Rethinking Journalism Culture and Authority: Beyond 'Professionalism'

David Nolan

University of Melbourne

d.nolan@unimelb.edu.au

David Nolan is a lecturer in Media and Communications in the School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne. He lectures in journalism studies, media policy and research methods, and his work focuses in the role journalism plays as a constitutive technology of public life. He is a member of the Editorial Board and Reviews Editor of the journal Communication, Politics and Culture.

Abstract

This paper provides a sympathetic critical engagement with the framework recently developed by Christopher Anderson (2008) for understanding the form, constitution and operation of journalistic authority. It argues that Anderson usefully draws upon approaches developed within sociological studies of professions and professionalism, while augmenting these by bringing them into dialogue with both 'cultural' analyses of journalism and work that has sought to understand the constitution and operation of journalism as a 'field of cultural production'. While this paper suggests that this framework both embodies a sophisticated theoretical perspective and provides useful heuristic directions for research, it suggests that a Foucauldian understanding of journalism, as an historically and contextually variable cultural technology that operates as part of a broader field of governmental practices, addresses two potential shortcomings of Anderson's model. Firstly, it provides a more concrete and materialist understanding of 'culture' that serves to avoid a slippage toward forms of cultural and political-economic determinism. Secondly, it provides a less idealistic, and consequently more realistic, conception of journalistic autonomy. Having considered the implications of this for an understanding of how journalism is constituted and operates as a "cultural technology" that contributes to formations of public life, it concludes by reflecting on the normative implications of this approach for journalism studies.

Keywords

Journalism; Expertise; Authority; Governmentality; Practice; Research

Introduction

A decade ago, in an article concerned to argue that news values were a form of "common knowledge" of what constitutes news shared by journalists worldwide, journalism educator Murray Masterson contrasted his survey findings with sociological studies that derived an understanding of news values from studies of news content. The problem with such studies, he argued, was this:

> Their findings seldom make allowance for pressures to publish, spike or perhaps rewrite which can come from advertising, cultural or religious opinions and pressure groups, economics, the law, politics, managerial intrusion and the unexplainable question of good taste. None of these, with the possible exception of good taste, has anything to do with news values or journalism (Masterson, 1998, p. 88)

Remarkably, here, "news" and "journalism" is defined precisely against factors that mediate its constitution, as a form of abstract knowledge that may (but more typically does not) translate into the form news actually takes. Such a view is 'idealistic' in both its common and philosophical senses, in its claim that journalists might, in the face of such pressures, produce something that that corresponds to an ideal form of journalism, and in its claim that "news" represents a universally shared epistemological construct. Following critiques of objectivity, it might also be deemed "ideological" both in constituting a stance that serves to mask the role news values play in contributing to particular versions of reality, and providing a highly limited basis for journalists to reflect upon their own role in contributing to news content (Hackett and Zhao, 1998). It is also, rather obviously, open to the criticism that it represents an ahistorical perspective that involves a reductive generalisation of the variability, and connections between, formations of journalism as these have existed across different historical, geographical, political, institutional and generic locales. However, it may be argued that such points are of less interest than the historical fact that such a perspective, as a form of knowledge shared by apparently autonomous professionals, is being posited here as both a definition of what "journalism" both is and should be, and as an epistemological grounds of journalistic authority.

The recent work of Daniel Hallin (2008, 2000) represents the polar opposite of this position. Following his work with Paolo Mancini on how their embedding within different 'media systems' serves to mediate how journalists understand and perform their roles (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), Hallin has become particularly interested in how journalism has been affected by, and has contributed to, the advent of neo-liberalism (Hallin, 2008).   It is notable

that such investigations operate on the assumption that, rather than existing as an invariant form of professional knowledge, journalism is both materially constituted and historically variable. Indeed, Hallin goes as far to suggest that, at least in the US, journalistic professionalism itself may be seen as a short-lived historical phenomenon that has, in recent years, been subject to a seemingly irrevocable decline. Rather than focus primarily on this debatable contention, however, this paper follows Christopher Anderson's recent suggestion that, rather than focus on journalism's 'professional' status, a broader and more significant research agenda concerns the manner in which journalistic authority is socially produced and materially manifest, and the practical implications of this for the role it performs in public life (Anderson, 2008). To this end, it both draws on and critically engages with Anderson's framework in order to develop a theoretical grounding for a comparative investigation of shifting formations of journalistic authority. In particular, it suggests that Anderson's broadly Bourdieuian framework can be usefully augmented by bringing it into dialogue with work that has built on Foucault's analytic of "governmentality". The usefulness of this move, I argue, has two dimensions. On one hand, it provides a more focused "cultural" analysis through its more concrete specification of the concept of culture and consideration of the role that a focus on this might contribute to such analysis. On the other, it leads more directly to a focus on what sort of normative contribution such an analysis might make to future forms of journalistic practice, an issue addressed in the conclusion.

Professions and "Professionalisation"

Anderson's theoretical overview of approaches to understanding journalistic authority and expertise canvasses three paradigmatic sets of approaches: perspectives on journalism as a profession, on the discursive construction of journalistic expertise and, following Bourdieu, on journalism as a field of social practice. Considering the first of these, he proposes that many of the critical and organisational studies of the 1970s and 1980s were characterised by a "critique of professionalism" that involved "the deconstruction of the idealised image of the journalist that saw him or her as the transparent relay of external events" (Anderson, 2008, p. 250). Clearly, the professional norm of objectivity was a central target for such studies, which ranged from organisational studies of how professional perspectives and practices might be seen as pragmatic responses to institutional imperatives (Tuchman, 1972; Gans, 1978), through to analyses of the ideological role these performed in contributing to an hegemonic order (Hall et al, 1978; Gitlin, 1980). As Anderson notes, such perspectives coincided with, and partially drew upon, a renewed interest in the sociology of professions. Such work, whose influence is perhaps most evident in John Soloski's analysis of how professionalism operated as a non-bureaucratic mode of social control and "trans-

organisational control mechanism" (Soloski, 1989), involved a shift from functionalist perspectives on professions as entities that contributed to the reproduction of societal order, to a focus on "professionalisation" as a strategic project through which particular occupations sought to gain the particular economic and social power that accrues to occupations that attain this status.

It is notable that such work already moved beyond the terms of debate surrounding whether journalism "is" or "is not" a profession. Such debates have, nonetheless, remained persistent in work that has either sought to argue that journalism is a profession and should be recognised as such (Henningham 1995), that it is at best a semi- or quasi-profession (Dunn, 2004; Tunstall, 1996), or that argue journalism both lacks essential qualities and should not seek to gain the attributes of a profession (Hartley, 2008). While significant, such debates continue to rest upon both an essentialist definition of a profession and an approach that involves assessing whether a particular occupation "qualifies" as one, based upon the degree to which it bears requisite "traits". While this approach retains the imprint of a positivist functionalism, both neo-Weberian and Marxist approaches to the sociology of professions had long since rejected this problematic in favour of one that centred on "professionalisation". This was understood, on one hand, as a form of strategic action pursued by groups who pursued "professionalising strategies", and sought commensurate recognition, as a means of both gaining a monopoly over a particular occupational domain and enhancing their own power and status. On the other, "professionalisation" was regarded as a structural outcome of capitalist expansion. These perspectives were, for example, combined in the work of Larson (1977), coincided with, and contributed to, the rise of monopoly capitalism, as a means of "market closure" that was instrumentally deployed as a ground for narrowing the field of competition. As monopoly capitalism facilitated the rise of large organizations, moreover, 'professionalism' came to be understood as an alternative basis for securing workplace control, particularly through the use of professional training and the establishment of professional schools. These facilitated an effective socialisation to, and reproduction of, a particular culture of service delivery, and a means of standardisation that could be achieved without recourse to mechanisms of managerial direction and monitoring. While professionalism could, from this perspective, be seen to largely serve the interests of employers, it also represents a means by which professionals themselves pursued their own interests. While employees within large organizations could not determine their own conditions of employment, professionalism nevertheless provided a ground upon which such workers could lay claim to a particular class status, articulate demands that they be afforded the respect and remuneration from their employers such status demanded, and even lay claim to a degree of independent influence over their own working conditions. At the same time, such claims to

an independent and principled professionalism also delivered additional advantages to employers, who displaced the cost of investing in workplace training onto professionals themselves, exploited the professional commitment to the delivery of a vital public service by increasing workplace demands without delivering pay increases or overtime, and deployed the claim that they offer a product or service delivered by independent professionals to enhance its market value.

While, as Soloski's analysis demonstrated, this perspective offered productive insights into how professionalism could operate as both an instrument of workplace control and a limited grounds for resisting employer demands, it has nonetheless been subject to criticism. Abbott (1988), for example, questioned the manner in which Larson's approach tends to subsume analysis of particular professions within a generalised narrative that assumes that "professionalisation" follows an invariant logic dictated by a fundamental economic logic. Others have questioned the applicability of this logic to journalism that has (variably) adopted certain professionalising strategies (such as the appropriation of a discourse of professionalism, the establishment of formal education and training, the establishment of occupational associations and codes of conduct) while it has been either ambivalent about or resistant to others. For example, as Elsaka (2005) and Aldridge and Evetts (2003) have documented in relation to New Zealand and Britain respectively, many journalists preferred to be viewed as a craft or a trade than a profession, and were strident in their opposition to attempts to establish a statutory basis of "market closure" through compulsory registration on the grounds such schemes would involve a form of licensing which would compromise journalists' independence. Notably, in their analysis Aldridge and Evetts consider professionalism as not merely the outcome of "professionalising strategies", but as a "polyvalent discourse" deployed by various parties in the pursuit of different ends. Thus, the discourse of professionalism may be valorised by existing and aspirant journalists who aspire to the particular social status afforded recognised professionals, mobilised as a basis for defending particular modes of practice, employed by various educational institutions that claim to offer 'professional' qualifications, as well as used as both a basis of resisting employer demands. However, it can also be deployed as a disciplinary mechanism of workplace control, something Aldridge and Evetts contend increasingly occurs as "employers, managers and supervisors are mobilising the discourse of professionalism *unilaterally* and instrumentally" (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003, p. 556). Interestingly, they also suggest that, contra Hallin's arguments regarding a 'de-professionalisation' of journalism is taking place, both journalists news organizations and others, most notably educational institutions, are *increasingly* embracing discourses of professionalism, even as these are also being redefined.

While such debates are certainly relevant to an understanding of changes occurring within journalism, however, they are not the whole story. In this respect, Anderson's move to position professionalism as a particular basis upon which journalists exercise authority is particularly useful, as it allows a consideration of how other claims to journalistic authority, particularly in forms of "alternative" and "citizen" journalism, are premised precisely on a principled refusal of professional identity and associated forms of practice that, simultaneously, claim to represent a more radical and authentic embodiment of such journalistic ideals as representing the public, speaking truth to power, and operating as a means through which members of the public can both gain access to knowledge that supports an informed exercise of citizenship and engage in collective debate (Singer, 2007; Bruns, 2005; Platon and Deuze, 2003). Here, as Anderson suggests, work deriving from the sociology of professions such as Abbott's work on how actors seek to establish particular jurisdiction over an occupational domain through their work may prove extremely useful. At the same time, any such analysis must necessarily include a focus on both non- and explicitly anti-professional claims to authority, as well as the implications of these for emergent forms of professional expertise. In short, then, a "professional" focus is an important dimension of, but is also insufficient to, an analysis of shifting formations of journalistic authority.

From "Professionalism" to "Culture"

The second strand of approaches to journalism involves a shift from professionalism to one focused upon journalism culture. Here, Anderson suggests that the work of Barbie Zelizer (1992) exemplifies this "cultural turn" that, instead of focusing on either "ideology" or the problem of how journalists as a group seek to extend their power, instead focuses on how journalistic identities are discursively constructed within "interpretive communities". The latter term is one which Zelizer explicitly contrasts with approaches to journalism as a 'profession', precisely on the grounds that journalism's professional status is doubtful. Nevertheless, Anderson argues, Zelizer's focus on the process through which journalists authenticate their work, and in so doing engage in a process of community boundary-drawing has much in common with the Abbott's focus on professional struggles for "jurisdiction" as a basis for exercising a form of cultural authority that forms discursive rules precisely through the articulation and mythologisation of examples of "good" and "bad" practice while, in so doing, also establishing a particular basis of authority that is distinct from that of other occupational groups and centres of social power. The advantage of re-establishing this connection, he suggests, lies in its emphasis on how the articulation of a discursive grounds of journalistic expertise is connected to, and emerges from, a struggle over jurisdictional authority that both centres upon the articulation of a particular identity and social role and is

embodied in its performance. Notably, here, a focus on "culture" is seen to equate to the construction of a discursively grounded authority, a point upon which Anderson argues that the limits of Zelizer's approach become apparent:

> While Zelizer, and those engaged in similar work, rightly draw attention to the discursive aspects of authority (stories, symbols, self-descriptions), they have less to say about other factors that might contribute to the reality-shaping abilities of journalists: state power, questions of hegemony, concentrations of economic capital, ethnic and class-based exclusions, and legal decisions. Cultural narratives are important aspects of journalistic legitimation and contestation. But they are not the only ones. (Anderson, 2008, p. 255)

What is clear, here, is that "culture" is defined as discursive systems of meaning embodied in forms of social meaning-making, narratives and other symbolic forms, but also does not exceed this definition.

A more expansive definition is provided by Thomas Hanitzch (2007) as a ground for his comparative international studies of journalism. While Hanitzch acknowledges the difficulties consequent to a term that has multiple definitions, he also recognises that definitions of culture as a "way of life" characteristic of term's anthropological usage, which have also retained an abiding influence in cultural studies, extend beyond its embodiment in expressive forms. Thus, concerned to provide a workable level of terminological clarity, he provides the following definition:

> One can generally speak of culture as a set of *ideas* (values, attitudes and beliefs), *practices* (of cultural production), and *artefacts* (cultural products, texts). Journalism culture becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work for themselves and others. (Hanitzch, 2007, p.369)

Journalism culture, Hanitzch suggests, is thus embodied in distinctive forms of cognition, evaluation and performance. Respectively, these provide: the conceptual basis upon which events become interpreted as news; a grounds for journalistic perspectives on their social role, thus providing both a guide to action and a basis of assessing their own work and that of others; and, finally, distinctive techniques and practices that are both given shape by evaluative and performative structures and that serve as a material basis for their perpetuation.

Hanitzch also, notably, explicitly distinguishes therm "culture" from that of "ideology". Journalistic ideologies, he proposes, can be understood as "distinctive arrays of journalism-related values, orientations and predispositions that articulate themselves as dominant professional culture (e.g., objective journalism) or as a counter-hegemonic set of values (e.g. civic journalism and peace journalism)" (2007, p. 370). Nevertheless, he argues, "journalism culture is more than ideology", as it constitutes "the arena in which diverse professional ideologies struggle over the dominant interpretation of journalism's social function and identity" (Ibid.).

While this perspective appears conducive to an analysis of the effects of struggles within and over the culture of journalism, however, Hanitzch appears more analytically concerned to simply map the existence of cultural difference within conceptual articulations and embodied practices of journalistic roles, epistemologies and ethical/ideological frameworks. This comparative project provides something of an empirical counterweight to suggestions that a 'global' culture of journalism can today be discerned (Deuze, 2005). Nevertheless, Hanitzch's deployment of the emic/etic distinction drawn from international communication research, and his heuristic decision to focus solely on the 'etic' examination of "the constitutive elements of culture from the perspective of a common denominator of theoretical terms and concepts" (2007, p. 370) involves something of a shift away from an analysis of journalism as a field of cultural struggles and contestation. At best, that is, such an approach can register the existence of such struggles, through the documentation of the simultaneous existence of different articulations of journalistic concepts and practices. However, this rather static documentation provides little basis for engaging with the potentially transformative effects of such struggles, and still less of how these are impacted by broader structural and cultural changes in socio-political life.

Having said this, rather than jump headlong into proposing an alternative and more "adequate" methodological approach, it is worth reconsidering the theoretical basis around which the object of investigation ("journalism culture") is constructed, since this has manifest implications not only for the sort of understanding it might generate, but also the purpose such an understanding might serve. To do this, it is useful to draw upon the rather different reflection on the term "culture" provided by Tony Bennett (2003). In this essay, Bennett seeks to clarify both the sort of understanding of culture that is entailed by, and the form of cultural analysis called for on the basis of, a Foucauldian analytic of "governmentality"[1]. This

---

[1] I have chosen to use this formulation since it is primarily with scholars who have drawn upon Foucault's work, most particularly Nikolas Rose and Mitchell Dean, rather than Foucault himself that Bennett engages.

is explicitly contrasted with a more dominant tendency engendered by the 'cultural turn' that, across a broad range of disciplines, sought to effect a shift away from both generalist economic and sociological determinisms through a consideration of social phenomena are "culturally mediated" in ways that neither general principles of social structure nor the Marxian base-superstructure model could account for. However, focusing particularly on the "social semiotics" that became a dominant strand of cultural studies, Bennett argues that a problem engendered by the theoretical models of "culture" is that these came to rely upon a no less generalist explanation of (albeit "culturally mediated") social phenomena as these relied on a theoretical-conceptual rather than analytical understanding of "culture":

> …there is an asymmetry in the relations between culture and other regions of practice to the degree that the former exercises less a role of determination in the last instance (the role reserved for the economy in Marxist formulations) than one of constitution in the first instance. Culture, that is to say, is always there, and there first, immanent within economic, social and political practices, organizing them from within, while it can itself be affected by such practices only to the extent that they supply external conditions for the operation of cultural practices which, since they too are language-like in their organization – are themselves, of course, also always culturally structured from within. (Bennett, 2003, p. 51)

For our purposes, the particular semiotic model of culture that provides Bennett's target here matters less than his overall critique of approaches that seek to find in culture a generative principle that is otherwise either elusive or found wanting. This critique would apply equally, for example, to persistent (if not always explicitly acknowledged) usages of culture to refer to a "way of life" of particular social groups or, indeed, analyses of the "discursive" basis of cultural identity that treat the latter as an object in and of itself. The definition of culture as both an object and "arena" of contest, equally, appears to rest upon a rather problematic circularity.

Against approaches that position culture as both expressive and fundamentally generative, Bennett draws on an approach to discourse that is both less 'stable', in the sense that it lacks any fundamental basis, and more materialist. Here, against a view of discourse a form of cultural *a priori* mediating social life, he quotes Foucault's observation that discourses "take shape in technical ensembles, in institutions, in behavioural schemes, in types of transmission and dissemination, in pedagogical forms that both impose and maintain them" (quoted in Bennett 2003, p. 54). Journalistic discourse, in this sense, is no more or less than an element within an assemblage of forms of training, processes of workplace organization, techniques of

newsgathering and writing and institutional and regulatory structures that serve to constitute it as a cultural technology. Here, it may be seen that Bennett's attention to the materiality of culture bears some relation to, but in important respects also departs from, Rodney Benson's call for a renewed focus on the material constitution of journalistic culture:

> To the extent that culture can ever be distinguished from social structure, it is as a sort of "sediment" of past struggles over the hierarchical organization of power and the allocation of resources, in other words, the state and the market, which return us to political economy. (Benson 2004, p. 279)

A governmental perspective on culture is quite compatible with Benson's suggestion that journalistic culture emerges through processes of social struggle over cultural practices through which practitioners come to conduct themselves and, on this basis, serve as a particular form of cultural authority that has implications for power relations. Neither need it involve a denial of the fact that these power relations are based upon, and serve to constitute, forms of hierarchisation. It also should not involve a denial of the continuing importance of forms of sovereign and economic power, but seek to include these within an analysis of the constitution of culture. Yet a return to political economy as the fundamental basis upon which forms of culture are shaped (albeit a usefully detailed one), as this formulation risks, is to fail to understand how these necessarily operate in the context of, and in relation to, a more dispersed network of forms of governmental power, including that which is exercised in the field of cultural production. Here, one need only bring to mind John B. Thompson's attention to (in a somewhat clunky term) the "mediatisation of modern culture" (Thompson, 1995) to illustrate this point. This mediatisation should not, of course, be regarded as the product of an autonomous domain of culture that unilaterally conditions processes of modern politics. However, it also points to the fact that, at least in liberal democratic polities, forms of media professionalism, media institutions and practices form a ground as well as a prominent target for forms of state and economic activity, rather than merely their outcome.

The constitution of journalistic autonomy

The third strand of Anderson's overview of approaches to journalism is one that has increasingly come to dominate journalism studies in recent years: Bourdieuian approaches to journalism as a "field of cultural production" (Benson and Neveu, 2005). As Anderson suggests, the advantage such approaches offer is that they enable an analysis of how micro-organisational and institutional practices of journalism operate as part of larger "field" of journalism that, in turn, operates in relation to, and is at least partially constituted by,

heterogeneous forms of power that emerge from other fields of cultural production and power. Moreover, even if examples of such analysis occasionally risk positioning the field of journalism as ultimately subordinate to more "fundamental" fields of political-economic power, it nevertheless retains a focus on how fields develop particular characteristics, such as languages, modes of practice, institutions and values that cannot be entirely reduced to an effect of external determinations (Sedorkin and Schirato, 1998). In addition, the suggestion that fields are dynamically constituted by both internal struggles for forms of social, cultural and economic capital, as well as their relations with other fields is, in many respects, quite compatible with both perspectives on how journalistic professionalism is constituted through internal and external struggles for "jurisdiction", and the governmental emphasis on how journalistic culture emerges in relation to, and as part of, an assemblage of dispersed sites and practices through which social authority is exercised. A distinction between Foucauldian and Bourdieuian analysis, however, may be seen to emerge if one considers how the concept of 'autonomy' is theorised in each.

The issue of how autonomy operates within Bourdieuian analysis has provided a point of focus for Michael Schudson (2005), who notes that normally, and normatively, "autonomy" tends to be positioned as both a resistance to external influences and as something that should be defended against the encroachment of, in particular, political-economic power. Here, forms of editorial separation between journalists and management, and regulatory bases upon which media freedoms (such as the US First Amendment protection) are habitually cited as a grounds of journalistic autonomy, albeit one that is always precarious and frequently compromised. However, Schudson refers to a wealth of studies that have empirically documented that the exercise of journalistic autonomy is not, in practice, best characterised as resistant to forms of state authority, but more habitually relies upon such centres in the development and presentation of news items, and the narratives and forms of information and perspective these provide. Additionally, he notes the manner in which news organizations have successfully appealed to First Amendment in ways that, rather than protect democratic communication against economic influence, have actually sought to further their own economic interests in ways that serve to demonstrably limit their operation as a forum of democratic representation. While it does not follow from this that one should necessarily be against journalistic autonomy or that such authority is an ideological sham, such examples serve to illustrate the point that to regard autonomy as necessarily resistant, and something that should *automatically* seek to defend may be both a rather naïve and potentially conservative stance.

Analyses of how governmentality operates in within liberal democracies, by contrast, examines how various practices of governmental power seek to target, shape and work through, rather than undermine, forms of autonomy to achieve particular ends. That is, such analyses posit that "autonomy" is not something that stands opposed to power, but as its concrete realisation through processes of 'subjectification' that seek, in Nikolas Rose's perspicacious phrase, to act upon subjects' particular "powers of freedom" (Rose, 1999) and lead them to exercise their autonomy in particular ways designed to contribute to the attainment of specific goals. Here, it is useful to recall Foucault's particular conception of liberalism as a basis for the exercise of forms of power that "posit[..] the existence of spheres of life and freedom which are, and are to remain, autonomous of itself, but which still need to be rendered knowable" (Bennett, 1998, p.67), in part so that these spheres can be targeted by projects that seek to reshape and redirect such forms of autonomy without undermining them.

To focus on journalism as a form of cultural authority from this perspective, we may consider how it is both informed by, and serves to constitute, particular forms of 'public culture'. Here, following Schudson's lead, it is worth considering how journalism has historically operationalised its principled social role of providing a mechanism of public representation on the basis of a "public interest" that is has claimed to both know and represent. In practice, this has involved the construction of a particular position of autonomous authority that is precisely formed through its relations with various other public institutions, prominently including both ruling administrations and state officials, but also other, non-state centres of expertise. It was not against, but through such relations that 'public concerns' could be known, reconstituted and disseminated across populations, with manifest implications for how these were identified, debated and addressed in various forms of 'public action'. Following Hallin's analysis, it may be recognised that today, the conditions within which such models of a 'public interest' oriented regime of journalism operated have, in many respects, been largely undermined. However, Hallin's claim that this represents a 'demise of professionalism' does not necessarily follow, since aspects of an older professionalism have not only been displaced, but also replaced by alternative discourses and practices of journalistic professionalism (Nolan 2008a). These have frequently involved an appeal to more quantitative techniques for knowing, and claiming to represent, a measured public. Here, we may include increasingly sophisticated audience and demographic surveys, ratings and circulation measurement, practices of public opinion polling and various feedback and accountability mechanisms that seek to demonstrate, and act upon, a more detailed knowledge

of 'actual' publics[2]. These effect of this provides another, albeit rather different, bases upon which 'public concerns' are identified and responded to, and thereby contributes to the constitution of different sorts of public life. Such transformations are, however, not best understood as an abandonment of professional concerns to represent the public. Indeed, to suggest that a "professional v populist" binary is also suspect need not involve any celebratory idealisation of commercial media. Rather, as Simon Cottle has demonstrated, journalists working in "infotainment" formats are both disposed and quite eager to justify these precisely as fulfilments of a professional obligation to connect with public concerns (Cottle, 1993).

To reiterate, however, governmentality is not merely a matter of the various ways in which a self-constituting field of journalistic practice seeks to know, and act in relation to, a "general public". Indeed, the influence of other fields is already apparent if we consider how, for example, such "public-constituting" technologies and forms of expertise developed within other fields have been imported into journalism as means of addressing the problem of grounding journalistic authority. Clearly, though, any adequate analysis of the constitution of journalism as a field of governmental practice must also take into account the effects of other forms of expertise that have both recognised and devised schemes to recruit and reshape practices of journalistic autonomy. This is most obviously exemplified in the development of increasingly sophisticated forms of communication management that have sought to employ practitioners able to develop strategies to direct the conduct of journalism precisely on the basis of a detailed intelligence regarding journalism as a field of cultural practice. Lest this be seen as automatically suspect, however, we might also note in passing that the same is true of programs and courses of "journalism studies" that have emerged, for the most part, within the academy (see Nolan, 2008b).

Conclusion

It is worth, finally, reflecting on the normative implications of the approach that has begun to be outlined in this paper. It is important to reiterate, here, that this does not involve any claim that journalistic autonomy is either meaningless or an ideological sham, but rather a claim that this emerges within, and as a constitutive part of, a broader field of governmental relations and practices. If this is accepted, it follows that our concern should be neither a damning critique, nor a straightforward defence of journalistic authority against external influence.

---

[2] Here, quotation marks are used to emphasise the point that public opinion research does not merely measure publics, but actually serves as a technology that contributes to their constitution. On this point, see Osborne and Rose (1999).

Rather, it suggests that further consideration of the internal and external relations through which journalism is socially constituted is called for, as a basis for considering the extent to which it requires, and potential avenues to achieve, its reconstitution. This is not, I would argue, a matter of comparing actual journalism to a theoretically articulated "public ideal" of democratic journalism, but rather necessitates an empirical consideration of the sort of "publics" journalism presupposes and engenders. To the extent to which these are found wanting, in terms of posing problems for a viable and democratic public life, such an analysis would also provide a basis for considering what potential avenues of reform might be desirable and achievable.

Rather than seek to understand journalism culture as an abstraction, then, a "governmental" analysis would focus on its complex constitution and concrete operations as a cultural technology. It may be suggested that, rather than consider journalism's contribution to public life in generalised terms, such an agenda might support a more specific focus on how the role it plays in constituting "public problems" is mediated by its own constitution. For example, such an analysis might begin by focusing on research that has demonstrated the deleterious role that practices of "balanced" journalism played in promoting an unwarranted credence in climate change scepticism in the years prior to the middle of this decade (Boykoff and Boykoff, 2007; Carvalho and Burgess, 2005). Such practices not only provided a 'distorted' perspective on scientific consensus, but also contributed to forms of public action that failed to address, and thereby actively contributed to, the "public problem" of anthropogenic climate change. Here, research might seek to further consider how the internal and external relations that serve to constitute journalism as a field of cultural practice contributed to this. To what extent have these been adequately addressed, and what prospects and avenues are available for doing so? To address this problem is not to seek to establish an ideal public function for journalism, but to address a pressing public concern in determinate circumstances.

References

Abbott, A. (1988) *The system of professions: an essay on the division of expert labour.* Chicago, UChicago Press.

Aldridge, M. and J. Evetts (2003) Rethinking the Concept of Professionalism: The Case of Journalism. *British Journal of Sociology* 54 (4), 547-564.

Anderson, C (2008) Journalism: expertise, authority and power in public life. In D. Hesmondhalgh and J. Toynbee (eds) *The Media and Social Theory* (pp. 248-264). Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Bennett, T. (1998) Culture: A Reformer's Science. London: Sage.

Bennett, T. (2003) Culture and Governmentality. In J. Bratich, J. Packer and C. MacCarthy (eds) *Foucault, Cultural Studies and Governmentality* (pp. 47-63). SUNY Press, Albany.

Benson, R. (2004) Bringing the Sociology of Media Back In. *Political Communication* 21, 275-292.

Benson, R. and E. Neveu (eds) (2005) *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field.* Cambridge, Malden MA: Polity.

Boykoff, M. and J. Boykoff (2007) Climate Change and Journalistic Norms: A Case Study of US Mass Media Coverage' *Geoforum* 38, 1190-1204.

Bruns, A. (2005) *Gatewatching: Collaborative News Production Online.* New York: Peter Lang.

Carvalho, A. and J. Burgess (2005) Cultural Circuits of Climate Change within UK Broadsheet Newspapers 1985-2003. *Risk Analysis* 25 (3), 1457-1469.

Cottle, S. (1993) *TV News, Urban Conflict and the Inner City.* Leicester: Leicester UP.

Deuze, M. (2005) What is journalism? Professional identity and ideology of journalists reconsidered. *Journalism* 6, 442-464.

Dunn, A. 2004, From Quasi to fully: On journalism as a profession. *Australian Journalism Review* 26 (2), 21-30.

Elsaka, N. (2005) New Zealand Journalists and the Appeal of "Professionalism" as a Model of Organisation: an historical analysis. *Journalism Studies* 6 (1), 73-86.

Gans, H. (1978) *Deciding What's News*. New York: Vintage.

Gitlin, T. (1980) *The Whole World is Watching.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hackett, R. and Y. Zhao (1998) *Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity.* Toronto: Garamond Press.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., and B. Roberts (1978) *Policing the Crisis*. London: Macmillan.

Hanitzsch, T (2007) Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Towards a universal theory. *Communication Theory* 17 (4), 367-385

Hartley, J (2008) Journalism as a Human Right: The Cultural Approach to Journalism. In M. Loffelholz and D. Weaver (eds) *Global Journalism Research: Theories, Methods, Findings Future.* Malden MA: Blackwell.

Henningham, J. (1995) Journalism in the USA and Australia: Some comparisons. *Australian Journal of Communication* 22 (1), 77-91.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., and B. Roberts (1978) *Policing the Crisis*. London: Macmillan.

Hallin, D (2000) Commercialism and Professionalism in American News Media. In J. Curran and M. Gurevitch (eds), *Mass Media and Society* (pp218-237). London: Arnold.

Hallin, D (2008) Neo-liberalism, social movements and change. In D. Hesmondhalgh and J. Toynbee (eds) *The Media and Social Theory* (pp. 43-58). Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Hallin, D and Mancini, P (2004) *Comparing Media Systems: Three models of media and politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Larson, M.S. (1978) *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis.* Berkeley: UCalifornia Press.

Masterson, M. (1998) A Theory of News. In M. Breen (ed) *Journalism Theory and Practice* (85-103). Paddington, NSW: Macleay Press.

Nolan, D (2008a) Tabloidisation Revisited: The regeneration of journalism in conditions of 'Advanced Liberalism. *Communication, Politics & Culture* 41 (2), 100-118.

Nolan, D. (2008b) Journalism, education and the formation of "public subjects." *Journalism* 9, 733-749.

Osborne, T. and N. Rose (1999) Do the social sciences create phenomena? The example of public opinion research. *British Journal of Sociology* 50 (3), 367-396.

Platon, S and Deuze, M (2003) Indymedia Journalism. *Journalism* 4 (3), 336-355

Rose, N. (1999) *Powers of Freedom: Reframing political thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schudson, M. (2005) Autonomy from what? In R. Benson and E. Neveu (eds) *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (pp. 214-223). Cambridge, Malden MA: Polity.

Sedorkin, G. and T. Schirato (1998) Theory and Current Affairs Television. In M. Breen (Ed.) *Journalism: Theory and Practice* (pp. 104-118). Paddington, NSW: Macleay Press.

Singer, J. (2007) Contested Autonomy: Professional and popular claims on journalistic norms. *Journalism Studies* 8 (1), 79-95.

Soloski, J. (1989) News reporting and professionalism: some constraints on reporting the news. *Media, Culture and Society* 11: 207-228.

Thompson, J.B. (1995) *The Media and Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity.

Tuchman, G. (1972) Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity. *American Journal of Sociology* 77. (4), 660-79.

Tunstall, J. (1996) *Newspaper Power: The New National Press in Britain.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zelizer, B. (1992) *Covering the body: the Kennedy assassination, the media, and the shaping of collective memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.