Agents of democratic accountability? : professional culture of political journalism in the US and Germany

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AGENTS OF DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY? PROFESSIONAL CULTURE OF
POLITICAL JOURNALISM IN THE US AND GERMANY

by

Matthias Revers

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Abstract

Newspaper journalism in the early 21st century is experiencing economic predicaments and a crisis of professional authority, both connected to technological changes of public communication. This is the backdrop of this study of political journalism. It is based on three years of qualitative field research on political press corps in Albany, New York and Munich, Germany, encompassing 72 interviews with reporters (from 31 news organization) and spokespeople (across all political parties and branches of government) as well as about 350 hours of observation. It also draws on professional discourses, including news stories about journalism (meta-journalism), obituaries of journalists as well as journalism award statements.

The main question this research addresses is what defines professional cultures of US and German political journalism and how are they expressed in professional discourse and performances. It also examines how professional culture affects competition and autonomy maintenance towards politics. Accounting for technological changes, it also asks how the adoption of online media is mediated by established notions of professionalism and how professional culture is reshaped by new practices in turn.

Although there are tendencies towards more subjective assessments in the news (e.g. analysis) in both contexts, opinion is still a taboo for US journalists, engendering complex purification rituals. Professional role conceptions also differ regarding interventionism. While obedient reproduction of political messages is uniformly obsolete, the German press culture seemed more reserved in terms of changing the political status quo, exposing the private lives of politicians and honoring more aggressive journalistic efforts in this regard. The US press corps champions a competitive culture, which is not
free from collegiality, while the German press corps is rooted in an associational culture defined by formal and informal solidarity. Corresponding to the taboo of opinion (and thus partisanship), the professional performance of reporters needs to assert more distance to the political realm in the US than in Germany. Finally, the German press culture is much less affected by news digitization and seized by social media. This is explicable by the relative vitality of the news industry, strong privacy concerns in Germany and the professional culture’s inertia to change.
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Chapter 1: Theorizing Journalism

Journalists as Arbiters of Democratic Deliberation

This dissertation seeks to make a small contribution to better understand the relation between journalism and democracy. It examines one link in the value chain of the larger enterprise of deliberative democracy, journalists, their cultural commitments and performances insofar as they are relevant for shaping this larger enterprise. The focus is specifically on political journalists as active participants of the public sphere—the space for discussion about issues of common concern. To better understand this sphere, it is necessary not only to study discourses that circulate within it but also the institutions and practices that enable, generate, mediate these discourses. The hope is to illuminate why journalism erects the kind of political public sphere that is in place.

Habermas (1962) theory of the public sphere does not only provide a theoretical foundation but also a set of empirical questions to this end. The public sphere is the realm for discussion of matters of common concern between citizens. Deliberation within this space, whether in face-to-face encounters or by means of mass-mediation, generates public opinion, which, according to Habermas’ later revised pronouncement of this theory, “represents political potentials that can be used for influencing the voting behavior of citizens or the will-formation in parliamentary bodies, administrative agencies, and courts” (Habermas 1996:363). One way to understand efforts of political journalists then is to create these “political potentials.” Their work thus “potentially” demands accountability and legitimation from the state.
The power of mass media is inevitable, he argued later, “because they select and process politically relevant content and thus intervene in both the formation of public opinions and the distribution of influential interests” (Habermas 2006:419). Habermas does not problematize this power per se, as long as the media system is “self-regulating” and thus autonomous from these interests. Thus, institutional autonomy (especially from the state and market economy) is a condition for the public sphere to work effectively. Only then, participants of the public sphere have the necessary intellectual autonomy to rationally assert and evaluate truth claims. According to Habermas, the public sphere has to be governed by universal discourse ethics, which emphasize rational-critical argumentation and disregard the manner in which they are delivered or by whom.

Since the public sphere is ideally as set apart from state and market as from private spheres of citizens, it is the job of journalists, as its central facilitators, to mediate between the two, including by bringing citizens’ voices and concerns (often derided as “publicized opinion”) to the attention of the state. To be democratically valuable, public debate needs to comprise a diversity of voices and arguments, which is a common criterion in empirical research on mediated deliberation in public spheres (Benson 2009; Ferree et al. 2002; Jacobs and Townsley 2011; Jacobs 2000). To be sure, this is less a yardstick for state house correspondents, who are by definition politics-centric since their job is to be watchdogs of and in government. However, it does apply to them in terms of how serious they take public concerns and viewpoints in their reporting and the extent they perceive themselves as representatives of public interests rather than mediators of intra-political discourse.
One insufficiency of Habermas’ theory (and its deducible empirical questions about the public sphere) is its dismissal of non-rational discourse. Real public discussion is shot through with symbolism. Arguments are not just presented but narrated and performed, and one important challenge (and influence) of journalism is to decode and/or encode as well as convey these arguments. The symbolic content of public discourse is not arbitrary but is rooted in a cultural code of democracy (Alexander and Smith 1993). Rationality is still part of the equation in this cultural sociological conception of the public sphere (Alexander prefers to speak of a “civil sphere”) but not as something “real” and ontologically superior but as one signifier amongst others, which only becomes “real” in its discursive consequences (Alexander 2006:53–67). One important role of mass media in the civil sphere, according to Alexander, is to set communicative boundaries between civil society and what he calls noncivil domains (i.e. state, market, law, the family). Deliberation in the civil sphere is not just about rational-critical debate but shared understanding of the symbolic dimension of issues of common concern. Shared understanding does not mean that everybody agrees from the outset but, just like rational-critical debate, but involves contention.

From this vantage point, journalism is not (and should not) only (be) an institution that mediates facts and rational arguments but represents, “the major repository out of which the common stock of cultural resources circulates to form the basis of shared social meaning” (Jacobs and Townsley 2011:72). Starting from this premise means considering journalists as “entrepreneurs of meaning” rather than detached “fact entrepreneurs,” whose own moral and cultural commitments are important mediators for creating shared understandings. Journalists may perceive their position in civil society more as
informants of the public, enabling citizens to make informed decisions about matters of common concern, or more as asserters of public opinion vis-à-vis the state. As Jacobs and Townsley’s argument continues, however, “in both of these roles, journalists use and create the cultural repertoires through which elites and citizens understand themselves as democratic actors and act like democratic citizens” (ibid.:73). At a time when journalistic forms of engagement diversify (above all on social media) and the idea of objective reporting appears more challenged than ever before, journalists may also increasingly understand themselves as democratic actors. But how does this relate to their professional identity and aspirations of autonomy? This provides even more reason to study the professional culture of journalism today.

**Media systems and Journalistic Fields**

Despite the existence of transnational public spheres, at least in transitory form, taking nations as reference points for comparison is still critical, especially for studies on an institutional level of analysis. News is still constituted on the national level in the first place, connected to national press traditions, nationally sovereign political systems, more or less state-regulated markets and legal frameworks. An important reference point for comparative studies on news media is Hallin and Mancini’s book *Comparing Media Systems* (2004) that distinguishes three models of media systems in Western democracies, differentiated roughly by different market structures, relations to the state, and varying degrees of professionalization of journalism. Variations on these three dimensions lead to different degrees of autonomy from and forms of dependencies on state and economy.

To account for prevailing interdependencies as well as struggles for autonomy, which are inherent to professions (Abbott 1988), Bourdieu’s field theory has proven to be
another useful theoretical framework in media scholarship (Benson 1999; Couldry 2003; Hesmondhalgh 2006; Jacobs and Townsley 2011; Rohlinger 2007; Townsley 2012), including journalism studies (e.g. Meyen and Riesmeyer 2012; Schultz 2007). Viewing journalism as a field of cultural production means that it is torn between its own standards of “good journalism” (e.g. independence, investigative rigor) and external principles of evaluation (e.g. market penetration, political influence). Journalists have both options at their disposal (at varying proportions, depending on their outlets’ position in the field). In addition, the very criteria that define the autonomy of the field are themselves always contested.

According to Bourdieu, there are two central tensions concerning the autonomy of a field: a) One involves the nomos of the field, its “principles of vision and division” (Bourdieu 1996:223), which are the field’s internal norms of practice, membership, reward structures that define what “autonomous journalism” means. Members of the field constantly seek to redefine or interpret the nomos according to their interests and own position within the field. The other tension concerns b) how the journalistic field responds to the influence of other fields, which assert their own interests through it and whose principles of distinction are used by members of the journalistic field. The way we assess a fields’ autonomy is by looking at how it challenges exertions of influence and the degree to which it translates and “refracts” these influences into its own logic (ibid.:220). Besides the nomos, the worth of these heteronomous principles (external principles of distinction) are a further subject of contention (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:17–18).
Whereas autonomy is connected to democratic duty in Habermas’ theory of the public sphere, from a Bourdieuian perspective it accrues from interests of maintaining and enhancing social status. There is a tension between a journalistic fields’ desire to differentiate and public sphere obligations to the common good. Schudson (2005) therefore called attention to assign normative privilege to autonomy and argued that the ongoing struggles of heteronomy journalism is subjected to might actually benefit the vitality of the public sphere.

To Bourdieu, this tension consisted of news media representing a field of cultural production and a field of power at the same time. As such, the journalistic field is not only concerned with producing journalism for its own sake and to compete with other media organizations but with advancing the dominant interpretation of the social world and thus “the imposition of the dominant principle of domination” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:76n16). As Wacquant has noted (certainly in agreement with Bourdieu), however, it may be better to think of the “field of power” not as a field in the conventional sense but more as a “meta-field” (ibid.:18n32). Couldry took up this point and suggested to think of it more as, “a general space where the state exercises influence … over the interrelations between all specific fields” (Couldry 2003:666). This space may well be what is otherwise considered the public sphere. However, rather than merely struggling for status (Bourdieu) or fulfilling democratic duties (Habermas), journalists are morally and emotionally invested in this sphere and, lo and behold, derive enjoyment from engaging within it.

Furthermore, Bourdieu argued that we have to pay attention to the challenges that norms and reward structures, the field’s nomos, are subjected to, especially through new
actors seeking to improve their position. Such heresies, comparable to the avant-garde in the fields of arts (Bourdieu 1993:101–103), shift the overall boundaries of the field. These kinds of challenges also take place in the journalistic field. We may think of the younger generation of digital native reporters, who are early adopters and promoters of multimedia and social media journalism, as the journalistic avant-garde, so to speak.

A position within a field does not unambiguously predict position takings of agents inhabiting this position (Bourdieu 1993:29-73). Actors are not locked in their field position, in other words. Instead, such a position allows many different courses of actions in given circumstances. There are tensions, however, between professionally valuable and economically viable journalism, for instance, and there is no question that the economic dimension of news production does have an effect on news reporting.

**Journalistic Culture and Professionalism**

A thorough examination of journalism requires attention to symbolic distinctions reporters articulate in their work practices and in meta-journalistic discourse (with the researcher, amongst themselves, in public). On the core, this dissertation takes a Durkheimian perspective on profession as a *moral community* fused by solidarity and identity (Durkheim 1992[1957]), contrary to a Weberian perspective that would emphasize the means of social control within the profession (Schudson 2001). Durkheim envisioned professions as a moral body, or *buffer* rather, between an increasingly unleashed economy and civil society. Not only did he suggest this to be the social function of professions but considered civic morals as the very basis of professional commitments.
Though not formulated as such in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* but in accordance with Durkheim’s (1995[1912]) work on religious communities and its cultural sociological exegesis (Alexander and Smith 2003), such a community shares a cultural code that guides them in distinguishing between professional and unprofessional motives and procedures. This code and system of moral classification is ingrained in what Durkheim termed *collective representations*, shared by the group. They center on ideas of the sacred, which draw power from ritual and taboos that separate them from the profane. These rituals of purification and pollution reinvigorate collective representations and reinforce social order of the group (Douglas 2005[1966]). We may think of collective representations as the symbolic vocabulary of the profession, which they draw from to make sense of their activities and to assert professional claims toward other occupations, the state or in civil society more broadly.

Collective representations constitute the “cultural stuff” that is available. Although their substance is largely withdrawn from individual agency, they are polysemous and thus malleable in their interpretation. Thus, actors have some creativity in terms of how they use symbols to purify and pollute in interaction. As Eliasoph and Lichterman noted, “speakers must invoke the same codes *even when they make arguments on opposite sides of a political debate* ... people improvise; they think with the codes creatively as they formulate particular arguments” (2003:744). I will look at acts and expressions of purification and pollution of journalists, which are directed inwards to sanctify the professional community, to revive shared values or to condemn transgression. I will show that in these intra-professional debates, journalists from opposite positions of the journalistic field draw from the same symbolic resources.
Rituals of purification and pollution are also directed outwards, particularly in struggles with adjacent professions over jurisdiction (Abbott 1988), that is, areas of professional responsibility and expertise.

Journalism is a particular case concerning its jurisdiction(s). It has, or rather used to have, authority over a large segment of the public sphere—we may define this as the authority over mediated publicity in the public sphere—given that publicity is not only realized in mass mediation. Apart from the fact that other players increasingly compete for this formerly exclusive domain of journalism through participatory news infrastructures on the internet, journalism is also involved in a multitude of other jurisdictional struggles in the areas it covers. Whether politics, arts, business, sports—journalism makes truth claims about these different intersecting domains in public, habitually in disagreement with them. Whereas none of these institutions seek to assume the role of journalism in the public sphere in toto, they challenge its interpretive authority in their own area of expertise.

**The Performance of Professional Boundaries**

In the sociology of science, jurisdictional struggles have been theorized as boundary work (Gieryn 1983). Through boundary work, professions attempt to assert or expand its sphere of influence towards other professions. Because they are often in disagreement about their own boundaries, they are subject of intra-professional debate. The professionalization of journalism is a history of boundary struggles (Schudson 1978). Currently, the professional debate about online media and interactivity is certainly the most prevalent boundary struggle. Media scholars have highlighted boundary work accompanying the technological transformation of news media, particularly debates about
traditional versus participatory models of journalism (Lewis 2012; Robinson 2010). The boundary concept has already transpired earlier in journalism studies in the context of clashes between serious and less serious forms of news (Bishop 1999, 2004; Winch 1997). In these studies, boundary work occurred in the news as a form of public social control of norm violation within the journalistic field.

The reason why journalism is such a fruitful object for this particular kind of analysis is exactly because its professional boundaries are so fuzzy. Waisbord (2013), following Larson (1977), conceptualized journalistic professionalism as a “professionalizing project.” This project is defined by ambiguity, which manifests itself in intense boundary struggles that are based on, “the desire to preserve integrity and authority over a certain field of practice” (Waisbord 2013:90). Barbie Zelizer (1993) has offered a different solution, namely that, instead of a profession, we should consider journalism as an interpretive community that defines itself through collective interpretation of events. Zelizer’s work illuminates the role of journalism in constructing public perception of historical periods and events, like the Holocaust (Zelizer 1998) or the Kennedy assassination (Zelizer 1992).

Looking at boundary work within journalism and in political environments across nations is an attempt to better understand how political public spheres are influenced by professional cultures of journalism. For political reporters, whose autonomy is particularly compromised by political power, boundary work is ubiquitous. It is even more so at a time of economic predicament and technological upheaval of the news business. Upholding professional authority in a state of crisis can be considered a perpetual “social drama” (Turner 1974) for journalists, a continuous struggle over their
integrity and relevance in an increasingly networked public sphere. According to Gieryn’s (1983) typology, this dissertation is concerned with two purposes of boundary work: 1) the protection of autonomy, including boundary work among journalists and in relations to politics. This mainly involves procedures of boundary maintenance. However, as I will demonstrate, dealing with politics also involves boundary blurring to allow cooperation, at least temporarily in order to eventually be able to assert autonomy. I refer to the interplay and situational adjustment of maintaining and blurring of boundaries as boundary management.

2) The following analysis also points to another purpose of boundary work Gieryn distinguished, which is the expansion (or rather reclaiming) of authority. This is relevant to journalism in the context of their dispersing professional authority in the networked public sphere. Because of its distributive organization and the gradual dissolution of traditional institutional orders in this network configuration (Friedland, Hove, and Rojas 2006), the professional logic needs to accommodate these new conditions. This adjustment entails boundary work of journalism, entering a realm where “everybody can be a journalist” and demarcating what “real journalism” is about. As I will demonstrate, this expansion extends to boundary work within journalism about the means and ends of the profession.

Stressing boundary work and struggles over journalistic jurisdiction is to some extent commensurate with a theory of journalistic fields. However, a Bourdieuan perspective ultimately reduces boundary work to instrumental interests (status and power), raised from distinctive positions in the field, and analytically undermines the autonomy of universal moral and cultural motives and commitments. A cultural
sociological view holds that autonomy desires in journalism arise from belief in the purity of collective representations of the profession. This conception is different from common interpretations in journalism studies that may emphasize symbolic means of boundary work but always to an end that is associated to other interests.

These works are generally unexposed to Michelle Lamont’s (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Lamont 1992) cultural sociological interpretation of the boundary concept. Lamont defines symbolic boundaries as, “conceptual distinctions that we make to categorize objects, people, practices, and even times and space” (1992:9). We draw boundaries and distinguish ourselves from others, first of all, to mark our own place in the social fabric and define our identity within it. Lamont’s work draws attention to cultural repertoires in this context, which substantiate and condition the enactments and interpretations of symbolic boundaries. While this perspective sensitizes to the role of culture in situational signaling of boundaries, it does not have much to say about how these repertoires are structured.

In order to account for this lack, this dissertation will consider signaling or enactment of boundaries—directed outside of the profession (including towards the researcher) as well as to each other—as boundary performance. It builds on a conception of cultural performance (Alexander 2004), which brings together structured and creative dimensions of boundary work. While at times drawing from Erving Goffman’s (1956) unrivaled insights into situational performances, I follow Alexander’s argument that the authenticity (hence success) of a performance is not only situationally conditioned but by appearing as, “motivated by and toward existential, emotional, and moral concerns” (ibid.:530). To accomplish these appearances, performances refer to collective
representations. A performance asserting professional boundaries may signal affirmation of symbols of professionalism or opposition to symbols of unprofessionalism. Since the cultural logic of journalistic professionalism is not only diluted by economic and political *heteronomies* (Bourdieu 2005) but also infused by and commensurate with civic ideals and epistemologies, its performances are not strictly self-referential.\(^1\) Taking an obvious example of a fundamental collective representation in US journalism, *objectivity* is more a civic than an exclusively journalistic epistemology (Schudson 1978:121–159).\(^2\)

An effective performance has to have “ritual–like” qualities in that participants and audience members “share a mutual belief in the descriptive and prescriptive validity of the communication’s symbolic contents” (Alexander 2004:527). Even if meanings are used strategically in performance, mutual cultural beliefs are preconditions for them to be executed and accepted as authentic. Even the most cynical audience members, for instance political actors watching journalist performers, share these beliefs in essence. Though they are opponents and operate under different constraints, both professions believe in the idea of public service on a fundamental level. Tuchman’s (1972) notion of the “strategic ritual of objectivity” of journalists, on the other hand, suggests that ritualistic practices are disconnected from ends, *compulsively* exercised and concealed by a purported “sacred professional knowledge.” Journalists’ commitment to this ritual, in other words, is rooted in false consciousness and ultimately serves other interests. This

\(^1\) The most radical claim in this direction would certainly be Luhmann’s (2000) argument that mass media are autopoetic systems, which operate according to a simple code of information and non-information.\(^2\) Unlike most prevalent applications that consider performance in the public domain (assembled in Alexander, Giesen, and Mast 2006; Alexander 2010), this dissertation accounts for the fact that journalistic performances already have a semi-public character during reporting, which leads up to (public) news outcomes. Most performances, which will be examined in this dissertation, are of this kind. But they are not completely disconnected from their news discursive realization either. In other words: reporters’ performances “live on” in the news they produce.
notion of ritual is too narrow, I argue, to account for the full extent how journalists engage and identify with the symbolic resources at their disposal.

This dissertation is driven by the conviction that we can learn more about (professional) culture by first acknowledging its relative autonomy, at least in the analysis (Kane 1991), rather than reducing it to ideology or material interests from the get go. Only after analytically considering meaning in its own terms we can go back and see where it corroborates and where it counteracts other social forces and further ask why this is the case. Furthermore, materiality imposes itself soon enough on the cultural analyst, as we do not only interpret things that are overtly cultural. As Reed argued, any social structures may be studied interpretively:

First, though actors may not explicitly assign meaning to a given set of “externalities,” insofar as these externalities are ultimately dependent upon human action and are artifices of human creation, they presuppose and enact a meaningful logic of some sort—and the investigator must reveal this. And, second, when such objectivized structures intersect with subjectivity, this occurs through the grid of culture. Interpretivism thus insists on the historicity and cultural specificity of externalities. (Reed 2008:121)

Professional Culture and Technological Change

Technological change is an important issue in journalism today, not only in terms of news production and distribution but in that new practices and performances affect journalistic professionalism. In the social media age, journalists are more present as individuals and personalities than ever before (with the exception of TV anchors maybe). Journalists’ performances of professionalism on these platforms are quite different from legacy news venues. These new performances are not merely a consequence of being granted more of an individual voice by news organizations and having more freedom of expression thanks to social media. I further argue that social media are not only technologies (or communicative infrastructures) but are already infused with certain
cultural conventions of engagement and speech. In other words: when journalists adopt these technologies they already find scripts of performances.

**Cultural Logics of Technologies**

Constructivist new media scholars argue that technology itself only contributes possibilities of use (affordances) to its own adoption, emphasizing the contingent and negotiated character of technology-induced innovation within news organizations (Boczkowski 2004; Domingo 2008a; Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010). There are two ways innovation of work practices by means of online technologies will be considered (in chapter 7) that diverges from these and other works on the social construction of technologies: innovation will be considered uncoupled from organizational settings, which is where most of these studies are set. Furthermore, the significance of technologies in journalism will be considered while avoiding the usual pitfalls of conflating voluntarism and idealism, determinism and materialism, respectively, which haunts many similar works (Leonardi and Barley 2008). In other words: accounting for individual agency does not mean having to sacrifice material constraints and facilitations of action; correspondingly, accounting for efficacies that are external to human agents does not mean disregarding ideal dimensions of human behavior.

Concerning the latter relationship, technology, particularly Twitter, will be conceived of as a cultural environment, “encouraging certain types of interaction while discouraging others” (Meyrowitz 2009:520). Emphasizing encouragement—as rendering desirable—rather than mere affordance—as making possible—is an effort to avoid tilting on the latter side of the determinism/voluntarism continuum. By the time researchers study adoption of a certain technology, it constitutes more than just a machine or
algorithm but a bundle of materiality, designers’ inscriptions and previous users’ conventions of engagement (Orlikowski 2000). Hence, a social network like Twitter already bears “cultural baggage” when journalists adopt it, including value assignments, cultural hierarchies, practices and roles.

Furthermore, a technology is not isolated but “situated within a number of nested and overlapping social systems” (Orlikowski 2000:411). Thus, values of these other systems enter into the adoption of a technology. Practices of blogging or what I will call Twitter-aided reporting are infused with meanings of digital culture more broadly (Deuze 2006) as well as the economic crisis of the news industry. One way these meanings take shape, for instance, is in the “myth of interactivity” that besets contemporary journalism, which arose from the interaction between the “digital revolution” and the crisis of traditional news media (Domingo 2008a). In a similar vein, I will argue in chapter 7 how important the diffusion of such meanings through news organizations and peers were for how Twitter was adopted in the Albany press corps.

The social network of Twitter followers constitutes not only a more tangible audience but also interlocutors who raise implicit and explicit cultural expectations of journalists (Marwick and boyd 2011). Hence, journalists become aware and encouraged to engage in certain ways and construct a certain Twitter identity through others. I will argue that the transformation of journalism in the early 21st century is particularly shaped by an ethic of transparency, which the case of Twitter demonstrates. Transparency is understood as a combination of openness, honesty and a commitment to self-accountability and understandability. The following section discusses how this ethic intersects with established boundaries of journalism.
Boundary Expansion and Institutional Change

One way to conceive journalism as an institution is by the distinct logic, defining its means and ends, according to which it operates (Friedland and Alford 1991). Institutional logics are primarily symbolic constructions, which concretize as practices and social relationships. They serve as guidelines for institutional behavior and “create distinctive categories, beliefs, expectations, and motives and thereby constitute the social identity of actors” (Rao, Monin, and Durand 2003:797). Next to incentive structures—encouraging certain actions and discouraging others—Rao and others consider social identity as the key link between institutional logic and individual behavior. Through assuming an identity, adopting a role and exercising duties guided by values deriving from its logic, actors feel as part of an institution.

A new identity may initiate change and replacement of one logic by another, as Rao and others showed in the shift from classic to nouvelle cuisine in France. However, institutional change never occurs simply by implementing new technologies or legal norms (Friedland and Alford 1991). These innovations are important but are always mediated through nascent symbolic orders and reformations of social relations. Furthermore, the replacement of institutional logics is not seamless but a dialectic process involving contention.

Early 21st century professional journalism undergoes such contentious change. Lewis (2012) argued that the opposition between professional control over content and open participation is at the heart of the current transformation of journalism. Open participation, enabled and encouraged by digital culture, requires content to be openly distributed rather than centrally controlled. I will argue and show that, by way of
adopter Twitter, journalists diverge particularly on the question of openness rather than participation. I further argue that the professional logic is not confronted with a logic but an ethic of transparency (or openness) because it is rooted in the participatory and decentralized culture of the internet rather than a delimitable institution or profession.

With the rise of the internet, professional journalism became enclosed, challenged and partly subsumed by a more expansive sense of news production, which blurs definitions of what constitutes news and its producers. The jurisdictional struggles of journalism broadened and diversified as a consequence. Journalism sees itself confronted with its usual rivals, not least those it covers and who now participate on media platforms as equal participants in the first instance. Journalism also feels challenged by other opponents (e.g. blogs, activism, citizen journalism). It is irrelevant in this context whether these “opponents” may in fact reproduce journalistic norms more than subvert them (Vos, Craft, and Ashley 2012). What is important is that these perceived external threats manifest themselves as internal disagreements about how to adapt to new conditions: to draw sharp boundaries and asserting journalism’s autonomy from other types of news production, according to its own distinctive logic; or to make boundaries more fluid and permeable for practices, norms and identities, which are more adequate for the new news environment. The latter does not mean giving up on journalism’s original jurisdiction and its operating principles entirely. It is rather an impetus to diversify professional performances.

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In the absence of a true theoretical synthesis and to conclude this discussion, while discourse ethics in the Habermasian sense have a normative impetus that may have
consequences in public discourse—which is an empirical question—it is also striking that what is most salient in public discourse are not rational arguments but effective performances. In the case at hand, this concerns not only performances of professionalism in written form (the news) but also by journalists in action. Furthermore, as Alexander argues, the means of symbolic production of performances are not equally distributed. Power matters for the production and distribution of a performance or, more generally, a piece of communication. This is where a field perspective can help explain success and failures of performances.

As suggested in the previous section, on a metatheoretical level the approach suggested here departs from a full-blown Bourdieuan analysis in two fundamental ways, subsumable under the heading of the interpretivist paradigm as opposed to a realist, albeit reflexive realism (Reed 2008:115): 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 subjects. In other words: it is carried by the conviction that research subjects can make sense of their actions and thus so can the researcher (speaking with Gadamer, Reed refers to this premise as the “principle of hermeneutic charity”). From this vantage point, what comes closest to a social ontology—culture—is neither an objective, external determinant nor purely based on individual intentions but always a matter of convention and thus has to be subjected to interpretation.
Resolved and Open Questions: Literature Review and Research Questions

Newsroom Ethnography and the Professional Culture of Journalism

The so-called newsroom ethnographies of the 1960s and 1970s are still primary references for media scholarship today (Epstein 1973; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Schlesinger 1978; Tuchman 1978). The settings for most of these studies were print newsrooms3 but some were also set in TV newsrooms (Altheide 1976; Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade 1980; Epstein 1973) or press corps (Dunn 1969; Tunstall 1971). Their scope goes beyond journalism in and of itself to its relationship to social movements (Gitlin 1980), domestic and especially national politics (Hess 1981), and to foreign policy (Cohen 1963). With notable exceptions (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1989; Jacobs 1996b), the last two decades of the 20th century was a period of dearth of sociological studies of news.

Most of these studies examined news production from a phenomenological perspective and set out to demystify journalistic professionalism, particularly the objectivity norm, which Tuchman (1972) denoted as a strategic ritual. They considered newswork as conditioned by organizational routines and news as social constructions. Gans viewed journalists’ relations to powerful sources as “symbiotic relationship of mutual obligations … which both facilitates and complicates their work” (Gans 1979:133). Good relations facilitate first-hand information, evade pressure from these sources but at the same time make them “virtual allies” worried about displeasing them (ibid.:270-273).

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3 Some of these, such as Tuchman (1978) and Fishman (1980), also did research at city hall but not as their primary focus.
Another common interest of the newsroom ethnographies was the assessment of newsworthiness and news decision-making. What puzzled many scholars was the broad consensus across media organizations about what is the news at any given moment. Todd Gitlin explained news decision as guided by hegemony, “of imposing standardized assumptions over events and conditions that must be ‘covered’ by the dictates of the prevailing news standards” (Gitlin 1980:264). Routines of newsmaking are vulnerable to the unexpected, especially social conflicts and crises. However, when the unexpected enters the media space, Gitlin argues, it always does through the filters of the dominant ideology, which succeeds in reproducing itself even in these out-of-the-ordinary circumstances. Therefore less powerful civil society actors have to adapt even more to media routines than official bodies. The latter, on the other hand, have more leverage in that they can exert pressure on news by direct and indirect, more subtle forms of manipulation (e.g. secrecy, non-responsiveness).

News media resolve the problem of selection by negotiations and typifications, according to Tuchman, to turn certain occurrences into public events. These factors are “relatively content free” (Tuchman 1978:46), which shifted the explanation of news bias away from purposive selection and suppression of facts towards organizational routines and internalized cognitive schema on the part of journalists (Tuchman 1973). Similar questions were raised by Molotch and Lester (1974), who argued, echoing Gitlin (but without a theory of hegemony attached to it), that only unexpected events disrupt routines and open the gates to non-elite actors. In examining news beats, Fishman (1980) determined a connection between the structure of news and bureaucracy. He argued that
nonevents are possible only because they are, “violations of the bureaucratic procedures which organize beat settings” (ibid.:84).

A fundamental problem of the newsroom studies lies in their organizational scope and emphasis on routines to deal with internal and external constraints, which meant that they neglected the public character of news that goes beyond practice (Jacobs 2009). News as well as newwork is interrelated with public spheres and civil discourses, the negligence of which Jacobs blamed for the subsequent demise of media sociology. In his own newsroom ethnography, Jacobs (1996b) demonstrated the centrality of narrativity for assessing and legitimating newsworthiness as well as producing news texts. Thus, aside from social construction, journalism is also culturally structured; both are central concerns of this research.

Another signpost is Michael Schudson’s (1978) work Discovering the News. By way of historical analysis of objectivity as a powerful discourse in the professionalization of US journalism, instead of a strategic ritual (Tuchman 1972) or a heuristic to accomplish pressures (Gans 1972), Schudson situates it in the progressive era as a response to public skepticism of “facts” and the rise of PR and wartime propaganda. He later argued that, in contrast to European journalism, US journalism “needed” objectivity as a discursive resource to establish professional autonomy (Schudson 2001).

The goal of conducting cross-national research on journalism is to examine the “cultural givens” of news production, in the context of which journalism emerged and exists. These cultural givens, to speak with Schudson, “cannot be linked to features of

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4 Others (Gitlin 1978; Katz 2009; Pooley and Katz 2008) blame the limited-effect-hypothesis associated with the theory of the two-step-flow of communication (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Lazarsfeld and Berelson 1944). The consequence and subsequent interpretation of this theory was that the role of media for opinion formation is limited and that social networks are more significant for that matter.
social organization at the moment of study. They are apart of culture - a given symbolic system, within which and in relation to which reporters and officials go about their duties” (Schudson 1989:275). One method of examining a professional culture is by tracing its historical evolution, another one by comparing it cross-nationally. Chapter 3 will show that this approach has gained popularity in recent years and that German journalism is in many ways different from US journalism.

The first and principal research question this dissertation addresses is: *What is the professional culture of journalism and how is it expressed in professional discourse and performances of journalists? (RQ1)*

**Competition and Pack Journalism**

Pack journalism in a broader sense is connected to competition between news media. On the face of it, it appears counterintuitive why competing news operations would cover the same stories *because* they are competing with each other. News media, operating under the assumption that the competition covers the same story, seek to rise above by being first and scooping their competitors. There is a tension, though, between issues that unequivocally evoke general public attention (e.g. a national election) where “the desire to be unique is far outweighed by the risk of being different” (Shoemaker and Reese 1996:125) and issues that only become pack stories because of this risk of deviation. “‘Pack journalism’ results in sharing of ideas and confirmation of news judgments and the observation of other journalists” (Ibid.:265). According to this view, journalists confirm (and align) their news judgment by interacting, observing and reading (which is another form of observing) each other.
The first sense is the original sense of the term “pack journalism.” It is rooted in the idea of reporters covering the same issues in close proximity to each other and over a longer period of time (e.g. on the campaign bus), which is a situation of mutual awareness that leads to groupthink (Crouse 1973). Gans (1979:139) has pointed out that competing journalists on the same beat often employ each others as sources in moments of uncertainty, which he suggested leads to “fraternization.” Tunstall (1970:81–86) found that competitor-colleagues at the Westminster Lobby not only share certain information but directly cooperate with each other to report the news. They do this out of a “competition not to be last with the news” (ibid.:81).

Another explanation for the (pack-like) homogeneity of news coverage has been offered by Zelizer (1993) by the above-mentioned notion of “interpretive community” journalism constitutes, which is defined by the collective interpretation of circumstances and production of shared discourses. Reinemann (2004) specifically points to the problem that journalists rely on consuming other news media’s coverage to assess newsworthiness, which is ultimately as source of homogenization and mainstreaming of news discourse.

Pack journalism also transpires by technological mediation, as Boczkowski’s (2010) study on online news production suggests. He found that changing news consumption patterns and monitoring between competing news operations—both afforded by the web—results in imitation and similarity of news agendas, particularly in the production of hard news (there is more incentive to uniqueness in soft news production).
What is missing in these accounts is how the different layers of pack journalism (agenda setting and collective interpretation, based on interaction, groupthink and the news itself) influence each other, particularly in different professional cultures. The second question that guides this research thus is: *How does professional culture influence competition between news operations and pack journalism in particular? (RQ2)*

**The Relation between Media and Politics**

A common tenor and critique of newsroom studies was that, instead of questioning the dominant order, objectivity helps reproducing it. However, as Cottle (2000:26–28) rightly argued, newsroom ethnographies merely presupposed that news reflect social hierarchies but did not discuss how sources compete for access and how cultural forms of news have varying permeability for different social actors. During the intermediate period of media sociological dearth between the first and “second wave of news ethnography,” which Cottle marked the beginning of in 2000, Ericson and others’ (1989) newsbeat ethnography tackled how sources accommodate to journalistic demands. Ericson and his colleagues emphasized that cooperative arrangements at newsbeats involve reciprocity of knowledge as well as a convergence of worldviews. A later study conceptualized this interrelation as cultural negotiations between different interpretive communities (Berkowitz and TerKeurst 1999).

Besides the consensual view of a self-inflicted dominance of official viewpoints in the news, Leon Sigal’s (1973) examined reporter-source relations in Washington and suggested that source initiative essentially determines what’s news. Amongst other things, he showed the various ways that politicians use the press for political purposes, not only to influence public opinion. Opposing to the one-sidedness of influence, Cook
(1998) argued that the power of media, which operates within politics and largely does not involve the public, has been largely overlooked or not taken seriously enough. He suggests to think of news media not only as a political but governing institution, arguing that the three branches of government could not work without them. Cook makes the argument that, “newsmaking and its place in the political system is best conceived not as a linear, unidirectional process but as interactive and interdependent, the result of what I have elsewhere termed the negotiation of newsworthiness” (ibid.:12; italics in the original).

While acknowledging some of the constraints of discursive diversity in political news (overreliance on official sources, professional norms and conventional wisdom), Schudson (2008:50–62) argued that there lie opportunities, even in decried features of the professional culture of US journalism, which can disrupt these inertia: the event-focus of journalism can disturb routines, the obsession with conflict and skepticism of politics can legitimize oppositional views and expose official hypocrisies.

Studies of press-politics relations, have gone beyond social relations and focused on concrete negotiations in constructing the news (Reich 2006). They also reversed the focus towards how media logic permeates and “mediatizes” politics (Kepplinger 2002; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Strömbäck 2008). One interview study in the UK parliament, for instance, showed how important media logic is for micro-political decisions and the kind of “mediated reflexivity” politicians nowadays have to possess (Davis 2009).

These studies have furthered our understanding of the interpersonal, informational and cultural levels of source relations, specifically regarding how control over news
transpires. Rather than examining the conditions for and consequences of journalistic autonomy or the lack thereof in this social formation, this dissertation considers source relations in terms of journalists’ cultural practices of asserting autonomy, contingent on their professional culture. No matter whether or not journalists succeed in their endeavors of autonomy maintenance, these relations and power struggles are opportunities to better understand journalists’ normative commitments and techniques to assert them. The question it asks, therefore, is: *How does professional culture influence the relationship and maintenance of autonomy of journalism vis-a-vis politics? (RQ3)*

**News Digitization and Journalistic Professionalism**

The internet obviously had a tremendous impact on the distribution and consumption of news as well as the economic situation of the newspaper industry. This is certainly one main reason why news ethnography and media sociology experienced a comeback in the last 15 years, although largely outside of the sociological discipline. The general sense is that the internet dwarfs all other factors of influence on journalism, especially in terms of its “professional imagination” (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008).

Several studies (e.g. Cottle and Ashton 1999; Deuze 2007; Robinson 2010, 2011a) deal with media convergence. Klinenberg (2005) argued that the fundamental problem with convergence is that it leads to newsrooms being permeated by market principles. A foundational study of this period (Boczkowski 2004) criticized the notion of a unitary logic of convergence, however, and showed that news digitization efforts are contingent on previous cultures of innovation in newsrooms, inscriptions of intended users (active or passive), relation between online and legacy news sections and how traditionally editorial functions are conceived.
New media scholars, many of whom inspired by science and technology studies, focused on how online technology restructures journalistic practice. Anderson (2011b) argued that a central component of media transformation are algorithms, which do not only mediate between audience and journalism but affect the image of the public journalists envisage. Technology also redefines roles in news organization, such as “slotwork” (the initial filtering of incoming information) in news agency journalism, where “slotters” becomes nodes between technology and human agency (Boyer 2011).

Many studies at the intersection of new media and journalism studies focus on resistance against technological innovation in news work. Boczkowski (2004) has pointed both to cultural (professional discourses) and structural (organizational arrangements) inertia against innovation in newsrooms. Technologies are received with varying enthusiasm on different levels of news organizations, furthermore, which leads to initial conflicts and gradual adoption through shared knowledge and mutual learning (Schmitz Weiss and Domingo 2010). Several scholars who studied innovations of news work have reached similar conclusions, namely that adoption of technologies reproduces established journalistic norms more than change them (Cottle and Ashton 1999; Domingo 2008a; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012; Quandt 2008; Ryfe 2009; Singer 2005). This “normalization of technology” perspective appears particularly dissatisfied with how little journalism is opening up to participatory affordances of new media.

The normalization hypothesis led some scholars to the inverse conclusion, that is, online technologies are most successful where they further journalistic goals, such as more effectively processing and disseminating information relevant to them (Hermida 2010b; Robinson 2011a), or when they resonate with specific news values, such as
immediacy (Domingo 2008b; Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012). Many of these studies do find deviation from traditional norms, particularly on social media, regarding more outspoken and opinionated forms of journalism (Chu 2012; Lasorsa et al. 2012; Singer 2005) and replacing individual and institutional expertise to verify facts by networked expertise (Hermida 2012). Accounting for these recent changes, which many journalists in this study have experienced first hand (from the pre-internet and even pre-computer era until the current situation), the final question this dissertation addresses is:

(How) does the professional culture of journalism influence the adoption of online media and (how) do these media reshape the professional culture in turn? (RQ4)

This question will be discussed in the context of social media and Twitter specifically. It will not only be a story about change but also stasis since the professional culture is expected to resist change in various ways. Finding out exactly what these inertia to change are further point to the most salient constituent elements of professional cultures.

Overview

Though this chapter has provided a theoretical framework for how to analyze it, the empirical contours of the notion “professional culture” have been consciously left imprecise in the research questions. The theoretical discussion above has made the argument that, though a “global culture of journalism” may exist to some extent, there are reasons to believe the nation is still the main reference point and foundation of occupational traditions and self-images of journalism. Thus, it starts from the premise that cross-national comparison of journalistic fields is still a worthwhile endeavor. After chapter 2 discusses methods and research methodology assumed for this endeavor,
Chapter 3 will make the case for comparing journalism in two specific Western
democracies, Germany and the US, which are expected to be neither too distinct nor too
similar to each other. These two contexts will be mapped on the basis of available
research evidence and data on media systems and journalism as well as various sources of
professional discourse, including field research conducted for this project.

Chapter 4 continues this discussion by looking more specifically at how journalist
define, draw boundaries and perform professionalism in interviews I conducted,
situations I observed first hand or in mediated form. It will point out similarities and
differences of the German and US press cultures. While RQ1 is to some extent all-
encompassing and thus present throughout the dissertation, chapter 3 and 4 are
specifically devoted to it. Chapter 5 accounts for several important social and spatial
factors of each setting in order to carve out the implications of professional cultures on
competition and solidarity among journalists as well as the different dimensions of pack
journalism, addressing RQ2.

Chapter 6 looks at the interrelation of press and politics to see whether and how
professional culture shapes this interplay and the maintenance of autonomy of journalists
specifically (RQ3). Chapter 7 analyzes the adoption of online media, enabling and
inhibiting factors of each press culture for it and how digital forms of engagement have
affected this culture in turn. The study found market differences of how substantial
technological changes occurred. A larger part of this chapter examines the US case in its
own terms, where the transformation of newswork was more sweeping, particularly
through blogs and Twitter. The conclusion summarizes and connects some of the key
findings and discusses important limitations of this research. The main limitation—how
characteristics of professional cultures manifest themselves in news discourse—will be tackled by suggesting questions for future research.
Chapter 2: A Multilevel News Ethnography

Cases and Sampling Logic

The state house press corps serves as a case to examine the professional culture of journalism in each country. First of all, I argue that this setting is better suited to study national specificities of press cultures than national capitals where many such studies are set (e.g. Clayman and Heritage 2002; Clayman et al. 2007; Hess 1981; Pfetsch 2001). The national capital is customarily a place of exceptional concentration of political power, restricted access to elected officials, intense competition between media outlets as well as foreign media presence. The state house, in comparison, represents a more regular setting of journalistic work, in between the national elite and smaller local news ecosystems. I further argue that press corps exhibit constant and magnified expressions of professionalism: they assemble competitor–colleagues (Tunstall 1970) from a range of different news organizations. As opposed to reporters in newsrooms, these journalists are in constant competitive awareness of each other, not only for stories and access but also for defining the principles of what they do. They criticize each others’ work and engage in regular discussions about how journalism is supposed to be practiced. Every news story may be evaluated publicly and serve as a yardstick for a reporter’s level of professionalism. Furthermore, relations between political actors and journalists are necessarily complex and contentious, prompting various means of maintaining professional autonomy in practice. Extent (and direction) of reporter-source dependency, antagonism and indifference vary across the press corps, conditioned by personal sympathy, topical overlap, respective influence of politician, journalist/news organization, etc. To be able to discern regularities within these variations and similarities
and differences across settings enables to carve out important characteristics of the press cultures in question.

Furthermore, the sampling strategy of examining national journalistic cultures by way of one press corps in each country is smarter than it may look at first sight (an area sample with one case). First of all, the dual character of informants—competing delegates of various news organizations, on the one hand, and members of group of colleagues, on the other—allows for cross-sectional breadth and counterbalances local idiosyncrasies. I would argue that reporters in such settings have more awareness of the journalistic field as a whole than reporters in newsrooms (where most news ethnographies are set) who may physically meet reporters from other outlets on assignments but are otherwise surrounded by colleagues. Multiple layers of comparison, cross-national as well as triangulation of methods (interviews, observation, meta-journalistic coverage, tweets, obituaries, award statements), help distinguish systematic patterns from noise and particularities.

The Settings

The Landtagspresse (LP) in Munich had 65 members listed in early January 2014, the Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) in Albany 45 members. The core members (who are there most of the time and who drive news coverage about state politics) are about the same in both cases, between 25 and 30 journalists. LCA reporters represent regional broadsheet newspapers (*Albany Times Union, Buffalo News*), metropolitan tabloid newspapers (*New York Daily News, New York Post, Newsday*), TV stations (NY1, YNN), radio stations (NYS Public Radio Network, WCNY/The Capitol Pressroom), a national broadsheet newspaper (*New York Times*) and news agencies (AP,
During periods of heightened public attention, for example the same-sex marriage debate, media presence doubled and maybe even tripled at times.

LCA reporters have permanent office spaces at the Capitol building. News bureaus at the LCA include between one and four reporters. Four journalists at the Capitol represented the local paper, the *Albany Times Union*, when this study was conducted. Casey Seiler led the team as state editor who shared an office with Irene Jay Liu when I started my field research (replaced by Jimmy Vielkind in 2010, formerly of the weekly *New York Observer*, which does not have a permanent Capitol reporter anymore). The other TU office was shared by Jim Odato from the investigative team and policy reporter Rick Karlin. The *New York Daily News* bureau also had four journalists when I started my research. Bureau chief Ken Lovett, reporter Glenn Blaine, columnist and editorial writer Bill Hammond and blogger Elizabeth Benjamin. Benjamin left the *Daily News* in 2010 to blog for and anchor the evening news TV program Capitol Tonight on the Time Warner station Your News Now (YNN). Benjamin’s successor at the Daily Politics blog of the *Daily News* did not report from the Capitol.

The bureau of *Gannett News Service*, the only one that is not inside but across the street from the Capitol building (see chapter 5), was led by Jay Gallagher, who died May 24, 2010. Joseph Spector, who worked as a reporter under Gallagher, replaced him as bureau chief, working next to reporter Cara Matthews. Nick Reisman became a reporter for *Gannett* after Gallagher passed away before joining Benjamin’s team on YNN in spring 2011. He was replaced by Jon Campbell, previously an intern at *Gannett*.
New York Times had three journalists at the Capitol when I started—Danny Hakim (bureau chief), Nicholas Confessore and Jeremy Peters. Peters left in 2010 to join the Times’ media desk (he changed to national politics in late 2011) and was replaced by 22-year-old Thomas Kaplan right before Andrew Cuomo took office as Governor. Confessore left in 2011 to join the national desk as a political reporter. Hakim left Albany in July 2013, after an unusually long tenure for a Times man in Albany (seven years), to become the European economic correspondent (based in London). When I started my research in spring of 2009, the Times bureau members were collectively awarded the Pulitzer Prize for breaking news reporting. They received the award for breaking the story of the Governor Eliot Spitzer prostitution scandal, which led to his resignation. Hakim was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in the Public Service category in 2012 for a series of investigative reports about abuse in New York homes for developmentally disabled people.

The Associated Press had three journalists at the Capitol when I started but continued with two in 2010 when Valerie Bauman left Albany. The New York Post was represented by two reporters, including long-time Capitol reporter Fred Dicker, who had been at the state house for over thirty years. Some bureaus were one-(wo)men-shows, like NYS Public Radio, The Buffalo News and Newsday. The latter sent an additional reporter during important periods and had fixed tenures for Capitol correspondents (four years). James Madore was the bureau chief when I started and was replaced by Yancey Roy in 2011 who was a press secretary for the State Environmental Department before he got hired by Newsday (he worked as a Capitol reporter for Gannett before his press secretary job).
Key news organizations of the LP are regional newspapers (*Augsburger Allgemeine, Main-Post, Nürnberger Nachrichten, Donaukurier, Mittelbayerische Zeitung, Passauer Neue Presse*), metropolitan newspapers (*Abendzeitung, Münchner Merkur*), public service broadcasters (Bayerischer Rundfunk, ZDF), private TV (Sat 1), private radio stations (Antenne Bayern, Radio Arabella), a national news magazine (*Der Spiegel*), news agencies (dpa, DAPD (which has since seized to exist), AFP) and national newspapers (*Die Welt, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung*, although in respect to Munich it can also be seen as regional newspaper, similarly to but with a more regional focus than the *New York Times* in New York).

LP reporters are not permanently at the state legislative building, the Maximilianeum. There is a press room reporters use to file stories during session days but it is mostly empty on other days. When they do not attend events elsewhere, reporters work in newsrooms (if they work for media outlets that are located in Munich) or at offices their news organizations provide for them. The constitution of the LP is different in that most news organizations are represented by one journalist only. A notable exception is the public broadcast cooperation Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR), which has five radio journalists (three of whom are at the Landtag most of the time) and three TV reporters, as well as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which has two permanent correspondents and the Landtag. Overall, there is more variety of news organization represented in the LP than in the LCA. Furthermore, there is also a greater presence of national media outlets in the LP. With the exception of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (national/regional), Sat 1 and dpa, I rarely saw reporters from other national media outlets at the Maximilianeum,
Field Access and Data Collection

There were significant differences in terms of (spatial) access to my informants, which started with making first contact. Because LCA reporters are at the Capitol all the time, I could literally knock at their doors to introduce myself. I established contact to LP reporters over phone because I did not have immediate spatial access to them. If they were at the Landtag, they were very busy and it was difficult to talk to them. At the Capitol building I could basically roam free, and attend almost all events the press had access to. At the beginning of my field research I contacted Governor David Paterson’s press office to get credentials for press conferences. I actually received a call by a State Trooper who did a background check on me. Later on when I became more comfortable with my field role, I did not ask for permission to attend events but just entered rooms as if I was a member of the press. Some spokespeople knew me, others did not ask me any questions. Since I took notes, I blended in with other reporters.

My access in Munich was much more restricted. I had a phone conversation with the chairman of the LP, Uli Bachmeier (Augsburger Allgemeine), to talk to him about how the association is organized and access before I came to Munich. When I got there in October of 2011, I got press credentials for the Landtag and was thus admitted anywhere journalists had access as well. However, I was not allowed to attend regular background discussions the LP organizes. This was unfortunate because it was described to me as one of the key function of the LP and important to most reporters. I contacted the press office of the Staatskanzlei (state chancellery, where the office of the Minister-President and the
state cabinet is), which is in a separate building in walking distance from the
Maximilianeum, to be admitted to press conferences and interview spokespeople. I was
denied both forms of access and was told that the Staatskanzlei does not cooperate with
researchers on principle.

The research setting in Albany was more convenient, especially for observational
purposes, because it is more contained. Apart from the times when I shadowed specific
reporters, I occupied one of the empty desks in the LCA main room in 2011, which was
assigned to the Wallstreet Journal but whose reporter at the time, Jacob Gershman,
hardly used it. In the most observation-intensive phase of my research, it served as a good
lookout point, allowed me to write field notes and get other work done in downtimes (for
examples in the afternoon when reporters where busy with filing their daily stories)
without missing anything.

Interviews

I conducted field research under conditions of confidentiality. Conforming to IRB
regulations, I interviewed after getting written consent by informants to use the data. I
started doing interviews in Albany in April of 2009. In the following 27 months (and
additional two weeks in February 2012) I interviewed almost all LCA reporters who are
permanently on location, some of them repeatedly (with a voice recorder, apart from
continuous conversations). My field research in Munich was more compressed as I stayed
there from October of 2011 until late July 2012. Overall I conducted 72 interviews, with
journalists from 31 news organizations and spokespeople from all branches (except the
executive branch in Munich) and parties of government and legislature respectively. In Albany, I did 42 interviews with 31 journalists (seven of who I interviewed twice) and four spokespeople; in Munich, 30 interviews with 24 journalists and six spokespeople.

In Albany, initial interviews with journalists lasted 64 minutes on average. Most of them took place at the Capitol building, on days when the legislature was not in session (often on Fridays). Interviews with spokespeople were slightly shorter (58 minutes on average) and so were follow up interviews with journalists, in which I tried to clear up specific questions that arose during the course of events or during writing articles. When I was in Munich, I started working on an article on Twitter and when I was back for a conference in New York in early March of 2012, I did two weeks of additional field research in Albany before that. I interviewed a few of the reporters again about Twitter, which was not relevant when I talked to them for the first time. I also took the opportunity to interview three new members of the press corps.

Interviews with journalists in Munich took 52 minutes on average (with spokespeople 42 minutes). Most of them took place in newsrooms or offices, some at the Landtag restaurant (“Gaststätte”), coffee shops and one at a brew-house (at 11am, involving beer on the part of my interviewee). The interview guide (see appendix) was revised several times but the basic structure of the interviews and some key questions remained the same. I was able to translate most questions, some questions I had to approach differently in German (e.g. about pack journalism) because of linguistic-conceptual differences. Linguistic adaption of the interview guide took place in

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5 Since part of the project deals with press-politics relations, it seemed reasonable to get a sense of the other side of that interrelation, without being able to give it similar attention as journalists.
intermediary field research in Graz, Austria in the summer of 2010 where I interviewed eight political reporters. This data will not be considered in this dissertation, however.

Most interviews proceeded in the following order: I first asked the interviewee about their career trajectory, education and current working conditions. A discussion about professional values followed, which asked broad questions about public responsibility, what they consider bad journalism, about pack journalism, their national occupational tradition, about their (news) reading/watching habits and how their work has changed in recent years. When they did not address issues I was interested in themselves, I probed more specifically (regarding the latter question, for instance, how the internet, social media and how the economic downturn of newspapers changed their work). The final section of the interview dealt with news gathering and source relations and addressed questions about the significance of being on location, keeping distance yet being close to sources, off-the-record conversations and political actors’ strategies of influencing journalism. I asked spokespeople for their perspective on questions where it made sense, particularly about source relations, of course.

The interview guide only provided a rough skeleton of questions to address. As I became more familiar with the political settings, I asked more contextualized questions in addition. I developed a habit of listening to interview recordings in the days after I conducted them, sometimes several times (particularly good interviews), and took notes (including what issues to address in subsequent interviews). Thus, even if

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6 At that time I intended to do a three-way comparison but decided to get rid of the Austrian case because of incomparability (state governments are relatively irrelevant in such a small country and the journalistic stakes are relatively low) and because of my emotional involvement as an Austrian citizen (involving frequent feelings of embarrassment in relation to political affairs). Besides, I was interviewing former colleagues of mine since I used to work as a journalist there for a little over a year, which is not ideal (but certainly not a common impediment for social research).
transcription/analysis was not possible before the next interview (mostly it was not),
every new interview was informed by the previous. One technique connected to this is to
test theories interviewees articulated. This was an effort to find out whether theories were
based on a particular view or common sense across the field. The beauty of not only
doing an interview study but also observation was, furthermore, to be able to follow up
on questions in informal conversations with journalists.

**Observation**

I did some observation at the LCA at the beginning of this research but started in
a more intensive and focused manner in November of 2010. Focused means not only
participating at events “as a journalist”—mainly press conferences and other, more
informal exchanges between politicians and the press—but spending time and shadowing
particular reporters in their offices while still attending above-mentioned events with
them. By doing that, I could witness their regular work tasks, conversations with each
other, and their sources on the phone and in person. When I could not attend physically, I
followed the constant flow of digital news from afar, especially through Twitter.
Reporters’ Twitter feeds not only referred me to news stories but also to events that were
happening in the building, official press conferences as well as unofficial press
availabilities. Many tweets and blog items were supplemented with pictures and videos,
which made for an even better substitute for physical presence.

Since journalists took notes constantly it was not conspicuous or intrusive for me
to take notes as well. This was a great advantage of this field site since I had to rely less
on mental notes (or “head notes”), especially considering that field stays took as long as
eight hours sometimes. Furthermore, there was a basic understanding of what I was doing
among my informants, which to them was essentially reporting on background about journalism, just for a much longer period and a much longer (and probably less comprehensible) story than regular news reports. Field notes consist of observations, conversations, hyperlinks to newspaper stories and blog items, which evolved from the activities witnessed on a given day.

The two reporters I spent most time with worked for a regional newspaper and shared an office together. “Chuck” was the bureau chief in his mid-forties, “Dash” a political reporter in his late twenties. They were on the forefront of cross- and social media journalism, operating one of the must-read blogs in state politics, tweeted constantly, next to frequent radio and TV appearances. I shadowed another senior reporter, “Ned,” from a regional newspaper. He belongs to a small group I refer to as “traditionalists” in chapter 7, defined by their oppositional stance towards tweeting and blogging. I also spend some time shadowing one young TV reporter I will not refer to by pseudonym. I called her a “one-woman-show” because she basically operated as a video journalist who did everything by herself (shooting video, editing and presenting it), including background reporting that was similar to print journalists (with notebook and pencil instead of a camera). A few other reporters/news bureaus I had good rapport with did not grant me this kind of immediate access. However, from the position of their competitor-colleagues’ offices I witnessed casual conversations with those more cautious journalists as well.

I gathered about 300 hours of observational data in Albany and about 50 hours in Munich. Observation in Munich was basically reduced to plenary session days since all journalists were at the Landtag for these occasions. On these days, I spend most time at
the “Steinerne Saal” (the hall outside the plenary chamber) and surrounding area, observing journalists dealing with sources and talking to them in downtimes. I witnessed several committee meetings but only few reporters attended those.

One reason for this imbalance is obviously the amount of time I spent in Albany (almost three years) compared to Munich (10 months). Another one is restricted access in Munich, as mentioned above, and the organization of work spaces (only temporarily concentrated at the Maximilianeum and dispersed at other times). My requests to shadow LP reporters I felt comfortable asking were denied. However, even if I succeeded in that endeavor and shadowed them in their newsrooms, the setting would not have engendered observations that were most valuable in the LCA, namely interactions with competitors and sources. LCA reporters are much more exposed to different kinds of actors at the Capitol (politicians, spokespeople, competitors, lobbyists, activists, citizens) and LP reporters are not.

There is perhaps also a cultural dimension to the closer access I got to LCA reporters than LP reporters. With few exceptions, Albany reporters were quite approachable and I was able to build rapport with many of them quickly, which was less the case in Munich. I was nervous when I knocked on the door of the very first reporter I approached in Albany. Two minutes later we were talking about skiing. Despite the absence of language barriers in Munich, interaction was much more easygoing in Albany. This was not surprising to me, however, having experienced manners and behaviors of social interaction in both contexts and appreciated the openness of talking to strangers in the US.
Because of this imbalance, the comparative analysis presented in this dissertation will be mostly based on interview data. One could argue that the interviews, because of the difference in rapport, also afforded different levels of depth and honesty of responses. This may seem so on the outset but I found that in each setting there was a different conversational equilibrium in the interviews. In the German interviews, reporters often seemed more forthright in admitting weaknesses. I, in turn, was more careful how I phrased my questions and made sure they did not come off as having a hidden agenda. US reporters were maybe “better performers” in presenting themselves but I also felt that I asked more critically, less in terms of asking in a confronting manner but in signaling more critical vantage points.

**Obituaries and Award Statements**

For the analysis in chapter 3, I did some additional data gathering and analysis. I have examined 73 obituaries of 45 US journalists, publishers and editors, most of them published in major national newspapers (*New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times*), together amounting to 223 pages of text. I have similarly analyzed 78 obituaries of 43 German journalists, mostly in national newspapers (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt*) and in the weeklies *Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel*, amounting to 160 pages of text. Some of these journalists I have chosen purposefully because of their high status in the profession (e.g. TV anchor Walter Cronkite or *Spiegel* founder Rudolf Augstein) or because they turned up prominently in an initial random search of journalists’ obituaries. The larger part of journalists is randomly chosen from a sample of deceased awardees of major journalism awards (see appendix for a full list of deceased journalists considered). I went through the list of awardees, determined which
one of them have passed away and selected those who died after 1980 for the sample. I chose 1980 as a cut-off point because this period spans the career of the most senior reporters in my field research case studies and, in the interest of consistency, one generation unit of journalists. It is also a question of online availability since most regular archives of newspaper websites only start in the late 1990s.

I have surveyed journalists who won major awards in both countries in relevant news categories (e.g. not art criticism). I chose the Pulitzer Prize (PP) as the most prestigious award and the Peabody Awards (PA) for radio and television in the US. I surveyed all individual PP winners (some categories are institutional) in the categories National Reporting, Breaking News Reporting, Investigative Reporting, International Reporting. I chose PA winners since its beginning in 1940 in relevant (news) categories. I ended up with a list of 79 names, which I went through in random order.

In Germany, I choose the Egon-Erwin-Kisch-Preis (for feature writing), established in 1977, which has become one of the categories of the Henri-Nannen-Preis (HNP) in 2005. The HNP has other categories but since it is so recent, hardly any awardees have passed away (except in the life work category). I also surveyed dead awardees of the Theodor-Wolff-Preis (TWP), except unrelated categories, such as literary journalism, which exists since 1962. I ended up with a list of 72 names from which I chose randomly. Unfortunately, there is no prestigious prize for TV and radio journalism that leads back as far. There were many German journalists on the list I could not find obituaries from while in the US there were only a few.

I compared award statements within the same time-frame (1980-2013). I selected statements in news categories of the Pulitzer Prizes (PP), namely breaking news, local
journalism, beat reporting, national reporting, investigative reporting, explanatory
reporting, explanatory journalism and public service. Since categories of the PP change
constantly (some are newly founded, some discontinued, others revived), not every year
within the time-frame had awards in every category I looked at. In some years there were
two prizes awarded in one category. I also selected institutional and individual Peabody
awards (PA), which are news-relevant and that amount to 23 in the time frame. The PP is
by far the most prestigious journalism award in the US. To make sure that the patterns I
found within the exceptionally short PP statements are not idiosyncratic, I also read
award statements of the George Polk Awards (GPA) (statements from 1998-2012 were
available), which are presented annually by Long Island University. I chose this award
after determining that the GPA was deemed worth mentioning in the obituaries.

In Germany, I read all news-relevant award statements of the Theodor-Wolff-
Preis (TWP) from 1998 until 2013 (earlier award statements are not available online) and
the Hanns-Joachim-Friedrichs-Preis (HJFP) from 1995 (when it was awarded for the first
time) until 2013. I read press releases of the Henri Nannen Preis (HNP) from 2005 until
2013 (the prize was only founded in 2005 but is probably the most prestigious journalism
award in Germany), which includes quotes from jury statements that are presented live at
the awards show. Full jury statements are not available online. The statements in the
press releases are usually sufficiently detailed (one longer paragraph; for the award for
life work and press freedom there are usually two long paragraphs).

Data Analysis

As customary in qualitative social research, analysis of interviews and fieldnotes
happens simultaneously with data collection in order to continuously refine both
processes. I used a qualitative data analysis application called HyperReserarch to code the data. For reasons of comparability, the same coding scheme developed in the US was used for German data as well, while new codes were still developed and applied back to the US case. The codes served more as signposts for themes in the data than deconstructing it to its specificities. The functionality of the program enables more fine-grained analysis through testing associations between conditions across cases. However, I preferred to do the analysis in writing, starting with rather detailed annotations to codes and longer memos that gradually transformed into raw drafts of the empirical analysis.

While still doing field research in Germany, I started working on a research article about implications of Twitter adoption for journalistic work, which eventually became two articles (incorporated in chapter 7). For this analysis I tried a different approach than I did in the rest of this dissertation. After some free writing that enabled me to identify some relevant themes and categories, I took inspiration from Miles and Huberman (1994:132; 182) to structure the vast amount of interview and observation data. I constructed a table, which is a mixture of what they call thematic conceptual matrix and a clustered summary table, essentially breaking down statements and events concerning different technologies and media (email, blogs, social media, smartphones, internet more generally) on different dimensions of journalistic work (workflow, research, audience engagement, competition, institutional/professional issues and public sphere), while also indicating whether statements are evaluative and how (positive or negative). This provided an outline and revealed patterns in that particular section of the data.

While I was writing I realized that I needed to look at tweets and chose one particular debate before and after the passage of a same-sex marriage (SSM) law in New
York in late June of 2011. I was further encouraged by my informants to focus on this case, who referred to it as the first time they fully exhausted Twitter’s capabilities and set precedents for future tweeting endeavors. In the months before that period, I had continuously monitored 25 Twitter feeds of a core group of individual reporters and news bureaus and more casually followed 45 others by officials, aids, lobbyists and reporters who left the beat but still engaged in conversations. The core group generated around 200 daily tweets on average and over a thousand on eventful days. On the day SSM law passed the Senate (June 24, 2011) the core group tweeted 1621 times. I conducted a content analysis of tweets, which the core group generated between June 16 and June 28, 2011, which was when the debate about SSM leveled off (overall 4492 tweets). I coded for one variable (forms of Twitter engagement) with 17 values (see appendix for a frequency table).

I did an ethnographic reading of obituaries.⁷ I started with articles I downloaded after a random web search and took notes on patterns that emerged. I then took a random sample and read obituaries, alternating between US and German articles after every five journalists for immediate comparison. I kept reading new texts for as long as new themes and patterns emerged (until theoretical satiation set in, alternatively). This point came just about 10 names before the end of the German list, which I exhausted for the sake of completion and which also set the cut-off point for the US list (45). I read all award statements in the sample, also switching between national contexts for comparison. In reading both of these bodies of text for the first time, I was looking for definitions and representations of good journalism, making notes and markings and then reading parts again (and again).

⁷ Some may refer to this as “ethnographic content analysis” (Altheide 1987).
While I was writing, I reached out to several informants about confidentiality issues and let them authorize quotes I thought might be problematic. In all instances I ended up using the quote the way I intended to but in some cases omitted or reduced contextual information about the quoted informant or associated news stories. Besides not using their names, I tried to be careful to protect their confidentiality when I quoted them, including not making them easily identifiable for their competitor-colleagues (who expressed interest and may read my written work) in instances that may be uncomfortable to them. I shared early drafts of articles I wrote about the US case with key informants there, to avoid mistakes and misinterpretation and to get feedback on my interpretations.

Apart from these practical issues of sampling, access, data gathering and analysis, the following and final section will specify the methodological position of this research concerning qualitative social research, case studies and causality.

**Methodology: Against “Positivized” Qualitative Social Research**

As a case study design, this research could be classified as an *embedded, two-case design* (Yin 2003:39–55). Within the two research settings, multiple units of analysis are examined (this is what is *embedded* about them)—reporters, news organizations, sources, meta-journalism they produce, tweets, etc.

Furthermore, this research strives to study these local setting in their own terms, interpretively, and in depth in order to present thick descriptions of them (Geertz 1973:3–30). Other than Geertz who attempted to reach an emic understanding of larger forces through detailed analyses of local cultures, however, this project is not theoretically innocent to the influence of larger forces on these micro-settings from the outset. The greater part of qualitative social research labeled “grounded theory” claims to strive for
inductive reasoning. My approach is more theory-driven and resonates with what Charles Peirce termed *abductive reasoning* (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). Rather than treating the press corps as *extended cases* to study journalistic professionalism with my “favorite theory” (Burawoy 1998), the starting point was a set of theories (see chapter 1) that informed the angle as well as scope of questions and observations. In reflecting about, analyzing and gathering more data, these theories were continuously played off against each other, especially field theory against cultural sociology. The goal of this technique of *alternative casing* (Timmermans and Tavory 2012) is to find the “best explanation” and generate new insights by analyzing data with a broader theoretical foundation.

Throughout simultaneous data gathering and analysis I applied two typical inductive techniques, which are useful for abductive reasoning (ibid.): Firstly, *defamiliarization* of preconceived understandings about the object of research, concomitant with inscription (interview transcripts, fieldnotes) and coding of data. Secondly, doing field research over a longer period of time enabled me to *revisit* phenomena in similar situations or in subsequent interviews in order to “test” the validity of observations and preliminary conclusions drawn. This revisiting draws from what Glaser and Strauss (1967:101–115) termed the “constant comparative method.”

Another remedy against presumptions or prematurely asserting causal relations is what Howard Becker called the *null hypothesis trick* (1998:20–28). The idea, drawing from inferential statistics, is that what should be “tested” is in fact the null hypothesis of no relation between independent and dependent variables. The ethnographic practice of analyzing while still gathering data over a period of time, which is defined by contingency of unfolding events, should involve counterfactual reasoning. Following
Max Weber’s (1949:173) notion of judgments of possibility (“Möglichkeitsurteile”), this involves continuous imaginative constructions of alternative courses of events that might have led to the same outcomes and envisioning modification and omission of causal components of the observed course of events.

Furthermore, this research also aims at refining theory about the subject matter (i.e. journalism, political communication, political public spheres). One overarching outcome is that considering journalistic culture in its own terms (not already tied to power, as suggested by field theory) produces new insights on journalism. Interviewing is one method to bring culture to the fore, by narrative accounts journalists provide about their work. Interviews data deals with, “what the person being interviewed thinks happened, or thinks should have happened” (Luker 2008:167). Interviews took place in a historically contextualized manner and many accounts relate to concrete events that happened before the interviews. In part, interviews illuminate these events, connections and relations between people. The greater part, however, deals with professional codes and symbolic boundaries of journalism. They express these codes and boundaries when asked about their relationship to their competitors and their sources, about what they consider their role to be and how journalism ought (not) to be practiced.

While the analytical purpose is obviously to connect these micro-social accounts to larger, structural and cultural forces, qualitative field research that does not acknowledge individual agency is either blind or insincere. However, it cannot get lost in such details either. It is here where field theory can be a reminder that a given utterance or performance derives from a certain position in social space, equipped with certain

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8 Though originally formulated in respect to historical research, I would argue this is applicable for any processual social research that it is concerned with tracing sequences of events and following subjects through time.
resources. We are thus dealing with bounded agency that does not simply reproduce but also generates or refines social structures (Giddens 1984:1–40).

While doing field research, it is advisable to treat these interpretations as preliminary in order not to prematurely appropriate them by theoretical preconceptions. The ethnographic habit of simultaneously gathering and analyzing data ideally involves a constant back and forth between drawing conclusions and defamiliarizing oneself from them to be able to consider empirical findings in their own terms. In interviewing, I also acquired a habit of testing my theories and those expressed by interviewees in subsequent interviews.

In line with what Burawoy (1998) termed “reflexive science,” reactivity is not bias to be controlled for but a device the researcher can use to intervene consciously to reveal social orders in the research setting. There are things to learn from subjects explaining, justifying or creating impressions of themselves exactly because we interfere in their lives. In this context and on every other level of doing sociology, reflexivity in Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) sense is similarly important: to be aware of one’s own social and epistemological dispositions and how they might influence deduction from empirical observations. In my own case, this means particularly to reflect on my taken-for-granted assumptions from my past journalistic experience, which may be as much a benefit (context knowledge) than a curse (inside-the-box-thinking). However, it certainly proved to be helpful in terms of getting field access.9 Reflecting upon dispositions of research subjects, rooted in part in their position within the journalistic field, is bolstered by a combination of interviewing and observation as it captures

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9 The particular research scenario of former journalists studying journalists has been recently discussed in some detail (Paterson and Zoellner 2010).
discursive knowledge as well as practical consciousness and concrete actions of newsworkers.

The broader epistemological position of this project, furthermore, opposes the submission of qualitative social research to a positivist paradigm (cf. King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). Qualitative social research that treats cases equally and that perceives expanding the number of cases as the only means to strengthen causality (we might say “n-fetishistically”) does itself a disservice. This logic of inquiry is rooted in statistical inference, which is to draw conclusions about the coexistence/coincidence of several (related) conditions in a population from observations of a random sample of that population. Probably in no other style of qualitative inquiry does the insufficiency of subduing to positivist principles become more blatant than in ethnography. It enables testing (preliminary) hypotheses in different ways and circumstances, with identical or dissimilar subjects about whom the ethnographer obtains more knowledge than necessary to “measure” the “variables” in question and thus has a basis to decide upon which findings are more relevant than others.

Positivist and interpretivist research paradigms have radically different goals, furthermore, the former pursuing a “logic of verification,” the latter a “logic of discovery” (Luker 2008:125). A main objective of the latter is to generate theory rather than test theory and push finding to the highest level of abstraction possible. Generalizations can obviously not be made by statistical inference but logical inference, based on interaction of existing theory, fine-grained, contextual knowledge about the research setting and subjects and generating new theoretical insight or refinement of old ones. Building on Clyde Mitchell, Small argued that logical inference in qualitative, case-
based research determines causality of conditions based on an “explanatory schema.” Hypotheses based on logical inference read like this: “When X occurs, whether Y will follow depends on W’, which is logically justified given the processes observed” (Small 2009:23).

Logical inference, in other words, utilizes process tracing. It identifies causal-process observations to increase leverage and strengthen causal inference (Collier, Brady, and Seawright 2004; George and Bennett 2005). Process tracing combines within-case and between-case comparison and is particularly apt to identify intervening conditions between a posed relation between independent and dependent variables. It can, furthermore, deal with equifinality, that is, different possible paths that lead to an outcome. It does this by tracing and mapping these paths logically (by counterfactual reasoning) as well as empirically (George and Bennett 2005:207).

One basis for process tracing is exactly not to consider every observation as any other but acknowledges the likely possibility that some observations are especially revealing about certain processes of interest. As Brady and Collier put it, “the strength of causal-process observations lies not in breadth of coverage, but depth of insight. Even one causal-process observation may be valuable in making inferences” (2004:12). It gives causal privileges if there are logical reasons to do so. Process-produced data alone, on the other hand, for instance news coverage, cannot provide explanations on the same level of detail regarding how and why observed outcomes came about.

With regard to theory testing, causal-process observations can do three things: enlighten theoretical assumptions in terms of 1) posited but controversial causes for outcomes, 2) intervening processes in this causal relationship, 3) expanding it by other
outcomes which coincide with predicted outcomes if these are really affected by the causes, in other words: outcomes that serve as “markers” for the theoretically posited causes of predicted outcomes (Mahoney 2010:125–131).

Having said all of this, I do believe it can be useful to add components that follow a “logic of verification,” that quantify and generalize based on statistical inference but only if the other (main) qualitative features are analytically autonomous from them. In that sense, mixed methods are useful as long as one acknowledges that one research paradigm (positivism or interpretivism) enjoys epistemic privileges. While there is hardly quantification in this dissertation (except some simple frequency measures in chapter 7), I will argue in the conclusion that a thorough examination of US and German political public spheres requires a systematic comparison of news coverage emerging from the two research settings. This future research should involve a standardized content analysis of random samples of news stories as well as more unstructured analysis of news events.
Chapter 3: From Media Systems to Journalism Cultures:

Mapping the Terrain

The examination of journalism as a cultural practice in the following chapters—paying particular attention to boundary work and professional performance—needs to be placed in its broader institutional context. Material structural conditions of news making only tell part of the story of what guides or rather bounds journalistic work. Though systemic forces do impinge on journalists of this study, they do not just map on directly on their work. The journalists of this study not only have different personalities but were socialized in an occupational culture with a long tradition and occupational mythology that weighs on them.

The first section discusses important structural characteristics of the US and German media systems that set the broad framework of incentives and constraints for how journalism unfolds in the research settings. I will draw on secondary data and research literatures to map German and US media systems and journalism cultures. Current cross-national research in journalism studies, mostly based on surveys and content analyses, will provide some hints as to what kind of outcomes are expected in this study. I will argue, however, that they provide very thin mappings of something as complex as a professional culture.

The last two sections suggest a different approach to professional cultures of journalism by focusing on occupational consecration and mythologizing. According to Aldridge & Evetts (2003:562), “the very vigour of [journalism’s] occupational mythology” makes it worth studying from a professionalism perspective, despite of its indifference to professional structures and its cultural ambiguousness. I will draw on two
data sources to chart the occupational mythologies of US and German journalism. I look at moments of professional consecration since 1980 (considering that careers of the oldest journalists in this study go back about that far), namely obituaries of notable journalists during that period and statements of important journalism awards in Germany and the US. The final section draws from that part of the field research data where journalists engaged in occupational mythologizing and talked about their professional tradition and its most important constituents (positive and negative). The conclusion brings together features that pervade all of these data sources as well as some expected outcomes that can be deduced from all this with regards to the ethnographic case studies.

**Characteristics of Media System**

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), US and German news media belong to two distinct models of media systems: The liberal and the democratic-corporatist model respectively. Hallin and Mancini’s main criteria of comparison are: 1) the development of media markets and level of commercialization of news media, 2) political parallelism, which means how closely political agendas and news agendas are linked, 3) professionalism, which is defined by the independence, distinctive professional norms, and public service orientation of journalism, 4) state interventionism, which may take the form of state funding of media, legal norms that regulate media work and licensing mechanisms that regulate access to the profession.

Along those dimensions, Hallin and Mancini (2004:143–197) show that the Democratic Corporatist Model (which includes Germany, Scandinavian countries, Benelux, etc.) is defined, first of all, by a historical coexistence of commercial media and other media tied to political and social groups (parties, unions, interest and religious
groups). Although these ties have been established at the beginning of the 20th century and softened since, bargaining and power sharing between them was and still is important. Whereas these groups support different ideologies, there is a shared understanding about the rules of the game of consensus building and power sharing. In this system, news media serve to represent different views and interests and act as forums of discussions between these groups so that they can reach consensus. This is the condition of political parallelism Hallin and Mancini identify for these Western democracies. Parallel to that, there is a high degree of journalistic professionalism, which reflects in a consensus about institutional norms and a relatively high degree of autonomy relative to other institutions in these societies. Legally, there is a long tradition of press freedom but also of state interventionism in these European countries.

The liberal model (ibid.:198-248), including US and UK, is defined by the dominance of commercial media and market mechanisms, which Hallin and Mancini link to early industrialization in these countries as well as long traditions of free markets. Newspapers in liberal media systems, however, are typically beset by low circulation. Since these countries also have histories of small governments, state interventionism is less noteworthy accordingly. As opposed to strong ties between media and social groups of the democratic corporatist model, media in the liberal model reached substantial institutional autonomy from political parties and other social groups in the late 19th century.

In the initial phases of differentiation from the state, commercialization of media systems is associated with a rise of professionalization of journalism. Increasing commercialization, however, eventually leads to de-differentiation of media systems in
respect to the market economy, resulting in market concentration that counteracts professionalism (ibid.:287–294). Consequently, in the liberal model there are stronger tensions between professionalism and commercial pressures today—public service imperatives versus private ownership interests. Partly as a consequence of commercialism, liberal media systems are also marked by lower diversity of debate compared to other models. In the post-9/11 era in the US we have, furthermore, witnessed resurgent tensions between the autonomy of news media and a stronger “national security state” (ibid.:234). Even the New York Times, a post-war icon of American journalism that pushes back against the state, was perceived as complicit with the US government and as influencing public opinion in favor of the “war on terror” in this period, at least initially.

There are several important parallels between the two models, which are early expansion of commercial press and commercial broadcasting, highly professionalized journalistic fields, and a long traditions of fact-centered reporting in journalism. At the same time, there are significant contrasts regarding political parallelism, state interventionism and long-established ties between media and political groups (the party press), in Germany.

Hallin and Mancini’s (2004:251–295) larger historical argument, building on Jeffrey Alexander’s earlier work (1988) and conforming to other differentiation theories of mass media (Bourdieu 1998; Luhmann 2000), is that over time media systems become more similar to each other as they differentiate from other institutions in society (church, politics, market, etc.) and develop their own institutional logic. Hallin and Mancini argue that the liberal model of the US is dominant and other models have converged towards it,
partly because differentiation processes started earlier than in continental Europe. They locate the causes for this convergence on the exogenous level, i.e. the development of a “global culture of journalism” that is dominated by the US and common technological transformations, as well as the endogenous level, i.e. commercialization of media, modernization and secularization in Western democracies.10

In an historically comparative cross-national study of France and US news media (1960s-1990s), Benson and Hallin (2007) show this convergence empirically over time. Their results also show that significant national differences persist, suggesting that national comparison of news is still a useful undertaking in this day and age.

Circulation and Commercialization

In 2009 the number of daily newspapers in Germany was 357, in the US 1397 (WAN 2010). Relative to the population in each country, one newspaper serves about 220,000 people in the US and 230,000 people in Germany. Standardizing newspaper circulation relative to population shows that in the US it is consistently 3/5 of Germany, which has to do with the stronger German newspaper readership base (discussed below). While Figure 1 indicates a steeper decline in the U.S. in absolute numbers, overall newspaper circulation has decreased by 17% in the U.S. as well as in Germany between 2000 and 2009. On the surface this might not sound as drastic. However, a drop of about 500000 of average daily circulation each year in Germany is, as one of my interviewees pointed out, as if each year one Süddeutsche Zeitung dies. Similarly, an annual decrease of two million sold copies per day in the U.S. equals the death of one Wall Street Journal per year.

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10 They define secularization as the disassociation of citizens from “religious and ideological faiths” (Hallin and Mancini 2004:263).
As a consequence of this circulation drop, one would assume that revenues have declined to the same extend. Instead, in combination with the economic crisis that hit the U.S. hard in 2008, advertising revenues have dropped dramatically (see Figure 2), by almost 50 percent between 2007 and 2009. In Germany (Figure 3) advertising revenues decreased between 2001 and 2003, remained steady between 2003 and 2007 (in the US the decline started as early as 2005), and then decreased again from 2008 to 2009 but not nearly as dramatic.

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Note: Data are taken from Newspaper Association of America (NAA) and Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger (BDZV). NAA reports circulation for 2011 also (slightly lower than 2009) but based on changed bylaws by the Audit Bureau of Circulations and it was therefore excluded.

Figure 2: USA: Daily Newspaper Revenues

Note: Data based on the 2010 “World Press Trends” (WAN 2010).

Figure 3: Germany: Daily Newspaper Revenues

Note: Data based on the 2010 “World Press Trends” (WAN 2010) and Bundesverband Deutscher Zeitungsverleger.  

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What also contributes to the harder impact of the economic crisis on the newspaper industry is that revenues overall depend more on advertisement than on sales in the US. Connected to that, in Germany there is a much stronger newspaper readership base. The reach of newspapers (daily exposure to the medium of the adult population) was 70% in Germany in 2009 and has remained steady over the 10 years before (78% in 1999) (WAN 2010). In the US, in comparison, only 43% of the adult population was daily exposed to a newspaper in 2007 (WAN 2010). Newspaper readership has not migrated to the internet to the same degree, furthermore. In 2008, 57% of the US adult population read online newspapers compare to only 21% in Germany (Picard 2010). Revenues generated by German newspapers are almost equally distributed on copy sales (49%) and advertisement (51%) in 2008. In the US, on the other hand, there is a much higher dependency on advertising revenues. The OECD reported a proportion of 87% generated through advertisement against 13% through copy sales in 2008, which is largely in line with the data reported in Figure 3. Of the 21 democratic countries reported, the data also suggests that the newspaper market in the US is most dependent on advertisement.

As discussed by Esser and Brüggemann (2010), one reason for more stable newspaper sales in Germany is a regionally and editorially divided newspaper market, which is associated to high reader loyalty. Regional newspapers are strong and many of them are owned by small, family-owned companies. A significant share of the effective circulation drop can be attributed to tabloid newspapers and Bild in particular, which lost

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2 million print readers between 1998 and 2012 (it used to be 4.5 million in 1998). Broadsheets remained relatively steady and some even expanded their reader base (like the weekly Die Zeit).

There are several implications of those quite distinct situations of the German and US newspaper industries that we could translated into certain research expectations (to avoid the loaded term “hypothesis”): at a more severe state of crisis, there is more uncertainty within US newspapers and their journalists and thus more willingness to experiment with new forms of journalistic engagements (and potential sources of revenue). Furthermore, competition between news organizations—competing for shares of a shrinking market—becomes less geographically segmented through news digitization.

The higher proportion of sales revenue also means that in Germany newspaper readers are more directly responsible for the wellbeing of the newspaper industry. The inversion of that argument would be that German newspaper journalists feel more directly obligated to their readers. We would therefore expect that newspaper journalism is more accountable and responsive to citizens’ concerns in Germany. US newspapers, in contrast, depend to a much higher degree on advertisement. They are thus not only discouraged from critical stances towards businesses but also from assuming partisan positions or at least positions that deviate to much from the middle (newspaper coverage following a commercial logic seeks to address as wide an audience as possible).

Certainly, US newspapers take positions and endorse candidates in the editorial pages. However, these are less aligned with parties or ideologies than with certain issues and individual candidates. Furthermore, even if newspapers have liberal or conservative
tendencies, they tend to counterbalance this by featuring columnists that hold opposing points of view (e.g. the Times’ David Brooks is a conservative, albeit a moderate one). This tendency towards the middle also resonates with the prevalence of a particular understanding of journalistic objectivity in the US, which consists of giving equal weight to both/all sides of the story amongst other things.

The proportion of advertising revenue can be used as an indicator for the degree of commercialization of newspapers and, in Bourdieu’s (2005) terms, the heteronomy of the journalistic field in respect to the economy. The relation between commercialization and news coverage is ambivalent: On the one hand, commercialization predicts depoliticization and a narrower, more homogenous debate (Baker 2002). On the other hand, it may afford more independence from the state and thus higher willingness to criticize it, though Benson (2010) has refuted this in a comparison of US and French journalistic fields. More audience-supported media (indicated by the percentage of revenues through sales) are furthermore associated with higher diversity of debate (Bagdikian 2000; Benson 2009). Though news coverage will not be systematically compared in this dissertation, reporting leading to news and views about it will be. Thus, I expect German journalists to (seek to) differ more from each other in terms of what and how they report compared to the US.

Concentration and Centralization

In terms of concentration of newspaper markets, two measures are important: 1) The proportion of circulation shared by top newspapers and 2) concentration of ownership.
1) The circulation concentration is higher in Germany than in the US. In 2009, the top three daily newspapers shared 22.5% of the total average sold circulation. This is mainly due to the dominance of Bild with an average weekday circulation of 3.18 million copies in that year. The top 8 newspapers share 30.8% of the total circulation (IVW 2009; WAN 2010). In the US in 2009, the top 3 paper share 10.5% of the total circulation and the top 8 16.4% of it. The biggest papers in the US do not have a dominance that is comparable to Bild, with the Wall Street Journal having a little over two million and USA Today a little under two million circulation. This suggests that the US is far less centralized in this sense. There is not one single newspaper and not one tabloid paper, like Bild, which is nearly as influential.

2) In terms of media ownership there are different measures available in Germany and the US. Since not all of German publishers are public companies, they do not have to report annual revenues in contrast to most US companies. Therefore, World Press Trends reports the total average sold circulation of each publisher (composed of the newspaper it owns) for Germany. In the US, newspaper publishing companies are ranked according to revenues generated. In Germany in 2008, the top ten newspaper publishing houses together share 94% of the overall circulation. The top publisher, Axel Springer AG, alone

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holds 32%, which is 4.25 million of 13 million total circulation.\textsuperscript{16} In the US in 2007, the top ten newspaper publishing companies hold 41% of overall revenue. The top newspaper publishing house, Gannett, only owns 8% ($4.6b) of the $55b overall.\textsuperscript{17}

Of course, these measures do not consider the overall power of these publishing companies. For instance, while the power of News Corp. in the US newspaper business might not look great on the surface, its overall influence, especially due to Fox News and numerous other news organizations around the world, is far greater than this ranking suggests. Furthermore, Germany’s population is a forth of the US (so is the number of its newspapers). However, we see a higher concentration of ownership and circulation of top newspapers. Scholars in the field of political economy of news (Bagdikian 2000; Herman and Chomsky 1994; Herman and McChesney 1997) believe that concentration of ownership lessens competition and narrows debate ideologically in media systems. Others have argued that technological convergence of media also leads to a convergence of formerly separate corporate and editorial divisions of news organizations (Klinenberg 2005). Many have challenged this assertion and argue that the political economy perspective overemphasizes the influence of business branches of news organizations on the news. Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that the state has a much greater influence on the diversity of debate than the economy. Similarly, field theorists have argued that the state is dominant in shaping the bearing of different forms of capital in journalism (Benson 2006; Couldry 2003).


Political Parallelism and State Interventionism

There are several factors that contribute to what Hallin and Mancini have termed “political parallelism” in Germany. Connected to a corporatist political system where political parties and interest groups shape ideological blocks throughout society, the party press had a much longer half-life in Germany. In denazification efforts after World War II, the allies (particularly Britain) supported and licensed newspapers that pursued explicit anti-Nazi agendas. Political parallelism is not only promoted by ties between media owners and political currents but also affiliations of journalists and divisions in readership and news content (Hallin and Mancini 2004:156–158). This still becomes apparent in a greater inclination towards opinion and advocacy of certain political ideas as well as a conflation of journalistic roles of reporter and commentator in Germany. Köcher (1986) called German journalists “missionaries” who are driven by promoting certain ideas and influencing opinion. Similarly, Patterson and Donsbach (1996) showed that German journalists are more likely to work for media outlets whose political position match their own and are more concerned with influencing politics by backing certain ideas and values than just providing information (as their American counterparts).

Granted, US newspapers do take political positions in the editorial pages but overall they are more centrist and thus more similar to each other (thus less “externally pluralist”) than German newspapers. In contrast to US newspapers, however, German newspaper do not openly endorse political candidates or parties. In this particular sense, the editorial policy of Unabhängigkeit (independence) of German newspapers is true. Although media scholars have identified de-ideologization, separation of news and
opinion and objectivity in Western European media systems, political parallelism persists (Hallin and Mancini 2004:183).

Therefore, I would expect German journalists to be less hesitant to express their political opinions and acknowledge how they shape their news decisions. They will probably write commentary next to more factual news, perceive the former as a privilege and will not have a problem with mixing both tasks.

In terms of state influence on the press, Germany combines elements of press freedom and regulation, particularly in terms of hate-speech restrictions and the provision of free television airtime for parties during election campaigns. Both of these things do not exist in the US, of course. Press freedom is demanded by both nations’ constitutions and it extends to other important legal protections of media organization, for instance shield laws (source confidentiality protection). However, the first amendment of the US constitution has more centrality and is treated “in a more absolutist way” (Hallin and Mancini 2004:229) than in European countries where legal protections of free speech and the press are balanced against other concerns (privacy, hate speech laws, political pluralism, public order, etc.).

While newspapers are private businesses in both countries and thus relatively autonomous from the state, there is much greater state influence on the public broadcasting system in Germany, where private broadcasting has been introduced relatively recently (1984). On an institutional level there is less state interventionism in the US media system. Formally, the state acts more as an enabler of the autonomy of news media than in Germany. While the German state is not exactly restrictive toward news media, weaker legal protection is a serious limitation of media autonomy. Granted,
formal state influence (or its absence) does not yet say anything about how much the state influences news coverage in informal ways and, conversely, how obedient news media are in regards to state interests. There has been criticism (Zelizer and Allan 2003) that US news media were traumatized by 9/11 and engaged in “patriotic journalism” in the wake of it—taking on a more state-supportive role—which was not enforced by new regulations but self-imposed, so to speak.

Professionalization

Both media systems are considered highly professionalized. According to survey studies, 69% of German journalists held college degrees in 2005\(^{18}\) (Weischenberg, Malik, and Scholl 2012) against 89% US journalists in 2002\(^{19}\) (Weaver et al. 2007). It should be mentioned in this context that university education in Germany is more specialized from the beginning and obtaining a degree—which before EU educational reforms was more than a BA and equal to or slightly less than an MA—required a final thesis. Especially in the older generation of journalists, there are many dropouts who have received a significant amount of higher education but never graduated. Nowadays, it is more uncommon to get a job without a degree in Germany. Furthermore, 14% of German journalists (in 2005) received education in non-academic journalism schools,\(^{20}\) another 14% studied journalism at university and 17% received degrees in communication science or media studies (Weischenberg et al. 2012). The most common journalistic education in Germany occurs in-house in two-year trainee programs most news

\(^{18}\) \(N = 1536.\)

\(^{19}\) \(N = 1149.\)

\(^{20}\) Some of the most prestigious journalism schools have non-degree options. For instance, the Deutsche Journalistenschule in Munich has a 16-month non-degree program as well as a two-years master (in cooperation with the University of Munich). The Berliner Journalisten-Schule has a 15-month non-degree program, the Henri-Nannen-Schule in Hamburg a 18-month non-degree program.
organization have. In Weischenberg et al. 62% of respondents reported to have received such education. In the US (in 2002), 36% of working journalists majored in journalism at college and 9% held graduate degrees in journalism (Weaver et al. 2007).

Another common indicator of professionalization is the degree of organization in associations and unions. This measure is problematic, however. First of all, it appears to measure different thing in different cultural contexts. In Germany as in other European countries, there are economic incentives to be a union member regarding collective bargaining agreements. Press IDs, which are also issued by associations, provide journalists not only with credentials but certain discounts. Both of these incentives do not exist in the US. Therefore, union and associational membership may have more professional underpinnings whereas in Germany they are diluted with other concerns (economic as well as professional politics). Many unions, furthermore, provide information about their overall membership but not regarding how many members work full-time as journalists. In an earlier version of the US survey, Weaver (1998) still reported membership in “journalist organizations” (which includes associations and unions) to 36%. One journalism union, Deutsche Journalistinnen- und Journalisten-Union (part of Verdi, which has recently especially expanded its membership through freelancers), reports 22,000 members, 2/3 of which are freelancers. Respective to 48,000 journalists overall in Germany, including freelancers, (Weischenberg et al. 2012) this would mean that at least 46% are union members. The other major union of the Deutscher Journalisten-Verband, which reports 38,000 members, which would mean that at least 80% of German journalists are union members. Irrespective of the actual
proportion of journalists who are organized in unions of associations, it is save to say that this proportion is higher than in the US.

Press councils, furthermore, do not exist in the US but they do in Germany. They are governed by the media field itself and thus perceived as a professional efficacy of overseeing journalistic work and offsetting commercial pressures (Hallin and Mancini 2004:163–164). There are numerous journalism awards in both countries, some of which are very prestigious within the profession. In Germany, however, there is no single award that stands out to the degree the Pulitzer Prize does in the US (more about awards below).

Overall, journalism appears to be less formally organized in the US than in Germany. However, this does not mean it is less professionalized but that professionalism is structured differently, that is, more decentralized, regulated between news organizations\textsuperscript{21} and more freely among peers (Hallin and Mancini 2004:223).

**Journalism Cultures**

In the context of the recent upsurge of comparative media systems research, the subject of journalistic cultures has primarily manifested itself in extensive survey studies around the globe. Patterson and Donsbach (1996) generated an early and often-cited study of journalists in the US, UK, Italy, Germany and Sweden, focusing on the relation between journalists dispositions and news decision making. Their findings suggest that ideological commitments affect news decisions of German journalists most and US journalists least. This effect appears to be strengthened by weaker editorial control and

\textsuperscript{21} Ombudsmen and the installment of a public editor at the *New York Times* after the Jayson Blair scandal would be examples of this.
thus more individual autonomy of reporters in Germany (Esser 1998). This autonomy together with political parallelism and stronger ideological positions of newspapers is explicable if we assume that there is some ideological elective affinity between reporters and news organizations and possibly “matching” in the hiring of journalists (Hallin and Mancini 2004:174–175).

David Weaver has brought together international surveys on journalistic professionalism for the first time in 1998 and recently expanded and updated this work, which now compares 30 nations around the globe (Weaver and Willnat 2012). The most striking difference between US and German professional roles concerns the significance journalists assign to being government watchdogs. Only 7% of German reporters deemed this to be “extremely important” to them against 71% in the US. Moreover, 39% of US journalists found it “extremely important” to provide the public access (to get their voices heard in public discourse) compared to 12% in Germany (Weaver and Willnat 2012:537).

The Worlds of Journalism Study confirms Weaver and Willnat’s conclusions in part (Hanitzsch 2011). Of the different professional milieus Hanitzsch distinguishes (they exist everywhere but vary in size), US and German journalists are most different on the dimension of “critical change agent.” This milieu emphasizes a certain kind of watchdog journalism that seeks to influence public opinion and political agendas, advocate for social change and mobilize the public to participation in civil society. Only 10% belong to this cluster in Germany whereas 21% do in the US. Put a different way,
there is a stronger faction of the journalistic field that pursue a stronger interventionist agenda in the US than in Germany. The biggest cluster, however, is constituted by “detached watchdogs” (69% German, 64% of US journalists) and speaks to broad similarities between both journalism cultures. They agree with the critical change agents in terms of what kind of journalism is most relevant to them (watchdog journalism) but disagree to what end. Rather than opinion leaders, agenda setters and change activists, they perceive themselves as detached information providers.

Stronger interventionist tendencies in US journalism compared to Germany are also confirmed in Esser’s (2008) comparison of TV election news reports. It applies a much weaker conception of interventionism, though, namely how autonomous journalists report campaigns, using their own terms and assessments and how much space they allow for politicians’ self-presentations. The Worlds of Journalism study (Hanitzsch et al. 2011) also found new evidence that the meaning of objectivity varies in different national contexts (cf. Donsbach and Klett 1993). While there is agreement on the importance of impartiality, neutrality and reliability of information, the degree to which subjectivity may enter the news varies. Surprisingly, US journalists tend to be more favorable towards analysis than German journalists and thus towards dissolving the separation between facts and opinion. According to a recent large-scale comparative content analysis of political news in print media (Esser and Umbricht 2013), there is a coexistence of objective and interpretative news forms in US newspapers. In Germany, there is a similar emphasis on factual news together with a higher prominence of opinionated commentary (than in the US).
Based on interviews with 112 journalists and spokespeople in Washington D.C. and Bonn, Pfetsch (2001, 2003)\textsuperscript{24} asserted that the “political communication culture” is more media-driven in the US and more politics-driven in Germany. This corresponds to a large-scale study of public discourse on abortion in the German and US (Ferree et al. 2002), which found US media to have more agency towards politics while German news media serve to a larger extent as vehicles of political discourse. While the authors found both public spheres to be dominated by official voices, there is more openness to civil society actors in the US. Corresponding to more media initiative and interventionism in US journalism, there is also appears to be more antagonism towards PR than in German journalism (Esser, Reinemann, and Fan 2001).

Two expectations can be deduced from this: US Political reporters are driven more by the desire to instigate change in government than to just witness, report and analyze what is going on. While in the US lines between news and opinion blur in terms of more gradations of how much subjectivity may enter different forms of news (on different platforms), in Germany they blur in the hybrid identity of reporter/columnists.

**Occupational Consecration and Mythologizing**

The remainder of this chapter takes a different vantage point of journalism cultures in Germany and the US. The focus is on how journalistic achievements are honored and how dead journalists are commemorated in German and US journalism, in jury statements of important journalism awards and obituaries of journalists in leading media outlets, respectively. I start from the assumption that by commemorating and

\textsuperscript{24} For a sample size of 112 interviews, the analysis is surprisingly thin, however—maybe a consequence of subjected the transcripts to a standardized content analysis and indicated by the fact that Pfetsch refers to her own study as “exploratory” (2001).
honoring others, journalists do not only worship these figures and accomplishments but also celebrate (the best of) their own profession. The final section deals with instances when my informants invoked actors, events and institutions of their profession in interviews as pure or impure representations of journalism. What happens in all of these settings—official ceremonies, the news and interviews—is professional mythologizing of different sorts: journalists, their organizations and stories are turned into professional myths. Following Schudson’s examination (and partial demystification) of Watergate, as long as myths are rooted in some empirical evidence,

that kernel of truth sustains the general myth and gives it, for all of its ‘inaccuracies,’ a kind of larger truth that is precisely what myths are for: not to tell us in empirical detail who we are but what we may have been once, what we might again become, what we would be like ‘if.’” (Schudson 1995:163)

I analyze obituaries and awards, which are staged by influential organizations in journalism that assign important voices in journalism with evaluating and celebrating professional excellence. Obituaries and awards are expected to be relatively uninhibited by critical discourse and thus evoke pure forms of professional consecration and mythologizing. I argue that obituaries and award statements therefore represent pivotal moments of ritual purification of journalism. By the same token, journalism scandals and generally prominent acts of occupational-ethical transgression are critical targets of pollution. Both trigger discourse in public venues (meta-journalistic news, trade publications, social media, etc.) as well as in conversations and involve maintenance and reassertion of professional boundaries. I will not examine scandals and public discussions about them in their own terms (though this would be a worthwhile undertaking in the future) but consider them as they appear in interviews, which involve both professional purification and pollution.

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Honoring Journalistic Excellency: Award Statements

In Germany, I chose the Theodor-Wolff-Preis (TWP), Henri Nannen Preis (HNP) and Hanns-Joachim-Friedrichs-Preis für Fernsehjournalismus (HJFP). The TWP has three categories, two of which are relevant in this context because of their news-relevance. One for local journalism, the other is simply called “Allgemeines” (general) and can be anything from investigative reports in sports journalism, to features about “broken existences” and reports about the Israel-Palestine conflict. There is a clear emphasis on feature writing in both categories, however. I considered HNP in the categories of investigative reporting, feature, documentation (which essentially means explanatory journalism), life work of a journalist and press freedom, which is usually awarded to a foreign journalistic entity. The genre lines are more distinct in the HNP than in TWP. The HJFP does not have categories in this sense, only a general award and a “Förderpreis” (sponsorship award) and sometimes a special award. The award criteria seem deliberately vague to allow for flexibility. The prize recognizes a certain attitude, which Hanns Joachim Friedrichs personified and which is ingrained in a quote attributed to him: “you recognize a good journalist if he does not give himself over to a cause, not even a good cause.”

In the US, I analyzed The Pulitzer Prize (PP) in beat reporting, breaking news reporting, explanatory journalism/reporting, feature writing, investigative reporting, local reporting, national reporting and public service. With the exception of breaking news,

25 There is another award for “Kommentar/Glosse/Essay” (commentary/squib/essay) that I did not consider in this context. It was merged in 2013 with “Allgemeines” to a category or “Reportage/Essay/Analyse” (feature/essay/analysis).
26 I did not consider essay and photo feature categories.
explanatory reporting and feature writing, all categories had a strong investigative emphasis. This is even truer for the George Polk Award (GPA), which does not have a separate category for but promotes investigative journalism in all categories. I considered the GPA for foreign reporting, economics reporting, business reporting, labor reporting, legal reporting, national reporting, internet reporting, magazine reporting, state reporting, education reporting and local reporting. The Peabody Award (PA) has institutional (for certain programs or stations) and individual (journalists) award categories. I chose those in the time frame between 1980 and 2013, which were awarded to news people and operations.

I read through all statements, searching for definitions and representations of good journalism and then read parts of the statements again (and again). Though these statements are acts of celebration and purification for the most part, there is some supplementary criticism involved—of course not addressed at the awardees. Furthermore, there were three controversies involving revocation or non-acceptance of awards in the time frame. The PP for feature writing, which was awarded to Janet Cooke (Washington Post) for a fabricated story, as it later turned out. The HNP jury withdrew the 2011 feature-writing prize a few days after they awarded it to René Pfister (Der Spiegel). The lede of the story, which suggested deriving from Pfister’s own perception, turned out to be imagined. Pfister described Bavarian Minister-President, Horst Seehofer, operating his model railway in the basement of his vacation home but was never there in person. In the third controversy, a team of reporters of Süddeutsche Zeitung did not accept the HNP for investigative reporting in 2012. It will be further discussed below.
Formally, award statements are one paragraph long, sometimes two or three paragraphs (e.g. lifetime achievement awards) with the exception of PP statements, which are particularly short. Usually they are one sentence long (up to 50 words, typically 30 words) and their structure is fairly standardized. Statements in the PP breaking news category first stress quickness, comprehensiveness as well as difficult circumstances under which stories were produced until describing their topical focus. The staff of The Times-Picayune, for instance, received the award in 2006, “for its courageous and aggressive coverage of Hurricane Katrina, overcoming desperate conditions facing the city and the newspaper.” To take an example that concerns my field research site, the New York Times staff, which includes the members of the Albany bureau at the time, received the breaking news award in 2009, “for its swift and sweeping coverage of a sex scandal that resulted in the resignation of Gov. Eliot Spitzer, breaking the story on its Web site and then developing it with authoritative, rapid-fire reports.”

In this context, it is worth mentioning that the internet was first acknowledged in the breaking news category (the only category where it is acknowledged in general) in 2007, social media for the first time in 2012 when the prize went to the staff of The Denver Post:

For its enterprising coverage of a deadly tornado, using social media as well as traditional reporting to provide real-time updates, help locate missing people and produce in-depth print accounts even after power disruption forced the paper to publish at another plant 50 miles away.

When online was part of the award rationale, it had to be combined with traditional means of reporting. Statements in all other analyzed categories usually begin with a description (mostly descriptors) of secondary qualities of the story, sometimes

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28 All quotes from Pulitzer Prize statements are taken from the Webpage of the Pulitzer Prizes, Past winners & finalists by category. Retrieved February 6, 2014 (http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat).
aesthetics (referring to the story as masterfully written, riveting, compelling, etc.) but more often inferring to the reportorial conduct that brought it about (e.g. based on rigorous, carefully sourced or dogged reporting) before addressing what the story revealed substantively. Statements of investigative stories tend to focus less on aesthetics. To give an example, Arthur Howe of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* received the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting in 1986 “for his enterprising and indefatigable reporting on massive deficiencies in IRS processing of tax returns-reporting that eventually inspired major changes in IRS procedures and prompted the agency to make a public apology to U.S. taxpayers.” The second half of the statement, which suggests the news story brought change and thus had an effect, is a common theme and deserves special attention.

**Revelations and their Effects**

In searching for themes what defines a certain journalistic effort as good journalism, two basic elements stood out: 1) the story reveals something we did not know before and 2) this revelation had effects beyond journalism and facilitated some form of social change. The first element, though different in quality, is a basic requirement in both contexts. US award statements differ, however, by putting a much stronger emphasis on effects, on certain tangible results of news stories or changes it brought about. This resonates with the similarly greater accentuation of investigative journalism, rooted in the muckraking tradition in US journalism and its associated key occupational myth (i.e. Watergate). This also reflects in a strong emphasis of investigative journalism in almost all Pulitzer Prize (PP) categories beyond the category named “investigative reporting” as well as the George Polk Award (GPA), which describes itself as placing “a premium on investigative and enterprise reporting.”
What is further remarkable is that the emphasis on effects seems to have increased for the PP, probably less rooted in stronger preferences of award juries than rhetoric accentuation. For instance, the PP juries based their judgment of excellence in the public service category (which is not investigative by definition) much less on effects before 2000 than afterwards. Between 2013 and 2000 there were ten and between 1980 and 1999 only 5 statements that pointed to concrete effects. Some of these 5 discerned rather vague effects (e.g. “helped hold its community together” (1998)) while those after 2000 tended to be more concrete (e.g. “resulting in arrests and reforms,” “leading to changes in policy and improved safety conditions,” etc.). Public service awards are at least partly event-driven, which was the case with Katrina and 9/11, where news were not outcomes of enterprise reporting. However, even in the context of disaster the PP foregrounded effects, although less tangible (e.g. creating solidarity in the community).

Hence, the strength of effect claims vary. Some statements attribute a very clear cause and effect relation to the prizewinning story. This was the case for William K. Marimow of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* who received the PP for investigative reporting in 1985, “for his revelation that city police dogs had attacked more than 350 people -- an expose that led to investigations of the K-9 unit and the removal of a dozen officers from it.” The 2009 GPA for state reporting went to Raquel Rutledge (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*). The statement of the award lists a sequence of effects her story had: “Her watchdog report, ‘Cashing in on Kids,’ led to a government shakeup, criminal probes, indictments and new laws aimed at keeping criminals out of the day care business.”

Some claims remain more vague but still underline the worth of a story by its effects. For

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example, the 2006 investigative reporting PP went to Susan Schmidt, James V. Grimaldi and R. Jeffrey Smith (*The Washington Post*) “for their indefatigable probe of Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff that exposed congressional corruption and produced reform efforts.” Other justifications detour to public outrage for making effect claims, for instance a story may have “aroused such widespread public indignation that Congress subsequently rejected proposals giving special tax breaks to many politically connected individuals and businesses,” as the 1989 National Reporting PP. The weakest effect claims would either stick to public indignation or an increase of public attention to a given problem because of a news story.

The preference of investigative reporting and effects in the US is even more striking considering German awards. While there are certainly PP and GPA statements that make do with what a story revealed rather than what it changed, Theodor-Wolff-Preis (TWP) and Henri-Nannen-Preis (HNP) limit themselves almost exclusively on revelation. This is certainly connected to a strong emphasis on feature writing but even when investigative journalistic efforts are honored, they are much more reserved about asserting effects, if they assert them at all.

The typical appraisal of journalistic excellence in investigation reads like this: “Their achievement was to discover and investigate step by step one of the greatest business scandals in the history of the federal republic.”\(^{30}\) The honored reporters of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* were further lauded for penetrating the complexity of the issue, “which is even hard to grasp for accountants” (ibid.), and against the odds of a defiant

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object of investigation—the multinational conglomerate Siemens. By far the strongest
effect claim I could find was in the statement of the 2013 HNP for investigative
reporting: “the local reporter caught the scent and forced authorities to reopen the
investigation.”

There is an element that accompanies honoring investigative revelations in
Germany, which is not nearly as pervasive in the US award statements. It is a narrative of
resistance and hardship, which journalists had to endure in order to produce a certain
investigative report. Besides penetrating complex subject matters (intellectual
hardship, as it were), honored journalists acted against opposition of advertisers, sources and
sometimes even their own occupation. To give a few examples: Two young journalists of
the Kölner Stadtanzeiger won the 2001 TWP for local journalism for a story after the
change of discount law, which involved them negotiating selling prices in several shops
in Cologne. The statement noted, “they demonstrated independence from advertisers of
their newspaper.” Eric Fiedler (NDR) received the HJFP in 2008 for his independence
and choice of stories: “notwithstanding difficulties and obstructions of his investigations,
if an issue moves him he does not give up, even when threatened.” A story that
appeared in the weekly magazine of Süddeutsche Zeitung about doping in soccer won the
TWP in the general category and mentioned, “a sports journalist who investigates doping

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Gruner + Jahr Unternehmenskommunikation, April 26. Retrieved February 7, 2014 (http://www.henri-
mit seinen Recherchen die Behörden dazu, die Ermittlungen wieder aufzunehmen.”
Deutscher Zeitungsverleger. Retrieved February 7, 2014 (http://www.bdsv.de/preisträger-
Unabhängigkeit auch gegenüber den Inserenten der Zeitung.”
Sache ihn bewegt, gibt er trotz aller Schwierigkeiten und Behinderungen seiner Recherchen, ja selbst bei
Drohungen nicht auf.”
networks is not even welcome among all colleagues, let alone athletes, operatives and soccer physicians.” In a story about another doping scandal involving the Deutsche Telekom road cycling team in the same year, the HNP committee honored the Spiegel reporters, “who have been pressured over and over again, who were subjected to massive economic pressure through imminent cancellations of advertisement, but who continued their investigation nonetheless.” In 2013 the HNP for press freedom, which usually goes to journalists in (semi-)authoritarian regimes, was awarded to a journalist of a local newspaper for reporting on a group of Nazis in his town and continued, despite severe attempts of intimidation.

In US statements, this narrative of resistance and hardship is surprisingly absent—surprising because of its performative import for further attesting tenacity and intrepidity, which enter PP as mere adjectives (partly for the lack of space). But even longer GPA statements do not provide much more than such adjectives for the most part. There was no mention of pressure by advertisers, nor that the investigation was disliked by sources or other, more source-complicit news operations. There are two cases between 1998 and 2012 where GPA statements mentioned that the news operation had to fight in court for documents to be released for the investigation, the implication being that the institution in question denied to disclose records. The 2008 GPA in local reporting, for

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instance, made note of this in the justification: “To break the case open, the reporters filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit that was heard by the Michigan Supreme Court.” The resistance consisted of insufficient transparency and concession to disclose. A more severe case of resistance concerned an investigation into the murder of civil rights activists in Mississippi in 1964, which won the 2005 GPA in justice reporting:

Despite receiving threats to his life, Mitchell relentlessly pursued leads, located new witnesses and unearthed previously unknown information that enabled the State to convict the man who was the mastermind behind the killings. More than four decades later, justice was finally served.

The 2007 GPA for local reporting was awarded posthumously to Chauncey W. Bailey, editor of the *Oakland Post*, who was murdered during an investigation of a local business that had been linked to serious crimes.

Beyond cases involving litigation and existential threats, resistance seems not worth mentioning in US award statements. One way to interpret this is that push back against journalistic investigations is more self-evident in US journalism. In Germany, more modest forms of opposition were frequently mentioned and perhaps this feature of investigative work has to be highlighted because it is less expected in German journalism.

As mentioned above, the 2012 HNP for investigative reporting was overshadowed by controversy at the award ceremony, which is noteworthy in this context: at the awards, Hans Leyendecker, flanked by his two colleagues of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, went on stage and refused to accept the prize in protest against having to share it with the tabloid *Bild*.

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He referred to a “cultural break” that happened by awarding Bild with this honor. This scandal caused discussions about the meaning of good (investigative) journalism right after the SZ reporters left the stage as well as in meta-journalistic news stories in the following days. Bild had been awarded the prize for uncovering and initiating a nepotism scandal involving former German president, Christian Wulff, which ultimately led to his resignation. The SZ team was awarded for an enterprise investigation that revealed a corruption, bribery and extortion scandal involving a Bavarian bank and Formula 1 and instigated criminal prosecutions.

The unusually detailed justification for the award already reflected a certain uneasiness with the decision and awareness of the proclaimed “cultural break,” which was preceded by a stalemate of the jury, as it later turned out: “For the evaluation of investigative work two criteria are important: the investigative achievement of the reporter and the social significance of the investigated revelation.” After describing the journalistic merit of each story, the statement continues, “on the one hand, the superlative of investigative achievement, on the other hand the superlative of social effect; both balanced each other out” (ibid.).

The status of Bild is so polluted among larger parts of the journalistic field that reporters even refuse to be mentioned in the same breath, let alone honored next to it. But

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there are two further important takeaway points of this scandal for the purpose here:
firstly, the different reasons for which the prize was awarded to Bild and SZ concerns the
very contrast discussed above, namely social effects of an investigation and investigative
achievement (the extent and difficulty of the revelation). The investigative achievement is
usually considered a necessary condition for a story to even be considered as an
investigation, while its effect is only a subsidiary but beneficial criterion of evaluation.
Bild was awarded the HNP for the social effect (i.e. the president resigned) rather than
the investigative achievement that led to this outcome. The SZ story combined both
criteria.

The subsequent debate also reflected this issue of contention. For instance, the
German journalist association “Netzwerk Recherche,” which is devoted to the
advancement of investigative journalism, published a press release in the wake of the
award ceremony. The statement, which appeared in several news stories, argued that, “the
jury of the HNP lacks understanding of journalistic criteria” and in the case of Bild
“confused a successful ‘scoop’ with the best investigative achievement.” 42 The release
also suggested that HNP should learn from the Pulitzer Prizes if it wants to be taken
serious in the future.

Secondly, it is unimaginable that 1) a US reporter would refuse to accept a
Pulitzer Prize, just for the sheer deprivation of prestige for her news organization. The
number of PP a newspaper in the US received in its history is used as evidence for its

42 Schröm, Oliver and Markus Grill. 2012. „Nach Nennen-Eklat: Zeit zum Umdenken.” Netzwerk
Recherche [press release], May 12. Retrieved February 9, 2014
(http://www.netzwerkrecherche.de/Presse/120512-Nach-Nennen-Eklat-Zeit-zum-Umdenken/).
Original: “Der Jury des Nannen-Preises fehlt offenbar zum wiederholten Mal ein klares Verständnis für die
journalistischen Kriterien. Im Fall der Auszeichnung der "Bild"-Zeitung verwechselt sie einen
erfolgreichen "Scoop" mit der besten investigativen Leistung.”
professional worth. Wikipedia presences of newspapers, which often list the number of PP at the very top of the page (in case that number is worth mentioning), are an indication of this. However, it is also inconceivable that 2) the *New York Times* would have to share a PP in investigative reporting with the *New York Post*. Journalism awards in Germany do not amount to the same professional prestige as in the US. This is because there is no award that enjoys such centrality in the journalistic field as the Pulitzer. Related to that, it also indicates a lower degree of autonomy of the journalistic field overall since prestige is less conditioned by field-internal reward structures as it is in the US. Granted, the HNP was only founded in 2005. However, the apparent uncertainty of the HNP award committee—voting three times with a draw before deciding to split the award—about the criteria of journalistic excellence is one indication of this lower autonomy. Another one is that some obituaries of awardees, which were selected for the analysis in the following section, did not even mention that they won these awards. In one case, instead of mentioning the TWP, the obituary noted that the deceased had been awarded a cross of merit, a state honor.⁴³

*Revelations and Empathy*

Feature writing and featuresque qualities in other types of news stories had much more prominence in German journalism awards, equivalent to the investigative emphasis in the US. Correspondingly, there is more diversity and a different weight on what kinds of journalistic revelations are worthy of praise in Germany. Rather than disclosure or uncovering corporate or government secrets, many news stories in categories, which are not explicitly about feature writing, are often awarded because they reveal hidden life

circumstances or helped better understand a larger context through looking closely at something small. Going through the list of awardees in the PP category of feature writing suggests that the same kinds of stories get awarded as in Germany—moving stories on individual fates that sometimes illuminate bigger problems. A TWP statement in the general category of 2011, clarifies some evaluation criteria that would largely hold for features in the US:

This piece has everything, which is generally considered as “award-worthy:” It is a deeply humane story about humanity, taken out of real life and investigated close at the narrative subject. The story is neatly crafted; it is touching but subtle in its choice of language and not at all corny. And it is exciting – from the first until the last line.  

Another virtue of good feature writing, which is often pointed out in German award statement, is that it deals with a supposed dull issue and turns it into an exciting story. Not all statements put it as bluntly as the HNP in 2005, which honored Stefan Willeke’s (Die Zeit) story by stating, “it enchants the sale of a shut down coking plant—a substance matter nobody is interested in—into a fascinating piece of journalistic literature.”

A remarkable difference between the US and Germany, however, is how statements deal with emotionality. While features in both contexts demand stories to be moving, German award committees prefer and honor a specific kind of narration of


emotionality. This is already apparent in the above-quoted TWP statement that refers to
the story as “not at all corny,” a phrase that occurs over and over again. Besides moving
stories, German juries demand reporters to show empathy for their subjects but to deliver
it in a distanced language. In a story about Alzheimer, which was awarded the HNP in
2009, the jury notes that, “the author has followed the story over one and a half years up
close and then did a brilliant job writing it very movingly but completely
unsentimentally, with great sensitivity and authenticity and high informational value.”
A TWP statement suggest that, “with linguistic accuracy that creates distance Ulrich
forcefully depicts suffering of people in short scenic highlights, which he sets against the
coldness of the judiciary. A moving journalistic work.”

This rhetoric—appreciating distance, delivery that is unagitated (“unaufgeregt”) and free of pathos, avoidance of jargon of concernment—occurs with varying degree but in almost all German statements that honor feature/sque stories but is completely absent in the US statements. Even in the short PP statements, distancing rhetoric would be possible by inserting qualifying adjectives, but they typically read like this PP in feature writing to Eli Sanders (The Stranger) in 2012: “For his haunting story of a woman who survived a brutal attack that took the life of her partner, using the woman’s brave
courtroom testimony and the details of the crime to construct a moving narrative.” US


award rationales appear less apologetic of honoring emotionality of stories and this is also true for other categories beyond feature writing. In Germany, on the other hand, the demand and stressing of restraint and dispassion is blatant and will be a recurring theme in the following, not only in obituaries but also in the field research data.

Meta-journalistic critique

Most commonly, critique is raised implicitly by contrasting the awarded journalistic achievement or person to categories of bad journalism, without concrete reference points. But there is also more explicit critique by addressing certain trends in journalism or certain positions of the journalistic field (e.g. tabloids) in award statements. This tends to occur more often in TV award statements, which read similarly in both countries. The individual PA of 1998, which was awarded to Christiane Amanpour, then at CNN, honored her in contrast to dominant trends in television at the time:

This past year has seen an abundance of criticism of television news, much of it deserved. By now, we’ve witnessed many of the excesses and heard most of the reasons: competition, fragmented audiences, the blurring line between entertainment and information, and on and on. Against this backdrop of hype, exaggeration, tabloidization and increasing irrelevancy, the international news reporting by Christiane Amanpour stands out.48

In contrast to these lamentable trends, Amanpour is defined by “fearlessness and tenacity” and, as opposed to the goring attention to “famous faces,” her style of reporting is described as keeping herself in the background and commitment to issue competence and subjects of news stories. The 2001 HJFP was devoted to honoring journalists of the “old-guard,” which represent the name-giver’s generation and who successfully, “set

standard of independence and quality from former days in television and salvaged them at a time when the obsession with youth and ratings-orientation increasingly define the medium.\(^{49}\) One of the awarded journalists, Günter Gaus, was a well-known portrayer and interviewer of important personalities of post-war Germany and later became a politician. His greatest accomplishment was depicted as, “having established a conversational culture in German television, which stands out from the general overflow of talk shows” (ibid.).\(^{50}\)

What I could not detect in the US statements at all is a critique against new media. German award statements provide this critique occasionally but often enough to be noticed, especially in comparison. The 2005 TWP in the general category was awarded to Lara Fritzsche for a story about anorexia, which was based on online discussions. While lauding the method and the story, the statement used it to contrast old and new media and emphasize the former’s persistent strengths:

Fritzsche writes about weblogs, in short: blogs. They represent their own, new and young communicative sphere, which the author skillfully reflects upon. Along the way, Fritzsche shows where the old is superior to the new medium: its intellectual distance, condensation and situating in a overstraining flood of information.\(^{51}\)

The 2013 HJFP was awarded to Marcel Mettelsiefen for his reporting from Syria.

It draws boundaries in respect to a trend that TV stations increasingly use amateur video

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\(^{50}\) Original: “Günter Gaus hat mit seinen Porträts … im deutschen Fernsehen eine Gesprächskultur etabliert, die aus der allgemeinen Talkshow-Überflutung herausragt.”

footage when there is a lack of professionally produced pictures: “The authentic pictures of Marcel Mettelsiefen and his levelheaded texts are an indispensable corrective to the numerous YouTube videos from obscure sources.” The few other times when online technologies came into view, they were foreign objects (literally and figuratively). The HNP, even though it refers to having received print and online articles from 2009 onwards and explicitly invites such submissions, has not explicitly honored any online journalistic effort with the exception of the *Times Picayune*. The New Orleans daily (at the time) newspaper received a special award in 2006 because how essential its “articles posted on the internet as a substitute” (HNP 2006) were for the dispelled and traumatized Louisiana community. The PP, on the other hand, while almost exclusively awarded to traditional newspapers, frequently honors combined journalistic efforts in print and online, not only in the breaking news category.

Another distinctive feature of German awards to local and regional newspapers is that juries, particularly of the TWP, frequently use statements as a call upon other newspapers in that category to provide space and resources for journalistic greatness they are honoring. An investigative story about foster parenthood by Jan Haarmeyer (*Hamburger Abendblatt*) was acknowledged in 2013. The statement mentioned, “the prize jury wished that more local journalists could invest so much time on an issue and

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receive so much space for it.”

Even the HNP, which does not have an award category that is explicitly devoted to local or regional journalism, mentioned in its award statement for investigative achievement, which went to Christine Kröger (Weser-Kurier) in 2011:

Her work … shows that not only big magazines can assume the investigative control function of the press. Christine Kröger proves with her dossiers in a remarkable fashion that with endurance, tenacity and bravery a regional newspaper can also fulfill this journalistic core task.

The fact that these critiques are raised in this context is an indicator that the news industry and journalistic profession pay attention to them. It is also common that journalists use the public forum of award speeches—providing media exposure and endowing the awardee with momentary professional sanctity—to raise general and sometimes targeted criticism.

**Celebrating Occupational History and its Witnesses: Obituaries**

This section considers obituaries for deceased journalists, which appear in national newspapers. The US papers usually have a separate section where these obituaries appear, unless the deceased is a former chief editor of the paper or a very famous journalist (e.g. Walter Cronkite), which would warrant A1 coverage. The typical location for these obituaries in German papers is the Feuilleton or culture section of newspapers. *Der Spiegel* has an obituary section (one-paragraph-length) were some of these articles appeared. More high-profile obituaries in *Spiegel* are placed in the culture section.

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or media section. When its founder, Rudolf Augstein, died, *Spiegel* devoted 168 pages of the magazine to numerous obituaries written by leading figures in media, politics and literature.

The structure of obituaries seems much more standardized in the US than in Germany. An obit in the US usually starts with a paragraph on the deceased’s major achievements, his or her impact and sometimes major awards. The following paragraphs focus on detailing journalistic achievements, which are usually accompanied by characterizations of journalistic ethics and values the person embodied and furthered. In this section there are also often stories about conflicts with state actors, ideally (US or foreign) heads of states, and historical events in which they were an important part of. Sometimes this section discusses an exceptionally important story the deceased became famous for. The following paragraphs sketch the biography, educational and professional career trajectory. This is frequently accompanied by anecdotes of contemporaries. Obits usually close with family members that survived the journalist.

On a semiotic level, obituaries have to establish the journalistic excellence of the deceased and there are several techniques to do this, some of which are similar in the US and Germany, some that are distinct. By ascertaining excellence, the dead journalist can serve as a representative of professional purity and become an object of occupational self-consecration.

*Honoring Craft and Abilities*

The most basic way to praise a dead journalist is to laud his or her craft. Many obituaries discuss what great writers and narrators reporters were and, especially with TV journalists, how simply they could explain complicated circumstances and how great
their delivery was. For example, *Die Welt* described Werner Graf Finck von Finckenstein as follows: “He was a gifted narrator: witty, with attention to detail but also a great sense for what is essential.” An obituary for the broadcast journalist Robert Trout said that he “was admired for the ease with which he ad libbed his way through some of the century’s most important breaking news reports.” The skills and abilities these texts emphasize vary with the specific line of journalistic work the dead engaged in. For instance, they praise feature writers’ capabilities of narration, investigative reporters’ simplicity of expression, etc. Different personalities seem make for good journalists, on the other hand, even in one line of work. Obituaries of broadcasters may honor the matter-of-fact-ness or emotionality of their delivery, for example.

Another component of celebrating a dead journalist is to establish her or his intellectual credibility. This occurs frequently by discussing the books the deceased has written and having others confirm how insightful and significant these books were. A distinctive German way to substantiate this claim is by referring to their (famous) university teachers or their academic accomplishments. Even this very short obituary (one paragraph) does not fail to mention that Andreas Razumovsky, “began to write for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on Theodor W. Adornos recommendation.” The obituary of Friedrich Karl Fromme in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* goes into lengths about his academic accomplishments: that Fromme had studied sociology and

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public law with Theodor Eschenburg, whose assistant he was; that he had written a “standard work” of constitutional law as his dissertation; finally, that he must have had “painful experiences” of not being able to continue his Habilitation, “which remains puzzling, considering his academic talent: books and countless articles in academic journals prove what he could have accomplished in that area.”

The highest distinction of intellectual credibility, it seems, is being regarded not only in the public sphere but the specific beat and field of expertise. This applies especially to Fromme:

Fromme has in fact invented news coverage on legal policy and judicial policy as a journalistic discipline, as one constitutional law professor, politically distanced from him, once mentioned admiringly … One constitutional judge had once conceded that, without Fromme’s representation and interpretation of supreme court decisions, the Federal Constitutional Court would not have gained the influence that it now has in public perception. (ibid.)

In this specific case, other news outlets counterbalanced this praise by noting about Fromme’s craft that, “he practiced the profession in a slightly professorial way, sophisticated, in complex convoluted sentences and with gigantic article lengths.”

A related example is the obituary of Gerhard Mauz in Der Spiegel mentioned that, “young folks became judges and lawyers because of reading, indeed devouring, Mauz. Others became journalists because they wanted to write like him.”

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Honoring Personal Qualities

While craft and intellect are rooted in skills and talent, the more elaborate and personal obituaries (usually written by close colleagues or friends) tried to portray the character of the journalist in ways that specified how only her personal characteristics made the kind of journalism she engaged in possible. Even though the depth of these obituaries was not more or less in either context, different character traits were celebrated and in a different tone. A former editor of Bette Orsini, who became well known for her investigations on Scientology, is quoted in her obituary as saying:

“She was one of the most tenacious — almost ferocious — reporters I have ever worked with during my career … Every cliché, including the one about the bulldog that gets a hold of an ankle and won’t let go, was true of her.”

In some cases evidence for aggressiveness is substantiated by anecdotes about how steadfastly the deceased resisted pressure from sources. Frequently, it already occurs in the lede, as in Daniel Schorr’s obituary in the Times: “Daniel Schorr, whose aggressive reporting over 70 years as a respected broadcast and print journalist brought him into conflict with censors, the Nixon administration and network superiors, died on Friday in Washington.” Tenacity, aggressiveness, relentlessness and fearlessness are character traits that are particularly emphasized in US obituaries. Another attribute, which occurred in US articles but not in German articles, is competitiveness. A former competitor from the Times commemorated Malcolm Bowne, AP journalist who reported about

Richter und Anwälte geworden, weil sie Mauz gelesen, ja verschlungen hatten. Andere wurden Journalisten, weil sie schreiben können wollten wie er.”


Vietnam war, as a, “‘fierce competitor’ but also a friend.” Discussing the career path of long-time ABC anchor and reporter, Edward Morgan, mentions, “he next worked for United Press International on the West Coast, in Hawaii and in Mexico, where he beat the competition in reporting the assassination of Leon Trotsky.” Chapter 5 will return to this difference and demonstrate that competition and competitiveness is perceived as a virtue in the US and has more negative connotations in German journalism.

German obituaries often described important journalists as quiet and reserved and emphasized they were never spiteful even though they were critical. Joachim Neander, a former political correspondent in Bonn — a “chronicler of the last years and days of the old federal republic [before the German reunification] — was described as, “never tempted towards chumminess or rowdiness; his style was always defined by generous, elegant distance.” The virtues of Martin Süskind as a chief editor, whose journalistic craft was celebrated and explained by bloodline (his brother was the author of the bestseller Perfume), were described as, “being brash and showing off was not Süskind’s style, he was more concerned with what was in the newspaper he was responsible of rather than himself being represented in it.” It hardly occurs, furthermore, that a renowned journalist in the US is celebrated by quoting a former head of the state’s remarks about him. Former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder described Hans Ulrich Kempski,

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former chief reporter of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, as a, “great journalist and a very amiable person.”\(^6^9\) This was, admittedly, not quoted from the obituary but the obsequies three weeks later. However, it is not at all uncommon that top politicians are quoted in obituaries of journalists, especially when they were political reporters.

The German obituaries also had a stronger inclination to get at the heart of the person through his or her failures (including ideological failures, from the standpoint of the obituary’s author). The lede of Herbert Riehl-Heyse’s obituary, a renowned journalist of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, written by the chief editor of *Die Zeit* could not be a better illustration of this:

Maybe the greatness of a person shows best when he shows weakness. Herbert Riehl-Heyse was often anxious, vain, coquettish. But he has always acknowledged this and expressed something, which most colleagues would only admit under torture: he became a journalist not least in order to “receive attention and to feel important.”\(^7^0\)

This last quote was taken from a lecture Riehl-Heyse gave at the award of the Theodor-Wolff-Preis in 1996. The obit, titled “lauding obstinacy,” continues in this fashion, obviously deeply respectful of the deceased who, “renewed feature writing in Germany,” and maintains that, “nobody is able to fill the gap that Herbert Riehl-Heyse left behind.” There are, however, indeed less flattering examples to be found. *Der Spiegel*, for instance, begins commemorating Diether Stolze as follows: “He was one of those journalists who felt naturally like belonging to the political guild.” The obit


continues to point out (happily, from a left-liberal perspective of *Spiegel*) his main defeat, which was that, “he had failed in his attempt to turn the liberal paper conservative” (ibid.).

The only US example where the negatives character traits were stressed in a similar way was in the obituary of former *Times* chief editor A. M. Rosenthal: “Brilliant, passionate, abrasive, a man of dark moods and mercurial temperament, he could coolly evaluate world developments one minute and humble a subordinate for an error in the next.” Besides praising his many journalistic accomplishments, above all the publication of the Pentagon Papers against massive pressure from the Nixon White House, the 4329-words *Times* A1 obit keeps coming back to Rosenthal’s temper, “stormy outbursts” and “fits of anger” (ibid.).

*Honoring Triumph on the Battlefield of History*

Besides personal attributes, there are three reoccurring themes addressing experiences journalists made as evidence for their professionalism. To put it a different way: In order to be considered a personification of good journalism, a journalist has to have made one or more of the following experiences and accomplishments: 1) having faced and resisted political pressure, 2) foreign (or even better: war) correspondence, ideally during a particularly significant period of time, 3) not only having witnessed but influenced history.

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1) Resistance against political pressure as a signifier of professional honor features prominently in obituaries, often mentioned in the lede and explained in more detail later on. Besides reporters themselves, it is an honor attributed also to publishers and network executives as enablers of journalistic autonomy. The *Washington Post* obituary of NBC president John Goodman, which already mentions in the title that he, “battled White House,” begins with following lede:

Julian Goodman, who, as president of NBC in the 1960s and 1970s, stoutly defended his network’s coverage of the Vietnam War against White House criticism, and who issued an abject apology after NBC cut away from a dramatic football game to show the TV movie ‘Heidi,’ died July 2 at his home in Juno Beach, Fla.”

It mentions appreciatively that he was on President Richard Nixon’s “political opponents” list and threatened with the revocation of broadcasting licenses if the NBC did not cover the administration more favorably. The article also mentions episodes when Goodman appealed to Congress for upholding freedom of the press. Nixon was depicted as the nemesis of journalism in these obituaries and several journalists were honored by having fallen from his graces. *Times* reporter and D.C. bureau chief, Tom Wicker, was a target of Nixon’s animosity who, “helped ignite opposition to the war in Vietnam and … called for the ouster of President Richard M. Nixon during the Watergate scandal.” The obit described Wicker, who later became a columnist for the *Times*, as a “liberal voice” who was critical of the Vietnam war and particularly Nixon. He referred to the Watergate scandal as “the beginnings of a police state” and was then admitted to “Nixon’s ‘enemies


list’” (ibid.). Although Watergate and news coverage on the Vietnam war involved attempts of restricting the freedom of the press by several presidential administrations, Nixon’s administration was depicted as the key enemy. Because US journalism prevailed (at last with his resignation), this whole era is narrated as a period of liberation from state interventionism.

Narratives of having faced and endured political pressure is present in German obituaries, if not nearly as strong and celebratory as in the US. What Nixon was for US journalism, former federal minister and Bavarian Minister-President, Franz Josef Strauß, was for German journalism and to a lesser degree former chancellor Helmut Kohl. Both are known for their difficult relations with the press. Strauß earned his fame in connection with the most extreme instance of state intervention in journalistic affairs in the German post-war era. After a critical article about the German armed forces by Der Spiegel, its author Conrad Ahlers as well as publisher and chief editor Rudolf Augstein were arrested on the order of then-defense minister Strauß. As Augstein’s obituary in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung mentions, “Augstein was arrested, together with leading members of the staff, on the grounds of treason and was imprisoned for 103 days. At the end of the scandal was the fall of the defense minister, Franz Josef Strauß.”75 This scandal, later known as the “Spiegel-Affäre,” cost Strauß his ministerial office and was seen as a defining moment for press freedom and investigative journalism in Germany.

Another obituary noted that some people criticized the deceased former chief editor of the public service station ZDF, Reinhard Appel, as too nice to his interviewees;

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however, “this did not keep CSU chief Franz Josef Strauß to ask for his head in 1979.”

When the well-known portrayer of politicians, Jürgen Leinemann of Der Spiegel, died, obituaries mentioned that not all politicians were flattered by his descriptions, particularly Strauß and Kohl. “Helmut Kohl struck his name off the list of accompanying journalists on trips abroad.” The obit also mentioned that Leinemann considered objectivity a “naïve or hypocritical fairy tale” (“naive oder heuchlerische Mär”).

2) Leinemann’s obituary was one of the many cases that highlighted journalists’ experiences as a foreign correspondent, in his case for Der Spiegel in Washington D.C. What the regular foreign correspondent represents in German obituaries, is the war correspondent in US obituaries, given numerous military involvements of the US in the post-war era. There were only two war correspondents in the German articles. What the Spiegel obituary on Walter Henkels fails to mention, however, it that he was a war correspondent as a member of the “Propagandakompanie” of the Waffen-SS. Heinz Schewe, foreign correspondent for Die Welt, was described as one of publisher Axel Springer’s favorites, though he deemed his reports from Moscow often as too Soviet-friendly and his coverage from Israel as too favorable to Palestinians. Springer liked him because he saw in Schewe “a brother in spirit: in believing in a future of a reformed

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Germany and in seeking reconciliation with the Jews.”\textsuperscript{79} The obit notes how devastated Schewe was when he first visited Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem, quoting him as remorsefully stating, “and I helped to make this mass murder happen as a soldier” \textsuperscript{80} When he became a war correspondent to cover the Six-Day War in Israel, the obit notes that he fell in love with the country and its people and that he learned the “national language as one of the first foreign correspondents” \textsuperscript{81}

US obituaries of former war correspondents are hardly stories of reconciliation. They are, in the first instance, stories of unconventionality, bravery and intrepidity that reveal failures and wrong-doings of the U.S. government in war efforts abroad. Even Walter Cronkite, who was known as the, “most trusted man in America,” and, “a nightly presence in American homes and always a reassuring one,” earned his spurs, “as a war correspondent, crash-landing a glider in Belgium, accompanying the first Allied troops into North Africa, reporting on the Normandy invasion and covering major battles, including the Battle of the Bulge, in 1944.”\textsuperscript{82} The obituary quotes from Cronkite’s memoir where he told the story when he was taken onboard of a B-17 for “bombing mission to Germany” and ended up operating a machine gun until he was “up to my hips in spent .50-caliber shells” \textsuperscript{82}

This is how another iconic figure of US-American post-war journalism, David Halberstam of the \textit{New York Times}, was eulogized by the \textit{Washington Post}, particularly concerning his war credibility: “He’d been hit by shrapnel in Africa. He’d waded through


\textsuperscript{80} Original: “Und ich habe als Soldat mitgeholfen, dass dieser Massenmord geschehen konnte.”

\textsuperscript{81} Original: “Als einer der ersten Auslandskorrespondenten lernte er die Landessprache.”

swamps on patrols in Vietnam. He’d written stories so inflammatory that John Kennedy suggested, futilely, that the publisher of the Times remove him from the war beat.”83 The obituary of Halberstam’s former paper is surprisingly short (1,177 words, about the same length as in the Post), possibly because of the fact that, “he left The Times, not exactly on mutually amicable terms.”84 The Times obituary added a (self-celebratory) detail to the story of pressure from the White House, namely that publisher Arthur Sulzberger responded to Kennedy’s “suggestion” to remove Halberstam from Vietnam, “that Mr. Halberstam would stay where he was. He even had the reporter cancel a scheduled vacation so that no one would get the wrong idea” (ibid.). Apart from its prosaic tone and absence of war bravery narrative (compared to the Post obituary), the article suggested that, although Halberstam worked on a whole range of issues, that he, “came into his own as a journalist” covering Vietnam and that, “his dispatches infuriated American military commanders and policy makers in Washington, but they accurately reflected the realities on the ground (ibid.). Clyde Haberman, author of the obit, then sought to clear up a misconception, namely that Halberstam acted out of anti-war beliefs, arguing that he was driven by purely professional motives (revealing the truth).

The AP obituary of Malcolm Browne establishes his war reporter credibility in the typically compressed news agency style, mentioning that, “Browne survived being shot down three times in combat aircraft, was expelled from half a dozen countries and

was put on a ‘death list’ in Saigon.”\(^{85}\) This obituary also foreshadows the next theme I am going to discuss: Browne witnessed and shot the famous picture of a Buddhist monk who burned himself in Saigon as a protest against the US-backed Diem regime on June 11, 1963. As the picture circulated on frontpages all over the world, it “sent shudders all the way to the White House, prompting President John F. Kennedy to order a re-evaluation of his administration’s Vietnam policy” (ibid.).

3) In the wake of reporting about this act of self-immolation, the role attributed to Browne went beyond a key witness of history toward an active agent of history. As several other iconic images of the Vietnam war, the picture was accredited with having changed the course of history. As Browne’s obituary in the *Washington Post* argued, his “photograph drew unprecedented attention to U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Within months, the administration of President John F. Kennedy abandoned support for the Diem regime.”\(^{86}\) Even Walter Cronkite, who is better known as a narrator of history, received the graces of having changed history in his earlier career in the *Times* obituary: “In 1977, his separate interviews with President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel were instrumental in Sadat’s visiting Jerusalem. The countries later signed a peace treaty.”\(^{87}\) While it does not directly attribute the peace treaty to Cronkite, it certainly imputes a causal connection.

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The German obituaries accredited change of history less dramatically and event-centered. German journalists rather affected history by changes of public discourse.

Friedrich Karl Fromme, who I already mentioned above, would be an example of this as his (strengthening the public influence of supreme court decisions). Rudolf Augstein is certainly also in this category. Even the ideologically contrary Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung acknowledged in an obituary that, “under his leadership Spiegel became the most important investigative paper after the war.” Another obituary quotes leading politicians in some length:

President Johannes Rau acknowledged the deceased as “perhaps greatest publicist of the federal republic”. Augstein’s life work had made him an important part of German history. … Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called Augstein a fervent defender of democracy and the rule of law. Without him, the policy of detente towards the East would not have been enforceable.

There is also a notable difference between German and US obits in terms of how history is witnessed (if not changed) by those journalists, which addresses an important distinction between the two journalistic and political cultures. US articles emphasize specific historic events while German articles emphasize historic processes. A list of the following kind would be highly unusual in German articles: “Mr. Newman helped cover numerous historic events, among them the shootings of Robert F. Kennedy, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., George Wallace and Ronald Reagan. He announced the death of

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President John F. Kennedy on NBC radio.”

Apart from the fact that assassinations were less common, there was certainly no lack of key events in post-war Germany. To take another example, the *Times* described Tom Pettit’s “most famous report” as having witnessed the killing of Lee Harvey Oswald as, “the only reporter providing live coverage.”

A German witness of history was rather described in the following way, here exemplified by the former chief editor of *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Hans Heigert, as eulogized in *Die Welt*: “His whole career is that of an almost classic German post-war publicist: a faithful but reform-minded and idealistic catholic, a liberal but social conservative as well as a consequent Nazi enemy and tolerant democrat.”

Rather than having witnessed certain events, the focus is often on issue debates and conflicts journalists engaged in. The kind of influence that is attributed to them in these debates is, again, discursive rather than concrete vis-à-vis political decision-making. Another good example of this is former publisher of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Joachim Fest. His biography of Adolf Hitler, although criticized on the left for being “too empathetic,” is denoted as a central work in the German culture of remembrance regarding the Holocaust. He is described as an important commentator of post-war Germany, above all in the *Historikerstreit*: “As a political feuilletonist and conservative intellectual he continuously took positions on contemporary history and was also engaged in the


‘Historikerstreit’ about the assessment of atrocities committed by the Nazis in the mid-1980s.⁹³ At the same time he was blamed for clearing Albert Speer’s reputation from complicity with the Nazis. An otherwise sympathetic obituary, by an author who knew and respected Fest personally, discussed this implication:

He provided midwife-services for Albert Speer’s memoirs whose line he certainly fell for—documents proved that Speer could not have been as clueless as he understood to make Fest believe. Fest corrected his mistake—too late. He was haunted for his life by the suspicion to have sympathized with Nazi bigwigs.⁹⁴

Honoring away Ideological Positions and Political Entanglements

The case of Fest is also revealing in regard to the final theme in the obituaries, which will be considered here. Obituaries describe ideological positions and political entanglements (i.e. friendship with politicians) of the deceased in complex terms while at the same time asserting that these commitments did not affect the journalist’s critical capacity. In the rare cases when US obituaries identified political positions (usually when the deceased journalist was a columnist), it was always defined very clearly. A.M. Rosenthal, for instance, was described as a conservative and “accused of steering the paper to the right,”⁹⁵ though not by the New York Times itself but the Los Angeles Times.

This ideological designation had to be distinguished from blind partisanship, however.

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For example, Tom Wicker was described as a “Southern liberal/civil libertarian” and his critical credibility (re)established by noting that, “Mr. Wicker had many detractors. He was attacked by conservatives and liberals.”

To take up the example of Fest again, though he was identified as a conservative, the obituaries complicated his position by pointing out the he rejected ideological convictions of any form and noted that he was friends with ultra-left Ulrike Meinhof, before her RAF involvement. The SZ obituary points out:

“Despite his affiliation with FAZ and his short-termed CDU seat in Berlin-Neukölln he did not allow himself to be co-opted by any political direction. Because of his critique against local politics in Hamburg he was expelled from CDU when he was still with NDR—and he did not really regret that: “The political involvement was a mistake. I didn’t belong there.”

The Spiegel eulogized its former chief editor, Erich Böhme, as a “homo politicus” with very clear positions (and position-taking), for instance regarding the German reunification. Ten days before the Berlin wall fell, the first sentence of his column read, “I do not want to be reunified” (ibid.). Augstein, who Böhme had a difficult relationship with, commentated one week later, “I want to be reunified or newly unified” (ibid.). Böhme’s political position was defined as follows:

Of course Böhme’s affection belonged to reform policy, as it was pursued by Brandt. But he reserved his political attitudes for election days; in conversation with Böhme or in his commentaries it was not discernible whether he sympathizes

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97 Original: “Trotz der Bindung zur FAZ und seiner kurzfristigen Mandatszeit für die CDU in Berlin-Neukölln ließ sich Fest noch in seiner Zeit beim NDR aus der CDU ausgeschlossen - was er aber nicht wirklich bedauerte: ‘Das politische Engagement war ein Irrweg, ich gehörte da nicht hin.’”


99 Original: “‘Ich möchte nicht wiedervereinigt werden.’”

100 Original: “‘Ich will wiedervereinigt oder neu vereinigt werden.’”
with one party. (ibid.)

Another obituary in the left-liberal Frankfurter Rundschau—tellingly not in Spiegel—made the relationship with Brandt more explicit: “He was personal friends with Willy Brandt, whom he frequently accompanied on walks. ‘Without taking it easy on him,’ as Böhme later said.”

It is quite remarkable how the sincerity that is expected from a journalistic portrayal in an obituary collides with the aspiration of professional consecration. Ideological positions and affiliations have to be accounted for, while professional credibility has to be reestablished. It is reestablished through separating beliefs and intellectual positions and abstracting personal friendships from professional obligations.

However, the degree of involvement with politics that became visible in German obituaries is absent from US cases. On a more speculative, counterfactual note, even if US journalists had these relationships with US presidents, which is doubtful, they would probably be omitted. Such entanglements would interfere too much with the purpose of the text, professional consecration, which insists on a certain degree of hostility between journalism and politics, much more than it does in Germany.

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101 Original: “Natürlich gilt Böhmes Zuneigung der Reformpolitik, wie Brandt sie betrieb. Aber er behält sich seine politische Einstellung für die Wahlsonntage vor; im Gespräch mit Böhme oder in seinen Kommentaren wird nicht erkennbar, ob er mit einer Partei sympathisiert.”

Occupational Mythologizing in Practice: The Significance of Collective Representations of (Un-)Professionalism

One reporter of the Albany press corps, Mike Gormley (of Newsday since late 2013, during my field research capitol editor for the AP) posted a status update on his Facebook profile in February of 2014, which commemorated a recently deceased colleague of his who, like Gormley, used to work on the investigate team of the Albany Times Union.\textsuperscript{103}

Harvy Lipman who for years was an investigative reporter and editor at the Albany Times Union, died Friday, his daughter Melissa tells us. Harvy left the TU years ago for investigative jobs in Washington and in New Jersey. But he left his mark in Albany. Harvy set a tone with Editor Harry Rosenfeld and Managing Editor Dan Lynch about the value of investigative reporting. He would uncover organized crime one week, and patch together a touching story on the failings of welfare for children and single mothers a couple weeks later. The breadth of his ability was matched only by his compassion. He knew what he wrote could effect lives, and he took his job as seriously as a surgeon.

Harvy was also a mentor, probably without knowing it. He didn’t go around using the word "mentor" or make a show out of helping younger journalists. He led by example. He led by getting a story right no matter [how] long it took. For Harvy, the least important name in his stories was in his byline. He cared deeply about people and especially those who had no voice, except for Harvy’s. This business we love has suffered a deep loss. I’d like to say there will be another Harvy Lipman, but I seriously doubt that. (Michael Gormley, February 8, 2014)

Aside from the fact that Gormley seems to have been personally inspired (and probably mentored, in the sense he described) by Lipman, this semi-public obituary points to the relevance of honoring journalism and its members for other journalists. It also utilizes some of the themes that were discussed in the previous sections: empathy and public service, issue competence and intellectual curiosity, the importance of investigative journalism and selflessness.

\textsuperscript{103} I asked permission to use and attribute this semi-public status update to him.
Apart from such, admittedly rare, moments of commemorating inspiring contemporaries, collective representations of professionalism are always present when journalists talk about journalism (which they do constantly), even when exercising their regular duties as reporters. In interacting with sources and performing as professionals more generally, journalists draw from collective representations according to situative demands. A cultural theory of performance considers such choices as the scripts guiding performances (Alexander 2004). These enactments are necessarily simplifications of collective representations. To give a crude example from my interviews, a reporter may not recite the actual text of the first amendment of the US constitution when a Senator attempts to throw him out of a public meeting, but refer to it by saying, “sir, you’re not protected by the United States Constitution. I am” (Interview, 8 September 2010). As one of his competitor-colleague said (unprompted) in the interview I did with him, “we are literally mentioned in the constitution. There is no other institution outside of the government that’s mentioned in the constitution but the press. … I consider myself a stand-in for the guy in the street” (Interview, 21 January 2011).

Instead of drawing on immediate examples, journalists sometimes used collective representations to distinguish between good and bad journalism in the interviews. They referred to current affairs and events in occupational history (of course older journalists tended more toward the latter, though not exclusively). In addition, I asked them about their role models (individual as well as organizational) and significant events in the history of their occupation (positive and negative). This was to prompt them to engage in occupational mythologizing, also with the intention to analytically link field research and analysis of professional consecration discourses.
Unsurprisingly, state house reporters understand criteria of professionalism and unprofessionalism mainly with respect to source relations because it is in these day-to-day interactions that professionalism materializes most clearly. Consequently, they also assign meaning to those collective representations that concern press–politics relations. Thus, a common thread of myths and narratives they referred to is the ideal of watchdog journalism and pushing back against those in power in the pursuit of this ideal, whether embodied in heroic acts of journalists and publishers or long-term commitment of news organizations to certain kinds of stories that do justice to this ideal. Even more significantly for assigning meaning to what they do, it seems to me, are journalistic scandals and instances of professional shame that violated these ideals. They often look at representations of professional purity with a more detached, almost academic admiration compared to representations of impurity, which often involve emotional indignation.

**German Mythologizing: Reluctant Invokers but Firm Believers**

Starting with Landtagspresse (LP) reporters and before addressing actual occupational myths they invoked, it should be mentioned how unwillingly they discussed specific examples and how persistently they demystified what they were doing. One senior radio reporter said he thinks Germany is too small and to entangled in world affairs (particularly the EU) to have its own distinct occupational myths—comparable to the US—adding a modest self-description: “we are service providers” (Interview, 22 November 2011).104 Another German interviewee explains his hesitancy after unwillingly referring to the controversy around the revocation of the Henri-Nannen-Preis for reportage in 2011 (see above): “There are enough instances to talk about quality in

104 Original: “Wir sind Dienstleister.”
journalism, of course, but it is not true that good journalism only occurs in the form of trace elements” (Interview, 15 May 2012).\(^\text{105}\) He took issue with complexity reduction of talking about isolated cases and inherent disregard of the greatness of quotidian reporting, so to speak. Another LP reporter responded to my question about occupational tradition that this was not a concern for her, explaining it to a similar effect:

I did not choose this career because I thought that I would [become a journalist] as in the Nixon affair, as it were … this was not the trigger. I read a series in *Spiegel* on social policy … [in school] and I knew more afterwards than before. And that was my motivation. … To uncover such a scandal is very remarkable, of course … I would also do that but this is not the day-to-day business. (Interview, 25 January 2012)\(^\text{106}\)

Other reporters specifically referred to regular journalism as important mainstays of German journalistic professionalism:

What is utterly underestimated and what you often don’t notice are stories on a lower level. Especially local journalism and things like that. There, journalism in and of itself is almost more important than those big stories … There is so much that is uncovered by journalists, which remains hidden in the greater public sphere. (Interview, 6 December 2011)\(^\text{107}\)

Although these journalists are themselves in the business of personifying and using specific events as representations of larger issues, they resisted applying this principle when reflecting about their own professionalism. Their performance of professionalism involves unpretentiousness and composure, which easily distracts from the fact that is a performance. Most, but not all of them, could be eventually convinced to

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\(^{105}\) Original: “Es gibt genug Anlässe über Qualität im Journalismus zu reden, das sicher, aber es ist jetzt nicht so, dass man guten Journalismus nur mehr in Form von Spurenelementen finden würde.”


\(^{107}\) Original: “Was total unterschätzt wird, wovon man häufig nicht so viel mitbekommt, sind die ganzen Geschichten auf unterer Ebene. Gerade Lokaljournalismus und so was. Da ist der Journalismus an und für sich fast noch wichtiger als bei den grossen Sachen. … Da wird so viel von Journalisten aufgedeckt was der grossen Öffentlichkeit verborgen bleibt.”
talk about good or bad aspects of German journalism and its tradition. The media outlet most frequently mentioned, usually by referring to specific journalists or story but also by naming it the institution for investigative journalism in Germany, is *Der Spiegel*. As one TV journalists said, “of course you read *Spiegel* and *Spiegel* has good stories always, time and again, and you are inspired by that” (Interview, 30 May 2012). One reporter said: “I can neither personify this, nor – well, of course I’m proud of *Spiegel* (laughs)” before mentioning a recent, very well written commentary in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* by a competitor-colleague (Interview, 23 March 2012). One reporter, who values the heritage of *Spiegel*, said:

Much is owed to *Spiegel*, which unfortunately castrated itself at some point. Now, that’s the opportunity to get this off my chest because it always bothers me: … one occupational disease is vanity. *Der Spiegel* was much more investigative and was much more successful with such things, that’s my theory, … when all those articles did not include a byline. With the byline they pilloried themselves a little bit. At that point information channels became traceable. (Interview, 6 December 2011)

Reporters also mentioned *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Die Zeit* and specific journalists working for these outlets as positive exemplars of German journalism and inspirations. One figure mentioned several times is former ARD news anchor Hanns Joachim Friedrichs—the Walter Cronkite of post-war Germany. One LP reporter said he appreciated him for being “distanced, getting to the heart of issues,

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108 Original: “natürlich liest man den *Spiegel* und der *Spiegel* hat immer gute Geschichten, immer mal wieder, und wird auch inspiriert dadurch.”

109 Original: ich kann das weder personifizieren noch kann ich sagen - natürlich bin ich jetzt stolz auf den *Spiegel*.”

and also for being able to tell stories” (Interview, 24 January 2012).\textsuperscript{111} Others paraphrased an above-quoted sentence attributed to Friedrichs, “you recognize a good journalist if he does not give himself over to a cause, not even a good cause,” a sentence that became a dictum of journalistic objectivity in German journalism and occurs again and again in intraprofessional discourse. Interestingly, Friedrich’s himself learned this principle during his time at the BBC. In Friedrich’s autobiography, which appeared in 1994, one year before his death, he ascribes it to Charles Wheeler, who was head of news at BBC during the time Friedrichs was working there (1950 until 1955). Friedrichs wrote:

[Charles Wheelers’] maxims included the insight that a respectable journalist keeps ‘distance to the subject of observation’; that he does ‘not give himself over’ to a cause, ‘not even a good cause’; that he does not join in with the loud cheering or sink into public shock; and that he remains ‘cool,’ even when dealing with catastrophes but without appearing ‘cold.’ ‘Always involved – never belonging’, this journalistic motto describes the reporter Charles Wheeler best. (Friedrichs and Wieser 1994:70–71; my translation)\textsuperscript{112}

Other LP journalists referred to the German basic law (i.e. its constitution) as a source of meaning and representation of professionalism. One reporter said:

I think it’s good that press freedom is guaranteed in the basic law, that authorities have a duty of disclosure and that there are many colleagues who have an occupational ethos. I like that. But I like professionalism in any job. (Interview, 30 January 2012)\textsuperscript{113}

Other reporters referred to specific political events as either meaningful for their self-understanding as journalists or for entering their career. One senior reporter

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{111} Original: “Ich persönlich fand den Hans-Joachim Friedrich seine Persönlichkeit wo ich dachte der ist distanziert, der bringt’s auf den Punkt, der kann auch mir Geschichten erzählen – was ich auch wichtig finde – also mir als Nutzer das Gefühl geben, wenn ich das nicht weiss dann fehlt heute was.”


\end{flushleft}
responded to my question about significant events in the German occupational history, “what is still inconceivable for me, although we journalists only provided the background music, was the opening of the border to the GDR in 1989” (Interview, 22 November 2011). Although this journalist asserted that LP reporters don’t conceive of themselves as part of the state anymore these days (as they used to 30 years earlier), it is telling that he refers to a political event rather than a distinct journalistic achievement. Another reporter said the German reunification started his journalistic career, not in terms of instilling in him a professional but a political consciousness:

What politicized me and ultimately brought me on the journalistic track is the German reunification. During the events of 1989, 1990, I sat electrified in front of the television and watched and that was the time when I started to think and act politically and … as a consequence also working journalistically ultimately. That was a formative event for me. There was no role model for me in that sense and I’m not somebody who started out as a do-gooder either. (Interview, 30 May 2012)

Although this may also be true for some of them, none of the US reporters said they became journalists because of some sort of political or civic awakening. If they experienced such moments, it was usurped by a distinctly professional consciousness. Some senior US journalists I interviewed underlined that they watched the Watergate hearings on television, describing it as a formative event for them. However, even if the ultimate removal of Nixon from office was a political procedure, it was initiated and became specifically associated with journalism and ingrained at the center of the occupational mythology.

\[114 \text{ Original: “} \text{Also war für mich - aber da sind wir Journalisten ja..haben ja nur die Begleitmusik gemacht – was für mich bis heute fast unvorstellbar ist war 1989 die Öffnung der Grenzen zur DDR.”} \]

\[115 \text{ Original: “} \text{Also mich hat politisiert und dadurch auch letztlich auf die journalistische Spur gesetzt die deutsche Einheit. Also die Ereignisse 1989, 1990 waren so die wo ich auch elektrisiert vorm Fernseher saß und mir das angeschaut habe und das war eignentlich die Zeit wo ich auch anfing da politisch zu denken und zu handeln und … als Folge daraus dann auch mich journalistisch dann letztlich zu betätigen. Das war eigentlich das Ereignis, das mich geprägt hat. Es gab in dem Sinn kein Vorbild oder ich bin jetzt auch niemand, der als Weltverbesserer gestartet ist.”} \]
In terms of negative references and notions of pollution, journalists talked about current affairs, which were shaped by journalism in important ways. One was the resignation of defense minister Theodor zu Guttenberg in the wake of accusations and provision of evidence of plagiarism in his dissertation. This did not follow a journalistic investigation but was preceded, accompanied and followed by intense media attention. One LP reporter described “the rise and fall of zu Guttenberg” as an “inglorious chapter” of the German press and as a negative “textbook example:”

One could learn what happens when somebody unilaterally commits to one outlet only, the Bild Zeitung, what are its means to convey him, up to nearly undemocratic spheres, I found. I mean, it was almost messianic what they established. I found that horrible. A lot of the backlash was also extreme, of course. (Interview, 5 December 2011)

I talked about this issue during a time when rumors were circulating about a possible political comeback of zu Guttenberg. It was shortly after chief editor of Die Zeit, Giovanni di Lorenzo, co-published a book of extensive interviews with zu Guttenberg after his resignation. Extracts from the interview were preprinted in Die Zeit. One of my interviewees was irritated by this whole episode:

Reporter: Take di Lorenzo who still believed shortly before Guttenberg’s resignation that this is a great man and that this was all forgivable what he did and one should focus on the matter at hand and not his doctoral thesis. He still wrote that one week before. I mean he is just totally biased and the – I have not read the book and I will not read the book because I don’t want to give him a stage – but the excerpts I read confirm that. Di Lorenzo also tries to push him. I find it regrettable that Die Zeit lends itself for that, to be honest. I didn’t buy that issue. MR: I had to, as a subscriber.
Reporter: Well, as a journalist I should actually read it. It is rather unjournalistic of me not to do it but everything in me rebels against that. (Interview, 1 December

116 Original: “Man hat lernen können was abläuft wenn so jemand sich ganz einseitig an ein Medium bindet, an die Bild Zeitung, mit welchen Mitteln er da transportiert wird, bis hinein in fast schon undemokratisch wirkenden Sphären finde ich. Also das ist ja fast so dieses Heilsbringerhafte was da so etabliert wurde. Also das fand ich grausam. Viel von der Gegenreaktion war natürlich auch extrem.”
The other current affair, which was discussed frequently and ambivalently, was the resignation of German president Christian Wulff who was accused of corruption. This will be further discussed in chapter 4 as an exemplar of “Kampagnenjournalismus,” which is a distinctively German category and mostly associated with Bild. The ambivalence revolved around the subject of whether the end of Wulff’s resignation justified the means, which some journalists believed to be the case, while others where concerned exactly about those means and how that campaign was launched and promoted by Bild.

Foundational but Controversial Mythologizing in the US

In the Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA), journalistic events of the 1960s and 1970s were most central to their professional self-understanding. They refer back to instances where the press most famously pushed back against the state, the Vietnam era, for instance Seymour Hersh’s reporting or the New York Time’s release of the Pentagon Papers. It is in this period that journalists locate the most powerful mythical representations of professionalism. An older reporter mentioned an instance when one of his editors defended him against complaints by a former governor, which launched a rendition of heroic stories of publishers in that era:

[Former Governor, George Pataki,] really, really didn’t like my column. … So he

117 Original: “R: Wenn man di Lorenzo nimmt, der bis kurz vorm Rücktritt von Guttenberg noch der Meinung war das ist ein toller Mann und das ist alles verzeihlich was er gemacht hat und man soll sich auf die Sache konzentrieren und nicht auf die Doktorarbeit. Das hat er in der Woche vorher noch geschrieben. Aso er ist da einfach voll befangen und das - ich hab das Buch nicht gelesen, werde es auch nicht lesen, weil ich ihm da keine Bühne verschafften will - aber was ich so in Auszügen gesehen habe bestätigt das im Prinzip auch. Also der di Lorenzo versucht schon auch den zu pushen. Dass sich die Zeit dafür hergibt finde ich bedauerlich ehrlich gesagt. Die Ausgabe habe ich mir auch nicht gekauft.
I: Ich bin Abonnent, ich musste sie sozusagen kaufen.
R: Naja, als Journalist müsste ich es eigentlich lesen. Ist eher unjournalistisch, das nicht zu tun, aber da sträubt es sich in mir.”
called my editor and suggested that I started doing something else. And the editor, to his credit, said “no, we really think he’s doing a great job.” That’s when you see what the editor is made of. There is a famous story, in the early sixties … Kennedy invited [Arthur Ochs] Sulzberger and James Reston, who was then the bureau chief of the Times in Washington, to dinner. And at one point at the dinner Kennedy said to Sulzberger, “you know, I think, maybe Halberstam is too close to the story.” Remember: this publisher is young, probably in his thirties, and Kennedy is like Obama now—he was that popular, at the peak of his power and popularity—and, “what do you think about maybe moving that guy along.” Sulzberger said: “no, we think he’s doing a good job.” And also, when the Washington Post was doing Watergate and Nixon was screaming at Katherine Graham, the publisher, almost every day and she stood fast. Those are the hero stories and not everything has turned out that well. (Interview, 23 May 2009)

Watergate was, of course, frequently mentioned but just as often in a negative as in a positive sense. One reporter from the generation that was directly influenced by Watergate said that it changed political reporting:

I think probably the turning point in America was Watergate, for the reporter coming in saying, basically: “prove that you’re not a crook!” [laughs] It used to be there was a lot of stuff that wasn’t reported. I hear old stories about governors here in New York, and let alone presidents, with Roosevelt and all his girlfriends, and Kennedy. All those things were never reported. Today they would be reported. … there was a gentlemen’s agreement among reporters. They’ve had the same thing here in New York and all that’s changed. … I was young, I started college in ’77 and I was really into watching Watergate hearings when I was young. And I think there is an era of journalists who are a little older than me and maybe a little bit younger that got into it because of Watergate. (Interview, 17 May 2010)

Though he was by far the most disenchanted interviewee in terms of state government as well as reporting about it, he concedes that what drove him into his job and what still drives him is idealism. When I asked him what public responsibility means to him, he said: “Because I’ve become so cynical and jaded, it’s hard to believe this. But no, I take it very seriously.” What he and his competitor-colleagues do, he said, was vitally important for public deliberation in a democracy and there were no alternatives to it. He gave an example of the kinds of stories he focused on and said, “who else would be
doing that? How else does the public find that out? You’re not going to find a blogger to
do that unless you get a blogger who’s pro or anti” (Interview, 17 May 2010).

Younger reporters are, of course, aware of the significance of Watergate but were
not as strongly influenced by it. One of them, though acknowledging this significance,
seemed particularly set out to demystify Watergate in terms of the impact it had on him:

It’s ridiculous, Matthias, but I came into journalism because I was looking for
money. … I think most of my colleagues would have gotten into this business for
a higher purpose. I did not. I always thought I would be in politics. … So
Watergate to me means that journalists can and do make an enormous difference
but I’ve had instances in my own life, even though I’m young, where I have
tangibly seen the effects of my writing and it has made a difference. And so that’s
almost equally fulfilling to me but knowing that there are success stories out there
… knowing that we have the power of the press and the freedom to just criticize
the way we can is beautiful. (Interview, 18 May 2010)

Another reporter of around the same age, however, brings up Watergate in the
context of a different ideal and role model when he talked about resisting the force of the
pack:

Reporter: I grew up in a place you know working at a newspaper that loathed
pack journalism and would always try to step back and look at things from the
famous Jimmy Breslin Grave Digger perspective. Are you familiar with that
story?
Interviewer: No.
Reporter: Kennedy is assassinated in 1963. It’s the biggest story in the world.
He’s buried, has a big state funeral and Jimmy Breslin – I am forgetting where he
was working at the time, maybe it was the Herald Tribune – goes down to cover
the funeral. He ends up doing was just kind of wandering off to the grave side
where all the pack is you know focusing on the parade ride and he met the guy
who was digging the President’s grave and wrote this story like what is the
meaning of this guy, what it meant to him to be digging the grave of the President,
who he was you know, emotions that were bubbling up. And it became a symbol
for going where the other guy isn’t. I mean Watergate is the same thing. Nobody
was following Watergate. Two guys at the Washington Post did and they wrote
the biggest story. (Interview, 5 April 2010)

Other journalists looked at Watergate more critically because they believe it is
responsible for the journalistic obsession with political scandals and bringing down
elected officials. One mid-career journalist who worked as a spokesperson for a while before he “returned from the dark side” talked about how journalistic time constraints looked from the opposite point of view while noting that journalism got an overly bad reputation sometimes:

[It] can lead people with not the full picture. So it can be frustrating. I think, also, since Watergate, every reporter thinks that every story has got to slam somebody or expose something. There is certainly a need for that but we need more information for that. That was a plus and a minus for journalism I think. (Interview, 23 February 2012)

Another senior reporter talked about journalism scandals involving fabricated stories (see below), suggesting they all connected to those heroic events of the early 1970s: “this all followed from Watergate and everyone wanted to be Woodward and Bernstein, you know, anonymous source that bring down a president, you become rich and famous, everyone wants to be that” (Interview, 23 May 2009).

The younger journalist quoted above, who said Watergate was not important to him, talked in a follow-up interview about more tangible and contemporary inspiring figures for him as a journalist. He mentioned Juan Gonzalez from the New York Daily News, where he did an internship early in his career. He told me about a series of columns Gonzalez wrote in 2005 about air pollution at Ground Zero:

He was just writing with a baseball bat … it was just a classic example of what newspapers do best but which so many have forgotten, which is you take an issue and you just keep hitting it and hitting it and hitting it until you get change; an issue that is black and white. You know, “here is the story of little Timmy who’s got lung changer,” you just go, go and you write the shit out of it until something is done. And Congress has passed legislation for 9/11 first responders, etc. That type of thing I think would not have happened without such persistent attention paid by newspapers and Juan Gonzalez wrote a lot about that and was really one of the first who really kind of carried the torch on it. (Interview, 10 June 2011)
While this is a singular and idiosyncratic example, it refers to a greater theme that inspires journalists about their job, which is not only pushing back against pressure from the state (as above) but exerting pressure on the state by creating a public sphere around an issue that demands government action. Historically, besides the 1960s and 1970s, the post 9/11 era in US journalism was another central period of reference, though mostly in negative ways. Particularly the role of New York Times journalist Judith Miller and her reporting for creating a favorable atmosphere for going to war with Iraq in 2003 was a theme LCA journalist addressed. One reporter who used this example said:

It turned out that she had a romantic relationship with a source and ended up, partly as a result of that, printing hugely misleading information and presenting it in a way that ended up contributing to a country going to war. I mean, I’m not blaming her for the whole war but that is one of the most fundamental conflicts of interest that good old-fashioned, small-town, straight-ahead newspapers would not tolerate. … You don’t want people making deals with sources that end up compromising their honesty and you don’t want people having hidden agendas or hidden relationships. (Interview, 16 March 2011)

He also added that he thinks this was symptomatic for journalism in Washington DC. There are several layers of meaning within this example: 1) This instance was perceived as defaming for the New York Times as the paragon of good journalism in recent history. Many journalists relate to that, especially those from regional newspaper who secretly dream of the influence of their competitor-colleagues of the Times Albany bureau (see chapter 4). 2) In a similar vein, it is not a coincidence that a tabloid journalist used this example. 3) This critique also touches on another issue, namely that local and regional journalism really is the backbone of journalistic professionalism in the US rather than 4) the top levels of journalism at the center of power. The White House Press Corps, to take the most prominent example, is more subjected to criticism than honored as the best journalism the US has to offer.
After talking about the competition between the New York City tabloids in a positive way, another reporter’s statements reverberated this perception of local journalism. He worked for a regional newspaper, in a market in which it was by far the most important source of news:

I think that our paper back there took pains to be accurate, took pains to be fair, didn’t consider that, because we were the only voice in town, that we can say whatever we wanted. And I think there really is in a lot of places that sense of responsibility that real journalists and good journalists don’t abuse. (Interview, 23 February 2012)

Interestingly, however, though many examples reporters drew upon concerned national news and reporting on federal government, Washington reporters were not points of reference to the same extent that Berlin journalists were for LP reporters (see chapter 5).

Another issue for LCA reporters was the perceived recent buildup of journalism scandals involving fabricated stories, which represented abuse of public trust to them. The fabrication and plagiarism scandal involving former Times journalist Jayson Blair was most frequently mentioned. After an allegation of having plagiarized a news story in 2003, the Times started investigating Blair’s former stories and found several instances of plagiarism, questionable sourcing and false pretense of having reported on the ground. After concluding the internal inquiry, the Times reported on the case in a front-page story on May 11, 2003, titled “Times Reporter Who Resigned Leaves Long Trail of Deception.”

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Jayson Blair seems to have become such an epitome of bad journalism that his name is used in plural to signify a type of bad journalism. As one young reporter said, “you’ve got your Jayson Blairs out there who make stuff up. I think sometimes we were over-reliant on unnamed sources, which allows the press to be used by those in power rather than holding them accountable” (Interview, 24 February 2012). Another young reporter said that, despite those “bad apples,” he believes that traditional journalistic norms are still largely in place:

I think generally, journalism reporting in most broadcast, TV and [other] news operations still to this day operate in the Joseph Pulitzer model of journalism, seeking the truth and presenting the truth. I’m still proud of that, although it gets a bad name by your Jayson Blairs and your Fox Newses. But I still think that the core journalistic principles for 95% of the traditional outlets out there is intact. At least I hope it is. That’s what I tell myself. (Interview, 28 February 2012)

Cable news channels and Fox News in particular did not come up as frequently as I thought they would (only one other reporter mentioned it, in the same breath with MSNBC), given that Fox News is commonly perceived as the most extreme negation of nonpartisan journalism in the US. Whenever I brought up “the wall” or the nonpartisan press tradition in US journalism during my field research in Germany, LP reporters often did not accept that premise by referring to Fox News.

A frequent defense of conservatives against the press is the myth of liberal bias of mainstream media in the US. One senior reporter said they were confronted with that myth all the time, especially from readers but also politicians. He conceded there might be some truth to that for social issues but countered that if you cover the budget you “automatically” become fiscally conservative (Fieldnote, 6 May 2011). Another reporter said about this myth:

You hear a lot of that on talk radio, … Rush Limbaugh talks about that, … he talks about MSM, meaning the mainstream media, which he thinks is very liberal.
It sure depends on where you stand. I’m sure if someone is very far left thinks The New York Times is – I’ve heard people, friends I have would say, “oh, they’re just very very conservative.” I don’t know, I think they’re just – they’re doing the same thing as every other newspaper, they’re trying to pick stories that they’re think are important and run with them. (Interview, 16 April 2009)

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter circumscribed the frame conditions of political journalism in the US and Germany on different levels. Discussing some basis characteristics of and research evidence on media systems and journalism cultures raised the following expectations regarding field research in Germany and the US: US reporters pursue a more interventionist agenda (i.e. bringing about change in the beat they cover) than their German counterparts. While newspapers in both context separate opinion and news, German journalists have hybrid professional identities of reporters/columnists. In the US, lines between news and opinion increasingly blur in terms of a greater variety of subjective forms of news (in traditional as well as online news venues). German journalists are comfortable with their (traditionally established) hybridity; US reporters experience tensions with this newfound subjectivity.

Newspaper journalism in the US, furthermore, occurs in the context of a much more severe state of economic crisis and uncertainty in the 2010s. Competition between reporters is more intense and encompassing and occurring on a wider variety of venues, on which US reporter are more willing to try out new forms of journalistic engagements than German reporters, including participatory journalism. On the other hand, more audience support of German newspapers could lead to more accountability and responsiveness of journalists to the public. Because of stronger persistent ideological divisions in German journalism, reporters are expected to wish to differ more from their
competitors than in the US. Thus, the pack force of collective assessments of
newsworthiness and interpretations of issues is also expected to be weaker in Germany.

One important factor in this context is the stronger political parallelism,
corresponding to long-established ties between journalism and interest groups as well
multiparty-proportional representation in Germany. Accordingly, German newspaper are
much more vehicles of certain issues and viewpoints. This also shows in the much
weaker emphasis on interventionism in survey studies, on tangible effects of journalism
at awards and on journalists as change agents of history in Germany.

The interventionist emphasis in US journalism shows in award statements that
highlighted investigative journalism as worthy of professional honor and underlined
effects and social change instigated through it. German awards emphasize investigative
journalism less and for the most part limit themselves to its revelations rather than effects
in honoring them. US obituaries highlight aggressive qualities of journalists, the conflicts
they had with key state actors and how brave they conducted themselves as war
 correspondents. Opposition against the reporting that generated the awarded journalistic
achievement is only mentioned when they were severe, which speaks to how much these
conflicts are expected on the way to journalistic excellence (compared to German award
statements, where opposition and resistance by sources and advertisers are constantly
mentioned).

Eminent US journalists are honored as agents of history rather than mere
witnesses, as having had concrete effects on the course of history rather than just exerting
discursive influence. In line with this emphasis on concreteness, the kind of witnessing of
history they provided along the way is more event-driven than processual. In many of
these points, German obituaries are antitheses: aggressiveness and competitiveness are not part of the consecratory discourse, conflicts with politicians are described in much weaker terms. Their influence on history is discursive, contributing to historical reflexivity through engaging in and shaping important discussions. They have a role as witnesses of history, not of key events but important processes.

German journalism awards stand out in terms of how much feature writing and the kinds of revelations it can bring are honored in major awards. Though emotionality is demanded from these stories, it has to be delivered in a distanced fashion and not be too sentimental. While intellectual credibility is important for journalists in both countries, there is a stronger connection to academia in Germany. German journalists, furthermore, commemorate their own by ascribing more definite ideological positions and personal entanglements with politics. The absence of this last aspect in US obituaries may be because it actually does not occur as much and also because it would interfere much more with professional purification.

Regarding mythologizing by my interviewees, it was striking how performance of professionalism in Germany was defined by matter-of-fact-ness. Most German interviewees initially refused to even refer to mythical centers because they said this would undercut the true significance of journalism. German journalists, furthermore, link their occupational initiation to political events. Corresponding to how journalists are presented in obituaries regarding political entanglements, German reporters seem to perceive themselves much more as political players or at least civil society actors with stakes in politics than professionals. US journalists, on the other hand, referred to distinctly journalistic events or at least those that were symbolically coopted by their
occupational mythology. The 1960s and 1970s turned out to be an important era for them and they explicitly link their understanding (and experience) of autonomy maintenance to this period. However, even foundational myths (such as Watergate) are not exempt from ambivalence as some journalists associate them with bad journalism (i.e. obsession with scandal).

There was a recurrent theme in US journalists’ invocation of occupational myths that emphasized aggressiveness and pushing through against opposition from government. Current events, in which German journalism had such a role (or that could at least be coopted for these purposes), such as the Wulff or zu Guttenberg affairs, were controversially discussed by LP reporters. Journalism scandals in recent occupational history serve as symbols of bad journalism for US reporters. They perceive regional journalism as the backbone of journalistic professionalism and though this is also true for LP reporters, their claim was much weaker.

Media scholars (e.g. Blumler and Gurevitch 1995) have lamented a lack of comparative research on media systems at the end of the 20th century. Although these calls were successful in bringing a vibrant comparative research field at the nexus of political communication and journalism studies to life, there is still a deplorable lack of qualitative research in this area. The following chapters seek to make a small contribution to remedy that defect.
Chapter 4: Good and Bad Journalism

Public Turf Wars over Professionalism

On 13 April 2012, the *New York Post* announced that its state editor, Fred Dicker, has landed a book deal with HarperCollins to write Governor Andrew Cuomo’s biography.\(^{119}\) The *New York Times* bureau chief at the time, Danny Hakim, tweeted at 8:12 that morning: “Weeks after protestors called NYP’s Fred Dicker ‘mouthpiece for Gov 1%’ he signs deal to write #Cuomo’s authorized bio” before linking to the story. 95 minutes later, Fred Dicker countered: “Those snooty Times Boys still jealous over that front page NYT profile of me a year ago. Otherwise, why be so nasty?” Hakim’s colleague, Nick Confessore, retorted another 49 minutes afterwards: ”I think they should also publish Cuomo’s counter-memoir: ‘Sunday Nights With Fred: A Kind Of Love Story.’” Tom Kaplan, the third and youngest *Times* man at the Capitol (22 years old at the time), wrote about the book deal for the next day’s edition of the *Times*, to which Dicker linked on Twitter and commented, “a nice straight account. Hope Tom doesn’t get in trouble!” as a further blow against the rest of the *Times* bureau.

In his comment about the “snooty Times Boys” Dicker was referring to a story by former Albany correspondent and media reporter for the *Times*, Jeremy Peters, which appeared on the frontpage of the *Times* on April 22, 2011 and the night before online.\(^{120}\) To the surprise of Dicker, the story had not turned out as critical as he expected. On his

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weekday talk radio show, Dicker talked about the story, saying he was contacted by many people about it that morning:

The Times did a profile on the frontpage — of me, talking about my years here at the Capitol. It was written by Jeremy Peters and I think I and a lot of people expected it to be something of a hatchet job. It’s not that. I mean I do compete with the New York Times here and over the years I … had some friction at times. On balance, I think it’s a fair and accurate piece. … I heard from a regular listener of the show who pointed out some things I think are accurate in describing errors in the article—but none of them are huge. … It refers to my Monday weekly column in the Post as a weekly Op-ed and this writer notes “it’s mostly if not entirely news-driven,” and that’s absolutely true. There are mainly two types of columns that appear in newspapers. One type is opinion columns. I very rarely but on occasion do write those. They usually appear on the Op-ed page, opposite the editorial page, but my Monday column is a news-based column; it’s a breaking story column; it’s an insight Albany column … But it’s an interesting article. I’ve heard from a variety of people, people I haven’t heard for many years … [he lists some well-known New York State politicians] So I’m hearing from both sides of the political spectrum, maybe all sides, and hearing some nice things. So I appreciate it. As I said, I thought Jeremy Peters did a pretty good job and I appreciate that he didn’t go out of his way to do a hatched job on me. That certainly could have happened.  

The other reporters at the Capitol I talked to that day were similarly surprised about the positive depiction of Dicker. The surprise is understandable, considering how Dicker usually talks about his competitor-colleagues from the Times on air.

For those people who think … that the New York Times is really a paragon of all that’s good and true in journalism … something that I do not and haven’t for many many years believed to be true—check out a story that’s in the Times today … This is one of the most egregiously flawed stories I’ve ever seen. … it’s such a shame to see, I mean have a comprehensive, honest story—what the heck!

After the Twitter confrontation with the Times about his Cuomo biography book deal at the beginning of this chapter, Dicker, obviously furious, went on air and engaged in a long tirade about the Times bureau:

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I see there is some nasty blogging going on out there, it’s really a shame what happened, the decay of the press, the selfishness of many of these people. The New York Times boys. This one guy, Danny Hakim, he has been spoon fed by the Cuomo administration for months on the series he put together on isolated cases of patient abuse for mentally handicapped people. … probably is going to win some big prizes with it [it was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize], he has exclusive after exclusive handed to him by the Cuomo administration. Over the years, I’ve been hearing and seeing it for decades, few decades anyway, the New York Times boys, sometimes women too, they expect to be spoon-fed by the 2nd floor [the Governor’s office]… because they are the New York Times after all, right?

He then refers to Hakim’s tweet, defending himself against the (quoted) allegation of being a mouthpiece for the Governor. He continues his rant on Hakim, the Times and Twitter:

The low-class nature of some of the people in journalism today just takes my breath away. It’s all about them personality preening, their little tweets, their nastiness. In that same tweet, this guy from the Times says I’m writing an authorized biography. What evidence is there of that? The New York Times is supposed to have such high standards of reportorial judgment. … This is supposed to be a major, adult publication but too often or so often they are like little petty punks on the Twitter feed. But that’s the journalistic world we live in.

Another frequent aim of critique on Fred Dicker’s radio show is the Associated Press. One (broadsheet) reporter explained Dicker’s hostility against the AP by the fact that his column used to secure him a weekly wire story for many years. This stopped when Mike Gormley came to the Capitol to run the AP bureau as state editor. The reporter gave a few examples of the, in his view, insignificant stories the AP used to cover and said: “They don’t do that anymore. They let the blogs do it and I think that’s smart. I just think they’ve gotten smarter, not weaker” (Interview, 5 May 2011).

One episode—to be discussed in more detail at the beginning of chapter 5—shed a negative light on the press corps as a whole and the AP in particular, however. It involved rumors that first circulated among the press and were slowly legitimized for public discussions by allusions in social media coverage and ultimately an AP wire story.
Email correspondences between Governor Paterson’s office and members of the press were later disclosed, following a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by Columbia Journalism Review and Gawker. In one of these emails to Paterson’s communication director, AP Capitol editor, Mike Gormley, argued:

The world is also messed up because of the fear/benefit of the tabloids. Every political entity says they hate the [New York] Post, but everyone caters to them at one time or another. Until that ends, there will always be a streak of tabloid in all Albany coverage.123

Gormley blames tabloids for the ills of journalism and the Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) in particular because they create a climate of agitation and competitive anxiety amongst reporters. One tabloid reporter said about this particular incident, “I have been covering the Capitol for my 16th, 17th year and I’ve never seen anything like that, where rumors were getting into the paper. And I, working for a tab[loid], you know: the AP not the Post was the first one to put it on the wire” (Interview, 10 February 2011). He himself fought with his editors against publishing a follow-up story and succeeded until Paterson himself made a public statement about the allegations and thus legitimized the issues to be reported by everyone.

The emphasis this reporter gave to the fact that he works for a tabloid accrues from his perception that broadsheet reporters look down on tabloid journalism and that in this case he has resisted the temptations to jump on the sensational story immediately, as opposed to the AP and other broadsheets. His perception serves him right, as one broadsheet reporters confirms, whose contempt for tabloid journalism is particularly accentuated:

Laziness bothers me, you know, deliberate advocacy bothers me. Lack of context

and fairness bothers me. It mostly comes out of the tabloid culture. That’s my kind of reference point for what I don’t like. ... In the tabloid culture they just take sides: Teachers unions: bad! This Governor: bad! This Governor: good! And I’ve seen such grotesque examples of this, like, the [bad] guys are described in physical terms as fat and sweaty and nervous and ... the good guys are described as brave and stout. I mean that’s pathetic. And that’s the tab culture. You pick sides, the editors will tell them which side they’re on. And it’s Orwellian, to overuse a cliché: the actual facts literally do not matter at all. It’s just: that’s their side. It’s like reading propaganda. And that’s pathetic. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

Besides the broadsheet/tabloid conflict, there is another subsidiary line of division between journalists, particularly concerning newspaper reporting, which is commonly perceived as the most dignified form, versus TV reporting (radio would be in the same category). As one interviewee said: “In print, reporters generally are far superior to the TV reporters. And the radio people I would not even call them reporters. I think they just basically transcribe whatever said and they throw it up in the air” (Interview, 20 March 2010). In a portrait of Albany reporter, Elizabeth Benjamin, who was a blogging pioneer when she was still working for newspapers (Albany Times Union, New York Daily News), we read:

Has her newspaper past helped her adapt [to television]? I ask. “There are two kinds of people in political TV news: people who started there, and the people who are the print journalists. The print journalists are a thousand times better. They have the context, they can break the news, and they can do reporting.”

Another, more recent tension among the press concerns exactly the kind of journalism Benjamin mainly stands for (which is not TV): the always-on blogging and tweeting journalist, who distinguishes herself mainly through speed and volume of news output. Because all news organizations involved utilize these platforms, contentious discussions about them occur less in public fora. They do, however, backstage, which is

what the larger part of chapter 7 deals with. The overarching question this chapter raises in this context is why do journalists engage in those conflicts, which often seem rather petty? A field perspective would suggest that journalists not only compete for capital (attention, audiences, revenue, etc.) but also for redefining or sustaining (depending from which position we look at it) the fields’ reward systems. A cultural sociological perspective argues that these professionals, no matter what their position in the field, hold the same, deep-felt believes about what they do and consider it their moral duty to rectify transgression, to take deviants to task and to police boundaries.

**Boundaries of Professional Journalism**

Public disputes and private conversations about good journalism shed light on conflicts involved in the collective marking of boundaries of professionalism. The remainder of this chapter will engage in cross-national analysis of these boundary struggles. When I asked journalists to define bad journalism, they often identified journalistic virtues and responsibilities at the same time. Their conceptions of professional and unprofessional journalism often conflated reportorial conduct and the news it engenders. Thus, bad journalism will be discussed in both of these senses.

Journalists constantly discuss journalistic norms and ethics; they are continuously engaged in the “‘relational’ construction of journalistic identity” (Benson and Neveu 2005:12). These ongoing discussions and negotiation happen in person as well as in the news. The following chapters all deal on some level with this construction in different areas of journalistic practice. Chapter 7 deals with the impact of new media, particularly social media, on professionalism and contentions about it. Chapter 6 focuses on source relations, which is where boundaries are particularly prevalent and debated for embedded
The social dynamics of press corps and the multidimensional problem of pack journalism (chapter 5) similarly lend themselves for an examination of professionalism, since journalists have competitors they distinguish themselves from right in front of them on a daily basis. Given the (strict and less strict) competitive lines of division in place, the expectation is that these discussions occur more frequently and intensively in those two case studies.

As suggested before, I do not conceive these discussions merely as ways to assert status and reproduce the dominant “principles of vision and division,” in Bourdieu’s sense. I argue that reporters seek to maintain the purity of their profession when they draw boundaries. Journalism is not only their livelihood and a means to attain social status but involves important moral commitments. As a moral community, journalists consider themselves as indebted to the common good. Beliefs about the right means to serve that common good differ, however, and are subject of contention and negotiation, especially in the face of changing conditions of professional practice. Hence, journalists are not only engaged with protecting boundaries of the profession from external influence (mainly economic, political) but also with policing boundaries against internal deviation.

This study utilizes the magnified manifestation of intra-professional debates within political press corps for a more detailed analysis of journalistic culture in the US and Germany than cross-national surveys or content analyses provide. In interviews, I tapped these ongoing debates by asking journalists how they define bad journalism to probe them to draw boundaries. Because of the multitude of channels reporters fill with content in the LCA, intra-professional debates notably extend to the public as meta-journalistic discourse, especially compared to the Landtagspresse (LP). The introductory
section focused on clashes between distinct types of journalism. I will continue this discussion in a more systematic cross-national analysis in the following sections, which will be structured according to six recurring issues reporters drew professional boundaries around: 1) different missions and organizational identities in journalism 2) issues of craft (how journalistic products are constructed), 3) reportorial conduct (how reporters are supposed to gather the news), 4) autonomy (from sources and from each other), 5) transgression of competencies and ethics (journalism at the expense of others) and 6) public responsibility.

**Missions and Organizational Identity in Journalism**

As suggested in the beginning, the main lines of public conflicts revolve around tabloid versus broadsheet journalism in the US (the AP or *Bloomberg News* would also be in that category for the purpose here), old versus new forms of journalism (blogging, tweeting above all), and to a lesser degree broadcast versus print journalism. In Germany, these oppositions are generally weaker, especially within the press corps, and additionally include private versus public broadcast companies. In Bourdieu’s terms, these antithetical couples within each field can be treated as “classificatory schemes, which exist and signify only in their mutual relations, and serve as landmarks or beacons” (1993:95). If we’d compare most different cases of journalistic missions in these respects, we would expect to find extreme forms of evaluations, based on rarefied depictions of each other and mutual distinction. The data confirms part of this assertion in that journalists indeed draw boundaries in reference to counterparts. However, I will make the argument that they do this by employing a shared cultural code. In other words, though they refer to each other, boundaries tabloid reporters draw are not substantively different from
broadsheet reporters. Criticism tends to be stronger from extreme positions on the spectrum of occupational prestige.

Of course, tabloid journalists know their news product is perceived as inferior compared to their counterparts’, certainly from an academic perspective, which I represented in the interview situation. They believe, however, that what separates them is just nuance, that is, simpler language and less space. As one tabloid reporter said:

I would say 90% of what I write – because I’m writing politics or policy stuff – you can get in the New York Times. We might write it differently; it might not be as edgy word-wise but I think it’s all the same thing. (Interview, 10 February 2011)

I heard similar remarks in the LP, though in Germany the prevalent distinction between “Boulevard” and “Qualitätspresse” does not overtly refer to different formats but missions of journalism, including value judgments about them. One LP tabloid reporter said that differences between tabloids and broadsheets are shrinking:

Of course I need to entertain readers differently in a boulevard newspaper than in a daily newspaper like Süddeutsche Zeitung, although the Süddeutsche is boulevardized just the same by now and doesn’t cover different issues than I do. (Interview, 21 March 2012)

She said the differences were much greater 20 years ago when she started her current job. What she did back then was a whole different category of journalism compared to what her broadsheet competitor-colleagues did, she conceded. In our conversation she mentioned that there is an ongoing discussion about how much news and opinion need to be separated within her organization. She believes that as a correspondent for a boulevard newspaper she has to assume a clear position. Several

125 I will use “tabloid” and “boulevard” interchangeably in the following.
126 The customary academic term for this phenomenon is tabloidization (Esser 1999; Sparks and Tulloch 2000). I prefer to use the literal translation because of ist normative undercurrent.
127 Original: “Natürlich muss ich in der Boulevardzeitung die Leser anders unterhalten als wenn sich eine Tageszeitung, die Süddeutsche, lesen, obwohl die Süddeutsche mittlerweile genauso boulevardisiert ist und auch keine anderen Themen mehr macht als ich.”
broadsheet reporters in the LP defended or spoke favorably about boulevard journalism to some degree. A broadsheet reporter who used to work for a tabloid newspaper for a few years does not see as big differences between those purported missions of journalism:

There are differences but in many cases they are very small. In many cases you notice that you swim in the same soup. And in many cases it is, like, this sentence is shorter and there a bit longer and that it’s not that different. Put differently: the serious publications, quote, end quote, have converged in the last 20-30 years to a certain boulevardization of topics. (Interview, 5 December 2011)128

He then names an example of extensive coverage about one such topic, which he says was unthinkable in earlier days. He does concede, however, that he tends to be more forgiving of tabloid journalism, based on understanding different production conditions out of his own experience, than most of his colleagues in his current newspaper. He does admit, however, that he could work himself up about Bild all the time. Another reporter from a regional broadsheet said:

In the best-case scenario, boulevard means for me that issues are vaporized from a cup of coffee to espresso. And maybe also very comprehensible..I have no reservations there. (Interview, 25 January 2012)129

She then said, although Bild did many things wrong, their political coverage on page 2 had a great “public service quality” because of a high level of informational content within confined space. A broadsheet journalist in the LCA who was very explicitly rejecting tabloid journalism referred to aggressiveness as a sacred principle, conceding that tabloids succeed in this regard occasionally, and defined a good story as:

“something that somebody does not want me to know. That’s a good story. A good story

128 Original: “Es gibt schon Unterschiede, in vielen Fällen sind sie aber auch ganz klein. In vielen Fällen merkt man das ist wirklich so der selbe Saft, in dem man schwimmt. Und in vielen Fällen ist es einfach so, dass hier ist mal der Satz kürzer ist und dort ein bisschen länger, aber dass es gar nicht so unterschiedlich ist oder anders gesagt, dass sich die seriösen Medien, unter Anführungszeichen, in den letzten 20-30 Jahren auch sehr viel drauf zubewegt haben, auf eine gewissen Boulevardisierung der Themen.”
129 Original: “Im besten Fall heisst für mich Boulevard, dass einfach Dinge wie so eine Tasse Kaffee auf Espressoqualität eingedampft werden. Und vielleicht noch sehr verständlich..also ich hab da keine Vorbehalte.”
gives somebody a headache, gets somebody in trouble, gets somebody fired, fixes a problem, rights or wrong” (Interview, 21 January 2011). One young tabloid reporter goes further, arguing that tabloid stories are forced to focusing stories down to its “barest principles;” making stories “snappier and edgier, which in a political environment causes some tension. It also causes change. I feel like the tabloids have more impact” (Interview, 26 May 2011).

Apart from these (partly) positive depictions, the norm is that broadsheet reporters criticize tabloids, in the LP Bild and LCA the New York Post in particular. They are criticized for helping one side over another and offering dishonest coverage to their readership for the sake of a great story. One LCA reporter put it succinctly and got a little worked up when talking about the New York Post:

Every day they’ve got to have a picture of a woman wearing a bikini and nothing else, right? There we are! That’s the bottom line of what that paper is about! [laughs] So you think that kind of paper is going to spend a whole lot of time on the pros and cons of an issue? No! They’re going to look for something that’s gotta’ hook! (Interview, 21 April 2010)

Another LCA reporter emphasized how important integrity was for how he and his operation operate. In this context he drew boundaries towards others who do not regard this as important from his perspective: “There are some reporters, as I’m sure you know, that are sort of open for sale,” because they were primarily concerned with scooping the competition, which “goes counter to public service” (Interview, 13 September 2010). Of utmost importance to him was neutrality and that news decisions are guided by the desire of ascertaining the truth and criteria of public relevance rather than relational commitments; everything else represents bias and/or partisanship to him. This is typical for how broadsheet journalists draw boundaries against tabloids in the LCA.
The following debate plays on another familiar criticism, namely that tabloids are superficial and only concerned with scandal. In a tongue-in-cheek Twitter argument two State Capitol journalists, New York Times reporter, Nick Confessore, and Daily News columnist and editorial writer (the only one of his kind who is on-location), Bill Hammond, discuss New York Post’s frontpage of July 19, 2011:

nickconfessore: Today’s NYP wood: A story about a new traffic camera system for midtown. Hot!
NYDNHammond: @nickconfessore Aren’t you broadsheet types always mocking tabs for not being substantive enough?
nickconfessore: I’m actually more mocking them for not being scandal-focused enough. #notw RT @NYDNHammond
NYDNHammond: @nickconfessore Scandal? What scandal?130

Confessore criticized the Post for deliberately ignoring the story of the day (involving its parent company, News Corporation), which is the News of the World scandal in Britain. Hammond, ignoring this context he is certainly aware of, jokingly argued that, for once, a tabloid does not live up to expectations of screaming headlines, instead covers a boring (i.e. “substantive”) issue and is yet criticized for it.

In the LCA, furthermore, there is a specific theme that did not occur in the LP (certainly partly because tabloids are not as prevalent there), which is that poor journalistic standards of tabloids may “poison” the rest of the press corps and drag it down at times. This critique especially concerns anonymous sourcing practices of tabloids (an issue to be discussed in detail in chapter 6). Tabloid journalism in this sense is perceived as a polluting force that threatens good journalism:

Since I’ve been here at least two politicians have made extensive use to the New

York Post. They just try to stampede the rest of the press corps. You know, give them something for Monday that drives a couple of days of coverage. … The tabloids give them a vehicle because their sourcing, their standards are so much weaker. They can just use it, it’s like an injection to a blood stream. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

Another reporter makes similar remarks:

There are people who have tried to drive an agenda in their so-called objective news reports. You see anonymous sources quoted saying gratuitous things, and this happens on a weekly basis. Unfortunately, some people who read that material think that’s good journalism. And it affects everybody because everybody says – or a lot of average readers think that is the way we should be operating too. (Interview, 5 May 2011)

As mentioned above, broadsheet reporters in the LP are less direct in their critique against the tabloid press. However, in more general terms they have similar opinions about it as their LCA counterparts. For one of them, bad journalism is tendentious journalism as practiced by boulevard newspapers. She provides an example of a damaging story about a celebrity based on rumors that turns out to be false, which is then followed by the headline: “That’s how the star suffers from bad rumors” and added,

“which we have spread … That’s how you ruin somebody’s existence. That’s how you can spread things in the world, which are unfounded, and then straighten it out. The press law still allows that and I find that very bad. That happens on all levels, including political coverage. I don’t want to wash my hands of it like I have never done anything like that because what don’t you do for a good story. But that’s a mistake and I don’t do that anymore. It’s a disgrace for our craft. (Interview, 23 March 2012)

She continues talking about defamation coverage and says that if you took away the question mark from “a leading newspaper” (she was undoubtedly talking about Bild) you wouldn’t read half of the stories they publish. On the question on bad journalism, one

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131 Original: “‘So leidet der Star unter bösen Gerüchten’ (die wir aber selbst in die Welt gesetzt haben!) … So können Sie Existenzen vernichten, so können Sie Sachen in die Welt setzen, die durch nichts zu halten sind, und nachher wieder gerade bügeln. Also das lässt das Presserecht immer noch zu und das finde ich sehr übel, also sehr übel. Aber das gibt’s auf allen Ebenen, auch in der politischen Berichterstattung. Also da - ich will jetzt da nicht reinwaschen, dass ich sowas noch nie gemacht hätte, weil was macht man nicht alles für eine gute Geschichte - aber es ist ein Fehler, ich mache es heute nicht mehr und ja, es ist eigentlich ein Armutszeugnis für unsere Zunft.”
broadsheet reporter said, “what boulevard does when they go against individuals, those yellow press stories; I find that’s exceptionally bad journalism … there are a few papers in the yellow press that I regard as awful, I mean, subterraneously bad” (Interview, 1 December 2011). Broadsheet reporters define good journalism and their own beliefs in opposition to tabloid journalism. This opposition is important for them to assert their professional worth. Another source of professional worth are prestigious news outlets in their country, which are representations of professionalism to them, especially (but not exclusively) when they work for one of them. One LP reporter who works for such a newspaper said:

Well, you are aware in which establishment you work and that it has a national reputation, that it is important and that this is a reason to be proud of—this is a prerequisite. … there is a [newspaper] claim to be the newspaper of record. To be the one that kind of sets the direction a little bit and that others copy. To put it bluntly. (Interview, 5 December 2011)

One reporter who worked for another top newspaper said:

Of course there is … a tradition in our paper, to which you are committed to … [In] a newspaper like ours you have access. That is not me but that’s the paper. … If you are from a regional newspaper you can’t talk to the chairman of the FDP for an hour. He doesn’t have the time for that. With us he has to make that time. And I draw on that. (Interview, 17 April 2012)

I asked reporters about events, institutions or figures in US/German journalism that make them proud to be part of it (discussed as “occupational mythologizing in

132 Original: “Das was im Boulevard gemacht wird wenn es gegen einzelne Leute geht, diese ganze Yellow Press Geschichte, halte ich für ausgesprochen schlechten Journalismus. … es gibt so ein paar Blätter in der Yellow Press, die ich für grottig halte, also unterirdisch schlecht.”

133 Original: “Also man weiss natürlich in welchem Haus man arbeitet und dass das nationalen Ruf hat und dass das wichtig ist und dass das auch was ist auf was man stolz ist, das ist einmal die Grundvoraussetzung. … es gibt schon so einen [Zeitung] Anspruch das Leitmedium zu sein. Also praktisch der zu sein, der die Richtung so ein bisschen vorgibt und der von dem auch alle abschreiben. Das ist jetzt einmal überspitzt gesagt.”

practice” in chapter 3). Apart from the fact that the term “pride” already made many German reporters uncomfortable and compelled them to tone down their responses, several of them named *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel* as well as well-known journalists from these outlets as epitomes of the best journalism Germany has to offer. In comparison, LCA reporter tended less to name specific outlets than stories (e.g. the release of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 by the *Times*) regarding positive as well as negative exemplars of US journalism. The following quote is an exception to this rule and comes from a reporter who himself works for the prestigious newspaper he is talking about:

> You work for the [newspaper], you work for an institution that’s larger than yourself. Or it outlasts you and it precedes you. And you owe something to it beyond just work. Whenever I’ve done road reporting, some story from a far flown locale, it doesn’t matter where. Could be the most conservative town in Alabama. When you knock on their door, saying you are from the [newspaper], it means something. People trust it. They value it, even if they don’t really, you know, at the time are like: “I think the media is liberal and biased.” Even if they buy into that whole critique, there is a true institutional trust there. It means something and you have to live up to that and you have to always understand the power of that. In the other direction you have to also understand that because you’re writing for the most influential paper in the world that what you write does have consequences and it’s a privilege. You are capable of ruining somebody’s life or career. And that brings with it an obligation to be scrupulous and fair … It really is this sacred trust and everything else kind of filters through that for me. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

His bureau chief puts it more abstract and low-key: “I think the [newspaper] has a different mission than, you know, a lot of the other people here” (Interview, 7 December 2010). Another reporter of the bureau did not address the mission or sacrality of their organization but instead emphasizes the practical advantages he has from working for it, namely better access to politicians than most other news outlets (Interview, 4 May 2011).

Top news outlets are not free from criticism or envy of other competitor-colleagues, of course, not only tabloid journalists but especially from regional
broadsheets. One young LCA reporter for a regional newspaper talks about several stories that have been covered by his paper and that only became big stories once a top newspaper has covered it subsequently. His boss confirms this by saying, “sometimes being first doesn’t matter if you’re not the New York Times (laughs) or Fred Dicker” (Interview, 11 May 2011). I had asked the young reporter about a competitor-colleague—a well-regarded journalist—and how the rest of the press corps perceives him. He responded by saying that he thinks he is a nice person but that he is not seen as a “god amongst men” in the press corps. Rather, his newspaper makes a big difference and influences how he and his whole team are perceived:

It can be very frustrating to see [name of reporter] pull all together and then get an A1 coverage … and see mountains move… It sort of feeds on itself. I think that some reporters look at that and not so much [name of reporter] but that [newspaper]-quality with envy and with some negative feelings. (Interview, 10 June 2011)

In the LP, such sentiments are not unfamiliar but seem much weaker. One reporter of a regional newspaper, for instance, said about a top newspaper:

You can find in top newspapers, like the [newspaper], an utterly stupid commentary about state politics, which has been written by someone in the ivory tower, from the distance—he knows the wire stories but doesn’t know the people and writes whatever. (Interview, 7 November 2011)\(^{135}\)

This statement, though, is as much drawing boundaries against journalistic claims made from a spatial distance (outside of the bubble) as against a well-regarded newspaper, implying it is not different than the rest of us (and sometimes even worse). Furthermore, it appears that there is no single outlet in Germany that stands out and is as mythologized as much as the Times in the US.

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\(^{135}\) Original: “Sie können genau so gut in einem Topmedium wie der [Tageszeitung] einen völlig bescheuerten Kommentar über die Landespolitik lesen, den schreibt halt dann einer der dort im Elfenbeinturm sitzt, aus der Entfernung – der kennt das Agenturmaterial, der kenn die Leute hier nicht, schreibt irgendwas.”
Journalism as a Craft

Journalists drew boundaries around how journalism ought to and ought not to be practiced as a craft. The underlying criteria relate to writing and, generally, the preparation of content. Here, LCA and LP reporter are almost congruent. The choices of interview quotes below thus do not represent different emphases of each case but poignant depictions of underlying professional values that are very similar across press corps.

Truth is the most basic value that distinguished good from bad journalism, for whatever reasons journalistic truth claims may be untrue. The main reason journalists provide for untruth is disinformation because of insufficient or misguided research: “bad journalism is journalism without fact-checking or no research whatsoever” (Interview, 10 November 2011). News may also be untrue because of misguided or distorted depictions of the truth. The different motives or reasons for misguidedness or distortion are separate subjects of more intense boundary work, which will be bracketed for now.

The following statements do not make assumptions about motives but limit themselves to how news products are assembled. Like this LCA journalist who was generally very careful in drawing boundaries against bad forms of journalism:

So you get your facts straight, you take the bias out. Whatever your own bias is, make sure you guard against that getting into the story. And you go to the best, to the most perfect version of the truth you can find. And it’s actually fairly simple. (Interview, 13 September 2010)

One mid-career LP reporter sums this up this way: “bad journalism is biased journalism, superficial—where the result is determined beforehand—perceiving things

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136 Original: “Schlechter Journalismus ist Journalismus ohne Gegenrecherche, vielleicht überhaupt ohne Recherche.”
one-sided, blanking out facts if they don’t fit the picture” (Interview, 1 December 2011). He combined this notion of distortion with blurring of facts and fiction and not letting facts in the way of a good story (as the saying goes). Another LP journalist addresses the notion of narrative constraints in journalism:

What happens often, of course: You have a story in your head and then you spin research results so that it becomes true. That is certainly a worse way [to do journalism]. (Interview, 23 March 2012)

At a more mundane level but related to the issue of narrative and narrative constraints is journalism that is bad for violating aesthetic criteria, as one LCA reporter argues:

There is journalism that I consider bad, because it is shoddily put together. Like a piece of furniture that is badly constructed. And that might be a matter of reporting or it might be a matter of writing. And I guess there is journalism that I consider bad, because it is boring. (laughs) Because if a piece of journalism falls badly upon the ear or if the writing voice is so bland that it does not honor the language and it doesn’t honor the complexity of actually what’s happening, then why should I read it? (Interview, 11 May 2010)

A young LP reporter distinguished journalism that is bad for substantive reasons and for being badly crafted: “There is also badly made journalism, that is stylistically bad texts or badly presented stories, which nobody reads” (Interview, 13 June 2012).

Aesthetically inferior and boring journalism are often raised as bad journalisms but the dismissiveness is low-key and devoid of emotional energy compared to other forms that don’t honor the craft.

One outlier in the LCA raised an issue, which is a common critique by media critics but was never mentioned by anybody else: reporting poll results:

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137 Original: “Schlechter ist voreingenommener Journalismus, oberflächlicher, bei dem das Ergebnis schon vorher feststeht, der die Dinge einseitig wahrnimmt, Fakten ausblendet wenn sie nicht ins Bild passen.”

138 Original: “Was natürlich oft stattfindet: Man hat eine Geschichte im Kopf und dann dreht man sich die Rechercheergebnisse so hin, dass sie dann auch stimmt. Das ist sicher der schlechtere Weg.”

139 Original: “Es gibt auch schlecht gemachten Journalismus, das heisst sprachlich schechte Texte oder einfach schlecht präsentierte Geschichten die einfach niemand liest.”
People don’t really have an opinion on this but ‘oh, I heard that there was a poll, well then I must be right!’ There you go: self-reinforcing echo chamber. But, it’s not my problem. I mean, I only complain ‘cause I have when they make me write them up. It’s the lowest form of journalism, I mean lower than sports even, is reporting poll results. (Interview, 21 April 2010)

This deviation from the general view is mostly explicable by this reporter’s outlier position in the field. In this case, as in many other instances of “outlierdom,” it tells us something about social relations and commonly held beliefs within the group. None of the other LCA reporters ever talked critically about polls because they all constantly report them. It’s a taken-for granted assumption of newsworthiness, which this one reporter dared to question from his marginal position in the press corps. None of the LP reporters addressed this issue because polling is not as powerful of an industry in Germany and therefore not such an integral representation of public opinion as it is in the US.

**Reportorial Conduct**

There seem to be some universal virtues of newsgathering. Those are *diligence* (as opposed to lazy journalism), *toughness* and *aggressiveness* in the sense of persistence and pushing back against resistance as well as not pulling punches, *skepticism* as the virtue of not taking things (especially spin) at face value and *resisting the pack* and the force of the mainstream criteria of newsworthiness and interpretation of issues. This last aspect is certainly intensified in a close-knit press corps but regards all journalists to some extent. This is even (or especially!) true if they are physically removed from their “pack” and they do not have to face competitor-colleagues every day.

LCA reporters talk about lazy journalism: “bad journalism is when a reporter becomes lazy or tries to protect their own viewpoints” (Interview, 28 February 2012).
Similarly to his colleague quoted above, another reporter says “you kind of know [bad journalism] when you see it” and talked about a story he just read by one of his competitor-colleagues about a breakfast the Governor gave for lawmakers:

The story essentially painted the lawmakers in a mildly negative way, named three of them, quoted none of them, did not appear to seek comment from any of them. Instead the entire account was based on an anonymous source that was clearly a Cuomo administration official that was in the room. The entire slant of the story was, how they see the world. So there was no balance. It was just lazy; it was either biased or lazy. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

Other reporters mention making short-cuts or cutting corners as bad journalism, which means either not putting in the effort to do all the reporting that is required or, as alluded to in the quote above, purposefully not looking into contradicting information or statements from the opposite side.

Another virtue that has been discussed in both cases is toughness or even aggressiveness while reporting. One LCA reporter made a remark in the context of FOIA requests that are withheld or delayed, emphasizing that reporters and their organizations need to be persistent and enforce them in court if necessary. Another LCA reporter talked about weak journalism as not to “go to the place that was most uncomfortable for you. And when you go to write a story you hold back at the last minute, you hold your punches” and, concerning the latter, gives the Times’ series of stories on misconducts by David Paterson as an example where they did not push far enough to force the rest of the press corps to follow up on their stories, “they kind of blew it off” (Interview, 15 April 2010).

In the LP, this theme appeared in one interview with a wire reporter in the context of the press corps’ problem of exhibiting too much understanding for politicians and as a
consequence, “the inclination to hurt them decreases,” which may lead to “fabric softening” (“weichspülen”) (Interview, 24 November 2011). Another LP reporter talks about an instance where she was already “against the wall” when that people tried to muzzle her. Her guiding principle became not to be afraid (“hab keine Angst”) subsequently (Interview, 21 March 2012).

Another related virtue is skepticism because it also require to reporters to inhabit a removed posture to the subject matter. As one LP reporter emphasizes:

Skepticism and inquiring, inquiring continuously. If something seems strange: inquiring over and over again. Also asking stupid questions, banal questions. … don’t take it as given – “it’s just the way it is” … that’s not an answer. (Interview, 6 December 2011)

Another experienced LP reporter for a weekly media outlet expresses her journalistic credo in a similar fashion:

There is this famous sentence “nothing is as it seems,” which every journalist should stick to their mirror. … That’s the greatest journalistic virtue, to ask everybody involved. Ideally on paper, black and white; that would be most amazing. (Interview, 23 March 2012)

This skepticism, which pertains to all subject matter and pronouncements in general but political actors in particular, may also turn into being overly suspicious. One spokesperson for a former governor in the US case told me his “favorite conspiracy story,” which involved a situation where reporters suspected they were led around the nose and that his office was hiding something from them. Instead, he told me, that it was an instance of “pure incompetence” while acknowledging there were times when they

140 Original: “die Neigung dann abnimmt denen weh zu tun.”

141 Original: “Skepsis und nachfragen. Wenn einem etwas komisch vorkommt immer wieder nachfragen, immer wieder nachfragen. Auch einmal blöde Fragen zu stellen, banale Fragen zu stellen… Das nicht als gegeben hinnehmen – “das ist halt so” … das ist keine Antwort.”

142 Original: “Naja, es gibt ja den berühmten Satz „nichts ist wie es scheint,“ den sich jeder Journalist hinter den Spiegel klemmen sollte. … Das ist die grösste journalistische Tugend, also alle Beteiligten zu befragen. Möglichst Papier, schwarz auf weiss, das wäre natürlich das tollste.”
were in fact conspiring (Interview, 28 February 2012). Accordingly, one LCA reporter drew boundaries against accepting the constant attempts of sources trying to “spoon feed you” at face value, which would be the exact opposite of skepticism (Interview, 16 March 2011). One of his younger competitor-colleagues said:

I consider bad journalism that which accepts at face value, all that is in front of it, for example: if the governor would—sometimes politicians say one thing as cover for things when in reality there are deeper motives. I could consider bad journalism that which gives too much weight to that, to those—to the spin essentially. (Interview, 18 May 2010)

A final issue where German and US reporters agreed was particularly informed by the social formation, which they are a part of: the press corps and the stereotypical pack (or: Rudel) it represents. Journalists talked about the importance of resisting the gravitational pull towards the pack mainstream. Interestingly, however, in the context of bad journalism (usually before I probed explicitly for it) pack journalism was only raised by one interviewee in each case. Asking specifically about pack journalism usually prompted them to draw boundaries. The same thing probably would have happened had I talked to them about reporting polls.

One LP reporter said: “There are those media waves that evolve and to resist them and keep calm is often difficult” (Interview, 24 November 2011). One of his colleagues told me an example of a story, which the whole press corps focused on and that she found utterly insignificant because it was solely based on the appearance of a politician (i.e. the Governor not wearing a tie at a relatively formal occasion): “Then you think: ‘Am I doing something wrong? Do I run in the wrong direction? Am I out on a

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143 Original: “Es gibt ja so mediale Wogen oder Wellen, die entstehen, und da standzuhalten und ruhig Blut zu behalten ist oft schwierig.”
limb with this? ’ … Of course certain things [in the Landtagspresse] do go in one direction’ (Interview, 25 January 2012).

As the previous section already suggested, LCA reporter have very detailed opinions and view on pack journalism, including advantages or positive implications of the pack. As their Bavarian counterparts, however, they conceded negative aspects and drew boundaries accordingly. As one young TV reporter said:

Pack journalism could turn into a nasty thing, you know, where we’re all jumping and going in one direction because we saw two other people do that. That happens, too, which is not good journalism. It’s kind of laziness in a sense, because you’re just following everyone else around. (Interview, 22 April 2010)

Another young wire reporter said how impressed she was about one of her colleague’s endurance during the Carolyn Kennedy affair, when the force of the pack was particularly strong directly as well as indirectly through editors:

I was really impressed … a colleague of mine really fought day to day with editors saying ‘this is what the real story is’ … it’s nice when you see people do it differently. … If you see everybody going one direction and they being politicians or the people who are spinning stories in their direction that’s when they get something just their way. That’s when they can sneak something in. I’m being kind of—I sound kind of paranoid but, truly, I think it’s dangerous, the pack mentality. (Interview, 16 April 2009)

There appears to be a certain threshold, however, when deviating too much from the pack is considered problematic. This was apparent in a quote in section 5.2.1 where an LP reporter rejected truth claims made from the “ivory tower,” lacking insider knowledge members of the press corps have. One LCA reporter made a similar remark in respect to journalism that is bad for that reason:

There is a new reporter for a newspaper which I am not gonna name who has reported a few things that were kind of aloof from the pack, neither of which is

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proven true. And I was at a point where I look at them and I think “Ok, well, it’s his business, I don’t necessarily trust it because I know the track record.” (Interview, 18 May 2010)

Since other LCA reporter brought this up as well more or less explicitly I could figure out who he was referring to, namely a reporter who reports on Albany but is not physically there most of the time. This was not the only reason, however, why his reporting was considered inferior, as the reporter quoted above told me in a follow-up conversation as well as other of his competitor-colleagues. The bottom line concerning pack journalism is that reporters consider it necessary to be part of the pack to produce good journalism about their subject matter but that blindly following the pack without providing one’s own insights similarly leads to bad journalism.

Autonomy from Sources

Unsurprisingly, a majority of reporters in both contexts drew boundaries regarding insufficient autonomy from politics, defining their ideals in distinction from biased and partisan journalism, either connected to journalists’ personal, ideological convictions or partisan allegiances. “Unsurprisingly,” because it is plausible that in collectively constructing their identity reporters draw from experiences of their immediate environment, in which media-politics relations are a defining aspect. I will deal with the intricacies and performative dimensions of source relations in more detail in chapter 6. In the context here, I will talk about press-politics relations only insofar as reporters used them specifically to define good and bad journalism.

A bureau chief in the LCA said: “If you’re an ideologue and letting that slip in, I think that’s bad journalism” (Interview, 10 February 2011). Talking about a specific instance of bad journalism he read that day, another LCA reporter said the story was
“biased in a real way ... in the sense of deliberately doing what you can do to help or hurt an official” (Interview, 21 January 2011). One senior reporter for a regional paper explicated gradations of bad journalism, starting with being influenced by sources and ending with advocating their positions: “Obviously, the worst is taking sides; particularly, if you are on one side” (Interview, 17 May 2010).

Boundary work to that effect is not much different in the LP. One reporter, for instance, said: “Well, really bad journalism, I mean the worst possible, would be to combine personal interests with something you write about, if it is openly tendentious out of base motives” (Interview, 5 December 2011). One competitor-colleague of his said when asked about bad journalism:

We are journalists, not politicians. There are, of course, journalists who have a very strong sense of mission. I also have an opinion obviously but it should not touch on news coverage, with the exception of commentary, of course. But bad journalism is when certain things are blanked out, if it doesn’t fit to a certain style, which the article should get; that really is a deadly sin in journalism. (Interview, 17 April 2012)

Interviewees referred to journalists becoming political instruments as bad journalism. This occurs through unattributed assaults, “where people ... allow themselves to become weapons by using an anonymous quote that attacks one side or the other unfairly” (Interview, 16 March 2011). It also occurs through intentional misrepresentation and distortion: “I think bad journalism ... [is] carrying the water for somebody else ... purposefully avoid talking to people that are gonna give [you] the

145 Original: “Also richtig schlechter Journalismus wäre, also der schlechtestmögliche wäre, wenn jemand persönliche Interessen verquickt mit etwas worüber er schreibt, wenn er offen tendenziös ist aus niedrigeren Motiven.”
contrary point of view” (Interview, 8 September 2010). This bureau chief also explicitly rejected any form of give-and-take between journalist and source.

A common reference point in this regard is the *New York Post* and Fred Dicker. Though some of his qualities are perceived as professional virtues, particularly his aggressive style of questioning and institutional knowledge, his competitor-colleagues define him more as a political player than a journalist, referring to his inclination for one-sided and opinionated news stories, his endorsement of unattributed attacks and especially his close relationship with Governor Andrew Cuomo during the research period (see chapter 6 for a more extensive discussions). In the LP, on the contrary, anonymous sourcing was not a boundary issue. LP reporters commonly reject journalism that is appropriated by interests or which is permeable for strategic communication:

There are more and more lobbyists relative to journalists and they try to push through their topics and there are unpleasant examples of this again and again. And that’s for me simply deceiving people. That is for me really the incarnation of bad journalism, interest-led [journalism]. (Interview, 30 May 2012)

German reporters, moreover, had a distinctive category to circumscribe journalism that is an instrument for other interests, namely *advocacy journalism* (”Kampagnenjournalismus” - “campaign journalism” would be the literal but misleading translation because refers to political campaign reporting in the US). For the most part and as with instrumentalized journalism, it is not rooted in personal political convictions but strategic alliances with political actors for the purpose of harming or helping certain political interests in return for access.

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147 Original: “Also auf den einzelnen Journalisten kommen immer mehr Lobby-Leute als früher, die dann natürlich auch versuchen ihre Themen durchzudrücken und da gibt es einfach immer wieder unschöne Beispiele. Und das ist für mich einfach Menschen hinters Licht führen. Also das ist für mich eigentlich der Ausgeburts an schlechtem Jorunalismus, interessegeleitet.”
A TV LP reporter referred to a current example of such journalism, namely the story revealed by Bild about corruption allegations against German President, Christian Wulff, who ultimately resigned: “Bad journalism is journalism that only aims at destroying people … advocacy journalism. I would add what happens to the president right now to this category” (Interview, 24 January 2012).148

The fact that this category is missing, both linguistically and conceptually from the US data, I think is significant in itself. Aside from Fred Dicker who is implicitly accused of advocacy journalism, the fact that there is no category to denote this form of journalism is telling in itself. To pursue a campaign, which implies a certain level of systematicity and conspiracy, seems almost too far for US reporters to imagine. However, intraprofessional discourse about the relation between Dicker and Cuomo at times took shape as assuming ideological (Cuomo is liberal on social issues but conservative on fiscal issues) and strategic alliance between News Corporation and a possible future presidential candidate, Andrew Cuomo. However, in Germany and Continental Europe in general, let alone Southern Europe, advocacy journalism is certainly more common, which makes the necessity for a distinctive term evident. A shared organizational reference point for “Kampagnenjournalismus” was Bild Zeitung for many informants.

Some reporters, however, mentioned the Wulff affair in a positive light. One non-tabloid reporter, whose outlet was implicated in breaking stories about this issue, qualified negative remarks about the question mark (quoted above), arguing that if the question mark would not exist, the Wulff story would have never broken (which she deemed as important). A tabloid reporter even referred to the Wulff affair as a “prized

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148 Original: “Schlechter Journalismus ist Journalismus der eigentlich nur zum Ziel hat Leute zu vernichten. … Kampagnenjournalismus. Das was da gerade mit dem Bundespräsidenten passiert würde ich dazu zählen.”
possession” (“Glanzstück”) of German journalism when we discussed journalistic myths in terms of “what you can write about a president and not be intimidated” (Interview, 21 March 2012).

There is an interesting parallel between the German and the US data: it concerns the notion of stenography (a related idiom is “ripping press releases”) with the German equivalent of “Chronistenpflicht,” which translates literally as “chronicler duty.” Both expressions refer to a role understanding of the reporter as a recorder and reproducer of state government affairs. LCA and LP reporters perceive this as an outdated conception of journalism, as (too) credulous and insufficiently autonomous professional demeanor. One senior reporter who said he has seen so much bad journalism in the LCA in recent years said: “I’ve seen just bad reporting where people let their sources do too much of the work for them. So you become more of a stenographer than an actual reporter. There’s been a lot of that going on” (Interview, 17 May 2010). He explicitly referred to blogging and tweeting as stenography. Another LCA reporter, who is apparently not coincidentally good friends with this reporter, mentioned stenography in the context of pack journalism:

You’re not just trying to be a stenographer. A reporter is not a stenographer. We don’t just write down what people say. If we’re doing our job right, we’re trying to find out what the truth is. So even if you’re on that story with the pack, you can be covering it better than the pack. And that’s still going against the pack. (Interview, 13 September 2010)

There is a perception among LCA reporters, especially older reporters who hold more traditionalist values, that stenography (or whatever term they used to circumscribe it) had a comeback and is thriving under the current conditions of the news business. It is thriving on competition and, in connection to that, the prevalence of (micro-)blogging.

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149 Original: “was man über einen Bundespräsidenten so schreiben kann und sich nicht einschüchtert lässt.”
LP reporters specifically drew boundaries against this form of journalism as something that has (or is supposed to have become) obsolete. A senior radio reporter said:

We don’t understand ourselves as chroniclers today—to reproduce precisely what happened in what commission or plenary session—but we write stories. We try to get to the heart of an issue. What the one or the other said in the plenary session is rather secondary. We process issues and don’t record events at the Landtag anymore, as it still was the case 20-25-30 years ago. (Interview, 22 November 2011)\(^{150}\)

He explains this tendency by a reduction of news staff covering the state house and contraction of journalistic forms and space for political news. Another mid-career reporter confirms this:

We had a debate recently about whether journalists actually have chronicler duty; it means that there are events, which are relatively boring but which have to be covered. The vice-president of the Landtag had complained and argued that he had to appear in a news story about an event because he is vice-president of the Landtag. … I think this chronicler duty only exists on a very small scale anymore. (Interview, 10 November 2011)\(^{151}\)

However, another reporter who works for a weekly news outlet says that the internet changed all print media but daily newspapers less so because, despite topicality constraints, “they still have chronicler duty … and summarizes what happened on the previous day” (Interview, 23 February 2012).\(^{152}\) She used to work for newspapers before the internet and it is possible that her somewhat diverging view of the purpose of newspaper journalism derives from this historical perspective. It is furthermore

\(^{150}\) Original: “Wir verstehen uns heute nicht mehr als Chronisten, dass wir genau wiedergeben was in welchem Ausschuß oder im Plenum passiert ist, sondern wir schreiben Geschichten. Wir versuchen den Kern einer Sache herauszustellen und was im Plenum der eine oder andere sagt ist eher nebensächlich. Wir arbeiten Themen ab und protokollieren nicht mehr - wie es von 20-25-30 Jahren noch der Fall war - das Geschehen im Landtag.”

\(^{151}\) Original: “Wir hatten neulich eine Debatte darüber, ob es für Journalisten eigentlich eine Chronistenpflicht gibt. Das heist, dass es Ereignisse gibt, die eigentlich relative langweilig sind aber man muss darüber berichten. Da hat sich der Landtagsvizepräsident aufgeregt, der gemeint hat, beim Pressebericht über eine Veranstaltung einfach vorkommen zu müssen weil er Landtagsvizepräsident ist. … Ich glaube, dass es so eine Chronistenpflicht nur mehr im ganz engen Rahmen gibt.”

\(^{152}\) Original: “Die Tageszeitung hat schon noch ihren Platz, weil sie einfach auch Chronistenpflicht hat … die fast zusammen was am vorigen Tag passiert ist.”
conceivable that the chronicler duty will experience a comeback as a negative stereotype in the LP if blogging and tweeting ever reach the level it has in the LCA.

Finally, there is another interesting difference between the two cases. It concerns how state house reporter deal with opinion in the news and the degree to which these two things need to be separated (denoted by the metaphor “the wall” in the US). I will discuss the performative significance of the separation between opinion and news in chapter 6. In the context here, I would like to focus specifically on how journalists’ understandings of opinion and news relate to definitions of good journalism.

First of all, several LP reporters (and spokespeople) made assumptions about their competitor-colleagues’ political leanings (assumed conservative and CSU-close for the most part; see chapter 6). One mentioned that some of his colleagues were even members of a party, which is unthinkable in the LCA. One LP broadcast reporter’s position about opinion in journalism is typical for what other German journalists told me: “To avoid opinion is bad journalism. I think journalists have to take position, especially in a public service apparatus” (Interview, 24 January 2012). One LP tabloid reporter has a more radical stance when asked whether news and opinion need to be separated:

Not at all because I write opinion reports. I believe there is no bare news. Well, there is bare news in politics but I need to string words together and through that it’s already not objective anymore but my opinion already expresses itself by mentioning one thing first and the other second. For the most part I write opinion reports. In reporting the news I already try to express opinion. Thus, the reader knows exactly where he stands with me. I try to polarize too. That was always my strategy, to polarize, and there are always readers who complain massively and others say “great, I completely agree.” We often had discussions with chief editors whether one should separate opinion and news but I believe as a correspondent in a tabloid newspaper I need to state my position. (Interview, 21

Not only did she suggest that what she writes does not even pretend to be free from opinion but also that it intends to polarize. Although one could also say that about some of her US tabloid counterparts (according to how their broadsheet competitor-colleagues perceive them, less as journalists but as pursuing certain agendas), they themselves would never admit to that. When I asked him about his column, one representative in the LCA who tends to speak truth to power emphasized, “it’s not opinion as much as analysis or insider information. Occasionally, very rarely, I write opinion columns” (Interview, 20 March 2010). He talked about an elective affinity between a newspaper’s editorial position and reporters’ political opinions, at least in terms of topical agendas. Nonetheless, he found the idea of “the wall” and the requirement to separate news and opinion important. Some of his competitor-colleagues would contend with this statement, as one of them did explicitly in the interview: “There’s very little difference between his column and his news story style, it seems to me” (Interview, 5 May 2011).

In this context, the statements of one tabloid columnist who is also a contributor to the editorial page of his paper, are insightful. He used to work as a regular reporter before and at that time always took pride by the fact that people couldn’t tell what his opinions were. He described himself as a centrist who has no “natural team” to fall back on.

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on. Sometimes when he had written his column for the next day, he lied awake, thinking, “what have I done,” which he attributed to the fact that he is always around the people he criticizes, in contrast to most of his fellow editorial board members. After years as a reporter he was asked to write opinion and realized that “I didn’t know what my opinion was. I had means to bury my opinion-making instinct somehow.” It took him about two years “to regain that” and he said during that time he joked to his family that he “had to nurture my biases. I was so accustomed to see both sides or even multiple sides of an issue that it was very hard for me to say ‘ok, I’m gonna come down on this side’” (Interview, 16 March 2011).

What this indicates is one of the most striking differences between US and German journalism, which is how important it is for US reporters’ performance of professionalism to separate news and opinion writing roles, even for those who, from a distance, go farthest in effectively blurring those lines. In contrast, it is striking how far some German reporters go in pronounced blurring of lines between opinion and news to the extent they want to “polarize,” which could not be more different to US reporter’s depictions of the wall.

A related issue concerns objectivity where reporters were somewhat divided on, even more so in the LCA. What is striking is that younger reporters (who are more adept with social media and multimedia journalism) are critical or dismissive of objectivity. As this one reporter who said: “I think that journalists do themselves a disservice when they are robotically objective in their coverage, because the world is not objective” (Interview, 18 May 2010). As I will demonstrate in chapter 7, such a critical stance towards
objectivity is not just generational but connected to social media-aided journalism and the influence of digital culture on journalistic professionalism.

LP reporters were also divided on objectivity. Reporters who do weekly or magazine journalism (print, TV) and, interestingly, who work for public service companies tended to be more critical of objectivity and to demand more analytical news coverage and more definitive positions within it. One such reporter said:

Everything needs to be objective all the time. What is objective? Already my choice of topics is not objective. Already the question what I put first in a broadcast is not objective. This can’t be the yardstick. There is no objectivity in magazine journalism in my view. (Interview, 30 May 2012)\textsuperscript{155}

There was a tendency among reporters occupied with daily journalism (newspapers, wire service) to use objectivity and values associated with it (detachment, neutrality, etc.) in a positive way. To give an example, a reporter for a daily newspaper defined his public responsibility as, “that I feel obliged to impart a relatively objective picture” (Interview, 17 April 2012).\textsuperscript{156} Unlike in the LCA, these divisions about objectivity were neither generationally conditioned nor was there a connection to the degree of new media adoption.

**Transgression of Competencies and Ethical Boundaries**

Another form of bad journalism reporters distinguished is unethical and what I call transgression of competencies (one could also say overly-autonomous journalism), which is the exact opposite of insufficient autonomy, namely journalism that presumes too much influence on the sphere it covers. It includes reporting on rumors, suspicions and hypotheses as well as vicious journalism.

\textsuperscript{155} Original: “Es muss immer alles objektiv sein. Was ist objektiv? Schon meine Themenauswahl ist nicht objektiv. Schon die Frage was setze ich an 1 in der Sendung ist nicht objektiv. Also das ist finde ich nicht der Maßstab. Objektivität gibt’s im Magazinjournalismus aus meiner Sicht nicht.”

\textsuperscript{156} Original: “dass ich mich schon verpflichtet fühle relativ objektives Bild zu vermitteln.”
One LP journalist for a weekly newspaper raised the notion of suspicion reporting ("Verdachtsberichterstattung") in the context of bad journalism but admitted that it may have positive consequences, as with the Wulff affair. One of her competitor-colleagues finds reporting rumors legitimate under certain conditions:

Badly researched stories are bad journalism for me, superficial research, rumors. I think you can write about rumors as long as it is clear in the article that it is a rumor and, as I said, the person in question has to be asked and if she denies to comment, then so be it, but she had the chance. But [you must] not present it as a representation of facts. (Interview, 26 March 2012)\textsuperscript{157}

In the LCA, reporting based on rumors and suspicion came up in the context of a specific series of events during the time when David Paterson was Governor, especially in early 2010:

If your mother tells you that she loves you, you got to check it out. You can’t take her at her word. Which is a good rule to draw if you’re a journalist. And what has happened with the advent of blogs particularly is that people hear things ‘cause there is so much rumors and gossip, you know how it is. People are always talking. … [during the Paterson administration] there was this whispering campaign of innuendo about sexual misconduct and just all sorts of wild rumors and based upon nothing that – for as I can tell. It was just rumors were flying and making it out to the blogs. It was making it into Fred Dicker’s radio show. He would talk about it on the air. So it was being circulated and I mean that wasn’t fair to Paterson and it wasn’t to journalism. (Interview, 26 January 2011)

Several other LCA reporters used this example to draw boundaries against journalism based on rumors. It seems to have been another defining moment in recent history of LCA reporters. It is not so much that this kind of transgression (reporting rumors) was new but that it has been intensified by technological means (blogs and Twitter), which were still relatively new at the time, which helped circulate rumors more quickly on different platforms. The obvious difference is that LP reporters, as with most

\textsuperscript{157} Original: “Schlecht recherchierte Geschichten sind für mich schlechter Journalismus. Oberflächliche Recherche, Gerüchte. Ich finde man kann gut über Gerüchte schreiben aber dann muss in einem Artikel klar sein, dass es ein Gerücht ist und, wie ich gesagt hab, die Person, um die es geht, muss zumindest einmal gefragt worden sein und wenn sie dann die Stellungnahme verweigert ist das dann so aber sie hätte die Möglichkeit gehabt. Aber [man darf das] nicht als Tatsachendarstellung hinzustellen.”
sensitive issues, draw on a national story as an example (i.e. the Wulff affair). It also speaks to the low intensity of social media engagement, which is able to carry such a story forward in the LCA. It also speaks to a (still existent) cultural barrier of journalism in the LP, where an affair would probably not raise as much dust or probably not even be made public. Though the inhibition threshold to report about politicians’ personal lives seems to be sinking in Germany as well, as several reporter have noticed, it is not nearly as low as in the US case.

One LCA reporter addressed this shift of boundaries of reporting on politicians’ private spheres. To him the turning point was Watergate, “for the reporter coming in saying, basically, ‘prove that you’re not a crook.’” He said he heard stories about former presidents and Governors and their affairs, which never got reported (including John F. Kennedy): “There was a gentlemen’s agreement among reporters … all that’s changed … That whole era changed with, when you can prove that the president of the United States is a liar, then I think it changes for everything” (Interview, 17 May 2010).

Another form of bad journalism that transgresses boundaries and slowly moves in the area of unethical journalism is vindictive journalism, that is, journalism that is unnecessarily harmful or cruel. One reporter for a regional broadsheet paper used the example of the indebted former State Comptroller, Alan Hevesi:

[He] was sentenced and he has been demonized in some of the tabloids, for instance. You would think that after Osama bin Laden he’s number two on the creep list. … he’s being used as the poster boy for corruption in Albany. … I think the treatment has been a little on the harsh side. I mean he definitely deserves – he disappointed us. He definitely deserves what he’s gotten but there have been editorial cartoons and there’s been front page of the tabloids with his head shaven. They’ve done everything but put him in prison-striped outfit. (Interview, 5 May 2011)
As in this example, vicious journalism is often vicious because it aims at helping one side over another, thus close to the idea of advocacy journalism. But viciousness can also become an end in itself, as one LP reporter points out:

Of course you can also inebriate yourself with the feeling: my god, I can make the CSU angry and now they are all scared of me. But that’s not a value in itself and not a motivation to do or not to do this or that. I think it should be about the issue. I know there are colleague who are somehow really into that. (Interview, 30 January 2012)\footnote{Original: “Natürlich kann man sich auch berauschen an dem Gefühl: mein Gott, jetzt kann ich die CSU ärgern und jetzt fürchten die mich alle. Das ist aber jetzt eigentlich kein Wert an sich und nicht Motivation um dieses oder jenes zu machen oder nicht zu machen. Ich finde es sollte eigentlich um die Sache gehen. Ich weiß schon, dass es Kollegen gibt, die das dann irgendwie ganz toll finden.”}

As mentioned earlier, another form of bad journalism concerns crossing ethical boundaries, involving some (possible) collateral damages of news reporting. One LP radio journalist told me that he is regularly at court, reporting about an ongoing trial at the time. He says that he talks to one of the jurors when they both take smoking breaks.

We often smoke together and talk about all the world and his brother but I would never dare to talk to him about the trial because he must not. … I think that is part of the basic rules that you need to follow. With colleagues from Bild Zeitung I would not be so sure that they would do that. (Interview, 6 December 2011)\footnote{Original: “Wir rauchen da öfters zusammen und reden da über Gott und die Welt. Aber mir würde niemals einfallen über diesen Prozess mit ihm zu reden weil das darf er nicht, deswegen würde ich ihn auch niemals deswegen angquetschen. Und ich finde das gehört zu diesen Grundregeln, die man unbedingt einhalten muss. Bei den Kollegen von der Bildzeitung bin ich mir da nicht so sicher, dass die das machen würden.”}

Another reporter went beyond hypothesis and referred to a concrete example of unethical journalism in his view:

Bad journalism is, third, transgressing ethical and moral boundaries. For example, there was this case before the previous election where a boulevard paper made a big story about then Minister-President Beckstein … The core of the story was that he turned fat, that he drinks, that he takes medication and that he is being beaten by his wife. And that was a pretty big and sensationalized text und afterwards all four points turned out to be false. But that was after the election. This is something where I’d say ethical-moral boundaries were crossed.
One LCA reporter talks about not needlessly harming people as a journalistic virtue: “I know that our editor here says ‘you don’t wanna hurt people. Do no harm, you don’t wanna needlessly hurt people who are innocent bystanders,’ which makes sense. You don’t wanna do damage” (Interview, 16 April 2009). Interestingly, though other LCA reporters drew ethical boundaries, they hardly mentioned harming somebody (innocent or not) as a possibility or as something to avoid. Reporters are aware of the responsibility that comes with possibly ruining somebody’s livelihood (often involving families, which would fit the “innocent bystander” category) but do not rule it out or underline it as a dilemma they face.

Ethical issues mentioned concerned journalism that violates the public trust through being corruptible by political interests or intellectual theft. One LCA reporter, who used to work for a local newspaper of her corporation, said that in that local market she had a competitor who would continuously plagiarize her stories: “I’d go to press conferences and he just sits there, he didn’t even have a pen or a pad, he didn’t…he just copied my stories. That’s bad journalism” (Interview, 23 May 2009). A curious journalistic virtue mentioned by one LP reporter is restraint. Although he is the only one in the press corps who brought it up, it is still noteworthy:

Fairness, restraint – for me what is really important: Journalists who I appreciate most are those that bring least valuation in their stories, who simply describe things, present facts as they are and let the reader come to his conclusions. So, I

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160 Original: “Schlechter Journalismus ist, drittens, der ethische und moralische Grenzen überschreitet. Es gab zum Beispiel bei uns den Fall vor der letzten Landtagswahl hat eine Boulevardzeitung eine grosse Geschichte gemacht über den damaligen Ministerpräsidenten Beckstein … Kern der Geschichte war er ist fett geworden, er säuft, er nimmt Tabletten und er wird von seiner Frau geschlagen. Und das war ein ziemlich grosser, reisserischer Text und hinterher haben sich leider alle vier Punkte als unwahr herausgestellt. Aber nach der Wahl. Das ist dann was wo ich sage da ist auch eine ethisch-moralische Grenze überschritten.”
would never condemn in an article. (Interview, 1 December 2011)\textsuperscript{161}

First of all, this could have easily been said by many of his competitor-colleagues. In other words, restraint would not have been a surprising category if mentioned by other LP reporters, whereas it would have been coming from LCA reporters. Restraint is certainly a more fitting description of professional performance of LP reporters than for LCA reporters, even if he was referring to news representations rather than reportorial conduct. Referring to the news, LCA reporters used notions of objectivity, detachment and facticity as well as keeping opinion out of the news. The notion of restraint, on the other hand, implies an urge of something to come out.

However, one statement by an LCA reporter, a tabloid reporter over and above, was interesting in this context. He said he rejects something that his competitor-colleagues accuse him of, which is hyperbole. One of those broadsheet competitor-colleagues, who could be considered his adversary, said something very similar when I asked him about bad journalism by emphasizing that he tries not to “overhype things.” He didn’t refer to anything specific but that “you know when you see it. Many people take so many short cuts these days” (Interview, 7 December 2010).

**Public Service**

The ideal of public service and public responsibility, in other words the responsibility of the journalist to the public, is one that journalists in both cases take very seriously. The terms *watchdog* or *accountability* fell in this context as well as *keeping an eye on those in power* (“den Mächtigen auf die Finger schauen”) and *forth estate* (“vierte

\textsuperscript{161} Original: “Fairness, Zurückhaltung - also für mich ist ganz wichtig: Die Journalisten, die ich am meisten schätze, die bringen in ihren Geschichten eigentlich am wenigsten Wertung, die schildern Sachen einfach, stellen die Fakten dar wie sie sind und lassen den Leser dann schon zu seinem eigenen Schluß kommen. Also verurteilen würde ich in einem Artikel nicht.”
Gewalt”). In distinction from the above-mentioned notion of chronicle duty, many LP reporters raised “Einordnung” (which means situating) as their distinctive responsibility as representatives of the public who permanently observe government action. Many reporters were so enamored with public service that their interpretation of other issues all filtered through it. In the interviews, I dealt with this question usually after I probed them to draw boundaries against bad journalism. In this section it proved useful to provide separate narratives (with a comparative eye) of US and German notions of public responsibility before providing a comparative assessment in the chapter conclusion.

**US: Accountability and Watchdog Journalism**

What is striking about the US interviews is not the prevalence but the level of idealism they are imbued with and the tone with which journalists express it. When I asked one reporter about what public responsibility means to him, he said that journalism and “feeling some responsibility to the public” are “almost synonymous … The only reason I’m doing this is to serve the public, is to serve democracy” (Interview, 13 September 2010). Another reporter said:

I take seriously the idea that I’m the publics’ watchdog … I feel a personal accountability in the sense that I want to explain to them what’s going on up here, how it affects them, for better or for worse, and who’s doing the right thing or the wrong thing about it. Journalism is a weird profession because I do not spend much of my time worrying about making money for my paper. I mean it’s sort of in the background, right, but the way I can help my paper is by writing good journalism that has an impact. (Interview, 21 May 2011)

Several journalists described that what motivates them by some version of “making the world a better place:”

I mean reporters, generally speaking, are a very hard-working bunch of people. They work long hours, you know, they don’t get paid a lot, they don’t have a lot of high social standing or societal standing, you know. But what keeps a lot of people going is that it’s like: “But we’re doing good work.” You know, we are
engaged in the search for the truth. And ultimately at the end of the day, what we
discover and publish is going to make the world a better place. I mean, that does
sound a little like Pollyanna or, you know, gaga, unicorns, rainbows, pie and sky.
But a lot of people do feel that way. (Interview, 26 January 2011)

While he ironically stepped back from defining the purpose of journalism in this
grandiose way, he stresses that journalists indeed hold such beliefs. The following
discriminative comment of a reporter about one particular story also demands this principle:

Hundreds of hours of video and radio and hundreds of inches of print have been
dedicated to Donald Trump – he’s not even a candidate – about whether he may
or may not be a candidate for president … He’s gotten more free publicity.
Multimillion dollars worth of free publicity … That doesn’t improve the world in
any way. That doesn’t alert anybody to waste or abuse of taxpayers’ money.
(Interview, 5 May 2011)

Waste and abuse are subjects of central importance in state house reporting to him
and was a theme that reappeared in many conversations I had with reporters on and off-
tape. This particular reporter quoted above, one should add, is an investigative journalist
and hardly involved in daily news making. Other journalists perceive their role as arbiters
of the public somewhat more tragic, as this senior reporter who has been reporting from
the Capitol for 25 years when we did the interview:

Unfortunately the last twenty years I have been sort of documenting the decline of
New York State. Which has been rather sad. … But I really feel like somebody
has to do it and people need to know. And so I feel that really really strongly, in
that I feel like, you know, it’s almost like a mission to do this work. (Interview, 11
February 2011)

One way how another reporter defined his idea of public responsibility was by
telling me about a recent story he did that was outside of the state politics purview and
that involved needy people who were victimized and died in a tragic accident:

For whatever reasons I found myself doing those stories over the years. I just sort
of happened to find them and grabbed on to them. [Stories involving] people who
are completely helpless, how are they being treated by our society, by our
government. And often they are not always treated as well as they should be. And
they can be victimized by the circumstances or by neglect, or even worse. Having
seen that in other situations as a journalist it has made me empathetic and therefore it’s important that we do those stories, that people know about that. (Interview, 8 April 2009)

After this interview, which was the very first I did for this project, I have witnessed this reporter several times pitching stories to his editor, implicitly or explicitly appealing to its public service value to a degree I have not witnessed among any other journalist. This reporter, as some of his (competitor-)colleagues, has concrete obligations in mind when he reflects upon public responsibility, apart from high-flown ideals. One basic demand such reporters raise about their work is that issues need to address or at least relate to people’s concerns—a demand they often feel compelled to violate. They concede to this when they refer to state government as a “bubble” or as a “Käseglocke,” implying that they are removed from relevance criteria of the outside world to some degree. One reporter, who does take public relevance as a criterion of newsworthiness seriously, said:

The question here is always: how’s that gonna affect people. So we shy away from sort of internecine political battles, unless we can share what’s gonna affect people in [his constituency] for this reason or that reason. That’s why I like taxes so much to write about. Everybody understands the impact of taxes and impact of jobs. (Interview, 23 May 2009)

This idea that the state house reporter is responsible for creating accountability regarding how government spends taxes resonates in many LCA reporters’ statements about public responsibility. Reporters often referred to themselves as representatives of the public; that they are there (at the government building) for them (the public, particularly voters). One reporter told me of an instance where the press was kicked out of a meeting room for a lack of space and that he told the Senator in charge: “I’m here as a representative of one million people who read my newspaper every day. I know I’m not
an elected official; they didn’t choose me. I’m here, because they can’t be here” (Interview, 8 September 2009).

Reporters do not get audience breakdowns; few get click statistics on their stories and they are happy if their stories do well. During my observation, I witnessed Chuck tell Dash that their story on Cuomo’s first State of the State address had 55,000 hits. He added that he wants to beat one other story so that it becomes the top clicked story (Fieldnotes, 6 January 2011). Another bureau chief told me their webpage has a chart with the most-read stories of the day. He said: “I feel good when I see one of my stories there” (Interview, 20 March 2010).

Despite all that, I got the sense that clicks are an encouragement but their lack does not represent a discouragement for LCA journalists. Nothing during my fieldwork suggested that reporters make news decisions with such considerations in mind. Of course editors are concerned that stories are getting read and clicks may have an indirect effect through them. However, from what I could discern reporters don’t get reprimands if their stories get relatively few hits. One former LCA reporter and chief editor of a newspaper, which circulates click statistics daily among its news staff, said that, contrary to his expectation, click statistics did not turn his reporters into “click whores” (Interview, 11 May 2011). This led me to the conclusion that, contrary to research which claims a strong connection between audience metrics and news decisions in contemporary journalism (Anderson 2011a; Boczkowski 2010), this relationship does not seem to be equally strong in all areas of journalism. Maybe there is a specific newsroom-effect that intensifies competition for clicks, whereas institutional beat journalists
disregard metrics in comparison (although Anderson’s research was set in the Philadelphia news ecosystem, he mainly studied it from the perspective of newsrooms).

Most news outlets journalists work for have very definitive target audiences, either demographically (working class or more affluent readership) or regionally, which affects how they write, which stories they focus on and which politicians they talk to (i.e. lawmakers from their region, only lawmakers with state-wide influence). Some of the reporters who blog throughout the day next to their legacy news writing duties also make distinction between their blog audience (usually more political insiders) and their newspaper audience (the majority constituted by the public-at-large). Journalists say they feel a responsibility to their audiences and that this responsibility requires more from them than simply describing events nowadays. One young LCA reporter said: “I believe in this day and age, people want a personal brand, they want people they can trust, they want people who are in the weeds of things and who provide them with context” (Interview, 18 May 2010).

Through electronic means of communication, journalists have more diverse interactions with their readers than before the internet. Readers do not only call but they write emails, comment on stories, reply to tweets, etc. When I asked one bureau chief whether that gives him a better sense of his audience he said, “it’s a probably pretty narrow slice of our readership … the most strident slice. … I mean, it’s interesting, you know. I read it, but I don’t think that really captures the readership at large” (Interview, 7 December 2010). Some reporters perceive it as an obligation to be responsive to their readers, as part of the public service they provide and that defines their job:

You have to remember all the time that: look, they’re the reader. They’re the one that down a dollar every day for my newspaper. And that’s paying for my salary.
And if you just roll it on their doorstep and say: “Take it or leave it.” That’s the way journalism was in the 1950s. It’s not the way journalism is today. … it’s like a conversation, in a way. I like to hear from the readers. I speak a lot on [his constituency] … I think it is very important to be accessible. (Interview, 8 September 2010)

Like many of his (competitor-)colleagues, the following reporter says that often time comments by readers are not helpful, to say the least:

It’s rare enough but it’s a nice surprise when somebody sends you a thoughtful response, how they’re disagreeing or agreeing, taking issue or praising or whatever. You can tell that they’re a normal person, they’re not, probably, gonna be throwing beers on their TV. … We are trying to become more interactive. You can now comment on a lot of stories. … We often … literally use as reporting comments on earlier version of the story or a blog post that becomes a story. So there’s a slightly more organic connection than it used to be. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

I have witnessed or overheard several instances when reporters talked to readers on the phone, sometimes yelling into the receiver (responding to being yelled at, I assumed). On one occasion, I heard one bureau chief getting a call by a reader who was outraged over a story on same-sex marriage. The reader accused him and his paper of advocating for sodomy. At some point the journalist said, “I’m very busy right now, I gotta go,” and hung up. He later told his colleague, who wrote the story the reader was complaining about, that he used “fuck” all the time, wondering whether this was in accordance to his religion (Fieldnotes, 11 February 2011). One older reporter told me about a contrary episode, which happened shortly before our interview, where a reader criticized a story he co-authored. The story quoted a state worker who was furloughed and protested against it:

The next day, I got two emails from readers who went on to a site where you can look up salaries of state workers. They said: “Why did you let this guy get away with this? This guy makes $40,000 a year plus his benefits.” And I was like: Wow! [laughs] Shit! It’s a whole new world. I mean readers can actually interact and challenge you like that and go get the information we should have gotten on the guy. (Interview, 17 May 2010)
Some differentiated between consumers and the public (or: readers) and said there was a tension there, which affects their work:

The news business gets blame for a lot of stuff; for simply not pushing back against the consumer; so, going along with the consumer. In America, it’s all about the consumer. This is what they want when they want it. And you’re blamed for over-sensationalizing or focusing on Tiger Woods when we should be focusing on the health care debate. (Interview, 5 April 2010)

He himself acknowledges that his paper is more focused on the consumer by saying that “I don’t think either [their main competitor] or [his newspaper] reports to be the paper of record.” One of his competitor-colleagues though says one should be careful not to draw too strong of a contrast here: “People want to read important things, too, you know. Readers are not idiots. But it’s the balance of what they need to know and what they want to read.” Apart from that question, even if no one would read his stories anymore, “what we do still keeps the politicians more honest about what they’re gonna do. … there’s still the watchdog role” (Interview, 13 September 2010). In a similar vein, another reporter said the tension between newspapers getting thinner and readers not wanting to read what she writes does not (or rather: should not) matter: “I think even if they don’t wanna read the newspaper, they wanna know that someone is there, someone is at the meeting, someone is holding people accountable … they don’t want that to go away” (Interview, 23 May 2009).

As alluded to earlier, (US and German) state house reporters’ understanding of public responsibility has an important spatial dimension. Being at the government building and, more generally, having direct access to elected officials, their staff, interest groups and lobbyists has a direct public value to them. As one bureau chief told me:

When you’re in the building, you don’t just see people at news conferences, you also see them in their offices, you know. You run into them, you have lunch. You run into them, you have coffee. You meet them later for a beer. You know, it’s
like these tremendous advantages for the public, being in here. (Interview, 13 September 2010)

On an instrumental rational level, being on location is the main foundation of their work. It is thus only natural that they would perceive it as inherently important. Above of that, they draw professional meaning from being there. Spatial and, as a consequence, social proximity to their jurisdiction and the knowledge it generates is a sacred and exclusive asset they provide to their outlet and the public sphere more generally.

Accordingly, as examined in chapter 5, truth claims being made about their jurisdiction by journalists from remote locations are dismissed categorically as long it does not confirm the consensus among the press corps.

**Germany: Public Servants and Classifiers**

German reporter in general tended to provide more narrow answers to the question of public responsibility than the US reporters in terms of referring to more concrete journalistic practices rather than more abstract norms of public responsibility.

One line of responses aimed at the idea of watchdog journalism, which keeping an eye on those in power. One reporter said:

My intension has always been, in a nutshell, to rap power wielders’ knuckles, to ask and report critically, not to tell readers superficial matters but to lead them behind the scenes and show them what happens there. They can watch everything else on television every day. I want to show them what they can’t get through the wire or elsewhere. (Interview, 21 March 2012)

Another reporter said something to the same effect but combined with a specific responsibility incumbent on public service broadcasters:

We are, I think that’s how we should understand ourselves, those that keep an eye

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162 Original: “Meine Intention war immer auf den Punkt gebracht den Mächtigen auf die Finger zu klopfen, kritisch zu hinterfragen und zu berichten, den Leser nicht Vordergründiges zu erzählen sondern sie hinter die Kulissen zu führen und ihnen zu zeigen was passiert da. Das andere können Sie im Fernsehen jeden Tag sehen. Ich will ihnen das zeigen was sie weder über die Agentur noch sonst mitgeteilt kriegen.”
on others on behalf of the public. Especially with public service [media] this
should be on top of the agenda. After all, we do not have the economic pressure
that private stations, newspaper or magazines are subjected to, and we should
utilize this much more than we already do. (Interview, 6 December 2011)\(^{163}\)

Contrary to US data, where reporters from such organizations are part of the
sample but where public service broadcasting is not nearly as influential, these journalists
are subjected to specific demands and obligations regarding public responsibility with
higher demands of commercial autonomy:

I think we have the duty to report on issues, which are uninteresting to ad-
supported media … but which would not be reported without us, without public
service television. We also have the duty to hang on to issues for much longer and
to do more intensive research on them, which is also not profitable for private
media. … Secondly, we have the duty and owe it [to the public], also because of
broadcasting fees, to be much more careful regarding PR than private
broadcasting. Thus, we need to assert distance to corporations. (Interview, 30
May 2012)\(^{164}\)

One reporter had a distinctive response to the question but because he is a central
figure in the LP it is worth discussing here. He said that what LP correspondents need to
provide to the public is a certain “surplus,” which other journalists (who do not report
from the Landtag constantly) cannot offer. This may mean greater topicality by simply
being on location when things happen; it may also mean offering news with a certain
regional focus (which is usually not available through the wire or other news content
everybody has access to).

\(^{163}\) Original: “Wir sind glaube ich so sollten wir uns verstehen, diejenigen, die im AUftrag der
Öffentlichkeit den anderen auf die Finger schauen. Gerade der öffentlich-rechtliche, bei dem sollte das
ganz oben auf stehen. Wir haben ja nicht den wirtschaftlichen Druck, dem Privatsender, Zeitungen und
Zeitschriften unterworfen sind, und das sollten wir viel mehr nutzen als wire es bisher tun.”

\(^{164}\) Original: “Ich glaube, dass wir die Pflicht haben eben auch über Dinge zu berichten, die für Medien, die
werbefinanziert sind, uninteressant sind … die aber ohne uns, ohne das öffentlich-rechtliche Fernsehen,
nicht stattfinden würden. Wir haben auch die Pflicht an Themen länger dranzubelieben und auch intensiver
to recherchieren was sich vielleicht für privatfinanzierte Medien auch nicht lohnt. … Zum zweiten haben
wir die Pflicht und Schuldigkeit, auch durch unsere Gebührenfinanzierung, beim Thema PR viel
vorsichtiger zu sein als es im privaten Rundfunk der Fall ist, also hier wirklich auch die Distanz zu
Unternehmen klar zu machen.”
LP reporters also frequently mentioned awareness of possible consequences of news reporting, regarding possible harm or public opinion formation, as something they perceive as part of their responsibility to the public. One radio reporter said when I asked him what his responsibility to the public was, “that I take my job seriously, that I take the people about whom I report seriously and that I don’t forget my journalistic responsibility over the thrill of the chase, which often succumbed me in my earlier days” (Interview, 22 November 2011).\(^{165}\) He then gave an example of a hostage situation, which he became aware of one night. The kidnappers drove on the freeway up north. His station had an agreement with the police not to report immediately in such a case in order not to risk the lives of hostages. When the car crossed the state border he called his colleague in Hesse, told him about this agreement and asked him to honor it. The response was dismissive and insinuated nepotism with the Bavarian police on his part. Though the situation ended positively, the reporter found it utterly irresponsible that his colleagues up north reported on the hostage situation and, in his view, threatened the hostages.

One newspaper reporter said he always tries to be aware of two, often interrelated, dangers:

I have to be aware what each sentence can cause, concerning the work itself, how I deal with people—that’s what I see as my personal responsibility—and I see it also in that I report on issues, which are meant for the public and which can also create a public. (Interview, 1 December 2011)\(^{166}\)


\(^{166}\) Original: “Ich muss mir im klaren darüber sein was ich mit jedem Satz anrichten kann, sowohl in der Arbeit selbst, wie ich mit den Leuten umgehe - da sehe ich meine ganz persönliche Verantwortung - ich sehe sie natürlich auch darin, dass ich über Themen berichte, die an die Öffentlichkeit gehören, eine Öffentlichkeit unter Umständen erst herstellen.”
Another reporter who works for a regional newspaper also talked about this latter aspect as something he became aware of when he reflected about what he did after starting his current job:

The [newspaper] is a medium, which many people read in our region … I feel when I write things with a certain spin … I believe that it has consequences on public perception in the region. I do think that I have a certain responsibility to write to the best of my knowledge and belief. (Interview, 13 June 2012)

He added that one has to be careful, therefore, with pointed formulations. Besides this issue, which others have raised as well (though not in the context of public responsibility), LP reporters raised several news values, which are necessary to do be a publicly responsible journalist. Those are: seeking the truth and situating (“Einordnung”) and entertainment to readers. The latter two differ in some respects from what US reporters told me.

“Einordnung” was contrasted with chronicle duty journalism, which LP reporters perceived as outdated. Public responsibility means “situating and explaining. I don’t see it as much in reproducing what happened,” said one bureau chief (Interview, 24 January 2012). Another senior reporter drew boundaries in a similar way when he said, “our service is increasingly situating, evaluating, establishing connections. Earlier we had a much more documentary character” (Interview, 17 April 2012). He said that when he started as a young reporter at his newspaper it was drilled into him that page one has to depict what a historian will regard as most significant one hundred years later. The consequence was often a rather “dry retelling” of events. This understanding was based

168 Original: “einordnen und erklären. Ich sehe es nicht so sehr darin alles abzubilden was stattfindet.”
169 Original: “[was] jetzt verstärkt unsere Leistung betrifft ist eigentlich dieses Einordnen, bewerten, Zusammenhang herstellen. Früher hatten wir auch viel mehr dokumentarischen Charakter.”
on a reader who does not exist anymore, he emphasized, and for whom his newspaper was the exclusive source of news.

In the quote, he touched on something that is essential to understand this notion of “Einordnung.” It denotes journalism, which is on the spectrum between opinion and bare news (but especially distinguished from the latter). The following statement by a young reporter exemplifies what it encompasses:

I find evaluation very important. I am a great supporter of opinion, of commentary. I think it belongs to journalism to give people, who are less well versed in an issue, the opportunity of situating. Whether they share that opinion is something else but you give them the opportunity to classify it. (Interview, 26 March 2012)

First of all, there is no real counterpart for the notion of “Einordnung” in the US. Probably what comes closest is analysis, both as a newer form of journalism distinct from older forms and as something between opinion and factual news (but more strictly distinguished from the former).

The other issue that LP reporters perceived as their responsibility to the public is to also entertain them (besides fulfilling all these other, democratically important tasks). While LCA reporters concede to the importance of style and composition of their writing, only one of them dared to use the notion of entertainment in the context of public responsibility and only in order to defend his newspapers’ agenda (a tabloid) as, both, entertaining and informing. One LP reporter, working for a broadsheet newspaper, deemed it very important to transport important information by entertaining readers:

I find it very important that issues, which tend to be a bit dry sometimes, not as easily consumable – parliamentary coverage is, after all – it can get a bit dusty –

170 Original: “Ich finde Bewertung sehr wichtig. Ich bin ein grosser Anhänger von Meinung, von Kommentaren. Ich finde das gehört zum Journalismus dazu um den Menschen, die sich weniger in dem Thema auskennen, die Möglichkeit zur Einordnung zu geben. Ob sie die Meinung dann teilen ist etwas anderes aber man gibt ihnen die Möglichkeit das einzuordnen.”
to also consider consumability; entertainment in a positive sense; to write it so that people like to read it and that you are not thrown off after two sentences because it is so boring. (Interview, 5 December 2011)\textsuperscript{171}

Another LP reporter summarized public responsibility of journalism in the following way: “Information, criticism, control and entertainment is what they say is important about media. The entertainment aspect is not as important but it also applies,” after which she referred to one news story of the day we did the interview as having a high entertainment value, adding, “whereby it also tells you something about the whole situation,” and thus transports something significant (Interview, 25 January 2012).\textsuperscript{172}

Clearly, entertainment is not an end in itself for these reporters but an important form of delivery for more serious matters.

I found similar concerns about setting editorial priorities based on audience metrics. LP reporters argued that their subject area has to be independent from such considerations. As one bureau chief put it, “politics must occur [in the news]” (Interview, 24 January 2012).\textsuperscript{173} To him it is irrelevant whether politics is perceived as complicated, tainted or unentertaining. He argues it’s the news media’s and specifically public service media’s responsibility to put these issues on the agenda. A newspaper reporter confirms this indifference to audience metrics with respect to news coverage that is publically relevant:

Newspapers and magazines conduct consumer research in multiple ways, what do people read and how much. We are well aware of this and this is a fundamental

\textsuperscript{171} Original: “Ich find sehr wichtig, dass man bei diesen Sachen, die tendenziell dazu neigen ein bisschen trocken zu sein manchmal, nicht so leicht konsumierbar - parlamentarische Berichterstattung ist ja, manchmal staubt’s so ein bisschen - … auch denkt an Konsumierbarkeit; an Unterhaltung im positiven Sinne; dass man es so schreibt, dass es gerne gelesen wird oder dass man zumindest nicht sofort nach Satz 2 rausfliegt weil es so langweilig ist.”

\textsuperscript{172} Original: “Information, Kritik, Kontrolle und Unterhaltung sagt man ja immer, dass bei Medien wichtig ist. Der Unterhaltungsaspekt ist jetzt nicht der wichtigste aber der kommt auch vor … wobei es auch wieder etwas sagt über die ganze Situation.”

\textsuperscript{173} Original: “Politik muss stattfinden.”
field of tension. But it is also important that issues, which are taken to be publically relevant, are documented, even if it is to be expected that you have less readers for it. (Interview, 7 November 2011)\footnote{Original: “Die Zeitungen und Zeitschriften betreiben ja in vielfacher Weise Konsumentenforschung, was wird wie stark gelesen. Das wissen wir ziemlich genau und das ist halt ein grundsätzliches Spannungsfeld. Aber es kommt schon auch darauf an dass die Dinge von denen man meint, dass die öffentlich relevant sind, die auch zu dokumentieren auch wenn man davon ausgehen kann, dass man da einmal weniger Leser hat.”}

Another reporter, who does not exclusively report political stories for his regional newspaper, tells me in a rather prosaic manner about recent audience research conducted at his paper:

Within that period I had political stories that I deemed as important. The rating was 5\% [of readers read the story]. And I reported on Bruno [Sacha Baron Cohen’s alter ego] and the rating was 97\%. Und that tells you everything. But despite of that, you need to take notice and place both. Thus, what we do in politics is special interest by now but it is enormously important. (Interview, 1 December 2011)\footnote{Original: “Ich hatte in der Zeit politische Geschichten, die ich für wichtig gehalten habe. Da war die Quote bei 5\%. Und ich hatte Bruno, da lag die Quote bei 97\%. Und das sagt eigentlich schon alles und trotzdem muss man beide Themen wahrnehmen und auch setzen. Also es ist sicherlich ein Spartenprogramm was wir fahren in der Politik mittlerweile aber es ist halt enorm wichtig.”}

Corresponding to these concerns with perceiving readers, listeners and viewers as consumers, LP reporters argue that the audience should not be underestimated. Concerning that newspapers back away from descriptive reporting and towards more clearly stating positions, one reporter mentioned that this was not objectionable as long as it is clear where they stand: “The reader also has to deal with the newspaper more critically. But I think the reader can be entrusted with this responsibility” (Interview, 13 June 2012).\footnote{Original: “Der Leser muss dann kritischer mit einer Zeitung dann auch umgehen. Ich glaube die Verantwortung kann man dem Leser aber schon geben.”} In a similar vein, another reporter said about opinion entering into news feature writing: “I think the reader is smart enough to distinguish what is purely factual coverage from what is color coverage” (Interview, 10 February 2012).\footnote{Original: “Ich denke der Leser ist klug genug um das unterscheiden zu können, was jetzt die reine Faktenberichterstattung ist und was die Stimmungsberichterstattung ist.”}
Besides metrics and not underestimating (imagined) audiences, reporters interact, with them over phone for the most part. As one reporter emphasized, “I find it constructive actually. But that doesn’t mean that he [the reader] has my opinion afterwards or that I have his opinion.” She told me of a recent caller who complained that her story cited one survey rather than another, which comes to different results. While she did not regard the criticism as valid, she said on principle:

I find this important. It is also expected in my company to talk to every reader [who calls] and I wouldn’t want it differently myself, I mean if I complained with a newspaper I would want to get a callback. (Interview, 25 January 2012)

However, it is undeniable that reader complaints mostly annoy journalists. When I asked a wire reporter how he feels about the fact that there is an additional layer between him and the public sphere, his response was, “no, I don’t mind. There is a positive side, for instance I’m not called or bothered by readers. When they complain it always goes to the newspaper” (Interview, 24 November 2011).

**Chapter Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, I will first summarize the results in terms of 1) similarities and 2) differences between Germany and the US. I will then discuss 3) broader implications of these findings.

1) In broad terms, German and US reporters agree upon what the craft of journalism entails: good journalism is committed to the truth, is cognizant of biases and narrative constraints that distort the truth. Good journalism, furthermore, delivers this

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179 Original: “Nein, das stört mich nicht. Das hat auch positive Seiten, z.b. werde ich nicht von Lesern angerufen oder belästigt. Wenn die sich beschweren geht das immer an die Zeitung.”
truth in an aesthetically appealing fashion, not only compositionally but also in terms of entertaining audiences. A good reporter is expected to be diligent in the search for the truth and has to exhibit toughness and aggressiveness on the way, especially in politics where power is the central operating principle. A fundamental skeptical attitude towards political claims and pronouncements, next to an ability to decipher strategic communication, is another important trait of a good political reporter. Furthermore, especially in rather tight-knit press corps, resisting the pack is necessary to be regarded as a reputable journalist. This is a delicate balancing act, however, since breaking away too far is looked down upon. Sharing relevance criteria of the pack and its tacit knowledge about the political setting it covers is essential, which can only be sufficiently acquired by being on location and participating in the constant off-the-record conversations between journalists and political actors.

Unsurprisingly, though good working relationships with political actors are indispensable (among other things in order to engage in off-the-record conversations), autonomy from politics is a central professional virtue, especially in terms of not allowing biases and partisanship into the news. Both, biases arising from personal convictions or strategic alliances where journalists become political instruments, are to be avoided. Stenography and fulfilling chronicler duties are also considered insufficiently autonomous. Another form of bad journalism, which is in some ways contrary, transgresses boundaries of ethics and competency by rumor- and suspicion-based reporting or vindictively going after subjects of journalistic attack.

Public responsibility is a fundamental commitment to political journalists. They draw meaning form the idea that what they do facilitates democracy. They perceive
themselves as representatives of the public and government watchdogs. Their public is a more or less concrete constituency (demographically, regionally), which became more tangible through electronic means of communication. These same technologies also enabled more accurate audience metrics, which can be an encouragement for these journalists but hardly a discouragement. Connected to that, although they perceive a tension between serving the public (what they need to know) and serving consumers (what they want), the watchdog role shields them from these concerns to some extent, at least regarding their self-understanding if not from editorial pressure. To put it succinctly, to state house reporters it is more relevant to be there, doing a good job keeping an eye on government than whether people read, listen or watch their work.

2) The opposition between broadsheet and tabloid journalism structures boundary work among LCA journalists much more than in the LP. Tabloid reporting inspires not only much stronger boundary drawing in the LCA but is also perceived (by non-tabloid journalists) as a threat that pollutes government reporting in general. This is explicable by the higher presence of tabloid journalism in the LCA. Correspondingly, LP reporters deemed journalistic standards to be high throughout the press corps, which some explained by a relative scarcity of tabloid reporters.

There are three main differences concerning autonomy from politics: in the LCA, anonymous sourcing (and particularly attacks based on it) is perceived as a condition that undermines this autonomy. In the German case this was not discussed. LP reporters, on the other hand, have the distinctive category of advocacy journalism (“Kampagnenjournalismus”) to denote journalism that lets itself be used extensively for political purposes. Although this is not unheard of in principle in the US, the fact that
there is no category for it is telling in at least two ways: Firstly, single newspapers are just not as powerful in the US to be able to launch an effort that would be worth calling it a “campaign.” A paper like Bild, which is a common reference point for this type of journalism in Germany, on the other hand, has that kind of power (with a circulation of almost 2.7 million). Secondly, at least in newspaper journalism in the US, pursuing a definite political agenda is less common as it is in Germany or Europe.

Another, more subtle difference between German and US journalistic autonomy concerns stenography/chronicle duty. Though it refers in both contexts to obedient journalism, which is supposed to be overcome, some in the LCA perceive its resurrection in the context of social media. If the LP experienced a similar proliferation of blogging and tweeting in the future, chronicler duty may also come back to the same extent. During the research period, however, LP journalists distinguish themselves from it and considered it as essentially obsolete.

Finally, my research found a third main difference regarding autonomy, which is the wall between opinion and news. The wall is central for US reporters’ understanding of professionalism, where even outliers (i.e. those who blur this line) believe in its importance. This separation does not exist in Germany and is not significant in terms of professional worth. Extremists go as far as saying that their news accounts always blur those lines, on purpose and with the intention to polarize. Pursuing a certain position, furthermore, is often seen as desirable for providing good journalism in the LP.

There are some insightful contrasts in the discussion on public responsibility. The general idealism, which is shared by almost all of these journalists, is much more high-flung in the US than in Germany. However, US journalists also have more concrete
obligations in mind in connection to it, namely keeping tabs on public spending (representing the tax-paying public) and exposing waste and abuse in this regard. Though also shared in both cases, the relative oblivion towards whether readers pay attention to their stories is stronger in the US. In Germany, on the other hand, journalists working for public service broadcasters exhibit a particularly strong responsibility to the public. This has institutional reasons, to be sure, as the public service broadcasting system is relatively strong compared to the US. LP reporters in general seemed more explicitly aware of their responsibility of creating or shaping the public sphere and influencing public opinion formation.

The German notion of “Einordnung” is distinctive and, though related to analysis, has a different connotation. Both relate to assigning a more central role to the journalist, his or her contextual knowledge and judgment. “Einordnung” is a more expansive notion that encompasses different practices that give more importance to journalists (including analysis but also providing background, evaluate, assess, commentate). This general tendency is similar to the US where analysis conceptually captures this general trend. To further speculate, the concept of analysis, with its scientistic undertone, seems especially commensurable with the objectivity norm, implying that judgments being made are not at the discretion of subjectivity but based on knowledge and careful deliberation.

3) One general observation is that the reference point for how LCA journalists drew boundaries was more often their immediate environment. LP reporters relied to a larger extent on external referents, such as national stories or episodes in occupational history, rather than the press corps itself. I do not believe that this is a function of a deeper immersion in the US field on my part. As the beginning of this chapter suggests,
intra-corps boundary drawing is even done publicly in the LCA, which I could not discern at all in the German case.

News and the reporting that yielded it (information gathering, negotiating with informants, etc.) are almost equivalent in respect to journalists’ self-understanding and professional boundary work. What all of these accounts also indicate is that reporters from opposite corners of the journalistic field, those assumed to be mostly driven by market forces (tabloids) and by professional standards (broadsheets), imagine their respective opponents to hold radically different journalistic values. Notions like “tabloid culture” suggest that journalists consider themselves to belong to a different occupational culture. On a semiotic level, boundaries provide a different picture: namely, the beliefs they express and use to morally pollute their counterparts are essentially the same beliefs.

Journalists have an all-encompassing shared understanding of journalistic professionalism, which is based on a rather simple cultural code according to which they distinguish between professional and unprofessional journalism. This code is entrenched in a shared professional discourse and mythology that discriminates between good and bad journalism. They employ this code to distinguish themselves from each other, to make claims about the brilliance or inferiority of journalistic work and to defend professional boundaries. It crystallizes in the claims being made about bad and good journalism in interviews, conversations (face-to-face, digitally), and news coverage.

The differences within each social setting and between the two cases are thus not of a foundational nature (except on two dimensions) but are explicable by variations of significance assigned to these principles at different locations of the journalistic field and
salience regarding the particular form of journalism they practice (e.g. for a columnist in the US, expressing opinion is desirable).

Table 1: Code of Journalistic Professionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Journalism</th>
<th>Bad Journalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurate</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetically appealing</td>
<td>Unappealing, boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diligent</td>
<td>Lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeptic</td>
<td>Credulous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent thinking</td>
<td>Pack thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impartial</td>
<td>Partisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Instrumentalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth-driven</td>
<td>Advocacy-driven (Ger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual</td>
<td>Opinion-laden (USA)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Unlike the LP, Fred Dicker stands out as a key figure in the LCA. In fact, he questions one central assertion of field theory, namely that actors with most agency are those who hold most capital in the field. We would assume those actors to be those journalists from the most well-respected news outlets, which are economically healthy on top of everything. The New York Post is not a well-respected newspaper within the journalistic field, nor is it economically viable (but is sustained by a powerful multinational company, News Corporation). Dicker is so influential because he inhabits a hybrid position in the field and draws on distinct cultural representations simultaneously: critical watchdog journalist, on the one hand, and promoter of political agendas, on the other. He can push positions on some level more convincingly than politicians because he does not have immediate financial or electoral benefits from holding them. By delivering those positions in an aggressive way against its opponents, he maintains the impression of engaging in watchdog journalism. His power in the journalistic field accrues from drawing upon its autonomous principles and heteronomous principles equally.
Chapter 5: Press Corps: Packs of Hounds, Flocks of Sheep and Lone Wolves

The Dark Sides of the Pack

February 7, 2010. It’s Super Bowl Sunday. The Capitol editor of the Associated Press (AP), Mike Gormley, contacts Governor Paterson’s communications director, Peter Kauffmann, at noon. In a disclosed email correspondence, he offers him “the only fair shot you’re likely to get” to comment on sex scandal allegations against the Governor. Initiated by the New York Post, rumors had circulated at the State Capitol for over a week that a State Trooper, making his routine rounds at the Governor’s mansion, walked in on the Paterson having sex with a woman who was not his wife. On Friday February 5, 2010, John Koblin of The New York Observer fed these rumors on Twitter, linking them to an alleged investigation by the Times that is about to drop a “bombshell” on Paterson. This was flanked by Liz Benjamin, then of the New York Daily News, who cooked up the sex scandal rumor again, linking them to the alleged “bombshell story” that “a major newspaper” is working on. She insinuated that this one would be “far worse” than the extramarital affairs Paterson acknowledged right after he took office after


Eliot Spitzer resigned in the wake of a prostitution scandal. All this boiled down to a collective anticipation amongst the press that Paterson will resign soon, which would repeat itself in the following months.

Paterson’s communications director denies rumors and responds to Gormley’s email inquiry that “the press is chasing a phantom fear of being scooped by a [New York] Times story that will have no major revelations.” This competition for breaking news or getting scoops has been described to me by reporters as connected to an anxiety-laden scenario, which involves coming to work one day and having an editor yell at them for not having a story a competing newspaper does have.

Just as the New Orleans Saints score their first points in the Super Bowl through a field goal, reducing Indianapolis’ lead to 10-3, Gormley writes Kauffman that he does not want to print rumors, yet he finds it hard “to ignore the shitstorm of the last few days” (ibid.). Kauffmann again tries to argue Gormley out of the story, saying that there was no connection between a probable Times story and those juicy rumors. But Gormley tells him that the AP will run the story in seven minutes and that he needs his comment. Just as he pushes “send,” The Who move from “Teenage Wasteland” into “Who are You”—in the early 2000s better known as the title song of CSI—in the Halftime Show of the Super Bowl, where the Indianapolis Colts lead 10-6. There is, however, little resemblance between the scientific sterility of a crime scene investigation and the nerve-racking situation Gormley finds himself in at that point. The AP ultimately runs the story, shortly after the second half of the game begins and, measured by the current turn-around time of

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news, *long* before the Saints beat the Colts 31-17. The story opens with the claim that Governor Paterson met with leading figures of the Democratic party to discuss his future “as questions swirl around the state capitol about a variety of unproven accusations involving the Democratic governor’s personal conduct.”

Despite the use of qualifiers—“unsubstantiated claims” and “whisper campaign”—the AP as the model of fairness and ethical rigor in journalism elevates those rumors to the national stage by moving them to the wire, legitimizing them as publishable for others in the process, and setting the agenda for New York political news in particular.

On the following day, Gormley interviews the Governor—now forced to respond—who rebuts all accusations, denoting the initial *New York Post* column as “fabricated.” The ensuing e-mail correspondence between Gormley and Kauffmann indicates resentments by the latter. He blames the AP for being prompted by a “flurry of blog items … to run a story about the phantom story.” This seems to induce Gormley to explain himself to Kauffmann and tell him that he was pressured by his editors to run the story. On the following day he claims that this quasi-apology was a draft of an email that he should have never sent to Kauffmann or anybody for that matter. In a revised version of that email, he leaves out the part that reveals internal tensions in the AP on that night. Whether intended or not, or if true or not, the “draft” sent on February 11th 2010 was written by a journalist subjected to corporate pressures that threatened to

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compromise not only his professional integrity, but also his livelihood. It deserves to be quoted in some detail here because it points to some fundamental problems that apply not only to the Albany press culture:

We live in a world in which a person everyone seems to agree is a good man is getting trashed like I’ve never seen. Nixon had far more support. But the world is also messed up because of the fear/benefit of the tabloids. Every political entity says they hate the [New York] Post, but everyone caters to them at one time or another. Until that ends, there will always be a streak of tabloid in all Albany coverage. But that doesn’t make it right. Between you and I and I realize our relationship may be over _ I will tell you what I shouldn’t tell anyone. On Sunday, as on Saturday and several days before, I reported out every rumor and found no proof of drugs or affairs. … On Sunday, after 10 hours of reporting, a top editor decided they needed a story. He wanted a story that simply said, based on rumor he heard from a reporter who heard it from a tabloid reporter, that the governor was going to resign. … I argued with several editors, all of whom wanted something. I had a sourced story on the conversations with legislators that they wanted to run in 15 minutes because it was late in the night. I, of course, said that wasn’t enough time to give the governor’s office fair treatment. I was told it was. … (At this point it’s important to note an [sic] very strict AP rule: No story can hit the wire with an anonymous source unless the writer’s byline is on top.) At 8 p.m., I was told by my boss that he would push the button on the anonymous source story at 8:15 p.m., with or without the governor’s office on-the-record response. The editor said we would write it through when you give it to us, and he suspected you guys were intentionally delaying comment so it would end up on the wire too late for newspapers. I again said bullshit. At 8:13 p.m., without your comment on the record, I called and said I was pulling my byline on the one-sided, sourced story. Panic set in for the editors. At this point, my position as capitol editor and my AP career was threatened (such are the cut throat times in journalism today). I’m not asking for credit for this, it’s a simple, basic duty of a journalist, one we’ve all done in our career. You called back soon after and I slowly added your comment because you wanted Richie Fife or someone to provide the other half of it. Please note the story that I blocked was: "ALBANY _ Gov. David Paterson is considering resigning amid persistent rumors about his personal behavior." That’s the story that everyone was ready to do. (Ibid.)

Gormley then went on to defend the story that ultimately did run on the wire, paragraph by paragraph. In the withdrawal on the next day from the email quoted above that was never meant to be sent, according to Gormley, he wrote that he initially used “poetic license” to defend himself. He said he was stressed and was afraid that “irreparable damage” was done to their relationship and that “my email account was just
wrong in tone and content” (Ibid.).

This episode brings together several issues that are of key importance in this study: political press corps can be intensely competitive social settings. While competition certainly has positive consequences also, the anxiety of “being scooped” by competitors tends to foster homogeneity of news discourse. Editors who are geographically and socially removed from the beat but more involved with the economic realities of news organizations fuel and amplify this anxiety. They usually do not possess the background knowledge about inner workings and intricacies of the media-politics game of political apparatuses reporters cover and thus the means to make informed assessments. The downside of reporters’ immersion is that this knowledge, which is so essential for critical journalism, is always paralleled by hearsay and rumors. The preoccupation with discerning the value of insider discourses (rather than other concerns, like public relevancy) is part of why such an institutional setting is described as a bubble or echo chamber.

This incident also shows that tabloids’ laxer sourcing standards gives them agency to advance political conflict immediately to the public realm. This is why they often succeed in setting the political/news agenda and dragging the rest of the press corps with them (one of my interviewees circumscribes this dynamic as “tabloid culture”). This may well be a micro-social manifestation of a larger trend of “tabloidization,” which is further promoted by economic austerity of print media. A former gubernatorial spokesperson, formerly a journalist and purportedly a believer in the ideal, if not the practice of journalism, explains how press events can be “tabloidized” by a single reporter:
When … Fred [Dicker] is sitting in the red room, yelling at a Governor, are all the TV stations rolling on it and they’re all gonna air it tonight? Of course they are! Of course they are! Is the AP gonna run a story on it? Yeah they are! And does it ratchet up the tension, again this … blood in the water idea: all these other reporters are like “oh, Fred is all worked up, I’d better be worked up too!” … I’ve been in the room on both ends of that, I’ve been in the room as a reporter and I’ve been in the room as someone who works for the Governor’s office and I’ve seen how reporters react when reporters see when Fred is hard charging. And they all privately will tell you that he is ridiculous. When they get in the room with him and he is sticking some Governor with questions, they’re asking the follow up questions. (Interview, 28 February 2011)

In the episode described above, competitive anxiety and tabloidization in combination with the assumption that the competitor with highest professional esteem, The New York Times, is working on this story further lowered the inhibition threshold to publish rumors.189 Blogs and Twitter, which lack editorial control (that could buffer the feeding frenzy early on), lend themselves for initiating and driving a story until it assumes a life of its own. This can fuel this process even further and accelerate rumor-mills. With other journalists as their most attentive audience, they create echo chambers in which feedback loops of collective agitation are intensified. As Buffalo News’ Tom Precious noted in the aftermath of this episode:

Prodded by ‘shocking’ and ‘stunning’ and ‘bombshell’ authoritatively written reports by several newspaper blog sites, and then picked up by liberal and conservative political and gossip blogs around the country, Albany has been overtaken by the newest form of scandal: one that hasn’t even been revealed.190

All of these dynamics of collective decision-making and construction of news can be subsumed as pack journalism, a multidimensional phenomenon hardly any state house

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189 The disclosed emails actually revealed that the Times was investigating on this issue but the story that they were working on at around February 7th 2010 was not connected to this but dealt with a domestic violence incident a member of Paterson’s administration was involved in and that the Governor’s office allegedly tried to cover-up. See: Hakim, Danny and William K. Rashbaum. 2010. For Paterson Confidant, Fast Rise and Questions. The New York Times, February 17, p. A1. Retrieved March 10, 2014 (LexisNexis Academic).

reporter denies exists and constitutes a problem for his or her work. Apart from that, there are upsides to packs as well. One could argue that such collectivities ensure accountability of politics and that their decline or absence would impede it. Whether positive or negative, such collective dynamics are significant for public debate, decision-making and power struggles in the political realm. The sex-scandal was one in a series of damaging rumor-turned-news stories on Governor Paterson, some of which had stronger factual bases than this one. The news story by the *Times* that came out eventually did not address these rumors. President Obama publicly requested him to withdraw, David Paterson’s approval rating further plummeted and he ultimately decided not to run for Governor in late February of 2010.

**Mentalities and Social Orders of Press Corps**

This chapter deals with this ambivalence of the collectivity of press corps and pack journalism. I will first provide some more context about the social settings, especially the associations, their purposes as well as social relations, spatial arrangements and routines of the Albany and Munich state house press. I will then discuss press corps as competitive social arrangements as well as sources of professional solidarity and as countervailing power against political pressures. Finally, I will discuss the multilayered notion of pack journalism and more generally what it means when a group of competing reporters acts collectively.
The Associations: Legislative Correspondents Association and Bayerische Landtagspresse

Organization and History of the Associations

The Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) Inc. in Albany was founded in 1900 or earlier (the exact date is unknown) and is one of the oldest press associations in the USA. It is a non-profit corporation and files as a civic league with the IRS (since 1989). The LCA hardly appears as an association, except 1) as a distinct space on the third floor of the State Capitol, right between the Senate and Assembly, housing members’ offices and 2) their annual political satire show, which they stage in front of politicians and lobbyists sometime in mid- or late spring. The first LCA show was staged in 1900 (it’s the longest running show of that kind), the year after the 32-year construction work on the New York State Capitol was officially finished. Consequently, the LCA must have come into existence that year or earlier. I attended two dress rehearsals in 2009 and 2011 (the second time, inhabiting the status of an unofficial “mascot” of the press corps, I was asked to collect tickets at the entrance), which happen one night before the show in front of political staff, friends and families of reporters. The idea of the show is that politicians watch themselves being parodied by singing reporters and then get the chance for rebuttals, either on stage or in prerecorded videos.

The political satire show of this sort has tradition in the US political culture. For instance, “Inner Circle” (since 1922) is another well-known format in New York City, which mainly focuses on lampooning of the mayor by the press, followed by the mayor’s rebuttal. The White House Correspondents dinner (since 1920) is another example, though in a different format (a comedian is invited to make fun of the US president and
the press, followed by the president making fun of himself and the press). The political satire show is a playful ritual of boundary maintenance that enables journalists to tell politicians what they really think of them, with due ironic distance. Though the internet now provides more commentary outlets for journalists (e.g. on social media), the tradition is indicative for the occupational culture of US journalism and its boundaries.

The Maximilianeum in Munich houses the state legislature (“Landtag”) of Bavaria since 1949 and was built in 1874. The association “Bayerische Landtagspresse” (LP) was founded in January 23, 1957 and since 1992 its official name (in the registry of associations at the local court in Munich) is “Bayerische Landtagspresse - Landespressekonferenz Bayern e. V. (BLPK).” In the bylaws, it says, “[the association] has the purpose of facilitating journalistic work and representing occupational interests of its members opposite the assembly, state government and [political] parties” (my translation).191 What this entails exactly will be discussed in more detail in the following section. In brief, it means that the association acts collectively on behalf of its members (individuals or the whole group) if they are discriminated or wronged by political actors.

Criteria for LP membership is a full-time occupation as a journalist in Munich and continuous reporting duties on Bavarian state politics. The LP, furthermore, expects “that this occupation is carried out based on one’s own perception and information gathering” (Ibid.).192 A condition for membership, in other words, is to be on-location and witness political processes first-hand (“aus Augenschein”) rather than from afar. The bylaws


192 Original: “dass die Tätigkeit aufgrund eigener Wahrnehmung und selbst eingeholter Informationen erfolgt.”
further declare that the association organizes press conferences and background
discussions. Judging from conversations with reporters, however, only the latter happens
on a regular basis (while some would prefer that the LP also organized regular press
conferences, as it is customary for the “Bundespressekonferenz” in Berlin). About once a
month, the LP invites one person (usually a politician) to a background discussion, which
is open to all members and to members only (I was not allowed to participate). It creates
a conversational space, defined by a collective confidentiality agreement between
informants and the press that everything is off-the-record. The hope is that invited guests
talk openly and provide journalists with more contextual knowledge than they would
have otherwise. According to some informants, this is true sometimes while other times
discussions do not provide new insights.

These two aspects, defending its members’ interests and organizing background
discussions, have been described to me as the main purposes of the LP. Both do not apply
for the LCA: There are no collective background conversations in an organized fashion.
There are few off-the-record events but politicians usually organize them (e.g. the
traditional Christmas dinner at the Governor’s mansion) and they are not intended as a
professional exchange of information in the first place. Furthermore, the LCA does not
defend individual members against political pressure or exclusion from information.
There are rare cases, however, where collective interests of the press are defended by the
LCA. This happened in 2013, for instance, when the LCA presidents wrote a letter
complaining about the exclusion of the press and protesters from a Republican hearing.193

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(http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/media/2013/05/8529818/albany-reporters-protest-being-blocked-
republican-hearing).
Older reporters, in the LP and to a lesser degree in the LCA, told me that relations between journalists and politicians were much less adversarial in earlier days. One LP reminisces:

In my beginnings at the Landtag in 1978, older colleagues still saw themselves as a “part of the parliament,” as an exclusive circle. They all automatically received the Bavarian order of merit, just like elected representatives. That’s long gone and it all became much more democratic. (Interview, 22 November 2011)

US journalists who had been reporting at the Capitol in earlier days say that they think there was more socializing going on between sources and reporters. One of them said that he had a virtually unlimited expense account (unimaginable for present-day reporters) and took sources out for dinner all the time, while admitting that he got too close and actually became friends with some of them (Interview, 11 May 2011).

Another important contrast between the two press corps is that the ranks of the LCA have thinned much more in recent years than the LP. As other state house press corps throughout the US (Dorroh 2009), it has experienced severe cutbacks in the early 2000s. Seven news bureaus of mostly regional and local newspapers have closed at the State Capitol between 2005 and 2011. In the LP, the bureau of the regional paper Donaukurier has closed two years before my research in Munich; the one before that (of the Mittelbayerische Zeitung) closed in 1999. Both newspapers, however, are still (or again) represented by correspondents in the LP who are not reporting full-time about state politics but who are there when the Landtag is in session. However, because of these experiences and because of staff cuts in some of their news organizations, correspondents in both cases have crisis awareness, though in a much stronger sense in the US case.

There are also some ongoing ethical controversies in the press corps about the LCA, concerning the very foundations of the association, which, to my knowledge, do not exist in the LP. Besides the fact that profits are donated, the annual LCA show involves monetary transactions between journalists and political actors (i.e. reporters selling tickets to politicians). This has been a contentious issue and is the reason why some individual reporters and news organizations represented in the LCA do not participate. This includes the New York Times, which has announced through its columnist Frank Rich in 2007 that it will no longer participate at the White House Correspondents dinner because it was a “crystallization of the press’s failures in the post-9/11 era.”\textsuperscript{195} According to one of my informants, this pertained to all such events, which meant that the Times’ Albany bureau did not partake in the LCA show thereafter (personal communication, January 19, 2014).

What has also been subject of ethical discussions in the past is that the New York State Senate pays the LCA press room manager and that the state provides office space for news organizations free of charge.\textsuperscript{196} The press room manager, who is essentially responsible for scheduling of press conference, sorting mail, handling security entrance cards for the press, etc., is less debated than the provision of free office space, however. Though the majority appears to find ethical resolution in the fact that office assignments are handled by the LCA and not the state, this arrangement has caused debate and mild controversy in the past. Gannett News Service moved out of the State Capitol to an office building across the street in 1981\textsuperscript{197} after publishing a critical story about former

\textsuperscript{197} According to Richard Benedetto, personal communication, August 22, 2011.
Governor Hugh Carey’s administration’s expenses and then being itself faced with criticism for receiving free rent at the LCA offices.

Even though this rearranged situation is ongoing and goes back to this one incidence, involving reporters (and politicians) who are not even present anymore, successors in the Gannett bureau seemed to draw professional meaning from this spatial distance. Former bureau chief, Jay Gallagher, is quoted in Hammond’s story about this circumstance as saying, “it works for us, but I don’t want to pass judgment on anybody else … I feel better about covering the capitol knowing we don’t get free space from the state” (ibid). According to one informant, Gannett never discussed to move back in the Capitol subsequently and deemed the $20,000 annual rent for the office space across the street “reasonable” (Email conversation, 22 May 2009).

This episode may seem idiosyncratic but aligns itself in a series of instances in which news media increasingly refused perks from the state following Watergate, as one of my senior informants told me. Right around that time, some media organizations also demanded to be billed when reporters were invited to functions. The Times insisted on paying airfare when travelling with the governor, a practice this particular informant was critical of because it excluded smaller, local newspaper from these trips (Fieldnotes, 22 April 2011).

Spatial flows of State House Reporting

LCA offices were fixed workstations for specific news bureaus and reporters. Several smaller offices were located in the hallway between the two legislative chambers. In the main pressroom, portraits of past Governors and posters of past LCA shows decorated the walls. The social center of the common area was constituted by two green
leather armchairs with ruptured armrests next to an even older looking newspaper stand and an open space. As much of the rest of the interior, both looked as if they had been standing there for a century. There were several empty desks, which were sometimes used by reporters on temporary assignment at the Capitol. A narrow stairway led up to a half-floor, which reporters called the “shelf” and which was considered the most prestigious space (Dash referred to it as the “inner sanctum” of the LCA).

The press room in the Landtag was not used permanently by LP reporters but only on days when the legislature was in session. The room was relatively small (compared to the LCA room) and reporters shared workstations. There were several news organizations represented that have their main newsroom in Munich (Abendzeitung, Bayerische Staatszeitung, BR, Münchner Merkur, Süddeutsche Zeitung), other newspapers provided offices for their correspondents in Munich, usually in proximity of the Maximilianeum.

On days when the legislature was not in session, LCA reporters sat in their offices most of the time, though even then there are some events they attended to in the building. On session days, they were out and about most of the time, talking to legislators in the lobby outside the chamber before and after but hardly attended sessions themselves. This is partly due to the fact that there is an internal audio as well as television broadcast of legislative sessions at the Capitol. Reporters had these broadcasts on in their offices while they were filing stories, looking up from their computer screens on occasion when something interesting was happening. Another reason—and this is similar in Munich—is that majorities are formed before the debate happens in the plenary session. Besides talking to political sources on session days, they often met them by chance while walking through the building. Because of that, some reporters made it a point to regularly get up
from their desks on less eventful days to walk rounds and see whether they meet someone who tells them something interesting directly or after work over drinks.

Often enough, they were approached by sources (mostly spokespeople) at their desks, who pitched upcoming events, came by after events to provide further information, often on background, or bring things “in perspective” (also known as “spin”). A more proactive way to talk to sources is a stakeout. It occurred when journalists intended to talk to one (or several) politician about a certain issue but there was no official opportunity to ask questions scheduled on a given day. If reporters knew or found out in that situation that politicians were at a particular location at a certain time, they (alone or in a group) staked out the area or passage politicians needed to walk through to more or less force them to respond to questions.

The problem with stakeouts is that reporters often didn’t know when the official would appear exactly, which meant that they waited for long stretches of time (sometimes hours). As a consequence, these waits were opportunities to talk to each other and for me to listen into these conversations. This was not the only opportunity for conversations among competitor-colleagues, however, since the LCA is an open space—also partly and sadly due to the many news organizations, which have moved out—that is conducive for casual conversations. During my fieldwork, befriended reporters regularly dropped into each other’s offices. They met in the main room where the newspaper stand is or on the shelf gallery, which included out-of-use poker tables, because there was a fridge reporters shared. Shelf reporters frequently talked in the middle of their shared office space, typically at the end of the day.
On session days, LP reporters were also outside of the pressroom most of the time, roaming around and chatting with sources. They did spend time (certainly more than LCA reporters) watching the session itself on the press gallery of the plenary hall, however. When Minister-President Seehofer attended the plenary session, he usually came in earlier to talk to the press. Because of this, a bunch of reporters awaited him, which is the closest the LP came to a stakeout. Although Seehofer seemed to talk casually with reporters, he used these conversations to send specific messages (to opponents and/or voters), share assessments and break news. Though the scope of news was hardly earthshaking in this context, it was significant enough that many reporters found it essential to be there and listen. One spokesperson said derogatorily about this practice, that Seehofer acted as the “public chatterbox” and stood there to “throw some bones,” which diverted media attention away from the legislative process (Interview, 23 April 2012).

The location where these as well as most other conversations between journalists and sources happened is the *Steinerner Saal* (“stony hall”), which is on the third floor of the Maximilianeum. Despite an occasional bunch that revolves around a politician there, I have not heard of or witnessed stakeouts in the way they happened in Albany (involving reporters hovering in front of offices). When I talked to LP reporters about the significance of spatial access to politicians, many referred to the Steinerne Saal as the most important place to get valuable information or just capture moods during session days, which could only be accrued through witnessing directly and face-to-face conversations. Though LCA reporters equally emphasized direct interaction as important,
there is not a single place of such centrality as an informational stock exchange in the State Capitol as the Steinerne Saal in the Maximilianeum.

LP reporters sometimes just walked around the Steinerne Saal and talked casually with different people or waited for someone specific to ask questions, which were often unrelated to the political agenda of the day, of course. TV reporters tended to meet and talk to politicians in the Steinerne Saal and took them to neighboring rooms for interviews, especially if the room was crowded and noisy. There was also a buffet in a passage, which connected the Steinernen Saal to another hall, with several tables where conversations with sources but also among journalists happened.

The Landesgaststätte, a restaurant, on the first floor of the Maximilianeum, which was the second most important informational stock exchange for reporters. They had their own corner with bar tables on the right side of the counter, overviewing the rest of the room, which was furnished with regular tables. One of my informants told me that the LP, in an effort of “associational lobbyism,” as he put it, pushed it through when the Landesgastätte was reconstructed two years earlier. They had a similar place in the old room, which was not included in the original layout for the reconstruction. It was mostly relevant for journalists to observe (e.g. who is having lunch with who) while talking among themselves.

Another important difference to Albany was that there was a no-protest zone (“Bannmeile”) around the Maximilianeum, which is typical for legislative buildings in Europe. Furthermore, you could not just enter the Landtag if you wished. You needed to book a tour, have an invitation or proof that you are a journalist. The first time I was at the entrance of the Maximilianeum, I looked around when I was jogging by and
immediately drew a suspicious look on myself from a policeman. The next time I only had a day-pass and was told where exactly I must go and that I could not just roam around freely.

My first visit to the State Capitol 2.5 years earlier could not have been more different. Though there was a security gate and scanner, the State Troopers did not even ask me where I intended to go. The building was truly open to the public (including activists and protesters). Visitors and protesters accessed the building through one of the three security gates, on the west or east entrance on the first floor of the Capitol or through the underground concourse that connects the Capitol with the other state government buildings on Empire State Plaza. Because the public actively used this access to express their will, part of journalists’ attention was devoted to protest actions that frequently accompanied political deliberations. Journalists’ views on organized protests in the Capitol were rather cynical, however. Some activist groups handed out schedules to LCA reporters in the, which listed protest actions that would take place on a given day at the Capitol. It appeared to me that the more professionalized activism was the less interesting it became to journalists, who missed spontaneity and authenticity, which resonates with Sobieraj’s (2011) ethnographic work on the media-activism nexus. Journalists felt forced to cover protests nonetheless because of their news value, which consisted of performative representations of public will that parallel (often dry) policy debates.

To give a concrete example: the period of state budget negotiations in March is always a period when multiple interests groups decent on the Capitol to make their claim heard. One day before the passage of the 2011 budget, one particular group of about 35
protesters blocked the entrance to the executive offices, as announced beforehand. They expected to be witnessed by the press while they were handcuffed and led away by the police. The plan was successful. State Troopers prompted them to leave voluntarily, read them their rights one by one, restrained them with plastic handcuffs and led them away—all in a civilized fashion. As customary at such instances, there was someone from the police filming for documentary evidence as well.

I talked to one TV reporter about it, who said she was annoyed by how staged these protests were but says she had to cover it because otherwise some producer would complain on the next day. She said it would not be a separate story but an element in her budget story of the day. One older competitor-colleague overheard our conversation and said that back in the 1960s they would have just stormed the office, screaming “freedom.” But now it was all set up, he said wearily, “you are here, you’re gonna go here, and then you will be arrested” (Fieldnotes, 23 March 2011).

Social Relations in the Press Corps

I did not notice any significance to the position of LCA president in terms of social rank within the press corps. I was referring to the president of the LCA at the time as “your president” to other reporters at the beginning of my field research. Neither did they find this designation funny, nor did they know who I was referring to immediately. To be sure, there are hierarchies in the LCA, however. Fred Dicker may have actively claimed the position of “dean of the press corps” and outsiders may have also attributed it to him but he was simultaneously the most controversial figure within the LCA. Office space assignments reflected some aspects of corps hierarchies, namely organizational influence and seniority: the shelf houses the New York Times, NYS Public radio and The
Buffalo News (both represented by two of the most seasoned reporters in the LCA) next to Newsday. The AP office (two to three reporters), furthermore, was an actual room with a door that was more than four times as big than that of Bloomberg News (one reporter). By far the tiniest office was shared by YNN and NY1 (three, sometimes four people), both TV stations that typically require more equipment than print reporters. I have attributed this at the time to the fact that they only recently staffed up and that TV journalists enjoy less professional recognition by the virtue of their medium. Apart from hierarchies, spatial divisions also reflected competitive lines since direct competitors (e.g. New York Daily News and New York Post, NYS Public Radio and WCNY, Bloomberg and AP etc.) were not in direct earshot of each other.

Besides the fact that workbenches in the pressroom were shared, social relations within the LP were structured differently than in the LCA. The chairman of the LP, Uli Bachmeier, was highly regarded. This had partly to do with his seniority, which was actually a condition for holding the position as chairman. LCA reporters of all ranks take annual turns on the association presidency, on the other hand. In the LP, furthermore, it was my impression that “opinion leaders,” those who generated the hard core of topical foci of state house coverage, are also social leaders who did not only seem to “work sources” but also their competitor-colleagues when they sat side by side on the press gallery.

Judging from my interviewees, an average state house reporter was in his early 40s in the LCA, mid 40s in the LP, a white male and has been working as a journalist for about 20 years. Half of LCA reporters I interviewed had been on this assignment as state house reporters for more than five years (10 on average), half of my LP informants 10
years or longer (12 on average). There were more reporters in the LCA who have been in Albany for a relatively short time, counterbalanced by some reporters who had been there for decades and few around the average. Seniority was distributed more evenly in the LP in comparison.

Unless the position was fixed-term by the organization (only in some rare cases in the LCA, like Newsday), being the state house correspondent was in many cases a long-term or final position of a journalistic career, especially in regional newspapers. This was even truer for LP reporters, many of who were probably going to retire in this position. For younger journalists, being the state house reporter was typically a springboard to move on to other ventures. In both cases, several journalists had switched news bureaus on the beat at some point in their careers. This is only reasonable, assuming that some news organization would want to hire journalists who already have expertise and connections in state politics. Other news organizations utilized periods of institutional reconstitution, i.e. when a new administration comes into office, to build up young reporters. An example would be the New York Times, whose reporters generally did not tend to stay on this assignment for much longer than four years.

Because of this career structure, circulation and professional recognition of news organizations did not simply map on to symbolic hierarchies within the press corps. Some regional newspapers, which are generally well regarded (in the US as well as in Germany), had correspondents who had been on this beat for decades. They mostly enjoyed great esteem among their peers, which had to do with expertise, institutional knowledge as well as past journalistic accomplishments. It also had to do with the fact that long-established and broad source networks procure exclusive stories and, more
importantly, different story angles, which distinguished their coverage from their competitors.

Another feature, which united New York and Bavarian state politics and news coverage thereof, is that these setting were male-dominated. Because of this, female reporters in the LP and LCA talked about their gender as an impediment in their job. One female LCA journalist did not like the undertone it had for her to hang out with (mostly male) sources after hours. Even more importantly, several women felt they needed to assert themselves much more to earn respect of their peers than men. This is also discussed in a portrait of Elizabeth Benjamin in *Columbia Journalism Review*. This article pictures Benjamin as particularly tough and relentless, an impression I share from observing her from a distance (she declined several of my interview requests), and explains this by her gender:

Politico’s Maggie Haberman can sympathize with charges that Benjamin’s a spitfire. “I think she’s aggressive, but I think she’s appropriately aggressive,” says Haberman. “It’s New York and she’s a woman. People can pretend that it’s the same for us, but it isn’t. Even more so in Albany. It is such a man’s world; just look around at all the women lawmakers.”

“You don’t have that many options as a woman in Albany or in politics in general,” says Benjamin when I ask her, weeks after we meet, about her tough reputation. “You’re either written off because you’re a woman and it’s a boys’ club, you’re viewed as a sex object, or you’re a hard-arsed bitch.” She’s been called all three; criticisms that have intensified since she began on TV. Mail—much of it from older women—regularly arrives at YNN complaining that Benjamin is too abrasive and not deferential enough to the politicians she interviews. But Vielkind is quick to defend his friend. “In the halls of power, people respect power,” he says. “As many of us remember, sometimes the only thing you can do to make a bully stop picking on you, and take you seriously, is to punch him in the nose.”

Concerning this last statement, I have found this kind of language to be typical for LCA reporters (not so much LP reporters)—a depiction of the game and its power

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relations and their own immersion in it by a language of violence (e.g. kicking someone’s teeth in, crucify someone, beating the shit out of someone), which took me aback at first but which I quickly grew accustomed to because of the frequency it occurred.

**Corps Solidarity**

Press corps are competitive social arrangements at their base, which the following sections will focus on. Apart from this, there is a sense of professional solidarity, camaraderie and in some cases friendship, which transcend competitive divisions. Jeremy Tunstall (1971) has denoted this ambivalent relationship as *competitor-colleagues*. All state political correspondents in this study see their competitors mostly as colleagues, in a way as substitutes for newsroom peers. One LCA reporter, who has been on the Capitol beat for only a few years when I interviewed him, said, “I think it’s very warm, I feel I gain a tremendous amount from them, I feel proud that I have earned their respect on some level” (Interview, 18 May 2010). Another young LCA reporter describes the camaraderie that accompanies competition as many others did, including LP correspondents:

LCA has an odd camaraderie. Well, if one of us, unless it’s a super scoop, you know, exclusive story that we don’t want to share, for the most part they’ll [be] like: “Oh, so and so just said that – you might wanna get that for your story.” Because we know that we’re all pretty much working on the same daily stories. (Interview, 22 April 2010)

Despite the fact that all LCA reporters described the press corps as very competitive, they also said that the relationship was very collegial. One of them told me that he had a particularly bad day when I interviewed him. His editors wanted him to follow (and ideally disprove) a story one competitor-colleague has published that day, who he jokingly referred to as “the devil” on a different occasion (talking to others in my
presence). He was stressed out and unhappy about this because he found the story was just “bullshit.” He mentioned that two of his competitor-colleagues consoled him and went for coffee with him. He added that he considers them his friends (Fieldnotes, 8 September 2010).

In general, LP reporters described the press corps in more positive terms than their US counterparts, as harmonic, as a home or a clique, as a backing and source of collegiality that they would not have otherwise. One young reporter said:

I find the cooperation extremely collegial. What sometimes happens is that you help each other – when you don’t get a quote or when you are just lost or when you don’t reach someone. If a colleague becomes aware of this, you get help. And I find that fantastic because this is a job where you are often a lone wolf. I really appreciate that and it is very friendly, too. Many colleagues are close friends. I find that beautiful. (Interview, 26 March 2012)

LP as well as LCA reporters mentioned such stories of mutual assistance over and over again, especially sharing quotes. They seemed to believe that a press corps appears as a pack of self-interested individuals to an outsider, who would find this kind of mutual support hard to believe. I did not find this significant at first and thus did not explore it further. Possibly many of them entered the press corps only having worked in the newsroom before that, assuming such a competitive situation and were surprised when their competitor-colleagues were more supportive than they expected.

Besides sharing quotes, reporters also share assessments with competitor-colleagues. One young reporter, who constitutes a one-man-bureau like many others in the LP, said that he appreciates the possibility of feedback with other journalists. One

reporter, who does have colleagues from his company at the Landtag, appreciates that competitor-colleagues in the LP are cooperative nonetheless:

Because everybody cannot be everywhere at the same time, you help each other out. I appreciate this very much, really. There is no competitiveness in this sense. … The matter of course and friendliness with which this happens I find very positive. (Interview, 6 December 2011)\textsuperscript{200}

One senior LCA reporter, who a younger and admiring journalists referred to as “god” on several occasions (I took it as a request to pass it on in writing, which I am doing at this moment, albeit confidentially), is generally very competitive and reticent when it comes to talk about his work. He told me that he helps out competitors if they are on the wrong track, however, “because I’ve been here for so long, if I hear a reporter say something that I know is like, ‘you’re missing something there,’ I’ll tell them” (Interview, 17 May 2010). He added that this kind of sharing has increased in recent years when the press corps has been getting smaller.

Besides these similarities, informal mentoring between more senior and younger reporters, at least in minor ways, is something I only heard about in Albany. One journalist who was frequently mentioned is Jay Gallagher from \textit{Gannett News Service}, who has passed away in May of 2010. Several reporters had been supervised by Gallagher when they were interns at the \textit{Gannett} bureau earlier in their career and some have continued to receive mentorship by him as competitor-colleagues, especially in the years before he passed away.

Another, more significant, contrast concerns formal associational manifestation of solidarity in Munich. The LP acts as an interest group not only in theory (in the bylaws)

\textsuperscript{200} Original: “weil es auch nicht so ist, dass alle überall gleichzeitig sein können, hilft man sich gegenseitig aus. Was ich sehr sehr schätze, wirklich. Das ist kein Konkurrenzen denken in dem Sinne. … Die Selbstverständlichkeit und Freundlichkeit mit der das alles da läuft, das finde ich sehr sehr positiv.”
but explicitly and in practice. As mentioned above, this is a primary function of the LP, besides organizing discussion rounds with politicians. Many reporters have emphasized this in the interview and some pointed to concrete examples when the executive board of the association sprung into action against political pressure. This happened, for instance, when political actors are uncooperative, unfairly outcast reporters and cut them off from access to information or exert pressure on superiors to remove a journalist from the beat. One reporter told me that under Minister-President Edmund Stoiber, the state government press office frequently just did not call back, which ensued in a complaint by the LP, defending collective interests in this instance. When a spokesperson “lied offensively” was another instance when the LP took action, he told me, as well as in procedural issues, for instance, pushing for plenary sessions not to be held in the afternoon because of editorial deadlines (Interview, 10 November 2011). There are more extreme examples in the corps history. One senior reporter told me about a former competitor-colleague from a regional newspaper who encountered strong political headwind:

Reporter: For example – that’s already 20 years ago – they wanted to get a colleague of us … fired in connection with [a political scandal] and he indeed lost his job because he reported too critically about the former Minister-President, Max Streibl. The Landtagspresse is a good measure to push back against this.

MR: Did [Landtagspresse] file a complaint?

Reporter: Exactly.

MR: And how did that…

Reporter: Well, the colleague then went to Spiegel, he had an offer from Spiegel, from Donaukurier to Spiegel – those were different times. But Donaukurier fired him under pressure from the Minister-President who wasn’t Minister-President for much longer.201

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201 Original: “Zum Beispiel wollte man, das ist jetzt schon 20 Jahre her, einen Kollegen von uns … im Zuge der Amigo-Affäre rausschmeißen und hat ihn auch aus seiner Zeitung entfernt weil er zu kritisch über den damaligen Ministerpräsidenten Max Streibel geschrieben hat, und da ist die Landtagspresse schon ein gutes Mittel um da dagegenzuhalten.
I: Wie ist das, hat man da Beschwerde eingelegt?
B: Genau.
This case was reported in the press at the time. The following newspaper article quoted from the LP resolution, which called on the Minister-President to withdraw a dismissive statement he had made about the reporter:

Wolfgang Krach was “recognized and esteemed as a diligent, serious correspondent across party lines.” There was “political pressure exerted in the case of Wolfgang Krach, according to information of the association.” The association would observe “political interventions against journalistic work with concern, wherever it occurs.” Part of press freedom was “to respect and endure political evaluations, even if they do not conform to one’s own view.”

In comparison, the LCA as an organization representing the interests of individual members is virtually inexistent. There were instances when politicians ostracized particular reporters but this did not entail concerted action by the association. At times, the LCA takes action for collective interests, however (I have referred to recent instance above). Only one reporter referred to such “concerted efforts” where the LCA writes a complaint letter when a government agency blocks public records, which are subjected to the Freedom of Information Agreement (FOIA). He affirmed, “it will carry some weight, because it is everybody, you know. There is some political weight behind it, ‘cause nobody really wants to upset them” (Interview, 13 September 2010). He spoke in the third person because he himself is not a member of the association anymore, although he has an office in the LCA. Though there was nothing wrong with it on principle, he said that he does not like the image the LCA projects: “The public looking in sees a club of

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I: Und das hat dann auch...Gut, der Kollege ging dann zum Spiegel, der hat dann ein Angebot vom Spiegel gekriegt, vom Donaukurier zum Spiegel, das war damals noch anders, aber der Donaukurier hat ihn gekündigt auf Druck des Bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten und den Bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten gab’s damals nicht mehr lange.”

people who are supposed to be competing and I don’t think it looks good” (Interview, 13 September 2010).

When I asked reporters about the purpose of the association, most of them referred to the LCA show, besides assignment of office spaces. Apart from the Times bureau, another reporter, who happens to be friends with the reporter quoted above, says he has never participated in the LCA show because he finds it “too cozy” (Interview, 17 May 2010). It seemed he made a distinction between more organized forms of associational solidarity in the LCA and informal solidarity between individuals in the competitive-collegial social setting, which he does endorse and engage in.

Corps solidarity is exclusive, furthermore. State house reporters frequently made dismissive remarks about journalists who reported on the same issues and events they attended but who are not members of the press corps. This concerns journalists who report from remote locations and reporters who are only on temporary assignment at the state house or elsewhere (e.g. party conventions, on the campaign trail). One young reporter told me that he has trust in his competitor-colleagues to ask relevant questions at press conferences, which he does not have concerning other journalists:

We all have the same things in our heads and that’s very good. And I feel that level of trust with them that I don’t necessarily feel with people who are not in the LCA. We see that sometimes with television reporters who come to the Capitol but who are not always at the Capitol and who sometimes ask question that you think “what the fuck kind of question was that you idiot! You waste a question asking about underwear, dumb ass!” You know, whereas there are other questions that are unanswered. (Interview, 18 May 2010)

This distinction also concerns local journalists LCA correspondents may encounter when they are on the road with politicians. I asked another young reporter about going on tour with the Governor and about tensions between people from the press corps and local journalists, which other reporters told me about before:
It’s really weird. It’s easy for us to judge but they ask really dumb questions, they ask very provincial questions—which is understandable, it’s their job to ask the local question … You get varying levels of it. Some people ask the appropriate local question, if you are a local TV reporter, that your viewers want to know. Other people ask like “what are your goals for...,” you know, stuff that’s just stupid and shows you got this assignment an hour ago and didn’t know who Andrew Cuomo was before that. You get this weird dynamic. And also they are very start-struck, which is weird. It’s a strange thing. (Interview, 4 May 2011)

As so often the case, LP reporters expressed similar sentiments in a much more cautious way. When I asked one LP reporter whether there were benefits of reporting from outside the bubble, he told me about a story he and his competitor-colleagues covered. A commentary appeared in a competing newspaper, written by a journalist who is not on location, which diverged from the press corps’ assessment. He attributed this to a “lower level of information” on the side of the commentator: “It is more independent but maybe sometimes less competent. That’s the downside” (Interview, 13 June 2012).203 Another reporter said he sometimes wondered about journalists commenting on party conventions who were not even there. He said what was key is “close inspection” (“Augenschein”) because, “politics has a lot to do with interpersonal relations” (Interview, 24 January 2012).204

At a panel discussion at the press club in Munich, the chairman of the LP, Uli Bachmeier, told the audience of an incidence where a reporter from Berlin came to a CSU party convention in Wildbad Kreuth. That reporter asked sources about possible future personnel changes in the state cabinet, received one speculative assessment and turned this immediately into a news story, which was distributed in advance through the news agency dpa. After the panel discussion Bachmeier was interviewed further about

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203 Original: “Es ist unabhängiger aber vielleicht manchmal auch weniger kompetent. Das ist natürlich die Kehrseite davon.”
204 Original: “Politik hat ja unglaublich viel mit zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen zu tun.”
this incidence and said that nobody from the LP would ever do that, “just because somebody says something, which is obviously speculative, and sell it as a fact – that’s not admissible.”

There were also concerns, mostly among more senior journalists, about the withdrawal of correspondents because of cost savings in news organizations in the recent past. One could assume that they would be happy about this since fewer reporters in the corps means less competition and possibly greater discursive influence of those who remain. Far from it, they loathed the reduction of correspondents because they believe the corps can exert less power and politicians are less responsive with fewer notebooks and voice recorders held in their faces. They are also worried that coverage about state politics will deteriorate in general when more and more journalists report from afar, without the necessary background knowledge. These concerns are weaker in the LP, of course, which has experienced less thinning of its ranks.

**Competition**

A striking contrast between the two cases concerns how reporters perceived competition within the press corps, which has been described to me repeatedly as “fierce” and “intense” by LCA reporters. One senior reporter who has been on the Capitol beat for decades said, “the competition here is fierce. It’s so fierce that it drives me crazy” (Interview, 17 May 2010). Curiously, while most LP reporters agree that competition is “sporting” (some even said there was no competition at all) and the relationship to other reporters was “collegial,” there were a few who spoke of exceptions in the corps who

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pursued a more competitive agenda. One of them had a different perception and spoke of intense competition in general. Those who mentioned exceptions referred to one newspaper and its LP reporter in particular who acts more competitive than others by disseminating exclusive advance stories through news agencies. Some referred to this practice as “pseudo-exclusivity,” which one reporter defines by an example: a politician may leak a few pages of a much longer bill to a reporter, who then turns this in such a pseudo-exclusive story, based on incomplete knowledge of the whole text. It means, that I am in a way instrumentalized in that he gives me these five pages, which happen to benefit him and that he wants to place somewhere. It happens sometimes. And then you ask yourself what is exclusive about that if it appears somewhere a day in advance. (Interview, 17 April 2012)

Apart from the fact that the general competitive environment was assessed at more intense overall, LCA journalists drew several lines of competition. The main competition is between the New York City tabloids, *New York Daily News* and *New York Post*. One reporter added the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, which has added a “Greater New York” section in April of 2010 explicitly to compete with the *Times* in metro coverage. One reporter described these competitions as “epic newspaper battles” (Interview, 11 May 2010). The *Journal* assigned one reporter to the state house beat. It turned out that this reporter, Jacob Gershman at the time, mostly covered the state house from New York City, which quickly attenuated the assessment of the competitive threat to the *Times*.

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206 Original: “dann werde ich ja in einer Weise instrumentalisiert, indem er mir gerade diese 5 Seiten gibt, die für ihn gerade vorteilhaft sind oder die er gerne plaziert hat. Also das ist teilweise schon so. Und man frägt sich natürlich wo ist das exklusive an was einen Tag vorher irgendwo ist.”
Although most of the newspaper presented in the LCA served distinct regional markets, the prevalence of online journalism and especially blogging increased competition between them and radiated all through the LCA. One radio reporter said:

I do find I get pulled into online stuff. You know, I’m definably influenced by the blogs. And I want to have stuff out there, too, if the blogs have it. … you have to sort of do a little bit of everything. (Interview, 11 February 2011)

As newspaper became “more like a wire service” because of online journalism, this also meant that news agencies faced more pressure. Though the AP Capitol bureau was rid of its main competitor, United Press International (UPI), which withdrew its correspondents in the mid 1990s, newspaper blogs started to become a competition for immediate news in the mid 2000s. One newspaper reporter, who is very critical of blogging and social media, said that it induced a change of strategy and eventual improvement of AP coverage:

I think the AP is focused on more substantive stuff now. … “The budget of $132 million includes a tax increase of blah blah blah,” rather than “so-and-so reported today that Shelly Silver may be against a property tax cap, based on a knowledgeable source.” The AP used to throw that shit on the AP wire. They don’t do that anymore. They let the blogs do it and I think that’s smart. … They know they’re going to get beat all the time by bloggers on minutia and on the big stuff. Because the bloggers will also say we’ll put something on the blog saying “a deal on the $132 million budget just got struck. More to come.” And it’s up to the AP to put it all out as quickly as possible. The whole story. (Interview, 5 May 2011)

He believes the AP had to accept that they may not be the first in line to break exclusive stories anymore so they focused on being first to publish a more fully substantiated and sourced story, which is suitable for publication in print newspapers that usually have higher sourcing standards than blogs. The social media competition, which he is the first to point out had led to a degradation of journalism, also had indirect positive effects on journalistic actors who refrain from it, in his view.
There is also a difference between LCA and LP in terms of how competition (and its relative inexistence) was generally perceived by reporters. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, LCA reporters associated competitive pressure with anxiety. Unsurprisingly, those who addressed this most openly were female reporters. One of them spoke about the “unspoken pressure” of a leading newspaper breaking a story, which she does not have:

No reporter ever wants to hear the question: “Why didn’t you have this?” It is a lot easier to write a story as much as you can that you have rather than come in and say “I didn’t have it” or “I could have had this but I didn’t.” That’s a really terrifying question to get, first thing in the morning. (Interview, 16 April 2009)

Another journalist said she experienced the competition as frightening, which leads her to sometimes cover stories she originally deemed as irrelevant because her competitor-colleagues follow them. She also talks about an individual competitor entering the scene recently, which was ultimately a positive experience for her:

In a way it was good, because I work harder now. ‘Cause I think: “I’m not letting them get that. This is gonna be mine.” And I have to say, actually it has sharpened me in a way that the print people go through that all the time. And it’s tough, ‘cause you want to be friends with people. But you know, if they get something you don’t, it’s hard to take. So, that’s been new for me, because I was here for [many] years with essentially no competition. (Interview, 11 February 2011)

She added that she also benefited from the fact that her company reacted to this competition by providing her with new equipment. Other LCA reporters confirmed her point about the benefits of this situation and said they were thriving on competition. One senior reporter said in the context of talking about the economic decline of newspaper that, “I wish there were more jobs for more people. I relish the competition. I like the competition” (Interview, 5 May 2011). Another young journalists, who just transferred from another beat to the State Capitol when I interviewed him, found the competition in the LCA “huge,” which he attributed to the fact that many journalists there have settled:
“You have people who have drilled down deep into this government, everything that’s going on, and they are competing against people who have similarly drilled down and that just raises the level,” he said. When I asked him what about US journalism he is proud of, he said, “one of the things I love about it is that competition” (Interview, 24 February 2012).

Apart from the fact that LP journalists perceived the competitive situation as pleasant, many of them drew boundaries in respect to the highly competitive environment in Berlin, which some described as a “shark tank” and as much rougher in comparison to their collegial atmosphere in Munich. One reporter said that a disadvantage of the press corps was a certain danger of a clique:

It can generate a certain herd movement within the Landtagspresse sometimes, which has the advantage that the competitive pressure is not as incredibly great as in Berlin, for example, that’s the sense. Berlin media are focused on producing exclusive reports, come hell or high water. And that means they sell some farfetched stuff … That occurs less here. (Interview, 24 November 2011)\(^\text{207}\)

One LP reporter, who used to work in Berlin, contradicts this by saying that competition within press corps always seems more relentless from the outside than it really is and that there is usually collegiality to be found. He described a scenario when he was still reporting there where one of his direct competitors came too late to a press avail. Rather than rubbing his hands with satisfaction over the competitive advantage, he would fill him in about what was said up to the nuances he discerned as important (Interview, 17 April 2012). One reporter, who also had experience in Berlin, said that Minister-President Seehofer introduced the Berlin style, which includes more informal

\(^{207}\) Original: “Die kann auch manchmal innerhalb der Landtagspresse so eine Art Herdenbewegung entstehen und das hat aber den Vorteil, dass der Konkurrenzdruk nicht so wahnsinnig groß ist wie in Berlin z.B. so dass das Empfinden. Berliner Medien kommt ja auf Teufel komm raus darauf an Exklusivmeldungen zu produzieren. Und da wird halt dann oft ein ziemlich hergeholtes Zeug verkauft … Also das ist bei uns weniger.”
background discussions and using the press for political conflicts (Interview, 24 January 2012).

LCA journalists hardly ever referred to political reporting in Washington D.C. One reporter, who used to be sent on assignments to D.C. every once in a while, said, “to me Washington was too large. There’re thousands, like 3000 reporters there. You show up for events, there could be 150 reporters. You can’t even really sit down with sources in Washington” (Interview, 20 March 2010). Another reporter referred to state politics as “amateurish” in comparison to Washington in terms of strategies pursued to “win the news cycle” (Interview, 21 January 2011). There was really only one LCA journalist who had a particularly negative opinion of the D.C. press corps, which he discussed in the context of the Judith Miller (discussed in chapter 4) case:

Ironically, I think there is something about the competitive environment of the top levels where having access to inside sources becomes more important. The people who get that access do it sometimes in unscrupulous ways and they are rewarded for it by advancing in journalism. I think it’s kind of unfortunate. (Interview, 16 March 2011)

In both cases, informants dissociated individual and organizational competition to some degree. One LP reporter said that in some cases your organizational identity (or being the paper of record) matters less than your personal reputation:

It’s often a matter of individual authority of correspondents. The Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung is a very important newspaper because they have a very good Landtag correspondent [Uli Bachmeier] who knows very much and who has the best contacts. You see that at the Landtag when you deal with people … they always rush up to him because they know him the longest, he is well versed and he is also the funniest and so on. That’s important. Much is decided upon the individual qualifications of the correspondent and there are comparable media outlets to the Augsburger where I would say it does not work so well. (Interview, 5 December 2011)

208 Original: “Das hat dann viel zu tun mit auch der persönlichen Autorität der Korrespondenten. Die Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung ist eine sehr wichtige Zeitung weil sie einen sehr guten
When I asked one LCA reporter whether individual competition to competitor-colleagues was more important than the competition between newspaper, he said:

Obviously, just because we’ve all been working together for some number of years. … Also, there is this sort of pride that your news organization has it first. Not that … I beat him. I mean that’s what drives me more is just that somebody has to give us credit for breaking the story first. (Interview, 17 May 2010)

A recurrent way to describe the competitive situation in the LP as well as in the LCA was that on daily stories, which everybody covers (“the pack story”), reporters help each other out and talk about the story. On exclusive or investigative stories, however, there is no exchange. One day, I was in a conversation with a young reporter in the hallway of the State Capitol, who I have found to be an easy-going and witty guy. When another journalist from a direct competitor walked by, he asked him in an off-hand kind of way where he was going. The other reporter, who I have experienced as a stern character, shrugged his shoulders and said “I can’t tell you, sorry” (Fieldnotes, 24 February 2010).

Another mid-career reporter changed jobs and moved from one to another competing bureau at the Capitol, which was intended to “beef up” the newspapers’ coverage on state politics. He said he told his former employer about their competitor’s job offer on Thursday. He said they were “very nice” about it, made a counter-offer but told him he has to decide until Sunday. “And it hit me. I said: ‘Does that mean, if I decide to go, I’m not coming back to work on Monday?’ And they’re like: ‘Yeah.’ [laughs] … That was it. There was no two-weeks notice,” he said, surprisingly without any

Landtagskorrespondenten hat, der auch sehr sehr viel weiss und der auch die besten Kontakte von allen hat. Das ist sehr wichtig. Das sieht man auch wenn man im Landtag umgeht mit den Leuten … die stürzen immer auf den Bachmeier zu weil den kennen sie am längsten, der kennt sich am besten aus und der ist auch der lustigste und so. Also das ist wichtig. Das macht sich also viel an der persönlichen Qualifikation des Korrespondenten fest, da gibt es vergleichbare Medien wie die Augsburger wo ich jetzt sagen würde da funktioniert es nicht so gut.”
resentment that I could discern (Interview, 10 February 2011). In his new job, he initially assumed his biggest hurdle would be to compete against his former colleagues but he realized that the real uphill battle would be the relative irrelevancy his new employer previously had in state politics.

Pack Journalism

The phenomenon of pack journalism is well familiar in US as well as in German journalism. There is no definitive term in the German language, which would imply such unambiguous negative meaning as “pack journalism” for US journalists. There is the literal translation “Rudeljournalismus,” which is somewhat common but only next to other terms, like “Meute” (which also means pack) or “Wegelagerer” (highwayman) that are often raised by German politicians. In the interviews I conducted in Albany, I started talking about the press corps by directly confronting journalists with the stereotype (“what does pack journalism mean to you?”), while in German interviews I found the better strategy to be circling the wagons in my questioning, so to speak. I started by asking about advantages and disadvantages of a press corps, which was usually followed by advantages only. I then mentioned that a common criticism against press corps asserted tendencies of homogenization of news coverage, calling such a group a “pack”, etc., only after which most of them addressed these issues.

A very succinct definition of pack journalism by a senior LCA reporter goes as follows: “Pack journalism, for me, is sort of covering my ass” (Interview, 17 May 2010), he says, by which he means going to events and following politicians most of his competitor-colleagues will also go to and follow. He adds that the LCA has often been described as a ship, “it can travel together sometimes, which becomes sort of a collective
thinking. I don’t know if that’s necessarily bad because it’s often just an obvious thinking.” Another senior LCA journalist says that “by definition” it is not a good thing but that pack journalism “bubbles up out of good intentions.” It was driven by competition but he says that there are many “smart, seasoned reporters” in the LCA and, while they may sometimes overcover stories, they all recognize a story as important and go in the same direction, “not because it’s the wrong direction but because it’s the right direction. Where it becomes pack journalism is when you are pursuing it not because it’s a great story but because you anticipate that everybody else is gonna do it” (Interview, 16 March 2011). Both of these journalists addressed the basic understanding of pack journalism as a collective agenda setting, which results in all news media covering the same issues. This does not only concern press corps contexts but essentially all of news making to some degree. Most LP reporters agreed to the argument that homogeneity of issues covered is inevitable because of factual criteria, which decide upon newsworthiness. As one LP reporter said:

Clearly there is something like pack behavior. That is simply because you define a certain hierarchy of topics, which just objectively occurs in part. For instance, when the Minister-President comes in, it is clear: all lunge at him. Of course. There are things that are objectively important, which everybody follows therefore. (Interview, 6 December 2011)

Two basic criteria of newsworthiness for a state house reporter are the amount of money and extent of power involved in a story, entrusted by citizens of the state to their elected representatives. LCA journalists, who tended to emphasize holding government accountable for tax spending more than their German counterparts, frequently mentioned

209 Original: “Also es gibt ganz klar so etwas wie Rudelverhalten. Das liegt einfach daran, dass man natürlich eine gewisse Themenhierarchie einfach definiert, die zum Teil einfach objektiv vorhanden ist, also sprich wenn der Ministerpräsident einläuft dann ist klar: stürzt sich alle drauf. Das ist klar. Es gibt Dinge, die ganz objektiv wichtig sind und die deshalb alle machen.”

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the state budget as an undeniable subject of newsworthiness because it concerned how citizens’ money is spent in a given year. The Bavarian budget ("Staatshaushalt") does not nearly evoke such interest, which has to do with how it is negotiated (mostly within the cabinet and additional minor issues in the legislature).

Though some reporters acknowledged problems with the implicit consensus of newsworthiness, most of them accepted similarities of story selection as inevitable and countered that you can still achieve journalistic greatness in that way.

**Differentiation within the Pack**

While competition drives pack journalism, it counteracts it at the same time. One reporter made this point by saying, “pack journalism is the … inverse of competitive journalism” (Interview, 28 April 2011). Competitiveness may mean to distinguish oneself within the pack story or to go in a completely different direction:

If you see everybody going right, strongly consider going left. Because if everybody is going there, presumably if there is anything really substantial there, it’s gonna get covered, right? But what’s all this other stuff that’s not gonna get covered when twelve reporters go one way? So you have to – you can’t ignore the pack, where they’re going. You have to look into it, you have to figure out – if that’s the best use of your time. (Interview, 13 September 2010)

Sometimes the pack story was best served by a short piece, he continues, and then there was room to go elsewhere, either to a completely different issue or somewhere else within that story. To him, both could mean he is doing a good job because, as he said, “even if you’re on that story with the pack, you can be covering it better than the pack. And that’s still going against the pack.” One LP reporter acted particularly determined about resisting the pack if he finds it necessary:

I claim for myself, and that has always worked, that if I don’t consider something an issue I bring that argument forward to my editorial department and then we keep our hands off it. We don’t jump on every bandwagon, heaven knows. This
would contradict the pack, insofar. (Interview, 1 December 2011)²¹⁰

There are other LP reporters who share this view and don’t see the press corps as a pack, which they explain by different interests regarding each journalists’ (regional or demographic) constituency and emphases. They also see distinction concerning opinions, which they don’t only express among each other but in news commentary (as an important contrast to the LCA). One LP reporter acknowledged a certain homogeneity in topic selection but says, “the differentiation [of an issue], how something is presented, is very different, partly concerning accentuation, partly also … concerning commentary or … concerning regional tailoring” (Interview, 10 February 2012).²¹¹ He specified this latter issue, which is relevant in his case working for a regional newspaper, and suggested that I should take a look at the daily press review, which is on display at the Landtag, where I will find that “there is a certain mainstream regarding agenda setting … but there is definitely diversity of opinion.”²¹²

Several people refer vaguely to a certain core of reporters in the LP who are there all the time and who define what that mainstream is. One spokesperson denoted this hard core of the LP as the, “boy group, which does not distinguish itself much in its news coverage” (Interview, 23 April 2012). More news commentary would be a remedy against this, according to this spokesperson, while suggesting there is not enough of it currently.

²¹⁰ Original: “Ich beanspruche für mich aber, und das hat eigentlich immer funktioniert, wenn ich das Thema für keines halte und das auch argumentativ meiner Redaktion nahebringen kann, dann lassen wir die Finger auch davon. Also wir springen weiss Gott nicht auf jeden Zug auf. Insofern stimmt das mit der Meute nicht.”
²¹¹ Original: “Die Ausdifferenzierung, wie etwas dargestellt wird, ist dann schon sehr unterschiedlich, zum Teil was die Akzentuierung angeht, zum Teil auch … was Kommentierung angeht oder auch … was die regionale Ausgestaltung angeht.”
²¹² Original: “Es gibt's sicher einen gewissen mainstream … aber es gibt durchaus Meinungspluralität.”
Collective Interpretation of Issues

Besides collective agenda setting, there is another form or rather further consequence of pack journalism, which is intensified within groups of reporters. One LCA reporter differentiated pack journalism accordingly, “basically what it means is everyone covers the same thing or everyone covers the same thing in the same way” (Interview, 11 April 2011). Continuous conversations between reporters, with the same sources, at the same location about the same issues promote this second form of pack journalism as interpreting issues in similar ways. Most reporters denied that it happened as a “conspiracy among reporters,” which seems to be a common public stereotype they are confronted with. Apart from that, collective interpretation of issues can also happen in more intangible ways.

One LP reporter stated carefully that one might be able to detect a “similar voicing” of stories sometimes. Another one suggested there is a danger in the constant exchange of views, which may turn into a “conformity of opinions,” while adding that it also happened through reading each others’ work (Interview, 13 June 2012).2 Marginal insiders and former members of the press corps expressed more critical assessments of this kind of pack journalism.2 One LP reporter, who is a marginal insider, detected a certain mainstream in the press corps, which is conditioned by talking to each other, he says, “they sit together, my colleagues, and they say, ‘what are you going to write?’ and there are a few opinion leaders who then say, ‘this is the direction,’ and then all write it

2 Original: “entsteht schnell einmal so eine konforme Meinung über ein bestimmtes Thema, wobei ich sagen muss das ist dadurch dass man sich gegenseitig liest auch so.”

2 Marginal insiders can be reporters from less relevant news outlets (that have no influence on other journalists), whose agenda may be removed from daily journalism for whatever reason (they are columnists or exclusively practice investigative journalism) or just socially marginal reporters who do not engage as much with other reporters. While their statements can be dismissed as (spiteful or not up-to-date) outliers or adopted as insights from a position of greater critical capacity, I took them seriously but in a careful, reflexive fashion.
that way” (Interview, 24 January 2012). Not spending too much time at the Landtag has helped him in that regard, said another LP journalist, because:

You are not as likely to get stories that stand out from others … I have often the impression the Landtagspresse levels and it does not level upwards … you have the highest reputation when you don’t hurt anybody, when everybody is well-behaved and writes the same in principle. (Interview, 10 November 2011).

The competitive nature of the LCA possibly attenuates this tendency. Not even the most critical insiders on the margins of the press corps believe this to be true, nor do former members assume that was the case now. One of the latter kind told me that “in the old days,” that is, at the time when he was a Capitol reporter 20 years ago, the bureau chiefs of the New York Times and Daily News shared an apartment and decided on their way to work what story they would make big on a given day (Interview, 11 May 2011). Nowadays, competition even limits what friends within the press corps talk about. A current LCA bureau chief who is good friends with another journalist in the press corps told me:

I’ll be talking to a friend of mine, you know, at the end of the day, which can be pretty late. And we’ll just be laughing about something and then I’ll go home and I’ll see on the wire that he had this great story that just really beat me badly. But that’s the business. (Interview, 13 September 2010)

As mentioned earlier, there are less tangible ways in which pack journalism takes place than conversational alignment of stories. One has to do with a certain collective thinking at a place like the state house, which is referred to as a bubble, echo chamber or “Käseglocke” (meaning: cheese cover, but the better translation would be bell jar in this context). This thinking in one direction does not only involve journalists but other

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215 Original: “Die sitzen zusammen die Kollegen und dann wird schon auch gesprochen ‘was schreibst denn du?’ und dann gibt’s so ein paar opinion leader, die dann sagen, ‘dahin geht die Richtung’ und das schreiben dann alles so. … Ich habe oft den Eindruck, die Landtagspresse nivelliert und sie nivelliert nicht nach oben. … man ist dort eher am höchsten im Ansehen wenn man niemandem weh tut, wenn alle brav im Prinzip das gleiche schreiben.”

216 Original: “Geschichten, die sich von den anderen abheben, kriegt man dort eher nicht.”
political insiders, politicians, political staffers and spokespeople and, in the US context especially, lobbyists. It involves thinking alike, accepting the ways government works as a given and leads to a certain “blindness,” which consists of not being able to assess issues from a critical distance anymore. From a journalistic perspective, it also promotes becoming an insider, which is avoidable by limiting tenures as correspondents and which some (marginal) journalists would find a good idea. One LP reporter mentions in this context “border crossings” by some of his more senior colleagues:

To the point where colleagues stand in the chamber, who walk in there nonchalantly even though this is actually not appropriate—you speak with people in front of the chamber. That happens. And that journalist colleagues hit up a representative for some personal matter they have noticed and they pass them a note about what issues they should address. There are cases where too much has been mixed up I think. (Interview, 15 May 2012)  

Another outside force that promotes homogeneity are editors who push their correspondents to cover stories their competitors have or to cover them in the way their competitors have them. Often times, this does not transpire as direct order but anticipatory obedience on the side of correspondents. The episode at the beginning of this chapter has demonstrated both forms of this pack-sustaining efficacy. As one young LCA reporter put it diplomatically, “there is a danger [that] the editors sitting in their shiny buildings in offices on the top floor are a little disconnected from the stories sometimes” (Interview, 16 April 2009). As with other sensitive subjects, few reporters have spoken about it in terms of how it affected them but instead they talked about it in general terms or second-hand. One radio journalist in the LP says it concerns newspapers more, “they

\[\text{Original: “Bis hin zu Kollegen, die im Fraktionssaal stehen, die wie selbstverständlich da rein gehen was eigentlich so nicht möglich ist – man spricht vor dem Fraktionssaal mit den Leuten. Das passiert. Und dass Journalistenkollegen Abgeordnete anhauen weil denen persönliche Sachen aufgefallen sind und die schieben denen irgendwelche Zettel zu, welchen Themen sie sich annehmen sollten. Es gibt Fälle wo vieles glaube ich zu sehr miteinander vermischt wurde schon.”} \]
say that they receive this pressure ‘we need this’ or ‘when they have it we need it too’”
(Interview, 24 January 2012).218 A former newspaper journalist in the LCA who is given
“free reign” in his current situation said:

I think editors or producers or whatever might not necessarily have their feet on
the ground, know lay of the land, understand what’s going on, feel like they can
dictate news coverage that way … I think that’s a classic media problem.
(Interview, 28 April 2011)

Another way synchronization of coverage occurs is when one outlet breaks an
exclusive story, thus setting the agenda and thereby also defining the narrative frame in
which it is told subsequently. Besides the fact that the rest of the press corps does not
follow up on most exclusive stories by one outlet (applying a lenient yardstick of
exclusivity), when they do, said one of my LCA informants, “there is probably a
collective decision making, you know, if someone takes a certain tack to start it off it’s a
lot harder to reverse that tack” (Interview, 5 April 2010). Much of what reporters told me
about this issue suggests that once a story is told, there is some narrative closure and path
dependence when others follow up on those stories or refer back to them later on.

Besides the qualities of a story itself, the power to drive the pack is not evenly
distributed among news operations. First of all, one might think of the New York Times or
the Süddeutsche Zeitung as capable of doing this most effectively. This is only partly
true, however. Starting with the LCA, the Times does act as an agenda setter frequently,
which has to do with the fact that if they publish a relevant story, broad public attention
and particularly political attention is likely to happen (certainly more likely than with
other outlets represented at the LCA, with the exception of the AP). The Times has more
organizational resources (personnel, legal power, etc.) than all other newspapers and they

218 Original: “das kan ich aber nur aus dritter Hand sagen, die erzählen schon immer, dass die den Druck
bekommen – ‘man muss das unbedingt machen’ oder ‘wenn’s die haben müssen’s wir auch spielen.’”
certainly assemble journalistic talent and competency. However, some of their stories appear in the *Times* because they are the *Times* or, as one senior reporter says, “they get a lot of gifts handed to them” (Interview, 17 May 2010).

Apart from the fact that almost all other players in the LCA (at least those for who breaking news is relevant) drive pack coverage at times, especially given the proliferation of new media and leveling of competition it entailed, particularly Fred Dicker and the *New York Post* have done so frequently. In part this has to do with the different news channels Dicker operates: his Monday “Inside Albany” column has been particularly identified as a driving force for pack coverage, besides his regular news coverage in the *Post*, commentator duties on the regional CBS News affiliate and his daily 10 a.m. radio show on WGDJ. To many of his competitor-colleagues, a defining feature of the column is that it lends itself for anonymous attacks against political opponents. One of them said:

> Since I’ve been here at least two politicians have made extensive use of the *New York Post*. They just try to stampede the rest of the press corps. You know, give them something for Monday that drives a couple of days of coverage. That worked really well for Andrew Cuomo, when he was Attorney General, during Troopergate [a travel scandal involving former Senate majority leader Joe Bruno that turned into a political surveillance scandal involving former Governor Eliot Spitzer]. He wanted the whole thing to have a certain flavor. He was really able to use them with just little bits in the Monday column or even throughout the week. And we’d be forced to chase it because it was part of a law enforcement investigation. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

In this situation, even this reporter, whose job gives him a relatively high degree of autonomy from covering the minutiae of state government, was drawn into the pack. Another reporter was uncertain whether this happened anywhere else to the extent it does in Albany, where there was, as he said, an “obsession with these running stories” where nothing is added for a long time but “news” are still being generated. He provides an
example of a particular story, last-in first-out (or LIFO, which is a measure to layoff employees according to seniority, particularly in the field of education):

How many stories have been written about that just because the tabs will ask a question about it at every press conference because no matter what the Governor says they can write a story about it. That’s probably not productive on the long run but it happens. (Interview, 4 May 2011)

Pack dynamics in the LP are much less defined by certain news organizations acting as agenda-setters. First of all, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) does not have comparable influence in Bavarian state political coverage that the *New York Times* has in New York. Though SZ is nationally, next to *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the most influential daily newspaper, competition in Bavaria seems to be dissociated from this to some degree, as many LP reporters have emphasized. For instance, one journalist from a regional newspaper said that he had to “teach” politicians from his region that their voters don’t read SZ and that, “this fixation is detrimental and many see that by now” (Interview, 1 December 2011).

Another TV journalist asserted that the importance of the SZ is mostly based on other journalists assigning significance to it:

The impact of the *Süddeutschen Zeitung* is that *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is read in all newsrooms and that I have producers here of [TV program] that read the paper in the morning and go “we’ll go in this direction” and I may have a very different perception from Landtag at that moment. It may be the opinion of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* but, well – I have always tried in my time as correspondent to keep a certain distance from that. (Interview, 30 May 2012)

He mentioned an example of story a few years back, which he calls a media hype that was pushed by SZ. It turned out as a, “soufflé, which quickly disintegrated,” he said.

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219 Original: “diese Fixierung ist eigentlich eher von Nachteil und inzwischen sehen das auch viele.”
220 Original: “die Wucht der *Süddeutschen Zeitung* besteht darin, dass in allen Redaktionstuben die *Süddeutschen Zeitung* gelesen wird und ich dann hier meine Planer in der [TV Programm] hab und die in der Früh die Zeitung gelesen haben und sagen ‘in die Richtung gehen wir’ und ich sag aber vielleicht im Moment ist meine Wahrnehmung im Landtag eine ganz andere. Das mag ja die Meinung der *Süddeutschen Zeitung* sein aber, mmm ja. Also da … hab ich auch immer versucht, in meiner Zeit als Landtagskorrespondent, da so ein bisschen auch Abstand davon zu gewinnen.”
Secondly, there are fewer tabloids (in fact only one reporter, Angela Böhm from *Abendzeitung*, covers the Landtag permanently) that have much less agenda setting power in the LP compared to the LCA. On the contrary, as one informant told me, the association often acted as a disciplining mechanism of Böhm. He added that he wished the LP would act more often in that way, however.

Another collective dynamic concerns the linkage between state house presses and national implications and aspirations of state politics/politicians. In Munich, there is the exceptional position of the CSU, which only exists in Bavaria (and no other state) and which joins forces with CDU on the national level. During the research period, Angela Merkel’s CDU and CSU together formed the governing party in Berlin, which means that Bavarian Minister-President Seehofer was also deeply involved in national politics (and was minister in previous national governments). LP reporters have emphasized this circumstance and suggested that there was a lot of state political news coverage compared to other states as a consequence. This peculiarity of the political system seemed to affect their professional self-worth and the significance they assign to their work and that of their competitors. Among other things, they distinguished themselves from journalists in Berlin who could never penetrate the CSU to the same degree they can. One reporter said that on the state level, it was much easier to “get the mood at the party basis” (Interview, 24 November 2011).

In Albany, I have found a different interweaving of state and national politics, which was not institutional but individual and much more speculative than matter-of-fact. Only two to three months into Andrew Cuomo’s tenure as Governor, he was depicted as a presidential hopeful in the news. This speculation flourished even more after he received
credit for passing the first on-time state budget in years on March 31, 2011 and especially after the passage of same-sex marriage law on June 24, 2011. It is safe to say that Cuomo’s possible future as a presidential candidate has grown into an anticipatory myth among the LCA in his first year in office. It seemed as if they were obsesses with this story and questions about it came up time and time again in press conferences, interviews and news coverage, including in weekly roundtable discussions between Capitol reporters on TV (YNN, NY1 and WMHT all have such formats).

While this was going on, I started wondering why the press was so obsessed with this story, besides the inherent sensation of covering a future frontrunner for the highest political office in the US. A conversation with one of my informants at the end of my field work made me realize that a presidential future of Cuomo may positively affect the career of journalists who have been covering him for years before:

Reporter: Yeah, it’s the classic example: You’re a state house reporter and all of a sudden Cuomo becomes president and, shit, big career move, great for [name]’s career – all of a sudden the Washington Post wants the guy who has been covering him for the last eight years to move to Washington, cover the president. Shit, I’m in the White House! Actually, a friend pointed out that this is a, if you want to be completely cynical, this creates a massive disincentive for me to be critical. Because if I knock him down I theoretically diminish his political chances and, theoretically, my star could be aligned with his. Right?
MR: Do you think people consider that?
Reporter: Like anything, Matthias, I don’t think there is one big giant moment but it’s the collection of little, tiny decisions that add up to it. No, I don’t think there is anybody in the press corps who doesn’t see that. It’s a pretty basic read, right. Especially for people who make their living covering politics, which to me is just a total, endless matrix of incentive structures. Who wouldn’t see that. (Interview, 10 June 2011)

Collective Wisdom of the Pack

Besides negative effects of these more or less competitive and collegial constellations of journalists, correspondents told me about advantages of constituting a pack. They underscored collective wisdom, that is, a shared background knowledge about
“It’s basically a group of experts,” said one LP reporter, “media outlets send people permanently to the Landtag because part of the political business is to have contacts, to be able to assess issues, to know what that guy said three months earlier” (Interview, 15 May 2012). Collective wisdom has several implications: First of all, it implies a direct exchange of ideas. Reporters, who have been on the beat since recently, profit by asking more experienced reporters for context and assessments. One young LCA reporter talked about how he benefitted from collective wisdom on the day we did the interview:

I just wrote a budget story and before I wrote it I talked to four competitors, I consider them colleagues, from different newspapers and asked what they thought about the day’s news. … The pack has an informed opinion, you know, we don’t make this shit up. Are there dangers to that sort of group think? Absolutely. Are there benefits to it? Yes. I think it can lead to more insightful coverage in many ways. (Interview, 18 May 2010)

He sounded defensive in this quote because the larger point he tried to make was defending pack journalism by saying that LCA journalists know more about what is going on in state politics than almost anybody else outside of government, which had to do with things they know and assess collectively but can never write about: off-the-records information. He gave some examples, “I know which legislators are drunks. I know which legislators make unwanted advances toward women. I know which legislators are stupid. I know which legislators are smart. And that affects my thinking” (Interview, 18 May 2010). LP journalists, who were not at the Maximilianeum as much as others, asked competitor-colleagues what they thought about a certain issue, as this mid-career journalist who had been covering Bavarian state politics for decades:

221 Original: “Es ist im Grunde eine Expertengruppe. Jedes Medium schickt feste Leute in den Landtag weil zum politischen Geschäft einfach gehört, dass man Kontakte hat, dass man Sachverhalte einschätzen kann, dass man weiss was hat der vor drei Monaten gesagt.”
You exchange views. I can ask somebody who is always there, from Süddeutsche Zeitung or Augsburger Allgemeinen, like “I got the feeling that everybody is against Seehofer in the CSU. What do you think?” Then he says “no, you are on the wrong track there.” These assessments are quite important and they are beneficial. (Interview, 23 March 2012)

Another related positive consequence of collective wisdom is that an informed pack more easily defies and exposes spin. Being a LP correspondent meant, “to be immersed in the issues and therefore not fall for bluffs as easily” (Interview, 22 November 2011), to one senior radio reporter. One LCA reporter said, “those people who want to deceive or fail to disclose or spin will have a more difficult time doing it if the pack is focused on that story” (Interview, 5 May 2011). Another LCA reporter gave me an example of how the pack was more effective in “spotting discrepancies” when a former Governor supported a federal law that was just passed during his re-election campaign. The reporter then had asked the Governor why he didn’t reform the law on the state level when he had a chance five years earlier. He did not get a convincing answer and the reporter added that such question made that Governor realize, “that holding press conferences away from the Capitol made it a lot easier for him because he knew he had … a pack or a group of reporters here who knew his record inside and out” (Interview, 10 February 2011).

A third positive implication of collective wisdom is that a knowledgeable pack is more powerful to evoke responsiveness and accountability from politicians. One LP reporter refers to a scandal involving former minister of education and cultural affairs, Monika Hohlmeier:

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As the classic course of scandals goes, it induces something like a pack formation, where you go “ok, we want to know that everything is put on the table” and suddenly there are two dozens of journalists underway to investigate on this one matter and then some things are revealed. In this respect there is a pack, a pack of hounds, if you will. That does happen but it is very rare that it happens in a commutated way. (Interview, 7 November 2011)

A scandal of this proportion is indeed a rare occasion. LCA reporters talked about minor ways in which appearing in greater numbers is a benefit. One reporter told me of ganging up with other competitor-colleagues to stake out politicians:

We get together, a couple of us and say: “We really need a comment from the assembly speaker. Let’s all go down there.” And it just sort of helps, if there is more... If there is just one they might blow you off, but if there is two or I’ll get Erin from NY1 ‘cause she has a TV camera. … it does help sometimes, if you have a few of them. … If it’s only one or two, they might think they can get away with it. (Interview, 11 February 2011)

Another reporter mentioned what some news outlets refer to as “Troopergate,” which Eliot Spitzer was involved in during his brief tenure as Governor, as an instance where the pack was helpful:

When you have a group of reporters hitting you hard with questions, it’s a lot more difficult to just be dismissive of a question. … If one reporter asks something, you can kind of bat it away and then the next reporter follows up with a totally different question – it’s done, you know. But if a group of reporters are making it an issue … it kind of bubbles it up to the surface of the public consciousness. It also puts them on, you know, where they have to give real answers. And it allows you to find discrepancies in their stories. (Interview, 10 February 2011)

This pressure, of course, can more effectively be exerted in news coverage on given issues where witnesses are higher in numbers. One LCA reporter referred to this

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223 Original: “wie es in Skandalabläufen klassisch der Fall ist, da kann dann schon sowas wie eine Rudelbildung einsetzen, das man sagt: "So, jetzt wollen wir einmal wissen, dass da jetzt einmal endlich alles auf den Tisch kommt.” und da sind plötzlich zwei Dutzend Journalisten unterwegs, die in einer Sache nachforschen und da kommt auch was raus. Also insoweit gibt’s dann eine Meute, das ist dann eine Hetzmeute, wenn man so will. Das passiert schon aber das ist sehr selten, dass das sozusagen gleichgerichtet passiert.”

224 An instance of this is available in an online video, which shows reporters repeatedly asking very similar questions in a press conference and putting pressure on Governor Spitzer (azinyc 2007), azinyc. 2007. “Eliot Spitzer and Fred Dicker, Albany Press Conference.” YouTube Website. Retrieved January 11, 2014 (http://youtu.be/aBgxRRBgyFc)
form of “ganging up”—less physically than discursively—of the press corps on the issue of ethics reform, which he said would not have happened without the intense news coverage on corruption in recent years.

**Chapter Conclusion**

The two press corps turned out to be structured differently as associations. The degree of associational organization is much higher in the LP, which arranges background discussions and defends its members (as individuals as well as a group) against political pressure or stonewalling. The organizational arrangement of the LCA, even though it is much weaker, is ethically contested within the Albany press corps, whereas it is consensual in Munich.

Spatial access is a defining feature of both press corps. However, because of the permanence of on-site presence, it is even more central to LCA reporters. Despite that dwelling within the bubble would suggest otherwise, the no-protest zone around the Bavarian legislature secludes the LP from civil society and expressions of public will to some extent. This may or may not be countervailed by being less deeply embedded in the political setting, which would need to be addressed by systematically comparing news coverage. LCA reporters, even though they criticize protests as staged and inauthentic, promote these expressions of democratic will to the public realm.

The press corps solidarity is described in much warmer terms by LP reporters, which is counterbalanced by a friendly and humorous sociability among the LCA. This may be a biased view of an outside observer, who has not been socialized in the US and experienced manners of social interaction as refreshingly informal and unconstrained. The LP is interesting from a boundary perspective: the association protects the
professional autonomy of its members, which creates a form of solidarity between them that blurs lines of competition. LCA reporters would never defend their competitors from political pressure and, conversely, journalists under attack would probably never let themselves be defended by others. This does not only have to do with the more intense effective competition between outlets involved but with a competitive culture, which thrives on the individual dignity of the reporter. Increasingly, this reporter becomes a personal brand in the social media age. Just imagining that the LCA president would file a complaint against the Governor’s office for denying a New York Times reporter access seems absurd, not only because cutting off the Times itself would be counterintuitive (but is not unheard of).

Thus, press corps solidarity is more organized in the LP and more spontaneous in the LCA and there is most certainly a connection to the power of collectivism in Germany and individualism in the US that plays into this contrast. There is a tendency to embrace associational structures in Germany—which is an associational culture (“Vereinskultur”) in many ways—while in the US there is skepticism against (or at least contestation of) these structures and a preference for informal solidarity emerging from free association between individuals. The prevalent conservative discourse of “big government” in the US, which decries the (state-)administrative pervasion of social life, is further testament of that fundamental cultural difference.

Another striking contrasts concerns competition and competitiveness between reporters. First off, the competition in the LP appears much weaker than in the LCA. What is most interesting is that reporters in Munich perceive competition necessarily as something negative, even though it hardly exists (according to them). Albany reporters
perceive competition not only as a matter of fact, including all of its downsides (stress, anxiety), but they believe in its benefits and that it improves their work. Besides emphasizing these benefits in conversations, witnessing the manifestation of competition between LCA reporters in action and digitally on Twitter led me to think of it as a competitive culture, especially once I started doing comparative field research in Munich.

Pack journalism is understood by state house reporters in two ways, as covering the same issues and as covering them in similar ways. In terms of topical agendas, a certain synchronism appears partly inevitable and desirable to reporters, who deem certain issues as inherently important. Synchronism is unwarranted when it is purely based on competition, however. This competition is pushed directly by editors and, even more importantly, exercised by reporters in anticipatory obedience. At the same time, particularly LCA reporters see competition as a force that averts pack journalism in that it fosters the intention to distinguish oneself and stand out from the pack. This ambivalence is rooted in that they are referring to different kinds of competition implicitly: (1) One that is based on organizational interests (news outlets competing with each other), which fuels pack journalism. (2) Another form that is rooted in the individual competition between reporters in the press corps interrelation.

The second form of pack journalism—collectively interpreting issues—has different sources. One simply occurs by journalists talking directly to each other about issues they cover. This seems to be more prevalent in the LP, whose sociability seems more engaged and deep-seated in ritualism (LCA reporters rarely go for lunch in bigger groups). The competitive culture in the LCA further attenuates this collective interpretation of issues in conversation. Besides direct interaction, collective
interpretation also evolves through thinking inside the bubble, which we would expect to be stronger in Albany where the state house press is more deeply embedded in the political setting. Furthermore, Albany is a company town in many ways (the company being state government) and thus socially isolated. In other words: especially reporters who don’t originate from the area socialize with professional contacts outside of work for the most part.

Another way how a press corps ends up interpreting issues similarly is by one actor setting not only a topical agenda but a narrative course through an exclusive story, which others follow. The power to set the agenda in this way is not evenly distributed in the press corps in question. The New York Times as well as its polar opposite, the New York Post, both act in this way within the LCA. The LP, in contrast, has much less powerful tabloids and there is also a certain rejection of the dominance of the Süddeutsche Zeitung (which it inhabits in the national political context).

Finally, both press corps emphasized advantages of this collective interrelation, which is best summarized by the collective wisdom of a press corps, which is waning more quickly in the LCA as its ranks are thinning. Firstly, knowledge is shared within the press corps, which less experienced reporters particularly benefit from. Secondly, a better-informed collective can more easily defy and expose spin to the public. Thirdly, a wise pack of reporters can act more effectively as a collective to evoke responsiveness and accountability from elected officials.
Chapter 6: Embedded Reporting: External Boundary

Processes

For the most part, media–source relations have been considered in terms of their implications on news decisions in media scholarship, emphasizing control and relational autonomy, and there is a tendency of viewing journalists as mere vehicles of official viewpoints (see review of literature in chapter 1). This chapter examines source relations and the power struggles they involve by considering professionalism of reporters—understood as performance—that materializes in this context. The analysis pays attention to the performative dimension of boundary maintenance when journalists establish and demarcate their sphere of professional influence towards those they cover, boundary blurring to retain sociable platforms of cooperation with them as well as the interplay between both and situational and selective adjustments, which will be referred to as boundary management. The following selected but everyday moments of one political reporter will substantiate this argument. For reasons of confidentiality, news stories referred to in these episodes have to remain vague.

Days in the Life of a Reporter: The Tightrope between Closeness and Distance

Dash is sitting in his office on the third floor of the State Capitol Building, talking on the phone to a former gubernatorial spokesperson. He was offered to interview a high-ranking official on the next day for a “soft,” human-interest story and is looking for an independent angle. Therefore, he calls up the former press officer to ask him whether he could speak to his former boss and whether he has any suggestion about not making the story a quasi-press release. Just as he gets off the phone, Chuck, who high-fived him first thing in the morning, explains to somebody on the phone: “Dash did it through good sourcing!” On that day, whilst Dash tries to figure out how not to make the story just handed to him a “press release” for the politician, one reporter after the other comes into the office to
congratulate him on his scoop from yesterday. The story, which is in today’s paper and was posted the night before at 9:23 pm, reveals that a current elected official is about to resign in order to work for the state government in a not yet specified position. Dash received that tip from a county-level source yesterday, confirmed it with a spokesperson of the office the official is about to start working at, and finally with the official himself.

The most noteworthy detail about the story amongst the State Capitol press corps is not the resignation itself but the fact that Dash not only scooped the local daily newspaper in the official’s district but that it failed to get the story in today’s paper in time. They drop in saying “I can’t believe you scooped the [newspaper] on their own turf”, “did [newspaper] offer you a gig?” Chuck envisages the chief editor probably “reaming somebody out” this morning. Another reporter suggests Dash should “torture” the local paper on the blog and mention on every follow-up item how they did not get the story in today’s paper. Dash says he doesn’t want to do that because it would be like “kicking a dead puppy.” The other reporter suggests he could though make the point that, had the paper still a reporter at the State Capitol (as it used to), they would not be in this disgraceful situation.

(Fieldnotes, 9 February 2011)

In both of these instances Dash was handed a story by a source, however, for different reasons and with different implications for his self-worth as a professional journalist. The latter is based on an anonymous tip he received from a source he developed a good relationship with. The source knew something Dash would be interested in, therefore gave the information to him instead of others, probably motivated by possible future reciprocity and deepening the working relationship. “Good sourcing” involves a competitive advantage through social networks providing information before others get them. There are many reasons why sources speaks to one journalist before another—the outlet, its audience, reach and coverage area above all—but often times it’s about talking to a specific reporter she trusts rather than another. For that reason, Dash cultivates source relations with much care and often calls sources just to “shoot the shit,” as he says. The serious middle part of a phone conversations is usually framed by personal conversations and small talk at the beginning and end. Dash usually closes by
asking “anything else I should know?” which sometimes yields pieces of valuable information.

The other instance is an exclusive story, for the purpose of which a top official offers temporary accessibility (i.e. an interview). Dash would not have chosen to do this but is compelled by the fact that this politician is a subject of utmost and permanent newsworthiness. Thus, his newspaper is interested in an exclusive story about him. The office gave it to Dash because the story caters to his readers. As the following field note from five days later shows, it received a different reaction from his colleagues:

A colleague from Dash’s newspaper comes into the office, jokingly asking whether Dash had heard he had a 77% approval rating amongst their readers. The soft story Dash was preparing five days ago appeared on the front page this morning, about the official whose approval rating is amounted to 77% by a poll today. When I ask him about it later Dash says it was “not the most insightful thing I’ve ever written.” He felt compelled to do it as it was a rare opportunity that his newspaper wanted him to take. As a human-interest story it did not seem to do much harm despite painting a favorable picture of the official. And, as Dash emphasizes, the story is based on facts. (Fieldnotes, 14 February 2011)

The question remains, however, whether these “facts” are worth mentioning at all and Dash’s reaction suggests he does not think so from a journalistic standpoint. Even though or because other reporters played jokes on him, they understood Dash’s quandary and why he had to do the story nonetheless. His rolling eyes when somebody brings it up and self-justifying statements he expresses in front of colleagues on that day and still weeks after it appeared suggest the story generated tensions between ideals about journalism he believes in and the interests of his organization, one of which is to sell newspapers. Although “selling newspapers” is not an immediate concern for reporters, it is an organizational efficacy that impinges on their work in the form of tacit assumptions about newsworthiness and directives by editors. Such tensions occur when journalists’ concepts of professional worth connected to public service considerations (is this a story
the public needs to know about?) and accountability concerns (does the story require 
elected officials to justify themselves?) clash with the fact that news organizations are 
business entities subjected to the attention economy, on the one hand, and actors in 
power-ridden public spheres, on the other. From a Bourdieuan perspective (Benson 
1999), this tension is an expression of heteronomous forces impinging on the journalistic 
field and their confrontation with autonomous principles of distinction that are prevalent 
in journalism.

A few weeks later, Dash publishes a critical story concerning negotiations the top 
official was leading at the time, which shed an unfavorable light on the politician.

Dash talks to a competitor-colleague who just dropped in his office (a few weeks 
he made apologetic remarks to her concerning the soft-story). They talk about his 
soon-expected baby and then he mentions in passing that his paper was attacked 
by the [officials office] for the story he wrote a few days earlier while asking her 
not to spread it around. I ask him about it after she left and he told me the 
official’s office sent a complaint letter to his editor, calling him by name and 
arguing that he well made sure not to get the facts in the way of his story. He 
acknowledged he got a detail about a meeting time wrong but that did not warrant 
the complaint. Dash’s editor defended him, which was most important to him. 
(Fieldnotes, 16 March 2011)

This example illustrates the typical back-and-forth in the ongoing game politics 
and media play, in which one team “wins” on a given day and “loses” on another. Apart 
from this antagonism (which is part of their performance of professionalism as I will 
argue later), both sides carefully maintain and cultivate relationships with each other. I 
did not detect personal animosities between reporters and spokespeople after such tense 
situations besides the snarky jokes they make about each other all the time. Despite the 
mutual contempt I know exists (because people told me about it in interviews), such 
instances are usually followed by business-as-usual. However, exceptions to this rule will 
also be discussed in the following as well as different ways how autonomy is asserted by
reporters, on the levels of professional and organizational norms, direct interaction with sources, personal lives as well as the ultimate representation of professionalism, that is, news coverage.

**Reporters’ Means of Symbolic Production**

Cultural performance not only transcends meaning beyond the situational parameters in that they draw from representations shared by the respective group or collective. Besides interactional meaning and these larger cultural parameters, there are other variables in place that performers bring to bear: besides taking place in physical settings and using objects or other actors, performances also refer to other extra-situational resources as means of symbolic production, that is, “mundane material things that allow symbolic projections to be made ... [and to] make vivid the invisible motives and morals they are trying to represent” (Alexander 2004:532).

Journalists refer to material and normative manifestations of professionalism to bolster meanings they assert in performance by evoking norms, laws or organizational policies that protect their autonomy. They also count on protection by their organizations (news organizations or correspondents associations). Journalists also make sacrifices in their personal lives, less to support professional performances but to avoid compromising them. These manifestations and omissions can be seen as props for acting professionally and the following section will discuss those in turn.
Organizational and professional norms as boundary representations

Editorial Policies

News organizations regulate and protect the autonomy of their reporters. One way they do this is through ethical policies. Many newspapers—in the US as in Germany—have such policies and often publicize them on their webpage. Some companies in the US require their news staff to sign revisions of policies periodically, which I have not heard of in Germany. These codes also define social standards for source relations, for instance concerning gift acceptance and invitations. The Ethics Policy of Gannett, for instance, says: “For employees in news operations, the recommended practice is to accept no gifts.”225 Most news organizations nowadays demand to be charged for invitations (e.g. functions, dinners, trips). News organizations have more or less strictly defined sourcing policies, which specify if and how unattributed information and quotes can be used. Policies in the US, furthermore, prohibit journalists from making political donations, engaging politically, let alone holding political office, which tend to be more lenient in Germany (with the exception of a political mandate). The Times guidelines put it very succinctly: “Journalists have no place on the playing fields of politics.”226 After that follows a very detailed description what Times journalists can and, for the most part, cannot do regarding “participation in public life.”

Although I did not compare codes systematically, in Germany I have not heard of codification of source relations to the degree I have found in the US (a very detailed example would be the above-cited Times’ “Ethical Journalism Guidebook,” which is a

57-page document; the *Times*, additionally, has separate guidelines for the use of confidential news sources). Typically, tabloids have no codified policies, at least none that are public, and in general more lenient sourcing standards.

Ethical policies that are publically accessible and thereby *communicated* to the public, including news sources, serve as representations of autonomy. However, while in Germany none of my informants even mentioned ethical policies, US reporters did and, moreover, bring them to bear publically. US reporters utilize them in performance, refer to them as regulatory manifestations of boundaries when they are in the process of negotiating these with sources and also invoked them in interviews I conducted as such. In the disclosed email correspondence between AP state editor, Mike Gormley, and Governor Paterson’s communication director, Peter Kaufman quoted in chapter 5, the former defends himself for a critical story by saying that it could have been worse and that he threatened his editors to withdraw his byline, which would have meant, according to AP policy, that the story would not have appeared at all.

Ethical codes become particularly prevalent in performance in the context of anonymous sourcing. The common sense in the Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) is that anonymous sourcing has increased overall. They blame the intense competition between the city tabloids (*Daily News* and *New York Post*) for this, which one reporter called an “epic newspaper battle.” Secondly, they blame political blogs run by several news organizations, whose own sphere of competition and inherent hunger for instant information lends itself to lower sourcing standards.

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227 I did not ask about them specifically; only when reporters brought them up in the context of talking about source relations or journalistic values and ethics.

As a consequence, they try to offset for this common perception. One senior reporter told me about instances of fabricated stories in his company: “The most important thing a newspaper has in the US is its reputation and trust. This was a huge violation of trust obviously. So we really clamped down on anonymous sources or anything that we couldn’t document” (Interview, 23 May 2009). Another one explains his company’s strict policy: “You should be sparing in using anonymous sources. An anonymous source in a [company] story can only give factual information. No opinion” (Interview, 13 September 2010). Their company’s sourcing policies substantiate their professionalism.

As in the above cited email exchange with the Governor’s press officer, a reporter who refers to the rigor how his news organization operates as an extension of how she operates and how her news product is to be evaluated, namely purely according to professional standards. This is either an effort to defend a news story after the fact or convince a news source of a reporter’s credibility so that it may share valuable information with her.

**The Wall and the Discomfort of Partiality**

Some German reporters mentioned that political actors categorize journalists in friends and enemies, which has consequences for their work (e.g. getting less access to those who perceive them as enemies). The same is true for US reporters, who say that the editorial position of their newspapers influences how politicians approach them. In both setting, reporters presented as an indication of professionalism when they are not classifiable or attacked by politicians from both/several sides. One difference is, however,
that in the LCA reporters hardly contribute to the editorial section of their newspaper, whereas in the Landtagspresse (LP) almost all reporters I interviewed write opinion also.

Some LP reporters mentioned that they would sometimes compensate for this perception in allowing more space for “political enemies.” In general, however, it did not appear to be a great problem for them, apart from the regular consequences of being categorized and labeled. As one reporter pointed out: “There are prejudices on both sides, no question. People are sometimes categorized and can never escape that scheme. But that’s like everywhere”229 (Interview, 1 December 2011). Because party politics is more diverse and more central in a parliamentary system like Germany, this particular kind of categorization appears stronger than in the US. Certainly, media outlets are also categorized as liberal or conservative but less associated to respective parties (I have never heard of a newspaper or journalist in the US who “is Republican,” even if they hold conservative views). I have never heard US reporters talk about party affiliations. One reporter was bothered by liberal bias of the press and the devastation she perceived among colleagues when John Kerry lost the presidential election in 2004 and the corresponding joy when Obama won in 2008. A German reporter pointed out:

The whole thinking of politicians works like this: She is for us, she is against us. I think they really divide journalists like this: She is SPD-affiliated, she is a Green. I couldn’t even tell! I have voted Green before and I don’t know whether I have ever voted for CSU. I think SPD is a party you can vote for. I would not vote for “Freie Wähler.” What do they stand for?230 (Interview, 30 January 2012)

229 Original: “Es gibt da auf beiden Seiten Vorurteile, keine Frage. Leute werden auch direkt kategorisiert und kommen aus diesem Schema nicht mehr raus. Aber das ist wie überall.”

Again, however, LCA journalists take pigeonholing less lightly and respond by strictly distancing themselves from the editorial section of their newspaper as from any form of partisanship. This is actually connected to an institutional norm in US journalism: the separation of news and editorial sections, the effective division of labor between respective newsroom personnel and, above all, the obligation of news reporters to refrain from expressing their opinion. Reporters express this principle by the metaphor the wall (one of them says firewall)\textsuperscript{231}

Representing newspapers that publicize editorial positions and endorsements represents weak spots in reporters’ performance of impartiality, however. As one of them said, “if people like your editorial [or] if they don’t, you’re always answering for that, even though you don’t write them” (Interview, 10 February 2011). It makes them vulnerable, which is why reporters invoke “the wall” or variations of it when interacting with sources in order to distinguish themselves from their opinion-writing colleagues. Ned, who does not even participate in reporter roundtable discussions on TV because he finds this already too close to expressing opinions (if only by rolling eyes), says:

I don’t even read my newspaper’s editorials, because I don’t want to know what they think. I really want that sort of firewall up. I’ll have people come here and [say] ‘your fucking paper’s editorial said that ...’ [My answer always is] ‘uhm, that’s not me. That’s a whole other department.’ (Interview, 17 May 2010)

I walked with Ned from an outside event back to the Capitol building and Assembly Speaker, Sheldon Silver, and his spokesperson walked right next to us. When we passed by the fountains on Empire State Plaza Silver said jokingly that they should hold Assembly meetings out there. In fact, he added, they should also hold meetings with Ned’s paper’s editorial board out here and that Ned should suggest that to them. Even in this jokey situation, Ned, who I have experienced as quite humorous, responded quite earnestly by saying that he does not talk to his editorial board. (Fieldnotes, 10 May 2011).

\textsuperscript{231}The wall also commonly refers to the separation between editorial and corporate departments (including advertisement) of news organizations.
He said it in an effort to affirm the existence of the wall. The most extreme
upholder of the wall in the LCA told me that he is not even allowed to talk to editorial
writers and vice-versa and that violation could cost him his job. He told me that a Senator
asked him who his paper would endorse in a previous political campaign and he told him
that he could lose his job if he would try to find out about that. I asked him whether he
gets labeled according to his newspaper’s editorial positions and he said:

We’re constantly preaching to them. ... The most common thing that’ll happen is
they’ll send me something that is meant for [his paper’s chief editorial writer] or
vice versa. And I can’t forward it to her. There’s a wall! I can’t forward it to her.
So I will call him up: “Hey, you know, he really meant that for [name]. You
know, here’s her address.” – “Can’t you just forward it?” – “No! No
communication. And she does the same thing.” (Interview, 8 September 2010)

Other informants questioned his claim that he could lose his job were he to talk to
the editorial board and attributed it to his overly strict interpretation of the rules. Even if,
or rather especially if this was the case, the way he enacts his professionalism, when
talking to me and in situations he told me about, is revealing about the occupational
culture in which he does take his job so seriously.

Despite of the overall increase and diversification of analysis and commentary in
US media (Jacobs and Townsley 2011) and its diffusion to news sections and social
media presences (Lasorsa et al. 2012; Revers 2012), the wall and the omission of
partiality is the most consensual professional boundary among LCA reporters (see
chapter 4). Some LCA journalists with the rank of bureau chief or state editor, however,
write columns in addition to regular news reporting. They argue that what they offer in
their columns, however, is more analysis, wit or insider knowledge rather than opinion,
while strictly distinguishing between column and news writing:

I’m usually looking for a comic conceit to put on the week’s news. But that
frequently involves criticism of politicians that I am going to be covering at some
point on a very straight-ahead basis ... I try to make sure that, whatever the argument that I’m making in the column, that it’s completely bulletproof. That, even when it’s comic and cutting, that it is a fair critique; that it is a critique that no one would argue with. (Interview, 11 May 2010)

However, all of the column-writing news reporters I interviewed acknowledge tensions in reconciling these different obligations. These conflicts as well as the associated institutional boundary is nonexistent in Germany where the separation between news and opinion is weaker or nonexistent. Among LP reporters, the personal union of reporters/columnist is very common. In most cases reporters write opinion columns and an journalistic form they call Korrespondentenfeature, which tends to be more analytical and opinionated and contains more “color” than a news story. Probing for whether this combination of tasks ever got them into trouble with political actors (e.g. getting politically labeled, stigmatized, ousted) was negated throughout.\(^{232}\) In other words, German reporters do not seem to have any problem with negotiating writing opinion and “objective” news stories, often even in the same issue of the paper. Only one LP reporter spoke of a “balancing act” regarding the reconcilability of writing news reports and editorials about the same issue in the same paper.

LP reporters, on the contrary, object to the notion of reine Nachricht (pure news), which refers to the traditional ideal of news reporting in the US (this was already discussed in more detail in chapter 4). As one TV journalist pointed out: “Always the ‘pro and con and then we let the viewer decide’ is not my thing”\(^{233}\) (Interview, 30 May 2012). “I believe there are no bare news,”\(^{234}\) said one newspaper reporter. Even more

\(^{232}\) As I will show in the following section, commentary in itself can certainly sour source relations. Here, the issue is reconcilability of news and opinion.

\(^{233}\) Original: “Immer nur hier pro und kontra und dann lass den Zuschauer entscheiden ist jetzt nicht mein Ding.”

\(^{234}\) Original: “Ich bin der Meinung es gibt keine nackten Nachrichten.”
importantly, for LP reporters the appearance of impartiality in this sense is not a concern and they are comfortable with embodying both opinion and facticity. When I asked them whether their commentary impairs their news credibility, which is an idea that permeates my LCA data as a hypothetical scenario that is to be avoided by all means, LP reporters often did not even understand what I was talking about. One reporter put it quite bluntly: “Look, it’s a craft. It is like: ‘today I make a table, tomorrow I make a chair.’ It works. … If you can’t do that you chose the wrong occupation” (Interview, 23 March 2012). I likewise asked spokespeople if they pushed reporters’ buttons based on violation of impartiality as their US counterparts do. Similarly, for the most part they did not understand what I meant and unanimously negated.

Finally, I should emphasize that among LCA reporters, refraining from opinion does not only have performative significance. Several of them described it as a practice they need to “keep the news pure.” One LP journalist said something interesting in this context, which could not be more contrary to his US opponents. He said:

If I write a news report and it wells up inside me where I say “you can’t write that because what he is telling me is baloney” or it has this or that implication, which he has not considered … When I reach that threshold that it wells up inside me, that something wants out of me, then I write my news report, as it’s supposed to be, as objectively as I can, and then I write a commentary in addition where I can allow my opinion full bent. (Interview, 10 February 2012)

Only when I broached the subject again, he conceded that may be possible that opinion flows into the news but said that hybrid news genres, like analysis or feature writing, would also buffer this. To him, opinion is, contrary to LCA journalist, a way to

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236 Original: “Wenn ich einen Bericht schreib’ und in mir brodelts’, wo ich mir sag: ‘das kannst du eigentlich nicht schreiben weil was der dir sagt ist ein Schmarrn’ oder das hat die-und-die Auswirkung, die der vielleicht nicht bedacht hat. … Wenn die Schwelle erreicht ist, dass es in mir brodelt, dass aus mir was raus will, dann schreibe ich meinen Bericht – so wie er gehört, so objektiv wie es mir möglich ist – und dann schreibe ich noch einen Kommentar dazu wo ich meiner Meinung freien Lauf lassen kann.”
leave his opinion out of the news. In other words: writing opinion acts as an outlet so that his news remains pure. An inversion of that argument and a hypothesis would be that US reporters, who do not have this possibility for the most part, are more prone to let their opinion slip into the news.

**The Editorial and Associational Defense Shield**

In both contexts reporters told me about threats of and effective complaints directed at their editors by politicians for being treated unfairly or misrepresented. This usually occurs backstage and is hardly discussed in public. After I have left the field in Albany and while I was conducting field research in Munich, there was an incidence, however, where this common social dynamic of political offices exerting pressure on news organizations became public.

A leak of a document by Governor Cuomo’s Communications Director, Richard Bamberger to *Buzzfeed* initiated the discussion. It was called a “dossier” (put in quotation marks because this very designation was itself subject of discussion) about YNN journalist, news anchor and prominent blogger, Elizabeth Benjamin, compiling 35 pages of her news stories with annotations by Bamberger, such as “GENERALLY SNARKY.” Bamberger acknowledged the authenticity of the document, which he prepared for a meeting with senior executives of YNN. In subsequent meta-discussions among journalists about this story, the leaked dossier was viewed as evidence for the media-adversity of the Cuomo administration.

In this context, this example serves as a rare unveiling of prevalent backroom practices of complaining and exerting pressure on journalists through their superiors,

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which informants in both settings told me about. In almost all of these situations, editors act as personified boundaries for journalists, unless reporters committed factual errors. I refer to this personification as the *editorial defensive shield*, which reporters count on and use as another means of symbolic production in boundary performances. A seasoned LCA reporter said: “In my career I’ve made a lot of people angry over the years and cost some people their jobs and I’ve never faced any pressure by anybody [within my organization] to pull back, ever” (Interview, 23 May 2009). He explained this by the integrity of his company and the “aggressive tradition of free press in the US” overall. There was not one LCA reporter who said to have received anything else than support in such situations. Confident about the operation and commitment of the editorial defensive shield, reporters signal dual confidence when threatened: in the professional integrity of their organization and their own:

MR: Does it happen that they go higher up the chain and complain with an editor? Reporter: Oh yeah, it’s happened a few times. My general response is, ‘go ahead! Wanna play that game? Try it. Good luck!’ Recently I got into a shouting match with someone – it was a profanity-laced shouting match – and he said: ‘so I call your editors.’ I said: ‘Go ahead, I make my case to my editors.’ That’s been done. (Interview, 18 May 2010)

However, if this intimidation strategy was really so ineffective, it leaves the question why political actors bother at all? Besides emotional indignation, they may do it to signal readiness to attack and to demoralize reporters, hoping they will pull back in the future – an effect few reporters concede. Having to justify themselves repeatedly in front of superiors, however, may weigh them down, especially young reporters, who are confronted with threats more often than more experienced correspondents. From the perspective of spokespeople, furthermore, being tough on reporters is part of their own professional performance. A former Assembly spokesperson said:
Spox: There were certainly times where I had to get heated with reporters. I try to do it less and less because, at the end of it, I felt like crap because it’s not the way I really like to interact with people. Reporters who I still talk to a lot and respect, I think the good reporters understand that sometimes I have got to go back to my boss … and say: “I yelled at X.” “I yelled at him about that story.” Even if that doesn’t change anything.
MR: You did your job.
Spox: Right. Sometimes that’s part of the job. (Interview, 28 February 2012)

In the LP, political actors complain about reporters’ coverage with superiors, the editorial defense shield is normally in place. However, some informants told me about instances when this was not the case and where political pressure was transferred to them or their colleagues. LP reporters told me about much more severe instances of pressure than I heard about in the LCA, that is, threatening reporters’ careers in their organization or at the beat. This seems to be most prevalent for journalists from the public broadcasting company, Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR), where political actors are members of the broadcast board (“Rundfunkrat”). Political parties often demand more (or better) representation in news content, appealing to the public contract, though this appears to happen less than in the past.

One BR reporter told me that a former governor took issue with his radio commentary once and exerted pressure through his superiors to a degree that he decided it was better for him to back away:

[Edmund] Stoiber once complained vehemently about me and attempted to interfere in my career here at BR. That came through [to me] and I had a real problem for a while and avoided Stoiber for a long time, at least two or three years, because I felt unfree. It never happened as severely afterwards.²³⁸
(Interview, 22 November, 2011)

My informants also told me about political interventions at newspapers, which ended with reporters withdrawn from the beat, their jobs threatened and, in one case, dismissal. One newspaper reporter alluded to this whilst defining public responsibility in terms of maintaining ones independence:

It starts in the immediate environment, maybe a chief editor or publisher who says “do you have to present the Governor so negatively?” and so on. Well, I could then say “ok, next week I do it differently.” You have to push back against such interferences. That’s my opinion and that’s really important to me now. I had severe problems here [in my company] and thought a few years ago “ok, when I come in tomorrow I won’t have a job anymore.”

Later in the interview she described more specifically how pressure was exerted, which requires to quote her in some length:

There was severe pressure from the publishing company. From the publisher – it did not come from the editorial department – but, of course, the chief editor was instructed to discipline me. It concerned CSU stories, of course. That was before the parliamentary elections; very severe. There were emails from the publisher “this and that expression is inacceptable” and they asked me not to do that anymore. I don’t remember the specific wording. I always answered immediately that I would not accept that. It also concerned a text about a party convention where I referred to [current minister of finance] Söder as “overly ambitious,” which is actually totally harmless. “That’s outrageous. He is a minister!” I couldn’t believe it. That case went to the journalism guild. I negotiated with them and was told we could make it public but that I’d have to expect getting fired, having to go to labor court, there would be a settlement, I would get severance pay and I should be aware of that beforehand. And then I told them … not to report it and I’d see and push back for now. And write what I want. And then I did that. But it was tough.

(Original: “Das beginnt ja schon im nächsten Umfeld, vielleicht ein Chefredakteur oder ein Geschäftsführer sagt ‘ja, muss das immer sein, dass man den Ministerpräsidenten blöd darstellt?’ und so. Gut, und dann könnte ich vielleicht sagen ‘ja, ok, in der nächsten Woche mach ich das dann anders.’ Also gegen solche Einmischungen muss man sich wehren. Ist meine Meinung und das ist mir mittlerweile ganz wichtig. Ich hatte hier auch schon massive Probleme und dachte eigentlich so vor ein paar Jahren immer ‘so, wenn ich jetzt morgen komme dann hab ich keinen Job mehr.’”)

There are organizational reasons for the absence of an editorial defense shield that CSU utilized, namely a unique position of her outlet, which is subsidized by the Landtag to cover proceedings (not of one single party but the legislative body as a whole, of which CSU is the strongest player). There are other instances where the specific relationship between the organization and the political realm is not as obviously prone to such intervention.

The second organizational defense shield LP reporters have—the association Landtagspresse—also takes action at times as I have discussed in chapter 5. Although it rarely gets to this point, it is an established associational practice that members and political actors are aware of and understand as protection and deterrence respectively.

**Civic Withdrawal and Professional Purification**

Another aspect of the social drama of LCA reporters is almost nonexistent in the German data. Professional imperatives of impartiality and non-partisanship spill over into journalists’ personal lives in the US, setting off what Mary Douglas (2005) called a *pollution drama*, a set of taboos and rituals of avoidance: journalists curtail their own civil rights in avoiding any political involvement, party registration (and thereby primary elections) and even community board duties.

Dash does not vote at all in elections he covers. He argues it would be irreconcilable for him to choose one over the other candidate, which would have to be based on a preference developed beforehand, during a time when he is supposed to do his Minister.’ Ich hab es gar nicht glauben können. Das ging damals bis vor den Journalistenverband. Ich hab dann mit denen verhandelt und dann halt gesagt gekriegt ‘ja, das können wir jetzt öffentlich machen.’ Und dann müsste ich damit rechnen, dass ich gekündigt werde und dann geht das vors Arbeitsgericht und dann gibt es einen Vergleich und dann kriege ich eine Abfindung und das müsste ich einfach vorher dann wissen. Und dann hab ich gesagt sie sollen … erst einmal nicht darüber berichten. Und jetzt schaue ich erst einmal, jetzt wehe ich mich erst einmal. Und schreib aber was ich will. Und das hab ich dann gemacht. Aber es war schon hart.”
job covering the election in a neutral and balanced fashion. This is an extreme position within the LCA. However, the fact that a journalist would actually take such a stance is telling in its own right about how jealously the appearance of non-partisanship is guarded. Furthermore, not voting is common among national political correspondents also, some of whom also stated this in public. Dash referred to Jim Lehrer (former anchor for PBS NewsHour) and Leonard Downie, Jr. (former Washington Post editor) to justify his position in front of colleagues who thought this was going too far (Fieldnotes, 16 November 2010).

Next to professionalism, Hess (1981:89) related this inclination not to vote, which he asserted was common for Washington correspondents, to a lack of political beliefs among reporters. My research does not suggest that. Instead, reporters engage in these rituals of avoidance to pre-emptively counter criticism by political actors, who use any seeming violation of non-partisanship as a symbolic device to question their integrity and dismiss their work. Nowadays, even a disproportion of Facebook friends on each side of the aisle may serve to undermine the appearance of impartiality.

Even though this is a familiar game, reporters take it very seriously. As Dash says, “the appearance of impropriety is impropriety. The appearance of bias is bias. You can be attacked, that’s the standard to which you have to hold yourself to” (Interview, 18 May 2010). It is also common, therefore, that journalists refrain from covering certain subjects or organizations, which they have some form of personal connection to. To take a hypothetical example: if a reporter’s spouse is a cabinet member of the State University of New York (SUNY) she would not cover issues involving SUNY.
Only one German reporter mentioned and emphasized the incompatibility of political party membership and being a political reporter, even if lists of members are not public, there are no primary elections in Germany and thus no civic incentives to be a party member (there are others, however). He said he knows “several colleagues” who are members of a party: “I would never do that … because they give up their independence and also part of their credibility”\(^\text{241}\) (Interview, 1 December 2011). For LCA reporters, being a party member is generally unthinkable.

A common theme in jocular conversations between LCA journalists and spokespeople are each respective professional obligations: spokespeople tell reporters how they violate norms of impartiality while reporters tell spokespeople how they deviate from the ideal of public information and instead just offer advocacy and spin. One day, Dash explained to me a FOIA request he just filed with a government agency. He got the spokesperson involved in the process to make sure his request did not get lost: “\textit{This is what they are supposed to do – this is public information.} She is a public information officer. That is her job and that’s why we [taxpayers] pay her salary” (Fieldnotes, 10 January 2011). This is the essence of which reporters make pejorative remarks towards spokespeople: They are bound by their obligation to the public, who pay their salary over and above, to provide information of common concern.

Spokespeople can also get defensive about this, sometimes even anticipatory. One day, Dash and Chuck were in a conversation with a spokesperson about future hires by the Cuomo administration. They were engaged in speculation and digging for information about that at the time. The two reporters joked that the spokesperson, a former journalist,

\(^{241}\) Original: “Ich würde es nie machen … weil sie ihre eigene Unabhängigkeit aufgeben und auch ein Stück ihrer Glaubwürdigkeit verlieren.”
would probably start working for Cuomo in the following January, to which he responded that he still believed in public service (Fieldnotes, 16 November 2010).

Initially, I did not take such conversations seriously when I witnessed them. In conjunction with what they told me in interviews, I realized how sensitive reporters were about such criticism. The purification rituals, which I have discussed in this section, are further testaments of that.

**Managing Professional Boundaries**

Manifestations of boundaries discussed in the previous section – like the wall and the editorial defense shield – support boundary performances when journalists interact with sources. State house reporters invest considerable energy in cultivating and reflecting upon source relationships. Herbert Gans observed that beat reporters are more polite to sources compared than general assignment reporters (Gans 1979:141). I noticed that state house reporters interact politely and informally with political actors most of the time (but not always), at least backstage. In public settings, at press conferences for example, they are much more aggressive compared to general assignment reporters who only descend to the State Capitol every now and then.

State house reporters are aware and struggle with the dangers of overembedded source relations. From a network theoretical perspective (Uzzi 1997), these ties are built on lasting relationships of mutual trust and reciprocity that generate a constant flow of valuable information, while blocking information from outside the network. From the viewpoint of watchdog journalism, the problem with being too close to sources is that personal obligation may take precedence over public concerns sometimes and alternative sources of information may be neglected. LCA reporters talk about the State Capitol as a
“bubble” or “echo chamber” to refer to its self-referentiality, LP reporters call the Landtag a “Käseglocke” (cheese bell) in such instances of self-criticism.

The need to find a balance between closeness and distance towards political actors is applicable in both cases and probably a universal condition of beat journalism. Both, being close and distant, have professional merit. Closeness facilitates access to information, which those who are not as close may not get, whereas distance is desirable regarding professional autonomy. Reporters in both settings talk about the ways they maneuver between these two poles while trying to stay clear of extremes: Being in bed with your sources (figuratively and literally) or being completely shut off from any access beyond press releases. Everything in between constitutes a delicate social balancing act and requires adjustments and variations of performances and boundaries, in interaction as well as in the news.

There are differences within the LCA if and to what degree journalists socialize with sources outside of the State Capitol. The fundamental problem, particularly when correspondents have to interact with political sources every day, is switching between professionalism and sociability while maintaining a sense of authenticity. A senior reporter responded in a prosaic way when I asked him about this issue:

I can be friendly with politicians, have fun with them, go out with them, but I can never be real friends with them. I always have to be in the position to thrive a stake through their heart if it’s necessary. And a lot of people respect that, some don’t and they will never talk to you again. (Interview, 20 March 2010)

On a similar note, another says he still feels functional when he is imaginarily capable of ruining a source’s day. To this young reporter, on the other hand, finding balance constitutes a real challenge:

You can’t be afraid to be confrontational but you can’t be afraid to be open enough to be almost a friend but that’s too much; there is such a fine line—it’s a
very delicate thing. You know a lot of these people. You know their wives’ or their husbands’ or their kids’ names ... but you also know that they will do anything it takes to spin you and get you to state something that makes their boss look good. ... So it’s a delicate thing and, you know, it’s so easy to get caught in just being a human and having a human connection with somebody. It is one of the most challenging parts of the job. (Interview, 16 April 2009)

I did not have access to nightlife sociability between reporters and sources in Albany (nor in Munich). My understanding from the interviews, however, is 1) when they say they hang out with their sources they mostly mean spokespeople and “staffers,” not so much elected officials, 2) those who participate in this are mostly young reporters, 3) most senior reporters say they would never hang out with sources (the one quoted above is an exception). Some reporters do not socialize with sources outside the Capitol specifically because they think it would compromise their ability to be critical. Others make it a point that this does not have such effect: “what you do get is an easier working relationship … it doesn’t mean you can’t still kick their teeth in.” (Interview, 26 May 2011)

The situation is a little different in Germany. There appears to be more frequent personal contact between journalists and politicians themselves (not only spokespeople). But there are similar variations regarding how journalists maneuver the dangerous waters of trying to develop relationships with their sources without getting too close to them. One reporter has personal contact with some politicians but says:

I keep great distance. There are a few people who I know well, better than others, but I do not talk to them about internal information. I don’t let myself be embroiled in this, intra-party wars or whatever … I don’t let myself be turned into a tool.242 (Interview, 24 January 2012)

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242 Original: „Also ich halte da grosse Distanz. Ich habe ein paar Leute die ich gut kenne, besser als andere, aber mit denen spreche ich dann nicht über Dinge, die jetzt intern sind. Also ich lasse mich da nicht einspannen, zum Beispiel bei innerparteilichen Kriegen oder so. … Ich selber lasse mich nicht zum Werkzeug machen.“
This senior reporter, again, appeared comfortable about this balancing act and also mentioned that his age helped in this respect. One of the youngest journalists explained how she managed to assert herself in the job:

It was a special situation for me. First of all, I was by far the youngest when I came to the Landtagspresse, certainly by 15 years, and a woman in a male-dominated job. In the LP most alpha animals are men. It was difficult for me to acquire respect, that they don’t say “well, nice little thing, somehow” and I don’t exactly weigh 100 kilos either. That was most difficult at the beginning and that only works by keeping a lot of distance to those involved, by remaining factual.243 (Interview, 26 March 2012)

Gender was also touched by female LCA reporters, which are also a minority (in the press corps as well as in the Capitol universe in general). Some (but not all) female LCA reporters I interviewed told me they had to compensate their gender by being extra-tough. One also said that she feels she can’t take part in nightlife activities with sources—mostly men—because it would be compromising for her as a woman.

There is a culturally specific distancing behavior, furthermore, in the form of personal address in German. LP correspondents made the point that they do not use informal address (“Du” as opposed to “Sie”) with sources, though most of them make “a few exceptions.” One senior LP reporter does not, however:

You must have a certain closeness but it cannot cross closeness at a certain point. For example, I don’t “dutze” with politicians. I don’t want too much closeness to them, the same goes for spokespeople. I don’t want to, say, go play tennis or soccer or whatever with spokespeople, to establish this kind of personal contact. It becomes difficult because there will always be situations where I have to hurt a spokesperson or his boss or to hurt a politician. But, on the other hand, you do

need to find the right balance.  

The most frequent response from reporters about “dutzen”–an issue many of them addressed–is that in some cases it was “unavoidable,” and the following reporter is an example of this. When I asked him about closeness and distance to politicians he responded:

The perpetual business and conflict we are exposed to. You have to get close but you shouldn’t exaggerate it – that leads to many little daily issues. It leads to the question whether you can say “du” to a politician? It is inevitable in some cases, of course, in my case they are really few but there are some where it just happens over decades. You try not to allow yourself to be guided by it, on the other hand this is an unavoidable condition of the job. I mean, you can try it without closeness but then, well, you are isolated.

There is a peculiar contrast in the LCA where some senior reporters use officials’ first names when they address them in interviews and press gaggles. Usually, reporters address politicians by their title (Senator, Governor) while politicians address reporters by their first name (except New York Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, who uses “sir” or “madam”, even with reporters of the city hall press corps.) One senior LCA reporter said he uses officials’ first names in an intentional pejorative way to not make them feel “too important” (Fieldnotes, 10 May 2011).

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244 Original: “Man muss eine gewisse Nähe haben aber das darf nicht Nähe in einem bestimmten Punkt überschreiten. Zum Beispiel: Ich duze mich nicht mit Politikern. Ich will auch nicht eine zu große Nähe zu denen, ich will auch nicht zu Pressesprechern eine zu grosse Nähe. Ich will nicht, sagen wir einmal, mit einem Pressesprecher versuchen, dass ich da irgendwie mit dem Tennis spiele oder Fußball spiele oder was auch immer, also so eine Art von persönlichen Kontakt herzustellen, weil das wird einfach dann schwierig weil es wird doch Situationen geben wo man einem Pressesprecher oder seinem Chef ziemlich weh tun muss oder auch einem Politiker ziemlich weh tun muss. Aber man muss natürlich schon auf der anderen Seite die richtige Balance finden.”

245 Original: “Das ist das immerwährende Geschäft, der immerwährende Zwiespalt, dem man ausgesetzt ist. Man muss die Nähe suchen, man darf die Nähe nicht übertreiben - das führt zu ganz vielen täglichen Punkten. Es führt dazu: Darf man einen Politiker duzen? Bleibt natürlich in manchen Fällen nicht aus, also bei mir sind es wirklich wenige aber ein paar sind’s halt doch weil es sich über die Jahrzehnte einmal ergibt. Man versucht sich davon nicht leiten zu lassen, andererseits sind es unabwendbare Voraussetzungen für den Beruf, … Also man kann es auch ohne Nähe probieren aber dann...tja, dann bist du halt abgeschnitten.”
Amongst other things, the tension of this in-between-ness involves careful consideration when it is worth or required to attack a source in a news story (“throwing them under the bus,” as they say). There are many factors involved, first of all the story itself: How big is the story, i.e. how significant is it in terms of public accountability, how important is it for the reputation of the media outlet and individual journalist, etc. On the other hand, how damaging is the story for the source and, as a consequence, the relationship between the journalist and his or her source? Publishing every damaging detail is counterproductive for sustaining source relationships and may also be insignificant for the public at large.

Therefore, my informants talk about different forms of inhibition in this regard. Illustrative metaphors used by informants for these considerations are “protecting your sources” or “picking your battles” in the US, or as one of my informants suggested: “You need to report on them accurately but you don’t need to go crazy in fucking them” (Interview, 18 May 2010). One German reporter referred to such situations as “Abwägungssache” (a matter of weighting), another said he tried to not leave “verbrannte Erde” (scorched earth) behind. In contrast to their US counterparts, LP reporters were more upfront about acknowledging problems in a reflexive way, of having good relations to sources. They talk about having “Beisshemmungen” (bite inhibitions) or a “Zensur im Kopf” (literally “censorship within the mind,” meaning self-censorship). Some also talked about feeling guilty after they have published a critical story. This issue of guilt was only acknowledged by one US informant (Dash) and described by him as a fear of “having wronged somebody.” It is not inconceivable that spokespeople sense this guilt. I
have observed and he has told me of instances when he was yelled at on the phone. In the situations I witnessed, however, he did not give off the impression of feeling guilty.

From a comparative perspective, it is telling that several German reporters told me about guilt, most of whom I barely or did not know at all when I interviewed them. I spent much more time in the LCA, on the other hand, I had good relations with most of my informants but only my key informant, who I had developed a trusted relationship at that point, acknowledged guilt while we had a beer at his dinner table. I asked him whether he was Catholic and he responded: “Yeah, caught it! It’s a total Catholic thing.” Besides the fact that most German reporters are presumably Catholic (southern parts of Germany are dominated by Catholicism) and US reporters probably Protestant and Jewish, LCA reporters were more protective of their performative space of professionalism. Drawing on the ethos of journalistic autonomy, they assert this professionalism by not conceding weaknesses in this respect.

Reporters told me about different means to accomplish the tightrope walk between closeness and distance, reporting critically and maintaining accountability, on the one hand, and sustaining friendly working relationships and keeping communication to sources intact, on the other. One LCA journalist used a revealing metaphor to explain why sources give him off-the-record information: “Some do it to make a deposit in the favor-bank that sources and journalists are constantly making either withdrawals or deposits to” (Interview, 11 May 2010). The favor bank denotes a continuous relation of reciprocity, information in exchange for publicity and vice versa, which unites political actors and journalists.
Another, young newspaper reporters talked about the requirement to be grateful to sources who give you access in terms of not to “jump at throwing them under the bus.” (interview, 4 May, 2011) He then told me about a story he wrote, which he thought was insignificant (he used the word “stupid”) but got a lot of attention. The Governor’s office asked him to write that story, promising to give him access to information for a story he really wanted to write. The story was not material for the printed paper but he could instead place it on a blog, which he writes for on a weekly basis. At the time we did the interview, which was three weeks after the favor story appeared, he has not been provided access to that information yet.

The idea of the favor bank is not unfamiliar in the German context, although not in this terminology. One German TV reporter said about mastering the social balancing act with sources:

You have to resolve this relationship for yourself in a neat way. And that was never a problem for me in that sense because what is also clear: it is a business of give and take between journalism and politics and this means, if I get a good information from someone, I have to use a sound bite by that person at another point. That goes without saying. But that has nothing to do with partisanship or other dependencies but this is just how it goes. It is also legitimate I think. (Interview, 30 May 2012)

Another LP reporter, who is relatively uninvolved in online journalism (as a personal choice and because her company is structured in separate departments for print and online) saw advantages of being able to write online stories at one point. It gives her the opportunity to give publicity if she cannot provide it in print, as an effort not to displease a source. She describes a situation where she pursued a very busy informant for

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days, finally interviews him for ten minutes and then the story is canceled: “you can then go and place stories online that would fall through the net otherwise. As a result, sources feel they have been served well and will be with you for longer, hopefully”247 (Interview, 23 March 2012). In the LCA, one reporter who is less involved in digital media than most of his competitor-colleagues said he also perceives advantages in the online expansion of space for news. However, he connected this potential to the ability to accommodate important stories and not let them die for the lack of space on paper.

Granting favors to sources, even if it is reciprocated by more significant stories, is potentially or effectually transgressive regarding professional autonomy. For that reason, reporters countervail that loss of autonomy in performance. The vignette at the beginning of this chapter exemplifies this: Dash was handed a soft, human-interest story by a top official. He felt bad about it and his competitor-colleagues teased him for it. When he published a critical story about the same politician a few weeks later, it was followed by a complaint to his editors and Dash seemed vindicated. This is not to say that he wrote that story only because he wanted to “get even” but that he ascribes meaning to his work and uses this meaning deliberately in professional performance to his audience of competitor-colleagues and sources. In the concrete example, he told one competitor-colleague in confidence about the angry letter his newspaper received about his story while also defending the previous soft story, saying that its premise was based on facts.

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247 Original: “Sie können dann immer einmal nochmal solche Geschichten, die einfach durchs Raster fallen, auf Online plazieren. Dadurch fühlen sich die Informanten dann auch ganz gut und bedient und bleiben ihnen erhalten hoffentlich.”
Boundary Blurring: Backstage Talk and Journalists as Political Actors

Background and “off-the-record” conversations are prevalent communicative practices at a political beat (subsumed as *backstage talk* in the following). Spokespeople routinely say “off-the-record” as a suffix or prefix disclaimer when they talk to journalists in Albany, indicating what they just said or are about to say cannot be quoted. Conversations often alternate between off- and on-the-record, with reporters prefacing shifts by saying: “can we go back on-the-record?” In Germany, the analogous expression is “Unter drei” (under three).

**Off-the-record as a Performance**

On the most basic level, information shared off-the-records by spokespeople not only serve to be able to speak openly but to make deposits to the above-mentioned favor-bank. Because of that and because of tightly controlled communication policies of certain branches of government—above all the executive—some spokespeople use off-the-record perpetually in conversations with reporters. In one exchange I witnessed, a spokesperson called Dash to share a piece of information with Dash off-the-record, which was already publicized and thus actually on-the-record. After the conversation, Chuck said to Dash: “We already fucking know that! What do you mean off-the-record?! Oh my god. Is he trying to get points by telling us about it after we all already read about it in the *Post*?” (Fieldnotes, 10 January 2010)

I have not witnessed or heard about such a perpetual use of “unter drei” in Munich. There are several interpretation for why spokespeople seem much more careful, not to say distrustful, in Albany: my observation in the LCA occurred at a time when relations between press and politics reconstituted themselves, that is, it was after an
election, a Governor entered office and the power balance in the Senate shifted in favor of the Republican party. Furthermore, the constant potential of live coverage through blogs and Twitter in Albany increases the danger of information quickly entering the news that were not intended for be public. The overall level of immediacy of coverage is not nearly as high in Munich, as I discussed above.

Backstage talk fosters a certain kind of performance of journalists where they inhabit the role of close confidants rather than distanced professionals. Backstage is “a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course” (Goffman 1956:69). The kind of familiarity in backstage talk between political actors and spokespeople contrasts the professional distance we see in public settings, like press conferences or any event where members of the public are present or at least where cameras are rolling in their stead. The performative blurring of institutional boundaries makes strategic cooperation between media and politics possible. Spatial and thus social proximity further promotes this inclination. As mentioned earlier, the constant presence of LCA reporters in the statehouse, contrary to LP reporters, is an important difference in that regard. LP journalists engage frequently in off-the-record conversations as well, of course, but they are not as available for political actors as LCA reporters. Sitting in an LCA office, spokespeople coming by and talking to reporters almost seemed incidental and I had to remind myself that it was probably not.

This is how one senior LCA reporter characterized the State Capitol conversational culture:

“[Insiders, including journalists, lobbyists, elected leaders government employees] are there all the time. They’re talking. They’re talking to one another.
They’re passing on information. They’re passing on disinformation. They’re spinning. Some tell the truth. Some tell half-truths. Some pass along rumors. (Interview, 5 May 2011)

Another reporter, who has himself worked as a spokesperson for a while before he returned to journalism, talked about journalists who do not want to go off-the-record (which, deducing from my interview, is a position nobody in the LCA holds unconditionally). He does not agree with this position:

There are some journalists who want everything on-the-record. I think that’s a little unrealistic. Because … sources … – it’s not that they always want to mislead you but sometimes … they have real personal concerns for their own job, their working life that is important to them. The fact that they don’t make your story and your publication the number one priority and therefore tell you everything they know on-the-record? You can’t blame them for that. You can’t blame them for that. [In] the human interaction of talking to people and interviewing people, I think you do have to recognize that there are gonna be times where people don’t want to be on-the-record. (Interview, 11 April 2011)

He then describes how these information can be beneficial for journalists, pointing them to other persons to ask a question (and who might answer on-the-record), helping them understand motivations and incentives behind an issue they write about. Strictly spoken, off-the-record cannot be used at all but there are gradations, contingent on negotiation. A piece of information might be “on deep background” for further research, or “on background” and enter news coverage implicitly or as unattributed quote. In the latter case, reporters for prestigious outlets are required to specify the role of the anonymous source as much as they can.

Most reporters find backstage talk essential to do their job but argue that the first rule is to discern the motivation behind it in order to assess independently how and whether to use it or not. One LCA reporter provided the most comprehensive and vivid list of reasons why sources speak off-the-record, which apply to the LP as well:

Because it makes them feel powerful; because they like you. They are lying to
you because they don’t like you; because it’s their job to; because you’ve asked a reasonable question; because you have asked at all; because telling me something advances another interest of theirs; because they’re explicitly trying to make something happen; because people like to gossip; because they’re angry; because they’re sad; because their friend got fucked over something; because they got fucked over something; because they hate somebody in their office; because somebody in their office hates them; because they are rivals with somebody. It’s endless! You just have to try to know why you’re getting it. It doesn’t mean you can’t use it. You just got to know… you just have to be conscious of motive. It’s always better to know what the motive is if you can figure it out. Sometimes you just ask them: “Why are you telling me this?” Sometimes you figure it out. I know that this official and that official hate each other and they are rivals. Or that person thinks they rival with that person [so] they’re gonna subtly undermine them. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

Though all reporters engage in backstage talk on some level, my interviews reveal some disagreement regarding the extent to which they think it is warranted for good journalism and how the information ought to be used. One LCA reporter, who has by far the most skeptical opinion towards this culture of backstage talk and anonymous sourcing, had this to say when I asked him how he got along with his LCA competitor-colleagues:

It’s pretty friendly, since [my company] doesn’t deal in unnamed sources very much at all and especially in political stories. That just sort of means I am not in competition with them. … Look at the New York Post and the Daily News, look at how many unnamed sources: a lot! Now, most of the time it’s true but let me point out, for example: Mr. Jewell who is accused of bombing the Atlanta Olympics – law enforcement officials [quoted in the stories were] all unnamed sources – innocent! After being named in every newspaper in the country. …. Weapons of mass destruction in the country of Iraq – unnamed sources. ‘Well oops, sorry!’ You know, there’s a good way to avoid that and that is: if somebody says something that’s important enough that they want to say then let them say it! If they don’t want to say it on-the-record then [don’t let them say it]. (Interview, 21 April 2010)

He argues that a radical stop with unattributed sources would improve news discourse in general and on New York State politics in particular. There are others who share this opinion to some extent, though with hesitation, arguing it would only be possible if all reporters stop doing it simultaneously. This is unlikely, to say the least.
None of my informants in the LP, in contrast, said anything to the effect that there was too much anonymous sourcing. One reason for this is that the models of journalism at play in the LCA are more diverse than in the LP. Though the only tabloid reporter who is on location most of the time is subject of distinction by some LP reporters, boundary work is not nearly as strong as in the LCA and does not concern the issue of anonymous sourcing at all.

**Implications of Backstage Talk**

Backstage conversations are ubiquitous, seemingly innocuous but, partly because of that, can have severe consequences for political power relationships and people’s livelihoods more generally. Whatever the motivation behind it, a positive implication of backstage talk for journalists is that it helps them anticipate developments, evaluate official on-the-record information, make better-informed news decisions. One reporter defines his responsibility to the public as “painting as clear a picture as possible, and as complete a picture as possible,” (Interview, 18 May 2010) based on information that is not readily available and on what he knows beyond what he can report. “[Background information] is elementary from the viewpoint that I can assess the general situation and specific issues much better because of it”\(^{248}\) (Interview, 30 May, 2012), said one TV reporter in the LP.

As much as the reluctance of political actors to go on-the-record—which has grown over time in New York, according to senior LCA reporters—is a protective strategy, it may backfire not only as rumor mill but also in terms of being confronted with

\(^{248}\) Original: “Also ist auch elementar unter dem Gesichtspunkte, dass ich dadurch natürlich die Gesamtsituation und gewisse Dinge auch ganz anders einschätzen kann.”
reporters who ask better-informed questions than what can be anticipated by the on-the-record information available.

Besides these more regular positive implications, many of the most important news stories regarding public accountability of government are based on confidentiality. The most obvious example of this happens to be the key myth in US journalism, Watergate, which is unthinkable without Deep Throat talking on deep background. One particularly prosaic LP reporter referred to this example in an effort to demystify iconic representations of good journalism:

I think the public has the wrong impression. It’s always the portrayal of the brave investigative journalist, also in Hollywood movies, who finds out about something. In reality it’s virtually always the case, and the same goes for Watergate, that [journalists] need sources who give away something on their own initiative. … That’s why these great investigative achievements are based, to be honest, on betrayal of a person entrusted with confidential information. That makes the whole thing a little less impressive.\(^{249}\) (Interview, 24 November 2011)

The main negative implication of backstage talk is manipulation: affecting journalists’ interpretations (“spin”) or making them believe something, which is not true; selling something as a “secret” or “real story” to raise interest or make reporters feel privy. Sources also pursue secondary objectives when talking off-the-record, not so much about the issue itself but to generate a sense of closeness with a reporter. Another negative (intended or unintended) consequence is that it sets rumor mills in motion. This is even more significant in a news environment pervaded by information-hungry blogs and Twitter.

The ethics of source protection and conventions of confidentiality and trust in reporter-source relationships have an ironic effect that, in cases where unattributed information turns out to have no factual basis at all, sources are not held accountable for it (the reporter-source relationship may be harmed, however). Because of that, no reporter categorically refuses to let sources go off-the-record but some do it conditionally and negotiate the terms before they hear sources out. A TV reporter who operates like a print reporter in terms of engaging in backstage talk off camera, told me that because of the logic of her medium she needs to negotiate more about on- and off-the-record:

If they say “this is off-the-record“ and I know that it can’t be off-the-record, then I say “it can’t be off-the-record.” And so they can chose either to continue talking or they don’t have to tell me and just find someone else. So. But if they say: “Off-the-record,” I’ll let them know if it’s ok that it’s off the record. I’ll say: “OK.” If not then I’ll say: “I really need you to tell me this on the record.” And you can haggle with them. (Interview, 22 April 2010)

There is a particular danger to off-the-record information, which one LP reporter calls “to place issues under confidentiality” but which also exists in the LCA. These kinds of off-the-record information can become a particular hindrance for reporters and are used as a form of manipulation: If a reporter finds out something off-the-record from someone and then again from someone else on background, the first source can feel betrayed if the information gets out. In that particular situation, off-the-record information can become a gag order or at least impediment for future reporting. Because of that, some reporters don’t want to hear what a source says off-the-record if they can’t pursue the issue elsewhere. LCA and LP reporters talked about this. A senior LP reporter said about one of his colleagues:

It goes so far that [name] responds when a politician wants to give him information, which is not on the market yet – “but you can’t pass this on” – with

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250 Original: “Sachverhalte unter Vertraulichkeit stellen.”
“then don’t tell me about it because I can find out about it otherwise and am not bound. But when you tell me that under the condition that I can’t write about it then I don’t want to know it.”  

(Interview, 22 November 2011)

As mentioned earlier, several LCA reporters themselves perceive the use of unnamed sources as excessive, which is not the case in the LP. LCA journalists as well as some spokespeople I interviewed express reservations about this practice and find the degree to which the LCA engages in anonymous sourcing and anonymous attack quotes detrimental for political discourse. At the same time say they perceive it as a powerful rule of the game they can’t help themselves but engage in. This compulsion is also furthered by competition in the press corps, which was described to me as “fierce” and “intense” (as opposed to the LP where it has been described as “sporting”). In order to match contenders’ stories more than (but also) to get exclusives, most LCA reporters indulge in the excess of unnamed sourcing.

Another danger of backstage talk is that sociability conceals instrumental motives and becomes ingratiating confidentiality: “It’s an easy trap to fall into to talk to somebody off the record, [like:] ‘oh, we’re just chatting here’” (Interview, 28 February 2012) One former LCA reporter said she would not be comfortable with the level of informality some of her younger colleagues have towards sources, including officials: “It’s so informal. They talk to these aides like they are in their own living room. … I’m old-school, I guess” (Interview, 12 May 2011). One LP reporter referred to pseudo-confidentiality as a form of manipulation, which consisted of politicians trying to create a

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sense of “we’re all buddies and we’re all sitting in the same boat”\textsuperscript{252} (Interview, 17 April 2012).

The danger of feeling “in the know” in this sense is that powers and interests of participants dissolve in conversations amongst insiders. It also reinforces the bubble reporters refer to. Being privy to political insider conversation leave marks on journalistic news judgment and interpretation and may lead to emphasizing issues that are relatively insignificant for the public-at-large.

Talking about when Andrew Cuomo was still Attorney General According, a reporter described how he constantly blurred boundaries in this manner:

I had never seen such active leaking through law enforcement in my life. It was very political, very dirty. … [He had] long off-the-record discussions [with us]. That was just a try to relentlessly–politely but relentlessly–push your thinking in a certain direction. Or shape your interpretation of facts. And it’s become such a familiar game that it’s actually not as effective as he probably thinks it is. But it’s valuable. He’s a very smart guy, even when he’s being manipulative you learn something from him. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

An article in the \textit{New York Times} discusses then Governor-elect Andrew Cuomo–known for his meager press availability–as “a politician who prides himself on the art of the phone call.”\textsuperscript{253} The article states that he has regular and long (off-the-record) conversations with a small circle of reporters, which undoubtedly includes the \textit{Times}. The “art” \textit{Times} reporter Nick Confessore talks about creates “a powerful sense of intimacy, flattering and compelling amid the jockeying egos and endemic self-puffery of New York politics” (ibid.). Cuomo, according to this article, picks up on personal issues talked about in previous conversations, similar to the easygoing sociability I observed when Dash talks to his sources on the phone about the upcoming birth of his child. When

\textsuperscript{252} Original: “wir sind doch alle Kumpels und wir sitzen im selben Boot.”

Cuomo cuts to the chase, however, “he rarely declares his agenda, preferring instead to question you across a range of topics, in a mannered but intense style often described as Socratic.” (ibid.)

Except in case like these where the focus is on politicians, the issue of backstage talk is hardly debated publicly. One reason is that it is a controversial issue concerning journalistic professionalism. All correspondents engage in it on some level and thus have an interest to keep it backstage in order not to compromise front stage performances. As Goffman notes, “backstage familiarity is suppressed lest the interplay of poses collapse and all the participants find themselves on the same team, as it were, with no one left to play to” (1956:107).

**Journalists as Political Instruments**

As suggested above, the intention behind backstage talk, from a politics perspective, is often to use media for informational press maneuvers (Sigal 1973): making politics or individual career moves by leaking information or attacking opponents anonymously, thus without being held accountable for it. Though it occurs frequently, journalists drew boundaries against journalism, which lets itself be used excessively for such purposes. One LP reporter talked about this issue euphemistically, implicitly admitting that it does occur: “I think you also have the responsibility to give snipers among fellow party members not too big a platform”254 (Interview, 10 November 2011). Intra-party conflicts in the CSU, which is what he probably referred to, are said to be especially intense.

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254 Original: “Man hat schon finde ich auch die Verantwortung, allzusehr Heckenschützen unter Parteifreunden kein allzu grosses Forum zu bieten.”
German reporters talked about “instrumentalisert werden” in this context, which translates as “to be instrumentalized.” However, they did not refer to specific journalists in their own ranks. This could not be more different in the LCA where several journalists drew boundaries between good and bad journalism specifically in reference to tabloid journalism and tabloid journalists for letting themselves be used for anonymous political attacks. One spokesperson I interviewed described tabloids poignantly as “contract newspapers,” which means:

If they make a decision, you not only get the story but you also get the editorial, you get the Op-Ed, you get the photograph, you get the graph … you get the whole thing. That’s a good thing to have on your side. (Interview, 28 June 2011)

He did not say this in an accusatory tone at all but rather explained how helpful and how dangerous that can be (when the contract is not in your favor). One senior journalist took a more critical stance in this regard and, by way of defining how good journalism deals with anonymous sources, polluted respective tabloid practices:

We have different standards in terms of using anonymous quotes and gratuitous comments. … I don’t think the Post is necessarily being fair in using these anonymous quotes from who knows who these characters are, these alleged ‘highranking Democrats’ or ‘person close to the Cuomo camp’ or ‘person familiar with Shelly Silver’s thinking.’ I mean to say nasty things about someone in an anonymous quote is, I think, below the belt. If you want to say that we’ve learned that an investigation is going on according to someone close to the investigation, that’s different. But if you say we’ve learned that Alan Hevesi is one of the lowest scumballs in the world according to someone close to the investigation, that’s different. You know what I mean? They don’t distinguish. They’ll use either those things. It’s just as fine with them. I don’t approve of that. I don’t think most journalists would do that. So that’s the difference. (Interview, 5 May 2011)

Significant portions of the interview focused on this issue and particularly one reporter’s, Fred Dicker’s, sourcing standards. It is not the purpose to point fingers in specific directions, that is, individual reporters here but it is necessary to devote some
attention to Dicker because he has been such a central figure not only in the LCA but New York State politics in general over the last few decades.

When I conducted my field research in Albany, Dicker was the state editor of the New York Post and has been for many years. He writes a weekly column in the Post, besides his regular reporting, has a daily morning talk radio show (I was a guest twice to talk about my research), which often featured Andrew Cuomo in his first year in office, and is a commentator for Albany’s local affiliate for CBS News. He is often referred to and refers to himself as the “dean of the Albany press corps” and his journalistic style has been characterized in a portrait that featured on the frontpage of the New York Times as follows: “Mr. Dicker’s distinctive brand of journalism — old-school beat reporting, searing commentary and a sizable dose of showmanship — has helped him endure for more than three decades in Albany.” He is further described as “pummel[ing] politicians with such bipartisan brutality that people seem unable to turn away” while the portrait also pointed out that “so far he has been gentle with Governor Cuomo in columns that extol, not excoriate.”

An earlier portrait in the New York Observer wrote: “To Mr. Dicker’s admirers, his relentless reporting, with its heavy reliance on anonymous sources and its utter lack of boundaries, is a healthy antidote to Albany’s clubbiness. … His competitors blend an admiration for his scoops with a suspicion of his methods and a resentment of his open disdain for some of them.” Dicker is frequently the subject of this kind of news


coverage, focusing on journalistic meta-discourse. During the research period, the focus was on his good relationship to Governor Andrew Cuomo, which has since deteriorated. Allegedly, the falling out also led to the cancelation of a book deal, which Dicker acquired with Harper for a biography on Cuomo in spring of 2012.

Discussing Dicker on this level of detail is warranted because he serves as a kind of “boundary object” for many other LCA reporters for defining bad journalism, especially because of his sourcing practices. Overall, they perceive Dicker not so much as a journalist than as a political actor in his own right, not partisan (because his alliances are always temporary) but as pursuing his own personal agenda. It is indicative in this context that Dicker is characterized in the story quoted above as the “fourth man” to the allegorical *three men in a room* (the Governor and the leaders of the two legislative bodies). Though most LCA reporters did not mention him by name, it often became clear they were referring to him: “there are some reporters, as I’m sure you know, that are sort of open for sale” (Interview, 13 September 2010). Another reporter defined bad journalism in the following way: “there are people here, who write stories where they have just decided they are advocates or on the side of a certain politician. Sometimes kind of blatantly so, I think. Unfair journalism is bad journalism” (Interview, 21 January 2011). The next lengthy quote by one spokesperson of a former Governor is a more


extreme example of taking issue with Dicker. His outspokenness may be a consequence of not working within the confines of the Capitol anymore when we did the interview, even if he still had to deal with the LCA from time to time:

Fred Dicker allows himself to be used for personal attacks and you never have to give your name to be in Fred Dicker’s article. You can just attack somebody and say a quote … Every Monday he has his column that is some anonymous source quoted, lobbing a grenade at somebody … and very rarely it is actual journalism or is it actually uncovering something; it’s just attacks. And, again, I’m not gonna lie: we did it too. Part of the reason I felt that things started to turn around a little bit with [former Governor] … is because we started using Fred Dicker. We didn’t talk to that guy for a year and a half and he killed us every week. And then we started talking to him, giving him red meat, and he let off. Yeah, he still went after us every once in a while but it was a little bit more balanced. We got our shots in too. … We started fighting dirty like that, like everyone else does, and it helped. It helped the Governor’s coverage. Is that right? No! (Interview, 28 February 2011)

He refers to the power of the rules of the game of media-politics relations, which he found himself caught in and that he felt he could not change by continuously breaking them, even when working for the purportedly most powerful man in New York State. From his position, though, he did not accuse political actors for using the press in that way but the press for allowing itself to be used. This is, in his opinion, one contribution to the purported “dysfunction of Albany,” which is underrepresented in public discourse as it is mostly attributed to corrupt lawmakers and undemocratic procedures:

Again, I blame the rest of the LCA for that … Part of the dysfunction of Albany is that you have a press corps with some very very powerful newspapers there, with huge amounts of circulations, and they are led around by the nose by Fred Dicker who is the worst journalist there is and I don’t think that he is even a journalist. He is as bad as they come. He is as unethical – Again, I have not a single good thing to say about him. And it’s not even a personal thing it’s his business. And it’s what he does and it’s the way he allows himself, happily I might add, to be used as an attack dog for whatever person he feels like attacking at that time. (Interview, 28 February 2011)

259 Some argue that this person, the most powerful man in Albany, is in fact Sheldon Silver, Speaker of the Assembly. Putting that aside this spokesperson was also in a weaker position because the governor he worked for had a low credibility among the press and bad approval ratings. However, even a spokesperson working for a stronger Governor finds herself subjected to these constraints.
Dicker described himself in the article quoted above as an “equal-opportunity prick” (Smith 2005). In this context, he gives a forum for anonymous attacks to anybody but may turn against them whenever he pleases. Often enough, his own political positions become prevalent in source relations. The issues, which apparently soured relations with the Cuomo administration in early 2013, were Cuomo’s gun control measures (which Dicker opposes) and his indecisiveness concerning hydraulic fracturing (which Dicker favors). To sum up, there are three ways how Dicker is perceived to blur boundaries between journalism and politics: 1) he is an active facilitator of political conflict and maneuvering, 2) his own political opinions play a role in his work, 3) access to information from governors appears to accrue them more favorable coverage (i.e. a honeymoon), at least in the short-term.

In the LP, this theme of journalists becoming political actors was almost nonexistent. One reason for this may be that there are not as extreme examples as in the LCA and the general differences of normative commitments among journalists do not vary as much. The only recurring issue in the LCA was one competitor-colleagues’ tendency to publish parts of bills in advance, which seems so prevalent in the LCA that it is not even worth discussing. Another part of it is that the expected distance to politics is shorter, which is not to say that LP reporters are political confederates but that it is more acceptable to assume a position (after all, almost all of them write opinion). Above that, one LP reporter carefully assumed that most of his colleagues sympathize with CSU:

I think—I can’t say for sure since journalists don’t talk about that among themselves—but I would assume that the majority tries to be fairly neutral, at least in news coverage, but are themselves probably rather – in the Landtagspresse, I would speculate, there is a narrow majority CSU-near, with the exception of the Bayerisches Fernsehen [the TV branch of BR], which is
completely pervaded by CSU.\textsuperscript{260} (Interview, 24 November 2011)

Direct affiliation with a party was never discussed in my field research in Albany and this is, of course, a consequence of the German political culture, where party politics is more diverse and more strongly defines political divisions. Not even Fred Dicker, whose political stances are on the conservative side, is associated with the Republican Party necessarily. One LP reporter told me he knew several of his colleagues were members of a political party, which he finds irreconcilable with being a journalists because it means “giving up your independence and also losing part of your credibility”\textsuperscript{261} (Interview, 1 December 2011). The same journalists told me the most extreme case of journalists becoming political actors that I have heard in all of my conversations in this research when he described disadvantages of the press corps:

The risk of [the relation between media and politics] being so close is that folks start to feel as a part of politics. There are colleagues who heckle during committee meetings, who slip notes to politicians with the questions they consider appropriate. I would never do such things. I try to maintain distance, which is important if you want to report objectively and honestly. And some lose that [distance].\textsuperscript{262} (Interview, 1 December 2011)

In the US as in the German case, backstage talk is an inevitable and for the most part desirable practice for journalists as well as political sources. There are dangers involved in having this conversational culture in place. Part of the danger is the mutual trust involved—trusting that confidentiality is maintained and that information is valid,

\textsuperscript{260} Original: “Ich glaube – also ich weiß nicht weil da die Journalisten untereinander auch nicht drüber reden, aber ich würde einmal vermuten, dass die Mehrheit sich zumindest in der Berichterstattung bemüht einigermaßen neutral zu sein und aber vermutlich trotzdem selber eher die (Pause)....also Landtagspresse würde ich einmal spekulieren eine knappe Mehrheit eher CSU-nah ist. Abgesehen vom Bayerischen Fernsehen, das ist vollkommen CSU-durchsetzt.”

\textsuperscript{261} Original: “ihre eigene Unabhängigkeit aufgeben und auch ein Stück ihrer Glaubwürdigkeit verlieren.”

\textsuperscript{262} Original: “Das Risiko ist natürlich dadurch, dass es so eng wird, dass die Leute anfangen sich auch als Teil der Politik zu fühlen. Also es gibt Kollegen, die in Ausschüssen schon einmal einen Zwischenruf machen, die Politikern einen Zettel zustecken wo sie die Frage draufschieben, die sie für richtig halten. Solche Dinge würde ich nie im Leben machen. Also ich bin drauf aus die Distanz zu wahren, die auch wichtig ist wenn Sie objektiv und ehrlich berichten wollen. Und die verlieren manche.”
respectively—which not only opens opportunities for breaking that trust but can also act as a constraint in different ways: As a gag order, a fear of losing that trust (and thus access to information) and a sense of solidarity, which countervails accountability responsibilities.

Strategic and Involuntary Professionalism

Role Distancing

When reporters confront political actors, appeasing and role distancing boundary performances frequently accompany this. This performance separates the journalist from the confidant, so to speak, as an effort to maintain relationships while upholding a professional appearance. A simple example of this is the devil’s-advocate question, which means asking a question from a confrontational position while dissociating oneself from that position. One rather aggressive LCA reporter in this regard illustrates this:

The most effective questions that get politicians to respond are the most direct. And the most direct questions usually come from a bent. So, while you may not be a right-wing conservative or a left-wing liberal, you might ask a question that ... on its own would sound left-wing or right-wing. I think a lot of us might even ask a question self-censored in order to maintain the appearance of objectivity. (Interview, 14 April 2010)

Besides compelling the respondent to make a case in a more pointed way, the devil’s-advocate question is a way to be aggressive without appearing partial, which would undermine a performance of professionalism emphasizing nonpartisanship. It often occurs in press conferences when reporters preface an adversarial question by referring to a third party (e.g. ‘some would say that ...’), thereby deflecting the controversial stance (Clayman and Heritage, 2002: 152–162, 213–217). LP reporters were again more matter-of-fact in this sense and neither by observing them in practice nor when interviewing
them did I get the sense that they engage in this kind of performance of occupying an extreme position for the sake of the question.

The possible harm done to relationships and reputation of professional impartiality by asking a critical question is rather insignificant. The stakes are higher, however, when reporters work on a damaging story about a political actor. Boundary performances in these situations have to be more determined in order to still appear fair:

I found out that whenever you crucify somebody you look him in the eye and be fair to him, you give him a chance to say it. And they will forgive you or they will continue the relationship ... you learn fairness when you have to look a guy in the eye on the next day, when you have written something about him or her. (Interview, 18 May 2010)

Mostly I’ve beaten the shit out of people, but if you’re right, if it’s true and it’s fair, if you listen to them, if you’re polite and cordial and professional of all things, it doesn’t matter. It’s not your fault. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

The second reporter continues that being extroverted and well liked, going for drinks and dinners with sources means that they tend not to hold a long grudge against him after he has published a damaging story about them. Besides working for a powerful news organization, what also helps alleviate these often emotional situations is when the story itself appears professionally legitimate – that is, motivated by public relevance rather than partisanship or scandal – and when reporting itself is conducted in a fair manner. At the same time, reporters need to distance themselves personally from this inevitable and dutiful professionalism, conveying an amiable impression in order to sustain a relationship. A boundary performance in this sense involves role distancing (Goffman, 1972), signaling being forced to confront in order to superimpose assumed unprofessional intentions, be they personal sensitivities, ideological conviction or self-interest. It also averts pejorative counter-performances by political actors that impute unprofessionalism.
Enforced Distance

Mutual dependence usually suffices to sustain strained source relations. However, there can be friction for some time. In practice, most of the time it means a temporary disgruntlement of politicians and spokespeople towards journalists, accompanied by unresponsiveness to phone calls and disparagement. In extreme cases, all lines of communication are “cut off” and relationships are discontinued for a longer period, sometimes years.

For the most part, however, political reporters talked about this as a threat scenario and gesture by political actors. Of course, a regular lawmaker does not have this kind of symbolic leverage but, in New York, the three men in a room do; in the LP the Governor, few ministers and maybe the leaders of the bigger parties. Hardly anybody conceded to the effectiveness of the threat of being cut off. One reporter in the LP, who had experiences of falling out with a minister once, admitted that the possibly of cutting off an informant is a consideration: “Often times I would like to go farther but then I think ‘well, I better don’t do that because I won’t find out anything anymore’”\textsuperscript{263} (Interview, 30 January 2012). No LCA reporter specified these kinds of considerations. However, one reporter talked about weighing if a story is worth it:

If you get cut off, you wanna have a damn good reason. It’s gotta be like a really big important story. … you weigh it. The story is what it is, you gotta write the story truthfully and say ‘look, I’m sorry, I hope you’ll keep talking to me.’ … So, yeah, there is pressure like that to kinda, you know, if you really pissed off some people they’re not gonna talk to you for a while. (Interview, 16 April 2009)

\textsuperscript{263} Original: “Da würde ich oft gerne ein bisschen weiter gehen, denk ich mir ‘ja, das mach ich jetzt nicht weil da erfahre ich nichts mehr.’”
There were a few reporters in both contexts who experienced being cut off for a long time (months or years). One LP reporters discussed his experience as being cut-off as an attempt of manipulation by the official in question:

I fell out badly with a minister once about whose trip abroad I reported very critically. He has not exchanged a word with me for two or three months and that made rounds. Of course this is also a possibility to try avoiding such news reports in the future. If I say: “well, I have lost this informant forever or at least for three years. After three months he starts talking to me again but I have barely a chance to write him a text message about some confidential information – he would not do that again.” That’s also a way in which you are being manipulated.264

(Interview, 10 November 2011)

A young online journalist I interviewed works for an organization with a newsroom culture where source complaints are carried with pride. She told me about an instance where a politicians she portrayed felt misrepresented and stopped talking to her for a longer period. It was not about factual inaccuracies but about evaluations by other sources. “The person felt personally offended, so what!”265 Although she feels that way now, when it happened it was hard for her:

I: So he didn’t respond to phone calls anymore?
R: Yes, or putting me down somehow in front of everybody. That happened. I found it difficult to deal with it. At the beginning I thought “oh my god! Wow, I did not expected that reaction. Let’s argue about it in a normal way.” But it settled. After a while you start working together again and the relationship of trust is the same as before. (Interview, 26 March 2012)

Contrary to the former reporter, for her everything went back to normal. There is an exceptional case in the LP of a “reverse cut-off” where a reporter refused to talk to a politician who wronged him. The reporter commented critically on the radio about an


265 Original: “Es hat sich halt jemand persönlich angegriffen gefühlt, meine Güte.”
issue concerning the border between Bavaria and Czech and the general secretary of CSU wrote him an angry letter about it. They talked about it in person a few weeks later and the politician told him it was alright and he suggested they’d go for lunch soon. What he did not tell him, however, was that he sent a copy of this letter to his boss.

If he would have noted that, it would have been ok, he is entitled to complain about me any time. But he did not do that but did nice to me in my face and complained about me behind my back. I’m in this business long enough and I’m old enough that I’m not going to put up with that. I called his spokesperson and told him “tell him he should find some other idiot to go to lunch with.” … And there was silence between us for half a year … You cannot tolerate such things. I always preach to our interns: “The deeper you bow before those in power the higher is your butt that you get kicked in. Work properly, be fair but don’t put up with everything.”

In spite of not having access to top officials constitutes competitive disadvantage, those who endured the hardship of being cut off loved it, as did this seasoned LCA reporter:

I think one of the best things that happened to me was when the director of communication, John McArdle for [former Senate majority leader Joe] Bruno, wrote me off. He said ‘don’t come into my office, don’t call me, blah blah blah.’ And what it did was it improved my reporting so much because … it forced me to go well beyond him, to develop a source network so that when I finally did call his press office ... I already knew all the answers to all these questions. ... I had reliable information about what was going on and I simply needed to get the official word from him. And then I could decide how to use that official word and determine whether it was a lie or not ... It was really wonderful. (Interview, 5 May 2011)

Being denied access forced him to operate more independently and creatively and, as a consequence, advanced his performance of professionalism. Relief from external

influence, even involuntarily, resonates with journalistic principles of independence and probing, which competitor-colleagues reward with appreciation. Another senior LCA reporter told me that a similar experience had not only added to his professional growth but also benefited his readers, which is why he suggested younger reporters should try it.

Especially for young reporters, however, denial of access may present a real problem: “It could be damaging to your career. I think that’s what they rely on when they say ‘listen, we’re gonna cut you off if you do that’” (Interview, 5 May 2011), adds the reporter quoted above. While most LCA reporters have never experienced being cut off, the fact that all are at least familiar with the concept is telling for how prevalent it is as intimidation by powerful news sources. Although the majority denies its effectiveness, experienced reporters believe it may work to pull their colleagues’ reportorial punches. At the same time, however, heroic stories of experienced reporters represent examples young reporters follow and inspire boundary performances that are less penetrable by threats of denying access:

Reporter: One of the great liberations of an administration that plays really hard ball ... and doesn’t give you anything: you have nothing to lose ... One of the great lessons I’ve learned from [name], a colleague of mine; he was covering [former New York City mayor, Rudy] Giuliani. They, like, shut him down. He said it was the best two years of his journalistic career.
MR: [laughs] Because he didn’t have to walk on tiptoe with him any more?
Reporter: He didn’t miss anything. I try to have it both ways, personally. I try to be buddy buddy as much as I can, but I’m still gonna go out and write the story I’m all along am gonna write. And I’m not gonna do nice and take it easy on them. You just got to be a bastard pretty much. That’s part of the job. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

Since there are not many cases of reporters who have been cut off from a source for a longer period of time, patterns should not be overemphasized. However, what was striking is that reporters it happened to were never the most influential journalists from top news organizations. There is one exception in the LP but here young age may have
been a factor. One LP reporter in this category said tellingly in this context: “They have no sanction possibilities towards me. If they cut me off then they cut themselves off. Who does not speak to me is his own—I mean that’s not a problem for me but for him, I must say”\textsuperscript{267} (Interview, 17 April 2012). In the LCA one journalist in that category said he interviewed a Governor once and knew it would be his last interview with him. It appears as if officials may reduce access to top news organizations but cannot deny it completely (as they can for smaller regional news organizations or younger journalists (if they are not the only one working at that beat).

To conclude, while German reporters emphasized the practical impediments of that experience, US journalists accentuated the newfound independence it brought. Thus, LCA reporters assigned additional, performative meaning to being cut off (in the interview and probably also when it happened), namely the state as an expression of professionalism and independence. This is not only significant for them but possibly also serves as a template for other (younger) journalists for not being afraid of biting the hands that feed them, so to speak.

\textbf{Chapter Conclusion}

While most studies on source relations highlight their complex effects on news decisions, this chapter had nothing to say about the realization of journalistic autonomy in the news. Instead, the goal was to examine cultural techniques of maintaining autonomy in source relations and what they suggest about beliefs in good journalism in different national contexts. Whether journalists violate these ideals is secondary therefore.

\textsuperscript{267} Original: “Die haben ja keine Sanktionsmöglichkeiten mir gegenüber. Also wenn mich die abschneiden dann schneiden sie sich selber ab. Wer mit mir nicht spricht der ist selber...also das ist nicht das Problem für mich sondern für ihn muss man schon sagen.”
Journalists are subjected to various pressures and constraints that prevent them from exercising good journalism. However, the fact that they want to adhere to these professional ideals is a relevant piece of the puzzle. In fact, the clearest manifestation of these ideals may be journalists’ discomfort when they breach them. I argue that examining these culturally contextual tensions furthers understanding of journalistic cultures beyond survey research based on neatly conceptualized variables.

What has become clear in this chapter is that journalists make use of the symbolic vocabulary of their occupation in source relations as they perform boundaries to assert autonomy from politics. In non-public settings, these boundaries often dissolve since good journalism involves confidentiality and hence trust between reporters and sources. Journalists balance these contrary requirements by performative and informational adjustments, which I subsumed as boundary management.

The comparison has demonstrated similarities and differences between German and US reporters: I have first discussed different means of symbolic production for performances of professionalism. Many newspapers in Germany and in the US have ethical policies, which regulate journalistic conduct in general and source relations in particular. These policies seem stricter in the US, particularly regarding political involvements, and reporter utilize them in performances towards sources to assert the rigor, which their approach follows, and thus their professional autonomy.

Furthermore, in both cases political actors classify journalists as friends and enemies according to political stances they are perceived to take, for the most part according to their outlets’ positions. Reporters compensate this pigeonholing by being extra-fair to their “enemies” and extra-harsh to their “friends.” They are proud if
aggravation about their work comes from across the political spectrum. However, whereas German reporters are allowed to write political opinion next to their news reports, for almost all US reporters news commentary is a strict taboo. Generally, the threshold between objective and partisan journalism is much lower than in Germany, where inhabiting a political position, at least in news commentary, is accepted. US reporters use the taboo against expressing opinions (“the wall”) as a symbolic representation of professionalism. They painstakingly distance themselves in performance from political positions, especially those taken by their newspapers’ editorial sections. For some German reporters, on the other hand, writing opinion is an act of purification since they are less tempted to let their opinions seep into the news. This is an outlandish concept in the US context.

Performative requirements of impartiality go so far in the US that they enter into reporters’ private lives, which must not reflect badly on their professional lives regarding political leanings and engagements. Though nobody confessed to that personally, German reporters, on the other hand, told me that some of their colleagues are members of political parties. In almost all cases, newspapers provide an editorial defense shield for their reporters. In the US, journalists rely on this protection and use it as a representation of indomitability in situations, in which political actors threaten them. Even though the Landtagspresse provides an additional defense shield for German reporters, when political pressure permeates the editorial defense shield, that is, when pressure precipitates to reporters, it can have much graver consequences than in the US. Though such instances are in the past, US reporters have not even heard of comparable attacks.
Even though regional newspapers have comparable influence in both public spheres, they appear most vulnerable to this kind of pressure in Germany.

There are some common tendencies concerning boundary management in both cases: Variably adjusting professional boundaries seems essential in political reporting. Within each setting, furthermore, reporters differ regarding where they draw the line, especially in terms of how much they socialize with sources outside of work. There is also a common tendency that reporters make decisions which battles (i.e. critical stories) are worth fighting and which are not at the possible expense of good relations to sources. Furthermore, many journalists in the US as well as in Germany describe source relations as subjected to a continuous give-and-take (information in exchange for publicity), which one US reporter has designated so aptly as the “favor bank.” Female reporters performatively compensate their gender in these male-dominated social settings by not socializing with sources or by being overly tough. German reporters, however, spoke about inhibitions stemming from good relations to sources contrary to most of their US counterparts. Whether or not US reporters are just “less open” while in fact they have the same inhibitions is irrelevant. Both, inhibitions and “openness” about them, originate in their acceptability in each professional culture, suggesting that it is more tolerable to acknowledge “humanity” for German journalists. Furthermore, LP reporters seem to have more direct contact with politicians. In the LCA, sociability is limited to the political staff for the most part. I argue that both circumstance stem from the greater distance professional performance in US journalism involves. US reporter either do not have to or cannot concede to failure.
Backstage talk (off-the-record and background conversations) is an essential and ubiquitous practice for political correspondents. They are more ubiquitous in the LCA, however, because of spatial arrangements and the constant presence of journalists in the government building. They involve common dangers, that is, political actors use them as a platform to manipulate journalists by creating a sense of closeness and by putting issues in the straitjacket of confidentiality. There are differences, however, in terms of how backstage talk precipitates in the news. US reporters perceive the extent of anonymous sourcing as a problem (at least in interviews with a researcher, which is a performance in its own right) but as an inescapable condition of their work. Competition, which is intensified by tabloids and blogs, is held responsible for this inclination.

Related to this, the phenomenon of reporters becoming political instruments is a much stronger boundary issue in the LCA, which is personified by one tabloid reporter in particular. Although German reporters acknowledge the danger of becoming political instruments, the press corps varies less in terms of the degree instrumentalization occurs. Consequently, they did not draw boundaries around this issue and in respect to each other nearly as much as US journalists. One reason is that the press corps is less split by competitive struggles. Another reason is the power of the taboo against the political for US reporters, which explains the intensity of boundary struggles in general. This also reflects in the prevalence of role distancing to protect the impression of professionalism from political pollution in the US case, even in the way questions are asked in public and non-public settings.

The case of distance that is enforced by politicians (i.e. cutting off reporters) is also telling in this context. In both cases, being cut off happens rarely, is used as a threat
scenario by political actors and hardly involves most powerful journalists or news outlets. Despite the difficulties that being cut off from a top official constitutes for a reporter (who is supposed to cover him or her), the few LCA reporters felt professionally accomplished when politicians refused to talk to them for a longer period. They incorporated this involuntary distance as a signifier of professionalism in performance, which also sets examples for (competitor-)colleagues.

It appears as if there are higher performative demands to create impressions of professionalism in US journalism. This is true to some extent because the distance, which has to be maintained symbolically as well as in practice, is greater in the US in many ways. Journalistic norms in Germany correspond to the representative model of the public sphere, which is defined by greater domination of political elites (Ferree et al. 2002), and a lower degree of differentiation of media and state (Hallin and Mancini 2004). In some ways, however, journalistic professionalism in Germany is just a different performance, one that accrues less from high-flung idealism but instead factual levelheadedness and unagitatedness. This is also related to German public culture in general, of course, and the German mentality post-National Socialism, which forbids any form of expressive exaltation for any cause.
Chapter 7: The Digitization of Journalism: Boundary

Expansion and Permeation of Spatial Orders of Reporting

Making Sense of Social Media

*Columbia Journalism Review* published a portrait of Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) journalist Elizabeth Benjamin in late November of 2010. She changed positions during my research in Albany, from political blogger at the *New York Daily News* to news anchor and blogger for *Capitol Tonight*, a weekday political news program on the Time Warner channel *Your News Now* (YNN). Although the portrait was set up on the premise that, “Benjamin is seen as a challenger to [Fred] Dicker’s supremacy in state political coverage,” another fundamental thrust of the story is essentially the conflict between traditional journalism and multimedia journalism, particularly blogging.

Benjamin had worked for the *Albany Times Union* before she came to the *Daily News* and decided to launch a blog for the paper in late 2005:

> Benjamin, state bureau chief at the time and a longtime reporter for the paper, had taken a liking to Ben Smith’s Politicker blog at *The New York Observer*. Politicker had launched that year, pioneering the format of the modern local political blog—devotedly insider-ish, constantly updated, overseen by a hard-working obsessive, and very well-sourced. … “I said, ‘I want to do this,’” Benjamin remembers telling her editors. And while it was “like pulling teeth” at first, Rex Smith gave her the green light to launch Capitol Confidential in early 2006. Benjamin immediately loved the format. “I love reporting and blogging lends itself to that,” she says. “And I’m sort of a frenetic person and the pace of the blog is frenetic, so that works pretty well for me. It’s a quick hit and you get it out.” Bob Port, who joined the *Times Union* as senior editor of investigations in 2007, kept an eye on Benjamin’s statistics in the early days. “She amassed such a huge audience in such a short time—there were about 10,000 uniques on the web reading her blog—it dwarfed anything else we were doing,” he says. It was the result of hard work. “She would feed stuff into it day and night. The rest of us were at home, drinking coffee, trying to wake up, and Liz would be on her
Although the article suggests that she earned her stripes as a “frizzy-haired muckraker” in the state house press, it paints a distinctive picture of the modern journalist: not someone who spends weeks on a story, going through government records and talking to a multitude of sources on- and off-the-record but who is able, first and foremost, to process and move a tremendous amount of information in a short amount of time and who essentially never stops doing it.

The “modern political blog” has not taken hold of the Landtagspresse (LP) by early 2014 and it probably never will. Only one reporter I interviewed had a blog but says, “it’s hardly maintained because blogs don’t go as well here” (Interview, 1 December 2011). After I left the field in the summer of 2012, the radio and television crews of the public broadcast company Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) at the Landtag joined forces to launch a video blog, which is the only regularly maintained blog in the LP and a noteworthy organizational convergence as different bureau chiefs lead each team.

The inaugural post appeared on December 10, 2012, in which the BR state house bureau introduces itself and describes the purpose of this new undertaking. As all other posts, it is professionally recorded and edited and looks different from the majority of shaky, smartphone-recorded video blogs done by newspaper journalists in the LCA (to be fair, blogs by TV reporters do conform to higher standards). In an initial standup, the bureau chief of BR radio, Nikolaus Neumaier, says, “we tell you how grand politics is made in the Bavarian Landtag—behind us you see the assembly room—and we tell you

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269 Original: “Ich habe einen Blog, der aber nicht sonderlich gepflegt wird weil die Blogs bei uns schlecht laufen.”

smaller stories based on glimpses behind the scenes.” Sitting in the editing room, TV reporter Sebastian Kraft turns to the camera and adds understatedly yet snappishly:

We will also report for you about the Bavarian state cabinet; we are close to what’s happening and there are always stories, which don’t have that great of a news value but which we want to present to you on the blog because they are exciting to witness, for example, which minister has particular favor with the ‘father of the state’ or who is annoyed by the latest infamous change of course of the Minister-President.

BR radio reporter Eva Lell takes over and says: “politics not only happens in the assembly room but also on the internet. Politicians twitter, they post comments on Facebook and we look closely at this and are happy to also report about it on the internet from now on.” Three months later, there is another blog titled “The Landtagspresse twitters and posts” (using the German translation of twitter, zwitschern), in which other LP journalists talk about their views on Twitter and Facebook, underplayed by easy listening piano music. Social media are described as “good and quick sources of information,” by Henry Stern from Main-Post, who adds that “you can be a bit more informal than in other media, perhaps.” Frank Müller from the Süddeutsche Zeitung, a Twitter-pioneer and by far the most active tweeter in the LP adds: “We have had good

271 Original: “Wir erzählen Ihnen wie grosse Politik gemacht wird hier im Bayerischen Landtag, hier hinter uns im Plenarsaal, und wir erzählen ihnen kleine Geschichten weil wir hinter die Kulissen blicken.”
272 Original: “Wir berichten für Sie natürlich auch über die Bayerische Staatsregierung und sind da nah dran und da gibt’s immer wieder Geschichten, die haben jetzt nicht den grossen Nachrichtenwert aber die wollen wir für sie trotzdem im Blog aufbereiten weil die sehr spannend sind zu beobachten, zum Beispiel, welcher Minister oder welche Ministerin steht gerade in der besonderen Gunst des Landesvaters oder wer ärgert sich über die berühmt berüchtigten Kehrtwenden des Ministerpräsidenten.”
273 Original: “Nicht nur im Plenarsaal, auch im Internet findet Politik statt. Politiker twittern, sie posten Kommentare bei Facebook und wir schauen uns das ganz genau an und freuen uns, dass wir künftig darüber auch im Internet berichten können.”
275 Original: “Facebook und Twitter sind gute und schnelle Informationsquellen … man kann da auch ein bisschen informeller sein als man es vielleicht in anderen Medien sein kann”
experiences with representatives presenting themselves very authentically.”276 His competitor-colleague, Christian Deutschländer from Münchner Merkur, resonates this sense when he says, “I’m on there regularly because I’m aware that politicians post a lot, they like it and also like to post emotionally. And that is great for us journalists when something gets to us that is not filtered by some spokesperson.”277

Perhaps they both had a story in mind that Müller published more than a year earlier in Süddeutsche Zeitung, titled “when politicians twitter.” It discussed a representative’s Twitter feed that contained blonde jokes, which was further echoed, exposed and criticized online:

Aiwanger’s mishap sheds a light on how speed and content of the political debate in Bavaria changes through new media. Appearances of politicians accumulate on the leading social networks, Facebook and Twitter, and journalists and followers are also diligently involved. Spontaneous political discussions evolve, which are similar to a regulars’ table: sometimes loud, sometimes thoughtful, entertaining or rough. And occasionally misogynistic as well.278

The focus of the story is not only on such social media pitfalls but also on the inauthenticity of politicians not operating their own social media identities. This is what allegedly happened in this case, in which representative Hubert Aiwanger blamed his staffers for tweeting those jokes. The article quotes the politician saying, “if it goes on like this I will turn this crap off.”279 When another questionable joke followed on his

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276 Original: “Bisher haben wir vor allem gute Erfahrungen damit gemacht, dass viele Abgeordnete sich sehr authentisch geben.”

277 Original: “Ich schaue regelmässig rein weil mir klar ist, dass Politiker viel posten, gerne posten und auch gerne emotional posten. Und das ist für uns Journalisten natürlich am besten, wenn ohne Filter durch irgendeinen Presse sprecher irgendwas reinkommt.”


279 Original: “Wenn das so weitergeht, schalte ich den Mist ab.”
Twitter feed not even two weeks later, it was again castigated by political opponents online and the Twitter account was taken down.\textsuperscript{280}

These kinds of mishaps are not unfamiliar in the LCA, most infamously (though not concerning a state politician but a US Congressman from New York) in the Anthony Weiner sexting scandal. Apart from that, social media have distinct journalistic implications for LCA journalists, which is subject of debate in news coverage emerging from the Capitol. After the passage of a same-sex marriage (SSM) law in late June of 2011, which was not only a significant political event but also social media event for the LCA, state editor for the \textit{Times Union}, Casey Seiler, titled his weekly column “A Twitter convert’s testament:”

Last week, a colleague with spackled pants walked into my office. It turned out that he had miscalculated the tightness of the seal on his frozen coffee drink before giving it a vigorous shake and dousing himself with frappuccino. In a sure sign of what the new social media have done to me, my first thoughts were “That would make a good Tweet” and “I wish we had that on video.” Those two thoughts were followed by a cold wave of shame, as if someone had dumped a frappuccino on my soul.\textsuperscript{281}

After this overtly insignificant incidence, he talked about how the twittersphere has expanded in recent months and how powerful it was “for both data collection and content distribution.” He points to his initial reservations:

Like many reporters in midlife, I’m something of a late convert to Twitter. I initially scoffed at its 140-characters-or-less format, and dismissed it as yet another short-attention-span digital toy sent from outer space or Silicon Valley to destroy my industry’s business model. Brothers and sisters, I have seen the light. (ibid.)


Seiler then describes his epiphany during the SSM debate regarding what Twitter is or can be, both a “deeply stocked newsstand” and “a communal notebook that’s open to the public.” Not only that, but a platform to exert accountability (to a modest extent) in that, “an errant quote from a politician or advocate is posted and then handed around to thousands of followers in little more time than it takes to be typed.” Rather than the digital world, “life is a maze, and Twitter is just the latest tool we’ve invented to find our way through it.” Apart from the fact that I will argue that Twitter is much more than a tool to LCA journalists, this account reflects a significant impact of Twitter on state house reporting. Six months later, Bill Hammond described an instance in his weekly column, in which the digital realm of Twitter and the nondigital social space of the State Capitol remarkably intertwined. Describing an education hearing he attended, Hammond noted how dissatisfied he was with how Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan led the debate:

The situation was so odd that I posted a Twitter update from my seat in the hearing room: Nolan “isn’t asking Walcott about the hottest topic in city schools — teacher eval,” I wrote. The comment was passed along by a few of my equally curious fellow journalists. Imagine my surprise when Nolan reacted to that message about half an hour later, just as Walcott was about to wrap up his testimony.282

I will get back to the more specific implications of this instance later in this chapter. In the context here, this account suggest that LCA reporters (and their sources) are deeply immersed in Twitter, which appears to have more far-reaching effects on journalistic practice than a mere additional source of information whose usefulness depends what politicians communicate.

In the following section I will compare how the internet affected German reporters and US reporters. I will argue that it had a more central impact on LCA reporters’ work lives and self-understanding as professionals. Honoring that fundamental difference, I will then examine this impact in more detail regarding Twitter and how it expanded and diversified the boundaries of journalism in the LCA.

**News Digitization in Comparison**

**Workflow: Acceleration and Volume**

There are some broad similarities in how German and US reporters perceived the impact of the internet on their work. Most of them mentioned in some form or another increasing demands of topicality and associated time pressures as the most significant effects of digital media on their work. Despite that he himself had no online duties, “what changed overall is the turnaround time of news with online,” said one LP reporter (Interview, 7 November 2011).\(^{283}\) One wire reporter in the LP said that, although he has always been some kind of online journalist, “overall it became clearly more hectic and faster in the past ten years … because online media are very fast and we have to write even faster on some issues than before” (Interview, 24 November 2011).\(^{284}\) One of his senior competitor-colleagues from a public broadcasting company reminisces earlier days before private broadcasting:

> We became much faster and put a lot of pressure on ourselves. … [In the past] it did definitely happen that we said in accordance with newspaper colleagues “well, we are going to save that issue for tomorrow because there is so much happening today and tomorrow will be slow, according to the Landtag agenda. We’ll play that story tomorrow.” (laughs) And it worked. This would be unthinkable today.

\(^{283}\) Original: “Was sich allerdings insgesamt verändert mit online ist die Umschlaggeschwindigkeit.”

\(^{284}\) Original: “Insgesamt ist es eindeutig hektischer und schneller geworden in den letzten zehn Jahren. … dadurch, dass die Onlinemedien sehr schnell sind wir einfach bei manchen Sachen noch schneller schreiben müssen als vorher.”
Even for reporters who work for big national print media, which have active and innovative online presences, online duties are the exception. This has to do with the fact that these outlets—Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Der Spiegel, Die Zeit, to name a few—typically have separate online editorial departments (with a distinct leadership), which are separate companies owned by the same publishing house. One reporter for such an outlet said that he occasionally publishes advanced online stories:

I get into time conflicts. On the one hand, online needs to be as quick as possible … on the other hand the printed paper, which is our main claim, should be profound and have stylistic elegance. That means sometimes you need to tell the online staff, “lets better take that from the wire because I need to call people and I need to do research first.” I can’t immediately – there is a conflict of interest.

Most media outlets represented in the LCA do not have a separate online editorial departments, first of all, and seemed to have less liberty to pass on online news reporting to the wire. Although the increase of speed is even more true for LCA reporters, they talk about this change in conjunction with other implications of the internet, particularly blogging, which has been the most drastic innovation of political reporting in New York:

Negative consequences of the new media is that there is such an emphasis on updates, constant updates, is that I think that more and more journalists are compelled to post things immediately as opposed to getting something, weighing it, determining if it has news value, is it true, etc. … What happened when

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285 Original: “Wir sind sehr viel schneller und wir setzen uns damit natürlich auch selber ganz schön unter Druck. ... [In früheren Zeiten] da konnte es schon durchaus passieren, dass man sich in Absprache mit Zeitungskollegen gesagt hat ‘also das Thema sparen wir uns für morgen auf weil heute heute ist so viel los, morgen ist in der Landtagstagesordnung nur tote Hose, das Thema spielen wir morgen.’ (lacht) Das hat auch funktioniert. Das wäre heute undenkbar.”

286 Original: “ich komm jetzt in Zeitkonflikte rein. Also einerseits soll online möglichst schnell … auf der anderen Seite soll in der gedruckten Zeitung, das ist ja unser Hauptspruch, soll das hintergündig werden, soll das auch sprachlich einen Anspruch haben. ... Dass man manchmal schon sagen muss zu online "wir nehmen jetzt lieber die Agentur weil ich muss ja noch telefonieren und mit Leuten reden und ich muss erst einmal das recherchieren." Ich kann nicht sofort – es ist schon ein Zielkonflikt dann da.
blogging accelerated and the instant posting on your news website accelerated is … the emphasis on speed took away from judgment, took away from being able to evaluate things. (Interview, 11 April 2011)

Because of the requirement to stay current, one reporter said, “you’re doing blogs and you never stop to worry” (Interview, 23 May 2009) before mentioning issues with repetitive strain injury, which she attributes to “writing all day.” There is a striking difference to young journalists who were socialized in an online news environment. One of them said, “I always kind of been with the internet. I think it puts increasing pressure to get things up quickly, it allows less time for contemplation and digestion, which I think is probably bad” (Interview, 18 May 2010). Another young reporter resonates this sense of digital nativeness, the inevitability of speed and lack of personal reference to when the news cycle was spinning slower, which let him deal better with the online situation:

The idea to me of news happens, you write about it whenever it happens and send it to the web, put it online, that to me is much more natural than the first edition deadline is seven o’clock, the second edition is 8:30. (Interview, 4 May 2011)

Related to the overall acceleration of news production, a proliferation of news channels in conjunction with reduction of news staff, LCA journalists experienced a strong increase of volume of work that LP reporters did not undergo to the same extent. All reporters in the LCA have some and most of them extensive online duties (publishing advance online stories before the final story for the print edition, blogging, tweeting, producing multimedia content, etc.). Most LP reporters, however, did not have these obligations (yet). For the most part, their print stories are used for their company’s website and they occasionally write advance online stories. Though they experienced increasing pressure of a faster news cycle, their work tasks did not increase to the same extent.
Public radio journalists in the LP, for instance, talk about an increase of workload, which is not related to the internet but an information station, which was added to their company in the early 1990s as a response to the dual broadcast systems: “The demand for our stories is very high … Especially [from our information station] – it’s like a vacuum cleaner. You just have to attend to it” (24 January 2012). One of his colleagues said, “this news machine is enormously voracious; it wants to be constantly fed with news, from 6 in the morning until midnight” (Interview, 22 November 2011).

LCA reporters’ workload increased dramatically during the decade before my research in Albany began and especially the previous five years. This is, again, largely attributed to blogging, which started to really take off around 2006. Even one of the most social media-resistant and generally critical reporter of new media, Ned, produces volumes of news reporting for print and online that would be almost inconceivable for newspaper reporters in the LP. In the interview he told me that he used to write one story per day, sometimes only one story per week if he had been working on a longer project. Nowadays his workload is very different, he says, “the other day, I did four stories. … All four go on the internet. … Two will end up in print with me updating it with newer information for the print version. It’s just become nonstop” (Interview, 17 May 2010).

Ned is the only one who reports for his newspaper from the Capitol and is thus incredibly busy. Scheduling an interview and subsequent shadowing was a challenge. When we finally did the interview in May of 2010, he took his computer with him, constantly refreshing his web browser because he was waiting for a Supreme Court

288 Original: “Diese Nachrichtenmaschine ungeheuer gefräsig, die will von sechs Uhr morgens bis Mitternacht permanent gefüttert werden mit news.”
decision. The interview situation, though it turned out to be an engaged conversation, was overshadowed by this distraction:

This interview is a perfect example [of how this job changed]. I can’t sit here and give you 100% attention. Every four or five minutes I’m having to update because, and I shouldn’t have to be doing this, it’s all about feeding the web. I mean normally … I could sit and talk for an hour. But I’ve sort of got this fear that if I see [name versus] case come up, it’s like I’m flying out of here, because I’ve got to quickly read a 200 page court case and get it out to the web … on a really complicated legal issue. (Interview, 17 May 2010)

When I shadowed him a year later and followed him doing rounds through the Capitol, I sometimes asked him who he was trying to meet.

Ned responded, “just one out of 15 people,” and told me it concerned not only today’s but several other stories, which are coming up, including one for the weekend edition. He added that he always has a lot going on because he is a one-person-bureau. While we walked towards the Assembly, I told Ned that the more I learned about this place the more I get the sense that I can only scratch the surface and he says it was the same for him (Fieldnotes, 10 May 2011).

He described his jobs in the three years before our interview as a “fire fighter.” He means that he perceives his reporting to a large extent as damage control of covering only the most significant issues of the journalistic mainstream while cognizant of missing many others. An obvious side-effect of having more tasks to fulfill and more volume of content to produce is that the depth and attention devoted to each of these task decreases.

Asked about blogging, one young reporter said:

Sometimes it’s a pain in the ass because it’s distracting from the work that I wanted to do. That’s another thing: there is fewer reporters doing more work than ever before. And if you then have to blog on top of it and want to get your daily stories done, if you’re working for a newspaper … you’re stretched pretty thin. You don’t have the time to write out those FOIL requests and dig into government records. You lose a lot. (Interview, 24 February 2012)

As a consequence of being stretched so thin, LCA reporters not only experience interference with other work they regard as important but also stress and having
difficulties concentrating. One reporter, who is himself more concerned with projects than daily news reporting, emphasizes with his blogging colleagues:

I guess the bad side of it is, the reporters who are responsible for figuring out what’s in the next day’s paper have to spend a lot of time chasing down every little thing that is happening on the blogs. So maybe it makes it harder for them to focus, it makes it harder for them to …they have to stay on top of a lot of little stories. (Interview, 16 March 2011)

Another bureau chief describes how the application Tweetdeck with its pop-up functionality for new tweets, changed how Twitter affected his workday:

Reporter: The other danger is that it’s very hard to concentrate on one task … There is a magpie danger there where you are working on something and immediately ‘twink!’ – new tweet – and [you go], “uhh, what’s that?”
MR: Yeah, I can’t have that on all the time.
Reporter: Yeah, I can’t either, especially Friday when I write my column. I need to have a reason, like something has to be going on … for me to have it up, otherwise I just take it down and not worry about it.

The always-on communication in conjunction with social media captures US reporters’ daily work to a much larger extent than their German counterparts, even though they have the same technologies available to them, including another central component of this digital formation: smartphones. Interestingly and in another stark contrast to LCA reporters, several German reporters mentioned mobile phone text messaging as an important technological change in their jobs, although it has been introduced over a decade ago. They regard it as significant because of how it allows them to penetrate spatial boundaries of information, for instance, by sending/receiving text messages into/from closed session committee meetings. One wire reporter mentions this issue:

Overall it became much more hectic and faster in the past ten years. In some instances it’s almost bizarre because so much goes over text messages from ongoing meetings, in and out, and when they talk about something important inside the CSU caucus, wire stories are already circulating outside. But they read those inside and then there is this strange feedback to the inside. (Interview, 24
Another mid-career newspaper journalist said:

Then came the possibility of text messaging. This sounds trivial but it has actually changed political journalism a little bit. You probably can’t imagine how much is being done through text messages. It is a wonderful medium because you can text message into meetings. … You have the opportunity to get there directly; you have the wonderful opportunity to evade spokespeople, without them ever noticing it. That has actually changed the work. It is often the case that I do research through text messaging, that I message someone and say ‘can you send me a short sentence, a statement, on this and that topic?’ Especially on Sunday – perfect! – because it is a regular workday for us. (Interview, 10 November 2011)

In the LCA, nobody even mentioned text messaging and only one talked about the mobile phone as such, even though there are several other journalists who started their jobs using typewriter and phone booths. The exception is this mid-career journalist:

MR: You also have a fairly long historical perspective, … how did your work change? …
Reporter: It’s changed greatly in just the years I’ve been here. First of all, let’s start from the basics. When I first got here, there weren’t really a lot of cell phones. And I remember going on an assignment in the Adirondacks. … I had to find, first of all, a pay phone to call my editors because I didn’t have a cell phone. And then I had to beg someone to let me plug my computer into their fax machine, so I can transmit the story. … So, now … there are times I just write a whole story on my Blackberry, because I don’t have a computer with me.

Though smartphones are as omnipresent as in Albany, reporters in Munich never mentioned them as important innovations. In the LCA, although not mentioned often,

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289 Original: “Also insgesamt ist es eindeutig hektischer und schneller geworden in den letzten zehn Jahren. Bei manchen Dingen, das ist fast skurril weil das läuft dann über SMS aus laufenden Sitzungen rein und raus, und wenn die CSU Fraktionssitzung irgendwas wichtiges bespricht innen drinnen laufen dann draußen vor der Tür schon die Agenturmeldungen. Die lesen die drinnen aber mit und das gibt dann so eine komische Rückkopplung nach innen.”

290 Original: “Es kam dann die Möglichkeit der SMS, was ganz banal klingt aber den Politikjournalismus tatsächlich ein bisschen verändert. Sie können sich wahrscheinlich gar nicht vorstellen wieviel da mit SMS gemacht wird. Das ist halt ein wunderbares Medium weil sie jetzt in die Sitzungen rein smsen können. …Sie haben die Möglichkeit dort direkt dranzukommen, sie haben durch SMS die wunderbare Möglichkeit Pressesprecher zu umgehen, ohne, dass sie es jemals merken. Das ist tatsächlich was was die Arbeit verändert hat. Es ist oft so, dass ich Recherchen per SMS mache, dass ich auch einmal jemanden an-smse und sag ‘haben sie Lust mir einen kurzen Satz, Statement, zu dem und dem Theme zu smsen?’ Gerade auch am Sonntag – optimal! – das ist ja bei uns ein normaler Arbeitstag.”
smartphones are central for always-on, live news reporting to thrive, particularly in combination with social media applications and multimedia recording capabilities. Even though they use smartphones in many different ways, LCA reporters mentioned them usually in the context of instant notification about events:

There are certain efficiencies we gain of Blackberries. It’s probably changed, among other things, when something goes out, like a press release, we’re expected to be on it instantly. It means that they can call press conferences on a dime because they all know all the reporters have Blackberries, all know about it within 30 seconds. So, partly, technology in terms of communications technology has changed things. … You know, you have to have a Blackberry to be a full-blown reporter. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

I think when everybody got Blackberries, that’s when that changed. A few years ago. It used to be they would have to give a couple of hours notice. (Interview, 11 February 2011)

The reason why they mentioned smartphones in this rather trivial context is that it is in this respect that smartphone are most indispensable. Since reporters are often not at their desk at the Capitol, they could miss events that are announced minutes in advance or even while they are happening without a smartphone.

**Implications on Professional Roles and Norms**

The most far-reaching changes LP reporters perceive in connection with the internet is the weakening of gatekeeping authority through greater access to information for everyone and a connected shift of focus of newspaper journalism. One LP reporter for a national news outlet pointed out that the internet has exposed journalism to greater control by the public. He took the example of reporting about a political document. In earlier days, when readers were not able to access those by themselves, journalists could arbitrarily pick certain aspects of the document and omit others, according to their assessment. Nowadays, they can be called out for this by readers:
The second big upheaval … [was] actually that we lost this gatekeeping function. In earlier day, even access to trivial information was complicated. You had to call the press office in the interior ministry [for instance], you’d have to say “can you fax me the press release” or “can you connect me to the spokesperson” or something like that. Now with the internet you have the opportunity of much broader access [to information]. (Interview, 17 April 2012)

Another LP reporter has a similar sense of being more controlled through more open access to information on the internet:

If you want to do a good job you cannot make it easy for yourself, not just write something up that everyone can find through Google and Wikipedia. I think that’s a very significant issue because the verifiability has increased, of course, and it left the journalist like an emperor without clothes. There are so many stories that were traced back and exposed as copied from Wikipedia. (Interview, 5 December 2011)

Of course, the LCA has experienced a similar weakening of gatekeeping authority through opportunities of verification of their work through the internet. However, it led journalists to assume a different professional role altogether, which does not really exists in the LP as such. Besides fulfilling very similar journalistic duties as their German counterparts for their legacy news product, especially blogging LCA journalists understand themselves as providers of “original content” amongst other things. The consequence is a much-decried flow of unfiltered political information through blogs, curated by journalists. A young, blog- and Twitter-inclined reporter shed a critical light on blogs because of this:

It gives [political actors] a constant opportunity to get their word out and, since

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291 Original: “Der zweite große Umbruch … [war], dass wir eigentlich diese Pförtnerfunktion verloren haben. Früher, auch ganz banale Informationen, da kamen sie ja als normaler Bürger nur erschwert dran. Da hätten sie in die Pressestelle im Innenministerium anrufen müssen [zum Beispiel], hätten sie sagen können ,können Sie mir einmal die Pressemeldung faxen’ oder ,können Sie mir einmal den Pressesprecher durchstellen’ oder so. Jetzt haben sie die Möglichkeit im Internet einen sehr breiten Zugriff [zu Informationen] zu haben.”

292 Original: „Wenn du’s gut machen willst darfst du’s dir eigentlich nicht so leicht machen, nicht das irgendwie zusammenschreiben, was sowieso jeder bei Google und Wikipedia zusammenfindet. Also das ist eine ganz wesentliche Sache finde ich weil es die Überprüfbarkeit natürlich erhöht hat und den Journalisten natürlich ein bisschen so wie der König ohne Kleider dastehen lässt. Es gibt ja auch viele so Geschichten wo nachvollzogen wurde, wer alles bei Wikipedia abgeschrieben hat.”
blogs are often short and have one single angle to them, just this one tidbit. Often times they are just rewrites of press releases that people are putting up—the Times Union do it all the time where they just copy and say, “they just sent out this release. Here is the release,” and put it up. You kind of lose that filter, you know, your job as a reporter to an extent is to be a filter and to decide what the best thing is to present to your reader. So you have to be careful. (Interview, 24 February 2012)

He speaks from experience since in his former job he had similar blogging obligations (he doesn’t anymore in his current job). One senior reporter who is also critical but not opposed to this situation attributes this development to audiences: “They want to feel like they’re there. … People do seem to like that. They don’t really want the filters; the same way it used to be traditional, you know: we’re supposed to filter it for them” (Interview, 11 February 2011). Other, more traditionalist reporters in the LCA who never engage in instant sharing, are much more critical of unfiltered information and dismiss it as “stenography” or “news candy” in this context (see the discussion of traditionalist resistance against Twitter in following sections).

However, traditionalists are open to verifiability of their work through readers. One of the most outspoken critics of Twitter and blogs told me about an episode where one of his stories was criticized and contextualized by a reader (quoted in chapter 4). Another critical reporter said he hears much more often from his readers through email than he used to, “some of them sometimes raise good points … very valid points. A lot of times, however, the emails you get is sort of folks just wanting to express their viewpoint” (Interview, 11 April 2011).

This is a sentiment LP and LCA reporters share about the kind of feedback from audiences they receive thanks to manifold technological opportunities. On the one hand, they are pleased about having more interaction with their audience and appreciate some of their input. On the other hand, they are aware that the people who get in touch
represent a certain segment of their audience and they do not take them as representative
of the public at large. One LCA bureau chief said, “it’s probably a pretty narrow slice of
our readership … the most strident slice … It’s interesting, you know, I read it, but I
don’t think that really captures the readership at large” (Interview, 7 December 2010).
Much of the feedback, furthermore, is not factual criticism but opinion. One LCA
reporter said about comments on his news stories, “some of the time very, very helpful
and informative, most of the time totally worthless and filled with vitriol and bile”
(Interview, 11 May 2010).

Irrespective of the extent that interactions are fruitful or not, LCA journalists draw
meaning from greater capacity of interactivity and serving the public through new media
channels. Among LP journalists I did not get this sense with the exception of one young
journalist, for who the beginning of serious online journalism was September 11, 2001:

I think that was the moment when we recognized that journalism also works in
real time. And I think for me that was the biggest change in journalism … that
you can depict journalism in real time and the great opportunities arising from
that … because you can take people with you and show them things that are
happening, which they cannot witness first-hand. (Interview, 26 March 2012)293

As a further consequence of online offerings, journalists in the LCA and LP
perceive a shift of focus of print journalism. Because topical information ceased to be the
principle of distinction for newspapers, journalists have to offer more analysis,
interpretation and explanation. This is how one young LP reporter assessed this
transformation:

For us daily newspapers it also means that we have to think about how to be
current on the next day … We have to think about … how to make stories that are

293 Original: „Da glaube ich hat man erst erkannt, dass Journalismus auch in Echtzeit funktioniert. Und ich
glaube das ist für mich die grösste Veränderung im Journalismus … dass man Journalismus in Echtzeit
abbilden kann und dadurch ganz grosse Chancen hat … weil man die Leute einfach mitnehmen kann und
ihnen Sachen zeigen kann, die gerade passieren wo sie nicht vor Ort sein können.”
not based on topicality but that go beyond news and focus on background. Newspapers have to pay much more attention on commenting, offering more background, to provide much more orientation and assessment. That means to weight news, to assess news and to plainly provide even more as we used to provide earlier as newspapers. … We need to deliver more through this impetus of the internet. (Interview, 13 June 2012)²⁹⁴

For one columnist in the LCA, specifically blogs push newspaper journalism to be more on top of its game, “if nothing else because you have all these bloggers who are gonna come down on them if they catch mistakes. Also, they have to distinguish themselves, they have to show the value added of real, full-time professional journalism” (Interview, 16 March 2011). Dash told me on the way to a panel discussion I accompanied him to, which was itself a “branding effort,” about the need to more vigorously brand the newspaper as well as individual journalists working for it. It is not only about providing news from a more subjective point of view—informed judgment rather than opinion—but also providing more depth and analysis than what is available elsewhere. He told me that attending such panel discussions, apart from frequent TV and radio appearances, are efforts to push this added value of newspapers and of him as a professional journalist (Fieldnote, 25 January 2011).

Probably the greatest difference of how LP journalists and LCA journalists perceive new media concerns social media, as suggested by the introduction of this chapter. With the exception of one mid-career reporter who is particularly active on Twitter, if LP journalists pay attention to social media at all (mostly Facebook, to a lesser extent Twitter during the research period) they see its value mostly in being able to

²⁹⁴ Original: “Für uns Tageszeitungen bedeutet es auch, dass wir uns überlegen müssen wie sind wir am nächsten Tag noch aktuell. … Wir müssen uns überlegen … wie können wir Geschichten machen, die gar nicht so von der Aktualität [leben] sondern die über die Nachricht hinaus hintergrundorientiert ist. Da müssen wir Zeitungen stärker drauf achten, dass wir mehr kommentieren, mehr Hintergrund liefern, dass wir stärker Orientierung geben, stärker Einschätzungen geben. Also die Nachricht gewichten, die Nachricht einschätzen und dass wir einfach noch mehr leisten als wir früher noch als Zeitung geleistet haben. …[wir] müssen mehr liefern durch diesen Treiber Internet.”
monitor what politicians announce and disclose. This is bolstered by the fact that Bavarian politicians have discovered social media as communication channels shortly before my research started there and perhaps in prospect of the 2013 state election. One young LP reporter who has no online news production obligation says:

I got a Twitter account and a Facebook account for research purposes, just to be able to observe what happens, but I don’t provide my own journalistic impulses there or use it to publish my work. (Interview, 13 June 2012)295

His newspaper has a separate online department and opposes publishing advanced online stories. While LCA reporters perceive these as platforms for branding, for providing live coverage, communicating with other journalist, the public and their sources, etc., LP reporters speak of “research tools.” When I asked one LP bureau chief about most significant changes in journalism, his response involved, “then came new tools for research and identifying issues – trivial example: Facebook” (Interview, 10 November 2011).296 And he continued that he tells interns to also understand Facebook as a medium for research, since politicians sometimes post messages that provide insights in what is going on at a given moment. He added that he does not consider Facebook or social networks in general as competition but as assets, which is not surprising given their limited use. Talking about Twitter, a young LP online reporter said:

But I think that it is gaining ground, not only as a medium [for politicians] to reach people but I think more and more as a research medium for journalists, be it for identifying issues … but also for additional research, to get new voices. You read again and again that Twitter feeds are quoted in texts. But I think this is only the beginning. (Interview, 26 March 2012)297

295 Original: “Ich habe mir selbst einfach zu Recherchezwecken einmal einen Twitter account und einen Facebook account zugelegt, einfach um beobachten können was sich so tut, aber dass ich jetzt eigene journalistische Impulse da setze oder das irgendwie nutze für meine Arbeit um selbst was zu publizieren das gar nicht.”


297 Original: “Aber ich glaube schon, dass das im Kommen ist, und nicht nur [für Politiker] als Medium, die Menschen zu erreichen, sondern ich glaube für die Journalisten immer mehr auch als Recherchemedium,
The process of news digitization may just lag behind a few years or German journalists may never become as engaged on social media. In the meanwhile, social media themselves are changing. For instance, Twitter went public in 2013, which may affect how the social network is monetized (especially through advertisement) and, consequently, how users engage with it. Be this as it may, it is worth speculating further why LP reporters do not engage with social media as the LCA, keeping in mind that the answer is most probably multidimensional rather than simple:

One condition, which is different in Germany, is the economic situation of newspapers, which is not as precarious as in the US (see chapter 3). This in itself does not cause adoption of technologies but generates an overall climate and incentive to tap new revenue streams and innovate. Another reason is demographic: because the average age of LP journalists is slightly higher and retirement closer (and because retirement funds are not tied to the stock market), there may be a greater reluctance to change. Some LP reporters believed this, as this mid-career journalist, who said she had colleagues, “who are very innovation-friendly and then there are colleagues who say they will make it until retirement somehow and don’t need all that” (Interview, 25 January 2012). However, the few younger LP journalists I interviewed are also innovation-inertial relative to the press corps as a whole and especially compared to younger LCA reporters (who are all forerunners of new media adoption). Finally, there also seems to be a specific German cultural inertia. German public discourse about social media in recent years reflects

sei es um Themen zu finden …. aber auch um eine Geschichte nachzurecherchieren, um neue Stimmen zu haben. Das liest man ja immer wieder, dass in den Texten auch Twitterfeeds zitiert werden. Aber ich glaube das ist der Anfang.”

298 Original: “die sind da sehr innovationsfreudig, und dann gibt’s Kollegen, die sagen sie kommen da irgendwie bis zur Rente noch durch und das brauchen sie nicht.”
reluctance against social media with regard to data security and privacy. One LP reporter reflects this sentiment:

Journalists are certainly critical people for the most part. Not too long ago we were fighting against the glass human being [mass surveillance]. Take this generation of journalists; this relentless collection of data – that’s scary for many of them and that’s probably the reason for the reluctance to just put [data] on Facebook, to reveal one’s innermost being to that extent. (Interview, 15 May 2012)

He includes himself in this category and expresses his attitude towards social media and Facebook in particular:

This connectivity bears great opportunities. Some skepticism is involved because one company controls it. We need to consider: Who controls all these data? Who transmits them? If you deal critically with it, many of these reservations seem justified. (Interview, 15 May 2012)

Accordingly, compared to some social media profiles of LCA reporters who openly share personal pictures (with all of their followers and friends, presumably), LP reporters’ exposure on these platforms is much more reserved.

**Section Conclusion**

The rise of the internet was hugely important to German as well as US reporters interviewed and observed for this study. However, for German reporters the significance of the internet was mostly reduced to research and workflow, not as an (inter)active communication medium and professionalism-altering efficacy. Hardly any LP reporter even wrote for their company’s webpage. With very few exceptions, German journalists perceived social media not as transmitting channels. In contrast, almost all LCA reporters

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had extensive online duties and engaged and communicated actively through social media, especially Twitter. Accordingly, for defining good and bad journalism new media were never part of the equation for LP reporters. Furthermore, there was hardly boundary drawing when they discussed social media. Rather than denying detrimental effects on journalism, these consequences were just not as apparent to LP reporters because social media were not nearly as predominant news channels, interactive and performative platforms and reporting infrastructures as in the LCA.

There was a sense of fading gatekeeping authority among LP journalists associated with the internet, a matter of fact of the networked public sphere, which was hardly worth mentioning anymore for LCA reporters. Though all of them experienced technological transformations of news production and news consumption during their professional lives, professional roles and norms among LP reporters were relatively unchanged. Several LP reporters referred to the state of affairs regarding social media as a trial period (Probierphase) in conversations. One LP reporter raises predictive questions, which the US case already provides answers to:

How to operate all these new channels? What is this new type of journalist like who does all these things? Does that mean – we see it with our colleagues from the online department who are actually expected to tweet at night. (Interview, 15 May 2012)

He then raised concerns, which were very real for LCA reporters, namely about insufficient time to think and reflect in this new news situation. Since social media were important for LP reporters in terms of what they allow them to learn about political actors (this being their primary motive for adopting Facebook and Twitter), it is safe to say that

they affected politics earlier and more profoundly than journalism. Accounting for the greater significance of social media, particularly Twitter, for the practice of journalism in the LCA, the rest of this chapter will specify its effects and therefore deal with this case study in its own terms.

**Twitter and Journalistic Professionalism: Incorporation or Upheaval**

On a grey morning, ten reporters linger in front of the executive chamber on the second floor of the State Capitol Building in Albany. The entrance is blocked by State Troopers, as it has been since 9/11. The reporters have converged because they had learned that Sheldon Silver, Speaker of the Assembly, was meeting with outgoing Governor David Paterson. The reporters are here to “stake out” either official to get comments on today’s special legislative session. Immediately after Silver appears and answers several questions by journalists in the stakeout, a young reporter takes out his smartphone to tweet a quote by Silver. Two older reporters tease him for it. “Oh come on, put that away, will you,” says one, the other asks him reproachfully why he would want to tip off reporters not present. Another young journalist emphasizes that she only tweets occasionally, while her fingers, too, tap a message to the twitterverse. She only tweets when there is a “need for constant updates.” (Fieldnotes, 29 November 2010)

Governor Andrew Cuomo started his first day in office on January 1, 2011 by symbolically reopening government to the people. The State Troopers gave way to whoever entered the executive floor from that point on, following Cuomo’s order. The Capitol press, including those journalists who challenged their younger competitor-colleagues earlier, also gradually gave more public admission to the inner workings of state house reporting in the following months through their tweets. They did this by voluntarily or reluctantly, yet in the end wholeheartedly in most cases, adopting Twitter in their day-to-day practice. By June 2011, dismissive comments about constant tweeting almost seemed like distant history.

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302 Large parts of this section are taken from two articles generated from this study, “The Twitterization of News Making: Transparency and Journalistic Professionalism,” forthcoming in *Journal of Communication* and “The Augmented Newsbeat: Spatial Structuring in a Twitterized News Ecosystem,” forthcoming in *Media, Culture & Society*. 
The first part of this section deals with tensions Twitter evokes between these two generations of reporters, which reflect fundamental contentions in journalism: about the constitution of news—as something shifting and processual or fixed and definitive; about professional roles and norms—providing (relatively) exclusive and filtered or instantly shared information and impromptu analyses; about addressees of that information—the broader public or informed insiders. At the heart of this is an opposition between the ascendant ethic of transparency and traditional understandings of journalism, which evoke different performances of professionalism. I will argue that these tensions do not disrupt journalism ultimately but lead to the expansion of its boundaries, integrating new professional roles, norms and practices next to conventional ones.

In practice, boundary expansion occurs through diversification of performances of journalistic professionalism. On the one hand, journalists still engage in traditional performances, aiming at autonomy and exclusive control over their professional jurisdiction. On the other hand, new news environments, such as Twitter, require and evoke a different performance from these professionals, one that accrues clout from openness, connectedness and personality rather than objective detachment and impersonality. While LCA journalists who engage in the latter also engage in the former (they still have legacy news production duties), traditionalists exclusively buy into the former. Naturally, conflicts emerge between those two fronts, which get at the heart of the transformation of journalism, at least in the US, in the early 21st century.

The second part of this section deals with the expansion of spatial boundaries through Twitter. Twitter and the new media environment in general affect spatial orders of news reporting by enabling more immediate monitoring of the news production space,
almost real-time creation of news representations about it and permeation of spatial boundaries of information. This expansion of spatial boundaries, I will demonstrate, is only made possible by the diversification of performances and expansion of professional boundaries.

In this section, I will draw from additional data gathered on Twitter, particularly the content analysis of tweets during the same-sex marriage debate, which was a transformative and precedential experience for many LCA reporters. Before getting into the empirical analysis, I will discuss three academic debates that are relevant in this context: about the significance of 1) Twitter, 2) transparency and 3) space in contemporary journalism.

**Twitter and Journalism**

Twitter has evoked controversy ever since it became the social medium of choice in journalism (Farhi 2009; Hermida 2010b). This has certainly to do with the ambivalence about Twitter itself, whether it is an elitist social network or an inclusive space of deliberation. Tensions within journalism, however, mainly revolve around the perceived degradation of traditional norms in tweets. Previous research suggests that tweeting journalists violate objectivity standards and gradually adopt principles of accountability and inclusivity (Lasorsa et al. 2012). They subject fact checking increasingly to networked expertise rather than institutional expertise (Hermida 2012). Rather than compartmentalization, journalism on Twitter has a stronger commitment to dialogue (Artwick 2013). Journalistic engagement on Twitter varies, as does the extent to which old standards are violated and new ones adopted. Interested in how journalists
negotiate these differences, one focus of this chapter is the main tensions among journalists about professionalism that arise from Twitter.

While content analyses of tweets (Cozma and Chen 2013; Lasorsa et al. 2012; Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012) and survey studies (Engesser and Humprecht 2012; Gulyas 2013; Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013) provided important insights on the adoption of Twitter and its significance for journalism, a comprehensive qualitative examination is still missing (see Bélair-Gagnon 2013 for a notable exception). The analysis presented here provides a contextualized depiction of Twitter adoption and engagement in journalism, which considers subjective experiences of political reporters as well as their concrete practices. In order to further the understanding of professional tensions, this chapter examines how and why LCA journalists adopted Twitter and the relationship between degrees of Twitter adoption and reporters’ understanding of journalistic professionalism.

**Transparency and Journalism**

A traditional understanding of control and autonomy entails that professional practices generate certain outcomes that remain opaque to the outside. A news account, according to this conception, draws its authority exactly from its opaqueness and dissociation from its constructedness. Transparency demands the exact opposite: journalism following this principle draws power from revealing how it materializes, who produces it and under what circumstances. Transparency has long been an important counter-current in the professionalization of journalism. For example, the introduction of the newspaper byline around the 1930s in the United States (Schudson 1978:145) can be
considered as transparentizing and pushing back against professional compartmentalization in journalism.

The proliferation of online technologies and the rise of digital culture set off another push for transparency. An open journalistic culture, according to Deuze (2003), has a dialogic relationship with the public, which it provides with information rather than preconceived interpretations. Journalistic truth claims *must* be based on transparency, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) argue in a renowned journalism guidebook, in order to distinguish journalists from other content producers: by being honest and open about their methods, journalists are reliable, trustworthy and respectful to audiences.

Somewhat ironically then, transparency is now what objectivity was in the first half of the 20th century (Schudson 1978), namely a means of maintaining professional autonomy in the (networked) public sphere (Allen 2008). Especially with the emergence of blogging and social media, transparency became a pivotal transformative and re-legitimizing efficacy in journalism (Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2013; Hermida 2010a; Lasorsa 2012; Robinson 2007; Singer 2007). As a recent newsroom ethnography demonstrates, transparency has helped the BBC reconstitute its reputation of impartiality in a social media-saturated news environment (Bélair-Gagnon 2013). Lewis and Usher (2013) showed that the implementation of hacking in news production instills newsrooms with open source culture, which also thrives on transparency.

Transparency is a primary virtue of the twitterverse (Murthy 2013). Rather than mere disclosure, Twitter promotes *participatory transparency* (Karlsson 2010): when journalists present themselves on Twitter, they enable and implicitly invite others to interact with them and to get involved in the news production process.
Space and Journalism

Scholarship on news digitization suggests a sense of despatialization of production practices, disembedding of interpersonal relationships and their replacement by technologically mediated relations. This is certainly one ancillary conclusion to be drawn from Boczkowski’s (2010) important ethnographic study on the entanglement of online news production and consumption patterns and the resulting homogenization of news. This diagnosis certainly holds true for a significant part of journalism, namely that which is produced in newsrooms. Looking beyond the newsroom, which is a priori detached from the subjects it covers, to a news ecosystem (Anderson 2013) sheds light on journalism, which rely on and are characterized by continuous on-site reporting. In beat journalism of that sort, traditional and emergent worlds of news reporting intersect differently and the idea of replacement of one by the other seems absurd to begin with. Instead, what we find there is an augmentation of news production space, to use Robinson’s (2011a) terminology. This space is still bound by place in the physical sense of the term but Twitter and other technological infrastructures increasingly shape sociality and communication within it.

What the second part of the analysis tackles more generally is the efficacy of social media on places, which are subjected to heightened mass-mediated observation and attention. Thus, it goes a different route by focusing on how physical aspects of these communications and practices are shaped by digitality. Currently, a lot of attention in media scholarship focuses on the influence of social media on established forms of communication and practices. This focus derives from a sense that political mobilization, public communication as well as professional practices in media work have changed
since the emergence of social media (Murthy 2013). One area, which has not been examined sufficiently in my view, is how social media influence spatial orders, which are subjected to mass-mediation.

Media scholars have studied the relationship between mediation and space (Couldry and McCarthy 2004b), spatial interaction between newsroom and the city (Rodgers 2013) and within newsrooms regarding representations of the outside world (Hemmingway 2004). Robinson’s (2011a) newsroom ethnography witnessed changing spatial arrangements in converging newsrooms. However, there has been hardly attention to how social media as digital spaces affect existing spatial and temporal orders of news production. Interpreting Hermida’s (2010b) notion of Twitter as an ambient awareness system not only in the discursive but also spatial sense leads in the right analytical direction, I would argue, as it implies conceiving Twitter as a representational and projectional space simultaneously.

**Twitter and the Expansion of Professional Boundaries of Journalism**

I will first discuss the process and reasons of adoption of Twitter in the LCA. The following section begins with a breakdown of different forms of engagements (drawing on the content analysis of SSM tweets) to specify what reporters do on Twitter. The following analysis identifies transparency as a consistent symbolic resource of professional performance on Twitter. These performances impart 1) openness through instant sharing and weakening of gatekeeping boundaries, 2) recognition of competitors, 3), higher visibility of the journalist as a person, 4) critical outspokenness. The focus is on differences and controversies regarding these performances of transparency among three groups of adopters—intense tweeters, light tweeters, traditionalist non-adopters. I
will draw broader conclusions regarding the expansion of professional boundaries through the ethic of transparency.

**The Adoption of Twitter**

*How the LCA Adopted Twitter*

At the time this research began, the Albany state house was already a fully digitized newsbeat. Most LCA reporters wrote online stories, many blogged and produced multimedia content on top of their core legacy news responsibilities. Twitter became relevant in 2010, especially during the gubernatorial campaign. It became a central, almost indispensable, news reporting infrastructure in the spring of 2011.

Initiation and intensity of Twitter engagement varied. Besides three non-adopters, the spectrum ranged from early and full immersion in Twitter-aided reporting to mere passive use (monitoring).

**Table 2: Types of Twitter Adopters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
<th>Seniority</th>
<th></th>
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<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time of Adoption</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Early tweeters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24-52</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2-32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late tweeters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29-72</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9-43</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense tweeters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24-58</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2-35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light tweeters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30-72</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8-43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>57-60</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>32-36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53-57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>225</td>
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*Note.* Figures refer to April 2013 because number of followers and tweets were not recorded in spring of 2011 and cannot be dated back.

Ten *early tweeters* started in 2010 or earlier (see Table 2). Seven of them were under 30 and can be considered digital natives. Half of them started tweeting on their own initiative, the other half was encouraged by their organizations. Four of them were
curious but did not tweet much immediately, the other six were passionate tweeters from the beginning and forerunners of Twitter-aided reporting in the press corps. Eleven *late tweeters* started during spring of 2011. They included some of the most influential journalists, according to their seniority and organizations. Four were either encouraged or ordered by their news organizations to tweet, seven individually decided to get on Twitter, mostly inspired by their tweeting colleagues. Two reporters only *passively* monitored others’ feeds, one of who was skeptical but not opposed to Twitter. The other belonged to the *traditionalists* who had more than 30 years of working experience and were the most outspoken objectors to Twitter. Their seniority and the fact that two of them had colleagues in their bureau who tweeted guarded them from tweeting obligations.

I refer to those who embraced the whole range of tweeting practices as *intense tweeters* or *enthusiasts*. Neither was early adoption necessary for, nor did late adoption exclude from intense engagement. Seven early and three late tweeters constituted the group of enthusiasts. *Light tweeters* or *skeptics* advertised their own stories on Twitter and were more restrained when it came to promoting others’ news stories, live tweeting, commenting and conversing. Their tweeting activity varied, whereas that of enthusiasts was constantly intense. Regarding normative commitments, light tweeters constituted the middle position between traditionalists and intense tweeters: they were typically ambivalent about Twitter-aided journalism.

What accounts for these differences? In the LCA, several patterns emerged. Besides age and seniority, area of work influenced tweeting intensity: journalists who did more enterprise journalism were less prone to tweet constantly than those who dealt with
daily news. Organizational factors also registered as important conditions, such as economic viability, editorial philosophies and policies. Furthermore, the influence of tweeters, measured by number of followers, usually corresponded to the influence of their organizations (in contrast to an Australian study; see Bruns 2012). This is why late tweeters, mostly constituted by reporters from such outlets, had twice as many followers on average than early tweeters (Table 1).

*Why the LCA Adopted Twitter*

Most LCA journalists ultimately embraced Twitter. Intentions to start and keep tweeting were economic, relating to the business side of news organizations, as well as professional, relating to journalistic objectives. Economic intensions include branding, improving consumer loyalty, expanding audiences and advertising legacy news. Professionally, Twitter was perceived as a means of acquiring information, shaping public debate, providing public service and engaging more closely with audiences.

Many older reporters first recognized Twitter’s economic value, which accounts for their initial skepticism, and only embraced it once they noticed its professional merits. To give an example: one senior journalist was encouraged by his supervisor to tweet. His company believed tweeting was valuable “as a way of putting our material out there, as a way of building a profile in the world” and ultimately creating advertising revenue. Although this is why his company was interested in him becoming an influential tweeter, he said generating revenue was “not really what’s on the forefront of my mind. My goal is to be interesting to my followers. My ultimate goal is to find more followers. I want to make sure what I put out there is worth clicking.” The SSM debate was revelatory and turned him into one of the most active LCA tweeters:
I started getting it: there is no quicker way to get a piece of news to an audience of that size. And it’s very organic—you send it out there and then it gets retweeted. It’s like an echo and each time it echoes it reaches another audience. And if they see your name pop up two or three times they start following you; it kind of builds on itself. (Interview, 28 February 2012)

For young, digital native reporters, professional motives were apparent from the start. They perceived tweeting as an important skill and building a following as a career asset. They emphasized Twitter’s journalistic and individual rather than organizational appeals. A reporter in his early twenties said Twitter only really enthralled him when he came to the Capitol beat six months before our interview, despite that he had been tweeting for over a year before that:

It is invaluable … As an aggregation tool it’s outstanding because I have all the other reporters, so I know what everybody else is doing; … you have the people you cover, so you’re getting primary material from them; you have an instant analysis … that helps you, especially when you’re new, put things in context. It’s the greatest! (Interview, 4 May 2011)

He reported events on Twitter that did not get covered in the paper as a service to his readers, he said, before adding that social media skills were highly valued in his organization: “If you are looking at a beat or a job in five years you don’t want to lose out because the other guy has 10,000 Twitter followers and you abstained from that.” This is not just a future scenario, according to another informant. He told me that a top newspaper recently hired a former colleague of his because of his Twitter presence and following. The bureau chief of the young reporter quoted above, in contrast, said he “was told to” to get on Twitter as “part of our strategy.”

What drew my informants to Twitter was a self-evident belief across news organizations: adopting new forms of communication like Twitter helps newspapers to survive. Particularly the business concern for consumer loyalty found a complementary professional belief, which is that contemporary journalism has to be more engaged with
its audience. This overlap of economic and professional concerns for audiences, together with the participatory promise of Twitter, accounts for its success in journalism. The belief in the inevitability of new media adoption was handed down organizational hierarchies. An editor who supervised Capitol correspondents for his paper responded to criticism that online and social media journalism superficialize public information, arguing that television started this process: “That train left the station long time ago ... Humans have changed and now we as journalists have to respond to that” (11 May 2011).303 One of his supervisees echoed this sense of inevitability: “You don’t want to be the media institution left standing when the music stops and everybody sits down and you are the only one who is not occupying the media platform of choice that day” (Interview, 27 February 2012). This self-evidence will echo further in the following sections.

**Twitter Engagements, Contention and the Performance of Transparency**

Before moving to the debate about Twitter, the following provides an overview of what LCA journalists do on Twitter and to what extent, based on content analysis of the same-sex marriage (SSM) Twitter debate. Because information received through Twitter turned out to be helpful for covering the beat, some of the most skeptical reporters had monitored for a while before tweeting actively. Besides more obvious examples, even seemingly useless information proved beneficial. For instance, a reporter who physically attends a press conference may miss or not recognize the significance of a statement, which somebody else highlights in a tweet. Apart from competitor-colleagues, spokespeople and political aides were LCA reporters’ most responsive counterparts.

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303 A similar, taken-for-granted attitude was demonstrated among UK news editors’ perception of user-generated content (Hermida and Thurman 2008).
Enthusiasts tweeted after work, usually about more personal matters, but few of them were on Twitter 24/7.

Substantive live coverage—including statements, decisions, votes—was the most prevalent form of engagement in the content analysis\(^{304}\) of SSM tweets (31.9%), which is not surprising given how eventful this period was. Next to substantive news, 18.8% of tweets were situational and procedural, dealing with political processes and protest action, in which images and videos often augmented textual eyewitness accounts. One percent of tweets made political documents (e.g. press releases, bills, etc.) available. Two percent of tweets informed about the inexistence of news (no-news updates), which is typical at times of heightened anticipation.

Apart from these news-driven tweets, a significant portion referenced other content. All active tweeters promoted their own and their colleagues’ news stories and tweets (24.4%). They also frequently referred to and retweeted their competitors (15.9%), though light tweeters did it less or not at all. LCA Twitter feeds were filled with wit and irony and the SSM debate was not an exception (5.8%). Some intense tweeters voiced explicit commentary and criticism about political processes (1.7%), which sometimes overlapped with irony. Hashtags also served as outlets for commentary: conventionally, Twitter’s hashtag functionality aims at classifying tweets to specific issues and providing users with discourse beyond their social network. Hashtag commentary occurs when reporters insert critical, witty or emotive statements (e.g. #badsign, #ohalbany, #wow), which applies to 2.7% of SSM tweets. All tweeters, furthermore, engaged in some form of analysis (4.7%), which involved interpretation, drawing connections, prognoses, historical context and reference to previous political pronouncements and decisions.

\(^{304}\) Multiple categories could apply to tweets. See appendix for a frequency table (Table 5).
Intense tweeters engaged most frequently in discussions,\(^{305}\) mostly with other journalists (2.6%) and seldom with sources (0.4%), though this occurred more often during less eventful times. The SSM debate is, furthermore, exceptional in that it involved relatively frequent dialogue with the public (1.0%). Occasionally, LCA reporters made use of crowdsourcing (0.5%), including asking followers what question they would want to ask an official. 0.4% of the tweets were corrections of hasty errors and 3.4% were meta-discursive, meaning they discussed journalism and media. Fewer tweets than usual contained personal information (0.4%), which I attribute to long working hours and momentary national attention during that period.

Degrees and breadths of Twitter engagement reflect different conceptions of good journalism. The following analysis examines these differences, which are most pronounced between traditionalists and intense tweeters and more nuanced among light tweeters/skeptics.

*Gatekeeping vs. Instant Sharing.*

As suggested by the analysis of SSM tweets, tweeting journalists stress the value of instant sharing of verbatim statements, documents, updates on political processes, etc. Instant sharing fosters a processual rather than definitive conception of news (Boczkowski 2010), which not only affects news making routines but the “fundamental paradigm” of journalism (Robinson 2011b:202). Some LCA reporters denoted processual journalism as developing news, which included (live) tweeting news bits, linking to preliminary versions of stories on blogs, updates throughout the day and often resulted in legacy news stories. Instant sharing entails a different professional performance and

\(^{305}\) Figures only include public discussions (responses and retweets), no direct messages.
became a subject of discussions in the press corps. Opening of informational boundaries occur on two levels:

1) Most reporters generated developing news but differed regarding quantity and type of information they published. Reporters benefitted or became aggravated by developing news of competitors. Publishing exclusive stories is in the former category and journalists of more traditional news organizations, which never broke news online, greeted it with surprise and gratitude. Remarks in this vein came from a) light tweeters and b) tabloid reporters. One young reporter told me his boss, “loves it when the New York Times breaks a big story at three in the afternoon because it gives us time to pick it up, match it and write it in the [newspaper]” (Interview, 26 May 2011). His boss identified the story about Governor Eliot Spitzer patronizing prostitutes, which the Times broke online in March 2008, as a turning point (Interview, 20 March 2010). Another tabloid reporter asked, “I don’t know why you would give away an exclusive like that? I guess they feel that the online is as important as the print, but I don’t get that” (Interview, 10 February 2011). Though articles in print were generally still held in highest esteem, only these particular journalists considered online newsbreaks a sheer waste. Correspondingly, they adopted Twitter but were reserved tweeters.

The stakeout episode discussed above concerns developing news, which aggravated more traditional journalists. In explaining why he doesn’t tweet, one of them drew boundaries in respect to his tweeting colleagues’ inability to withhold information in stakeouts:

There might be two or three of us, you might find out something is going on and we’re staking it out. Somebody tweets that “the Governor is meeting with the Assembly leader.” So it goes from two people there to fifteen people there. And I’m like: “Are you breaking news? Wouldn’t it be better to wait and you’d have a
real story coming out possibly? Why are you sharing this information?” That’s what I don’t get about this instant sharing of information. I think it ends up harming what’s supposed to be your real product at the end, which is hopefully a good story for your readers. (Interview, 28 February 2012)

By “real product” he meant a story in the newspaper. Some light tweeters agreed to this position. During a visit to Albany in April of 2013, I talked to one of them about the episode that opens this article. She told me about a stakeout a week earlier where a handful of journalists had agreed not to tweet about it and was seemingly happy about this.

2) Besides tearing down competitive informational boundaries, concerns about instant sharing involved gatekeeping authority over political news. For this perceived undermining of professional autonomy, traditionalists were not just critical but outright dismissive of Twitter. Thus, for one of them tweeting was just stenography:

I think there is much more of a stenographer style of reporting of just getting it out one-sided because you have heard it from someone say[ing] it first, instead of a traditional way where you would check out the information first. ... That’s why I think this has been a disservice. I think it’s not good for the profession. (Interview, 17 May 2010)

Another traditionalist referred to tweets as news candy, meaning its purpose was mainly to please politicians. This started for him with blogging: “They ate it up; no question about it... It’s not really journalism. It’s another means of billboarding or headlining stuff” (Interview, 5 May 2011). The third traditionalist spoke of performative information, meaning it was strategic communication but pretended to be news. “People here who are bloggers and who tweet,” he said, simply reproduced attacks and revocations by politicians and, instead of checking out the information, “they put it right out there; unfiltered; unchallenged … are we the ones who are doing it? I’m not sure
that’s the case, but I think we’re more easily used; we’re more easily manipulated” (Interview, 5 October 2010).

Contrary to tweeting journalists, who perceived instant sharing of information as a public service, traditionalists saw it as a professional disservice. Firstly, they thought it helped political actors more than the public. One traditionalist said he was a non-tweeter because he did not understand, “what’s the benefit for who I’m ultimately serving, which is my newspaper reader?” (Interview, 28 February 2012). Secondly, they believed that journalists are supposed to confront opposite standpoints within every bit of news they publish as well as thoroughly fact check it.

Even enthusiasts shared some of these sentiments. A young journalist who was socialized as a multimedia reporter said he tried not to “fall for the sexiness of social media” anymore. He described how political actors counted on elective affinity to get publicity by using social media in ostensibly innovative ways: “If you are somebody who is using these multimedia tools and blogs you are more naturally biased to respect them and to cover them and to think they’re cool” (Interview, 10 June 2011). Covering such social media spectacle compromised journalistic autonomy to him.

*Ignoring Competitors vs. Mutual Recognition*

Instant sharing on Twitter not only involved “giving away” information but outright promoting competitors. This was common in the LCA, as suggested by the analysis of SSM tweets (15.9%), but more so for enthusiasts than skeptics. A utilitarian explanation for this is that they mutually recognized to bundle “network power” since composition of followers varied across the LCA. An idealist explanation would point to the belief in the need to recognize good journalism and, essentially, meritocracy. As a
performance of transparency, promoting competitors concedes to the fact that journalists themselves are not only avid consumers but also connoisseurs of news. They further communicate that they perceive themselves as part of the egalitarian digital culture and purely discursive realm of Twitter, where fostering discourse is an end in itself and valued more than organizational competition. They may also signal that they can afford to transgress competitive divisions.

Among intense tweeters, the principle of mutual recognition often trumped other interests. For instance, when a reporter pointed out in a tweet that another reporter—who was not even on Twitter—had the “best lede of the day” (newspaper reporter 1, 2013), he implied that his own lede could not keep up with it. But recognition was not only expected but demanded. Disregarding this principle involved public complaints on Twitter, which were mostly dispatched by enthusiasts against skeptics: “Gee. Thanks for the shout-out NY Post. (Not).” (TV bureau 1, 2012) Or: “If [name of telecast] is sourced as a ‘cable television show’ then I’m referring to the NYT as a ‘newspaper’ from now on.” (TV reporter, 2012) Both examples originate from one TV crew. While this irritation may have been a response to a perceived disrespect of newspaper towards TV reporters and national/metropolitan towards regional media, the fact that it was raised publicly on Twitter, on an eye-level and in front of an audience of thousands indicates the binding nature of recognition.

Connected to this, the demand of recognition may lead to excessive frankness. One reporter was annoyed by a story in a competing newspaper one day, which seemed to deliberately ignore a recent story of his on a related subject. His tweets expressed his annoyance vividly but after a few minutes he deleted them. He apologized, “I was overly
snarky in tweeting this earlier, so let me try again” (newspaper reporter 2, 2011), and referred to the story in a more reserved manner. Reporters were aware of the danger of being excessively frank, which was also fostered by a conversational culture of snarkiness, and compensated the lack of editorial gatekeeping by discussing the appropriateness of tweets with colleagues: “[Name] and I have both saved each other a lot of hassle with the occasional: ‘Hey, I was about to tweet this; is this a good idea?’ ... and often it’d been like ‘no, it’s not worth it’” (Interview, 27 February 2012). Reporters self-censored, often anticipating their editors’ objections. The reporter quoted above who retracted his tweets said his editor paid attention to his Twitter feed: “I think my old editor didn’t read my Twitter. My new one does because he’ll like call me and comment on things I tweet, which I guess makes me now a little self-conscious.” The retraction episode occurred after work and was an act of self-censorship.

Authoritative Distance vs. Communitarian Openness

Enthusiasts who most epitomized the ethic of transparency exposed their personalities on Twitter. They used first person, were witty (in 5.8% of SSM tweets), commentated (1.7%), analyzed (4.7%) and revealed personal details (0.4%). Such tweets not only provide more subjective assessments of issues but also shed more light on the individuals making the news and weaken journalists’ public/personal boundaries. One skeptic—a quiet and reserved person—was told to tweet by his superiors and says he experiences transparency as an obligation:

You have to embrace some of these things if you want to survive. ... You can be kind of funny and sarcastic on Twitter; no one is editing you, which is kind of fun. You can definitely be more personal on Twitter and if you’re not you gonna come off kind of buttoned-down, you know, so I think you have to [be more personal]. (Interview, 27 February 2012)
Although he adapted, he did not reveal anything about his personal life. A young enthusiast working for the same outlet deleted 700 of his tweets before unprotecting his former personal account and engaging professionally on Twitter. Both journalists were witty and conversational on Twitter but working for a prestigious news organization seemed to limit their disposition to disclose their personal lives. The opposite was true for enthusiasts of regional media who fully surrendered to the gravitational pull of transparency. One of them tweeted about fatherhood, approved all friend requests on Facebook, where he shared family and party pictures. He framed his self-presentation as corresponding to transparency claims he makes in his reporting:

I feel forced into being completely transparent ... Here I am demanding and asking that people be open and transparent with me ... and I feel I should too be open and transparent. ... The other part of it is: ... the easiest way for there not to be a picture of you doing coke on Facebook is to not do coke. ... To me privacy is just a shield for things that you don’t want to be known. (Interview, 10 June 2011)

He sought to create the impression of having nothing to hide. Though he may not have been a more open person than in the pre-internet era, social media enabled and encouraged him to disclose. Like other intense tweeters, he still wrote legacy news stories where he employed a distanced, authoritative self-presentation in accordance with traditional journalism. Intense tweeters were able to reconcile diversification of performances and inherent contradictions of norms guiding them. One of them described the difference between his individual and his bureau’s Twitter identity. He said he tweeted, “things that are appropriate as [name] tweets that would not be appropriate as [bureau] tweets,” in terms of more personal information or, “observations that are perhaps a little bit sharper” (Interview, 27 February 2012). On the issue of blurring news and opinion another reporter said, “As that line blurs people become increasingly transparent about what their position is,” and as long as they explained that to readers,
“it’s a fair approach” (Interview, 24 February 2012). Traditionalists were dismissive, light tweeters reluctant of such normative inconsistency. One of the former kind said:

I had a blogger who works for a newspaper tell me that they have a different standard than writing for the newspaper, that ‘our marching orders are to be bitchy and happening.’ I don’t get that. I don’t get how you can be a newspaper reporter one second and then you switch hats with a different set of standards. (Interview, 17 May 2010)

One skeptic shared this attitude, though not as strongly. He separated public and personal social networks, using Twitter only for the former:

I don’t use Facebook … for work, even though in [my company] we could and I think that there is some encouragement to do that. I just have a problem with the breakdown of personal versus work. I’d be afraid that if I started using it more and started posting my stuff on Facebook that … people could look at the postings, mostly of my friends, and then try to draw conclusions about how I feel politically about things. (Interview, 21 February 2012)

This reporter only approved my long-standing friend request on Facebook after we did this second interview I just quoted from. His Facebook presence was much more reserved than those of some of his LCA colleagues, who shared pictures of their children and vacations and who also tended to reveal more about themselves and their views on Twitter.

Objective Detachment vs. Critical Involvement

Skeptics and traditionalists took issue with violation of traditional norms on Twitter, especially regarding objectivity and the separation of news and opinion. The analysis of SSM tweets distinguished commentary, analysis, wit and hashtag commentary. Opinion in a narrower sense was hardly expressed at all. It was striking that enthusiasts tended to be reserved or critical about objectivity while traditionalists and
skeptics used it more sincerely in interviews. Prompted to distinguish good and bad journalism, one enthusiast said:

Good journalism ... is neutral about its consequences or whom it helps, whom it favors. But it’s not objective because if I was not bringing with me the cumulative value of my experience in the time here of what I’ve learned, I would not be doing my job. We’re making judgments every day about what is important and what isn’t. (Interview, 21 January 2011)

Another intense tweeter made a similar point, emphasizing that his most important principle was sensibility rather than objectivity, which he again distinguished from opinion:

I don’t feel necessarily a duty to give objective coverage when there is not objective debate. ... I don’t believe in skewing coverage, in holding back on things I know to be true because they cut one way or the other. But I don’t necessarily believe in giving all sides an equal weight just because they exist in the marketplace of ideas. ... My sensibility has some place in my written work; my opinion does not. (Interview, 18 May 2010)

Both of these interpretations endorse a less detached style of journalism and more categorical news decisions. One skeptic sounded different, saying she hoped “that I’m seen as being pretty objective” (Interview, 11 February 2011) so that political actors would not consider her in their camp. One traditionalist scolded tabloids for taking sides, saying they “immediately throw objectivity to the wind” (Interview, 5 May 2011).

Contrary to enthusiasts, these reporters still perceived objectivity as an ideal to strive for.

While objectivity was contested, LCA journalists agreed on the need to shun opinion. However, on Twitter they commented, criticized and, above all, ridiculed political processes, corresponding to a general tendency of blurred distinctions between news and opinion on Twitter (cf. Cozma and Chen 2013; Lasorsa et al. 2012). For traditionalists, this was yet another reason to reject Twitter. Even enthusiasts were

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306 Comparative research suggests social media are more successful in commercialized and competitive journalistic cultures (Gulyas 2013) where this crisis is more apparent.
uncomfortable about blending news and opinion. A common rationalization combined the growing demand for news analysis with a narrow specification of opinion as moral judgment—“saying this is bad”—which they claimed not to indulge in. One enthusiast appeared to dodge a question about opinionating on Twitter:

> It’s a little snarkier on Twitter. And I tried not to get involved with that but admittedly there’ve been some times where I have inserted plenty of snark but I still try not to cross that line into opinion ... there is a fine line that some folks probably do cross. (Interview, 28 February 2012)

One traditionalist traces the tendency to opinionate back to the emergence of blogs:

> [The wall] is crumbling particularly because of blogging. Some bloggers have a style of being snarky or witty or funny or inserting themselves into the blog post. You automatically get some opinion, some adjectives, and a framing of the blog post. (Interview, 5 May 2011)

Another traditionalist was opposed to tweeting reporters’ rationale of diversification of performances and standards on different platforms: “I see a lot of times people do cross the line. And it’s like, on the next day they are reporting on the same thing in a supposed hands-off [style in the paper] ... that to me is mind-boggling” (Interview, 28 February 2012).

Because of the ideological consensus on omitting opinion from news, transgression was accompanied by distancing performance. In tweets, distancing reflected in hashtag commentary (in 2.7% of SSM tweets). The following tweets are examples of this: “Skelos emerges from leaders’ meeting with Cuomo and Silver to reiterate that he wants permanent, not temporary tax cap. #twostepsback” (newspaper reporter 4, 2011) or: “Gay marriage, no. Seahorse protection, yes. tinyurl.com/69hf267 #whosaystheydonothing?” (TV bureau 1, 2011) The pound sign served as syntactic separator to insert commentary. After the pound sign, reporters expressed what they
really thought while preserving professional distance before it. As a form of speech enabling transparency, hashtag commentary is a subtle representation of professional boundary porosity. It enables an ambivalent performance of professionalism in a delimited space, traditionally detached and factual (‘how it’s supposed to be done’), on the one hand, and open, playful and snarky, on the other.

Irony provides further semantic distancing. Rhetorically, irony establishes distance by expressing the opposite of what it signifies. Irony aims at exposing what is expressed and what is unexpressed. It may thereby foster critical reflexivity and challenge of authority but may also lead to nihilistic disengagement (Jacobs and Smith 1997). Irony delivered by the LCA in tweets went both ways: it criticized political processes substantively but sometimes descended into absurdity and an outlet for frustration.

**How Twitter Expands Spatial Boundaries of Journalism**

Besides broader implications for professional boundaries, which will be taken up in the conclusion of this section, performances of transparency on Twitter have a mutually reinforcing effect of expanding spatial boundaries of news reporting. Simply put, through Twitter the observing eye of a reporter can more fully observe and capture the news production space, provided reciprocal instant sharing among participants within the space.

Analytically accounting for how space structures action and is simultaneously structured by action is to pay attention to *spatial practices* (Lefebvre 1991). Besides substantially positioning people, material and symbolic objects in a certain order, space also requires to be perceived and imagined as such in order to be actualized (Löw 2008).
News media assume a dual role within spaces subjected to mediated attention: Firstly, in fulfilling their relay function (Schulz 2004), news media wrest events from their temporal and locational circumstances and bring them to life at different times and places through textual, auditory and visual representation. Secondly, news media are themselves spatially organized to be able to anchor the news net (Tuchman 1978). Dispatching news correspondents to a government building is one expression of that. Besides reporting the news, correspondents act as mediators and facilitators of discourse in the sphere they are embedded in, which helps organize and create a shared sense of space.

Studying the entanglements of physical and digital spaces, state house reporting can be considered as a *digital formation*. In such formations, digital technologies 1) help organize actors, practices and content they share with each other, 2) enable interaction between these actors and 3) provide a space where all of this gets staged (Latham and Sassen 2005:10). Mere advertisement of news stories on Twitter would not make for a digital formation; it does, however, once Twitter provides a space for performance of professionalism, helps coordinate day-to-day reporting and facilitates interaction.

Examining *imbrications* of digital and nondigital (Latham and Sassen 2005:19–21) is to recognize, in the first instance, that digital formations are realized by nondigital arrangements. At the same time, nondigital, place-bound properties are themselves transformed through digital ones. The State Capitol twitterverse is a product of government as a place, its rhythms, social structures and practices. Representation of government on Twitter means that part of its former exclusively place-bound properties have been disentangled from it. For instance, presence, access or conversation may occur digitally as well as nondigitally. However, the interplay and mutual constitution of digital
and nondigital is not seamless but often times dialectic (Couldry and McCarthy 2004a). I will focus on spatial coordination but also discordance through Twitter.

As Meyrowitz (1985) suggests, social situations become less contingent on locational settings and physical barriers of information become more permeable through the proliferation of electronic media. Placeness remains important in government and news reporting, especially for actors on the inside, while digital spaces increasingly augment and affect it. One implication of this augmentation is a shift of the boundary between what is on and off public display. This transition is accompanied by a new situation, which is governed by its own logic (what Meyrowitz calls middle region). One way to circumscribe journalism is the continuous attempt to expand this region. Twitter furthers this expansion. Inversely, media-appropriating strategies of political actors can be seen as means to prevent the middle region from advancing to the public. The difference now is that journalists have more means with virtually infinite representational (digital) space at their disposal to bring what they learn to public attention. Because this space on blogs and Twitter is not “just there” but demands to be filled, this tension is intensified.

A lost sense of spatial distance may also be accompanied by a lost sense of temporal distance (Harvey 1989). Digitization affects the dynamics of news production as a whole, especially because of divergent temporalities connected to different velocities and synchronicities of digital and nondigital forms of communication. The ubiquity of smartphones, brevity and quickness of information sped up communication flows enormously in journalism. Reporters therefore rely on Twitter not only as enhancement of spatial monitoring but to better anticipate the future in an ever faster-paced situation.
Twitter is particularly relevant for journalists regarding protention, which is “a future-oriented part of actors’ present” (Tavory and Eliasoph 2013:912) and concerns anticipating the immediate future. The twitterverse, however, is but one of many layers of communication through which reporters anticipate. Different temporalities require coordination and harmonization of these layers.

Thus, Twitter shows how digital and place-bound properties of news reporting mutually constitute each other. By encouraging different professional performances of journalists, Twitter expands spatial boundaries of reporting and transcends physical barriers of discourse in news production spaces. Because of the requirements of immediacy, Twitter, furthermore, is relevant to journalists regarding future coordination.

**Twitter: Information Funnel and Space-Time Compressor**

Considering spatial and temporal aspects of tweeting is not just an analytical abstraction but rooted in reporters’ own understanding of Twitter. Only in most general terms they think of Twitter as a tool. Once they talk in more detail, they reflect on Twitter in spatial and temporal terms. The most obvious implication on everybody’s mind is how Twitter has accelerated the news cycle. One referred to a “brushfire” to describe the effect of Twitter for creating intense news breaking pressure in one particular instance (Interview, 28 May 2011). During the SSM passage, said another, “every second was important” because of Twitter (Interview, 28 February 2012). One LCA reporter explained Twitter’s journalistic appeal as being able “to see in real time who is picking it up“ (Interview, 24 February 2012). Spatial conceptions not only reflect in the common verbiage of “being on” rather than “using” Twitter but also more elaborate allegories: One reporter calls Twitter “a huge classroom where you are monitoring every note that is
being passed from Suzie and Chuck and whoever” (Interview, 27 February 2012).

Another journalist says Twitter helps him overcome spatial, acoustic as well as psychological impediments of place-bound sociality:

[Twitter is] like being at a cocktail party because there is all these different conversations going on, all different directions, different subjects, different people involved, there is different little groups of people that form around one topic and then people drift over to another topic. But the advantage is: you can listen to all the conversations you want to, that you are physically capable of following, you can participate in all of them at the same time and you don’t have to overcome any shyness. It’s just: you’re sitting in your home, type and you hit send and it’s out there; you don’t have to feel like you’re interrupting somebody; you don’t have to talk over the loud music. (Interview, 28 February 2012)

Yet another reporter combines Twitter’s temporal and spatial appeals by suggesting: “We live in a world where one tweet can be shot around the country in a minute” (Interview, 28 February 2012). Although individual tweets can have quite an impact, most dissolve in the ambience of ever-scrolling feeds and popup notifications, which are registered peripherally. The majority of tweets are significant for creating awareness of occurrences and debates within one or several social and discursive networks.

*Awareness in News Production Spaces, Old and New*

The LCA in Albany is located at the heart of the bicameral legislature, right between Assembly and Senate chambers. Spokespeople, lobbyists, organizers and officials frequent reporters’ offices to provide information, convince them to attend events, to write about certain issues and in ways that serve their interests, etc. On days when the legislature is in session, reporters are only at their desks to write and otherwise move around the building to attend hearings, press conferences, watch protest actions or just walk rounds. Their daily work is defined by a ubiquity of casual encounters and
conversations with sources, which yield tips, background and off-the-record information about past, present and future events and developments.

As the following chapter will demonstrate, the importance of off-the-record and background conversations for these journalists cannot be emphasized enough. Except few who do it conditionally, reporters I talked to identified these conversations as the way to gather valuable information, which ideally yield something to put on-the-record ultimately. The majority of face-to-face and phone conversations I witnessed between reporters and politicians during my research were not on-the-record. Many of these exchanges involved negotiations about which parts were off- and which on-the-record. Some spokespersons, especially in the executive branch of government, are so careful that they add “off-the-record” as a prefix or suffix to almost every other sentence they say. One reporter told me he talks more to lobbyists than politicians, mind you that the former usually have a clause in their employment contracts that forbids them to ever talk on-the-record with journalists.

This is one main reason why reporters believe the internet cannot replace being on location, though they all benefit from the proliferation of information it brings. Dispatching permanent correspondents is one strategy of news organizations to deal with what Schudson (2007) termed the anarchy of events. They are on the spot to anticipate and report on interweavings of expected and unexpected occurrences. Being there not only means getting information faster but is also a precondition for developing interpersonal trust with sources, which provides reporters more fine-grained knowledge about political processes. An experienced reporter remarked on this issue:

When we had the Senate coup attempt two years ago, you really had to be here. If you were in an office somewhere else, you wouldn’t even know that was going on
because we were notified one minute before it happened. … Sometimes you just … run into a lot of people, have conversations with people, and find out a lot about what’s going on that way. … If you’re not here, you’re really left out. Particularly this new Governor: he doesn’t give any warning of his press conferences. You can’t even be three buildings away. They’ll just say: “he’s gonna have a press conference in ten minutes.” So you got to be here. (Interview, 11 February 2011)

Why, I asked, does Cuomo’s office do that? Her response: “Because they can.”

When I asked another reporter whether short-noticing and Twitter were related, he said: “I don’t think they’re doing that because of Twitter but that’s just how they operate” (Interview, 27 February 2012). However, even the Governor’s office is interested in attendance of its press conferences. Twitter does not enable such a mode of operation single-handedly, of course. It is promoted by the digital formation as whole, of which the smartphone is another important component. Together with the always-on tweeting mentality and its incorporation in professional performances of journalists, a situation arose where immediate awareness of messages is collectively expected. As a consequence, politicians are more flexible whether and when to make announcements and hold news conferences, depending on the general news flow and state of the media attention economy. A minor event during my fieldwork was revelatory for me regarding this flexibility and the significance of Twitter for structuring the news production space. It occurred during the final negotiations about the 2011 state budget:

As I’m sitting in the office with Dash, @NYGovCuomo—Cuomo’s press office—tweets that there is a “three-way Legislative Leaders Meeting” in the Governor’s office, that is, Governor, Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the Assembly. The notification pops up and fades from his screen as Dash takes a minute to finish writing a paragraph for his newspaper story of the day. “Lets go downstairs,” he says and we head to the executive floor. When we arrive there is already a group of about 20 reporters and spokespeople assembled to “stake out” the three leaders; all of them prompted by the same tweet, which was released only minutes earlier in its deceptively ephemeral fashion. (Fieldnotes, 24 March 2011)
After waiting for 20 minutes, the two legislators (not the Governor) appeared one at a time without saying much. To me, however, this episode was striking for two reasons: 1) The attention to a tweet, which influential tweeters can rightly assume, 2) how effectively a powerful agent can utilize this attention to steer journalistic attention in a certain direction. In this particular case, the Governor’s press office wanted to make sure the press talks to the legislative leaders once they leave their bosses’ office or rather: they wanted to make sure the leaders have to answer to the press. A cynic may also assume they intended to occupy reporters with waiting instead of doing journalistic work.

*Locational Freedom/Digital Fixation*

Even though it is a useful supplement rather than substitute for bearing witness to occurrences (Ahmad 2010), covering the State Capitol unaware of its twitterverse became untenable to most reporters from the first half of 2011 on. One reporter who monitors but does not tweet actively says, “a lot of times Twitter is my eyes and ears of stuff I’m just unable to see first-hand” (Interview, 23 February 2012). He prefers but says it is impossible to witness all events in his purview first-hand. Another reporter, who is an intense tweeter, says that Twitter is “like having a telescope on the whole world” (Interview, 24 February, 2012).

As the content analysis of SSM tweets suggested, the Capitol twitterverse encompasses statements and announcements by political actors, links to news items on blogs and webpages, eyewitness accounts, including multimedia material, instant commentary and analysis, discussions and more. Consequently—merits of being on location notwithstanding—Twitter enables journalists to better cover the beat from a distance (besides blogs and multimedia material they provide, including videos from
press conferences). The *Wall Street Journal* and various local newspapers, which withdrew their state house reporters in recent years, demonstrate that. However, their absence is facilitated by others’ presence. In other words, the instantaneous coverage provided by on-location reporters yields more information and enables more locational freedom to other reporters as a consequence.

Reporters on- and off-site share a condition, however, that I refer to as *digital fixation*. One does not have to watch LCA reporters for very long to detect a coercive element to Twitter. This fixation on digital space is in a way more coercive than the requirement of locational presence because not only does it transcend physical but also social boundaries between public and private lives. Reporters find it increasingly difficult to tune out of these digital spaces because of the immediacy it requires to be considered a valuable participant within them. One reporter described to me in some detail how easy reporting out on assignment has become through technology before he added: “but it’s also made us more like a wire service … where you are always kind of writing.” He tells me he can now stay home if one of his daughters is sick and still write as many stories as he would have if he had been at the Capitol. Asked about his news reading habits, he responds: “I’m insane,” before describing a comprehensive routine that starts at 5:30am to beat his daughters awake and sometimes does not stop before 11pm, including weekends (Interview, 10 February 2011).

Another reporter has just read *All the President’s Men* when I interviewed him. He pointed out something Woodward and Bernstein mentioned in passing, which is that research on Watergate essentially came to a halt when either of them went on vacation. “Oh my god, these guys went on vacation?” he said with disbelief, realizing this could
never stop him from working because he carries the newsroom with him wherever he goes, as he remarked. To quote danah boyd (2010), “it used to take effort to be public. Today, it often takes effort to be private.”

**Future-coordination and Twitter**

One of the most prevalent Twitter practices in the State Capitol twitterverse is live tweeting. It is defined by instantaneous, often situational accounts of unfolding situations and events. In the analysis of SSM tweets, half were in that category. 19% of those provided situational information (e.g. protest action), which often involved pictures. 32% were more or less substantial live news updates (e.g. votes, statements by officials). Especially for newspaper journalists, live blogging (Thurman and Walters 2013) and live tweeting (Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith forthcoming) have become recent commonplace forms of news coverage.

LCA reporters say that instantaneity and live coverage capabilities were main reasons why they stayed with Twitter: 1) They experience direct, almost synchronic effects on public debate and 2) receive instant gratification for their work, whether by recognition through retweets or engagement in conversations. For reporters, this direct conversion of on-location expertise to discursive power is “exciting” and “fun.”

The general proliferation of news channels, however, made the anarchy of events and associated competitive pressures more powerful as bits of news and increments of time by which exclusivity is assessed became infinitesimal. Fueled by the drama of instantaneity on Twitter (Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012) and relating to what Grusin termed *premediation* (2010), the LCA enters what I call a *spiral of anticipation* whenever important political decisions are impending. There is a heightened sense of
excitement and anxiety about anticipating the immediate future among the press during these periods, which can last for days or weeks. This anxiety, rooted in competition and pack dynamics (see chapter 5), is paralleled by collective paralysis. A constant stream of updates about the inexistence of news and minor news bits is the typical form of coverage reporters generate on Twitter when they are in the spiral of anticipation. During these periods, they are primarily occupied with hovering in front of offices for hours, staking out politicians for comments.

Once the anticipated event occurs, the spiral of anticipation ends abruptly and reporters go either back to their regular routine or on vacation. One senior reporter told me on the day before the same-sex-marriage vote, “once these things finally happen we are all too exhausted to really appreciate them” (Fieldnotes, 23 June 2011). The press was in a constant state of alert in the days and weeks before that event. In view of protest action of hundreds of SSM supporters and opponents right next to each other and intensive negotiations among Senate Republicans, reporters were tied to the hallway in front of the Senate GOP offices for long stretches of time. There they staked out officials entering or exiting the premises. Protesters, who also positioned themselves there, not only turned the corridor into a hothouse but also acted as “voices of the public” for reporters. LCA journalists broadcasted all of this live on Twitter, picking up thousands of new followers on the way in the light of national interest about SSM law in New York—perceived as a precursor for federal legislation.

The scope of anticipation on and through Twitter is typically immediate, what Tavory and Eliasoph (2013) discussed as protention. However, to journalists this immediate anticipation is always connected to forms of sense-making of present and
future events in terms of preexistent narratives (Jacobs 1996a, 1996b; Schudson 2007).

Besides protention, Tavory and Eliasoph argued that actors anchor themselves and others
within larger *trajectories* (one of which is narrative). Coordination between different
modes of anticipation is particularly difficult in journalism, I would argue, which is
concerned with immediacy and for which alignment with preexistent cultural templates
not only guides decision-making but is at the heart of making news and taming the
anarchy of events: “[Journalists] assimilate the new, apparently novel, unique,
unprecedented event to the familiar old ways of understanding the world,” argues
Schudson and continues, “they ‘naturally,’ without much thought, [respond] with the
narrative frame that they [believe] fit the circumstances of the event before them.” (2007:
254, 256)

Future-coordination in contemporary journalism not only occurs in different
modes simultaneously but also on multiple digital and nondigital (including
interpersonal) platforms, each involving its own communicative logic. It takes effort to
establish consistency between these different layers and dimensions of future-
coordination. Although Twitter comes close to the direct turn-taking in face-to-face
communication, it does allow some delay between turns, which is more typical for
asynchronous forms of communication, such as email. This ambiguousness of
synchronicity and asynchronicity of Twitter amplifies inconsistencies between narrative
emplotment and immediate protention. As a consequence, interpretations of occurrences
on and off Twitter sometimes contradict or overtake one another.

An example of this occurred during the SSM passage, which was part of a
proverbial “big ugly”—a situation when several substantially unrelated issues get linked
together in political deals, in which agreement on one is contingent on consensus about others. One of those issues was rent regulations. After Democrats refused to vote on an extension of the measure and many Republicans joined them, the law temporarily expired. On Friday, 17 June 2011, Governor Cuomo threatened to call a special session, which would have kept legislators in Albany over the weekend to pass a temporary extension of the law. While the Senate Democrats agreed on voting for the extension on Friday, Liz Benjamin, blogger and TV anchor for YNN, tweeted a comment from Democratic Senator Kevin Parker under @CapitalTonight, suggesting otherwise:

“Andrew can drag us here, we’ll be here...I have no deal w the gov. If GOP wants rent extension they shld deliver 32 votes.”

Evidently, Benjamin met Parker before Senate Democrats reached an agreement on voting for the extension bill but tweeted his comment with some delay. Although a spokesperson of the Senate Democrats went on-the-record shortly afterwards, confirming the agreement, Parker’s statement spread widely through other reporters and emails among the GOP Senate staff. Apparently it set off alarm bells amongst Senate Republicans: when the Senate was back in session, Republican Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos abruptly adjourned without voting on the extension bill, expecting Democrats would oppose it and leaving it to the Governor to enforce a special session. Confusion erupted in the Senate chamber and after the misunderstanding was cleared up

307 @CapitalTonight (2011) JUST IN: Senate Dems say they’re ready to vote on rent extender through Monday. Twitter post, 17 June. Available at: https://twitter.com/CapitalTonight/statuses/81831197990334464
the Senate went back into regular session and voted unanimously on the extender bill. Republican Senators would later blame Parker’s tweeted comment for the confusion.308

In this case, the expectation and appearance of synchronicity obscured the leeway of asynchronicity and led the Senate GOP draw conclusions based on an outdated level of information and to follow the wrong narrative trajectory (which we might call “the story of the stubborn and unreasonable political opponent”). This episode also demonstrates the intensification of the political messenger role taken on by journalists on Twitter and their immediate influence on political processes as a consequence.

**Informational Permeation of Space**

Another instance where the influence of tweeting journalists on political processes became unambiguously clear was one day in January of 2012, when Daily News columnist Bill Hammond live tweeted a budget hearing with education chairwoman, Assembly Member Catherine Nolan. He commented on her interview of New York City Education Commissioner, Dennis Walcott, and remarked that Nolan refrains from asking him about the controversial issue of teacher evaluation.309 This comment was retweeted by several journalists and half an hour later Nolan says to Walcott: “the twitterverse wants me to ask you about teacher evaluation.”310 Although she expressed it in a sarcastic manner, her or her staff’s intention to call attention to it probably was to avert criticism in

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309 @NYDNHammond (2012) AM Nolan of Queens, educ chair, isn’t asking Walcott about hottest topic in city schools -- teacher eval. Huh. Twitter post, 12 January. Available at: https://twitter.com/NYDNHammond/status/161510351492493313
Hammond’s impending column, which loomed in his tweet. This was to no avail, however.

Hammond, through his journalistic influence and Twitter, was able to interfere in a debate that prohibits comments from the audience. He discursively penetrated a delimited political space, creating instantaneous publicity to a procedure he deemed unsatisfactory. Twitter helps journalists to advance government affairs to a public that was previously unaware of them. Apart from the question whether the public-at-large follows these communications (most of them do not), the opportunity and the fact that an interested public does is noteworthy in itself and apparently to those who are being held accountable.

Although generally expected, the reciprocal attentiveness of politicians and journalists on Twitter has rarely manifested itself so clearly to me as in this example. However, when I talked to one LCA reporter about this episode a month afterwards he remarked, “that’s not the first time I’ve seen that happen and it’s probably gonna happen more often” (Interview, 21 February 2012). The fact that the LCA discussed this episode on Twitter and that Hammond himself reviewed it in his following column indicates, though, that reporters were taken aback by the potential impact of 140 characters and by the directness with which they can potentially create accountability through Twitter, if only in a minor way. Journalists may not learn more but have an outlet to bring what they have learned immediately to public attention through Twitter (unless it interferes with other objectives).

In this case, live tweeting promoted concrete permeation and promulgation of the political backstage. At the same time, these Twitter engagements all have a performative
dimension as well. Through Twitter a reporter claims she is \textit{there at this moment} as a critical observer and public watchdog, raising the authority of her news account by conveying a sense of on-site immediacy. Live coverage especially imparts this immediacy to unfolding events, which black-boxes the journalistic mediation (Couldry, 2008) and narrative construction that is actually taking place (Jacobs, 1996b). Twitter confers discursive authority of live new coverage to newspaper journalists, who were previously excluded from it.

As already suggested above, intense Twitter engagement and instant sharing not only levels the medium playing field in this sense but also makes informational boundaries between journalists more porous. With news digitization, all news organizations represented at the Capitol became competitors, irrespective of their primary medium or coverage area. However, those traditional lines of competition still matter and reflect in how office spaces on the LCA floor are distributed, namely in such a way that direct competitors are not in earshot of each other. The \textit{New York Post} is separate from the \textit{New York Daily News} and \textit{Newsday}; \textit{Bloomberg News} is in a different room than the \textit{Associated Press} and the same goes for \textit{Buffalo News} and the \textit{Albany Times Union}.

Twitter-aided journalism does not completely subvert but somewhat permeate this spatial arrangement. One reporter who himself maintains these boundaries on Twitter says he benefits from others crossing them:

\begin{quote}
It’s become a very good tip-sheet for me to know what my competitors are covering, almost to the point it’s odd: I know this one guy, when he is out on assignment [he] will sometimes mention that he is out of town on assignment, which I would never do (chuckles) because it’s sort of a tip-off [that] you are working on something bigger, you know. (Interview, 21 February 2012)
\end{quote}

I already discussed controversial instances of instant sharing regarding the permeation of spatial arrangements and competitive divisions. Besides idiosyncratic
rebuilding efforts of traditional informational barriers (i.e. agreeing not to tweet from a stakeout), journalists in general do receive more hints on Twitter about what their competition is working on and also what they think about a given issue than before. A snarky or ironic comment tells something about where a reporter stands on a given issue. Mentioning certain facts and not mentioning others may indicate emphases of upcoming news stories. A further consequence of this enhanced flow of discourse among the press is that it is not self-contained. As one LCA reporter pointed out, Twitter “is letting the public in on the kind of banter that journalists engage in … [which is] probably a little locker room-ish sometimes” (Interview, 28 February 2012). As informational separation between journalists becomes more porous, news production processes become more transparent to the outside.

To some extent, this is hardly new for a rather tightly-knit press corps whose members talk about issues they cover all the time, at least those who get along. Twitter has enhanced this preexistent group practice, however, and partly uncoupled it from physical and social constraints as journalists become more aware of those they do not have face-to-face conversations with. However, one of the three traditionalists told me this was one main reason he does not follow Twitter. He believes that not participating in this conversation means avoiding the pack journalism involved, even though it means he misses some things.

**Section Conclusion**

Technological developments and a cultural shift, which is defined by a growing insistence on disclosure of information and openness of procedures, mutually reinforce each other in promoting transparency. Transparency raised expectations on self-
presentation, communicative norms and practices, and extends self-understandings of journalists. Twitter fosters a processual rather than definitive understanding of news, perceived as an ongoing discussion rather than a final product. Thereby, inhibitions to directly turn information into news, connected to filtering and gatekeeping, are weakened. Journalists felt less bound to keep themselves, their appreciation of others and assessments out of tweets, contrary to requirements of authoritative distance, competitive lines of division and stringent notions of objectivity. The faceless gatekeeper has given way to a more human and status-equal interlocutor who shares information and informed judgment.

Journalism performed transparently and performed as an autonomous profession is ambivalently related. On the one hand, transparency bolsters and sustains journalistic authority claims in the networked public sphere. On the other hand, by entering newer media spaces, whose operating principles escape its control, journalism gives up professional autonomy. Participatory promises entice journalists to adopt Twitter, evoking tensions with traditional normative commitments while selectively reinforcing them, particularly on the level of public service. The analysis demonstrated that journalists have different views about public service and, ultimately, the role of journalism in the public sphere. Despite conflicts, what appears to happen is not so much subversion but expansion of professional boundaries, which accommodate diverse forms of journalism.

This leads me to the relationship between different views of professionalism and degrees of Twitter adoption. Twitter reinforced oppositions about what constitutes good journalism in the Albany press corps that date back to the beginnings of news digitization
in general and blogging more specifically. Traditionalists (and to a lesser degree skeptics) exercised cultural resilience, seeking to reproduce a logic of professional control and aspiring to keep journalism autonomous. Their conception of journalism is essentialist: every unit of news must be treated as a closed entity, which is to be evaluated according to established standards. Traditionalists did not regard tweets as news. Intense tweeters, on the other hand, saw a tweet as a segment within a flow of news discourse, which they assessed holistically. Traditionalists and light tweeters conceived of journalism as subjected to one set of norms, irrespective of the outlet it occurred on. Deviation from these norms on one level (or platform) meant undermining journalism as a whole. Intense tweeters assumed flexible boundaries and diversified performances in different venues.

Intense tweeters were, furthermore, much less adamant in defending professional virtues of Twitter than its opponents were in disparaging it. This is partly explicable by the fact that they were lower on the totem pole of journalistic worth than traditionalists and skeptics. The main reason, however, was that they did not have to defend Twitter. I addressed this when discussing how and why reporters adopted Twitter, arguing that a self-evident belief in Twitter as a way to sustain the relevance of journalism has evolved. Twitter-aided journalism has become a doxa, in other words, which means that it has gradually withdrawn from the realm of competing discourses towards the realm of the undisputed and undisputed (Bourdieu 1977). The belief drew power from corporate and professional considerations. Journalists viewed Twitter as a possibility to engage and excite audiences for their work. News corporations viewed Twitter as a way to promote consumer loyalty, which can be monetized. The professional concern for audience engagement and the economic concern for consumer loyalty mutually reinforced each
other, especially at a time of crisis.\textsuperscript{311} I argue that this discursive formation, which was advanced within and across news organizations, through superiors and (competitor-)colleagues, is why Twitter has won over journalism (cf. Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013).

The way in which LCA journalists adopted Twitter reveals several dynamics: time and degree of adoption were not clearly related. Innovation-friendly reporters served as role models at a time when news organizations and news events pushed other reporters to get on Twitter. Specifically the SSM debate, when LCA tweets received national attention, further promoted adoption. As they were drawn in by events unfolding, reporters discovered merits of news reporting with and through Twitter that outlasted the passage of SSM law.

Concerning spatial implications, I have argued that it is better to conceive Twitter as an enhancement rather than a surrogate of on-site news reporting, which becomes itself unsustainable without awareness of the augmented space to its full extent. Like other electronic media (Meyrowitz 1985), Twitter has space-transcending implications. This transcendence is enabled by the specific kind of performance journalists (open, immediate, always-on, etc.) engage in on Twitter and the information flows and conversations it advances.

A defining feature and purpose of on-site reporting is to witness events when they occur and, connected to that, anticipating these occurrences. The immediacy of Twitter enhances their awareness and anticipation capabilities. Twitter is, furthermore, significant in this context because journalists utilize it to directly convert on-site capital into discursive authority in the public sphere. However, this quality of Twitter comes with

\textsuperscript{311} Comparative research suggests social media are more successful in commercialized and competitive journalistic cultures (Gulyas 2013) where this crisis is more apparent.
costs: the paralysis, which seizes the press corps at times when important decisions are impending, gets intensified through Twitter. Furthermore, coordinating the multitude of layers of communication and modes of anticipation can cause inconsistencies and misperceptions.

Reducing Twitter to a “journalistic tool” disregards the ways in which it affects the world journalists cover. In twitterized news ecosystems, the domains of journalistic observation constitute augmented spaces, constituted by physical and digital sociality. Place-bound properties shape the twitterverse and digital representations on Twitter influence spatial orders in turn.

Within the walls of government, a digital formation arose whose physical properties may be still more encompassing but in which digital components have continuous relevance and can temporarily dominate social relations. This formation has its own logic but needs to be held together by coordinative social efforts. One challenge of Twitter in this regard is its ambiguousness as a synchronous communication medium, which allows a degree of asynchronicity. The aforementioned drama of instantaneity of Twitter creates an expectation of and willingness to constantly be aware of it, which evokes contradictory feedback loops and responses between nondigital and digital space.
Conclusion

Discussion of Main Findings

Subjectivity

One main contrast between the German and the US professional culture of journalism concerns the amount and form of subjectivity that is acceptable to be revealed. On the surface level, we see a similar editorial separation of news and commentary in newspapers. In Germany, however, there is no strict separation of news reporting staff and commentary writers. State house correspondents there are particularly expected to not only share their beat expertise in the form of observations but also evaluations. As I have discussed in chapter 4, in both cases there is a sense that journalism, particularly in the age of information abundance, needs to offer more context and assessments on issues, which are based on expertise and experience of journalists. This emphasis is denoted as analysis in the US and Einordnung in Germany (which I translated as situating in a makeshift manner). Analysis in the US means anything that provides interpretation and background beyond the “facts” at hand but is distinct from opinion. Einordnung means all of these things, including opinion commentary.

Survey research suggests that US journalists more willingly admit to letting their interpretations and beliefs enter the news than German journalists (Hanitzsch et al. 2011) and that interpretative journalism is on the rise in the US (Weaver et al. 2007). Maybe what is going on here is that the objectivity norm in the US has denied journalists any subjectivity until fairly recently, who are therefore more forthright in admitting that it does play a role now. German journalists, on the other hand, were always able to be more
subjective in the news and even more so in news commentary. It thus seems that this “response behavior” was more as a matter of reference point than cultural difference.

Be that as it may, this study did not find that US journalists are more subjective and analytical than German journalists. To the contrary, Landtagspresse (LP) reporters stood out in emphasizing the importance of pursuing a certain position in the news. They also perceived expressing opinions in commentaries as acts of purification in respect to their factual reports in the news section about the same issues. The absence of “the wall” between opinion and news in the professional performance of German journalists was one of the most striking contrasts to the US. For US reporters, the wall is a metaphor for their autonomy and impartiality, and they invoke it when dealing with sources (chapter 6). It refers to actual divisions of labor and editorial departments (and sometimes even barriers of communication) and is an important component in the symbolic production of journalistic professionalism in the US. The wall involves rituals of purification in journalists’ private lives, requiring them to stay away as far from the polluting threats of politics as possible.

**Interventionism**

The literature discussed in chapter 3 as well as the analysis of awards and obituaries suggested much stronger interventionist aspirations in US journalism. Although scandal reporting is not exactly alien to LP journalists, the Legislative Correspondents Association (LCA) has reported and partly uncovered numerous political scandals in New York State politics, involving corruption and misappropriation of public money (above all), assault, sexual harassment, adultery and as well as a prostitution scandal over the last decade. A number of elected officials were expelled or resigned and
the state house press takes credit for part of this shakeup. As one reporter told me, “in the last three years or so here in Albany, we’ve probably had 50 years worth of history” (Interview, 20 March 2010). This is in part a function of the political environment (New York State politics has a notorious reputation) but it also has also to do with what journalists perceive their role to be. Correspondingly, US reporters do not spare politicians’ private lives, which means that some issues (e.g. sex scandal rumors surrounding Governor David Paterson) would have never become news stories in Germany.

There are forms of journalistic “intervention” that most journalists reject. A reference point for many LCA reporters were particular tabloid practices, which they deride, above all, for taking sides, partisanship and unduly simplifying issues. German reporters referred more specifically to “Kampagnenjournalismus” (advocacy journalism), which is associated with tabloid journalism. US reporters, as opposed to their German counterparts, give tabloids credit for uncovering grievances by pursuing issues in an aggressive fashion, however, because it conforms to the interventionist imperative of bringing about social change.

Journalists in both contexts are opposed to obedient forms of journalism, less in terms of aligning with political forces but by simply reproducing what is presented to them. Corresponding to the interventionist imperative, US reporters referred to this category derogatorily as *stenography*. In Germany, this formerly dignified journalistic role is more neutrally termed “Chronistenfunktion” (chronicler function). While it is principally an obsolete category of journalism in both countries, traditionalists in the LCA notice a comeback of stenography in blogging and tweeting.
**Competition**

Press corps are competitive social settings. One important difference between the two groups concerns the meaning of competition itself, however, which was perceived as something inherently negative by LP reporters. The LCA, on the other hand, represented a competitive culture that, apart from problems that go with it (not least stress), thrives on competition. News coverage by press corps has long been criticized as synchronous and homogenous, encapsulated in the term “pack journalism.” Pack journalism can be understood in two related ways, as collective agenda setting and collective interpretation of issues. While collective agenda setting is inevitable to some degree, it often does not reflect similarity of relevance criteria but response to competitive pressures operating between news organizations. Concerning the competitive culture in Albany, one would expect a greater synchronicity of issues covered by its reporters. Collective interpretation of issues occurs through consultation between competitor-colleagues (which appeared to be stronger in the LP), thinking inside the bubble as well as narrative consolidation by powerful agents (both appeared to be stronger in the LCA).

Both press corps were organized as associations. The way these associations were structured and how this affected journalistic work was markedly different, however. Associational cohesion was much stronger in the German case and fulfilled important purposes for correspondents (organizing background discussions, defending its members from discrimination and pressure by political actors). Solidarity was purely informal in the LCA, informal and formal in the LP. Even the few existent associational structures in the LCA were contested. To some degree, this difference of press corps reflected the strength of associational culture and the belief in collectivism in Germany, the lack of
associational culture and deep-seated individualist believes in in the US, respectively. Connected to that, individualism and competitive culture—where every journalist is “on her own” primarily—mutually reinforce each other.

**Politics**

The association shielded LP reporters from political pressure to a certain extent. German reporters’ scripts, furthermore, allowed for friendlier relations with officials and more direct informal contact between them. On the other hand, attempts of interference in journalism LP reporters talked about were much more severe, to the degree that reporters were transferred or forced out of their jobs. LP reporters also more openly discussed their inhibitions of attacking political entities.

LCA reporters asserted greater distance to politics in their performance and the means to achieve that symbolic distance appeared more complex. The political and partisanship represented taboos to these reporters, which reflected in interaction with sources as well as purification rituals they underwent. Even situations, which are detrimental for journalists (e.g. being cut off from an important office), were valued for their performative benefit as representations of professional autonomy. Political instrumentalization, which is pervasive on the level of making politics through conversations on background and anonymous quotes, is an intensely contentious issue in the LCA. It is also personified by one particular member of the corps, who inhabits a hybrid position between journalism and politics to many of his competitor-colleagues.

**Change and Stasis of Professionalism**

Online media have not affected journalistic professionalism in the LP to the same extent as in the LCA. There is a growing sense of waning authority of journalism in the
German case but the internet and social media have not contested traditional professionalism and expanded professional performances as they have in the US case. As discussed in chapter 3, German newspapers are much stronger economically and therefore the requisite to tap new revenue streams and redefine journalism online is much weaker. Furthermore, being more shielded from commercial pressure seems to have imprinted in the professional culture as an inertia to change, reflecting in a dominance of “traditionalists” in the LP, who represent a defeated minority in the LCA. Traditionalists hold an essentialist view of professionalism and see a deviation of norms on one platform as undermining journalism altogether. Innovators, which represent about half of the LCA, believe in the value of diversified professional performances. Still practicing traditional journalism in legacy news venues, they engage in performances of transparency (involving a different professional role, norms, and forms of expression) on social media.

Social media, particularly Twitter, were so successful in the LCA because their participatory promises appeal simultaneously to the professional (more effectively serving dissipating net audiences) and economic survival (strengthening consumer loyalty) of journalism. After adopting Twitter, state house reporters have discovered further advantages of it. The performance of transparency of other reporters fostered more space-transcendent news reporting, helped coordinate the immediate future and enabled direct conversion of on-site expertise to discursive influence. This seems to outweigh problems this new news situation creates, namely an immediacy that paralyzes reporters and creates contradictory feedback loops between digital and nondigital spaces.
Limitations and Future Research

I have argued that a press corps, assembling competing journalists delegated from different news organizations, is more apt to make claims about a national press culture than one relatively homogenous newsroom. There is still a possibility, however, that a press corps constitutes a rather uniform local newsbeat culture. The chance that this is the case seems to be greater in the LP, which exhibits less divisions and competition that would counterbalance local conformities the way they do in the LCA.

Another main limitation is that this dissertation has not studied how professionalism expresses itself in the news. Conversations, observations as well as professional discourses provide indications of different kinds of public spheres these journalists facilitate. Thus, future research should compare these reporters’ news coverage systematically. The following will discuss possible questions and expected outcomes for such an undertaking.

First of all, a systematic comparison of news outcomes needs to combine standardized content analysis of online and legacy news coverage, comparing the daily news output (days chosen randomly in a given timeframe) across different kinds of news operations at the state houses, with an unstandardized analysis of news coverage on specific issues, events and relatively short time periods (e.g. scandals, important political decisions, etc.) across the whole press corps. The latter will show how news gets defined by the whole group of news operations and reveal pack dynamics and feedback loops between legacy news and various online news forms (including Twitter). The former will systematically compare how those press corps operate during regular times. Days will be randomly chosen but may be excluded from the sample if there where exceptional events
(e.g. election day) that may distort the results. The variables that will be measured in the content analysis will partly respond to currents in political communication scholarship and draw on established measures in comparative studies, partly introduce variables tailored to outcomes predicted from my field research.

Scholars in the area of comparative political communication are interested in the substance of political news. Aalberg, Strombäck and de Vreese (2012), for instance, distinguished coverage about policy issues and what they call strategic game frames, which encompasses what is considered horserace coverage (discussing polls, who wins who loses, election results and using sports or war rhetoric) and strategy coverage (discussing campaign tactics, (hidden) instrumental motives of political actions, personality and style of politics as well as meta-coverage). Given the often lamented focus on the horserace in US political journalism, the balance between policy discourse and strategic game frames is expected to be father towards the latter compared to Germany.

Diversity: In line with normative ideals of public spheres, political communication scholars are interested in the diversity of debate which is offered by news media, in terms of sources represented as well as frames within which issues are discussed. Benson (2009) has suggested such an analysis of multiperspectivalness in the news. Although state house reporters are in some sense doomed to a certain narrow focus by their job description, it is still fathomable for them to provide a more or less diverse debate within that narrow area. The comparison would need to control for the higher diversity of political parties in the Bavarian legislature, however.
Another measure should examine (overt) subjectivity in the news, which includes criticism, evaluation, assessments that are not based on facts presented in the article but attributed to experience (e.g. “talk at the Capitol”). Contrary to what survey studies suggest, the expectation is that German reporters are still more subjective in their regular news coverage than US reporters. Online, however, we will see more subjectivity by US reporters. A somewhat subsidiary category of analysis (and therefore related to subjectivity) is context provided in news coverage in terms of linking to past debates and decisions and drawing other connections that not immediately obvious and based on immersion in the political setting. This is indicative of the amount of institutional knowledge that is available and shared in a press corps (findings can be weighted according to each individual journalists’ seniority on the beat). This is expected to be higher in Germany because there is less fluctuation in the press corps, more associational solidarity, less competition and thus more sharing of such knowledge.

Anonymous sourcing: This will be measured in the regular content analysis as well as in an additional automated quantitative content analysis of overall news coverage produced by the selected news operations. This latter analysis will count occurrences of a list of phrases which indicate anonymous sourcing (e.g. “on source said,” “speaking under conditions of anonymity,” “according to people familiar with the matter,” etc.). In the content analysis I will code for overt motives of the anonymous source (e.g. attack, legal protection, etc.). The expectation is that there is far more anonymous sourcing in the LCA than in the LP.

There will be two meta-analyses, furthermore. One will look at the online surplus that is offered in each context. It will look at the degree to which online news coverage is
a mere reproduction or less developed version of legacy news coverage and, conversely, the autonomous character of online engagements. Because LCA reporters provide more content online, they are expected to score higher on this dimension. The standardized and unstandardized content analyses of news coverage will look at the homogeneity of how issues are covered, the standardized content analysis will consider synchronicity of what issues are covered across the press corps. The competitive culture of LCA would predict a more synchronous agenda setting while the associational culture of the LP would predict more similar interpretations of issues.
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Appendix

Interview Guide

1. **Background, current job**
   - **Sample questions:**
     * How long have you been working as a journalist / in this media organization?
     * What is your area of work? What is your position in your organization?
     * What was your education? (if journalistic education: did that help you in your job?; if not: did you wish you had a journalistic education?)
     * How is your relationship to your superior(s)? To your colleagues?
     * What directives do you get from superiors? How is your work coordinated?

2. **Journalistic norms and values, press corps**
   - **Sample questions:**
     * What is an important news story to you?
     * What does public responsibility mean for you?
     * What is bad journalism? (examples; if necessary ask for journalistic values)
     * What parts of the occupational tradition of US journalism are you proud of / are you not proud of (persons, institutions, events..)?
     * How did your work change in the last few years (regarding economic and technological changes of the media industry)?
     * How do you keep updated? What do you read and watch that informs your work?
     * What does pack journalism mean to you? (probe not only for agenda-setting but also collective interpretation of issues, competition; ask how this may become problematic)

3. **Press-politics relations**
   - **Sample questions:**
     * How does being here help you do your job?
     * Why do people share off-the-record information? How do you deal with it? How does knowledge you acquire through it help you do your job?
     * How do you acquire exclusive information?
     * How do you find a balance between cooperating with political players and keeping them at arms-length?
     * What strategies do political actors (politicians as well as spokespeople) use to influence you/your work?..those of your colleagues?
     * Does working for a specific medium mean to have “natural enemies and allies” in the political sphere? (also: probe about the wall between opinion and news, if they find this significant, what it means that their papers also have editorials, incl. endorsements)
Table 3: Sample of German Obituaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journalist</th>
<th>Media Organization</th>
<th># obits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rudolf Augstein</td>
<td>Der Spiegel</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immanuel Birnbaum</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erich Böhme</td>
<td>Der Spiegel</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanns-Joachim Friedrichs</td>
<td>ARD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerhard Mauz</td>
<td>Der Spiegel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermann Proebst</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferdinand Simoneit</td>
<td>Der Spiegel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinhard Appel</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immanuel Birnbaum</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilhelm Bittorf</td>
<td>Der Spiegel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert von Borch</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans-Joachim Deckert</td>
<td>Mannheimer Morgen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainer Fabian</td>
<td>Rheinischer Merkur</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Ferber</td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joachim C. Fest</td>
<td>Der Spiegel</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Werner Graf Finck von Finckenstein</td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friedrich Karl Fromme</td>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rudolf Goldschmit</td>
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<td>Hans Gresmann</td>
<td>Die Zeit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hans Heigert</td>
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<td>Walter Henkels</td>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hans Ulrich Kempski</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gerhard Krug</td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jürgen Leinemann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Günter Matthes</td>
<td>Tagesspiegel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eka Gräfin von Merveldt</td>
<td>Die Zeit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claus Heinrich Meyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Werner Meyer</td>
<td>Abendzeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claus Peter Mühleek</td>
<td>Tauber-Zeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ernst Müller-Meiningen jr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joachim Neander</td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernd Nellessen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andreas Graf Razumovsky</td>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
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<td>Herbert Riehl-Heyse</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinz Schewe</td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Schille</td>
<td>Der Spiegel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Schueler</td>
<td>Die Welt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diether Stolze</td>
<td>Die Zeit</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>Media Organization</td>
<td># obits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin E. Süskind</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franz Thoma</td>
<td>Süddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Wilhelm Wenger</td>
<td>Rheinischer Merkur</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulrich Wildermuth</td>
<td>Südwestpresse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Witter</td>
<td>Die Zeit</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
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*Note: Media Organization at the time of the award*

**Table 4: Sample of US Obituaries**

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<th>Purposive sample</th>
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<td>David Halberstam</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred Friendly</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Bloom</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardner Botsford</td>
<td>The New Yorker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Cronkite</td>
<td>CBS News</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert D.G. Lewis</td>
<td>Booth</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James M. Naughton</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean M. White</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Wicker</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Rupli Woodward</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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**Sample of Awardees**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harold Eugene Martin</td>
<td>Montgomery Advertiser and Alabama Journal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Shannon</td>
<td>New York World-Telegram and Sun</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Ben Cramer</td>
<td>The Philadelphia Inquirer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Randolph Hearst Jr.</td>
<td>International News Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don Hewitt</td>
<td>CBS News</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline Frederick</td>
<td>NBC Radio</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Brinkley</td>
<td>ABC Television</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Ottenberg</td>
<td>Evening Star</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Shadid</td>
<td>Washington Post</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anthony Lewis</td>
<td>Washington Daily News</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edwin Newman</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Cahn</td>
<td>Christian Science Monitor</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gene Miller</td>
<td>Miami Herald</td>
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<td>Tom Pettit</td>
<td>NBC News</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bette Swenson Orsini</td>
<td>St. Petersburg Times</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alistair Cooke</td>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julian Goodman</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Agronsky</td>
<td>ABC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace Turner</td>
<td>Portland Oregonian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sylvester L. Weave</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>2</td>
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Table 5: Twitter engagements during the same-sex marriage debate

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types of engagement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advertisement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-reference</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reference</td>
<td>1096</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpretation</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashtag-comment</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irony/wit</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live tweeting/news update</td>
<td>1435</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstage</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No news updates</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion-peers</td>
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<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion-source</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion-public</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowdsourcing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Note.** Multiple categories applied for some tweets. Percentages refer to an overall number of 4492 tweets by the core group of 25 Twitter feeds from June 16 until June 28, 2011.