

Journalistic Practices, News, and Public Health in China:
Local Crisis, Global Implications

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List of Abbreviations

CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
Chinese CDC	Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CMS	Cooperative Medical System (<i>hezuo yiliao</i>)
CNNIC	China Internet Network Information Center
CPD	Central Propaganda Department
CSO	Civil Society Organization (<i>minjian zuzhi</i>)
GAPP	General Administration of Press and Publications
GDP	Gross Domestic product
GIS	Government Insurance Scheme (<i>gongfei yiliao</i>)
Global Fund	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GOCCPCC	General Office of CCP's Central Committee
GONGO	Government-organized Non-governmental Organization
IDUs	IV Drug Users
LIS	Labor Insurance Scheme (<i>laobao</i>)
MCA	Ministry of Civil Affairs
MIIT	Ministry of Industry and Information Technology
MOC	Ministry of Culture
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOP	Ministry of Personnel (since 2008, it is Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security)
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
NBI	National Bureau of Labor (since 2008, it is Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security)
NBS	National Bureau of Statistic
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organization

NPC	National People's Congress
NPHCCO	National Patriotic Health Campaign Committee Office (<i>quanguo aiguo weisheng yundong weiyuanhui</i>)
NPO	Non-profit Organization
OGI Regulations	Open Government Information Regulations
PRC	The People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SAFE	State Administration of Foreign Exchange
SAIC	State Administration for Industry and Commerce
SARFT	State Administration of Radio, Film and Television
SDFA	State Drug and Food Administration
SHI	Social Health Insurance (<i>shehui yibao</i>)
SSA	The State Secrecy Administration
TCM	Traditional Chinese Medicines
DD	Dahe Daily
HD	Henan Daily
ND	Nanfang Daily
NMN	Nanfang Metro News
NW	Nanfang Weekend
PD	People's Daily

Introduction

On a cold and dusty afternoon in October 2008, I took a taxi to an apartment building in the eastern outskirts of Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan Province, China. It was an ordinary looking grey concrete building, just like millions of others in most Chinese cities. Across the street, there was a hospital with a big red cross on top of its main building. The person who sent me there was very discreet. She scribbled down the address of the building and a mobile phone number on the back of a shopping receipt, asking me to throw it away after I got there. Along with me were two carton boxes of second-hand clothes. I called the number and a middle-aged man came down to help me move the two boxes. We went up for three or four floors and arrived at a normal looking apartment.

In the middle of the living room stood a robust, young woman. Her name was Ah Fang, and she was blind. Ah Fang stretched out her arms to me when she heard me coming in. Her eyes, dark and deep, were sparkling. We held hands and sat on a sofa in the living room. It was a two bedroom apartment. The living room was about 300 square feet, so it was divided into two sections: a guest section and an office section. Two other women joined us a minute later. And then, three little girls, carrying big backpacks on their shoulders and wearing red Young Pioneer Scarves around their necks, came home.

The apartment was the home for the four adults and three children. They were only related by one thing—HIV. Ah Fang had been an accountant and a military wife. She got infected through blood transfusion in a minor surgery. She did not know about the infection until she lost her eyesight. Ah Fang divorced her husband and found him a

new wife. Then she left the city where her ex-husband was stationed at and finally found herself a new home here. The two women, Ah Hua and Ah Lian, were villagers from nearby areas. They used to sell full blood or plasma several times a month just to make pocket money. Their husbands never sold blood because they were the backbones of their family. In Chinese culture, blood is precious and blood loss is bad for health. Ah Hua and Ah Lian were expelled by their husbands. The middle-aged man, Ah Zhong, did not know how he got infected. “Maybe in a dental clinic,” he semi-joked. The three girls, Fang Fang, Kang Kang, and Lin Lin, did not know where they came from. None of them had met their parents. Fang Fang and Kang Kang were found in dumpsters by a Taiwanese Catholic nun who was the only financial source for this family. Lin Lin used to live with her aunt. Before they found her, she was locked with a chain in a granary and was never allowed to go out. Her parents died before she could remember them.

They lived a normal life. The three young girls went to elementary school and made friends there. Lin Lin was not happy that day because she did poorly on an exam. Ah Huan and Ah Lian teased her all the way until she burst into tears. The three girls drew a picture together on the back of a calendar paper to express their thankfulness to the lady who sent me. Ah Fang was polite and warm. She was the leader of the group since she was the only person who had a college degree. There were three bunk beds in each bedroom. “When people come to see doctors across the street, they can have a place to sleep over.” None of them looked upset or desperate. When I asked them if they applied for alms from the government, they said no. “We don’t want them to know that we live here.”

They seem to be more scared about the government than the disease. It is not that they do not have the courage to confront the state, but that they know they do not have any chance to. Seeking compensation through legal means is almost impossible. Most provinces do not even accept any cases relating to HIV. The state just looks like the grey concrete building, solid and cold. This is a Chinese Leviathan, a monster revived during the course of the three decades of economic reform that is now starting to transform and grow.

But if you ask the ordinary people living in China today, eight out of ten will disagree. They all seem happy and satisfied. As China has now become the second largest economy in the world, who does not feel a little bit proud? This is exactly why such a transformed Leviathan is more chilling.

About five years prior to my visit to Ah Fang and her family, on the 2003 World AIDS Day, Wen Jiabao, China's premier, visited Beijing Ditan Hospital. A photo of Wen shaking hands with AIDS patients later appeared on the front page of almost all Chinese newspapers. This was the first time a Chinese political leader publicly shook hands with an AIDS patient. Like all political leaders' photo-ops, this one was also well planned and nicely conceived. Wen was placed in the center of the photo. The patient Wen held hand with was a middle-aged Chinese man with glasses. The man was lean, dressed in a patient's uniform with glasses that made him look intellectual. Wen was in his signature black jacket, with a vivid red ribbon pinned on his left chest. His face was facing the camera almost directly. Wen's face, which is now familiar to most Chinese, was half smiling, but his eyes were full of sympathy. That was the first year of the Hu-

Wen administration. After successfully dealing with the SARS crisis, it was time for China's new leadership to show a more humane face to the public. But the faces of Ah Fang, Ah Huan, Ah Lian, Ah Zhong, Fang Fang, Kang Kang, and Lin Lin will never be shown.

In China, there are more than tens of thousands of HIV/AIDS infectors living a secret life just like Ah Fang and her family. There are more than 100 million HBV infectors who try every possible way to hide their identities too. Some of them spend hundreds of dollars hiring substitutes to attend physical examinations, sometimes, just for a labor job in a factory. The patient who displayed his face with Premier Wen was brave and lucky, if he was a real AIDS patient. For those who really have suffered, they are rarely seen or heard. Because they are invisible and unheard, they are easily to be forgotten.

No example can be more convincing than the tragedy happened on June 4th, 1989, in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Twenty years later, the incident has almost been wiped out from every aspect of Chinese society. In 2007, right before the eighteenth anniversary of the massacre, a city tabloid from Sichuan's provincial capital, Chengdu, published a one-line advertisement in its classified section, stating "Paying tribute to the strong-willed mothers of June 4 victims."¹ The newspaper, the *Chengdu Evening News*, was immediately put under investigation. Three days later, the deputy editor-in-chief of

¹ "Mothers of June 4 victims" refer to those who lost their children during the Tiananmen massacre. There is a formal organization of this group of people, which is called "The Mothers of Tiananmen" (*Tian'anmen muqi*). It was founded in early 2000, led by Ding Zilin, a professor at the People's University. Her 17 year-old son, Jiang Jielian was shot and died on June 3, 1989, somewhere near the Tiananmen Square. All members of the group have relatives, mostly sons and daughters, who died from the Tiananmen Massacre. The idea of establishing such a group was inspired by groups such as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (a group of mothers of the "disappeared") in Argentina.

the paper and two other members from the editorial office were dismissed (Watts, 2007). One year later, the *Beijing News*, a newly emerged popular city tabloid, published an interview with a former Associated Press Beijing-based photographer, Liu Xiangcheng, as a tribute to the 30 years of economic reform in China. The title of the interview was “I used photographs to record the path that China went through.” Along with the interview was a group of pictures taken by Liu in the past 30 years, and one of them was taken right after the Tiananmen massacre. Simply captioned “The Wounded,” the picture showed two wounded civilians, bleeding, being rushed away on a tricycle cart in an alley. The timing of the mistake could not have been more wrong. It was fifteen days before the grand opening of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. All copies of the newspaper were immediately recalled and destroyed; the online version of that issue was immediately taken out, and a thorough investigation was immediately conducted. There was no public reveal of the official conclusions on both incidents, but words from insiders confirmed that both were caused by the “ignorance” of the young editors from both newspapers, who actually had never heard about June 4 or the Mothers of Tiananmen² and never seen any photographic documents on the massacre.

My questions are: Why do people so easily to take invisibility for granted? Why do people so easily forget what happened in the past? If recording what happens now is the mission of journalism, then why is it so hard for Chinese journalists to accomplish this mission? If today’s news is tomorrow’s history, and if today’s news does not reflect today’s reality, how much faith can we have in tomorrow’s history? Shall we simply

² According to media reports, the young clerk in charge of vetting ads in the Chengdu Evening News was “unaware of the significance of 64” (Watts, 2007).

attribute everything to the state, the monolithic communist authoritarian regime? How shall we reflect on ourselves and our roles in this process of remaking the Chinese Leviathan?³ When facing the omnipresent power of the Leviathan, is there a way out?

“News and truth are not the same thing,” says Walter Lippmann (1922, p. 358). The epistemological distance between the two constitutes a fundamental concern of my dissertation. I ask: During the outbreak of a dangerous infectious disease, how does news reflect the “truth” of the outbreak? What are the influences that affect the news construction of epidemics? How and why do the influences come into being? Specifying the research context in contemporary China, I attempt to answer these questions through detailed descriptions and analyses of the complexity and dynamics surrounding news production of public health issues.

Theoretically, I try to explore and discuss the concept of journalistic practices from a relational perspective. By following Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1998, 2005), I define journalism as a “sub-field,” which is related to, nested under, and affected by three major fields of power: the state, market, and society. Therefore journalistic practice is interpreted as competing for legitimacy, a form of power that struggles over symbolic capital. Further, different from the normative understanding of journalism, I do not presume that “journalism is another name for democracy” (Carey, 1996). I argue that

³ The idea of remaking the Chinese Leviathan is proposed by Dali L. Yang in 2004. In his book, *Remaking the Chinese Leviathan: Market Transition and the Politics of Governance in China*, Yang focuses on the administrative reform and the fiscal reform of the central Chinese government during the 1990s, which eventually help enhance the state’s capacity on economic governance. The power regained by the central government makes it a Leviathan, an integrated central state apparatus that ensures economic development and commensurate administrative reform without democracy. Yang’s overall tone of the book is quite positive about the Chinese government’s adaptation toward economic change. However, in my opinion, it is exactly the same kind of strategy taken by the Chinese state that leads to the instability of the regime.

journalism must be studied within “a particular historical conjuncture” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.90). By focusing on the post-1978 China—a transitional society with distinctive social economic and political conditions, I investigate the process, logic, mechanism, and techniques of news production in this communist authoritarian regime.

The arrangement of the chapters is as follows:

Following this brief introduction of the orientation and general structure of my research, Chapter 1 is a critical review of former studies on media transformation in contemporary China, based on which I proposes to incorporate a dimension of “society” to the currently dominant theoretical model—the state-versus-market model—in order to better explain the “concrete social and communicative relations both implicated in and engendered by this transformation” (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a, p. 5). Chapter 2 is a theoretical discussion of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice as well as how to incorporate his theory to the specific historical and empirical conditions in my research. I also offer a descriptive model to help better understand such integration. Chapter 3 explains the rationale of my research design and the process of data collection and analysis. The cases being examined in this research are news coverage from six Chinese newspapers on four epidemics: HIV/AIDS, SARS, Hepatitis B, and the H1N1 influenza. In addition to extensive content analyses, I use data from in-depth interviews with more than 40 journalists, government officials, and social activists who collaborate on and compete in constructing discourses of the four epidemics.

Chapter 4 is a general background introduction to the interrelation between public health affairs and the state-market-society complex, in which I hope to help the readers

better understand the interpretations of the data in the next two chapters. Chapter 5 is a preliminary analysis of the contents of the news articles that I have collected. Some interesting observations are highlighted and discussed. Chapter 6 shows my effort to provide a coherent interpretation of the interaction between news themes and news sources in the contemporary context. By doing so, I hope to demonstrate how Bourdieu's theory of practice is related to the specific cases in my research and to provide a thick description of the details and subtleties of the journalistic practices taken by actors within the Chinese journalistic field. The last chapter, Chapter 7 is more than a simple summary of all previous chapters. Not only do I offer further analysis on the news content, I also discuss the limitations of my research and raise questions regarding journalistic autonomy and the possibility (or impossibility) of striving for more press freedom in China.

Chapter 1

Media Transformation & Journalistic Practices in Contemporary China

After more than three decades of economic development, China has become the second largest economy in the world (Barboza, 2010). However, contrary to what conventional wisdom has long assumed,⁴ economic liberalization has not undermined the politically repressive regime, or made China democratic. Since the 1989 pro-democracy movement, the communist regime seems to be transforming into something apparently authoritarian in nature but which cannot be easily defined. People ask: Is China a regime marked by “neo- authoritarianism” (e.g., Petracca & Xiong, 1990), “decentralized authoritarianism” (e.g., Landry, 2008), “resilient authoritarianism (e.g., Nathan, 2003),” “fragmented authoritarianism”(e.g., Lieberthal, 1992), or “soft authoritarianism” (Roy, 1994)? Or is it still a totalitarian regime “characterized by the marriage of a Leninist party to bureaucratic capitalism with a globalist gloss” (Pei, 2002, p. 97)? Perhaps it would be wise to regard the Chinese system as “an authoritarianism of a still poorly understood new type” (Nathan, 2009, p. 38).

On the one hand, the current Chinese model of development features the world’s fastest-growing economy, non-transparent political governance, and growing party-state interventions in economic and social fields via its tremendously redundant bureaucratic system. Chaperoned by a revival of nationalism, the emergence of “bureaucratic capitalism” seems to portend an identity crisis for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

⁴ This assertion is mostly based on a broadly accepted assumption that “capitalism is the necessary basis of democracy,” or more specifically, “[D]emocracy awaits the period when capitalism has produced a stable middle class” (Calhoun, 1993a, p. 268).

The CCP realizes that economic success cannot guarantee political stability, so it becomes ever more eager to maintain its grip on absolute power by clenching its fist around every aspect of the society.⁵ On the other hand, the Chinese regime is far from the edge of collapse. To people living inside of China, the lack of freedom does not seem to be a life or death problem.⁶ The regime's legitimacy, "the degree to which citizens treat the state as rightfully holding and exercising political power" (Gilley, 2008, p. 260), has not been seriously challenged since the 1989 incident. Therefore, the Chinese system is full of inner contradictions: it "mixes statism with entrepreneurship, political monopoly with individual liberty, personalist power with legal procedure, repression with responsiveness, policy uniformity with decentralized flexibility, and message control with a media circus" (Nathan, 2009, p. 38). These contradictions become a "central puzzle" for many scholars who try to explain "how the CCP has been able to reform some aspects of state institutions while maintaining the central features of a one-party state" (Gilley, 2008, p. 259).

Against such a broad background, my research focuses on one of the contradictory realities in contemporary China; that is, the journalistic practices and news production in a transitional context embodied by social, cultural, political, economic, and

⁵ Since 2009, many scholars and observers have pointed out that the CCP has started resuming control over the society. Evidence includes the restructuring civil societies via taxation policies, and the expanding of governmental spending on "upholding stability (*wei-wen*)." *Wei-wen* is an omnibus term that encompasses operating "social management (*shehui guanli*)," tackling "mass incidents (*qunti shijian*)," tracking down dissidents, monitoring "social organizations (*shehui zuzhi*, China's official term for NGOs)," and maintaining social order or "a harmonious society (*hexie shehui*)." In March 2011, the National People's Congress (i.e., the Chinese parliament) approved an astounding \$95 billion U.S. (624.4 billion yuan) *wei-wen* budget, which surpasses China's military budget of \$91.5 U.S., or 601.1 billion yuan (Lam, 2011, p. 2).

⁶ In a 1993-1994 national public opinion survey in China, 94% of respondents chose to trust and obey the Chinese government and believed that the government served their interests (Chen and Shi, 2001). Surveys conducted in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, and 2002 found similar results (Z.-X. Wang, 2006, pp. 220-221).

technological changes. Mass media in China is still treated as an important method of manipulating and controlling information production and dissemination and as a propaganda instrument of the party-state. Therefore, practicing journalism in China is likened to “dancing in shackles” (Q. He, 2008, p. 79).⁷ Yet, at the same time, we can see a clearly growing autonomy of the “journalistic field” in China, at least in some specific cases or at a specific moment.⁸ The gradually enlarged social space resulting from the competition between the “state” and the “market” seems to be helping to expand the social and symbolic boundaries for journalistic practices. One important goal of my research is to describe and to explain the dynamics and contradictions.

One dominant theoretical perspective for studying Chinese media transformation is the “state-versus-market” model. First proposed in the 1990s, this model takes an active role in promoting the progressive power of the market, giving the hope that China’s mass media would become open and free and that eventually democracy would be realized. Therefore, the model is useful in terms of laying out a significant political-economic context for China’s media reform; that is, the emergence and development of a nascent capitalist market and its interplay with the authoritarian regime. Although some scholars cheer such interplay, hoping for the market to challenge the political status-quo, others seem to be deeply concerned with the dire reality that today’s Chinese media are not only enslaved by the Party-state but also by the market (e.g., Chan, 1993; H. Chen &

⁷ According to the 2010 World Press Freedom Index published by *Reporters Without Borders*, China is ranked 171 out of 178 countries in the index and is ranked higher than Iran, North Korea, and Burma but lower than Cuba, Rwanda, and Yemen (Reporters sans frontières, 2010).

⁸ The rapid development of investigative reporting after 2003 and the techniques and strategies that journalists use to contest state power are good examples of the growing journalistic autonomy (see Tong, 2011).

Chan, 1998; Z. He, 2000; Lee, 2000a, 2005; Lee, He, & Huang, 2006, 2007; E. K.-W. Ma, 2000; Polunbaum, 1990; Y.-Z. Zhao, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2008). Some scholars argue that the marketization of mass media in China may actually contribute to the “entrenchment of state control in the media” (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2008, p. 82). The relationship between the Party-state and the media now seems to feature “clientism and collusion” (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2008, p. 82) or a “cement patron-client” type (Lee et al., 2007, p. 35). Therefore it might be more useful to appropriate the “state-versus-market” model into a “state-market duet” in order to signify the “double oppression” imposed on the media.

Working both as a contextual and a research framework, the state-versus-market model nevertheless seems to raise as many questions as it answers. The model certainly provides a useful analytical perspective for research at the macro-level, but when considering things happened at lower levels, such as the strategies taken by individual journalists (coalition-forming, or battles with people from other interest groups), the model cannot deliver strong explanations. Media transformation in contemporary China is complicated. In order to understand its complexity, we need a new theoretical model, which is as simple and clear as the state-versus-market model without coming at the expense of subtlety, delicacy, and adaptability in Chinese journalistic practices in everyday life.

In this chapter, I will display relevant research context and discuss related literatures. First, I will outline the historical background of media transformation in China since the late 1970s; second, I will review the literatures in the field of Chinese media studies; and third, I will propose a new research direction for the field.

Background: Media Transformation in a Transitional China

The institutional structure of China's media is unique. Almost all media organizations in China are owned by the state.⁹ They belong to the “public service units” (*shiyè danwei*) of the government.¹⁰ Their function, as the name implies, is to provide services to the public. Most media organizations are “self-supporting, profit-generating” (*zìfú yìngkuì*), but are still overseen by the core state agency—an “administrative unit” (*xíngzhèng danwei*) such as the State Council or the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP). On the one hand, media organizations do not have authority over personnel and budgetary matters. To hire an employee they have to obtain allotments of approved posts (*biànzhì*) from the administrative unit. They also need to surrender their profits to the government and wait for budgetary allocations for everyday operations. On the other hand, because of the public-sector nature, the people who work for media organizations are usually hired as state cadres (or civil servants), a job that symbolizes an unbreakable “iron bowl” of life-time benefits. Even after being commercialized in the 1990s, China's media remained state-owned after private capital participated in investment and management. In 1999, in response to a dispute over the ownership of the *Chinese Management Newspaper* and its affiliated newspaper, *The Lifestyle*, the State Council, the GAPP, and the Ministry of Finance jointly issued an official circular, emphasizing that “the press in China is state-owned” (GAPP, 1999).

⁹ “All media” does not include the new media outlets such as Internet portal service providers like sina.com, most of which are privately-owned. However, in China, even though the Internet portal service providers can “publish” news, they do not have the right to report news. They can only relay news from traditional print or broadcast media.

¹⁰ There are three types of government agencies in China. The other two types are “state-owned enterprises” (*guóyǒu qìyè*) and “social organizations” (*shèhuì tuántǐ*).

China's mass media are hierarchically positioned at four levels in the country: central, provincial, city, and county levels (C. Chen, Zhu, & Wu, 1998, p. 10; de Burgh, 2003, p. 20). Since China is a single-party state, the state's control over the media is exercised via two institutional systems at each of the four levels: one is an "ideological control" from the Central Propaganda Department (CPD) of the CCP, and the other is an "administrative/operational control" from the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT)¹¹ on broadcast media, the GAPP¹² on print media, and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) on Internet/web-based media.

For example, *The People's Daily*, China's state party organ, is *ideologically* controlled by the Central Committee of CCP via the CPD and *administratively* controlled by the State Council via the national GAPP. Similarly, the Guangzhou-based *Nanfang Daily* is the party organ of the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee; hence, its *ideological* control comes from CCP's Guangdong Provincial Committee via the Provincial Propaganda Department, and its *administrative* control comes from the Guangdong Provincial government via the Guangdong Administration of Press and Publication. Meanwhile, ideological and administrative authorities at a higher level always sit on top of all the media at a lower level. Most of the time, on an everyday basis, both of types of control are realized by "forbidden directives" (*jin ling*) in written or verbal forms.

¹¹ Until 1998, the title of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television was the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television.

¹² Until 2001, GAPP was formerly known as the State Administration of Press and Publications. See <http://www.gapp.gov.cn/cms/html/21/384/List-1.html>. Access date: April 7, 2010.

“Party Principle”¹³—that all media outlets are subject to the principles and directives of the CCP—underpins the government’s regulatory power over the media. But not all Chinese media are regarded as “Party organs.” There are three basic types of newspapers, differentiated by the type of interest groups they represent: (1) Party organs, which are run by the CCP’s committees at central, provincial, city, and county levels; (2) Target papers, which are owned by official or semi-official organizations that represent major social groups, such as workers, women, farmers, and youth; and (3) Bureaucratic papers, which are published by central or local government bureaucracies, such as the *Health News* by the Ministry of Health (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a, p. 6). Since the party organs are overwhelmingly dominant in terms of number of titles and overall national circulation, Chinese journalists are often labeled as the mouthpiece of the Party or Party propagandists (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a, p. 7).

In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping (China’s de facto leader after Mao’s death in 1976) initiated a series of economic reforms in China. These changes led directly to the commercialization of China’s media in the early 1980s (e.g., Chan, 1993; Keller, 2003; Lee, 1990; X. Sun, 1998; Y.-Z. Zhao, 1998). The establishment of a media market impelled significant ideational (e.g., Y. Zhang, 2000) and structural changes in the Party-press system (e.g., a review by Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a). At the ideational level, “new” concepts of “audience” (*guanzhong*) and “reader” (*duzhe*) were introduced to the press, replacing the “old” concept of “masses” (*qunzhong*), a highly politicized concept anchoring the Party-press ideology (Y. Zhang, 2000). A market dimension grew to be a

¹³ There are three basic components of the principle: “(1) the news media must accept the Party’s guiding ideology as its own; (2) they must propagate the Party’s programs, policies, and directives; and (3) they must accept the Party’s organizational principles and press policies” (Y.-Z. Zhao, 1998, numbers added).

supplement to the “Party principle” as the mass media must consider the needs of the consumer market and carry out a propaganda function at the same time.

At the structural level, the influence of party organs declined dramatically by the mid-1990s, while bureaucratic papers and papers run by nonparty organizations (such as mass or professional organizations affiliated with government bureaucracies) rapidly gained market share. Bureaucratic papers not only severely undermined the circulation and advertising profits of the party organs but also led to enormous “political troubles” such as selling publication licenses and press cards to unauthorized individuals and groups (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a, p. 14). From 1996 to 1998, under the direction of the General Office of CCP’s Central Committee (GOCCPCC) and the State Council, GAPP launched a press-restructuring campaign in order to reduce the number of bureaucratic papers by around 15% (X. Sun, 1998). The restructuring campaign was not carried out smoothly. On August 29, 1999, the GOCCPCC and the State Council issued a “follow-up” regulatory order, once more carried out by GAPP, demanding all central and provincial bureaucratic organizations to significantly reduce the number of newspapers and periodicals under their control, to separate the print media industry from governmental affiliation, and to stop “arbitrarily apportioning” (*luan tanpai*) newspaper and periodical subscriptions to state organs at lower levels (GAPP, 1999; GOCCPCC & The State Council, 1999). Meanwhile, GAPP also started tightening control on press and publication licenses, unexpectedly leading to the boom of highly commercialized “metro

newspapers” which share registered licenses with local party organs as a way of strategically avoiding GAPP’s license control.¹⁴

In addition to restructuring bureaucratic news publications, another important step taken by the government to make Party organs more economically competitive was to consolidate major party organs and other media organizations into media groups. In January 1996, *Guangzhou Daily*, the party organ of CCP’s Guangzhou City Committee, was selected by the central authorities to form the first “socialist press group” in China (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a, p. 16). Since then media conglomeration has become a trend, for both political and economic reasons. By 2003 the central government approved the formation of 85 media groups all over the country, with 39 newspaper groups, 18 broadcasting and television groups, 14 publishing groups, eight distribution groups, and six film groups (Research Group, 2004).

Commercialization, and the political and economic chaos of its aftermath, is only part of the reason for the government to re-regulate the media market and to push toward conglomeration. Globalization plays an important role too. For example, media conglomeration is rationalized by the state as the first step to “link up with the international track” (*yu guoji jiegui*) and a crucial strategy in strengthening Chinese press’s competitiveness in the international market (Research Group, 2004; Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a, p. 17). Since China’s formal accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the government started to encourage foreign capital to invest in China’s media

¹⁴ This strategy is the reason why metro newspapers are also called China’s “state-run tabloids” (C. Huang, 2001).

market (see a review by C. Huang, 2004).¹⁵ Being exceptionally cautious, the government at first only allowed foreign investors to work in the production and distribution of cultural products and services, such as entertainment, museums, and travel services (Lin, 2004). For example, in 2001, Rupert Murdoch's Star Group obtained permission to directly broadcast non-news programs (such as entertainment shows) to cable television viewers in Guangdong province (C. Huang, 2004, p. 3).¹⁶ In 2004, the State Council officially announced that overseas investors would be allowed to form book, newspaper, and periodical wholesale and retail firms (Xin, 2004). Although they are not allowed to operate *news* organizations (including news agencies, newspapers, radio or television stations, broadcasting satellites, and backbone networks (McCullagh, 2008), overseas investors' enthusiasm does not seem to be dampened. In July 2004,

¹⁵ In fact, the first case of foreign investment in the Chinese press occurred long before China's entry into WTO. As early as August 1993, four years before Hong Kong's handover to China, a joint venture between a Hong Kong media company, the Wisdom Communication Ltd. (WCL), and a provincial bureaucratic newspaper, "The Modern Man" (*Xiandai ren Bao*) was formed in Guangzhou (see To & Yep, 2008). The paper was put under the shelter of the Guangdong Foreign Economic Commission, and the whole deal was fully legal in accordance with the Law of the Chinese-Foreign Joint Venture of the PRC and related regulations. Surprisingly, the Hong Kong partner held the majority (65%) of shares while the Chinese partner held the minority (35%). This type of arrangement is strictly forbidden today according to the State's Council's regulations on non-public capital's investment on China's cultural industry. The newspaper, however, only survived for 16 months. It was forced to close at the end of 1994 for some "non-economic" considerations by Beijing authorities. One conjecture is that the Hong Kong partner, WCL, initiated a protest against the Chinese government's arrest of Xi Yang, a Hong Kong journalist from *Ming Pao*, which is also a son-company of WCL. Because of that, *The Modern Man* has not been and will not be revived. Yiu Ming To and Ray Yep have done a careful study on this case (see To & Yep, 2008). Also, a Chinese journalist published, on his blog, a detailed memoir of his experience as a news reporter for *The Modern Man* during the joint-venture period (see S. Zhao, 2008).

¹⁶ Despite Murdoch's success in cultivating political ties with China's leaders, his attempt to make the News Corporation become a backdoor national broadcaster through an ally with a state-run satellite television channel in Qinghai was stopped by the Propaganda Department. According to several news reports, Murdoch said his business in China hit a "brick wall," and this failed deal may have cost him between 30 million and 60 million dollars (Kahn, 2007). On August 8, 2005, three months after Murdoch's failure, the State Council issued a regulation titled "State Council's several decisions on guiding the non-public capitals into cultural industry," that officially banned private and foreign investment in its news media sector including news agency, newspaper, publishing house, radio station, TV station, radio and TV signal broadcasting and relay station, satellite, and backbone network (The State Council, 2005).

Tom.com Group, an online service conglomerate based in Hong Kong, decided to invest about RMB 200 million in *Popular Computer Week (dian nao bao)*—an Information Technology (IT) weekly based in Chongqing Municipality—to form the first joint news company officially approved by GAPP in China (Cui, 2005).

The state's partial but persistent opening up of China's media market obviously aims to strengthen its domestic media industry through the introduction of foreign expertise and money. Meanwhile, under the "go out" policy, domestic media are also encouraged to explore the overseas market and to grow China's own "global media brands." In June 2004, *Guangzhou Daily* started sending its stories to Australian readers through the Australian edition of the Hong Kong-based *Sing Tao Daily*. In December 2004, the *Beijing Youth Daily*, a "target paper" run by Beijing Municipal Communist Youth League, listed its advertising division, Beijing Media Corporation, on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, becoming the first overseas-listed newspaper in China (Cui, 2005). In July 2010, the official *Xinhua News Agency* launched its 24-hour English-language news channel, *CNC World*. *Xinhua* also planned to open a newsroom in Times Square, an iconic location neighboring *Reuters*, *Conde Nast*, *News Corp*, and *The New York Times* (Barboza, 2010). These are only first steps that China has taken. On December 3, 2010, *China Daily*, one of the party organs of CCP's Central Committee, and a leading English paper with an average daily circulation of 300,000, launched its weekly European issue (Xinhua, 2010). A week later, a weekly Asian edition of *China Daily* also started rolling out, which targets a "high-end readership," such as politicians, scholars, and business leaders of Asian countries including Indonesia, Thailand, and

Singapore (Xinhua, 2010). Even provincial news organizations have been encouraged to “go out.” Although the *Nanfang News Group*, a press conglomerate run by CCP’s Guangdong provincial committee, was rejected for its bid on the U.S.-based *Newsweek* magazine (Z. Wang, 2010), in collaboration with the Malaysia-based *Sin Chew Daily*, it still aims to publish overseas editions of several of its news publications in all the major cities worldwide (G. Zeng, 2010).

As an integral part of the “go out” strategy, the globalization of China’s media certainly has its own political and ideological purposes. Li Congjun, the president of the Xinhua News Agency, clearly deliberates the rationale behind Xinhua’s global expansion as breaking “the monopoly and verbal hegemony” of the West (Fish & Dokoupil, 2010). The tagline is not a marketing slogan. Liu Yunshan, the director of the Central Propaganda Department, similarly defines press competition as “competition over discursive power” (*huayuquan de zhengduo*). As he further explains in a talk published by *Qiushi*, or *Seeking Truth* magazine, a core theoretical journal for Communist Party thoughts and ideologies, to improve its international competitive ability in the field of media, China needs to “further improve its ability to direct public opinion, to take over discursive power, and to win the initiative by constructing multi-language, broadly receptive, immensely informative, and strongly influential first-class international media that cover the whole globe.”¹⁷ Seemingly responding to Liu’s talk, *Qiushi* magazine launched its own English version on September 30, 2010, as “a gift to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China” (Xinhua, 2009). The English edition is

¹⁷ The complete version of Liu Yunshan’s article is not published online. Interestingly, its web version lacks the part on constructing a first-class international media. See the web version at <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/64094/8611969.html>. Accessed date: December 20, 2010.

not simply a translation of its Chinese counterpart. Aside from being a quarterly, “its contents and formats will be more catering to Western readership...The main purpose of this English edition is to help the Western society, especially theorists and academia, better understand CCP’s core values” (Xinhua, 2009).

Despite the apparent triumph of Chinese media’s “opening up” and “going out,” the Party-state has never seemed to relax. It knows very well that when global capital slowly but steadily makes its way into the local media market and when China’s media carefully but decisively expand their overseas market, the state-owned media must change roles, or at least develop new roles, that shift them away from being the Party’s propaganda instrument and toward providing products and services to both domestic and international readers and stockholders. Such a change will in turn undermine the Party’s absolute control at both the ideological and administrative levels.¹⁸

Yet the real challenge to the Party’s control comes from new information and communications technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet and mobile phones. According to the latest statistics provided by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), China has the world’s largest online population, with around 420 million Internet users as of June 30, 2010. Among these 420 million users, more than half (277 million) use mobile phones for Internet browsing (CNNIC, 2010). In 2001, China had

¹⁸ At the ideological level, a revival of nationalism has been growing. To balance the liberal “right-inclined” news media (e.g., the elite *Nanfang Weekend* or the city tabloid *Nanfang Metro News*), the Propaganda Department intentionally, at the policy level, supports the conservative “left-inclined” news organizations (such as the *Beijing Evenings* and the organ of CCP’s Youth League, *The China Youth*). At the administrative level, the state has loosened its tight control over personnel matters. Many news organizations can hire employees based on contracts, and can terminate the contracts if their employees perform badly. At the same time, media professionals have more freedom in terms of selecting the working unit. In the past, a journalist could easily lose his/her job for an influential but politically incorrect report. But today he/she can find a new job in the press because of the fame associated with the story.

already become the globe's biggest mobile phone market with 100 million users. The number quickly soared to almost 650 million by the end of January 2009 (W. Li, 2009). Fueled by the explosive growth of Internet and mobile phone users, information flows between China and other parts of the world becomes easy and fast. It becomes harder and harder for the Chinese government to control the information flows that penetrate into, travel within, and slide out of China. As virtual communities, electronic bulletin board systems (BBS), blogs, micro-blogs (the Chinese equivalent of Twitter), social networking websites, and Short Message Services (SMS) develop into popular means of communication, news and ideas that are not consistent with the Party's political stance can be easily accessed and exchanged.¹⁹

In 2003, during the early stage of the SARS outbreak, the Internet and SMS were the two major sources of information for ordinary Chinese people because the state attempted to cover up the epidemic (Tai & Sun, 2007). Messages from these "informal" networks of communication eventually "built up a fermenting pressure...in the state-run media to inform the public what was really happening" (Tai & Sun, 2007, p. 999). However, since the Propaganda Department had sent "forbidden directives" to all media outlets in China before the epidemic grew into a disaster, all journalists in China were, at first, forbidden to cover the disease and then, later, to publish only official news releases.

¹⁹ This kind of "chaotic condition" (from the view of the state) is also a factor of the complicated institutional and bureaucratic setting in China. There are a dozen of government departments that have the power to oversee the Internet and related issues. They are: (1) the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the CCP, (2) State Council Information Office, (3) Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), (4) General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), (5) State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), (6) Ministry of Culture (MOC), (7) Ministry of Health (MOH), (8) Ministry of Education (MOE), (9) State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC), (10) Ministry of Public Security (MPS), (11) Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), and (12) the State Secrecy Administration (SSA).

Messages and rumors that traveled via the Internet and mobile phones contradicted the “formal” information sources (such as print and broadcast media). As a result, those “informal” messages were regarded as doubtful and sometimes overlooked. On April 8, 2003, *TIME Magazine Online* published a letter from a military doctor in China, Jiang Yanyong, who publicly denounced the Chinese government for covering up the disease.²⁰ Two weeks later, the official count of SARS cases in Beijing increased from 37 to 339 almost overnight. The Health Minister Zhang Wenkang and the mayor of Beijing, Meng Xuenong, stepped down on the same day. These events increased the credibility of news circling via ICTs. Since then, more and more people turned to the Internet and other informal sources (such as SMS and verbal communication) for information on SARS.

The 2003 SARS epidemic was a turning point in many ways. The outbreak and its rapid progress around the world pushed the Chinese government to be more transparent. Meanwhile, the incident also motivated the Chinese people to seek uncensored information outside of the state’s control. Feeling threatened, in November 2003, the Chinese government initiated the Golden Shield Project (*jindun gongcheng*), a national censorship and surveillance project operated by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). Similar to the Great Firewall of China, a major task of the Golden Shield Project was to filter and block “inappropriate” information on the Internet by blocking IP

²⁰ On April 3, 2003, China’s Health Minister, Zhang Wenkang, publicly lied on a press conference on national television, saying that Beijing only had 12 SARS cases and only three people died of the disease. Infuriated by the lie, Jiang Yanyong, a 71-year-old retired physician at Beijing’s Chinese People’s Liberation Army General Hospital (No.301), emailed a signed statement to Time, saying that there were at least 60 SARS patients at one Beijing hospital and seven had died. Time published his email online on April 8. The World Health Organization (WHO) immediately raised Jiang’s allegations with Chinese government and issued warnings on travel to several Chinese cities. Two weeks later, the official count of SARS cases in Beijing was dramatically raised from 37 to 339, and both Health Minister Zhang and the mayor of Beijing were forced to resign.

addresses.²¹ The ultimate purpose of the project was “to integrate a gigantic online database with an all-encompassing surveillance network—incorporating speech and face recognition, closed-circuit television, smart cards, credit records, and Internet surveillance technologies” (Walton, 2001). When the whole project is fully completed, Chinese police will be able to monitor voice conversations and text messages via mobile phones. MPS claims that the project will help police improve their capability and efficiency and ensure the security of China; nonetheless, the project has already been seen as strong proof of China’s information censorship, a direct violation of human rights and China’s constitution (see a detailed analysis of the consequences caused by the Golden Shield Project by Q. He, 2008, pp. 170-173).²²

From “opening-up” to “going-out,” from commercialization to conglomeration, from promoting to curbing and intercepting information flow, the government has always played an overwhelmingly dominant role in China’s media transformation. But this dominance does not mean China’s media are easy to manipulate. “Maneuvering political wisdom,” “improvising,” “playing cutting-edge balls”—these terms are often used to describe how Chinese journalists strategically conform to the Party’s intervention in journalistic practices (e.g., Q. Liu, 2003; Z. Pan, 2000; Y.-Z. Zhao, 1998). On the one

²¹ Though the two are often confused with each other, the Golden Shield Project is in fact different from the Great Fire Wall (GFW). Simply speaking, the former is managed by the Ministry of Public Security while the latter is by CCP’s Central Committee. Therefore, the Golden Shield Project attempts to secure national and local stability, while the GFW is more about monitoring and directing public opinions (see Anonymous, 2010).

²² Ironically, another product of global integration of the economy and technology, China’s Internet filtering system obtains enormous help from several global technology conglomerates, including Cisco Systems, Nortel Networks, Sun Microsystems, and 3COM (Bambauer et al., 2005). Although human rights activists and organizations have constantly charged these corporations with actively assisting Chinese government in developing and maintaining Internet surveillance systems, there is no indication that these companies will retreat from the world’s largest consumer market.

hand, it is important to admit that these strategies can only work when there is a relatively “free” space between the state and the media. In today’s China, such freedom is clearly carved out by the economic reform. On the other hand, the boundaries of such a free space are not fixed. When strategies are played out or perceived by the state as tricks or even threats, the space will shrink or even disappear. There is constant tension between the structuring efforts of the state and the counter-structuring efforts of the media (though, of course, not all the media). Combined with a broader context of media commercialization, globalization, and pluralization (Lynch, 1999, p. 9), this tension constitutes an illuminating basis for research into the area of Chinese media transformation.

A Critical Review of Studies on China’s Media Transformation

Journalism and mass communication studies in China take a very different course as compared to their Western counterparts. Between 1949 (after the CCP gained power in China) and late 1970s (before the economic reform), Chinese scholars had rare exposure to Western theories of journalism (except for those of the Soviet Union). They had to develop their own approaches to media studies.²³ Back then the most dominant mass communication theory was the mass propaganda and persuasion model (see Chang, Chen, & Zhang, 1993). It was not until the early 1980s that scholars in China started to encounter Western (or more precisely, American) ideas and theories of journalism and mass communication. The key person was Wilbur Schramm. Schramm paid a short visit

²³ Chin-Chuan Lee (2005) makes a historical review on the models of journalistic practices in China since the late-Qing period, during which the nascent modern press started to emerge. As he proposes, there are three press models that characterize modern China: Confucian liberalism (1900s-1940s), Maoism (1949-present), and Communist capitalism (after the 1980s, especially after 1992).

to China in May 1982. During his stay at several universities in Shanghai and Beijing, he introduced communication studies to Chinese journalism researchers and students who were “rightly hungry to learn from Western liberal democracy and press freedom” (C. Huang, 2003, p. 446).

After 30 years of market-based reform, China has become deeply integrated within the global economy. As the state has been engaged in a systematic transformation from totalitarianism to authoritarianism,²⁴ mass media gradually shifted from a propaganda-centered approach to an audience/reader-centered one (Y. Zhang, 2000). To accommodate such a change, the government issued a large number of regulations specifically oriented toward mass media (C. Chen, 2001a, 2001b).²⁵ The “four-tiered media structure” that governs the media from state and provincial down to city and county levels starts to fall apart.²⁶ Practices of running news media and reporting stories

²⁴ Whether China is undergoing a transformation from totalitarian to authoritarian is debatable. Many scholars have accepted the transformation as a reality that provides a general political background for their research (Lee, 2000b; Y.-Z. Zhao, 1998). In many instances, scholars are more concerned with the possibility of China sustaining the authoritarian regime without political democracy (see a debate between Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley on China’s “regime institutionalization” in Gilley, 2003; Nathan, 2003).

²⁵ Although it is “administrative regulations and rules” rather than “laws” that govern different media sectors, the government started to incorporate legal validity as the premise of all regulations and to consider establishing a legal framework for the media system (Z. Guo, 2003). Meanwhile, as content provided by media outlets grew to be more prolific, the government’s regulatory strategies became more flexible and sophisticated. The core part of that content (i.e., hard news, such as political news and public affairs) is still being strictly controlled, while the peripheral part (i.e., soft news, such as entertainment and sports) is less closely monitored and thus gradually opens to private and international investors.

²⁶ In 1983, the Central Committee of CCP issued the No. 37 Document to introduce a four-tiered broadcasting system that corresponded to the four levels of administration within the government hierarchy—central, provincial, municipal, and county. The purpose of this policy was to strengthen the central government’s influence through increased television access for people. The four-tiered system was then extended to other media outlets including newspapers and the Internet (Z. Guo, 2003; Z. Hu, 2005; Z. Hu & Li, 2005). However, in 2003, the Chinese government started a restructuring campaign on newspaper and journal publications in order to (1) abolish mandatory subscriptions foisted upon villages and officials, (2) weed out newspapers and journals that yield no social or economic benefit, and (3) make the Chinese press more open to competition. As a result, more than 300 officially registered county

across regions (*yidi banbao* and *yidi jiandu*) have not only challenged local protectionism but also created rivalries among the media at various structural tiers. After China's entry into WTO in 2001, globalization has been expected to confound the domestic state-market interaction, to accelerate the process of liberating China's news media from the state's tight control (Chan & Qiu, 2002), and to pave the way for a journalistic paradigm shift from the Soviet propaganda model to the Americanized journalistic professionalism (Z. Pan & Chan, 2003). Regarding the process of China's media transformation as a "struggle between the forces liberated by market reform and centralized state control" (X.-L. Zhang, 2007, p. 58), the "state-versus-market" model soon became prominent.

Macro-Perspective: Commercialization and the State-Versus-Market Model

The state-versus-market model originally viewed the market as a progressive force that could undermine the domination of the party-state apparatus in China. Some scholars argue that commercialization has greatly expanded the scope of press freedom in China (e.g., C. Huang, 2001; X.-G. Zhang, 1993). For example, in a study of China's state-run tabloids (or metropolitan newspapers), Huang (2001) concludes, "the commercialization of China's media...is a significant and positive development towards a free press" (p. 447). However, other scholars find the opposite. They posit that commercialization does not necessarily predict press freedom (Lee, 2000a, p. 561), and that the post-1978 Chinese media landscape can be seen as a tug-of-war between the party and the market (Z. He, 2000). Some use the metaphor of a bird cage to describe a

newspapers were closed, meaning that the lowest tier of China's four-tiered media structure was nearly eliminated (X. Hu, 2005, Chapter 10).

false conception of press freedom created by the party-state (H. Chen & Chan, 1998). Others warn that the so-called capitalist market is not only *bounded by* but also *colluding with* the state. For example, based on their observation in the *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, Lee and his colleagues (2006) argue that China's party organs have transformed into "Party Publicity Inc.," operating like a business entity, sustaining financial pressures from the market while simultaneously promoting the image of the Party and its legitimacy through strategic ways to propagandize communist ideologies. In other words, when the media start to suffer from inadequate advertising revenues after the state stops providing subsidies, they have to serve two masters at the same time: the Party and the market. The challenge that China's media have to face is "how to appeal to the public while still steering clear of political trouble" (Link, 2005). This "two masters" system constitutes the most fundamental argument within the state-versus-market model.

The state-versus-market model has its problems: it is admittedly optimistic in its calculation of the results of China's capitalist reform. The model makes market liberalization a precondition for press freedom (and democracy). As Lee (2000b) points out, "Chinese journalism cannot be expected to make substantial advances in press freedom without the backing of a viable market economy, but the existence of a market economy does not guarantee press freedom" (p. 561). The reason behind such a "controlled commercialization" (Liebman, 2005, p. 23) is simply that China's political and administrative reforms have lagged "ever farther behind" (S. Wang, 2003b, p. 38). The state's earnest pursuit of economic achievements without yielding its strict control on the political system has actually created "illiberal and anti-democratic backlashes against

journalism” (Lee, 2000a, p. 570). As a result, the market and the state are now “transforming each other to become new sociopolitical powers” (E. K.-W. Ma, 2000, p. 27). Some scholar fears that “marketization has strengthened the authoritarian Party media, given their ability to repackage the official ideology and sell it with a profit” (Lee, 2000a, p. 561). It is hard for the state to let go its tight control over the media, but it is easy to milk these state’s new cash cows. For example, according to Lee, He, and Huang’s research, in 2004, the Shanghai Media Group submitted RMB \$600 million of its profit to the Shanghai authorities while only retained RMB \$100 million for the Group itself. As one interviewee laments, “[T]he Party gives them away, the Party takes them back” (Lee et al., 2007, p. 35).

Against this background, the theoretical assumption behind the original state-versus-market model is further adjusted to investigate the “double oppressions” upon the media from both the state and the market. For example, Zhao (1998) discovers collaborations between the Party-state and the elite class who mostly benefit from China’s economic reform. This kind of “state-market duet” not only suppresses voices of social members from the lower class but also reinforces the status quo. Lee and his colleagues (2007) study the “cement patron-client relations” between the media and the Party in Shanghai, a symbol of China’s economic boom. As they discover, such patron-client relations not only promote ultimate loyalty to the Party but also prevent horizontal coalitions among media organizations.

Yet the question of how to realize press freedom never stops. Reflecting upon the state-elite collaboration, Zhao (1998) proposes “a multisector, multitiered, pluralistic

media system organized around different principles and logics within a democratically constructed legal framework” as a direction for China’s media reform (p. 192). Tempting as it is, Zhao’s suggestion is not realistic. After the 1989 pro-democracy movement was suppressed, China started to suffer from an ideological vacuum. The 30 years of market reform made economic performance the only factor to retain CCP’s influence, leading to a serious legitimacy crisis. The current “fourth generation” leadership, under President Hu Jintao, has been trying to promote “harmony” instead of “tolerance” or “plurality” as a dominant political discourse. The agendum of “constructing a harmonious society” is more than a propaganda slogan. In the context of Confucianism, the idea of “harmony” implies collectivism, obedience, and homogeneity. Therefore, at the macro level, it is almost impossible to talk about press freedom if there is no structural change in the political system.

However, there is no single definition of press freedom; its differences in practice are even greater. The difficulty of realizing “press freedom” in a macrocosm does not necessarily rule out the possibility for individual journalists or their collectivities to pursue “freedom” in a microcosm. One important consequence of China’s economic reform is its introduction of “certain processes of secularization, formalization, and regularization” that allow the news media to evade “the all-encompassing, exclusionary, and absolutist socialist consciousness in Maoist mass campaigns,” to try on “media experimentation and news improvisation,” and to dilute state ideology (Lee, 2000a, p. 561). The problem is: strategies and improvisational negotiations performed by individual journalists and news organizations always vary case by case, and it is hard for

them to be reflected in and captured by the state-versus-market model, a theoretical model focusing on the big picture. Therefore it is necessary to analyze China's media transformation at the meso- and micro-level as well.

Meso-perspective: Professionalization and Stratification

Focusing on the strategies employed by media professionals to negotiate between the Party line and the market line offers an alternative perspective to study China's media transformation. Some scholars argue that great social change at both local and global level has inevitably transformed the underlying assumptions about journalistic practices, initiating a paradigm shift for journalism in China (Z. Pan & Chan, 2003). But rather than simply adopting the professional tenets from the West, China's journalists have actively reconstructed and reproduced the meaning of journalistic professionalism²⁷ in their everyday practice. Based on their field observation on the working tactics used by journalists from several news organizations, Pan and Lu (2003) conclude:

China's journalists clearly impute into their everyday practices the ideas that news-value judgments cannot be subsumed by political judgments; that journalists report facts, uncover the truth, and record history; and that

²⁷ The definition of professionalism has never been clear and consistent across time and space. Generally speaking, there are five types of interpretations of professionalism in Anglo-American societies. First, professions have been assumed to be distinctive occupations by a "checklist of traits" (Millerson, 1964) including "skills based on theory, agreed educational qualifications, mutual competence testing, adherence to codes of conduct and social responsibility" (de Burgh, 2003, p. 106). Second, some scholars regard professions as interest groups that effect a monopoly in the market (Larson, 1977) or as a unique form of occupational control of work well-suited to providing complex, discretionary services to the public (Freidson, 1994). Third, there is a revival of seeing professionalism as a normative value that was characterized by Emile Durkheim (1992) as a form of moral community based on occupational membership and by Talcott Parsons (1951) as vital to social order. The normative interpretation of professionalism suggests that the professional's training should cultivate proper balance between the interests of the self and the collectivity, which is sustained by interaction with the occupational community. The fourth group of scholars defines professionalism as a discourse, rather than an array of institutional protections or checklist of "traits" being used in places of work as a mechanism (Aldridge & Evetts, 2003). And last, there is Andrew Abbott's (1988) definition of professionalism as institutionalization of expertise, characterized by competing for jurisdiction over a knowledge system.

journalists adhere to a set of ethical codes of conduct in order to remain credible among the general public. All of these are among the canons of journalist professionalism. However, the ways in which these ideas manifest in practices are strictly local. First, these ideas are mixed with those from other discourses available in reform China, including that of the Party-press, Confucian intellectuals, and market economy. Second, these ideas manifest their relevance to journalistic work in journalists' usage of them in micro action settings. Consequently, these ideas are revealed in...different "ways of operating" (p. 224).

Pan and Lu's finding is interesting. Not only do they discover that the application of journalistic professionalism in China often depends on the particular contexts or the "micro-action settings," they also point out that media commercialization and globalization do not necessarily harm the old canon of "political correctness" or "Party principles." Rather, the journalists know how to "make their best choices in specific situations" (Z. Pan & Lu, 2003, p. 224). The immediate context perhaps matters more than the broad political economic context in terms of everyday journalistic practice. The tricky part lies in how to define or to perceive a situation as "specific." To answer this question, we need to first get to know China's journalists.

In the post-1949 China, journalists were often labeled "party's propagandists." Before the economic reform, they were educated to share the perspectives and practices under the Soviet model of the press. Principles of journalistic practices under this model include: "Loyalty to the party, consistency with the party lines, and observant of party's disciplines" (Z. Pan & Lu, 2003, p. 213, table 11.1). It is normal, even today, for Chinese journalists to comply with tight controls and endless directives from the Party. The ideological framework of media control was written into a series of "checklists of traits" regarding journalistic practices. The first and most important one was the "Chinese News

Workers' Code of Vocational Ethics" (*zhongguo xinwen gongzuozhe zhiye daode zhunze*).

The All-China Journalists' Association (*zhonghua quanguo xinwen gongzuozhe xiehui*) passed the code in January 1991 and issued a revision in January 1997.²⁸ The opening section of the code mainly emphasizes the political nature of Chinese journalism, such as, "the Chinese news sector is an important integral part of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics under the leadership of the CCP." The major part of the code lists six fundamental rules for Chinese journalists to follow: (1) serving the people whole-heartedly; (2) adhering to correct guidance of public opinion; (3) complying with the Constitution, laws and discipline; (4) ensuring the authenticity of news; (5) keeping honest and uncorrupted; and (6) carrying forward the spirit of solidarity and cooperation.

Like many other administrative regulations "with Chinese characteristics," the six rules of the code can actually be summarized into two rules: (1) Journalists must stick to the Party principle; and (2) When there is no conflict between the news value and the Party principle, journalists should follow the journalistic principle (such as ensuring the authenticity of news, no "paid journalism," and so on). As Nicolai Volland (2003) points out, the code is nothing but "a confession of faith in the political principles of the CCP" (p. 195). Therefore it is not surprising that the code has never been taken seriously.²⁹

²⁸ See a full text of the code at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2003-10-14/19271921005.shtml>. Accessed date: January 3, 2006.

²⁹ This practice does not mean that the Party's control over the press has been loosened. In a more latent way, the party-press system still dominates the field of journalism. For example, based on his field observation and interviews in Guangzhou in the 1990s, Latham (2000) found that local news producers openly acknowledged or even vociferously advocated "the ideological and pedagogical role of the media." A Chinese journalist even suggested news censorship from the Party because she thought complex news stories might lead to chaos in society and confusion among insufficiently educated people.

China's opening-up not only enriched but also complicated the "discursive milieu" of journalism in the homeland. Ideas such as journalistic professionalism were studied and incorporated into routine news production.³⁰ Western professional codes and rules, such as objectivity, fairness, and balance, seemed to override the "Party principle" and became the rule of thumb for journalistic practices. Academic discourses, such as viewing the press as "the fourth estate of society" or the fourth branch of the government, became well-received. These ideas were later transformed into a more concrete slogan to

³⁰ Globalization has brought a tremendous amount of material and symbolic resources to journalists in China from all over the world, which leads to a persistent transformation of their everyday practices. During the 20 years of "media reform," China has witnessed another tug of war between globalization and localization of journalistic ideas and practices. Globalization has pushed the frontline of Chinese journalistic practices from the national or regional borders to the world. For example, when two hijacked planes slammed into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, Chinese journalists crouched inside the New York Stock Exchange building, sending live reports from Manhattan to China. In 2003, China Central Television (CCTV) dispatched a five-member team to Baghdad to cover the U.S. war in Iraq. Until the end of February 2003, there were roughly 100 Chinese journalists from national and local news organizations in Iraq and nearby countries. "Such a sizable press corps...is rather unprecedented for the coverage of a war that is far removed from China, both geographically and politically," as *World Press Review* correspondents commented (X. Lei & Ma, 2003).

Being able to obtain more contacts with foreign news programs and practitioners, Chinese journalists begin to find inspirations in Western (more precisely, Anglo-American) professional exemplars. In 1996, the Department of Commentaries of CCTV created a number of news magazine shows including *Oriental Horizon (Dongfang Shikong)*, *Focus (Jiaodian Fangtan)*, and *News Probes (Xinwen Diaocha)*, which are modeled after CBS's 60 Minutes in the United States. Meanwhile, more and more journalists regard famous news reporters in the West as their "role models." Anthologies of Pulitzer Prize-winning news stories and biographies of media tycoons of the West (e.g., Rupert Murdoch) have been translated into Chinese and quickly become the bestsellers in many cities. China's media practitioners not only read these books but also cite their quotes and apply the ideas to daily practices. Many journalists took trips to news organizations in Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, Europe, and the Middle East (see Z. Pan, 2005).

In the field of journalism education some Chinese scholars advocate borrowing professional models from the West by making them more appropriate to the context of China (Lu, 2005). The number of journalism schools and programs soared from 232 in 2001 to 323 in 2002 (Cai, 2003, p. 68), an increase of almost 40 percent in one year. There are more than 100,000 registered journalism students all over the country, which is seven times greater than in 1997. There are nearly 25,000 students obtaining their undergraduate degrees in journalism every year, and that number is also growing rapidly (Song & Zhang, 2005). These students have been influenced by the professional thoughts and models taught at school. According to a large-scale survey among journalists and journalism students in China, Pan (2005) finds that there are "clear indications of how Western and overseas media may serve as sources of inspiration (in terms of professionalism)." As he further observes, "[T]he journalists and journalism students considered the overseas media outlets as being closer to their 'ideal news medium' and they gave the party-organ outlets low evaluation scores." Associating the survey results to the evidence of change we have seen at the socio-economic, organizational, and individual levels of China's journalistic practices, Pan's findings are not surprising.

describe the watchdog function of the press: *Yulun Jiandu*, or “supervision by public opinion” (or “supervision by the media”) (e.g., Z. Guo, 1999; Z. Pan & Chan, 2003; Z. Pan & Lu, 2003). However, muckraking does not change the nature of journalism, and the news has never been able to become an independent institution in China. As Liebman (2005) points out, “China’s media are not external actors, a Fourth Estate; they are one of the many competing Party-state institutions...” (p. 8). Working within the Party-state system means submission to constant political and economic interventions. “Supervision by the media” is in essence “supervision by the media who is supervised by the Party-state.” Even researchers who celebrated the rise of journalistic professionalism in China have to lament that it is “truncated and fragmented” (Z. Pan & Lu, 2003, p. 224).

We could not help but ask: Is China’s press a watchdog that always tries to pursue the truth even it is on a “Party leash” (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000b)? Or is it simply a lapdog, wearing a new commercial outfit to cover the old communist propaganda body? Are China’s journalists a “demagogue” that uses critical reporting as a way to challenge authority and to provide rebellious role models for the public? Or are they actually an “apologist” that serves the Party-state with “big help with little bad-mouth” (*xiao ma da bang mang*, which also means “marginal criticism and critical help”)? The answer is yes to all of above.

Before 1989, Chinese media’s watchdog work was also called playing “cutting-edge balls” (*da cabianqiu*) with the Party³¹: the press only published stories with

³¹ “Cutting-edge balls” can also be called “edge-ball” (e.g., Keane, 2001) or “hitting line balls” (Lee, 2005). According to Keane’s explanation, the term is “widely used in media and journalism to refer to creative compliance. The meaning comes from the game of ping-pong. Where the ball hits the edge of the table it is a winner” (Keane, 2001, p. 798, endnote V).

sensitive content when there was no strict forbiddance from the Party or when the Party has not realized the consequences (Liu, 2003). To play this game requires a clear and sophisticated understanding of the Party's bottom line, or the degree (*du*) of criticism that the Party can accept. Qin Benli, the chief editor of Shanghai's *World Economic Herald*, actually set forth "playing cutting-edge balls" as a policy of the newspaper. As he explained to a journalist from *The New York Times*, "It's like playing Ping-Pong...If you hit the ball and miss the end of the table, you lose. If you hit the near end of the table, it's too easy. So you want to aim to just nick the end of the table. That's our policy" (Kristof, 1989, para. 6). Although the *World Economic Herald* was shut down during the 1989 pro-democracy movement and Qin Benli was purged by the Party, playing "cutting-edge balls" has now become routine for many media outlets in China.

But it is only one of the strategies that China's press invents and utilizes to push the boundaries of Party control. After a short period of silence after 1989, Chinese journalists realized that the growing media market actually provided them more opportunities to be a "watchdog." The rise of investigative reporting in the mid-1990s is a good illustration (See Bandurski & Hala, 2010b; Tong, 2011; Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000b). Playing "cutting-edge balls" is still a popular strategy, but compared to the pre-1989 era, journalists have changed. The 1989 crackdown became a mental scar on most journalists' minds. Whenever they encounter a politically sensitive topic, they now choose to play the "safe card." Some call this "political wisdom" (*zhengzhi zhihui*).³² Others call it "scrape a mouthful of rice" (*hun kou fan chi*, or earn a living).³³ Cynicism

³² Interviewee 2008-01.

³³ Interviewee 2007-01.

somehow becomes a cover-up for the disappointment and frustration for the actually “lapdog” role taken by the media.

No matter how discontented they are, China’s news organizations and journalists are forced, by the tension between economic interests and political safeness, to quickly adjust to the new circumstances—among them an increasingly competitive news market, the rise of journalistic professionalism, and a changing strategy from the Party-state. An important development of journalists as a “community” since the late 1990s is the *division and stratification* within this particular community. According to Zhou Yihu’s (2008) research, the journalists in China have obviously split into three independent stratifications with their own interests and motivations: (1) the management class of the news institution; (2) journalists working “inside the system” (*ti zhi nei*); and (3) journalists working “outside the system” (*ti zhi wai*) (p. 326). More specifically:

The management class refers to those who work at the mid to high level of the news organizations. Most of them had a higher education... and were promoted to management positions in the early to mid 1980s. They are very familiar with the political system of the country, at the same time they are more or less influenced by the Western ideas of journalistic professionalism. These people are officials of the government, bosses of the news enterprise, and professionals of the press.

Journalists working inside the system refer to the “formal employees” on the “approved posts” (*bianzhi*) within the news organizations. They got into these organizations through job placement system under the planned economy, such as “job transfers” (*diao dong*) or “allocation upon college graduation” (*daxue biye fenpei*)...They share the same “insiders” identity with the management class and thus have strong bargaining power. Without special reasons, they cannot be fired. Most of them occupy management

positions at the lower level or certain important posts, which reward them with abundant political and economic opportunities.

Journalists working outside the system do not have the “approved posts” and thus are not authorized to receive social welfare privileges that state-owned working units provide. They fully depend on wage to make a living. Because of the restrictions imposed on their (informal) identities, most of them cannot be promoted to mid- or even lower-level management. They are the “rover journalists” (*liulang jizhe*)...most of them do not have the official license (a work permit) issued by the GAPP...More than 80% of Chinese journalists belong to this category...They do not sign working contracts and thus are not insured. Their wages are low and they work excessive lengths of time...They can be fired easily. Not only are they located at the bottom of the news organizations, they also have a strong sense of “being the bottom” (or being the grassroots). That is why they are called “news migrant workers (*xinwen mingong*)” (Y. Zhou, 2008, pp. 326-327, my parantheses and translation).

Zhou’s study is important because the stratification within the journalist community actually provides a different perspective, other than the journalistic professionalism approach, that allows us to explain why, how, and under what circumstances Chinese journalists employ specific strategies in their everyday practices.

Stratification means fissure, distinctions, and even emancipation. Because of the journalistic stratification, there appears to be more maneuvering space for each party of interest. For instance, the “rover journalists” seem to be positioned at a vulnerable and disadvantaged position, but they can also turn it into strength: since they have nothing to

lose, especially when they are still young and do not have many family responsibilities to fulfill, they can be bolder in news coverage than those working inside the system.

Journalists may improvise more under pressure. For example, a photo journalist from a city tabloid went to do undercover report among drug addicts just because his newspaper decided not to renew his contract. After he published a group of sharp, shocking, edgy pictures in the paper and won a famous photo prize, he received not a contract, but an “approved post” from the newspaper.³⁴

Media commercialization and internal stratification make “bargaining” a potential interaction between the journalists and the management, between the management and the financial investors, and between the media organization and higher officials. Such types of bargaining not only refer to “resistance” but also imply “accommodation.” As the state changes its “governmentality” (Foucault, 1991) or “techniques of governance,” journalists and media organizations also adopt, create, and develop strategies to accommodate to such a change. One important evidence is that when economic interest becomes a leverage for the market and the state, as opposed to disciplining the media, self-censorship³⁵ grows into a “normalized” practice (see Tong, 2009). However, contrary to conventional wisdom, sometimes self-censorship helps the media to “bypass a political minefield” and makes it possible to publish politically sensitive issues (Tong, 2009, p. 594). For individual journalists, their creativity is displayed in their works, such as the “Spring and Autumn writing style” (*chun qiu bi fa*),³⁶ a writing strategy used by

³⁴ Interviewee 2007-01.

³⁵ Interestingly, media’s self-censorship is sometimes triggered not by the “toughness” but by the “vagueness” of the state’s censorship measures (see Link, 2002).

³⁶ Interviewee 2007-02.

Confucius, who delicately contained either a complimentary or a derogatory message behind his essays, requiring one to read between the lines.

Micro-perspective: Networking and Alliance

Commercialization, professionalization, and internal stratification represent three major institutional changes that significantly affect China's media transformation and journalistic practices in the post-reform era. They mostly operate at the macro- and meso- levels. It is equally important to take into account changes happened at the micro-level. As Rui Bifeng (2009) argues, "in the power struggle on news production, what is involved is not just those institutional factors. The influence of many abnormal or informal factors cannot be simply neglected" (p. 15, my translation). A notable change at the micro-level is that the previously "informalized" and sometimes "secretized" coalition between journalists and actors from other social sectors becomes more and more open. Connections, or *Guanxi*, an old art of China's unique way of maintaining social relationships, gained significance in the press under this new context. Networking requires reciprocity and emotional investment. When Chinese journalists accept their allies' help in work, they have to pay them back, even if it is not always equivalently. That is why it is not surprising to find that Chinese journalists nowadays are maintaining an ambiguous relationship with the dominant power groups, especially the political and economic elites.

Yin and Wang (2007) provide a detailed analysis on how interpersonal connections associated with news beat changes Chinese journalists' career paths. The first group of journalists includes those who chose to climb the political ladder. That is,

they decided to become a member of the cadre system and were more inclined to accumulate “political capital” during their everyday practices. Most of them are on the “government beat.” It is hard to speculate which one comes first—does a journalist want to be a cadre so s/he chooses to do government affairs reporting or does s/he works on the government beat first and then decide to become a cadre? Either way, the emergence of “cadre fans” highlights an awkward arrangement that many Chinese journalists have to face, especially after a few years of working in the media. When a news reporter works for more than 10 years in one news organization, there are often two career paths s/he can choose: become an editor who has to work late everyday and gets paid based on workload or become a “cadre” who can get involved in the newspaper’s management and earn at least 10% more than ordinary journalists. Becoming a “cadre fan” can occur because there are no better alternatives.

The second group of journalists, according to Yin and Wang (2007), includes those who are more interested in economic benefits generated from their connections with news sources and advertising clients. For beat reporters, the difference between “rich beats” and “poor beats” is significant. The former usually refers to most business or finance-related areas, such as real estate, automobiles, telecommunication, banking, transportation, and so on. The latter refers to areas that cover agriculture, social incidents, social welfares, and so on. Journalists who are in charge of the “rich beats” not only receive big “red envelopes” (*hongbao*, or bribes) when they are invited to attend product promotions or company’s public relations activities, they can also draw a considerable percentage of advertising commission if they persuade the company to buy

advertisement space from their newspapers. Moreover, if the “rich beat” reporters can maintain a good relationship with their “client,” they can easily get a job offer from the client if they decide to leave the press. These offers rarely happen to the journalists on the “poor beats.”

Yin and Wang’s observation is especially insightful because both work for a major new media group in south China and draw conclusions from an insiders’ perspective.³⁷ Their conclusion, though interesting, fails to identify an important group of journalists. Even the most famous dissident journalists in China, such as He Qinglian, have to admit that there is a group of journalists who act differently. Most of these journalists are investigative news reporters or social news beat reporters (on the “poor beats”). They are the idealists among journalists who are more willing to defend human rights, to fight against social injustice, and to work like social activists.

The first two groups of journalists obviously cling to the center of the dominant class, since the whole focus of China today is to maintain political stability while keeping the rapid development of the economy. The idealists often work at the periphery.³⁸ They are more like the intellectuals defined by Karl Mannheim (1952)—“agents of a “free-floating intelligentsia... a social stratum relatively free of economic class interests, capable of acting a creative, independent political force in modern society” (quoted in Gu & Goldman, 2004, p. 3). Some call them “disparates:” even when the socio-political

³⁷ Yin and Wang’s article was published on *Modern China Studies*, a U.S.-based Chinese journal edited by overseas Chinese dissidents. Only a few months after its publication, the couple, both of whom worked for the *Nanfang News Group*, received harsh criticism from above, and eventually decided to leave their jobs. It is not clear whether it is because their analysis is too close to reality or because the journal is too sensitive.

³⁸ Certainly there are journalists that cannot be grouped to any of the three. One group is “pure journalists” who simply regard journalism as a “job.” They do not have political or economical pursuits. They live on salary and never participate in any form of alliance.

environment does not allow them to work in an ideal type of press condition, they find ways to confront or circumvent state censorship, economic enticement, editorial pressure, or even threats to their lives. For example, in opposition to the state's enduring efforts to cover up the AIDS epidemic, several Chinese journalists made enormous efforts to uncover the truth (Q. He, 2006). Long before the government officially admitted the severe situation of the AIDS epidemic in China, the *Huaxi Metro News*, a city tabloid from Sichuan, and the *Nanfang Weekend*, the most popular elite newspaper nationwide, published a number of stories on the "AIDS villages" in the heartland province of Henan, where thousands of villagers were infected by HIV via blood sale.

This group of journalistic idealists is not new. Chinese journalists have successfully pushed the boundaries of the Party's control, even though they have never been protected by law or the government. For instance, before the 1989 pro-democracy movement, some Chinese journalists formed an "informal coalition" with "other forces pursuing market-oriented reform and greater civil liberties" (X.-G. Zhang, 1993, p. 196). Amid the movement, more than a thousand journalists, mostly from Beijing, participated in a demonstration and signed a petition that called for press freedom. Slogans, such as "Don't force us to lie," were loudly shouted (Jernow & Thurston, 1993). Although the demonstration against press control was eventually shut down, like the movement itself, their courage has been passed down.

In December 2005, Yang Bin, the chief editor of the *Beijing News (Xin Jing Bao)*, was removed from his position. Meanwhile, the paper was commanded to stop publishing. Two more editors, labeled by the Party as "aggressive and disobedient," were

soon replaced by officials from the government. The state intended to teach the paper a lesson for its critiques on the government's efforts to cover up the chemical pollution of the Songhua River, from which residents of Harbin drank toxic water for days. After the decision to remove Yang Bin was released, nearly 100 journalists from the *Beijing News* immediately organized a strike to oppose the government's decision. This was the first time since 1989 that Chinese journalists publicly and collectively fought against the state in the hope of defending their beliefs in press freedom. Eventually, Yang Bin was discharged but the other two editors kept their jobs.

This incidence indicates that, although the results might be somewhat unpredictable, Chinese journalists still keep struggling and negotiating with the state, sometimes even in a collective form, which is still highly politically sensitive in China. But knowing how to struggle and negotiate becomes part of the "rules of the game" that journalists have to master in their work. Lee and his colleagues' observations on several Shanghai media outlets provide more evidence. As they explain, some journalists "struggle to wedge the media space a bit wider by, for example, trying to release a negative story before the pressure reaches them to kill it. It is vital for top media managers to cultivate cordial ties and communicate constantly with the Party authorities so if misunderstanding should arise it can be smoothed over" (Lee et al., 2007, p. 37).

Alliance, social networking, or even nepotism and clientelism, no matter what type of values are loaded onto these terms, China's journalists apparently rely heavily on social relations for their news practice, career building, and defense. This arrangement leads to an important feature of journalistic practices in China: news production is not

only connected to information sources and the socio-economic-political-cultural contexts, it also relies on individual journalists' *subjective interpretation* of their own "situation" (or "position"), such as their "personal" connections with the story. In other words, a news story may not simply be a product of institutional rules, professional codes, routines, or even ideology; it can also be influenced by the reporter's personal life experience and social relations.

Integrating the Macro-, Meso-, and Micro- Perspectives

Scholars often assume that the commercialization, globalization, and pluralization of the media would bring press freedom to China. However, economic reform is anything but a linear progression. As Victor Nee (1992) argues, China's market transition is "likely to produce hybrid market economies that reflect the persistence of the institutional centrality of their parent organizational form" because the characteristic of China's market transition is "strong government involvement" (Nee, 1992, pp. 22-23). Therefore, the uniqueness of China's market reform lies in its hybridity—a dual power structure that controls all the media in China: the Party and the market. This dual structure has also been clearly revealed in the "state-versus-market" model for China's media reform studies. Given the capacity and flexibility of the Party-state, it would be naïve to believe that marketization would bring press freedom to China in the short term. Media marketization is an unfinished project, and thus China's journalistic practices have to be scrutinized under the hybrid condition, a state-market-duet, formed through the ongoing economic reform and the upcoming reform, hopefully, in the political arena.

Against such a background, the journalistic practices in contemporary China have to be defined more carefully. Today, China's new generation of journalists cannot and should not be defined as "the throat and tongue of the Party." Compared to the old generation, most of whom were trained under the Soviet journalism model, the new generation is more inclined to practice their everyday trade under the perceived and adjusted version of journalistic professionalism. That is, they creatively appropriate the Western codes on journalistic professionalism and reproduce it in the Chinese context. Moreover, the young generation has more opportunities to get closer to their counterparts in the West; they have more choices in terms of the types of news organizations or media that they can work for; their salaries are usually above the average Chinese college graduate, and even higher than their peer groups; and they come into the profession for different reasons. Therefore, today's Chinese journalists can no longer be regarded as a "homogeneous" group of people.

It is clear that today's Chinese journalists have become more professional. What is not clear, however, is how they do their job on a daily basis and under what conditions. If we associate the structural change at the macro-level to the changes observed at the meso- and micro-levels, we will find the struggle between news control and press freedom; the negotiations among the media, the market, and the Party-state; the improvised strategies; and the formation of alliance are all heading toward a deep involvement with historical and social specificities as well as subjective interpretations³⁹ of such a complexity. However, the state-versus-market model, an analytical framework

³⁹ The "subjective interpretations" are not necessarily "conscious." I will get to this point later in this chapter.

that dominates the field of Chinese media transformation studies for decades, does not adequately consider the roles of concrete interpersonal, organizational, and societal relations during the process of media reform.

To illustrate China's media reform as a process more than a simply state-market interaction, I propose conceiving a conceptual model that allows us to simultaneously consider: (1) a politico-economic aspect that involves Party-state and market, (2) an organizational aspect that involves the newsroom, (3) a discursive aspect that involves social cultural contexts, and (4) a societal aspect that involves actors' interactivities both with and outside the newsroom. To paraphrase John B. Thompson's (1991) comments on the field of sociolinguistics, what is missing in contemporary Chinese journalism studies is "an account of the concrete, complicated ways in which (journalistic) practices and products are caught up in, and moulded by, the forms of power and inequality which are pervasive features of societies as they actually exist" (Thompson, 1991, p. 2).

Bringing Society Back In

Both Roya Akhavan-Majid (2004) and Hu Zhengrong (2005) propose incorporating a third dimension into the state-versus-market model for studying China's media transformation. Against the backdrop of China's effort to "de-ideologize" its governing philosophy through its market-oriented reform, Akhavan-Majid and Hu both notice that there is an emergence of interest-based forces (as opposed to the formerly ideology-based ones) that have pushed forward the boundaries of media reform in

China.⁴⁰ As Akhavan-Majid (2004) argues, "...many of the changes in China's mass media system during the post-Mao period have been achieved by spontaneous action on the part of non-state actors (e.g., citizens, journalists, entrepreneurs)...through what may be called 'creative renegotiation and expansion' of new policy openings initiated by the state" (2004, p. 554). Therefore, incorporating a dimension of "interest-based forces", or more directly, a dimension of "society," into the state-versus-market model may provide a new angle to examine consequences and to speculate on the future of China's media transformation.

The re-emergence of "society" in China has gained attention in the field of sociology of development, which mainly focuses on "countries in transition" such as Russia, Eastern Europe, and China (L. Sun, 2008, p. 92). Before China's economic reform, the state maintained a near monopoly on resources in every aspect in China, including the information resources delivered by the media.⁴¹ Since the state had to strengthen its total control over the society, the government strove to eliminate any social force inclined to be independent from the state. Consequently, it was rare to see any collaboration between the media and other social forces or to hear voices from individuals outside of the state's institutional systems. As Sun (2008) remarks, before the reform, "society, in the face of the preponderant presence of the seemingly omnipotent

⁴⁰ To Akhavan-Majid, the interest-based forces are represented by "non-state actors," including local authorities and private investors who are more interested in making profits from media commercialization than ideological supervision (2004, p. 561). Hu (2005), alternatively, attributes the forces to "public factors" resulted from "ascending desire for public interest" (2005, p. 4) in a "more stratified, diversified and mobilized" Chinese society since 1992 (2005, p. 6).

⁴¹ As I have reviewed early in this chapter, Chinese media was formerly regarded as an extension of the formal bureaucracy, which heavily relied on the state. Not only did the news organizations receive state's subsidies in order to maintain everyday operations but the journalists were also treated as the state's civil servants who acted as the state's spokespersons and who depended on the state.

state, virtually disappeared” (p. 99). After the reform, although the ultimate purpose of China’s economic reform is obviously aiming to maintain the CCP’s political monopoly since there is a lack of an equally implemented reform in the political and legal arena, the reform of economic institutions has to be carried with “a full-fledged transition of the whole society” (L. Sun, 2008, p. 93), of which China’s media system constitutes an integral part. More specifically, there are three changes:

First, China’s rapid economic growth has led to enormous social pressures that CCP has to deal with. During the thirty years of reform, CCP is forced to change its strategies of media control. On the surface, the Party seems to be more open to different opinions, but in essence the controlling method is becoming more and more sophisticated and professional. After the SARS outbreak in 2003, the establishment of a spokesperson system was soon implemented across central and local government departments and major social institutions.⁴² During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the government even hired an American public relations company to handle its overseas media relations.⁴³ While the government can manipulate truth and mandate all domestic media to send only official voices in a way that makes the media appear independent from the state (elevating the perceived credibility of the news), the establishment of a spokesperson system lifts the public’s expectation of government transparency on public affairs. As a result, the relationship between the government and the media has changed. With regard

⁴² Chinese government’s spokesperson system started in 1983 when a spokesperson “only showed up on diplomatic and other important political occasions” (Xinhua, 2003). After the outbreak of SARS in 2003, “Chinese senior leaders have reiterated the importance of opening information about government affairs and increasing administrative transparency, which asks for a comprehensive news release system with professionally trained spokespeople” (Xinhua, 2003).

⁴³ The company is the Chinese branch of *Hill and Knowlton, Inc.*, an international communications consultancy based in New York City (see Shen & Cai, 2008).

to such a change, a senior government official said, “We are promoting a shift from managing the press to serving it, treating reporters as ‘clients.’”⁴⁴

Second, opening up the media market leads to the introduction of foreign capital and human resources, which inevitably brings in different ideas and management methods. Journalists’ wages and salaries are no longer determined by administrative levels but also by the market. Meanwhile newspapers became thicker (in terms of pages)⁴⁵ and richer (in terms of revenues). A much larger amount of stories is now needed to fill the growing number of pages. Therefore the most traditional news sources, such as the government or other social institutions, became inadequate. As the media strive to find out more stories, “society” reemerges as their topic of interest. The rapid growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) not only indicates the expansion of civil society in China but also directly affects and restructures the state-society relationship.⁴⁶ Under the influence of a more intimate connection with the global civil societies and the rapid development of the Internet, China’s grassroots NGOs have formed a tight coalition with the media.

Thus, the third outcome: the nature of journalism has changed. In the past, most journalists regard themselves as the Party’s “throats and tongues” since the Party is the

⁴⁴ The senior official is Wang Guoqing, the vice-minister of the State Council Information Office, the chief information officer of the Chinese Cabinet. He is quoted during an interview with *China Daily* on January 4, 2007 (Qu & Zhao, 2007).

⁴⁵ According to a researcher from the Xinhua News Research Institute, from 1995 to 2004 the number of newspapers had not changed from 2000, but the total amount of pages increased from 35.96 billion to 123.56 billion. On average, the thickness of each newspaper more than tripled. The thickest newspaper in China’s history was published by the *Nanfang Metro Daily* on March 31, 2004, and the total number of pages reached 304 (G. Chen, 2006).

⁴⁶ According to the Wang Qiyang, the director of the Center for Policy Research from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, by the end of 2007 China had about 400,000 NGOs, including 212,000 social organizations (*shehui tuanti*, meaning organizations organized by the mass), 174,000 private non-profit organizations (*minban feiqiye danwei*), and 1,340 foundations (*jijinhui*) (W. Sun & Cui, 2008).

only master to serve. Today journalists must deal with forces from other social arenas as well. They must learn to negotiate between the lines of political correctness, economic profitability, and social responsibility. But most importantly, during the process of changing their reporting strategies, the journalists also reconstructed the “logic” of journalistic practices in China. For example, when reviewing the role of media in China’s legal system, Liebman (2005) finds, “[T]he media’s traditional close links to the Communist Party, combined with financial incentives brought on by commercialization and increased attempts to satisfy viewer and reader demands, *make them particularly able to influence courts and other official actors*” (p. 8, my italics). Therefore, China’s media seem to be empowered by their Party position and their popular market appeal. Their relationship with both the state and the market is not one-way. In this sense, it may be more appropriate to regard China’s media professionals as “policy entrepreneurs”⁴⁷ rather than “policy followers.”

All of these changes cannot be fully reflected in the state-versus-market model. That model provides a single, though very significant context, in which China’s press transformation occurs at the macro-level while obscuring the changes at the micro- or even the meso- levels. As some scholars criticize, this model does not take into account “concrete social and communicative relations both implicated in and engendered by this transformation” (Y.-Z. Zhao, 2000a, p. 5). It also ignores “some potentially dynamic forces, such as social awareness of civil rights, which have... already played an

⁴⁷ Andrew Mertha (2009) proposes to define the journalists and editors in China as a type of “policy entrepreneurs” (p. 997). Borrowed from John W. Kingdon, Mertha defines policy entrepreneurs as “advocates for proposals or for the prominence of an idea” and describes their defining characteristic as “their willingness to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return...including in the form of policies of which they approve” (Mertha, 2009, p. 996).

increasingly important role in Chinese media transition” (Z. Hu, 2005, p. 4). What is missing here is a new dimension, a new force that needs to be considered when discussing China’s media reform. It is a dimension of “society.” The questions are: What is society? Why is important to specify the irreplaceable location of society in the state-market constructions? How to theorize such a “state-market-society” model? Why is this triplicity superior to the traditional “state-versus-market” model? In the next chapter I will try to answer these questions by appropriating Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice to the study of contemporary Chinese media transformation.

Chapter 2

A Bourdieusian Approach to China's Media Transformation & Journalistic Practices

Barbie Zelizer (2004) argues that academic inquiry on journalism “emerges from and through different interpretive communities, defined by their shared strategies for interpreting evidence” (p. 13). The specific research discipline, the “interpretive community,” that I am engaging in this dissertation is media sociology. In general, media sociology endeavors to understand the media “as an internal production process and as a general frame for categorizing the social world” (Couldry, 2003, p. 653). Its historical trajectory is intertwined with the development of public opinion research in the field of political communication, most noticeably influenced by the “two-step flow model of mass communication” established by Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld during World War II. Until the late 1970s, a concentrated focus on how media messages affected the public shaped the dominant paradigm for media sociology (see a critical review by Gitlin, 1978).

In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers who followed the functional-structural tradition of studying occupation (or profession) and organization in sociology shifted their research objects to the mass media, such as studying journalistic professionalism (Tuchman, 1978) and the norms of objectivity of the press (Schiller, 1981; Schudson, 1978). Researchers from media sociology intended to understand media message construction from a variety of perspectives, including the individual characteristics of

newsmakers, their working routines and organizational settings, the institutional arrangements of media, and the cultural and/or ideological contexts within which they operate (see a review by Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).⁴⁸ However, the rapid development of mass communication research as *a distinct discipline* after World War II—even though the field itself is built upon an array of more established disciplines, such as history, psychology, political science, economics, and sociology—has not successfully led up to an “interpretive community” shared between media studies and the subfield of sociology on news institutions. The mutual indifference has existed for decades (Schudson & Anderson, 2009, p. 88).

Only recently has there appeared a revival of media sociology, largely resulted from the growing popularity of sociological theories developed by Pierre Bourdieu⁴⁹ (e.g., field theory), Jürgen Habermas (e.g., public sphere), Manuel Castells (e.g., media power), Erving Goffman (e.g., frame theory), Ulrich Beck (e.g., risk society), and others. One of the most attentive progresses is the application of Bourdieu’s field theory to empirical studies on journalism (Benson, 1999, 2004, 2006; Benson & Neveu, 2005; Couldry, 2003; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Krause, 2011; Marliere, 1998).⁵⁰ This “field

⁴⁸ In fact, Shoemaker and Reese elaborate on their view on news content construction and argue that the scope of media sociological research can be nicely summarized in their “hierarchy of influences model” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

⁴⁹ Application of Bourdieu’s theory to empirical studies of journalism started to get attention in the late 1990s, especially after Bourdieu’s most popular book, *On Television and Journalism*, was published in English in 1998.

⁵⁰ Calling for a revival of media sociology, in 2005, Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu compiled theoretical and empirical essays that connect Bourdieu’s theory of field to journalism and published the book, *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. Scholars who contributed to the book are mostly from France and the United States including Pierre Bourdieu himself, his student, Patrick Champagne, and other renowned media sociologists, such as Michael Schudson and Daniel C. Hallin. Besides the book, researchers from other countries, mostly Europeans, also show great interest in applying field theory into their studies on journalism in a specific national context. Examples include Jan Fredrik Hovden’s (2001) research in

approach” to journalism studies argues that the journalistic field (or media field, sometimes) is a pivotal part of cultural production because it produces and disseminates knowledge to a widely reachable readership/audience. As it states, “the ‘field’ opens up a new *unit of analysis* for media research: the entire universe of journalists and media organizations acting and reacting in relation to one another” (Benson & Neveu, 2005, p. 11).

However, because of a narrowed concentration on the concept of “field,” much of the research on the “journalistic field” only reveals a renewed interest on news production in news organizations, while the problem of agency and autonomy are not being sufficiently addressed (see critiques by Hallin, 2005; Schudson, 2005). The problem is: when conducting empirical studies, Benson and most other advocates of “field theory,” even though they emphasize the importance of actors in the formation and dynamics of a field, basically apply field theory as a “spatial concept” that either regards journalism as what happens in the newsroom at the meso-level or as a reflection of the broad political economic and cultural structures at the macro-level. This clearly reflects the lingering influence of newsroom ethnographies from the late 1970s, which “used newsrooms as stand-ins for the broader picture of journalism” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 68).

Bourdieu also attempts to distance his definition of journalism from merely conceiving of it in an organizational form. He does *not* think a news organization or an association of news organizations *per se* forms a field. To define the boundaries of the journalistic field, Bourdieu borrows Michael Schudson’s (1978) discussion of

Norway, Ida Schultz’s (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) ethnographic field study of Danish news values, and Monika Krause (2011) on the U.S. news media.

“objectivity” as an example. As he argues, only when studying the concrete, “the detail of a particular historical conjuncture” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 90)—such as, the development of “newspapers concerned with standards of respectability...which distinguishes ‘news’ from the mere ‘stories’ of tabloids”—that you can see how a field is formed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). In other words, the boundaries of a specific field are not decided by the shared nature of certain organizations or the similarities of professions taken by certain groups of individuals.⁵¹ Field should be treated as “analytically distinct” (Martin, 2003, p. 23).

I prefer to adopt and appropriate Bourdieu’s theory of practice, instead of the “field theory,” to construct a theoretical framework for the study of journalism. This “practice approach” corresponds to one important disciplinary premise of sociology; that is, to regard journalists as “agents of modernity” and to emphasize people—the patterns of how they group themselves into organizational and institutional settings, how they act in response to the surrounding structures, and the functions and effects that result from their work (Zelizer, 2004, p. 47). In contrast, when explaining the change, development and dynamics in journalism, the “field approach” seems to rely more on the structural factors, especially the interplay between the political and economic fields. This does not make it easily to differentiate from the traditional political economic approach.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the philosophical foundations of Bourdieu’s thoughts and how his works connect with my research; then I will introduce the major

⁵¹ However, Bourdieu does not always maintain this view. As John Levi Martin (2003) notes, Bourdieu’s fields “have changed over the course of his work: at some times he emphasizes an overall social field reducible to dimensions of capital...more generally...fields coincide with familiar divisions of action into self-contained realms of endeavor such as sport or art” (p. 30).

theoretical concepts that Bourdieu employs to construct his own logic of practice; and finally I will articulate Bourdieu's theory of practice to the specific context of China's media reform and propose the theoretical framework for my dissertation.

Why Bourdieu?

At the end of the last chapter, I ask: why it is so important and how it is possible to add a dimension of "society" to the "state-versus-market" model in order to examine and to explain media transformation in contemporary China. Those questions apparently assume that "society," along with the "state" and "market," constitutes crucial contextual factors that influence journalists' understanding of the "news facts" that they will later selectively present in their news works. But if we detach the context of contemporary China from these questions, nothing seems unfamiliar. All of these questions are talking about environmental or structural influences on news selection and production, which have already been carefully studied since as early as the mid-1960s (see reviews by Cottle, 2000; Holz & Wright, 1979; McQuail, 1985; Schudson, 2003; Tuchman, 2002; Zelizer, 2004).

If we follow this long academic tradition, we may find one repetitively asked question throughout the history: What/who controls the media? As many have argued, news is produced as a result of compliance to "social control" through organizational and occupational routines in the newsroom or a certain dominant ideology or value system in a broader social context.⁵² Without attempting to refute these arguments, what I am

⁵² For example, to Herbert Gans (1979), journalists are "by no means totally free agents" (p. 79). Although he does not think newsmaking can be explained by any single factor, he treats news sources as of "prime significance" (p. 281). In Gan's analysis, journalists often considered the availability and suitability of

trying to do here is offer a different perspective. I view news as something more than a static structure or institution. It is *relational*. From the production to the consumption of news content, in each step of the information flow, there is a process of “internalization,” “externalization,” and “socialization”—an exchange of things among human beings in symbolic or material forms. Use the news production in China as an example. As I reviewed in last chapter, the changes that happened in China’s media transformation cannot be simply explained by reforms at the structural levels, neither can it be summarized as organizational change. What we can see is the intertwinement of both the external and internal influences as well as the divisions and stratifications that resulted from the differences in personal choices when facing the same type of structural change. This is where I find Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice relevant. But before I elaborate on this theory of practice, I shall give you a brief introduction of Bourdieu’s philosophical background and thoughts.

There are mainly four philosophical schools that have influenced Bourdieu’s theoretical inquiries: phenomenology (e.g., Husserl, Heidegger, Schütz, Merleau-Ponty, and Wittgenstein), Marxism (especially the early and middle Marx; but Bourdieu is loosely connected to Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse as well), structuralism (e.g., Saussure and Lévi-Strauss), and existentialism (e.g, Sartre). Bourdieu further draws upon a neo-Kantian epistemology developed by, for example, Gaston Bachelard and Georges

sources during news selection and production, but the relationship between sources and journalists “resembles a dance” and “more often than not, sources do the leading” (p. 116). To Tuchman (1978), making news is a collective action, it “serves organizational interests by *reaffirming* the institutional processes in which newswork is embedded” (p. 12, my italics), the attitudes implied from in the news are “inevitably those of middle-class Americans” (p. 177), and that is why “news legitimates the status quo” (p. 14).

Canguilhem, who engage in the historicist philosophy of science, and Ernst Cassirer from the Marburg School of neo-Kantianism. In addition, Weber's account of Western rationalization and Durkheim's theoretical distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity are both critical to Bourdieu's theoretical development (see reviews by Brubaker, 1985; Brubaker, 2004; Jenkins, 1992, 2002; Robbins, 2002; Wacquant, 1993).

For Bourdieu, one of the most important motivations behind his intellectual inquires is to challenge "misleading dichotomies," such as the objective/subjective dichotomy (Calhoun, 2003, p. 286). Bourdieu's main mission is to "transcend" it (see a critical discussion by Vandenberghe, 1999). In Bourdieu's argument, "reality" has to be understood in the *relationship* between subjectivity and the objective social world. He firmly rejects objectivism because it fails to recognize that social reality is shaped by conceptions and representations conceived within the individuals' sense-making of the world. He rejects subjectivism as well because it fails to grasp the social foundation that forms the agents' minds. In other words, neither objectivism nor subjectivism can make "the second step back—the epistemological break with routine scientific modes of apprehension"⁵³ (Jenkins, 2002, p. 51).

⁵³ Bourdieu's epistemological break involves the "two steps back": "...the first step back is from the situation in question... while the second step back is from the act of observation itself" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 27). In other words, the first step back refers to sociologists' efforts to "objectify" the research phenomena; and the second step back refers to the "objectification of the act of objectification," or the efforts to "objectify" sociologists' first step. Bourdieu explains his "epistemological break" as follows: (1) social science must "break with native experience and the native representation of that experience;" and (2) social science must "call into question the presuppositions inherent in the position of the 'objective' observer who, seeking to interpret practices, tends to bring into the object the principles of his relation to the object..." (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 27). Bourdieu argues that neither objectivism nor subjectivism are able to make "the second step back;" that is, they cannot make "the epistemological break with routine scientific modes of apprehension," they cannot understand "practical knowledge," and thus they "cannot understand the social world at all" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 30).

Therefore, in order to “transcend” the false dichotomy of “subjectivism” and “objectivism,” Bourdieu wants to “develop a concept of agent free from the voluntarism and idealism of subjectivist accounts and a concept of social space free from the deterministic and mechanistic causality inherent in many objectivist approaches” (Johnson, 1993, p. 4). Bourdieu believes “the two moments, the subjectivist and the objectivist, stand in a dialectical relationship” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 15).⁵⁴ He attempts to develop a theory of practice that can “move beyond objectivism without relapsing into subjectivism” (Thompson, 1991, p. 12) and account for an “ontological complicity” between objective structures and internalized structures (Grenfell, 2008, p. 44). Bourdieu wants to, on the one hand, avoid the objectivist account of human action, which is “understood as a mechanical reaction ‘without an agent;’” and on the other hand, to escape from the subjectivism that “portrays action as the deliberate pursuit of a conscious intention” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 121). In other words, practice is neither determined by structural constraints nor by “free will;” rather, it is mutually constituted by both.

But this “mutual constitution” is more than a simple engagement between the structure and agency. In Bourdieu’s terms, practice is “the site of the dialectic of the

⁵⁴ Although Bourdieu emphasizes the “dialectical relationship” between subjectivism and objectivism, to many scholars, he seems to be more objectivist-oriented (e.g., King, 2000). For example, the quote cited here is actually used by Bourdieu to attack the ethno-methodologists who often regard scientific knowledge as a “construct of construct.” As he criticizes, “...even if the subjectivist moment seems very close, when taken separately, to interactionist or ethnomethodological analyses, it still differs radically from them: points of view are grasped as such and related to the positions they occupy in the structure of agents under consideration” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 15). However, such an attack does not mean that Bourdieu is more inclined to accept objectivism. The reason why Bourdieu seems to disagree more with the subjectivists, in my interpretation, is an instinctive reaction to the acclaimed, popular, or even somewhat dominant, existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre during the 1960s when Bourdieu started to formulate his own theories. However, it has also been revealed, for example, by Rogers Brubaker (1985, 2004), that Bourdieu started an effort to transcend the “antithetical poles of a basic opposition” between Sartre’s voluntarism and Claude Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism (Brubaker, 2004, p. 30).

opus operatum and the *modus operandi*;⁵⁵ of the objectified products and the incorporated products of historical practice; of structures and *habitus*⁵⁶” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 52, original italics). That is to say—at the risk of distorting what Bourdieu actually means—structure affects the agent through being “inoculated” in the agent’s dispositions and thus the agency of the agent is not free from the structural influence; while the “inoculated” structure in the agent is not the original one, it goes through the agent’s perception and becomes a “perceived structure.” Therefore, practice is a product as well as a representation of the dialectic of the “objectified subjectivity” and the “subjectified objectivity.”

In a relatively linear fashion of interpretation, Bourdieu’s theoretical orientation is to show “how structures are meaningfully incorporated into agents’ most deep-rooted dispositions in the form of anticipated outcomes over time. Perceived outcomes direct psychological investments and govern expenditures of energy in the broadest sense—in turn reinforcing or further weakening existing structures” (Fowler, 2001, p. 316). There are three key concepts that need to be further elaborated: habitus, capital, and field.

Bourdieu’s “Holy Trinity:” Habitus, Field, and Capital

Habitus, field, and capital are also called Bourdieu’s “holy trinity.” He uses these three concepts across almost all of his academic works. With the help of these three related concepts, Bourdieu tries to demonstrate how structures (1) are incorporated

⁵⁵ *Opus operatum* originally means “the work which has been done.” But traditionally the term has been used to refer to the “divinely created universe.” Bourdieu uses it to refer to “those objective and prior cultural and structural features of a society (which, like the universe, are beyond humans)...” or simply a “set of social rules” (King, 2000, p. 422). By *modus operandi*, which literally means “the mode of operating,” Bourdieu refers to “the practical strategies which individuals adopt” (King, 2000, p. 422).

⁵⁶ Habitus can be conveniently defined as “a set of dispositions.” But in Bourdieu’s theory, it is more complicated than that. I will discuss this concept later in this chapter.

into actors' dispositions over time, (2) become the source of practices, and (3) are subsequently reproduced through the "bodily hexis."⁵⁷ In other words, the "holy trinity" reveals a constant process of production and reproduction, incorporating and incorporated, between the structure and the agent. I will now explain the three concepts one by one.

Habitus

Habitus, originally a Latin word, appropriated by Bourdieu as a "theoretical intention...to get out from under the philosophy of consciousness without doing away with the agent, in its truth of a practical operator of object constructions" (Johnson, 1993, p. 5). Simply put, habitus refers to a set of dispositions that the social actors carry around in their minds (without necessarily knowing it) as a result of their social experience in certain "fields" (such as the fields of economics, politics, religion, culture, education, and so on). At the same time, this set of dispositions makes the actors inclined to act and react in certain ways. In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu (1990b) defines habitus as follows:

⁵⁷ Simply put, bodily hexis is a type of habitus. But it makes it possible for the "communication" between people through body languages, even just very tiny ones. According to Bourdieu (1990b), bodily hexis is "political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 69-70). He uses the difference between man and woman in the ways of posing, moving, and eating as illustrations of this concept. As he further explains, "[W]hen the properties and movements of the body are socially qualified, the most fundamental social choices are naturalized and the body, with its properties and its movements, is constituted as an analogical operator establishing all kinds of practical equivalences among the different divisions of the social world—divisions between the sexes, between the age groups and between the social classes—or, more precisely, among the meanings and values associated with the individuals occupying practically equivalent positions in the spaces defined by these divisions" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 71). As such, the body becomes the site of incorporated history, a convergence of time and space. Farnell (2000) further explains the body's "internalization" of history in hexis. As she says, "Bourdieu's move to embody social theory relies on the dual notions of *habitus* and *hexis*, the latter with a meaning similar to the Latin *habitus*. 'Bodily hexis' denotes a personal manner and style in matters such as deportment, stance, gait, and gesture that 'combines with the social'" (note 3).

...durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (p. 53).

In another essay, Bourdieu (1990a) tries to explain habitus as the source of action, the internalization of society, and something mediating between the objectivity and subjectivity:

The source of historical action, that of the artist, the scientist, or the member of government just as much as that of the worker or the petty civil servant, is not an active subject confronting society as if that society were an object constituted externally. The source resides neither in consciousness nor in things but in the relationship between two stages of the social, that is, between the history objectified in things, in the form of institutions, and in the history incarnated in bodies, in the form of that system of enduring dispositions which I call habitus. The body is in the social world but the social world is also in the body (p. 190). It seems to Bourdieu that habitus reveals itself in both time and space: it is a

mediator between the past and the present, and a mediator between the agent and the structure. In Bourdieu's terminology, dispositions or habitus⁵⁸ need to be understood as a "feel for the game" or a "practical sense" that "inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a manner that is *not* always calculated and that is *not* simply a question of conscious obedience to rules" (Johnson, 1993, p. 5, my italics).

This "game" metaphor seems to imply the application of "rules" in the conceptualization of habitus, because a game must have rules. To better understand the concept of habitus, I must emphasize here that Bourdieu is highly reluctant to use the term "rule." To Bourdieu, there are two very different ways of using the word "rule":

⁵⁸ In fact, Bourdieu often uses dispositions and habitus interchangeably, which somewhat obscures the clarity of his argument.

(1) rule can be “an explanatory hypothesis formulated by the theorist in order to explain what he sees;” and (2) rule is also used as “the principle which really governs the practice of the agents concerned” (Bouveresse, 1999, p. 46). When an observer applies “rule” to describe an agent’s action, he has to construct a “theoretical model... in order to account for it...by setting up as the principle of practice or institutions objectively governed by rules *unknown* to the agent” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 40, my italics). Hence, the danger of using “rules” or the term “rule” resides in: (1) asserting “the universality and eternity of the logical categories that govern ‘the unconscious activity of the mind’”; (2) reducing “historical agents to the role of ‘supports’ (*Träger*) of the structure”; (3) reducing the agents’ actions to “mere epiphenomenal manifestations of the structure’s own power to develop itself and to determine and overdetermine other structures”; and (4) ignoring “the dialectic of social structures and ...dispositions⁵⁹ through which schemes⁶⁰ of thought are formed and transformed” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 41, original parentheses). Only against this background can we understand why habitus is “not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules.”

According to Bourdieu, habitus are shaped during a long process of inculcation,⁶¹ starting from early childhood, and become a “second sense” or a “second nature” of the agent. Habitus are: (1) “experiences” from the past, carried by the agents to the presence

⁵⁹ It is important to emphasize that Bourdieu does not mean that “structure” and “dispositions” are two separate systems. They are intertwined, such as, dispositions are structured by structures and at the same time are structuring structures.

⁶⁰ To Bourdieu, “schemes” can be “logical categories,” “principles of division,” or “temporal structures,” which are “one of the mediations through which the objective structures ultimately structure all experience...without following the paths of either mechanical determination or adequate consciousness” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 41).

⁶¹ Inculcation here means the socialization of agents not only into a particular culture but also into the subordinate or dominant positions within the culture. The latter differentiates Bourdieu’s theory of habitus from the Parsonian problem of social order (Bohman, 1999, pp. 132-133).

and the future, and thus are “*durable*” but not “eternal”; (2) “practical senses” that allow the agents to understand the external conditions and to make decisions on what to do on certain situations, and thus are “*generative*” and “*transposable*”; and (3) “natural reactions,” deeply embedded in the agents’ minds, that do not need to be intentionally activated when the agents take actions, and thus are “*unconscious*.” Durable, generative, transposable and unconscious are four major features of habitus in Bourdieu’s theory. However, the last one, “unconscious,” is the most difficult to understand and thus causes a lot of controversies among scholars (see Bohman, 1999; Farnell, 2000; Jenkins, 1992, 2002; Margolis, 1999).

First, habitus is the agent’s “second nature,” “a spontaneity without consciousness or will, opposed as much to the mechanical necessity of things without history in mechanistic theories as it is to the reflexive freedom of subjects ‘without inertia’ in rationalist theories” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 56). Bourdieu suggests that habitus is inscribed in ‘bodily hexis,’ where the body is treated as a memory and is stored with “the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 94). Furthermore, these principles “em-bodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 94). As such, habitus becomes habitual and unreflexive: “[T]he agent does what he or she ‘has to do’ without posing it explicitly as a goal – beneath the level of calculation and even consciousness, beneath discourse and representation” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128).

Second, given that habitus is almost “determined” to be unconscious, Bourdieu still leaves room for the possibility of “rational choice.” He suggests, during “times of crises,” when “the routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures is brutally disrupted...‘rational choice’ may take over, at least among those agents who are in a position to be rational” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 131). To make this situation more particular, Bourdieu insists: (1) “The immediate fit between habitus and field” is the “most prevalent” modality of action (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 131), which means habitus works unconsciously most of the time because “the conditions in which *habitus* functions have remained identical, or similar, to the conditions in which it was constituted” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 62); and (2) even when an action is carried out at a conscious level, “accompanied by a strategic calculation of costs and benefits,” habitus carries out the operations “in its own way” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 131). In other words, the conscious/calculated and the unconscious/habitual modalities of action are not sharply different.⁶² It is no wonder Jenkins (2002) suggests that it would make more sense to

⁶² Bourdieu calls the “choices” made through habitus as “the most paradoxical property of the habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 61). That is because, as he explains, new experiences are structured by habitus “in accordance with the structures produced by past experiences,” which leads to selective exposure to and cognition of new information in order to “avoid information” (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 60-61). As such, “the *habitus* tends to protect itself from crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible, that is, a relatively constant universe of situations tending to reinforce its dispositions by offering the market most favourable to its products” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 61, original italics). Therefore, to Bourdieu, even when an individual makes a “choice,” the choice itself is adopted because of its “fit” with past experiences and the “field” in which it functions. This seems to be similar to Joseph T. Klapper’s (1960) limited effects theory on communication, which emphasizes the selective exposure, perception and retention of media messages among the audiences. Although Bourdieu does not take the psychological approach as Klapper does, he does acknowledge “a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world...and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to them” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 1).

interpret Bourdieu's distinction between "conscious thought" and "the unconscious mind" as lying "at opposite ends of a continuum" (p. 178).⁶³

Habitus is "a socialized subjectivity...because the human mind is *socially* bounded, socially constructed" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126, original italics). More specifically, habitus, as "structured structures," inevitably has incorporated the objective social conditions since its inculcation. Only by admitting this can we talk about the so-called *collective habitus*, such as "a class habitus,"⁶⁴ which represents "the similarity in the habitus of agents from the same social class" (Johnson, 1993, p. 5). Meanwhile, habitus, as "structuring structures," has the ability "to generate practices adjusted to

⁶³ Bourdieu's explanation on why habitus is unconscious is one of the most difficult parts of his theory to grasp. He tries to explain the condition of a "strategic calculation" within a "time" framework. He says, "...the responses of the *habitus* may be accompanied by a strategic calculation tending to perform in a conscious mode...an estimation of chances presupposing transformation of the past effect into an expected objective. But these responses are first defined, without any calculation, in relation to objective potentialities, immediately inscribed in the present...(and) in relation to a probably, 'upcoming' future which...puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence that excludes all deliberation" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 53). In other words, Bourdieu thinks that "calculation" itself is being transformed along the time axis from past to present and to future. He argues that "[S]timuli do not exist for practice in their objective truth...(they only act when) they encounter agents *conditioned* to recognize them" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 53, my italics). However, the agent's recognition of these stimuli is "arbitrary" or even seems to be natural because "the regularities" inherent in a condition within which stimuli are generated "are the basis of schemes of perception and appreciation through which they are apprehended" (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 53-54). Hence, the anticipated results, the objectives of "calculation," are already "pre-adapted" to the demand agents' habitus and become part of the schemes that direct the agents' perception, appreciation, and action. This is why Bourdieu calls the practical world "a world of already realized ends...and of objects endowed with a 'permanent teleological character'" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 53). Besides the "time" framework, Bourdieu also wants to situate habitus in a "space" framework. As he explains, the principle of making choices, which could be both unconscious and calculated, "can be linked by an intelligible relation to objective divisions of social space...in matters of economic or cultural capital, between the two poles of the field of power" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 2). In other words, habitus comes into effect, as an unconscious and invisible "mental structure" or "principles of vision" that directs individuals to construct the social world, *after* the objective divisions of the social world. To use Wacquant's paraphrase of Marx's famous formula, "for Bourdieu, men and women make their own history but they do not make it through categories of their own choosing" (Wacquant, 1996, p. xvii).

⁶⁴ We can also replace "class" with "profession." A profession habitus represents the similarity in the habitus of agents from the same profession, such as journalism. A profession habitus is also sensitive to time and space, meaning that one profession habitus may vary across time and space. Certainly we have seen the difference of journalists from different countries or even different cities. We also see that the same profession, such as journalism, has been transforming throughout the history.

specific situations” (Johnson, 1993, p. 5). This implies that habitus, especially in a collective form, may have the power to change the structures under which a certain type of practice is undertaken.

It is crucial to emphasize that *practice is not the product of habitus*, even if Bourdieu regards habitus as the key concept to grasp the generative principles underlying practices. As he says, “[H]abitus reveals itself...only in reference to a definite situation. It is only *in the relation to* certain structures that habitus produces given discourses or practices” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 135, original italics). In other words, if “habitus” refers to the “subjectified objectivity”—the generative schemes underlying actors’ practices, then “field” denotes the “objectified subjectivity”—the network of structured positions within which practices occur. Or in Bourdieu’s words, habitus is the “incorporated history” and field is the “objectified history” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 66). Therefore only by relating “habitus” to “field” can “practice” become possible. As Thompson remarks, “...practices should be seen as the product of an encounter between a habitus and a field”⁶⁵ (Thompson, 1991, p. 17).

Field

Field is the invisible structure, “a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 96-97). It is “the site of actions and reactions performed by social agents endowed with permanent dispositions, partly acquired in their experience of these social fields” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30). If

⁶⁵ Here “encounter” also implies that the relationship between a habitus and a field is not always “compatible” or “congruent.” Thompson uses an example to further explain this: “...when there is a lack of congruence (e.g., a student from a working-class background who finds himself or herself in an elite educational establishment), an individual may not know how to act and may literally be lost for words” (Thompson, 1995, p. 17).

habitus is “a feel for the game,” then field can be conveniently thought of as the “game” itself. However, Bourdieu would rather differentiate the concept of “field” from the commonsensical usage of “game.” As he argues, fields are “games ‘in themselves’ and not ‘for themselves’...one (the agent) is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*,⁶⁶ investment is made more complete and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 67, my parentheses, original italics). In other words, a field exists only when all participants believe in (but are not necessarily aware of) the game (and its stakes) they are playing. Therefore, the conception of field, as proposed by Bourdieu, demands us to ask what makes the rules of a “game” operative in the first place (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 115).

⁶⁶ *Illusio* is a term introduced and used by Bourdieu to describe “interests” (or “investment”) that are “both presupposed and produced by the functioning of historically delimited fields” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 115). To Bourdieu, the notion of interest is opposed to that of “disinterestedness” and that of “indifference,” and the latter needs more clarification. To be indifferent means “a state of ataraxy,” that is, not to be troubled or moved. “*Illusio* is the very opposite of ataraxy: it is to be invested, taken in and by the game. To be interested is to accord a given social game that what happens in it matters, that its stakes are important...and worth pursuing” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 116). However, Bourdieu refutes the “utilitarian” definition of “interest,” which implies a universal rule “engendered and required by a capitalist economy.” By following Mauss’s notion of interest, Bourdieu further argues, “interest is a *historical arbitrary*, a historical construction that can be known only through historical analysis, *ex post*, through empirical observation, and not deduced *a priori* from some fictitious – and so evidently ethnocentric – conception of ‘Man’ ” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 116-117). Therefore, to Bourdieu, “interest” is not a pre-defined, pre-determined concept to be applied in research. Interests can be regarded as *illusio* only when we admit their “specificity” in specific fields. As Bourdieu elaborates, “[E]ach field calls forth and gives life to a specific form of interest, a specific *illusio*, as tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules. Furthermore, this specific interest implied by one’s participation in the game differentiates itself according to the position occupied in the game...and with the trajectory that leads each participant to this position” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 117). In other words, interest or *illusio* implies relativity, depending on a dynamic relation between the “field” and the “habitus,” both of which are “socially and historically constituted rather than universally given” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 118). As Wacquant (1992) points out, by using the term *illusio*, Bourdieu tries to emphasize the importance of acknowledging “the various forms of hidden, nonmaterial profits that guide agents who appear ‘disinterested’” (p. 26). At the same time, the agents’ interests can only be “invested” or become a motivation (even though unconsciously taken by the agents) when their habitus can sensitize and mobilize them to perceive and pursue “certain future outcomes inscribed in the present they encounter” and when these “future outcomes” are sent by certain fields, not others (p. 26).

Another important feature of the concept of field lies in its emphasis on “relations.”⁶⁷ As Bourdieu remarks, “[I]n analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97, original parentheses and italics). Here Bourdieu rejects to regard “field” as a discrete and substantial unit of analysis. Field is relational for three reasons: (1) the agents and their actions are not separable from the positions distributed in the field within which they are embedded; (2) from the perspective of an agent, his/her position in a particular field is determined by the *interplay* between the agent’s habitus and the available positions within the field; and (3) such interplay is embodied both in the forms and volumes of capitals carried by the agents and in the distribution of various capitals that reflects a legitimate order and so defines the field.

Against such theoretical complications, Bourdieu tries to offer a “simple” and “convenient” definition of field in a university lecture delivered in France:⁶⁸

...a field is a field of forces within which the agents occupy positions that statistically determine the positions they take with respect to the field, these

⁶⁷ Bourdieu is not theoretically innovative here. There is a group of “relational theorists” who argues in a similar way. See Mustafa Emirbayer’s (1997) article on a comprehensive review of the “relational approach” to sociology.

⁶⁸ The lecture was transcribed and published in the book, *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*, edited by Benson and Neveu (2005).

position-takings being aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of relations of forces that is constitutive of the field. (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30)

Wacquant (1992) tries to explicate Bourdieu's definition of field by introducing two central properties of field:

First, a field is a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), a *relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity* which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter in it...A field is simultaneously a *space of conflict and competition*, the analogy here being with a battlefield, in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it – cultural authority in the artistic field, scientific authority in the scientific field, sacerdotal authority in the religious field, and so forth – and the power to decree the hierarchy and 'conversion rates' between all forms of authority in the field of power.⁶⁹ (pp. 18-19, original parentheses and italics)

Analogizing Bourdieu's conception of field to a magnetic field and a battlefield certainly makes the concept less abstract.⁷⁰ However, neither Bourdieu's "convenient" definition nor Wacquant's analogy makes it easier to understand. In order to grasp the meaning of Bourdieu's "field," two key components or core issues need to be clarified: boundary and autonomy.

First, field is dynamic, yet it has certain boundaries or limits. Bourdieu does not seem to address this issue broadly in his works, but this does not reduce its importance. As he asserts, "[E]very field constitutes a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are *dynamic borders* which are the stake of struggles within the field itself"

⁶⁹ The field of power, as Wacquant (1992) points out, "is not situated on the same level as other fields (the literacy, economic, scientific, state-bureaucratic, etc.)...should be thought of more as a kind of 'meta-field' with a number of emergent and specific properties" (p. 18, footnote 32).

⁷⁰ In fact, the concept of "field" was not created by Bourdieu. As John Levi Martin (2003) reviews, "field theory" stems from the physical sciences, such as the classical electromagnetism and Einstein's theory of general relativity. The word, "gravity" used by Wacquant, vividly points out the similarity between the meaning of "field" in physics and social science. Even in the sphere of social science, Bourdieu is not the first one to use the term. Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher and the founder of the Marburg School of neo-Kantianism, eloquently elaborated the articulation of the natural sciences and the "cultural sciences," which, in turn, inspired both Kurt Lewin and Bourdieu when they developed their own version of field theory. Moreover, in 1952, Karl Brandt, a German economist, published the first major introduction of field theory to the social sciences.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 104, original italics). It is interesting that Bourdieu has also admitted the difficulties in describing and explaining the issue at a theoretical level. He says, "...the boundaries of the field can only be determined by an empirical investigation...even though they are always marked by more or less institutionalized 'barriers to entry'" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 100). That is why he proposes to use "effect of field" to describe and determine a particular field's boundaries:

We may think of a field as a space within which an effect of field is exercised, so that what happens to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question. The limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 100)

To elaborate his explanation, Bourdieu (1992) uses an ensemble of cultural associations of a given American state as an example. He does *not* think the associations *per se* form a field; rather, it is the structure of the relations that links major American universities and has effects within each of them that forms a field (pp. 100-101). Using the boundaries of the journalistic field as another example, Bourdieu (1992) borrows Michael Schudson's (1978) discussion on "objectivity" in journalism. He points out that only when studying the concrete, "the detail of a particular historical conjuncture" (p. 90)—such as, the development of "newspapers concerned with standards of respectability...which distinguishes 'news' from the mere 'stories' of tabloids"—can you see how a field is formed (p. 101).

These two examples illustrate that the limits or boundaries of a specific field are not decided by the shared nature of certain organizations or the similarities of works conducted by certain groups of individuals. A field should be treated as "analytically distinct" (Martin, 2003, p. 23). A field emerges when various specific forces *relate* to

each other or *confront* one another. A researcher can only observe a field when s/he decides what is pertinent, what type of relations of power are involved, and how “the distance, the gaps, the asymmetries between the various specific forces” take effect (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101).⁷¹ In short, field is the locus of the relations of forces and the struggles among the forces continuously transform the field, and thus the boundaries of a field change constantly.⁷²

The second important feature of “field” relates to the question of “autonomy.”⁷³ Autonomy must be understood from the “logic” with which Bourdieu develops his research foci. Bourdieu sees the world organized like a set of Russian nesting dolls (Benson & Neveu, 2005, p. 4), where a specific field is called a “microcosm” while the space encompassing the field is called a “macrocosm.” One specific field can have sub-fields or the microcosms of this field (which can also be termed as the corresponding

⁷¹ I must point out that Bourdieu’s explanation of the boundaries of the field has never been unchallengeable. One obvious inadequacy is the role of observer in the process of constituting a field. Is it because the effects of the field really exist that which makes the field salient? Or is it because the observer wants to see a certain field that the effects become visible in his/her eyes? As Martin (2003) criticizes, “[P]erhaps the biggest danger of field theory is a tendency toward tautology: – since fields are only known by their effects...it is tempting to proliferate invisible fields that ‘explain’ whatever it is that we otherwise cannot explain” (p. 8). Indeed, “in field theory, explanation stops at the constitution of the field” (p. 12).

⁷² This is a fundamental difference between Bourdieu’s concept of field and the Althusserian concept of apparatus. See Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) for a brief explanation of the difference between the two (p. 102).

⁷³ The question of “autonomy” should have been understood from two aspects: the autonomy of agents and that of the field. However, the agents’ autonomy has never been a major concern of Bourdieu, which is largely because his definition of habitus does not reserve enough space for autonomy (see a critique on Bourdieu’s treatment on agency by Bohman, 1999). As Martin (2003) points out, Bourdieu’s use of “habitus” already implies that he regards the agents’ perception as “organized in terms of making sense of a prestructured causal world” (p. 24). Bourdieu (1992) also admits that “...autonomy does not come without the social conditions of autonomy; and these conditions cannot be obtained on an individual basis” (p. 183). It has been generally accepted that Bourdieu overlooked the autonomy of agents and that is also why he is sometimes labeled “ultradeterminist.” But to some extent, Bourdieu grants autonomy to the agents inasmuch as they are intrinsic to the field. As he says, “[T]he agents react to these relations of forces, to these structures; they construct them, perceive them, form an idea of them, represent them to themselves, and so on” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30). Also some scholars defend that Bourdieu actually has stressed an agent’s place, for instance, “in the doxic classification of schools and universities, even in the universalistic world of science,” which means the classifications of the world (or doxa) are not only rooted from social divisions but generated from the agents’ beliefs as well (Fowler, 2006, p. 113).

macrocosm). The autonomy of the field depends on whether it obeys “its own laws, its own *nomos*” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 32). Furthermore, as Bourdieu (1998) points out, “[T]o say that it (a field) is independent or autonomous, that it has its own laws, is to say that what happens in it cannot be understood by looking only at external factors” (p. 39, my parentheses).⁷⁴ In other words, the more a field is “capable of imposing its specific logic,” the more autonomous the field is (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 105).

Meanwhile, the field’s “autonomy” needs to be understood by being paired with the conception of “heteronomy.” In Bourdieu’s conceptualization of “field,” there is no “absolute” autonomy. Autonomy is always relative because any specific field can be regarded as a microcosm of “an encompassing social universe” (or a macrocosm). Although this corresponding “macrocosm,” compared to its microcosm, is freed from a certain number of constraints and is endowed with its own laws, it is not “completely independent of the external laws” that may come from its own respective encompassing “macrocosm” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 33).

Hence Bourdieu considers every specific field to be structured around the opposition between two poles: the “autonomous” pole and the “heteronomous” pole. To say that a field is “autonomous” is to admit that the positions within the field are basically structured according to a specific type of capital *unique* to that field. Similarly, a “heteronomous” field means the positions in the field are mainly affected by forces *external* to that field (which takes effect in the form of capital as well) (Benson & Neveu, 2005, p. 4). For example, Bourdieu thinks that the journalistic field, compared to the

⁷⁴ As Martin (2003) explains, “[T]his does not mean that external events or factors are not important for actors, but they do need to be translated to the internal logic of the field...akin to the principle that the magnet may cause the field, but it is the field that has the effects on the iron filings” (p. 23).

field of sociology, is highly heteronomous, because it is always “subject to the constraints of the economy and of politics” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 41).⁷⁵

Moreover, as Thompson (1991) elaborates, a field “may be seen as a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kind of resources or ‘capital’” (p. 14). In other words, in Bourdieu’s theory of field, actors are positioned in a social space according to economic, social, and cultural characteristics (see Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995). But “positions” in a field are *not* intentionally chosen by the agents. These “positions” can only be anchored in certain forms of capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 16). Therefore, whether a field is “autonomous” or “heteronomous” also depends on the type and the amount of circulation of capitals within the field as well as among the “nested” fields.

Bourdieu’s discussion on the boundary and autonomy of field not only provides a relatively less abstract version of the concept but also offers us an analytical tool to describe and understand the interplay between the agent and the structure. On the one hand, no matter how weak it is, each field has a certain level of autonomy, which is carried out by various forms and amounts of capitals possessed by the agents within the field and can be regarded as regulative principles that are followed by the agents. On the other hand, the principles draw up the boundaries of a socially structured space in which the agents compete with each other and struggle to change or preserve its boundaries;

⁷⁵ However Bourdieu does not deny the autonomy of the journalistic field. To Bourdieu, the journalistic field is a “very weakly autonomous field;” but even this “weak” autonomy inscribes something unique, its own *nomos*, to the field. For instance, the autonomy of the journalistic field can be understood from “the effects that the people engaged in this microcosm exert on one another” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 33).

whereas the outcomes or effects of such competition and struggle must be empirically revealed in every particular case because the regulative principles are constantly revised through the agents' actions and as are the boundaries. Therefore, field is both relational and dynamic; it is inscribed with "a historical dynamism and malleability that avoids the inflexible determinism of classical structuralism" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 18). In other words, on the surface, the theory of "field" seems to be objectively structured under the distribution of various capitals; but in "reality," no one particular "field" is predictable or well structured. As Bourdieu reminds us, any field "presents itself as a structure of probabilities" (quoted in Wacquant, 1992, p. 18).

Above all the "fields" there is "the field of power,"⁷⁶ which is "not situated on the same level as other fields...since it encompasses them in part" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 18, footnote 32). The field of power, according to Wacquant, "should be thought of more as a kind of 'meta-field' with a number of emergent and specific properties" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 18, footnote 32). Moreover, since every specific field is always immersed in the

⁷⁶ A preliminary definition of "the field of power" is provided in a footnote from Bourdieu and Wacquant's 1992 book, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. The definition is fully cited as follows: "The field of power is a *field of forces* defined by the structure of the existing balance of forces between forms of power, or between different species of capital. It is also simultaneously a *field of struggles for power among the holders of different forms of power*. It is a space of play and competition in which the social agents and institutions which all possess the determinate quantity of specific capital (economic and cultural capital in particular) sufficient to occupy the dominant positions within their respective fields [the economic field, the field of higher civil service or the state, the university field, and the intellectual field] confront one another in strategies aimed at preserving or transforming this balance of forces....This struggle for the imposition of the dominant principle of domination leads, at every moment, to a balance in the sharing of power, that is, to what I call a *division of the work of domination*. It is also a struggle over the legitimate principle of legitimation and for the legitimate mode of reproduction of the foundations of domination. This can take the form of real, physical struggles, (as in 'palace revolutions' or wars of religion for instance) or of symbolic confrontations (as in the discussions over the relative ranking of *oratores*, priests, and *bellatores*, knights, in Medieval Europe)...The field of power is organized as a chiasmatic structure: the distribution according to the dominant principle of hierarchization (economic capital) is inversely symmetrical to the distribution according to the dominated principle of hierarchization (cultural capital)" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 76, footnote 16, original parentheses and italics).

field of power, two different fields may share a certain kind of “similarity within a difference” (*homology*).

Field is also a “battleground” that involves and objectifies *power struggles* and interest competitions. There are two levels of power struggles in relation to field: struggles within a given field and struggles over the power to define a field. To illustrate such struggles, Bourdieu (2005) uses an interview between a journalist and a historian as an example:

I postulate as a hypothesis that when the historian addresses the journalist it is not an historian who speaks to a journalist...it is an historian occupying a determinate position in the field of the social sciences who speaks to a journalist occupying a determinate position in the journalistic field. And the properties of the interaction...express the structure of the relationship between the journalistic field and the social science field...the statutory objectivity that is granted to the historian is not linked to any intrinsic properties of the person but to the field of which he or she is a part, which is an objective relationship of *symbolic domination*, in a particular respect, over the journalistic field. (p. 31, my italics)

This example illustrates two things: (1) a specific field is always “present in the form of persons”⁷⁷ (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 31); and (2) in the course of these power struggles, the circulation and the change of relative weight of various forms of capital will modify the structure of the field. Using the example once again: the interview between the journalist and the historian may create a certain weight of “social capital” that may change the past structure of the journalistic field as well as the field of social science; or

⁷⁷ Bourdieu contends that, at the visible level, agents meet one another or compete with one another; while what is invisible is the space of relationships that constitute the fields where the agents’ interactions can be realized under certain proper names. For example, a journalist can “interview” a historian not only because s/he has occupied certain positions in the journalistic field that makes him/her a “journalist” but also because the intersection between the journalistic field and the “historian” (or academic) field implies a certain possibility of “symbolic hierarchy” that grants the journalist a legitimized reason to conduct the interview (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 256-258).

the historian may gain a certain amount of “symbolic capital,” such as fame or reputation, that elevates his authority in his own field.

Accordingly, Bourdieu proposes “three necessary and internally connected moments” to analyze a field: “First, one must analyze the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power....Second, one must map out the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority of which this field in the site. And, third, one must analyze the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favorable opportunity to become actualized” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 104-105). Simply put, to analyze a field we need to consider bundles of relations rather than simply deducing the concept to “a dead structure” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 19).⁷⁸

Capital

There are two presuppositions that make a field become “the site of struggles”:
(1) individuals who participate in or who are positioned to the struggles must “believe in the game they are playing, and in the value of what is at stake in the struggles they are waging (*illusio*)” (Vandenberghe, 1999, p. 53, original parentheses and italics); and (2)

⁷⁸ This designates an essential difference between Bourdieu’s and Althusser’s conceptualization of “structure.” As Wacquant (1992) precisely points out, “[A]n adequate theory of field...requires a theory of social agents...Conversely, the theory of habitus is incomplete without a notion of structure;” and that is because a field is “a *space of play* which exists as such only to the extent that players enter into it who believe in and actively pursue the prizes it offers” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 19). In other words, to Bourdieu, structure is not only an objective existence but also a subjective one acted out through the agents.

the “dynamism and malleability” of the field do not only lie in its structure⁷⁹ and the players’ habitus but also in “the distance, the gaps, the asymmetries between the various specific forces that confront one another” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). These “specific forces” are embodied in capitals.⁸⁰

Bourdieu defines capital as “accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its ‘incorporated,’ embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). The power of capital is embedded in the field. Positions in the field and their interrelations are “determined by” (Thompson, 1991, p. 14) the distribution, accumulation, and circulation of different types of capitals, which, in the first place, must be “perceived and recognized as legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 230) within the field. Therefore, capital is “a resource,” “a form of wealth” that yields power (Calhoun, 1993b, p. 69); it is itself a type of power “which amounts to the same thing” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243).

There are three basic forms of capital in Bourdieu’s theorization: economic, cultural, and social. Simply put, economic capital refers to money and properties that

⁷⁹ Here “structure” does not imply a static meaning; rather, it refers to, for example, how the field is delimited and how it is pulled and pushed between the autonomous and the heteronomous poles.

⁸⁰ Similar to the concept of field and habitus, Bourdieu does not regard “capital” as a pre-defined concept. He emphasizes that the particular forms of capital that are active in a field are “selected by the analyst as pertinent because they produce the most relevant differences” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). That is to say, the concept of capital is also relational. As Bourdieu claims, “*A capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101, original italics). Furthermore, “capital” is “a *vis insita*, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures,” and it is also “a *lex insita*, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). It is capital that “makes the games of society” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241).

people own. Cultural capital⁸¹ includes the inherited capital from an individual's family (such as a title of nobility) and educational qualifications s/he obtains. Social capital⁸² is made up of social obligations or durable networks by which social actors are interconnected and from which resources are produced and accumulated (see Bourdieu, 1986).

Each form of capital has both a social and an individual dimension. On the one hand, the “differential distribution of capital” across a certain field provides an underlining structure for the field. On the other hand, each actor in the field tries to maximize his/her capital, yet without having “a transitive preference ordering” which he/she seeks to do so (Postone, LiPuma, & Calhoun, 1993, p. 5). Constrained by their habitus and the positions they occupy from all available ones provided within a field (both of which are produced by and intertwined with structure), individuals *accumulate* all possible forms of capital, which in turn defines their social trajectory or life chances and thus reproduces the social structure (such as class distinctions).

Bourdieu firmly rejects the economist view of capital. In his regard, it is a “historical invention of capitalism” that reduces “the universe of exchanges to mercantile

⁸¹ According to Bourdieu, cultural capital has three forms: (1) “the *embodied* state” or “the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body;” (2) “the *objectified* state” or “the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.)” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243); and (3) “the *institutionalized* state” or “the form of academic qualifications” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). A few years later, Bourdieu tries to replace “cultural capital” with “informational capital” because the later can “give the notion its full generality” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). However, the new name, “informational capital” has not been formally adopted by Bourdieu or other researchers.

⁸² More specifically, social capital is defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various sense of the word” (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248-249). The existence and circulation of social capital can be embodied in material and /or symbolic form(s).

exchange” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). To Bourdieu, the economist view of capital recognizes “nothing but material interest,” deliberately searches for “the maximization of monetary profit” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 118), and thus cannot be reproduced in noneconomic and immaterial forms of exchange such as cultural or social capital. To him, capital should be seen as the “energy of social physics” of which “the laws that regulate their (i.e., all forms of capital) *conversion* from one into another” must be uncovered (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 118, my parentheses and italics).

Accumulation and conversion are two important features of Bourdieu’s notion of capital.

First, capital is accumulated overtime. It must involve a dimension of time. Capital has the capacity to produce profits (not necessarily material or monetary ones). It can “reproduce itself in identical or expanded form,” but not based on “perfect competition or perfect equality of opportunity” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). Bourdieu sees the accumulation of capital as filling up our society with *inertia*, “the tendency of the structures of capital to reproduce themselves in institutions or in dispositions adapted to the structure of which they are the product...” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 255, note 1). Such inertia blinds us from the fact that “the structure of the distribution of different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). In other words, capital is not something independent from the social structure (such as class); rather, it is the product of the structure, it reproduces the

structure, and thus it “contains a tendency to persist in its being” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241).

At the same time, Bourdieu sees capital as being accumulated by people, be it a single or a group. Capital needs to be evaluated, obtained, and possessed before it can be accumulable. As Wacquant points out, “[P]eople are ‘pre-occupied’ by certain future outcomes inscribed in the present they encounter only to the extent that their habitus sensitizes and mobilizes them to perceive and pursue them” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 26). Cultural capital, for example, can be accumulated through a long-term process of cultivation, incorporated as an integral part of the agent, of his/her habitus, and eventually become unconscious in mind and body, such as artistic taste. When there is a lack of a certain type of disposition, an individual could show a total “disinterestedness”⁸³ in something that could be regarded having high value in the field of cultural production. An individual’s “interestedness” is often triggered by certain more or less visible markers of cultural capital (such as the accent and wording of a class or region), which help to distinguish its value in a certain field where actors can perceive, appreciate, and react to these markers. Therefore, capital is always “possessed” by agents: it lives with them, grows with them, declines with them, and dies with them.

This is the “heuristic principle” that Bourdieu assumes to be fundamental between the actors’ practices and the interests they consciously or unconsciously pursue. On the

⁸³ Bourdieu is especially against the meaning of “interest” or “disinterestedness” in economism. To him, economism abuses the meaning of these two words by pretending and presupposing that an individual “recognizes” and “acknowledges” the value of certain things but just appears to be “disinterested.” However, it is highly possible that the individual may not even recognize or not the “feel” of the things. Therefore, economism disguises the structural reason behind the agent’s “disinterestedness” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 26).

one hand, this principle “calls upon the researcher to elucidate the specific interests at stake in the practices and conflicts which take place in particular field” (Thompson, 1991, p. 16), which nevertheless can only be defined in relation to other fields and actors’ habitus. On the other hand, it makes it possible for individuals to look upon certain types of capital, to accumulate them, and to somehow choose their own social trajectory, but at the same time inevitably reproduce the social structure that cultivates their perceptions and practices.

Second, the accumulation of capital also requires the possibility of transformation from one form into another, governed under “the law of conservation.”⁸⁴ Bourdieu regards economic capital as the most “efficient” form of all types of capital.⁸⁵ Measured by “labor-time,”⁸⁶ economic capital constitutes the basis that allows the conversion among different types of capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253). For instance, the transformation of economic capital into social capital, such as gift exchange, demands “a

⁸⁴ To understand the “law of conservation” that governs the conversions from one type of capital to another, according to Bourdieu, we should surpass “two opposing but equally partial views” first. One is economism and the other is semiologism (or structuralism, symbolic interactionism, or ethnomethodology). The former holds that “every type of capital is reducible in the last analysis to economic capital, ignores what makes the specific efficacy of the other types of capital;” while the later “reduces social exchanges to phenomena of communication and ignores the brutal fact of universal reducibility to economics” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253). To Bourdieu, the opposition between the two views is “artificial” because he thinks that human practice (including the conversion between different forms of capitals) should be apprehended as “a dynamic totality;” that is, “only a totalization of knowledge can elucidate...(the) internal coherence and external articulations” of practice (Wacquant, 1992, p. 27).

⁸⁵ Bourdieu argues that economic capital is located “at the root of” all other forms of capital and is often disguised by them (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 252). This coincides with his claim on the economic field. As he says, “while each field has its own logic and its own hierarchy, the hierarchy which is established between the kinds of capital and the statistical relation between different assets mean that the economic field tends to impose its structure on other fields” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 230).

⁸⁶ Bourdieu uses “labor-time” in its widest sense, which may be understood simply as the amount of work. Regarding Bourdieu’s usage as fairly appropriate, Craig Calhoun (1993), nevertheless, thinks it is problematic. Calhoun asks, how are the various concrete forms of work involved in the reproduction or production of capital in fact made equivalent to each other where a process of abstraction is lacking? (Calhoun, 1993b, p. 67) In other words, there is a conceptual inadequacy inherent in the “labor-time” used by Bourdieu: he only addresses the qualitative but not the quantitative difference in the forms of work that contribute to the reproduction of capital and thus the social structure (Calhoun, 1993b, pp. 67-68).

specific labor” that involves investing time, attention, concern, etc. to choose and personalize the gift. This may not be economical, but it is socially worthwhile and desirable (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253). More importantly, although economic capital is always accumulated by spending time, its conversion into cultural capital, such as a family’s social status, does not mean the effects of time would be depleted. Rather, cultural capital will actually buy more time for the family. For instance, a stay-at-home mother from a rich family can hire someone to help her on housekeeping, so she can enjoy more free time or even take a job. As such, cultural capital *reproduces* economic capital. As Bourdieu points out, the convertibility of different capital forms is “the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253).

The potential of conversion among different forms of capital may consequently affect the diffusion of “power” in a particular field. To Bourdieu, a field can be described as “a multi-dimensional space of positions” of which each position can be defined by “a multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 231). Each agent is positioned to a corresponding co-ordinate based on two things: first, “the overall volume of the capital they possess”; and second, “the composition of their capital” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 231). However, capitals held by individuals are not evaluated equally and cannot be transmitted with the same ease. There is an “(apparent) incommensurability”⁸⁷

⁸⁷ By “incommensurability,” Bourdieu refers to “a high degree of uncertainty” involved in the transmission and conversion of different types of capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253). Bourdieu argues, capitals can be distinguished “according to how easily they are transmitted” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253). However, every transmission has to involve different levels of risk. For example, a gift exchange entails transmission and conversion from economic capital to social capital, which is highly risky because it always induces the possibility of ingratitude and refusal.

of the different types of capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253, original parentheses), which leads to the question of “arbitrariness⁸⁸ of appropriation” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 254).

[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice

The formula above is often quoted to illustrate the relations among habitus, capital, field, and practice. It is originally presented by Bourdieu (1984, p. 101) in his book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, to illustrate “the structure of the life-style characteristic of an agent or class of agents...hidden under the diversity and multiplicity of the set of practices performed in fields governed by different logics and therefore inducing different forms of realization” (p. 101). This book attempts to reveal how cultural production and consumption contribute to reproducing class domination in France through legitimation and selection. However, except throwing out the formula, Bourdieu never bothers to explain how to decode it, and thus scholars never reach a mutual agreement on either interpretation or application of this formula as well.

My interpretation of this formula is more oriented toward its meaning on surface.

To Bourdieu, the “holy trinity” of habitus, capital, and field are not always unbreakable.

⁸⁸ The term, arbitrariness, has been employed in Bourdieu’s works extensively, although he has never explained its notion. According to Edward LiPuma (1993), the term appears in three senses in Bourdieu’s works. First, “a particular, specific cultural form of practice, such as the use of figurative art in ritual, is arbitrary from a cross-cultural standpoint...much ethnography shows that there exists no *a priori* cross-cultural linkage between a sign vehicle and its meaning.” Second, “there is formal arbitrariness within a culture. For instance, inequality in wealth leads to relations of domination and hierarchy...There is no intrinsic *a priori* reason why a certain accent or aesthetic judgment is upper class and another working class or why agents should consider an upper-class accent and taste indicative of higher culture.” This is further insisted by Bourdieu as “an absolute substantive theory of arbitrariness,” which claims that “cultural contents and practices are *historically* arbitrary. Any accent, aesthetic judgment, or philosophical text could have served the same function within the historical evolution of bourgeois distinction.” Third, the sense of arbitrariness turns out to be a methodological one. That is, “[T]here is no theoretical cause to show why specific forms – an accent, artwork, or philosophy – should be singled out or motivated and why they should always appear within a determinate content, as a Parisian accent, a taste for Goya prints, or Kant’s Third Critique” (LiPuma, 1993, pp. 17-18). In other words, the methodological arbitrariness actually reflects Bourdieu’s deep concern with sociological reflexivity.

The three conceptual tools can be applied to research separately, and Bourdieu himself does that too. However, theoretically, habitus and capital seem required to be bundled together if the concept of field is also used. In other words, when we think about the difference among the three concepts, capital and habitus are both embodied in agents, while field is represented by positions and networks. That might be why Bourdieu brackets habitus and capital together in this formula. But this is just a trivial point of the formula. More importantly, the formula indicates a relative substantive role of “practice” in Bourdieu’s theorization—the formula figuratively tells us that practice solely equals to a combination of the “holy trinity”—even though Bourdieu himself later almost just lays his theory of practice “quietly to one side” (Warde, 2004, p. 8), and primarily focuses on applying the concept of field to empirical research only. Then what is practice based on Bourdieu’s theorization?

Let me quickly review the definitions of habitus, capital and field first. Simply put, habitus are durable and transposable dispositions that agents acquired from externality through inculcation; capitals are a variety forms of wealth (or a resource) that the agents carry around and can yield power; and field is a network (or a patterned system) of objective forces within which the agents’ taking of certain positions will conserve or transform the structure of power relations of the field. Using the “game” analogy, Bourdieu sees field as the “game,” habitus as the “feel for the game,” and capital as the “stakes players bring into the game.” Accordingly, if we combine them together, then practice is simply the action of playing the game. Bourdieu (1992) uses a poker game to illustrate such analogies:

...players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a 'contract,' that the game is worth playing, that it is 'worth the candle,' and this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition. We also have *trump cards*, that is, master cards whose force varies depending on the game: just as the relative value of cards changes with each game, the hierarchy of the different species of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) varies across the various fields. In other words, there are cards determined by each field and even by the successive states of the same field (p. 98, original parentheses and italics).

This illustration tells us a few important features of playing a game or practicing.

First, "players are taken in by the game" because the agents' habitus are not generated from a social vacuum. It is a "socialized subjectivity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126). Hence, when the agents play/practice, they are not free because they are always constrained by the external factors that have already been internalized in their habitus. However, the agents are not consciously aware of this because these external influences have already become part of them, in minds and bodies. The internalized externality seems so natural that when the agents decide to play the game, they think it is their "own" decision. That is why Bourdieu says, "they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning."

Second, the agents get into the same game, that is, they practice in the same field, because they "agree" with each other. Agents in the same field share certain commonalities. But more importantly, according to Bourdieu, it is the type of capitals the agents hold that bring them together. The agents are positioned hierarchically within the field based on the type and volume of capitals (i.e., value of cards) they possess. Since the internal structures and power relations in different fields vary, the "values" and

hierarchical orders of different capitals vary too. That's why Bourdieu says, the force of "trump cards" "varies depending on the game."

Therefore, practice is not a free-style way of acting. It is "engendered in the *mutual solicitation of position and disposition*, in the now-harmonious, now discordant encounter between 'social structures and mental structures,' history 'objectified' as fields and history 'embodied' in the form of this socially patterned matrix of preferences and propensities that constitute habitus" (Wacquant, 1996, p. xvi, original italics). In other words, practice will not be laid out if there is no such thing as habitus, field, or capital.

Practice is relational. It is neither a passive reproduction of the structure nor a totally active reproduction of the agency. Contrary to the subjectivists' view of practice, the logic of practice is constructed in a system of structured, structuring dispositions—the habitus. Contrary to the objectivists' view, practice is constructed, not passively followed, during the process of "capital exchanges" among the agents. Thus, practice is "virtuosic" and "intersubjective" (King, 2000, p. 417).

Practice is a process. It is a constantly developing process, where agents are "bound up with the generation and pursuit of strategies within an organizing framework of...habitus" (Jenkins, 2002, p. 39). But the agents are "virtuosos" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 79). They know the script so well that they are able to *improvise* with regard to the moments of the playing and their connectedness with other players.

Practice involves power struggle. For the agents to practice, the capitals they possess must be "perceived and recognized as legitimate" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 230). That is why capital is said to be "a form of wealth" that yields power (Calhoun, 1993b, p. 69).

Without capital, there is little possibility for a game to proceed. But with capital, the greatest contribution it has to practice may only be *inertia*, or “the tendency of the structures of capital to reproduce themselves in institutions or in dispositions adapted to the structure of which they are the product” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 255). This means capital can best reproduce the existing power structure rather than overthrow it. Hence, the power struggle induced by practice may only lead to a reproduction of power relations in the field, rather than a transformation.

In sum, practice is something people do. It is a profession, an event, a game — anything that involves human activities. Contrary to what common knowledge tells us, practice is not resulted from rational calculation. It is unconscious because the “rules” we are supposed to follow have been “consumed” or “internalized” into our minds and bodies. But at the same time, how they “consume” or “internalize” the “rules” is constrained by their positions within certain fields. Therefore, something we do is not simply anything that we can do, or want to do, even though we are not fully aware of that. On the surface, it seems that we “choose” to do certain things, but underneath, we are actually “positioned” to do so. Practice is not completely unconscious either. Capital can accumulate and convert, fields can change, and so can habitus. Agency is located somewhere in between freedom and confinement. Practice is akin to our sense of play. It requires constant invention on the part of practitioners to adapt to infinitely variable situations. The situations *per se* exist, you might say, within the practitioners’ heads, which is why practice can be “strategic” and “improvisatory.”

A Bourdieusian Approach to Journalistic Practices in China

Bourdieu's theory of practice is highly sophisticated and controversial (see critiques by Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins, 2002). But it helps us form a better understanding of how external influences are "translated" in to the internal logic of "routine activities" (such as the journalists' everyday practices) and vice versa. The main features of practice are summarized as follows:

(1) Practice can be analogized to playing a game with "a feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 66). That is, playing a game not only needs to follow rules but also requires "having a 'sense' of the game, a sense of how to play" (Calhoun, 2003, p. 275). The "feel" or the "sense" is also called "habitus."

(2) Practice is "unconscious, automatic, un-thought" (Swidler, 2001, p. 83). But its "unconsciousness" is not naturally born because "rules" or "structures" are consumed and internalized into the agents' "habitus." Habitus is a socially cultivated reflex; it is repeatedly reinforced and imprinted in our minds and bodies. For example, you can always differentiate a soldier from the way s/he walks, because military parade has been "internalized" and become her/his habitus.

(3) Practice is not fully unconscious either. It can be strategic and sometimes improvised. Practice "is structured by cultural orientations, personal trajectories, and the ability to play the game of social interaction" (Postone et al., 1993, p. 4). But to understand what the "social interaction" is all about, you need to ask what game is being played or "What is the stake in their play" (Calhoun, 2003, p. 277). Then, like all games, practice also requires constant evaluations of self's and other players' strengths

and weakness, and constantly renewed strategies that often come from a process of improvisation. The tricky part is: because of the “unconscious” feature of practice, the players know the game so well that they are able to “improvise spontaneously without a second thought” (Swidler, 2001, p. 84).

(4) Practice does not necessarily lead to “change.” Practice can be seen as a form of power struggle. Game players bet for the stakes, practitioners compete for capitals. Winning or losing does not change game itself; exchange and accumulation of capitals do not change the relativity and hierarchy of ranking the capitals within the field. Some scholars laments, “the maintenance and reproduction of the existing social structure of domination” seem to catch all of us “in an ineluctable determined fate” (Garnham, 1993, p. 179).

The question is: What is the connection between Bourdieu’s theory of practice and my study on China’s journalistic practices during the process of media reform?⁸⁹ As I have reviewed in Chapter 1, the process and consequence of China’s media transformation cannot be simply explained by the confrontation or the collaboration between the state and the market. There are three problems: (1) The emergence (or re-emergence) of society clearly indicate the necessity of incorporating a dimension of society to the formerly influential state-versus-market model. However this dimension of society has been largely ignored in previous studies; (2) The journalists’ alliances or

⁸⁹ Bourdieu’s theory has been applied to Chinese journalism studies in the past. Some scholars use a single concept from Bourdieu’s “discursive milieu”, such as habitus, to reflect on the mutually constitutional relationship between news event and journalists (e.g., Q. Liu, 2003). Some others focus on discrete concepts, such as “improvisation,” “strategy,” and “game playing.” Some scholars use the concept of “practice,” not following Bourdieu but Michel de Certeau, the author of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (e.g., Z. Pan & Lu, 2003). Although these studies cannot be easily generalized, their meticulous descriptions and analyses on how news is produced in the everyday working environment have largely enriched the details of media transformation in China.

associations with actors and organizations from outside of the journalistic field have apparently become important factors that influence their everyday work. This cannot be explained by the state-versus-market model either, because it is almost impossible to simply attribute all the “motivations” or “ideas” behind journalists’ choices to economic or political reasons. (3) The existing literature on China’s media transformation lacks of a sense of balance and coherence in terms of connecting from the macro to the meso and to the micro levels. It is because most theories used in this area do not have the capacity to integrate these three levels altogether. Bourdieu’s theory of practice, coupled with the “holy trinity” of habitus, capital, and field, seems able to help overcome these predicaments.

Although China’s media transformation was initiated by the state and has been intertwined with the broader market reform and an emergent society, its “everyday form” still has to be “realized” and “mediated” through the “everyday practices” of individuals related to the reform. These journalistic practices, in theory, become a “bridge” to connect the structure and the agency, or we can say the practices are embodied in agency and embodying the structure. More specifically, on the one hand, when journalists “practice”—interviewing, analyzing, writing, editing, (self-)censoring, etc—their feels (habitus) for this “game”—how they do all the things listed above—are cultivated by the external structural factors coming from the state, the market, and the society, as well as the structural positions and dynamics among the three. In this sense, the journalistic practices are “reproducing” the structural transformation in contemporary China. On the other hand, the fact that structure is reproducing through

the agents makes room for agency (even if it is limited). As Bourdieu says, “transformation of the system...takes place only through the mediation of the experience and practice of individuals differently situated with respect to the...system” (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 1). Journalistic practices are not realized by one person, or only by persons from the news organizations. The media transformation in contemporary China becomes a possible reality because the, collaborations and competitions among all forces from the state, the market, and the society. Such encounters are carried out by journalists and people related to journalism (such as public relations, media buyers, propaganda officials, etc.) at the inner-organizational, inter-organizational, and inter-personal levels. Therefore, it seems make more sense to define journalistic practice from a broader scope that includes agents from outside of news organizations too. The concept of journalistic practice connects the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of the media transformation in China. To better explain such a complicated theoretical perspective, I will start with a discussion on the “journalistic field” in China from a transitional perspective.

Journalistic Field with Chinese Characteristics

Bourdieu (1998) states, journalism in a much broader sense is “a microcosm with its own laws, defined both by its position in the world at large and by the attractions and repulsions to which it is subject from other such microcosms” (p. 39). Any journalistic field must have certain level of autonomy, but its autonomy is always limited: like the Russian nesting doll, a specific field needs to be regarded as a microcosm of “an encompassing social universe” (or a macrocosm). Accordingly, the laws that operate

within the microcosm of a specific journalistic field may come from its own respective encompassing “macrocosm” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 33).

At the same time, Bourdieu thinks that the journalistic field, compared to, for instance, the field of sociology, is highly heteronomous. A “heteronomous” field means the positions in the field are mainly affected by forces *external* to that field, which takes effects in the form of capital as well (Benson & Neveu, 2005, p. 4). Hence, a journalistic field is always “subject to the constraints of the economy and of politics” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 41). In China, the journalistic field is subject to three macrocosmic fields: the political field—the state, the economic field—the market, and the social field—society.

Above all the “fields” there is “the field of power...a kind of ‘meta-field’ with a number of emergent and specific properties” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 18, footnote 32). The field of power contains all those separate fields, such as the political field, economic field, social field—the three fundamental power playgrounds in today’s China. These separate fields are autonomous and differentiated. They are the arenas of practices realized by “rules,” stakes, and capitals. Practices in turn make the fields become “battlegrounds” that involve and objectify power struggles and competitions over interests, domination, legitimation, etc.

There are two types of power struggles in relation to field: struggles within a given field and struggles across two or more different fields over “the power to decree the hierarchy and ‘conversion rates’ between all forms of authority” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 17). In China the power struggles across fields largely started after the economic reform. As I have reviewed in Chapter 1, in the pre-reformed China, the state was the only dominant

player in the field of power in China. The state maintained a near-monopoly over all types of resources and capitals. Even though economic field and social field existed, both of them were so small and weak that there was no possibility—that is, no enough stakes/capitals—to enter the game and play with the state. Economy was state-planned, businesses were state-owned, and society “virtually disappeared” (L. Sun, 2008, p. 99) because every single person worked for the state only. The interpersonal connections were more or less susceptible and under the constant surveillance of the state via the work units and the neighborhood committees.⁹⁰ Although the ultimate purpose of China’s economic reform is aimed at maintaining the CCP’s political monopoly, it still leads to the emergence and development of both economic and social fields, which inevitably causes resource and capital redistribution between the state and the market and society. This in turn changes the power relations among the three fields and makes power struggles possible. Such a transition is illustrated in Figure 2-1.

Insert Figure 2-1 About here

As Figure 2-1 indicates, before the economic reform, there is no room for the existence of a distinctive journalistic field because there were no forces strong enough to compete with the state in the macrocosm. Everything, every field was included in the field of the state. There was only heteronomy but no autonomy for any field besides the state. After the economic reform started in the late 1970s, when the market (or the

⁹⁰ Neighborhood committee is the lowest administrative unit in urban China. Most committee members are senior women from the same neighborhood. It is an information gathering center and thus its members are also called “KGB with tiny feet” (*xiaojiao zhencha dui*).

economic field) and the society (or the social field) started to grow, the unified macrocosm broke up. Although their strengths are not equivalent to the overwhelmingly powerful state, market and society at least pave their way into forming distinct macrocosms, which is very critical for the formation of a distinct journalistic field.

The structural transition within the field of power makes room for the emergence of a journalistic field with certain autonomy in China. As a microcosm, such a journalistic field is not located outside of any of the three macrocosms. It stretches across them (see Figure 2-2: the irregular gray triangle refers to the journalistic field). The boundary of the journalistic field is not settled. It changes constantly along with the increase or decrease of each macrocosm in which it nests. For example, as Figure 2-2 illustrates, before China's economic reform, the strength of either economic field or the social field was still weak. Hence there was not enough tension among the three to create a large enough space for the journalistic field to reside in. After the reform, the market grew quickly, as did society. Accordingly, the boundary of a journalistic field expanded.

Insert Figure 2-2 About here

Since journalistic field is only a microcosm, it is subject to the three macrocosms, especially the state, which is predominantly more powerful than the other two. Till today, the state still has absolute control over the mass media. That is why, although the scope of China's journalistic field has been greatly increased, it is still a largely heteronomous field and almost completely dominated by the field of the state. However,

this arrangement does not mean that the journalistic field is completely vulnerable or lacks agency. As the market and the society keep growing and floating away from the power center of the state, the arena for journalistic field will be growing along and eventually exceeding the boundary of the state.

The reality may not be so optimistic though. As researchers have already pointed out, the state is always trying to restrain the market and the society within a certain scope. The coalition between the state and the market already leads to a general concern over the form of “bureaucratic capitalism” in contemporary China. If that is true, then the shape of journalistic field would be like the one presented in Figure 2-3.

Insert Figure 2-3 About here

Although Figure 2-3 only presents two hypothetical arrangements of the three macrocosms for the journalistic field in China, it still reveals that only a thorough political economic and social transformation can bring a relatively independent and autonomous journalistic field to China.

Based on this conceptual model of journalistic field in China under the comparison between before and after economic reforms, we are now able to conceptualize China’s journalistic practices. There are two things we need to keep in mind: (1) a specific field is always “present in the form of persons” (Bourdieu, 2005, p.31); and (2) power struggles in the field can be embodied in the circulation and the change of relative weight of various forms of capitals.

Journalistic Practices in the Transitional China

As I have reviewed, practices are (1) relational, generated from the dialectic between field and habitus; (2) unconscious, because the structural factors are inculcated into the agents' minds and bodies and become their "second nature;" (3) related to power struggles and competitions, the ferocity of which depends on the type and volume of capitals circulated within the field and among the agents; and finally (4) reproducing the dominant power relations.

Following these features, I theorize the journalistic practices in contemporary China as:

actions (1) related to media contents production, (2) conducted by journalists and other agents who occupy certain positions in the journalistic field, (3) fulfilled through the accumulation and exchange of economic, cultural and social capitals among the agents who naturally comply with such activities, (4) subjected to the power domination from the three macrocosms—the state, market, and society—via the internalization of structural factors in habitus, and (5) destined to reproduce the existed power relations unless there is a structural change induced by symbolic and material forces external to the existing field of power.

The first four points of this definition seem clear and self-explanatory, while the last one seems confusing. I add some condition to the destined fate of practices in "reproducing dominant power structure" because, when studying a transitional society, we need to create certain theoretical space for social changes. I will explain more in detail below.

Journalistic Practices and Social Change

From Bourdieu's perspective, it is almost impossible for social change since the agents' practices are always reproducing the existed power relations or the dominant power structures. However, we have to take the context of Bourdieu's theoretical

arguments into account. As a person who struggles over social and academic classification and domination in his whole life, Bourdieu is deeply committed to “class”⁹¹ as an underlined structure. To Bourdieu, class or “class fractions” almost determine the habitus and the actors’ logic of practices, which makes it very difficult to explain “social change.” Even though class distinction based on “cultural capitals” is real in the French society, some scholars criticize Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” as something impeding social change too. As Sewell (1992) points out, “[W]hat gets Bourdieu off the track is his unrealistically unified and totalized concept of habitus, which he conceptualizes as a vast series of strictly homologous structures encompassing all of social experience...which...cannot explain change as arising from within the operation of structures” (p. 16). That is why Garnham (1993) asks, “what might be the sources of social change within Bourdieu’s explanatory schema...at what point and how changes in the mode of production produce changes in the basic logic of the classificatory schema such as to reproduce a structure of class interest?” (p. 183)

It is true that Bourdieu rarely addresses the problem of “social change.” But it is also true that we barely pay attention to Bourdieu’s discussions on “social change” at the very early stage of his academic career. As Wacquant (2004) reviews, when Bourdieu tries to capture and depict the autochthons’ lives⁹² in colonial Algeria, he finds out, “social and mental structures were not only out of kilter with each other but also

⁹¹ It is a common thought that a Marxist view of class constitutes the basis of Bourdieu’s theoretical argument. However, Paul DiMaggio (2007) points out that, Bourdieu’s notion of “class fractions” actually has “more in common with Weber’s status groups than Marx’s classes.” As he says, “[W]hat Bourdieu brought to the table, once one got past this residual rhetoric of class, was a renewal of Weber’s emphasis on status as process, and status groups as entities that employ culture as a source of solidarity and means of claims-making” (p. 5).

⁹² Autochthons in Algeria include both peasants and urban subproletarians.

themselves composed of a motley mixture of ingrown tradition and colonial imposition...the strategies of the autochthons prone to vacillating between two antinomic principles, the logic of honor, kinship, and group solidarity, on the one side, and the press of individual interest, market relations, and material profit, on the other” (pp. 391-392). It is clear to see from here that Bourdieu does not eliminate the possibility of social change in his theoretical explication; rather, he concerns more with the impacts of external cultural and economic forces having on the “ancestral tradition.” As such, the potential for social changes is established on the spatial axis.

As Wacquant (2004) further argues, the concept of habitus needs to be integrated with “the notion of *hysteresis*⁹³...and the sequential sedimentation of acquired capacities and proclivities over time” in order to explain how the Algerians live “in and through the discordant dispositions” and to expect a further social change, that is, “the establishment of an independent Algerian state” (p. 392). It seems that a temporal lag is particularly important to Bourdieu’s view on social changes too. Hysteresis allows the individuals, the social agents, to respond to, to adjust to and to internalize the changes in the “structure,” which not only will be internalized into the habitus but also will bring about “structuring structures” that may lead to further changes in the society.

Combining the spatial and temporal factors that lead to the “discordant dispositions”—the “intrusion” of external cultural and economic forces and the “temporal lag” (the hysteresis) of habitus inculcation— makes it possible for us to explain social change from a Bourdieusian perspective. In the past three decades, China, in a sense, is

⁹³ Hysteresis refers to “the temporal lag between the exertion of a social force and the deployment of its effects through the retarding intercession of embodiment” (Wacquant, 2004, p. 392).

similar to the colonial Algeria that Bourdieu observed in the last 1950s and early 1960s. Before its “opening up” to the world in 1978, China was an isolated communist country. The Party-state did not need to compete with any other forces and had maintained its sacred position in almost every aspect of Chinese society, not only in the field of media production but also in a broader field of cultural production. The Party ideology took a “symbolic dominance” in China. The blue and gray clothes worn by almost every Chinese in the 1960s and 1970s, the unquestionable correctness of Mao’s theories and directions, and the pervasive ideological control through the absolute authoritativeness of the Party organs (such as, *the People’s Daily* and *the Red Flag Magazine*, and *the China National Radio*), mutually constituted and maintained the dominant power structure in China.

Since the late 1970s, the economic reform has strengthened and enlarged the “economic field,” making the accumulation of “economic capital” a realistic and important force to challenge the Party-state on “symbolic dominance.” Meanwhile a gradual process of internationalization in the economic and societal arenas brings in external factors, something totally foreign, to the Chinese “autochthons.” If there is a start, then the encounter between the Red China and the colorful (plural) world outside is the “point zero” for China’s transition. As time moves on, global civil societies squeeze in, the Internet creates a “virtual public sphere,” and more and more foreign capitals—in economic, cultural, and social forms—flow between China and the world outside. The fast change at the structural level inevitably causes “discordant dispositions” in all Chinese people, because it takes time (temporal lag) for the historical relations—field

positions anchored in certain forms of capitals— to be “deposited” within the agents’ minds and bodies.

All of above constitutes a theoretical possibility in talking about social changes in China. More importantly, only when we admit the possibility of social changes can we resume our belief in “autonomy” of the fields and “agency” of the agents. In other words, if the field of power always reproduces itself, then why do we care about anything happened in the world we live? In a less perfect world, like China, to believe that “things can be changed”—that the structural transformation can be affected by actors—is in fact a critical reason for continuing practices.

How to Study Journalistic Practices in China?

In his most popular book, *On Television*,⁹⁴ Bourdieu is mostly critical and even satiric toward the French journalistic field, especially the televisions. His concern lies in the “symbolic violence”⁹⁵ produced by the mass media. As he says, “I want to try to show how the journalistic field produces and imposes on the public a very particular vision of the political field, a vision that is grounded in the very structure of the journalistic field and in journalists’ specific interests produced in and by that field”

⁹⁴ The book was translated and published in English in 1998. However, *On Television* is the title of its U.S. version; in the United Kingdom, the title is *On Television and Journalism*. Both versions are translated by the same author.

⁹⁵ Symbolic violence is “*the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004, p. 272, original italics). More specifically, symbolic violence is “the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate” (Jenkins, 2002, p. 104). However, such kind of legitimacy often obscures the power relations and allows, for instance, culture adds its own force to the power relations, which in turn contributes to a systematic reproduction of cultural domination in our society. Therefore, “*symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond – or beneath – the controls of consciousness and will*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004, p. 273, original italics). In other words, it is not through “repression,” which is always represented in certain regulations or rules, but through the habitus of the agents that established power relations are rendered legitimate.

(Bourdieu, 1998, p. 2). But if Bourdieu were in China, he probably would have a different view on the media.

The logic of practice itself is “the logic of social domination” (Wacquant, 1996, p. ix). To study the journalistic practices in contemporary China, first of all, we need to find out the purpose, a goal that the practices aim to. That is, what is the content of the power struggle (or the hierarchy of dominance) that the agents in the journalistic field are competing for? Compare with its counterpart in the West, the journalistic practices in China are more appropriate to be interpreted as instruments used in competition for political legitimacy. Political legitimacy needs to be justified at both the systematic level and the grass roots level (Weatherford, 1992).⁹⁶ It is in the journalistic field that both of these two levels are connected and mediated: the public obtains information about the political system (the Party-state) from the media—its accountability, efficiency, procedural fairness and distributive fairness; and the public’s perceptions and evaluations of the political system are reported in the news media too. In the Communist China, the state did not have to care much about its legitimacy because the media were its “instruments of knowledge” and “instruments of domination” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 13). After the reform, as a microcosm nested under the state, the market, and the society, not only is the scope of the journalistic field largely expanded but also the forces that can affect the practices in the journalistic field become pluralized. Although the

⁹⁶ According to M. Stephen Weatherford (1992), viewing political legitimacy from a systematic level emphasizes on the “formal system properties,” such as accountability, efficiency, procedural fairness and distributive fairness of the political system (p. 150); whereas the grassroots perspective on political legitimacy emphasizes on “citizens’ attitudes and actions” often measured by public opinions, especially on three important questions: feelings about political interest and involvement, beliefs on interpersonal and social relations related to collective action, and perceptions of the responsiveness of the political system (p. 151).

commercialized Chinese media share certain problems with its western counterparts, it is more important to highlight its potential counter-power toward the three macrocosms and eventually the meta-field of power. As Manuel Castells (2007) insists, “communication and information have been fundamental sources of power and counter-power, of domination and social change” (p. 238). Therefore, the changes at the structural level above the Chinese journalistic field and the changes in the species and volume of capitals deposited into and circulating within the Chinese journalistic field makes it become a battlefield for the market and the society to start competing with the state over “symbolic capital”—a discursive resource for political legitimacy.

Second, the idea of a “coherent” type of journalistic practices in China is almost unthinkable. It is equally impossible to examine every specific aspect of the practices. Besides a theoretical construction of the structural formation of the journalistic field in China, it is almost unrealistic to concretize it at the empirical level. If we follow the way that Bourdieu studies the academic field or the field of cultural production and consumption in France, we probably will lose track of the three-dimensional macrocosms over the journalistic field in China. That is because Bourdieu’s empirical research onto the field are mostly two-dimensional, focusing on the tension between the economic pole and the cultural pole (see Benson, 1999, for an application of such a two-dimensional study on the journalistic field). As an important type of source of power in the journalistic field, the social capital has been largely neglected by Bourdieu and many of his followers. To me, it is extremely important to include social capital into consideration when investigate the journalistic field in China. There are two reasons.

(1) It is natural to think that actors in the field of journalism are journalists.

However, based on the structural composition of the journalistic field in China illustrated in Figure 2-2, actors in the journalistic field, first of all, should come from a higher “macrocosm” above the journalistic microcosm. A journalist is first of all a citizen in the political field, a consumer in the economic field, and a human being in the social field. Moreover, people who provide information to the media may be actors from the market (such as a public relations company), from the state (such as stringers or spokespeople from the media relations office within the government), or from the society (such as social activists, NGO professionals, or even pedestrians). As a matter of fact, news sources are important actors in the journalistic field, but they are somehow ignored by journalism studies. Most of the time journalistic practices are studied based on the journalists’ accounts; the “fluid agents” who enter and exit the journalistic field because of certain occasions are largely ignored. To me, the activities of these “fluid agents” in the journalistic field are equally valuable and we should define their participation in journalism and interactions with journalists as a type of journalistic practices too.

(2) I have mentioned in Chapter 1 that *guanxi* or social connection occupies a very important part of Chinese people’s everyday life. As a matter of fact, the interpretation of *guanxi* resembles Bourdieu’s own accounts of “social capital.” As he (1986) defines, social capital “is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-

owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (pp. 248-249). The importance of accumulating *guanxi* or social capital is to convert it with other forms of capitals. This is exactly how *guanxi* is pragmatically used in China. *Guanxi* constitutes a critical part of Chinese journalists’ everyday practices too. The internal stratification of news organizations and the division among the beat journalists sometimes are resulted from *guanxi*. Therefore, in the context of China, to present a relatively real picture of the journalistic practices, it is necessary to include a considerable amount of discussion on social capital.

Third, as I argue at the beginning of this chapter, the problem of many media sociological studies lies in their exclusive focus on “newsrooms.” As a microcosm of the state-market-society macrocosm, it is hard for us only to study journalism in an organizational form. Following Bourdieu, I think, to study the journalistic practices in a transitional China, we need to find out the “historical conjuncture” that can temporarily fixate the “power relations” or the “networks of positions” within an “analytically distinct” field for investigation. Based on this logic, the particular “historical conjunctures” that I am interested in this research is “public health crisis.” I select four cases of public health crisis—HIV/AIDS, HBV, SARS, and H1N1 flu—occurred across a quarter of a century in China’s history, from 1985 to 2010. I deliberately select these four because they each occupy a variation of length of time and represent different stages in the process of China’s social change. In other words, China’s media have interests in the four epidemics not only because “they are there,” but also because they seemingly coincide with several historically critical moments for China’s societal transformation. I

will argue the four public health crises are represented in media not as “epidemics” per se but also as “social problems” (e.g., poverty, discrimination, etc.) in specific time in history. In the next chapter I will, first, elaborate on the theoretical and empirical research questions for my dissertation. Then I will explain the research design and the specificity of the methods employed in my research.

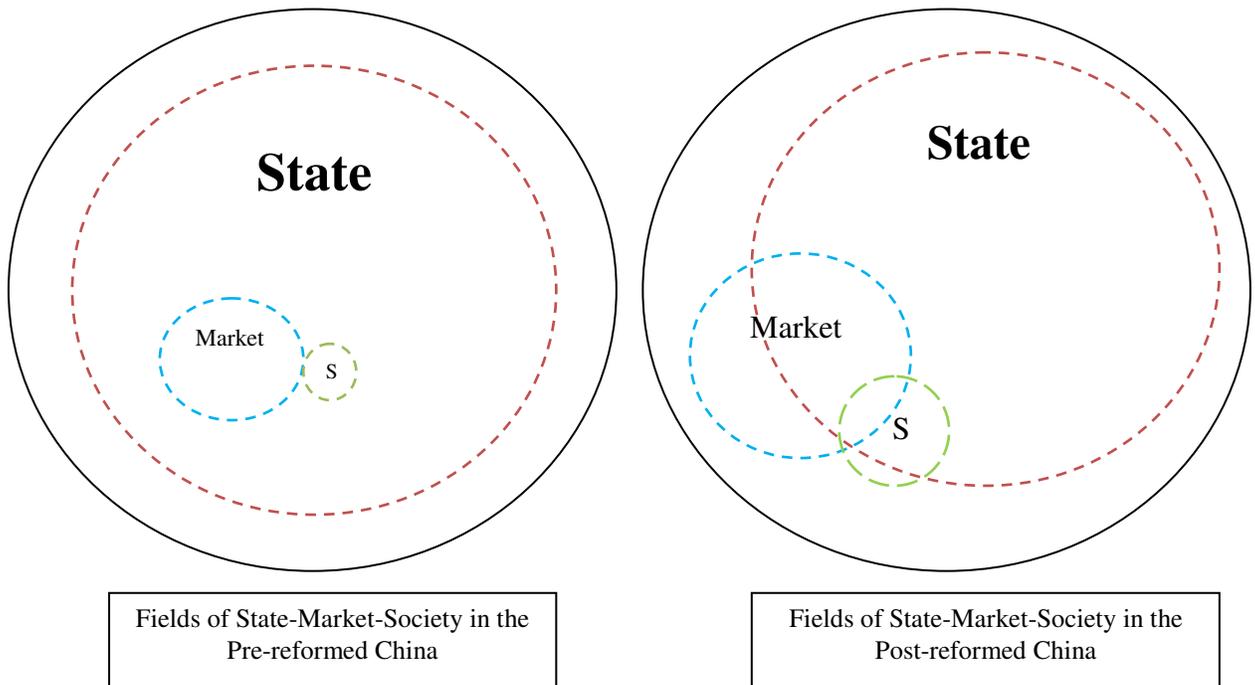


Figure 2-1 Structural Transition in China, Before and After Economic Reform

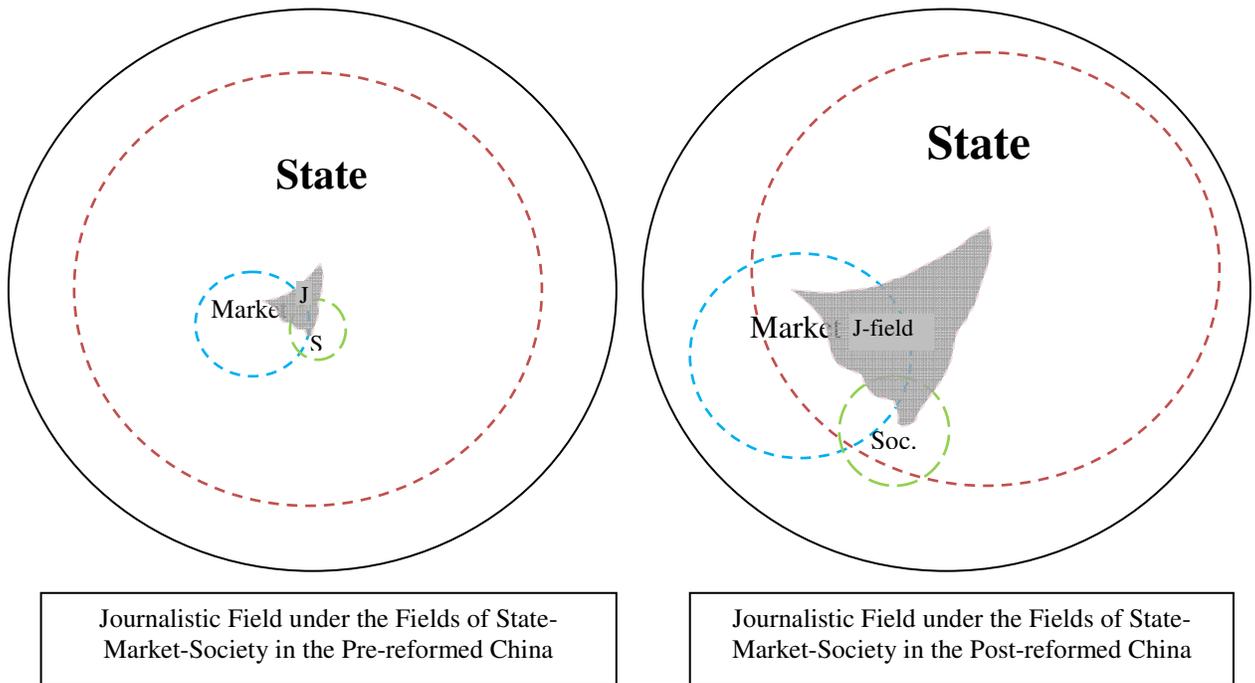


Figure 2-2 Development of Journalistic Field in China: Before and After Economic Reform

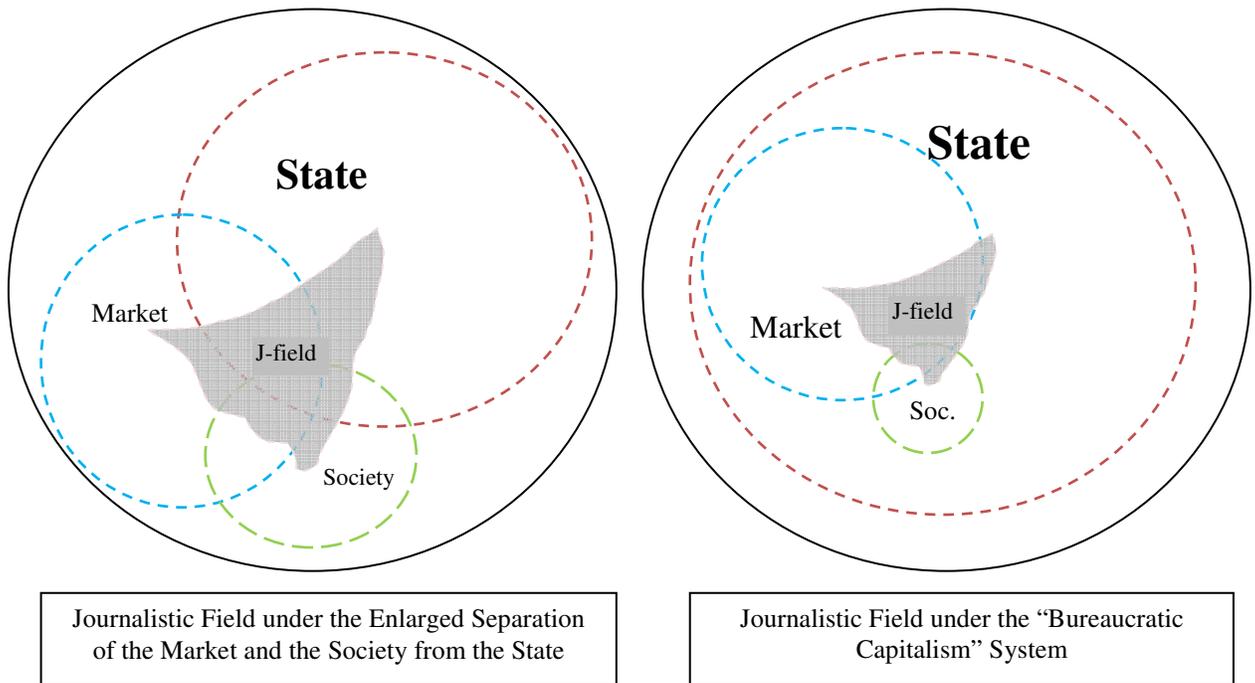


Figure 2-3 Journalistic Field under Differently Related Political Economic Social Fields

Chapter 3

Research Design

“News and truth are not the same thing,” says Walter Lippmann (1922, p. 358).

The epistemological distance between the two constitutes the most fundamental theoretical concern of my dissertation. In the context of contemporary China, we have seen the struggles of journalists and other social actors who try to display, to reveal what they see and what they think about truth—true stories, true incidents, the true face of people, and the true reasons. When scholars try to understand the news surrounding the truth, they intend to use the “state-versus-market” framework to explain the conflicts between the two. They argue that the reason news in China cannot get closer to the truth is because the journalistic practices are constrained not only by the political force—the Party-state—but also by the economic force—the market. They further argue that today’s journalists in China have become more professionalized, and they know how to improvise even under the pressure from the state and the market, but as a collective, they have also become divided—the internal stratification and external coalitions make it hard to use a single term to define this group of people. Scholars also display considerable concerns over the collusion between the market and the state and the nepotism between the media and the Party. They worry because when China started reforming and opening up, people anticipated there would be press freedom; but the dire reality tells the opposite: not only has the Party-state tightened its control, but the media has become more vigilant and docile—even worse, the media’s self-censorship is not only for protecting their employees but also for pursuing more profits.

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” (Dickens, 1890, p. 341).

Besides the state and the market, there is a third force that arises along with China’s economic reform and integration with the world outside. The social force generated from a growing society—a public sphere without the guarantee of democracy but relying on individual agents’ interconnectedness, in real and in virtual forms, and the nascent civil societies such as the international and domestic NGOs—has become more and more indubitable. We do not know where this stream of social force will end up—whether it will, just like the market, become an accomplice with the Party-state. At least for now, it has more or less casted a dim light onto the future of China’s press freedom.

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practices enables a “theoretical imagination” to describe and to explain news production under such a “state-market-society” complex. Although Bourdieu himself has a deep faith in class structure and a deeper doubt in human agency, I argue that his conceptualization of “practice”—as the “mutual solicitation of position and disposition” (Wacquant, 1996, p. xvi), as power struggles embodied in and carried out through capital accumulation and exchange, and as strategies and improvisation—allows us to anticipate a change within the journalistic field and the broader Chinese society. The “historical conjuncture” I chose to illustrate this theoretical argument is public health crises across three decades of China’s economic reform. I will try to reveal the processes and the results of journalistic practices surrounding these crises. My goal is to explain how they are made into news, to investigate the forces within and outside of the newsroom during the process of constructing and making them

into “social problems,” and to reflect upon the discrepancies between the “truth” and the news on these crises.

I must admit that it is almost impossible to identify what the “truth” is. For participants and bystanders, truth is more or less pre-determined by their own habitus, which are in turn cultivated by where they live and work, who they interact with, and lots of other external factors. Truth is also affected by the specific field within which it is being pursued. Even standing in front of the same “truth,” people from different fields, following different “rules,” will deal with the “truth” in different ways. This means they choose (or they think they choose but actually are pre-determined by the network of positions within the field) to depend on the type and amount of capitals they possess, and the hierarchical arrangement of these capitals within the field (such as, in the economic field, economic capital is always ranked the highest; while in the art field, cultural capital surely is more appreciated). In other words, to find out what is “truth” of those public health crises is almost an impossible mission. Therefore, my intention to reflect upon the discrepancies between the “truth” and the news is not to compare the true “truth” and the news. What I try to accomplish here is to find as many accounts of the same event as possible, and then compare these official or unofficial accounts with the contents of the news. In this way I hope to display a relatively complete view of the news’ construction of reality in the Chinese context. I argue that in contemporary China, news on public health crises is not produced by journalists only; it is socially constructed within the journalistic field constituted by networks of positions taken by actors—from the state, the

market, and the society—who possess different types and volumes of capitals; and it is a product of power struggles over political legitimacy.

Research Questions

Following the rationale I stated above, I ask: After an epidemic outbreak has occurred, how does it become news? What does the news say about the outbreak? How is it covered in the news? What are the differences between the truth and the news on the same epidemic? How and why do the differences come into being? More specifically, to answer these questions I need to further ask: How do China's journalists understand and write about the public health crisis? How do they interpret journalistic practices? Why do they write a specific news story in this way instead of that way? What are the factors that affect their thoughts and practices? How do people from other fields, such as media relations officers from the government or NGO practitioners and individual activists, get involved in the process of news coverage on the epidemic? Why do some people get involved but some do not? How do they influence (or attempt to influence) the journalists' work? Why are some journalists affected and some are not? What is the relationship between journalists and other actors in the journalistic field? How do they recognize and evaluate each other? From a broader perspective, I will also ask: how are the forces from the state, market and society embodied in the news? How do these forces relate and compete with each other? What is the dynamic between the agents and the structural forces? How is the dynamic embodied in the journalistic field? What is the logic *embedded* in China's media transformation and *embodied* in the journalistic

practices on the public health crisis? At last, I ask: why is it so important for us to bring society back in?

Research Subject: Four Public Health Cases

I select four critical public health crises after China’s economic reform for my research: (1) the fast spread of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) since its first reported case found in China in 1985, (2) the high prevalence of the Hepatitis B virus (HBV) epidemic in the Chinese population with a 9.8% HBsAg positive rate⁹⁷, (3) the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, which led to 8,096 known infected cases and 774 confirmed human deaths between November 1, 2002 and July 31, 2003⁹⁸, and (4) the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic (H1N1) or the “swine flu,” which did not hit China as hard as the SARS outbreak but still led to excessive media coverage. The four epidemics constitute a relatively complete picture of the major public health crises in China since the 1980s (see Table 3-1).

Insert Table 3-1 About here

As Table 3-1 displays, the four epidemics represent four different types of public health crises. Both HIV/AIDS and H1N1 are recognized by the World Health

⁹⁷ According to a 1992 national seroepidemiological survey, the prevalence of HBV surface antigen (HBsAg), which is a frequently used indicator for HBV infection, among the Chinese population aged between one and 59 was 9.8% (Luo, Xie, Deng, Zhou, & Ruan, 2011, p. 695).

⁹⁸ The statistics is based on the World Health Organization’s (WHO) summary report on the SARS epidemic released on April 21, 2004. According to this report, through December 31, 2003, the case-fatality rate of SARS was 9.6% (WHO, 2004).

Organization (WHO) as global pandemics, while HBV and SARS are relatively more localized. However, both HIV/AIDS and HBV are now regarded as “chronic diseases” due to the relatively long process of developing a form of viral infection to full symptoms. SARS and H1N1 are more acute, featured by their fast spread, high infection rates and even higher fatality rates. It is also worth mentioning that both HBV and H1N1 can be prevented with vaccines, but there is still no vaccine for HIV/AIDS or SARS.

Classifying these four diseases based on geographic scope and temporal duration makes it possible to compare the four diseases across time and space. On the one hand, along the spatial axis, I can investigate the differences in China’s media representations of local versus global health crises; on the other, the temporal differentiation allows me to examine the development of media discourses on infectious diseases over time and at a certain critical historical moment.

Research Methods

The main purpose of this research is to reveal how the news on public health crises is produced in China’s media via the everyday practices in the journalistic field. To serve this purpose, my research involves two steps: (1) to display the ways the four public crises were constructed and presented in the Chinese media; and (2) to answer why the news on the four epidemics are constructed in those ways. Therefore, I employ both statistical content analysis on the news coverage of the four crises and in-depth interviews with actors actively working within China’s journalistic field. With this combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, I hope to exhibit a

relatively complete picture of China’s journalistic practices across its 30 years of social transition.

Content Analysis

I selected six newspapers for content analysis (see Table 3-2). They were chosen for several reasons. As I reviewed in Chapter 2, China’s Party press is hierarchically arranged in four tiers, from the central to provincial, city, and county levels. As the media marketization progressed, the Party press formed “news groups” and published their own city tabloids to compete for larger market shares. The six newspapers thus represent fairly comparable samples of the most prominent Party-dominated and market-oriented newspapers at the national and provincial levels.

Insert Table 3-2 About here

Rationale for Selecting the Six Newspapers

People’s Daily (PD), China’s one most authoritative party newspaper, was selected to represent the Central party organs. PD was established in 1948, and its 2009 circulation was 2.35 million.⁹⁹ From Monday to Friday, PD normally has 20 pages. For Saturday and Sunday, it only publishes eight pages. Starting from 1985, PD also publishes an overseas version in more than 80 countries, with overseas Chinese as its target readership. PD’s headquarter is located in Beijing, the capital of China. It also has about 33 domestic stations in China and 39 overseas stations around the world. Although

⁹⁹ Data presented here are all published on the official website of PD. See <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/50142/104580/index.html>. Access date is August 10, 2010.

PD does not call itself a “news group,” it publishes more than 20 newspapers and magazines in addition to the PD, such as the controversial *Global Times*, a market-oriented nationalistic and sensational tabloid.

Nanfang Daily (ND) is the Party Organ of CCP’s Guangdong Provincial Committee. It is selected to represent a local party organ in a relatively economically and politically liberal region in China. Guangdong Province, situated on the South China Sea coast, stretches across the Pearl River Delta. Because it neighbors Hong Kong and Macau, Guangdong has more accessibility toward the “capitalist world” than any other area in China. It is, till now, the only area in China that can legally receive free-to-air television programs from Hong Kong via Guangdong’s own cable television services. Therefore Guangdong’s news media are relatively more liberal and aggressive than other parts of China.¹⁰⁰ Economically speaking, Guangdong is the richest province in China. Its 2010 gross domestic product (GDP) was RMB 4.55 trillion (689.2 billion in U.S. dollars), making it No. 1 of all Chinese provinces and exceeding Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan.¹⁰¹ Against such a background, ND is not surprisingly regarded as one of China’s most liberal party organs. ND was established in 1949. In 1998, ND restructured its organizational settings and re-branded into the Nanfang Daily Press Group, which further developed into the Nanfang Daily Media Group in 2005. ND now publishes 11 newspapers and six magazines in Guangdong, and jointly operates the

¹⁰⁰ The only exception is the media in Shenzhen. Shenzhen is China’s first Economic Special Zone, located immediately north to Hong Kong. The mass media in Shenzhen are relatively more conservative than other Guangdong media. Lee and his colleagues’ conceptualization of China’s press as the “Party Publicity Inc.” was based on their observation in Shenzhen (see Lee et al., 2006).

¹⁰¹ Data about Guangdong are quoted from the Chinese government’s official website: http://www.gov.cn/english/2011-02/03/content_1798444.htm. Access date: May 05, 2011.

Beijing News with the Guangming Daily Group in Beijing, the *Yunnan Information Daily* with the Yunan Publishing Group in Yunan Province, and the *Xijiang Daily*—a city level party newspaper in Zhaoqing, Guangdong.¹⁰²

Both *Nanfang Metro News* (NMN) and *Nanfang Weekend* (NW) are affiliated with ND. Along with the *21st Century Business Herald*, the three highly influential newspapers are defined as the “son-system” of the Nanfang Daily Media Group. That is, ND is defined as the “father” of all publications from the Group, and the three “sons” are relatively independent with their own organizational structures. For example, NMN also publishes three magazines—the *Nandu Weekly*, the *Nandu Entertainment Weekly*, and the *Fashion Weekly*. These three magazines are called the “grandson-system” of ND.

NMN is a fully market-oriented newspaper. It was established in 1997. On average it publishes more than 100 pages every day, with a daily circulation of 1.58 million. As a provincial newspaper, NMN is only distributed within the province.¹⁰³ Starting from 2007, it offers free online access to its digital version for readers outside of Guangdong. Besides Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong, for Shenzhen, Dongguan, and four other large Guangdong cities, NMN publishes local editions for each one of the six cities on a daily basis too.¹⁰⁴ These local editions are regarded as serious threats to local Party and commercial newspapers largely because NMN is situated at the provincial level and can cover sensitive stories that local newspapers cannot.¹⁰⁵ NMN gained

¹⁰² Facts and data about ND are from the official website of the Nanfang Daily Media Group: <http://nf.nfdaily.cn/jtjj/jtjjindex22.htm>. Access date: May 05, 2011.

¹⁰³ Starting from December 2010, NMN is also sold by vendors in Hong Kong and Macau.

¹⁰⁴ Data about NMN are retrieved from its official website:

<http://nd.oeeee.com/nddailyfile/webinc/2009gywm.htm>. Access date: May 05, 2011.

¹⁰⁵ For example, in May 2001, the Shenzhen government tried to sweep NMN away from Shenzhen’s press market by forcing the newspaper vendors to pay an extra fee for selling non-Shenzhen newspapers. The

national (or even global) fame in 2003 from its bold and ardent coverage on Sun Zhigang, a 27-year old victim of China's "custody and repatriation" system—a college graduate who was sent to a detention center in Guangzhou for not having a national identity card (*shen fen zheng*) or a temporary living permit (*zan zhu zheng*) at hand and who was beaten to death 72 hours later. NMN was the first media outlet that dared challenge China's legal authority's control over the "custody and repatriation" system. Three months after Sun Zhidang's death, the system was completely abolished. One month after the abolishment, NMN's manager, Yu Huafeng, and its chief editor, Cheng Yizhong, were arrested for an alleged accusation of corruption and appropriation of state's assets. Cheng was released a year later, but Yu was sentenced for 8 years in prison (see a detailed description of the incident by P. P. Pan, 2008, Chapter 9). NMN is selected here because of its deep marketization, aggressive style of news reporting, and its leading place in China's investigative journalism.

NW is also recognized as one of the best newspapers in China. Established in 1984, it was firstly positioned as a weekly focusing on culture and entertainment news. Starting from 1996, NW shifted its attention to public affairs and political news and was determined to be "a bridge to link the intellectuals and the public" (Hong, 2004, p. iv). A famous motto that NW follows is it "Cannot always tell the truth, but will never tell a lie" (*keyi you weijiang de zhenhua, danshi juebushuo jiahua*). According to an interview with Zuo Fang, the founder of NW, there are two initial goals of NW: one is

incident ended with NMN's public apology to the Shenzhen local officials because it published a series of coverage on the ban. Then NMN regained its right to be sold in Shenzhen again. Sina.com has a special section on this incident: <http://news.sina.com.cn/china/nanfang/index.shtml>. Access date: May 05, 2011.

“enlightenment” and the other is to break the “Pravda”¹⁰⁶ model of journalism (Hong, 2003). NW thus is also regarded as an “elite” newspaper in China—a newspaper that not only targets the middle and upper-middle class social elites but also has high standards of journalistic professionalism.

Most provincial newspapers in China are not distributed outside of the provincial borders. That is because they mainly rely on the Postal Service for delivery. If distributed outside of the province, the cost would be extremely high, especially for daily newspapers. As a weekly newspaper, the goal of “being based in Guangdong, facing the whole country” (*lizhi Guangdong, mianxiang quanguo*) becomes a possible reality for NW. As early as 1993 NW started to build up its own distribution channels in China (Hong, 2004, p. 29; Z.-A. Zhang & Liu, 2004, p. 21). NW now has 19 printing centers in major cities all over China and its current circulation is more than 1.6 million per week.¹⁰⁷ Therefore I categorize NW as a national newspaper rather than a provincial one.

The last two newspapers from my sample are both published in Zhengzhou, Henan Province. Henan is located in the central part of China and is the birthplace of China’s civilization with more than 5,000 years of history. According to China’s 2010 national population census, following Guangdong and Shandong, Henan is the third most populous province in China with a population of about 940 million, which is only 10 million less than Guangdong.¹⁰⁸ The 2009 GDP of Henan was RMB 2.29 trillion (338.9

¹⁰⁶ Pravda (or “Truth” in English) is the official party organ of the Soviet Communist Party. In China, the Pravda model refers to the “propaganda model” of news reporting.

¹⁰⁷ Data about NW are from NW’s official website: <http://www.infzm.com/aboutus.shtml>. Access date: May 05, 2011.

¹⁰⁸ It is also a political tradition in China that the members of the Politburo Standing Committee of CCP’s Central Committee—the *de facto* highest and the most powerful leadership in China— need to have working experience in the most populous regions. For instance, two out of the current nine Politburo

billion in U.S. dollars), which was ranked 6th place in China, almost only half of the GDP of Guangdong.¹⁰⁹ The Yellow River—“the Mother River” of China—runs across Henan Province in the north, approximately 12 miles north to Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan. The culture of Henan is often considered to be conservative, if compared with the economically affluent regions such as Guangdong or Zhejiang. Its conservativeness may also be a result of its geographical nearness to Beijing. With 398 miles between Zhengzhou and Beijing, it takes only 5 hours by train to travel in between. In comparison, the distance between Guangzhou and Beijing is 1,155 miles, almost triple the distance between Zhengzhou and Beijing. A closer geographical proximity to Beijing means easier political control from the central government and easier escapes of the local people to get to Beijing for petitions.

Henan Daily (HD) is the party organ of the CCP's Henan Provincial Central Committee. It is ranked at the same administration level as ND, both of which are provincial party organs. HD was established in 1949 too. Its circulation is about half a million,¹¹⁰ while ND currently has about 850,000 in circulation and has maintained the highest circulation number of all provincial party newspapers for 25 years (Y. Jin, June 3, 2010). HD normally publishes 16 pages daily. In 1999, HD was restructured into the

Standing Committee members, Li Changchun and Li Keqiang, had been the Party and government head of Henan Province. Li Changchun was the head of Guangdong Province from 1998 to 2002. He is now in charge of propaganda and ideological work in China.

¹⁰⁹ Full data of the 2010 national census can be retrieved from the China Data Online database at <http://chinadataonline.org/>.

¹¹⁰ HD only accomplished this number in January 2011. See <http://www.henan.gov.cn/jrhn/system/2011/01/01/010226176.shtml>. Access date: May 05, 2011.

Henan Daily News Group, affiliated with nine newspapers and two magazines.¹¹¹ *Dahe Daily* (DD) is one of HD's "son newspapers."

DD was established in 1995 by HD, in order to compete with the *Zhengzhou Evening News*, the most popular city tabloid in Henan in the 1990s. At first, its name was "*Dahe Culture Daily*," a free newspaper distributed by an advertising company. In 1996, the newspaper retook its power over circulation and advertising. In 1997, it changed its name to "Dahe Daily" and positioned itself as a commercial newspaper focusing on public affairs especially the livelihood of the people. It publishes 80 pages daily, with a circulation of more than one million in 2004.¹¹² DD became nationally well-known in 1997 for its continuous coverage of the "Zhang Jinzhu incident." Zhang Jinzhu was a police officer who hit a father and son with his sedan and dragged the father under the car for almost one mile. The 11-year old son died but the father survived. Knowing that Zhang was the "political commissar" of a local police department, DD did not reveal the hit-and-run driver's identity first and thus circumvented the censorship of the local propaganda department. The story evoked huge reactions from all over China. Soon after, China's most famous television investigative news program, "Focus" (*jiaodian fangtan*), covered the incident on CCTV and made it into a national news event. Zhang was sentenced to death one year later and was immediately executed. DD's continuous coverage on this incident is regarded as "the beginning of public opinion supervision in Chinese journalism" (Tong, 2011, p. 199).

¹¹¹ The data about HD is found from official website of the Henan Daily News Group at <http://www.dahe.cn/about/index.htm>. Access date: May 05, 2011.

¹¹² The data about DD comes from its official website at http://daily.dahe.cn/jujiao/t20081203_1440415.htm. Access date: May 05, 2011.

From the above, it is clear that the six newspapers represented six different types of organizational and cultural microcosms, which is illustrated in Figure 3-1. This classification also allows me to compare the news coverage from the six newspapers at different levels and for different purposes. Moreover, besides cultural differences, I chose newspapers from Guangdong and Henan for another important reason: both of them are very closely connected to the epidemics under study.

Insert Figure 3-1 About here

The four epidemics I choose to examine in this dissertation are: HIV/AIDS, HBV, SARS, and H1N1. HBV positive is relatively pervasive in China, with a prevalence of 9.8% among Chinese population aged from one to 59 (Luo et al., 2011, p. 695). The 2009 H1N1 outbreak caused more death in China and in the world than SARS. However, psychologically the H1N1 pandemic did not affect China as harshly as the 2003 SARS epidemic. The prevalence of H1N1 in 2009 was relatively even across China (C. Xu et al., 2011, p. 5), while the SARS outbreak was concentrated in a few condensed urban areas such as Guangdong and Beijing. Guangdong was regarded as the origin of SARS epidemic, since the first SARS case was discovered in Foshan on November 16, 2002 (R.-H. Xu et al., 2004, p. 1033). Until April 30, 2003, Guangdong had 1,454 reported SARS cases including 55 deaths (R.-H. Xu et al., 2004, p. 1031). In comparison, Henan Province was barely affected by SARS at all. There were only 15

SARS cases detected in Henan in 2003, and all fully recovered (Shan & Wang, June 6, 2003).

However, Henan was the area most severely impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemics in China. As early as late 1990s, it had reported that Henan had a population of about one million, most of whom lived in the rural areas, who were infected by HIV through paid blood donations. In some villages, the prevalence was over 60% (Kaufman & Jing, 2002, p. 2339). This HIV/AIDS blood scandal in Henan is also called a “Blood Elogy” (*xue shang*), referencing the “River Elogy,” a TV documentary aired in 1988 comparing the Chinese civilization rooted in the Yellow River and the Western civilization originated from the “ocean.” This documentary was later accused of causing the 1989 student pro-democracy movement and was banned in China.

Therefore I selected newspapers published in Guangdong and Henan also because the two provinces had crucial roles in the discovery and development of HIV/AIDS and SARS epidemics. In addition, as the most liberal province in China, the press in Guangdong was the first one to reveal the HIV/AIDS blood scandal in Henan. A few Henan journalists who were brave enough to write about the scandal were later purged from their hometown but found new careers in the Guangdong media. These hidden connections between the two provinces seem very interesting to me too. Another coincidence is that the most important social activists in the area of HIV/AIDS and HBV rights defense movements are either from Henan or Beijing. For example, Gao Yaojie, the 84-year old retired obstetrician and gynecologist, who was called “a crusader for AIDS prevention,” has lived and worked in Henan almost all her life. Another important

activist is Lu Jun, the founder of Beijing Yirenping Center, a rights defense NGO focusing on promoting social justice for HBV carriers, is also a native of Zhengzhou, in the Henan Province. Hence it is important for me to include Henan as a place to observe and think about how the locally generated social forces interact with its relatively “conservative” media environments.

Sampling Rationale and Procedure

News content is defined as “the complete quantitative and qualitative range of verbal and visual information distributed by the mass media” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 4). Quantitative analysis of news content mainly focuses on the attributes of news coverage that can be measured and counted, such as the number and type of news sources quoted in the story. As I have argued in Chapter 2, news coverage on the four epidemics is an “objective” representation of the journalistic practices that involves a process of constructing social reality via the habitus of the journalists’ and other actors and their intersubjective exchange of “capitals” in the journalistic field at a specific historical moment. What I will try to find, through a quantitative content analysis, are the changes in the themes, reporting styles, news focuses, information sources, and other crucial elements related to the four epidemics across time and space.

Since my research has specific news content to examine, I defined the population for my content analysis as: all news stories that have at least one of the four epidemics notified in its title published in the six newspapers. All of the six newspapers have electronic databases that I could use to search and find relevant stories. When I searched

in the database, I used a combination of keywords on each epidemic at a time. The search schemes are listed in Table 3-3.

Insert Table 3-3 About here

However, not all the newspaper databases contain news coverage from the very first issue of the newspaper. PD's online database is well designed and easy to use. It also includes all PD's news since its first issue in 1948. For the three newspapers published by the *Nanfang Daily Media Group*—NW, ND, and NMN—a person who had access to the media group's internal database helped me retrieve the stories I needed. Therefore data collected from these four newspapers are almost complete. For the two newspapers published by the *Henan Daily News Group*—HD and DD—I used the online database that the news group offers on its official website: www.dahe.cn. But the website only has news available after 2000, and the completeness of news content from this website is questionable. For example, I only found nine stories on H1N1 published by HD, and this is apparently not a complete search (See Table 3-4). Therefore, I must admit that data collected for HD and DD are not exhaustive and may not fully represent the “actuality” of news reporting on the four epidemics from these two newspapers.

Insert Table 3-4 About here

Table 3-4 also displays the size of the sample that I chose for this research. Since there is no universally accepted criterion for deciding the sample size in content analysis, I followed Kimberly Neuendorf's (2002) suggestion that a random sample size of 384 will "guarantee us a finding on our variable, plus or minus 5% at the 95% level of confidence" (p. 89). But Neuendorf's 384 threshold is for continuous variables, and may not be appropriate for the nominal measures that I planned to employ in the content analysis. Considering the possibility that the random sample size for nominal variables will be larger than 384, it will not be economically worthwhile. Therefore, I decided to use "384" as the threshold, which allowed me to include at least 30% of the total population of news stories in the content analysis. There are two specific sampling rules: (1) when the population size is smaller than 384, that is, if the news stories retrieved from the database are fewer than 384, I included in the sample every story from the whole population; and (2) when the population size is larger than 384, I used the simple random sampling method to construct a sample by randomly select 384 pieces of stories from the population. The total sample size for the content analysis is 6,198.

Coding Rationale and Scheme

The main purpose in my research of conducting a content analysis is to find out what the news on the four public health crises looks like. As Appendix 1 indicates, I choose to examine the news content from a general and a specific perspective. For the former, I tried to find out three types of basic information from the news:

- (1) News Type, which attempts to find out the geographic focus of the news or the nationality of the main actors in the news. This item tells us

whether the story is about mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau, or other foreign countries.¹¹³

- (2) News Theme, which attempts to locate a specific angle of coverage either on the events or on the professions or roles of the main actors in the news. To decide the news themes, all news stories are coded into nine specified categories and one “non-applicable” category. These nine specified categories can be roughly divided into five types of themes: (a) *Political theme* that includes the categories of “Government (or Party/State), Officials, or Politics” and “Policy, Law, or Lawsuits;” (b) *Economic theme* that includes the category of “Economy, Finance, or Market” and the “Advertorial” (soft advertisement) disguised as news; (c) *Social theme* that includes the category of “Civil society, citizen action and rights defense activities,” “Society, Life or Anecdote,” and “Entertainment, Sports or Culture;” (d) *Scientific theme* that is represented by the category of “Medical science, Popular Science or Public Health;” and (e) *Journalistic theme* that is represented by the category of “Editorial, Op-Ed, and Commentary.”

¹¹³ Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau are listed as an independent category because, historically speaking, these three areas do not always belong to China. In the Chinese media, it is also a tradition to cover the news on these three areas separately, under the title of “Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan News” rather than “domestic news.” For the convenience of coding, I also list “foreign policy news” as an independent category because it is sometimes hard to determine whether it should be included in domestic or international news. But in the category of “mainland news,” I specifically indicated that “stories on people from Mainland China in other countries” should be coded as “mainland news” rather than “foreign policy news,” almost all the stories coded as “foreign policy news” do not involve China as a central role. Therefore when analyzing the data, I combine “foreign policy news” and “International news” together and treat them as one category.

- (3) Primary and Secondary News Source, which attempts to find out are the actors who get quoted in the news. Primary news source refers to the actors that receive a considerable amount of attention from the journalist and get quoted in a sizable manner. Secondary news source refers to those who are not quoted as much as the primary source. There are 10 types of specified news sources (and one “non-applicable or unclear”) in my coding scheme. Further, these actors serve more than an information source in my research. According to a Bourdieusian approach to study news, these actors bring their own capitals into the journalistic field, form a certain type of social network within the field, and thus participate in the “game” of news production. Therefore, based on the different fields they originally come from, these news sources (or actors) can be re-categorized into four groups: (a) *Political actors*, including international, regional, national, and local officials; (b) *Economic actors* that include businessman or people engaging in commercial activities; (c) *Scientific actors*, who are mainly professionals and experts from medical and public health organizations or research institutes; and (d) *Social actors* that basically include the rest of all categories of news sources.

Present only the general information of the news does not seem enough. I also design a separate coding scheme for HIV/AIDS and HBV epidemics under study (see Appendix 1). What I intended to find out was how the media portrayed the “patient” who was affected the most by the epidemic. By doing so we can observe the subjects of the

“social problem” and the typical type of “faces” that media prefer to present in the news. For both epidemics, the coders were asked to code all the patients that were mentioned in at least two sentences in the news. The main coding items are: gender, nationality, provinciality (only for patients from China), the patient’s identity, means of infection, and main problem that the patient has faced with. For the purpose of comparison, I used the same coding scheme for HIV/AIDS and HBV. They are comparable because the main features of the epidemics, such as means of infection, are similar between the two.

Coding Procedure

Seven coders and one trainer were recruited to code the total 6,198 news stories. The trainer is a professor and the coders are students from a top university in China. Since the stories are all in Chinese, all of them are native speakers of Chinese too. The training process consisted of two stages. In the first stage, I selected 32 news stories, which included all four epidemics from all six newspapers, and discussed each one by one with the trainer. After the two of us reached almost a 100% agreement on all coding variables, the trainer gave one training session and explained the coding scheme to the seven coders. After the course, the coders were asked to code the same 32 stories that the trainer and I did. The coders were also encouraged to discuss the coding scheme with me, the trainer, and each other. After they completed the coding, their answers were compiled together. Then I examined and compared the coders’ answers to the “standard” answer that the trainer and I had agreed on. Problems were found and the original coding book was revised. Then I sent the results and the revised coding book to the trainer and the coders.

At stage two, I trained the seven coders via the Internet individually. I held four Q&A sessions via online chatting software. Each session ranged from one to two hours. After the Q&A sessions, the trainer gave the coders another training course, in order to further clarify their questions. After all training sessions were completed, the seven coders were voluntarily divided into four groups. Two coders were grouped together and assigned to code news stories on one particular epidemic. Only one coder needed to be paired with two other coders separately and had to code two epidemics. I divided the seven coders into groups because the main purpose of the content analysis is to display how the media portrays the four epidemics. A comparison among the four crises is a secondary goal. Therefore, in this way, the internal coding consistency on one specific epidemic is ensured.

For each group, I randomly selected 100 news stories on each epidemic and asked the two coders to code the same 100 stories. This was done to test for “intercoder reliability.” After I got the results back and calculated the percentage agreement of the intercoder reliability test, each group was required to do one more online Q&A session. Meanwhile a detailed explanation on the disagreement between the two codes was composed and sent to them for future reference. The rest of the news stories were sent to the coders after all questions were clarified. The coders were also told a post hoc examination would be conducted for quality control purposes.

Intercoder Reliability

Since I had two coders code news stories on the same epidemic, the intercoder reliability was calculated based on the same 100 stories coded by these two. For each

group, the coding results were entered into an excel document. Then I used an online software, ReCal,¹¹⁴ to calculate both percentage agreement and Krippendorff's Alpha for reliability test. The results are presented in Table 3-5. I only did an intercoder reliability test for the general information of the news. That is because the results from the 100 stories on the specific coding on the patients are quite slim. For each epidemic, there are fewer than 10 patients appeared in the 100 news stories, and thus calculating intercoder reliability based on such a small amount of units does not seem meaningful.

Insert Table 3-5 About here

In-depth Interview

Content analysis can only tell us how the four public health crises are presented in the news. It does not tell us how and why they are written in such ways. To answer these questions I conducted in-depth interviews with journalists and actors who are also related to and contribute to journalistic practices.

From 2006 to 2010, I met and talked with 44 persons, in China and the U.S. I interviewed almost all of them in person (only one via the Internet) and each interview lasted from two to four hours. These interviewees were from a variety of social organizations and backgrounds. They are journalists, editors, media managers, advertising professionals, social activists, NGO professionals, government officials, researchers, professors, patients, etc. Most of them live in China, but some are from the

¹¹⁴ ReCal is free to public at <http://dfreelon.org/utis/recalfront/>.

U.S. The majority of the interviews were completed in 2007 and 2008. For the purpose of protection, their identities are presented in a form of “year + number” in this dissertation.

All interviews were semi-structured, depending on the person’s vocation and background. Some of the common questions were about their family background, childhood experience, their life course and career path. When the interview went deeper, questions often became very flexible and changed from one interview to the next. All interviewees were asked for their consent before the interview started. Conversations were taped and fully transcribed. In the next chapter, I will present the results of the content analysis and the interviews, centering around the research questions that I have raised at the beginning of this chapter.

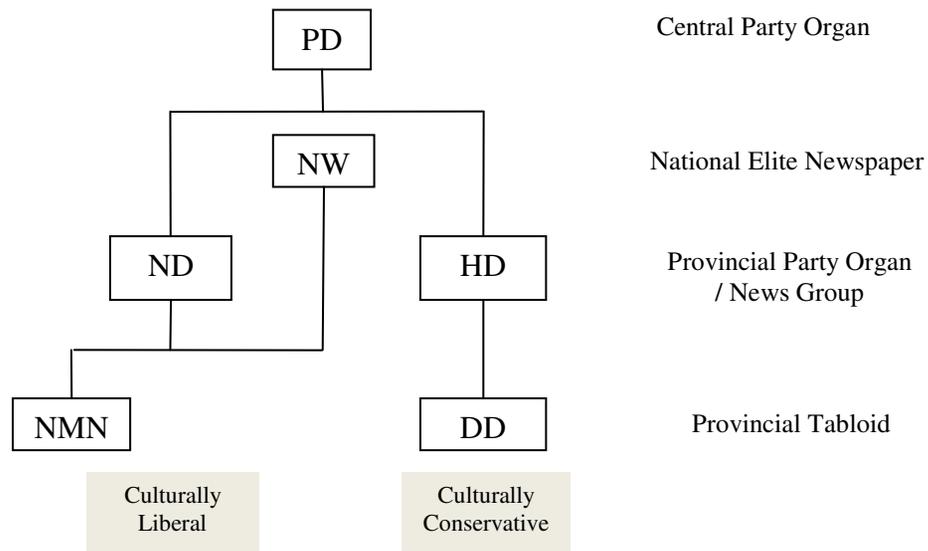


Figure 3-1 Classification of the Six Newspapers Based on Organizational & Cultural Variations

Table 3-1 Classification of the Four Cases of China's Public Health Crises

	Chronic Disease	Acute Outbreak
International Crisis	HIV/AIDS	H1N1
Domestic Crisis	HBV	SARS

Table 3-2 Classifications of Newspapers for Content Analysis

Tier	Location	News Group Affiliation	Type of Newspaper (Year of first issue)		
			Party Organ	City Tabloid	Elite Paper
National	Beijing	People's Daily	People's Daily (1948)	--	Nanfang Weekend (1984)
Provincial	Guangzhou, Guangdong	Nanfang Daily Media Group	Nanfang Daily (1949)	Nanfang Metro News (1997)	
	Zhengzhou, Henan	Henan Daily News Group	Henan Daily (1949)	Dahe Daily (1995)	--

Table 3-3 Keyword Combinations for Newspaper Database Search

Epidemic	Title Keyword Combination (in Chinese)	Title Keyword Combination (translated in English)
HIV/AIDS	标题=艾滋病 + 艾滋 + 爱滋病 + 爱滋 ¹	Title = AIDS Disease+ AIDS + “Love” AIDS Disease+ “Love” AIDS ²
HBV	标题 = 乙肝+乙型肝炎	Title = HBV + Hepatitis B
SARS	标题 = 非典 + SARS + 非典型性肺炎+ 非典型肺炎	Title = Atypical + SARS = Atypical Type of Pneumonia + Atypical Pneumonia
H1N1	标题 = 猪流感 + 甲流 + H1N1+ 甲型流感	Title = Swine Flu + Flu A + H1N1 + Influenza A

Note 1: “+” in all the six newspaper databases means “OR”.

Note 2: When AIDS was first introduced to China, a popular translation was to indicating the “sexual meaning” of the disease. Thus “爱” (love, pronounced “ai” in Chinese), a homophony of “AIDS” was extensively used. It was not until 1987 that the “love” character in Chinese translation of AIDS was replaced by a neutral word, 艾, also pronounced “ai” in Chinese and thus keeps the same homophony of AIDS.

Table 3-4 Time Span of the News Population, Population Size, and Sample Size for All Six Newspapers across the Four Epidemics

	HIV/AIDS			HBV			SARS			H1N1		
	Time Span	Population	Sample	Time Span	Population	Sample	Time Span	Population	Sample	Time Span	Population	Sample
PD	08/02/1985	861	384	08/16/1980	160	160	02/12/2003	1672	384	01/17/2004	104	104
	-			-			-			-		
	12/16/2010			12/16/2010			11/11/2010			02/25/2010		
NW	09/14/1985-	155	155	06/04/1993	21	21	04/17/2003	71	71	04/30/2009	11	11
	02/25/2010			-			-			-		
				08/06/2009			11/05/2009			11/05/2009		
ND	02/14/1985	963	384	01/12/1982	482	384	02/11/2003	1008	384	10/21/1999	628	384
	-			-			-			-		
	12/22/2010			12/28/2010			10/23/2009			08/14/2010		
NMN	01/05/1997	1098	384	04/21/1997	355	355	02/11/2003	1303	384	03/17/2004	558	384
	-			-			-			-		
	12/04/2010			07/22/2010			07/02/2010			12/10/2010		
HD	09/06/2000	300	300	01/08/2002	32	32	04/09/2003	721	384	12/04/2009	9	9
	-			-			-			-		
	12/01/2010			05/27/2010			11/17/2006			01/26/2010		
DD	01/03/2002	400	384	01/08/2002	187	187	04/09/2003	858	384	12/04/2009	185	185
	-			-			-			-		
	05/07/2010			05/27/2010			11/17/2006			01/26/2010		
Total (N=)		3777	1991		1237	1139		5633	1991		1495	1077
Sample/ Population (%)			52.7%			92.1%			35.3%			72.0%

Table 3-5 Results of Intercoder Reliability Test

	AIDS		HBV		SARS		H1N1	
	% Agr.	K. Alpha	% Agr.	K. Alpha	% Agr.	K. Alpha	% Agr.	K. Alpha
News Type	95	0.88	98	0.83	95	0.80	98	0.94
News Theme	93	0.91	92	0.90	90	0.87	87	0.73
Primary News Source	85	0.82	83	0.79	84	0.81	87	0.83
Secondary News Source	91	0.84	86	0.71	86	0.75	81	0.76

Chapter 4

State, Market, & Society in Public Health

Health is one of the central elements in China's definition of modernity. It is deeply rooted in the collective memories of being called "the sick man of East Asia" (*Dong ya bing fu*) and the invasion of foreign military powers in the late 19th century. In political and media discourses, health, hygiene, and sanitization, are definitive examples of nationalism—"one argument of native deficiency originally devised by colonial power" (Rogaski, 2004, p. 9). The wellbeing of individual citizens is important for the nation because it is the foundation of public health, the improvement of the nation's strength, appearance, and status.

The concept of "public health" was introduced to China by Christian missionaries in the late Qing dynasty (1644-1911).¹¹⁵ What came along was the institutionalization of Western medicine and epidemic prevention systems to replace the old, inefficient, and non-civilized traditional Chinese medicine and health care system (N. Yang, 2006). These changes were also a result of China's passive opening of ports to foreign business activities in the late 19th century which demanded the Chinese authorities handle quarantine issues by following western protocols (Flohr, 1996). Yet of all crucial

¹¹⁵ The first western-style clinic was established by Peter Parker, an American Protestant missionary, in Canton (today's Guangdong Province) in 1835. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission provided funds for Parker's medical practice and its aim was to demonstrate "the superiority of the Christian faith over indigenous forms of beliefs" (Flohr, 1996, p. 365). Moreover, the missionary institutions from Europe and the U.S. also helped establish western medical education systems in China too. For example, the British set up the Hong Kong College of Medicine in 1887 and Germany founded the Tongji Medical College in Shanghai in 1907. The well-known Peking Union Medical College was set up collaboratively by a few missionary organizations from the England and the U.S. in 1906.

incidents it was the mysterious plague in the northeast that killed more than 42,000 people¹¹⁶ that pulled back the curtain of creating a western-style epidemic prevention system in China.

In the winter of 1910, a highly contagious pneumonic epidemic broke out in Manzhouli, a small town and also the first station of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) on the border between Russia and China. Later, the so-called Manchurian Plague epidemic spread along the CER to Harbin, a major junction city where a large Russian population lived with indigenous Chinese. The Russian administration thus requested the Qing government to collaborate in taming the epidemic. The medical expert sent from China was Dr. Wu Lien-teh, the first Chinese medical student to graduate from Emmanuel College at Cambridge University (1902).¹¹⁷ Despite the fact that there was no cure for the plague and “a complete absence...of an organized sanitary service” at the moment of the outbreak (Farrar, 1911, p. 3), Dr. Wu and the Russian epidemiologist,

¹¹⁶ The estimated number of deaths in the 1910-1911 Manchurian plague epidemic ranged from 42,000 to 60,000 (Gamsa, 2006, p. 154).

¹¹⁷ Wu Lien-teh was born in Penang (today a state in Malaysia), one of the three towns of the Straits Settlements and colony of Great Britain, in 1879. But his family was originally from Taishan, a city in the Guangdong Province of China. After graduating from Cambridge in 1902, Wu worked as a researcher on tropical diseases in Liverpool for about four years. His effort in private medical practice in Penang was hampered by local opium traders because of his vocal opposition to opium consumption. In 1907, Wu and his wife went to mainland China seeking new career opportunities. Recommended by his old friend back in England, Colonel Ding Shiyuan, a Law student in London, Wu was appointed to be the Vice-Director of the Imperial Army College in Tianjin. Not only was he an important figure in establishing China's public health system, Wu was also the founder of the National Medical Journal (later, *Chinese Medical Journal*), the Chinese Medical Association, and the Harbin Medical School. Therefore, Wu Lien-teh was recognized as the pioneer in modernizing China's public health system and the figurehead of fundamental public health reforms in Republican China (see a review by Flohr, 1996). Because of his work on the 1911 Pneumonic Plague and the discovery of tarbagan (Siberian marmot) as the carrier of the plague, Wu was nominated for the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1935. Wu moved to Hong Kong in 1937, shortly after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Strangely, Wu was rarely mentioned in any mainland China's textbook or official publications after 1949. It was not until the SARS epidemic outbreak in 2003 that a group of Chinese medical professionals and SARS survivors rediscovered Dr. Wu Lien-teh and his contribution to China's public health services (W. Zhang, 2007).

Danilo Zabolotny, carried out a few crucial prevention measures, including strict quarantines, autopsies in an isolated hospital laboratory, and the cremation of dead plague victims' bodies (Gamsa, 2006). These steps eventually led to the end of the outbreak and stopped its spread to Russia and other parts of China. In April 1911, Dr. Wu organized and chaired the International Plague Conference in Mukden (today's Shenyang city, Liaoning Province). Conference attendees included scientists and epidemiologists from all over the world. This conference was not only the first international medical conference held in China, but it also became a landmark that indicated China's willingness to incorporate "a western public health system in the process of modernization and state building" (Flohr, 1996, p. 371).

With the increasing acceptance of western views on sickness and health, the governance of public health changed in China too. In the past, private bodies were not part of the liability of the state. Health was personal and did not need to be controlled by the state (Y.-Z. Huang, 2000, p. 50). But later the distinction between the "private" and the "public" have become blurred. Shortly after the Manchurian plague epidemic, the imperial Qing dynasty was overthrown and replaced by a new nation, the Republic of China (ROC). Constructing the contents and forms of the public's health thus became a crucial means for nation-building. In late 1920s, a "hygiene campaign" was organized and mobilized by government authorities and social elites in several big cities in China, such as Shanghai. The nationalist government conducted at least one hygiene campaign every year between 1928 and 1937 in Shanghai for the sake of promoting private and public sanitization (Nakajima, 2008, p. 49). These campaigns were highly politicized as

they incorporated personal hygiene into government-dominated public ceremonies and thus made forceful connections among the private body, public health and national strength.¹¹⁸ With an emphasis on “improv(ing) the city’s sanitation disciplining and reforming people’s behavioral norms” (Nakajima, 2008, p. 44), the hygiene campaigns under the ROC were reflections of deep concerns among the modern Chinese elites who regarded the wellbeing of Chinese people as the foundation of national strength and racial survival. Personal hygiene was connected to “civilization” and identified as a critical means to build a strong nation. Thus the purpose of promoting public health was for realizing “hygienic modernity” in China. This goal did not diminish after the CCP took over the regime from the nationalists in 1949 and established the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

After 1949, the initial framework for constructing a post-revolutionary health care system came from three distinctive sources: (1) the communists’ experience in the old revolutionary bases (such as Yan’an, Shaanxi Province) and the People’s Liberation Army, (2) experience from the nationalist regime or the old China, and (3) experience from the Soviet Union (Y.-Z. Huang, 2000, p. 51). In 1950, Mao also set up four guiding principles for formulating this “innovative” health care system: The system should (1) serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers; (2) regard prevention as principal; (3) integrate both western and traditional Chinese medicine in practice; and (4) be carried out through “mass movement” (M.-S. Chen, 2001, p. 458; Liang, Eichling, Fine, & Annas, 1973, p.

¹¹⁸ The hygiene campaign under the Kuomintang regime reached its high point in 1934 when Chiang Kai-shek inaugurated the New Life Movement in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province on February 19. A scholar called this movement “the Kuomintang version of a ‘culture revolution’” (Dirlik, 1975, p. 945).

106). Meanwhile, since the former elite-led society was largely suppressed or even eliminated after 1949, the whole policy-making process was absolutely top-down and totally controlled by the state.¹¹⁹ As a result, the emphasis of PRC's public health policy appeared to be about "equality, primary health care, community participation, and devolved decision making" (Y.-Z. Huang, 2010, p. 107).

Because of the second Sino-Japanese war and the national war, the general status of public health all over China from the 1930s to before 1949 was low. As a comparison, after 1949, health seemed to substantially improve. For example, from 1949 to 1980, the average life expectancy of mainland Chinese increased from 35 to 68 while the infant mortality fell from 200% to 42% (S. Wang, 2003a, p. 3).¹²⁰ Such a great success was due to the implementation of a series of innovative health care policies and systems, such as the "Three-Tiered Health Network," "Cooperative Medical System," and "Barefoot doctors" services. All of them primarily focused on establishing health stations or clinics

¹¹⁹ However the actual process was more complicated. Some scholars noticed that there were "two divergent strands within health care" during the Mao era (Cook & Dummer, 2004, p. 331). On the one hand, there were medical professionals and bureaucrats trained in the Soviet Union who followed the "top-down, centralized, Soviet-style approach" in campaign implementation (Cook & Dummer, 2004, p. 331), but on the other hand, there were the ex-guerrillas (including Mao)—most of whom came from villages, had worked with peasantry all along and felt more compassionate towards the countryside as well as the grassroots—wanted to do it from the bottom up. Conflicts between the two strands manifested themselves in the utterance of the leaders. For example, Mao issued an instruction on June 26, 1965 (i.e., the instruction 626), harshly criticizing the Ministry of Health for neglecting health care service in the countryside and ordering it to put rural health and medical practice in priority (Tsai & Yang, 2010, p. 7).

¹²⁰ After 1980, that is, after China began its economic reform, the average life expectancy was 70 in 1998 and 71 in 2001. The slowing down of the improvement, according to some scholars, indicates that the health care system under Mao was more superior to the one under Deng. The problem basically lies in the inequities and inefficiencies of the current health care program (see Hossain, 1997; Y. Liu, Hsiao, & Eggleston, 1999).

in the rural areas, providing affordable medical care and ensuring sufficient preventive programs at the grassroots level.¹²¹

Parallel to the establishment of a primary health care system was the need to use public health as a display of and an elaboration on China's pursuit of "self-reliance (*zili gengsheng*)," one of the dominant themes for nation-building after the CCP came into power. "Mass movement," a highly efficient and effective strategy of mobilizing individuals and communities, was maintained by Mao's regime from the revolutionary period.¹²² The communist leaders realized that the "rapid and dramatic improvement in

¹²¹ The "three-tiered health network" refers to the health care system in the rural area of China. The first level was "the brigade (*da dui*) health station and its barefoot doctors." The second level was "the commune (*gong she*) health centers, which had 10-30 beds each and outpatient clinics. Each commune health centre served 10,000-50,000 people, and was staffed by physician assistants." Therefore, when encountering serious cases, the barefoot doctors at the first level would refer patients to the commune health clinics. And if they could not handle the cases, they would refer the patients to the third level, "the county hospitals, which [were] staffed by fully qualified physicians and serve[d] from 200,000 to 600,000 people, the anti-epidemic station, and the maternal and child health clinic" (Zhu, Ling, Shen, Lane, & Hu, 1989, p. 431, footnote 6). The Cooperative Medical System (*hezuo yiliao*, CMS hereinafter) was a "financing and delivery system in rural China which provided peasants in communes with preventive services, primary care and curative services" (M.-s. Chen, 2001, p. 459). The system was funded by commune welfare funds, membership fees (i.e., individual premiums), and state (local government) funds (Zhu et al., 1989, p. 436). The focus was on preventive medicine and early diagnosis. It also provided health education, immunization, and basic medical care through its clinics at the county level or in villages. Barefoot doctors (*chijiao yisheng*) first appeared in late 1950s and became nationwide in 1965 (see Zhu et al., 1989). They were peasants who worked partially as farmers and partially as doctors. The term, "barefoot doctor" was actually coined in 1968, even though the form of "half-peasant half-doctor" had been around for a while. Most of the barefoot doctors received a short period of training from hospitals or medical schools, so they could provide both preventive and curative services in the brigade health stations. After a decade of political and social turmoil (1966-1976), China's rural economic system transformed from the Collective Production System to the Household Responsibility System. With the disappearance of the communes, the funding base for the CMS collapsed, leaving around 90% of all peasants uninsured (You & Kobayashi, 2009, p. 2). Since 1979, both the Cooperative Medical System and the barefoot doctors significantly declined. As a result, the "three-tiered health network" fell apart as well. In October 2002, CCP's Central Committee and the State Council issued an official document regarding the re-installment of the CMS in rural areas. The so-called New Cooperative Medical System (or Scheme) began in 2003, with an emphasis on voluntary participation and catastrophic illness coverage (You & Kobayashi, 2009, p. 2).

¹²² In China, especially under the Communist regime, political participation was mostly realized through political campaigns and mass movement. According to Govind S. Kelkar, it was "during the Anti-Japanese war years of 1937-1945 (also known as the Yen'an Period)" that such a system of "mass mobilization through political campaigns began in earnest" (Kelkar, 1978, p. 45).

the health status of the masses could not be achieved without the full participation of the masses” (M.-s. Chen, 2001, p. 462). Therefore, they remodeled the old concept of the “hygiene campaign” under the Nationalist regime and transferred it into a “patriotic” one. This “Patriotic Hygiene Campaign (*aiguo weisheng yundong*)” was not a single phenomenon, however. It was always influenced by and was responding to the political atmosphere at a specific moment, and thus became a crucial means for national identity-building and social and ideological control in the post-1949 China.

The 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign & Propaganda

In the winter of 1952, during the stalemate phase of the Korean War (1950-1953), hundreds of small rodents, tarantulas, and anthrax-laden chicken feathers were sprayed by American airplanes to the adjacent areas of China and North Korea. Authorities from both countries accused the United States of disseminating “biological weapons” and initiating germ warfare (Rogaski, 2002; N. Yang, 2004). This biological weapons attack seemed to go deeper into China in the next few months. Alleged attacks, mostly by rodents and insects, had been reported from the Three Northeast Provinces (*dong san sheng*, i.e., Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang) to certain coastal cities, such as Qingdao (in Shandong province) and Tianjin (a municipality close to Beijing) (Rogaski, 2002, p. 383). Although it is still a myth whether or not the U.S. actually deployed these biological weapons,¹²³ this germ warfare terror soon became the premier of China’s highly politicized “Patriotic Hygiene Campaign,” which even continues in force today.

¹²³ There is still no conclusion as to whether or not the germ warfare actually took place. According to some newly found evidence, especially the recently released official documents from the former Soviet

The ideological underpinning of the 1952 germ warfare was “a dual victimization.” As Rogaski (2002) explained:

The germ warfare allegations combined two motifs that were central to the identity of New China: China as a victim of imperialism, and China as a victim of nature. The patriotic Hygiene Campaign...embodied an enduring solution to China’s dual victimization: the need to eradicate, to exterminate, or to annihilate (*chu, xiaomie*) perceived enemies, whether political or natural, in order to achieve a state of modernity. (Rogaski, 2002, p. 382)

Rogaski’s analysis was precise in the sense that such kind of dual victimization was exactly what the CCP needed in the early stages as a ruling party.¹²⁴ More specifically, it needed to, first, assign concrete contents to a unified national identity through the establishment of an antagonistic “Other” (i.e., the imperialist America);¹²⁵ and second,

Union government, North Korea with the help of Soviet advisors fabricated the U.S. biological attacks (N. Yang, 2004, pp. 156, footnote 151).

¹²⁴ On the surface, the goal of the Patriotic Hygiene Campaign seemed benign: to improve environmental hygiene and prevent epidemics. However, as Rogaski (2002) further pointed out, if we articulate the political context and mobilization techniques of the hygiene campaign to other “disastrous mobilizations of the Maoist period,” such as the Great Leap Forward that started in 1958, the Patriotic Hygiene Campaign actually highlighted “distorted” human relationships in a time of political and social repression (Rogaski, 2002, p. 391).

¹²⁵ It was not a coincidence that the United States, not other “old-brand imperialist powers” (e.g., the Great Britain), was “Othered” in the early era of the PRC. The earliest contact between the China and the U.S. was in 1784 when Robert Morris, a merchant from Philadelphia, and Daniel Parker, a merchant from New York, dispatched the *Empress of China*, a cargo ship to Canton (today’s Guangdong, China) on February 22 (Swift, Hodgkinson, & Woodhouse, 1939, p. 24). This 14-month and 24-day voyage brought a full cargo of articles (mainly tea, nankeens, chinaware, silk, and cassia) that the U.S. had traded with Europe in the past (Swift et al., 1939, p. 30). Starting from there, the Sino-American relationship was essentially based on trade. This type of business relationship continued even after the First Opium War (1839-1842) when the U.S. signed the Wangxia Treaty with China in 1844. As Yang Kuisong commented, “unlike any other imperialist powers, the U.S. had never gained its interests in China by armed aggression or getting territory and indemnities, but by exerting its influence on intellectuals and ordinary citizens in basic values and even the way of life through cultural, educational and religious channels” (K. Yang, 2010, p. 23). The influence of America’s “soft power,” the ability of one country to affect other countries’ need through “intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions” (Nye, 1990, pp. 166-167), continued by force through World War II and China’s Civil War. A considerable number of Chinese intellectuals and citizens had accepted the American style of life as well as the way of thinking. Even the Chinese Communists tried to win American support at the beginning of the Civil War, which completely failed after Roosevelt’s death. Interpreting the Truman Administration as anti-Communism, Mao and his comrades had no choice but to work with the Soviets (Cohen, 2010, p. 161). Therefore, the U.S. constituted a primary concern of the Communist regime after 1949. On August 5, 1949, the U.S. State Department issued the “White Paper on U.S. relations with China,” providing a detailed historical review

reinforce its political legitimacy by showing its power and determination on winning both the “military war (i.e., the Korean War)” and the “germ war.”

But things did not work well at the beginning of the mass campaign against germ warfare. In the 1950s, it was still quite difficult for Chinese people, especially the peasants, to make a heuristic connection between the “poisonous insects” (released by the Americans) with diseases or epidemics.¹²⁶ Unsurprisingly many Chinese did not perceive American’s germ attacks as a real threat. Because of this, the first main objective for the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign was to educate the public and raise their awareness about the connection between germs and diseases. The campaign’s second objective was to establish a solid link between the germs and the “atrocities of American imperialism” (N. Yang, 2004, p. 158). To do so, the state needed to prove that the appearance of insects or epidemics in certain areas resulted from the American bombardments. The third objective was to transform the fear and public hygiene activities associated with the

of Sino-American relations since the 18th century. However, it became the center of CCP’s first mass anti-American campaign (Van Slyke, 1967). Mao’s reaction toward the “White Paper” was immediate and straightforward. He warned “part of the intellectuals” who wanted to “wait and see” and who still had “illusions about the United States” to cast away their illusions and determine to “wage a long struggle against US...”(see Mao, 1967). Regarding the U.S. as the greatest threat toward China, in the early era of PRC, the CCP started to eliminate the pro-American mentality and the influence of American culture at every aspect of Chinese society (see K. Yang, 2010). This became the beginning of decades of anti-America mass movements in China.

¹²⁶ The concept of bacteria or germs was not known to China before the second half of the 19th century (see S. H. Lei, 2010). Although western missionaries brought western medicines and treatments to China, they did not know how to translate or convey the idea of “pathogen” to Chinese patients. It was not until the first Sino-Japanese War of 1895 that Chinese elites started to get interested in western science and medicine, which had a major impact on Japan’s Meiji Restoration and modernization. Japan’s winning of the war “finally broached the outer defenses of Chinese cultural chauvinism” and spurred the Chinese elites’ enthusiasm in learning western knowledge and technologies (Andrews, 1997, p. 130). At around 1910 and 1911, the western terms of “bacterium,” “germ,” “fungus,” and “mold” were translated by Ding Fubao from Japanese into Chinese words—*jun* or *xijun*. Ding was a Chinese student who studied medical science in Japan and later became a practicing physician (Andrews, 1997, pp. 134-135). But it was very difficult to force Chinese to accept western medical practices as a replacement of traditional medicines that had existed for thousands of years. Therefore, even in the early-mid 20th century, most Chinese still did not connect disease with bacteria (N. Yang, 2004, p. 161).

“germ warfare” into an everyday routine. That is, to discipline the public’s personal hygiene habits and disease prevention activities (such as the elimination of rats, fleas, flies and the usage of clean water) under the gaze of the state. However, none of these could have been accomplished without the help of the “official media (*guanfang meiti*).”

The concept of “official media” is something idiosyncratic to the Communist political system. Before the “socialist transformation (*shehui zhuyi gaizao*),” the “non-official media” (i.e., privately-owned media) still occupied a considerable proportion of China’s media market. According to official statistics, in 1950, there were a total of 336 newspaper companies in China, and 58 of them were privately owned (Z. Shi, 2002).¹²⁷ These private newspapers were categorized by the CCP as “national capitalism (*minzu ziben zhuyi*)” and their owners as “national bourgeoisies (*minzu ziben jia*).” According to Mao, at least at the very early stage of Communist China, the “national bourgeoisies,” unlike the landlord class or the bureaucrat-bourgeoisies, were not the “exploiting classes” and did not need to be subject to “the people’s democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the Communist Party.” Rather, the “national bourgeoisies” could be educated and remolded (see Mao, 1950). Therefore, in the first two years of the PRC, although their readership had decreased quickly due to the lack of sufficient advertisement revenues (see Z. Shi, 2002), the private newspapers in China continued to exist. In some cases, the state even financially supported private newspapers and helped them survive (S. Li, 2009; Z. Shi, 2002).

¹²⁷ According to Li Siyi (2009), by the end of February 1950, there were 55 privately owned newspapers and 34 private radio stations in China (p. 26).

However, after the national economy was stabilized and then started to grow, the Party changed its policy toward national capitalism. After the completion of a series of political campaigns and mass movements,¹²⁸ the exploiting classes within China almost completely disappeared. On June 6, 1952, during the Third Plenary Session of the Seventh CCP Central Committee, Mao declared that the “main contradiction within China” was now between the working class and the national bourgeoisies (Anonymous, 2011). In 1953, a movement of “socialist transformation” began. To the Party, the most fundamental function of the press was a tool for “class struggle” (S. Li, 2009, p. 23). Based on Communist theories, the national bourgeoisies who owned newspapers would not speak for the working class. Therefore it was important for the Party to ensure that all newspapers and mass media were state-owned. In 1953, all private papers were ordered to become jointly-owned (*gongsi heying*) with the state. Very soon owners of the private papers retreated from their own properties and submitted everything to the state (Z. Shi, 2002). Ever since then, there has been almost no “non-official media” in China.¹²⁹ Moreover, such a “socialist transformation” not only changed media ownership but also the identity of media practitioners (J. Zhang, 2010). As media organizations and outlets became absolutely controlled by the CCP, the media practitioners became state

¹²⁸ For example, the land reform (*tudi gaige*) from 1947 to 1952, the Suppression of Reactionaries Movement (*zhengya fangeming yundong*) from 1950 to 1953, and the Three-Anti campaigns (*san fan*) in 1951 and the Five-Anti (*wu fan*) campaigns in 1952. (The Three-Antis refer to: anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-bureaucracy. The Five-Antis refer to: anti-bribery, anti-theft of state property, anti-tax evasion, anti-cheating on government contracts, and anti-stealing state economic information.)

¹²⁹ There were still four privately owned newspapers in China after 1953: the *Dagong Daily*, the *Guangming Daily*, the *Wenhui Daily*, and the *Xinmin Daily*. All of them were nevertheless staffed with Communist and pro-Communist members. So they were also regarded as an integral part of the official media apparatus (Houn, 1958, p. 438).

cadres, functioning as a “political instrument with which the regime conducts socialist and Communist education among the masses” (Houn, 1958, p. 435).

When the “Patriotic Hygiene Campaign” started in 1952, private newspapers had already been mostly marginalized so the campaign was largely carried out by the official media. It is noteworthy that media propaganda on the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign was much more than a simple indoctrination. To ensure utmost effectiveness and absolute political reliability, the party-state had actually developed a full set of techniques on media control and mass propaganda. Based on their experience from revolutionary times,¹³⁰ the state used a variety of information dissemination and persuasion strategies.

For example, in order to make sure that the news about the germ warfare was conveyed to the most fundamental level of the society, in urban areas, every working unit and communal unit (often organized by neighborhood committees) was required to hold newspaper-reading and radio listening groups on a regular basis (A. P. L. Liu, 1971, p. 125; N. Yang, 2004, p. 162). In rural areas, due to a high illiteracy rate, there were fewer mandatory newspaper reading groups. But each village (or brigade) had a wired loudspeaker that was loud enough for every person in the village to hear. Special personnel, sometimes the head of the brigade, would read the newspaper through the loudspeaker every day. To ensure some specifically important information or instruction would reach everyone in the village, the local Party propaganda personnel would organize collective radio listening activities (A. P. L. Liu, 1971, p. 126). The purpose of

¹³⁰ The CCP’s first Party newspaper was *The Party Paper (Dangbao)*. It began publication on November 30, 1923, without a specified publication regularity (Saich, n.d., p. 78). Therefore up until the early 1950s, the CCP had accumulated abundant experience in media propaganda.

the mandatory collective news studying was not only to help illiterates hear the news but also to create a certain level of peer pressure, which ultimately transformed media propaganda into an effective means of social control.

Another campaign strategy mostly took effect at the psychological level. Official media tended to use “emotion work” (Perry, 2002), a tactic that Mao was a master at, to link the germ warfare and aversion toward American imperialism (e.g., N. Yang, 2006, pp. 338-340). Short and succinct folk languages were adopted by the media to create powerful slogans for the purpose of emotional mobilization. For example, “To kill a fly is to eliminate an enemy,” or “Protect our children and resolutely smash the U.S. imperialists’ germ warfare” (J. Zhou, 1952). These slogans were highly praised by an article published in the *People’s Daily* on June 29, 1952 because they “clearly indicated the political meaning” of the campaign and revealed the “abhorrence and anger” of mothers all over the world toward the U.S. invaders (J. Zhou, 1952).

At the same time, the state clearly knew how to control the public’s emotional outburst to an appropriate degree. After the initial stage of creating (rather than eliminating) panic, fear, or even a “popular hysteria” among the masses, the official media’s “emotion work” smoothly began to boost a feeling of national pride and to strengthen a sense of national identity. A frequently used discursive framework in the media was to attribute the improvement of the health and living status to the Patriotic Hygiene Campaign under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. Further, the distinctions between the unnatural (caused by the “germ warfare”) and the natural epidemics were intentionally blurred. When the media covered or discussed a

certain epidemic, they drew everything together as all kinds of pests and diseases were caused by the imperialist America.¹³¹

The 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign was the start of the use of mass media as the key propaganda instrument in this newly established communist regime. Under the absolute control of the state, the mass media at various levels did not have any space for press freedom (see Q. He, 2008 for a review of media control in China after 1978; Houn, 1958 for the 1950s). As a matter of fact, the idea of “press freedom” had never been taken as a core value of the Communist Party. Even during the Civil War era (1945-1949), the CCP severely criticized the Nationalist regime’s policy on publication censorship on the one hand, and claimed that “newspaper is a tool for class struggle” on the other hand (S. Li, 2009, p. 23). Even since the first day of its establishment, the mass media in the Communist China, has never been an independent institution. As an integral part of the government and the party-state, it operated as “essentially a device for mass control” (Houn, 1958, p. 448).

The impact of the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign was significant. At the socio-cultural level, the 1952 campaign changed the human-nature relationship in China, from the ancient philosophical view of “Harmony between the Heavens and Humankind (*tian ren he yi*)” to a Maoist idea of “Man Must Conquer Nature (*ren ding sheng tian*)” (Shapiro, 2001, p. 9). The direct adverse effect of the campaign was on the natural

¹³¹ Interestingly, no matter how effective the Patriotic Hygiene Campaign was, it seemed local people and communities did not passively accept the messages sent by the official media. Yang’s (2004) research illustrated how a woman exorcist in a rural area asked to reside on a tree in the courtyard of the peasants association and thus was regarded as “a progressive divinity” by local people. Yang argued that this example indicated that “local communities did not simply surrender themselves to the control of state authority, instead they actively used the state’s political discourse in the attempt to justify the legitimacy of traditional local behaviors” (N. Yang, 2004, p. 165).

environment, such as the abusive usage of DDT and other environmentally harmful pesticides (Rogaski, 2002, p. 394). Later a nation-wide belief generated from the campaign, that if man had the resolve, he could manage to move an entire mountain with one bucketful of soil at a time (*yu gong yi shan*). This message became an “inspiration for numerous ill-conceived mass public-works projects of the late 1950s and 1960s” (Rogaski, 2002, p. 394). One of the best illustrations of this is the Great Leap Forward movement (1958-1960), a national collective hallucination on rocket-speed economic development, which led to a devastating famine instead.

At the institutional level, the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign soon became a routine activity that was repeated over and over throughout the Mao era. On March 14, 1952, the Central Committee of CCP established a “Central Epidemic Prevention Committee” (*zhongyang fangyi weiyuanhui*), headed by the then premier Zhou Enlai, to take charge of national disease control. The committee later became the “National Patriotic Health Campaign Committee Office (*quanguo aiguo weisheng yundong weiyuanhui*, NPHCCO),”¹³² the highest institution that oversaw national hygiene campaign movements in the 1950s and 1960s (H. Li, 2006; Z. Li, 2010).¹³³ On January 4, 1953, in an editorial published in the *People’s Daily*, the first working principle, or even a doctrine for public health practice in PRC, was clearly defined. That is, “health work must be combined with mass movement (*weisheng gongzuo bixu yu qunzhong yundong xiang jie he*)” (Editorial, 1953). Under this principle, health campaigns were

¹³² The two words, health and hygiene, sometimes are interchangeable in the Chinese context. In this dissertation, I use “hygiene” for the title of the “Patriotic Hygiene Campaign” and “health” for the title of the office according to their most popular translations.

¹³³ NPHCCO still exists today. It is supervised by the Bureau of Disease Control under the Ministry of Health.

argued to be most effective in the form of political movement and must involve mass mobilization and participation. As such, the party-state was able to penetrate to the very bottom level of the society and make mass movements an everyday routine.¹³⁴

The Legacy of the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign

The mass movement model of public health promotion conceived of in the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign was regarded as a standard way of epidemic intervention and prevention in China. The official definition of the campaign was “a mass movement under government leadership, in collaboration with the agencies, and with the participation of the whole Chinese population” (S.-N. Zhang, Liu, & Gu, 2002, p. 133). The “mass character” was also written into China’s Constitution. In Article 21 of the Constitution, it stated,

The State develops medical and health services, promotes modern medicine and traditional Chinese medicine, encourages and supports the setting up of various medical and health facilities by the rural economic collectives, State enterprises and institutions and neighborhood organizations, and *promotes health and sanitation activities of a mass character*, all for the protection of the people’s health. (“Constitution of the People’s Republic of China,” 2004, my italics)

The mass character of China’s public health policy constituted the baseline to understand the way Chinese government dealt with public health crises. Meanwhile, one must also understand that the written Constitution does not work alone and that it has to interact and cooperate with the “unwritten Constitution”—the Party Constitution (*zhongguo*

¹³⁴ The Party-led mass movement of the “Patriotic Hygiene Campaign” was only interrupted during the 10 years of Cultural Revolution. According to Yin Shi’s (2004a, 2004b) review, the history of the campaign can be divided into four stages: (1) the first stage (1952-1954) mainly focused on the American germ warfare; (2) the second stage (1955-1965), was when the scope of the campaign was expanded to have a broader focus on more everyday related public health issues, such as the “Eradicate Four Pests Movement” (*chu si hai yundong*); (3) the third stage (1966-1978) was heavily impacted by the Cultural Revolution during which the Patriotic Health Campaign Committee Office at all levels had been revoked; and (4) the last stage (1978-2003) was a restoration stage.

gongchandang dangzhang)—a party law that may be actually “more significant than the written constitution” (S. Jiang, 2010, p. 27). In a simplified way of thinking, the institutional power of the two “constitutions” is jointly represented by the head of the state—the Chairman of the PRC (*guojia zhuxi*). Different from the political system in the U.S., the Chairman of the PRC is also the Chairman of the CCP¹³⁵ and the Chairman of the Central Revolutionary Military Commission. This is called the “trinity system” that unifies the state power, the party power, and the military power, which had been written into the 1954 Constitution and became firmly established. Mao was the first PRC leader that held such an omnipresent power.

It is important to understand such a constitutional setting because this “trinity system” actually determined most domestic policies and international relations in China. It was also because of the superiority of the unwritten Constitution (the Party law) over the written Constitution that Mao could successfully launch a series of political campaigns and mass movements from the 1950s to 1970s. More importantly, whenever Mao felt threats to his absolute power and authority either from within or from outside of China, he would launch a mass campaign to defeat his opponents and enemies. For the same reason, in the area of public health, the driving force behind the Maoist health model was not only a concern over the spread of infectious diseases *per se*, but it involved significant “political purposes” as well (see N. Yang, 2006). In the case of the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign, it was the earnest need to establish political legitimacy that led Mao to initiate the campaign.

¹³⁵ The position of Party Chairman was abolished by Deng Xiaoping in 1982. The General Secretary is now the highest post within the Party system.

The political importance of the “trinity system” was also applicable to understand the mass media’s role as propaganda instruments. The most classic definition of the nature of China’s news media is: News media are the “throats and tongues” of the Party and the state. But it is not accurate that we refer to “the state” as equally important as “the Party.” As a matter of fact, it is the Party that the media must serve first. As Li Liangrong (2003) explained:

...we always regard news media as an integral part of the Party. On September 22, 1942, the *Liberation Daily* published an editorial titled “Party and Party Press,” clearly indicating that, “The press is the mouthpiece of the Party, and it is the mouthpiece of a gigantic collectivity”...In 1954, the Central Committee of CCP made a special resolution to point out that “the Party organ is a working unit of the Party committee.” In 1981...the Central Committee reemphasized that “newspapers and magazines, news, radios, and TVs are the Party’s bureau of public opinion.” (p. 2)

Therefore, the Party’s absolute control over the media in China and the intervention of the Propaganda Department into the everyday newsroom practices were legitimized through Party law and regulations. But Li’s explanation also revealed that the Party had faced challenges to this bottom line repeatedly throughout history so that it had to issue documents and resolutions over and over in order to reinforce its authority.¹³⁶

The legacy of the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign was multi-faceted. First, it created, or at least commenced, a “propaganda state” that overwhelmed its people “with official information and interpretation of reality...in the media, in the workplace, and even in the home” (Lynch, 1999, p. 3). This propaganda state regarded information control and message manipulation as the top priority. Its legitimacy was maintained and

¹³⁶ This does not mean that the Party is one completely unified institution in which the members always share the same view. Neither does this suggest that the media have always spoken with a uniform voice. Within the Party, there have been significant factional conflicts, and the media, especially newspapers, often split, choosing to stand by particular Party factions (e.g., Cheek, 1997).

strengthened via numerous ideological mass persuasion or the “thought work (*sixiang gongzuo*).” Second, the 1952 campaign successfully established a long-term antagonistic Other—the imperialist United States—for the Communist China. Official discourses about the U.S. were saved and recycled whenever the Party needed them.¹³⁷ The collective memory of the “germ warfare” was so deep and solid that even today people would still take any kind of mysterious epidemic (such as SARS in 2003 or AIDS) as biological weapons produced by the U.S. to crush “Us Chinese.” Even today, this health-centered cold war standoff is still haunting. Third, the campaign also brought a new lifestyle to Chinese people. Individuals were educated with habits of sanitization and personal hygiene, a modern symbol of civilization and morality. But at the same time, public health also became a “governmental apparatus” that “invite[s] individuals voluntarily to conform to their objectives, to discipline themselves” (Bashford, 2004, p. 11). In sum, the 1952 Patriotic Hygiene Campaign created a raw model of “health governmentality”¹³⁸ in the PRC. It specified the ways in which the party-state and its apparatuses (including the mass media) work together, via discourses and strategies, to manage and regulate the people, their bodies, their knowledge of health and sickness, as well as the symbolic boundaries¹³⁹ that differentiate (with an implication of protecting)

¹³⁷ For example, the political slogan, “the imperial America’s desire to exterminate us is not dead (*mei diguozhuyi wangwo zhixin busi*),” has become such a part of everyday language that almost all Chinese can use it adeptly under different contexts, which sometimes do not even relate to anti-Americanism.

¹³⁸ Here I adopt Michel Foucault’s (1991) definition of governmentality, which is: “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (p. 102).

¹³⁹ Here “symbolic boundaries” are defined as “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space” (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 168). These boundaries are “symbolic” because they are only “cultural marks” (Duara, 1993, p. 14), and they do not involve access

“us” from the “risky others.” After Mao’s death in 1976, a decade of social, economic and political turmoil had come to an end. China headed to the new era of “reform and opening (*gaige kaifang*)” under Deng’s leadership. But Mao’s legacy is still projecting a long shadow in all aspects of Chinese society, including public health and the mass media.

Economic Reform & Health Care Reform

Since the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping has initiated a series of economic reforms in China. The country started to shift from a planned economy to a socialist market economy “with Chinese characteristics.” Private enterprise and market forces started to grow, yet still largely under the supervision of the party-state. Even though Deng described the reform as “crossing the river by groping for stones (*mozhe shitou guohe*),” it succeeded in accelerating economic growth and alleviating absolute poverty.

According to the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China,¹⁴⁰ from 1979 to 2009, the average annual GDP growth in mainland China was 9.9%, reaching an historical high of 15.2% in 1984 and a record low of 3.8% in 1990. Based on the current price, the country’s average annual GDP growth in these 30 years was 15.8%, reaching an historical high of 36.4% in 1994 and a record low of 6.3% in 1999. In 2010, China surpassed Japan to be the world’s second largest economy. Benefiting from the economic boom, the overall welfare improved as well. Household income and the consumption per capita increased more than eight times from 1979 to 2008. Hundreds of

to and distribution of resources and social opportunities (which are the “social marks” to draw social boundaries).

¹⁴⁰ The annual statistical data on China’s economic and social indexes are available at <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2010/indexeh.htm>.

millions of people were lifted out of poverty, and the poverty headcount ratio in China dropped from 63.8% in 1981 to 16.6% in 2001 (Reddy & Minoiu, 2007, p. 24, Appendix 1).¹⁴¹

China's health care reform was initiated against such a broad background. In 1985, China launched its market-oriented reform in the medical and health care system. With the aim of mobilizing medical workers and improving hospital efficiency, public hospitals were encouraged to be responsible for their own profits and losses (*zifu yinkui*). Government investment in public hospitals accordingly pulled back. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, despite complaints and objections from both the hospitals and the patients, the marketization of the health care system continued. In 1992, the first sign of market force—"special medical services" provided by public hospitals with better nursing and more comfortable wards—started to emerge. In 2000, private investors were authorized to own commercial hospitals as a supplement to the non-profit public hospitals (see a review by H.-J. Wang, 2009).

Some scholars claimed that the condition of public health in China had "improved dramatically" since the economic reforms (Banister, 1998, p. 1015), yet the actual condition was not glamorous. As Chen (2001) reviewed, marketization did not bring "equally improved access to health care or better health status" to the general public (p. 471). Before the health care reform, nearly the entire Chinese population was covered by at least one type of insurance: for peasants, they were insured by the Cooperative Medical System (CMS, *hezuo yiliao*); for civil servants, military forces, students, and

¹⁴¹ These numbers are calculated based on the poverty line of \$1.08/day at 1993 consumption PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) adjusted poverty line.

teachers, their insurance came from the Government Insurance Scheme (GIS, *gongfei yiliao*); and for most enterprise employees and their dependents in the urban areas, the Labor Insurance Scheme (LIS, *laobao*) paid off their medical bills. However, after the economic reform introduced the Household Responsibility System in 1979, the communes—the funding base of the CMS—disappeared. The collapse of the CMS led to around 90% of all peasants uninsured. In the urban areas, a city-based Social Health Insurance (SHI, *shehui yibao*) scheme replaced the GIS and LIS in 1998. The SHI scheme was salary oriented, which combined individual medical savings accounts and catastrophic insurance, and covered about half of the urban population (Barber & Yao, 2010, p. 7; Yip & Hsiao, 2008, p. 461). The 2003 census indicated that 45% of residents in urban and 80% in rural areas were not covered by any form of health care insurance system (Houli Wang, Xu, & Xu, 2007, p. 1929). According to a 2008 survey of 101,000 households in 5,000 Chinese communities, health care had become the number-one concern of Chinese people (S. Hu et al., 2008, p. 1846).

As an increasingly apparent socio-economic discrepancy started to create social problems in China, it came hand in hand with significant differences in health status between the urban and the rural areas, between the rich and the poor, and between the powerful and the powerless. For example, unlike the LIS, the GIS was not immediately or completely replaced by SHI. In many cities, government officials, civil servants, and employees of state-owned companies still enjoyed free medical services or were subsidized by extra medical insurance in addition to the SHI, whereas the rest of the public had to pay a considerable proportion of medical fees out of pocket. Another

frequently used example to illustrate China's health inequality was that more than 800 million people in rural areas only had access to 20% of the medical institutions because 80% of them were built in the cities. Even within the rural areas, the discrepancy was also significant. For instance, rural infant mortality rate in the poorest counties versus the wealthiest counties was 123 versus 26 per 1000 live births, a stunning five times difference (Tang et al., 2008, p. 1494). Meanwhile, over the last two decades, the total health expenditure in China had increased more than 40-fold, which added up to 91.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2005 and accounted for 5.55% of China's GDP. But the government's share of total health expenditures declined from 32% in 1978 to 24% in 2008. In comparison, the total health expenditures of GDP only climbed up a little more than 1% over the last 30 years, from 3.02% in 1978 to 4.3% in 2008 (Barber & Yao, 2010, p. 11). According to a World Bank report in 2009, by 2003, 30% of the poor (*pinkun*) households in China reported health care costs as the main cause of their poverty (Wagstaff, Lindelow, Wang, & Zhang, 2009, p. 4). Because of the high cost and inequality in China's health care system, the patient-doctor relationship became more intense (Houli Wang et al., 2007, p. 1928). Even the outbreak of SARS in 2003 and the government's weak response in the first few months were thought to have resulted from the deteriorating condition of health care funding, particularly in the public health sector.

The changes that occurred in China's health care system provided a critical background to the emergence of a series of public health crises since the mid-1980s. They also revealed the impact of economic reform, especially the penetration of the market into the area of public health that was formerly controlled by the party-state. Is

the failure of China's health care reform a failure of the state or the market? This is still a moot point. To some scholars and policy makers, the problems caused by the health care reform resulted from the incomplete and un-thorough marketization of the system. But to many others, it was an ill-designed and hastily launched marketization plan as well as a result of the reduction of government investment in the health care system that had failed the reform. This is why many scholars felt nostalgia for the Maoist health care system and called for the return and reinforcement of the state power over health. For example, Huang Yanzhong (2000) argued that "the key to the continuous public health progress reflects both sustained and effective state engagement in public health sector" (p. xi). As a quasi-official response to the debate, in May 2005, Liu Xinming, the director of the Department of Policy and Law of the Ministry Of Health, claimed that "marketization was by no means the direction of health care reform in China." He further insisted that it should be the government, not the market, to hold the key to solving two major problems of China's health care system: low efficiency and inequality (L. Zeng & Zhang, 2005). In January 2009, China's State Council passed a new health care reform plan that promised to spend 850 billion yuan (123 billion U.S. dollars) by 2011 to provide universal medical service to its population of 1.3 billion (Xiang Zhang, 2009). In April 2009, the new plan was officially published for implementation, reasserting government control and concentrated on increasing the accessibility, equity, and quality of health care (Alcorn & Bao, 2011, p. 1557).

Openness & Transparency of the Government

Before the 2009 medical reform plan went to the National People's Congress (NPC), the legislative body of the state, for a final discussion and approval, it was released for public debate, inviting comments, critiques, and suggestions from Chinese citizens. From October 14 to November 14, 2008, the full draft titled, "Notice on deepening the reform of medical and health care system (*guanyu shenhua yiyao weisheng tizhi gaige de yijian*)," was published on the official website of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China's economic planning and management authority under the State Council. The design of the website was user-friendly. Of all the six sessions of the draft, the public could respond, with pseudo names, to each part separately or combined. All comments were open to the public too. For the whole month of public deliberation, there were 27,892 messages published on the website, some of them were not even related to the health care reform.¹⁴² Eventually the reform working group made 190 revisions of the draft based on "opinions of the mass" (The State Council Information Office, 2009).

In China, a country without the tradition of participatory democracy, encouraging citizens' participation into public affairs was something unusual.¹⁴³ It is well-known that China had a long tradition of "government secrecy" (Horsley, 2007b, p. 54). It is also

¹⁴² The website was still alive: http://www.ndrc.gov.cn/ygyj/ygyj_list.jsp, accessed date: January 20, 2011).

¹⁴³ In the contemporary context, "public participation" is different from the "mass participation" under Mao's regime. According to Zhao Yuhong (2010), mass participation "imposes an obligation on the people to cooperate with and support the government and the Party in the implementation and enforcement of State laws and party policies" (p. 4), whereas the western notion of "public participation...emphasizes the rights of the people to be informed, consulted and heard in public decision-making while imposing a related set of obligations on the government to guarantee public access to information, to decision-making and to judicial redress" (pp. 4-5).

estimated that about 80% of useful information was hidden in China's government files and was forbidden to be accessed by the general public (Horsley, 2004, p. 2). The lack of information free flow (including information censorship, concealment, and oppression) and lack of government transparency produced a bottleneck for China's continuing development and led to "corruption, misallocation of resources and distrust of public institutions" (Horsley, 2004, p. 2). Chinese authorities were fully aware of these problems.

On March 5, 2004, during the Second Session of the 10th National People's Congress, Premier Wen Jiabao (2004) delivered his first government work report. At the end of the report, he stressed that the Administration was committed to:

[A]dhering to scientific and democratic decision-making, further improving the decision-making mechanism that combines *public participation, expert evaluation* and government decision-making, and ensuring the decision-making are based on scientific evidence and are accurate (italics added).

Seventeen days later, on March 22, the State Council issued the "Implementation Outline for Fully Promoting Administration According to Law (*quanmian tuijin yifa xingzheng shishi gangyao*)," which reemphasized Wen's proposal to promote public participation and consultation in government decision-making process as well as enhancing government information disclosure (The State Council, 2004). These two events officially initiated the Chinese government's march toward "open, fair, and impartial."

However, China's transition toward "government transparency" was not conceived in 2004. It was actually driven, step by step, by a series of historical events and movements. The transition started with the "openness in village affairs (*cunwu gongkai*)" movement or the demanding of financial transparency of the village

committees¹⁴⁴ in the 1980s (Piotrowski, Zhang, Lin, & Yu, 2009, p. S130). Then it was the “natural pressures” from China’s economic boom and later the fast development of new information and communication technologies. China’s involvement with international affairs, from “opening up” to “going out,” also pushed for greater governmental openness. Some discrete events, such as the 2003 SARS outbreak, the 2004 and 2005 H1N5 influenza (bird flu), and the 2006 Songhua River chemical spill in the northeast also created a sort of “public opinion atmosphere” that demanded the government be more transparent (Horsley, 2007a, p. 3). The Chinese authorities also realized that information disclosure and government transparency would be the key to effective crisis management. On April 5, 2007, the Chinese government issued the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Open Government Information (OGI regulations),¹⁴⁵ the Chinese equivalent of the Freedom of Information Act in the U.S., and it took effect on May 1, 2008.

The OGI regulations further ensured a legal basis for public participation into government decision-making, the procedure that was then elaborated and reemphasized by the State Council in 2010. In an official notice issued by the State Council, it said, “It is necessary to involve public participation, expert evaluation, risk assessment, legal

¹⁴⁴ The village committee is a form of villager self-governance in the rural area of China. It replaced the “brigade” and “commune” mainly due to the establishment of “the household responsibility system (*jiating lianchan chengbao zeren zhi*)” in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The 1998 Organic Law on Villagers’ Committees (i.e., the VC law) requires “directly elected villagers’ committees (VCs) to implement the “four democracies”: directly democratic election of VC members, democratic decision making through the villager assemblies comprised of all eligible voters, democratic management by the VCs, and democratic supervision by the villagers under new systems of ‘openness in village affairs’” (Horsley, 2007b, p. 59). It is the last “democracy” that became an important resource for China’s further openness on public affairs and policies in both rural and urban areas.

¹⁴⁵ It is also translated into “The Provisions of the People’s Republic of China on the Disclosure of Government Information.” I adopt the most popular way of translation in this dissertation.

review and group discussions as a major policy decision-making procedure” (The State Council, 2010, Article 11). Hence it was not surprising that many scholars interpreted these policies as clear signals sent by the Chinese government as its moving toward political reforms. However, the actual performance of the government in accordance with the OGI regulations and the state’s demand of public participation was quite disappointing. Some critiques even called OGI a “sham law” (Sheng, 2009) or described the government’s transparency as “thin air” (Fletcher, 2008). In the meantime, Chinese citizens, social groups, and NGOs were still highly motivated, taking advantage of the OGI regulations to defend their own rights and further their advocacy goals (Horsley, 2010).

An Emerging Civil Society

The introduction of the information disclosure law and the state’s intention to formalize public participation in public affairs were both regarded as facilitating the development of a “civil society”¹⁴⁶ in China. The truth is, when the state starts, or even

¹⁴⁶ The meaning of civil society varies depending on the historical and socio-political-economic contexts within which it is used (see review by Kumar, 1993 from a sociological perspective; Wood, 1990 from a Marxist perspective). Both Wood and Kumar share a Gramscian view of civil society as a way of maintaining bourgeois rule through “consent” or “hegemony” rather than through “coercion” (by the state). But Wood (1990) goes further. He argues that civil society constitutes “a new form of social power...not only a wholly new relation between ‘public’ and ‘private’ but more precisely a wholly new ‘private’ realm, with distinctive ‘public’ presence and oppressions of its own, a unique structure of power and domination, and a ruthless systemic logic. It represents a particular network of social relations that does not simply stand in opposition to the coercive, ‘policing’ and ‘administrative’ functions of the state but represents the relocation of these functions, a new division of labour between the ‘public’ sphere of the state and the ‘private’ sphere of capitalist property and the imperatives of the market, in which appropriation, exploitation and domination are detached from public authority and social responsibility” (p. 73). I do not completely agree with Wood’s view of civil society as opposed to the “state” only and a “private” realm disguised to be public, but I do agree with him on defining “civil society” as a form of social power and a network of social relations. In the context of China, the conceptualization of civil society is different than the Western traditions. For one thing, there has never been a non-state force that can fight against the state. As Ma (2002a) reviews, before 1989, the purpose of Chinese civil society was to “harmonize the relations

just shows an intention to loosen its control over the society, the space for China's nascent "civil society" automatically becomes larger. In history, China's state-society relationship was always incredibly unequal. An independent society (not to mention a civil society) almost did not exist before the market reform. Since the late 1980s, following the reform, there has been an emergence and flourishing of non-state civil organizations since the late 1980s. As Susan Whiting (1991) reviews, as early as in 1990, there were about "2,000 NGOs at the national level and over 100,000 at the local level" (p. 17). According to official statistics, the number of registered "civil society organizations"¹⁴⁷ (*minjian zuzhi*, CSOs) soared from 4,446 in 1988 (MCA, 2005) to 431,069 in 2009 (MCA, 2011).¹⁴⁸

However, these numbers do not tell the whole story of China's "civil society." On the one hand, the numbers are deflated, which means they underestimate the real amount of CSOs in China. That is because: First, as Yu Keping (2006) indicates, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) only includes CSOs at the county level and above in its

between society and the government" (p. 115). Some scholars propose to define the basic characteristics of Chinese civil society first. For example, White, Howell and Shang (1996) state that "voluntary participation, self-regulation, autonomy and separation from the state" are the basic characteristics (p. 37). The central feature or the key to defining the civil society in China seems to be located in the question of "autonomy," or how much distance the civil society can maintain from the state.

¹⁴⁷ In China's official definition, the non-governmental sectors are called "civil society organizations" (*minjian zuzhi*) and can be divided into three parts: (1) Social organizations (*shehui tuanti*); (2) Private non-enterprise units (*minban feiqiye danwei*); and (3) Foundations (*jjinhui*).

¹⁴⁸ "NGO," or non-governmental organization, only became a popular term for describing civil society organizations after Beijing hosted the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Because the "non-government" meaning of the NGOs is often interpreted into "anti-government" in the Chinese context (see Kaur, 2006, p. 47, footnote2; Q. Ma, 2002b, p. 308), many Chinese scholars and officials prefer to use "non-profit organization," "intermediary organization" (*zhongjie zuzhi*), "social organization" (*shehui zuzhi*), "civic association" (*minjian tuanti*), or "mass association" (*qunzhong zuzhi*), etc. to describe organizations that are not managed by the government (see K. Yu, 2006). To clarify, in this dissertation, I use "CSOs" as the collective name for all types of civil organizations and associations in China. When referring to the grassroots organizations that are not closely associated with the government, I use NGO instead.

annual statistics. CSOs registered at lower levels are neglected. Second, according to China's regulatory policy on CSOs,¹⁴⁹ a CSO can only be legally approved through registration with MCA or the Civil Affairs Departments (CAD) at the county level and above. In order to be "qualified" for registration, the CSO must find a government or Party agency who admits to serve as its "supervisor" or "organizational sponsor" (*zhuguan danwei*). Additionally, one government or Party agency can only supervise one CSO of each kind within the same administrative region. For example, only one "environmental CSO" is allowed to be registered with CAD under the supervision of the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau. This "dual registration system"—management from both MCA and the "organizational sponsor—makes it extremely complicated and difficult for a CSO to get legalized. Therefore, many non-profit and non-governmental organizations do not register with the government. Some of them, for the purpose of maintaining regular activities, register as "companies" or for-profit organizations in China and choose to pay a "tax" to the government. Taking these "underground" CSOs into account, some scholars estimate that there might be as many as 8,031,344 social groups in China (K. Yu, 2006, p. 121).

On the other hand, CSOs are defined as "bridges between the state and society" by the Chinese government (Q. Ma, 2002b, p. 310). They are said to be placed in "the

¹⁴⁹ Feeling threatened by the "dramatic burst of political energy from student, worker, and city resident associations," the Chinese government started to regulate CSOs during the heyday of 1989 pro-democracy movement (Q. Ma, 2002b, p. 309). In 1998, the State Council issued the "Regulations for Registration and Management of Social Organizations" (*shehui tuanti guanli dengji tiaoli*) and started to impose a "dual registration system" for almost all CSOs in China with only a few exceptions. These exceptions include local chapter of local CPPCC or the Communist Youth League, CSO directly approved by the State Council, such as the All-China journalism Association, or "internal" organizations built up within an existing institution, organization or business enterprise, such as a university research institute.

intermediary sphere between the party and the masses” (Howell, 1998, p. 62). But in reality, through the “dual registration system,” a large number of the CSOs are put under the control of the government (Q. Ma, 2002b, p. 306), especially those that have obtained a legal license. Besides, a considerable amount of registered NGOs are supported by the state and thus are called “government-organized NGOs” (GONGOs).¹⁵⁰ Because of the “semi-government” nature of these CSOs and GONGOs, it has been argued that “the NGO phenomenon in China reflects an attempt on the part of the government to divest itself of some of the burdens of socio-economic development without at the same time sacrificing significant political control” (Whiting, 1991, p. 17).

From the perspective of the civil society itself, the context of China has already illustrated a very limited space for it to work with. For those who do not register with the government, the biggest threat comes from inadequacy of financial resources. China issued its first “Measures for the Management of Foundations” (*jijinhui guanli banfa*) in 1988, when there were only eight foundations all over China, all of which were led by government agencies. The 1988 foundation rules required a minimum of RMB 100,000 (or equivalent foreign currencies) as original funds for each foundation. All foundations received mandatory financial oversight by the People’s Bank of China (i.e., the central bank of China). In 1999, the State Council issued an order to remove the supervision role of the central bank without specifying new rules. This order created a “regulatory limbo” for all foundations (China Development Brief, 2004, para. 2). In 2004, MCA revised the

¹⁵⁰ According to Liu Xiaohua (2002), GONGOs are “national-level organizations, which receive most of funding from the government. Their staff and premises are also provided by the government” (p. 4). Therefore, although many outsiders call most Chinese NGOs who registered with the state agency as GONGOs, I do not agree with such an inaccurate categorization. There are still registered NGOs that do not receive funds and/or personnel from the government.

1988 rules and issued the new “Regulations on the Administration of Foundations.” The new regulations distinguish between “public fundraising foundations” (*gongmu jijinhui*), which are oriented towards fundraising from the general public, and “non-public fundraising foundations” (*fei gongmu jijinhui*), which are not (The State Council, 2004, article 3). The standard for establishing a “public fundraising foundation” seems moderately high especially to grassroots NGOs. According to the 2004 regulations, the original funds of national public fundraising foundations should be not less than RMB eight million; at the local level, it should be not less than RMB four million. Even for non-public fundraising foundations, the original funds should not be less than RMB two million and the funds must be retained in a current account (The State Council, 2004, article 8). Moreover, every year the public fundraising foundations must spend at least 70% of funds that they raise from the previous year. For non-public fundraising foundations, their annual expenditure on public benefit activities must be more than 8% of the surplus from the previous year. For both types of foundations, no more than 10% of their expenditure can be used to cover staff wages, benefits, and other overhead costs (TheStateCouncil, 2004, article 29). According to the latest news report, until June 19, 2011, there were in a total of 1,124 public fundraising foundations and 1,143 non-public fundraising foundations all over China (Y.-N. Huang, 2011). Compared to the more than 430,000 officially registered CSOs, the number of foundations is quite miserable. These new rules not only make it harder for most Chinese CSOs to obtain the permission for public fundraising but also make it easier for the government to weed out small grassroots NGOs.

Another section of Chinese civil society seriously impacted by the 2004 regulations is the international NGOs. The new regulations clearly state that no overseas foundation may engage in fundraising or accept donations within China (The State Council, 2004, article 25). This directive either encourages big international NGOs to be more localized by setting up independent branch in China and creating more indigenous funding programs or discourages small international NGOs by cutting them off from the Chinese fundraising market.¹⁵¹ But in either case, the 2004 regulations do not help improve the situation of China's grassroots NGOs because a large proportion of these NGOs are solely supported by international funding sources. Even if the big international NGOs become localized, they have to find a "supervisor" from the government or party agencies, which in fact will bring more constraints to their funding allocation.

Other than simply trying to curb public fundraising in China, the government also wants to control the funds flowing into China from outside. On December 30, 2009, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) issued a circular, demanding all domestic institutions (including domestic enterprises) that receive foreign donations to open foreign exchange accounts at designated foreign exchange banks by showing a "notarized donation agreement specifying the purpose of the fund" (SAFE, 2009, article 5). If followed strictly, this new order could be devastating to most grassroots NGOs in China since most of their funds are from overseas donations, and it would be difficult to get a notarized donation agreement by standing together with their overseas donors in

¹⁵¹ In fact, an often neglected problem is that the 2004 regulations only specify how to regulate "overseas foundations" that involve funds issues. For those non-fund-related international organizations, there are no clear explanations or directives. This is thus called "a state of legal limbo" for a vast majority of international NGOs working in China (Y.-C. Zhang, 2009).

front of a notary official (which by no means can be done in a drugstore or a postal office in China). Therefore the SAFE circular is interpreted as the Chinese government's intention of imposing tighter regulations on grassroots NGOs. As Meg Davis (2010) comments, this new foreign exchange regulation shows "a complex maneuver," which creates "a chill that shuts some NGOs down, allows others to survive but limits the overall growth of the sector—and without sparking an international outcry" (para. 12). In fact, the state's attempts to minimize the power of grassroots NGOs have been constant, which creates frictions between the China and the international civil society. In May 2011, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), a multi-billion dollar international financing co-op on epidemic intervention and prevention, partnered by governments, NGOs, private sectors, and affected communities, temporarily suspended millions of dollars in aid to China. One of the major reasons was that the Chinese government did not show "a sufficient level of involvement from grassroots organizations working with vulnerable populations" (Parry, 2011, para. 2).

The intensified conflicts between the state and the CSOs, especially the grassroots NGOs, result in many uncertainties regarding the future of China's civil society. Two contradictory views are always in debate. One is the so-called "civil society" perspective that has a firm belief that the development of NGOs will lead to a burgeoning civil society—a distinct force outside of the state characterized by voluntary participation, self-regulation and autonomy; and the other is the "state corporatism" perspective that always shed doubts on the "intention" of the state and argued that the state was actually trying to develop NGOs into a "quasi-state apparatus to enhance its control over the

expanding society” (J. Jin, 2007, pp. 30-31). We cannot be certain, for now, about which view is more correct. But one thing for sure is that there is always “a significant gap between rhetoric and practice and between the expressed intent of the party-state authorities, a system that is itself deeply conflicted, and what can actually be enforced for any significant period throughout the entire country” (Saich, 2000, p. 125). More than simply postulating about the future of China’s civil society, what we need to focus on is the actual roles played by individuals and organizations in the field of civil society.

It may be helpful to provide a clearer definition of China’s civil society here. To me, Chinese civil society is neither a collectivity of all types of CSOs in China nor is it a separate force from the state. I argue that China’s current civil society has a distinct history and reality that is a product of the global-local encounter after 1978. It is a network of social relations formed based on shared interest and embodied by actors and collectivities of actors who work to serve the public or to influence the policy-making process. A contemporary Chinese civil society is not fully autonomous because of its “patron-client” relation with the state. But it is becoming “a dynamic force outside of the state system” (Q. Ma, 2002a, p. 128).

Chapter 5

Public Health Crises in the News – An Outline

In the last chapter, I sketched out the historical and socio-political-economic background for my analysis of the news construction of public health crises in China's news media. The four cases I selected for this research are: HIV/AIDS, HBV, SARS, and H1N1. To examine how the six Chinese newspapers—ranging from the national to the provincial level and with Party or market orientations—cover the four public health crises, I choose to decode the news content from three perspectives: the geographic focus of news (i.e., news type), the specific reporting focus of the news (i.e., news theme), and the primary and secondary information sources quoted in the news.

News Type

News type indicates whether the news has a domestic or an international focus. Following Tsan-Kuo Chang's (2002) research on a primetime news program aired on the China Central Television (CCTV), I also include a category of "Foreign policy news" to signify news stories that involve more than one country or that discuss international relations issues. A fourth coding category I add here is "Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao news." It is included because these three areas have a special position in China's historical and geopolitical contexts. Further, since Hong Kong and Macao were officially returned to China in the late 1990s, and Taiwan is still under dispute, separating them from the news on China may make the discussions easier and clearer.

HBV vs. AIDS & SARS vs. H1N1

Tables 6-1 and 6-2 present the distribution of news types across the four epidemics and the six newspapers. As Table 5-1 shows, for the four epidemics combined, a predominant majority of reporting focuses—78.5% of all news—on mainland China. But if we look at the four epidemics separately, there are slight differences. The news on HBV almost exclusively focuses on mainland China. More than 94% of all news on HBV falls into this category. That might be because, unlike the other three epidemics, HBV is regarded as an endemic in China. According to WHO, most Chinese HBV carriers get infected during childhood.¹⁵² In comparison, although it is also a chronic disease, HIV/AIDS obviously has been covered more from an international angle. About 22.7% of all news on HIV/AIDS is about countries outside of mainland China. There is also significantly more AIDS than HBV news concerned with foreign policy issues (5.7% versus 0.1%), which clearly indicates that AIDS is a global epidemic and requires more international collaboration whereas HBV is a domestic endemic and does not need to be reported from an international perspective.

Insert Table 5-1 About here

As for the two acute outbreaks, news on SARS and on H1N1 seems to cover mainland China equally. About 78.9% of all SARS news and 82.8% of all H1N1 news are about China. However, it is somewhat unexpected that there is less domestic news on

¹⁵² WHO has a detailed factsheet on HBV on its official website: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>. Access date: July 1, 2011.

SARS than on H1N1. China was not only the origin of the SARS epidemic in 2003, but it was also the country most heavily affected by the epidemic in the world. Additionally, the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic originated in the North America and China was much less affected by H1N1 than by SARS. Further, almost 12% of SARS news falls into the category of “non-applicable/unclear.” While for news on H1N1, most of them can be coded into a distinct category (except for 1.8% of the total 1,077 stories). These differences imply that the Chinese news media dealt with the two acute outbreaks in different ways. As we will see later in this chapter, many of the stories coded as “non-applicable/unclear” are news commentaries or knowledge introductions on the disease. When it firstly broke out, SARS was almost un-heard to the whole world. The Chinese government’s initial cover-up exacerbated the panic and paranoid of the public. Therefore, as the epicenter of the epidemic, the Chinese media may have spent more space on explanation, education, or interrogation rather than simply reporting the facts.

National Press vs. Provincial Press

On the surface, one may postulate that the Chinese media were reluctant to report the SARS outbreak within the country’s borders because the government tried to cover it up from the very beginning. In other words, it is exactly because SARS started in China that makes it less possible for the Chinese media to cover it without constraints. By contrast, H1N1 was not a disease “made in China,” which makes it safe for the media to discuss it more freely. However, if we look at the six newspapers separately, will that still be the case? When covering the SARS outbreak, the four provincial newspapers—ND, HD, NMN, and DD—seem to focus more on mainland China than the two national

newspapers—PD and NW (see Table 5-2). The same pattern emerges when we examine coverage on the H1N1 outbreak: ND, HD and NMN¹⁵³ covered more from a domestic perspective than PD and NW.

Insert Table 5-2 About here

However, in comparing the news on SARS with the news on H1N1, only the two newspapers published by the *Nanfang Media Group*—ND and NMN—covered slightly more from a domestic perspective on H1N1 than on SARS. ND had 87.5% domestic news on H1N1 in contrast to 83.1% on SARS; and NMN had 83.3% domestic news on H1N1 as compared to 77.9% on SARS. DD—the provincial tabloid published by the Henan News Group—and NW—the national elite newspaper—do not seem to vary much in terms of the domestic concentration on the two epidemics. For DD, it had 80.7% SARS news and 79.5% H1N1 news on mainland China; for NW, 63.4% of its SARS news and 63.6% of its H1N1 news talked about mainland China too. Only PD, the party organ of CCP’s central committee, reduced its coverage of H1N1 from a domestic perspective and accordingly elevated its international focus on the global pandemic.

As Table 5-2 also indicates, the coverage on HBV from all the six newspapers is quite homogeneous. An absolutely majority proportion of news is on mainland China, further confirming that HBV epidemic was regarded as an endemic. Both ND (2.1%) and

¹⁵³ The total number of H1N1 stories retrieved from HD is too small, only 9 in total, and thus should not be taken into account.

DD (1.6%) published a few international stories on the disease, but it is PD (6.9%), again that allocated more attention to HBV in foreign countries.

Comparing the two national newspapers, PD apparently had a relatively balanced reporting on domestic (47.5%) and international AIDS news (34.2%). Further it also had significantly more news on foreign policy issues (15.7%) related to HIV/AIDS than the other five newspapers. NW seems to have been concerned more with domestic AIDS issues (65.8%) and less with international ones (21.9%). But strangely 10.3% of NW AIDS news is coded into “non-applicable or unclear.” The same thing happened to NW repeatedly in its coverage on SARS (28%) and H1N1 (9.1%). In total, 14.3% of news stories published by NW were coded as “non-applicable or unclear,” which is significantly more than the other five newspapers.

Comparing the two principal party organs, HD (74.3%) covered more domestic AIDS news than ND (53.4%), but ND (31.8%) reported more on international incidents than HD (20.0%). Meanwhile HD seems to have paid almost no attention to the AIDS epidemic in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao—the three “special regions” associated with mainland China through the concept of “Greater China” (see a review of the concept by Harding, 1993). By contrast, ND (6.8%) appears to have had the most widespread concern over the three regions among all the six newspapers, even more than PD (1.0%). Also from the same media group, NMN (3.1%) showed a noticeable amount of interest in the three regions too. Both ND and NMN are published in Guangdong province, which, is adjacent to Hong Kong and Macao, and is only one-hour flight from Guangzhou (the capital of Guangdong) to Taipei (the capital of Taiwan). It seems that this geographic

closeness makes the two newspapers more interested in the three areas. Also because of the geographic immediacy, more visitors from the three regions live in Guangdong than any other province or municipal. According to the latest national census data, more than one million foreign residents (including 420,000 from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) live in mainland China more than three months per year, one third of whom live in Guangdong (NBS, 2011). This further explains why there was more coverage on the three regions in the two Guangdong newspapers than the others.

In sum, the general patterns identified from the news types for Chinese media's coverage of epidemics are: (1) Regardless of whether the epidemic is a national endemic or a global pandemic, the domestic news is absolutely a dominant news type for Chinese media; (2) Regardless of the origination or severity of a certain epidemic, if we compare newspapers with different geographic focuses, provincial newspapers—no matter if they are a tabloid or a party organ—tend to cover more domestic news, while national newspapers tend to cover less;¹⁵⁴ (3) The newspapers published in Guangdong in general are concerned more about the condition of epidemics in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao than those from Henan (or even the central party organ, PD); (4) There appears to be a considerable amount of news coded as “non-applicable or unclear,” especially from NW. These news stories covered neither domestic nor international or “Greater China” events. To find out what these stories actually covered, we needed to examine the specific news

¹⁵⁴ For example, when covering AIDS stories, the two market-oriented tabloids, NMN (79.2%) and DD (80.7%) had significantly more concern with mainland China than the other four newspapers. Accordingly, they also paid less attention to international news. This is not surprising because the target readership of these two newspapers is local residents who may care more about what happens in the everyday life in their neighborhood rather than what happens across the Pacific Ocean.

themes that are included in this “non-applicable” category. (5) PD, as the mouthpiece of CCP’s central committee, and the most authoritative medium in China, strives to keep a balance on news reporting. Not only does it pay significantly more attention to “foreign policy news,” but it also tends to include more international news in its reportage as well. Does this imply that PD has a more international vision in journalistic practice? Or is it simply because when a news incident is not closely related to China, PD can act more normally based on news rules? Before we make a judgment, we need to explore the themes of the epidemic news first.

News Theme

News theme refers to the major topic that stands out from the news. More specifically, it is about a particular perspective that a news story takes in order to best represent the “real event” that constitutes the news. In my research, I created 10 categories of news themes for decoding the 6,194 news stories on the four public health crises (see Table 5-3).

Insert Table 5-3 About here

Since the four crises are all related to epidemics, it is natural to see that a considerable proportion of news from each crisis is written from a “medical, scientific, or public health” perspective; that is, a perspective mainly about the activities of medical institutions and professionals, about the “hard facts” of the disease, such as statistics on mortality, morbidity and survival rates, and about “knowledge” that may benefit the

general public and help them survive a serious epidemic. From Table 5-3 we can see that the “medical/scientific theme” is the most dominant perspective for all the news stories. More specifically, almost 70% of the news on the 2009 H1N1 pandemic is reported from the “medical/scientific” perspective. The least “scientifically” covered epidemic is SARS (34.8%), followed by HBV (38.1%) and AIDS (48.7%).

The second major theme that emerged from these news stories is “government, officials or politics.”¹⁵⁵ About 13.3% of news was reported from this perspective, with SARS news listed on top (20.9%), followed by HIV/AIDS (16.6%). By contrast, when covering the mostly domestically engendered epidemic, HBV, the presence of government and the Party-state apparently diminishes. Among all the 1,136 HBV news stories, only 0.6% mentioned the government. For the H1N1 pandemic, the role of government is not significant either: only 6.3% of the H1N1 news had an obvious government theme. The results are not surprising since both SARS and HIV/AIDS were the two most severe epidemics affecting China in the 20th century. Both of them experienced a stage of concealment by the government, as some in the foreign press call, China’s “state secret.” Both of them were made public by force and thus aroused certain social and emotional panic at one point. Both of them eventually ended up back in the government’s hand through more effective administrative control (such as punishing “scapegoat” officials) and stricter media censorship (such as mandatory directives from

¹⁵⁵ I must emphasize here that “government” also refers to the Party and the state. For most Chinese news media, it is almost a tradition—a routine way of reporting or a predictable directive from the Propaganda Department—to cover the leadership of the CCP and to emphasize the positive image of party members during time of crisis. It is also because in many news narratives, the government and the Party-state are always represented as if they were the same thing. Therefore, I did not differentiate “government” from the Party-state here when creating the coding measures.

the Propaganda Department on what to cover and what not to cover in the news). The role of the government and its officials has to be one of the central themes when there is a crisis like SARS or HIV/AIDS. Comparatively speaking, HBV and H1N1 were not as severe as SARS and HIV/AIDS in China. The government or the Party-state had nothing to hide from the public, and thus it was not necessary for the media to highlight the role of the government or the Party-state.

HBV & “Advertorial”

Besides the “medical/scientific theme” and the “government” theme, it is surprising that 24.4% of the news on HBV was covered in a form of an “advertorial.” Advertorials are a type of “soft advertisement.” In the Chinese media field, an advertorial is extremely popular because it can be successfully disguised as “real news” and can be easily perceived and accepted by the readers as if they were learning facts about a certain product or service. To make advertorials more effective, some news organizations even use a variety of news genres, such as feature, dialogue, editorial, etc., or mingle the “soft advertisement” with news stories on the same page in order to better dupe the readers (Ying & Ge, 2007). According to the Article 13 of China’s “Advertising Law,” “[A]n advertisement should be able to be clearly recognizable as a kind of advertisement.” As it further explains, “[M]ass media should not in any way publish an advertisement in the disguise of a news report whenever an advertisement is published in mass media, for not to mislead consumers, a clear indication should be shown to distinguish it from non-advertising information” (NPC, 1995). However, without strict law enforcement, an advertorial is still a popular practice in most Chinese

mass media. HBV, as a chronic disease with an almost 10% prevalence among the Chinese population, was a “gold mine” to pharmaceutical industry and Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCM). Most “advertorials” on HBV were promoting either a type of medicine or medical service. Because many Chinese people have a deep belief in TCM, especially when dealing with chronic diseases, a large proportion of these advertorials related to TCM and its practitioners.

The most serious problem of the HBV advertorials is that, in order to use fear as an effective stimulus to persuade the consumers, they often excessively exaggerated the virulence of HBV. In some “soft advertisements,” HBV was portrayed as an extremely contagious disease, which can be easily acquired through everyday activities, such as shaking hands or eating together. These distortions and even deceptions, unexpectedly, caused a huge misconception of HBV among the general population, which led to increased discrimination against HBV carriers in employment, education, and even marriage. This discrimination eventually led to the development of a rights-defense social movement by HBV carriers, mostly carried out via legal leverage involving filing lawsuits against employment and education discrimination. That is why more than 16% of HBV news is related to lawsuits, which is significantly higher than the legal news for the other three epidemics.

Accordingly, more than 11% of the AIDS news and almost 10% of the SARS news were covered from a legal perspective. By contrast, there is less legal news related to H1N1 (6.4%). This distribution corresponds to the distribution of “civil society or rights defense” news across the four epidemics. For AIDS, HBV, and SARS, more than

4% of the news of each involved NGOs or translating into civil or human rights affairs. For H1N1, this theme only is only 0.1% of the reporting, and the theme almost totally disappeared.

It is also interesting to see that, as three high-profile epidemics, AIDS (1.9%), SARS (2.8%) and H1N1 (1.7%) attracted more celebrity endorsements and were more often articulated with cultural news than HBV (0.5%), a less-famous endemic. Although the total amount of “entertainment, sports, and culture” news was very limited, the existence of this cultural venue reminds us that epidemics are cultural and social in addition to biological and biomedical. They can be further associated with “economic values” too.

Among all the four diseases, SARS (8.1%) and H1N1 (5.2%) received the most economic or financial reportage. This economic perspective is different to “advertorial” because here news does not focus on a specific product or service; rather, it interprets or presents epidemics from an economic point of view, trying to make a causal relation between the disease and economic progression or recession. In this way, certain invisible agendas behind disease prevention and intervention may easily be justified, even though in the last three decades most of these agendas actually have helped reinforce the state’s dominant political discourse—which happens to be “economic development first.”

SARS & Commentary

Among the ten news theme categories, “editorial, Op-Ed, or commentary” is ranked sixth, emerging from 4.6% of news. Further, more SARS news (6.5%) falls into this category than others. “Editorial” is not an unfamiliar news genre to Chinese readers.

Under the Mao regime, editorials published in the *People's Daily* or the *People's Liberation Army Daily* were often regarded as the voices of the CCP Central Committee and of Chairman Mao. The editorial was a critical “ideological front” (*sixiang zhengdi*), a combat field, to guarantee the correct direction that the whole country should follow. After Deng initiated the economic reform, the editorial was still an important discursive venue for Deng to articulate and elaborate his economic and political views. In 1991, under Deng’s instruction, an editorial team of the *Liberation Daily* in Shanghai produced a series of articles, under the pen-name “Huang Piping,” to drum up the Party’s confidence in Deng’s economic reform. Accustomed to education through the “political lectures” offered by mass media, the Chinese public knows clearly how to “read” editorials. Sometimes, reading editorials issued by party organs is the most effective way for the public to find out the Party-state’s real intentions behind China’s “closed-door” politics. The 2003 SARS outbreak started right before the power shift from the third to the fourth generation of China’s leadership—from Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji to Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao. It was a murky period, not only in the sense of the outbreak but also in politics. Editorials then may have served as a means for the new leadership to clarify their policy agenda, to prove their leadership skills, or even to create political charisma. But this is only one postulation.

If we examine the “editorial, Op-Ed, or commentary” category from each of the six newspapers individually, such a postulation soon proves not to be very accurate (see Table 5-4). As Table 5-4 reveals, for the SARS crisis, it is NW (23.9%), not PD (6.8%), that shown the most interest in publishing opinion pieces. Except NW, the national elite

newspaper, the rest five newspapers, including three party organs (i.e., PD, ND and HD) and two tabloids (i.e., NMN and DD), display a close variance in terms of the amount of editorial and commentary published on SARS. However the party organs do not share the same orientation as the tabloids or the elite newspaper. To PD, ND, and HD, the main purpose of writing an opinion piece is to speak for the Party or to direct the public. As a propaganda instrument, their editorials and commentaries are meant to establish a political authority of the new generation of leadership of Hu and Wen. To NW, NMN, and DD, especially NW and NMN—the two most politically liberal newspapers, both of which are famous for being independent and critical—opinion means something else.

Insert Table 5-4 About here

Being two deeply commercialized newspapers with obvious liberal intentions, NW and NMN are not regarded as the “authority” but as the “critics” of the Party-state. Neither of them had a “news commentary” column or page until 2002. On March 4, 2002, NMN started to publish a full page of “opinion and commentary” on the inner side of the front page. There are usually four or five opinion pieces published on that page every day, which may include one or two editorials and two or three pieces of invited commentaries and reader responses. One year later, in April 2003, during the heyday of SARS panic, NMN started to publish its own “Op-Ed” page by following the model and style of the *New York Times*. Writers invited to contribute were mostly experts from the field of economics, management, education, international relations, and civil society.

NMN pays approximately RMB 800 to 1000 for each essay, depending on the credential of the author.¹⁵⁶ In April 2008, NMN started to publish a weekly “commentary and opinion” edition every Sunday, as a supplement to its daily editorial and op-ed pages.

As a national elite weekly newspaper, NW does not always publish editorials. Since it started as a “weekly on cultural news,” NW’s journalistic and editorial styles are more soft and polished. NW’s quasi-editorial, the “Editor’s Note” (*bianzhe de hua*) sometimes works like an editorial with a soft tone and mainly serves as an introduction of the whole newspaper. The most celebrated opinion writing from NW is its “New Year’s Message” published on the first day of each year. The first year NW started this tradition was 1999. Shen Hao and Chang Ping, two renowned journalists in China wrote one of the most famous news essays in China’s modern press history, titled “There is always a force letting us burst into tears” (*zongyou yizhong liliang rang women leiliu manmian*). In this 1000-word essay, they showed a deep humanitarian concern for the public, especially those living at the bottom of Chinese society. On the side of this “1999 New Year’s Message” was an “Editor’s Note” written by the then chief editor of NW, Jiang Yiping, titled “Let’s lend strength to those lacking it, and enable pessimists to push forward” (*rang wulizhe youli, rang beiguanzhe qianxing*). One year later, in 2000, Jiang was removed from her post at NW by the provincial Propaganda Department. In late 2002, NW started to publish a regular “news commentary” column on its front page. The column’s title is “Ark,” insinuating that the newspaper serves as a “shelter” and delivers “hope” to the Chinese public. This may explain why during the 2003 SARS crisis, both

¹⁵⁶ Interviewee 2008 -03

NW and NMN published a considerable number of commentaries on the disease. It is reasonable to postulate that the freshly adopted news genre became a new weapon for these two politically liberal newspapers, and that they wanted to have their voices heard in order to push political and social changes in China. But this does not mean all editorials or commentaries published in NW and NMN are “critiques” on the government. In fact, both newspapers know very well how to express their point of view without getting into trouble. That is what they call “political wisdom.”¹⁵⁷

In sum, in the case of writing an “editorial, Op-Ed, or commentary” on the SARS crisis, even though the party organs and the market-oriented newspapers were both willing to provide their opinions, the motivations and concerns behind their commentaries were different. The appearance of such a considerable amount of commentaries on the SARS epidemic also explains why there are so many “non-applicable / unclear” items for these newspapers when examining “news types” (see Table 5-2).

HIV/AIDS & Social News

Among all the 1,990 news stories on HIV/AIDS, the theme of “society, life or anecdote” is ranked fourth (9.5%) out of the total 10 categories (see Table 5-3). Since the top three themes are either related to medical science or to government and policies, all of which fall into the “routine” of China’s journalistic practices—that is, as the mouthpiece of the Party and the government—the frequent employment of a “human interest” related perspectives seems quite unusual. As Table 5-4 displays, NW (23.2%), ND (8.3%), and

¹⁵⁷ Interviewee 2008-01.

NMN (18.0%) covered more social news on HIV/AIDS than the other three newspapers. PD (5.2%), the central party organ, covered fewer AIDS stories from a social angle than DD (6.8%), but more than the Henan provincial party organ, HD (2.3%).

The “social theme” of HIV/AIDS news refers to the stories about ordinary people’s everyday life. Unlike the political or economic news, the social news is “softer” and deeper. It is “softer” because social news often employs a “human interest” framework to portray the life of people who are “small potatoes,” their laughs and cries or their fears and hopes. A typical reportage style for social news is to employ emotions and details, in a way that arouses readers’ interest or sympathy. Social news is deeper because it requires journalists have a meticulous focus on details. Social news often describes an episode or tells a personal story, not only to convey a strong feeling of humanitarian but also to win readers’ attention by portraying the media itself as a sympathizer.

In this sense, the results for NW and NMN are not unexpected. Both of them are relatively more commercialized than the rest four newspapers, and they both intend to focus more on the grassroots. ND, as the party organ of the Guangdong province party committee, is the “father newspaper” of both NW and NMN. Rooted in the same media group, the organizational culture may explain why all the three of *Nanfang Media Group*’s newspapers published more social news. However, there might be other explanations too. For example, HIV/AIDS epidemic was heavily entangled with a “blood scandal” in Central China, thus this issue does not constitute a minefield, at least

temporarily, for the three newspapers in South China. The geographic distance may help ND, NW, and NMN become more outspoken on AIDS issues.

For HD and DD, they are both located in the storm's eye of China's AIDS blood scandal. Thousands of villagers from Henan and adjacent areas were infected by HIV through "illegal" commercial blood donations, which persisted for more than a decade. It was not actually "illegal" because the Henan government promoted and encouraged villagers to sell blood for boosting, what the government called, a "plasma economy." It is "plasma" not a "blood" economy because "plasma donation" was much more popular than selling whole blood at that time. To donors, selling plasma means fewer parts of their blood would be taken out and thus it sounds less harmful to their health. To buyers, less blood means less payment. This is apparently a "win-win" deal. Therefore, in the early to mid 1990s, the "plasma economy" was seen as a productive and creative way of taking advantage of China's "population bonus."

HIV/AIDS, "the killer of the century," came across China's borders as early as the mid-1980s. Most blood donors had never even heard of the disease. They certainly would not know that, when the blood stations took plasma out and infused the remaining part of the blood back into their veins, they injected them with blood collected from other donors' bodies too. In order to save money on instruments and to avoid tedious procedures for dealing with one donor at a time, the owners of the blood stations decided to mix all blood of the same type together, take out the plasma, and then infuse the remains to the donors one by one. If there was one HIV infector's blood get mixed in, people who shared the same transfusion procedure got infected immediately. This is how

tens of thousands of peasants, the most conservative and vulnerable group of people in China, became infected by HIV. In a sense, the HIV/AIDS epidemic in China's villages is just an "endemic."

Henan was China's most earnest supporter and promoter of the "plasma economy" in the 1990s. Therefore it is not surprising that Henan became the area most severely affected by HIV/AIDS as well. According to unofficial estimates, there are hundreds of "AIDS villages" in Henan and neighboring areas.¹⁵⁸ For a long time, HIV/AIDS was a taboo in the media in Henan. Journalists who dared to touch the topic of the "AIDS village" were persuaded not to publish their reports, were removed from their posts or were even purged from the province.¹⁵⁹ But in Guangdong, since the "AIDS villages" was generally perceived as only a problem of Henan, the Guangdong provincial government did not care much about local media's bombardment on this issue. This kind of journalistic practice is called "cross regional supervision" (*yidi jiandu*), which "leverages the political and administrative gaps that develop when competing power interests come into play" (Cho, 2010, p. 170).

Cross regional supervision arose along with the booming of investigative journalism in China, which in turn grew up with the development of "metropolitan newspapers" (*dushibao*, or "metro newspaper"). China's first "metro newspaper" was the "West China City Daily" (*huaxi dushibao*) in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, started in January 1995. The two "metro newspapers" I chose to study here both began operations in 1995 too. But it was not until 1997 that NMN obtained a national publication license

¹⁵⁸ Interviewee 2008 - 10

¹⁵⁹ Interviewee 2008-07 & 2008-09

and transformed from a weekly into a daily tabloid by creating eye-catching headlines, bold layouts, and generous concentrations on social news (see Fu, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d). It was also in 1997 that DD changed its title from “Dahe Culture Daily” to the current “Dahe Daily” and emphasized its focus on civil lives. From 1997 to 2000, both NMN and DD grew very fast, and both of them were regarded as the “flagship newspaper” of China’s metro dailies.

Metro newspapers are a distinct type of press in China. Unlike the party organs, most of them are fully economically independent from the state’s subsidy. They do not even receive financial support from their “father newspaper”—usually a major party organ. They are highly market-oriented and thus have to make the newspaper more readable. Social news is more favorable to metro newspapers because of its proximity to the readers. As the flagship newspaper of China’s metro newspapers, DD earned a reputation of being “close to the people’s livelihood” (*tiejin minsheng*). Ma Yunlong, the then executive chief editor of DD, was one of the founders of DD. He was a veteran journalist, a college graduate from the Peking University in the 1960s, and a prisoner of conscience who spent more than five years in jail because of his “anti-revolutionary” speeches during the Cultural Revolution (Y. Li, 2005). In a public lecture at the Fudan University in Shanghai in June 2008, Ma mentioned that there were two things he kept emphasizing when he worked at DD: first, to rush the reporters onto the street; and second, to ask them to approach the grassroots, to go to people’s houses: “I remember during the first month (of DD’s launch), we had a column called ‘reporters to work’ (*jizhe dagong*), which required every young reporter to work in the lowest, busiest, and

the most backbreaking job for one day, and to write an article about it” (F. Shi, 2008, my parentheses). This example illustrates the focus on social news when Ma was in charge of DD. However, after he was forced to leave his position in 2001, this social focus was changed. Restrained from the accessibility of the data, the news stories from DD analyzed in this dissertation research are all published after 2002. This might explain why DD has much fewer social themes on AIDS news than NMN, even though they are both metro newspapers.

The third reason that may explain the difference between DD and NMN (or between the Nanfang Media Group and the Henan News Group) is organizational. One thing that Ma Yunlong was not able to achieve was to set up an internal mechanism or to create a sustainable way of making his “idealist way” of doing journalism. After Ma left, the whole DD seemed to shatter. Some reporters from DD mourned Ma’s leaving, but they were soon pulled back by the reality and took the easiest way (as compared to Ma’s hard way) of news making; that is to heavily rely on the stringers or correspondents from government or companies.¹⁶⁰ By contrast, like Ma Yunlong, the chief editor of NMN, Cheng Yizhong, was also forced to leave NMN in 2003. Cheng was even framed, arrested and then purged from Guangdong (see P. P. Pan, 2008, Chapter 9, “The Newspaperman”).¹⁶¹ However, without having the same type of resolute leader as DD, NMN does not seem to be off track. It seems the difference between DD and NMN does not simply lie in the broader provincial contexts. DD seems to be mostly managed by

¹⁶⁰ Interviewee 2008-08

¹⁶¹ NMN’s coverage of the death of Sun Zhigang in 2003 was the main cause (see Chapter 4 for more details).

only people, while NMN seems to be managed by a well-designed system. Such an institutional difference seems to be reflected in the news they produce.

In sum, some of the themes of the news on the four epidemics reflected a quite normal and expected way of journalistic practice in China, with a few exceptions. (1) Stories on the four epidemics are quite concentrated in three areas: “medical/scientific,” “government/politics,” and “policy/lawsuit.” These three themes combined occupy more than 70% of all news themes. H1N1 was covered more from a “medical/scientific” perspective than others, SARS receives more “government/politics” focus, while HBV was more related to “policy/lawsuit.” (2) HBV has obviously been included more into “advertorials,” which may actually become the accomplice of a nationwide discrimination against people living with HBV. As a result, the anti-HBV discrimination movement receives a considerable amount of media attention too. That may also explains why the “civil society/rights defense” theme is more salient in HBV news than others. (3) There is more “editorial/commentary” on SARS from the six newspapers than on the other three epidemics. But if we look more closely, NW and NMN, the two market-oriented newspapers, are more inclined to use “commentary” as way of covering SARS. This might be explained by the history of these two newspapers and the liberal climate that is pervasive within the two news organizations. (4) When covering news on HIV/AIDS, the social theme is more frequently chosen by the three newspapers published in Guangdong than those in Henan. One of the major reasons is that the epidemic itself is a big social problem and a big political problem for the Henan government. Therefore the Henan press may not be allowed to cover HIV/AIDS from a

social perspective because social news is often more sensational and may lead to anti-government emotions. Because HIV/AIDS is not a “problem” for the Guangdong government, the press in Guangdong has more freedom to cover this topic with cross regional supervision. But the disparity between the two groups of press may also lie at the organizational level. While both are market-oriented newspapers, the difference between ND and DD in dealing with the social news of HIV/AIDS may result from intra-organizational factors, such as leadership style and management mechanisms.

News Sources

To investigate news sources is not only to find out where journalists discover information but also to reveal the “invisible power” (Brown, Bybee, Wearden, & Straughan, 1987) operating behind the news. It is important to decode the information sources—individuals and organizations quoted and attributed in the news—because they are also sources of power. The interaction between journalists and sources is critical to the “construction” of news since construction itself is a dynamic, intersubjective process. Therefore, journalists and their sources negotiate all the time. As Daniel A. Berkowitz (2009) points out, we should not regard the relationship between journalists and news sources as ephemeral or study it from a short-term perspective; rather, we have to take into consideration the long-term effects of how these reporter-source dynamics influence “dominant ideological positions” (p. 111).

In this study, I coded both primary and secondary sources *attributed* in the news on the four epidemics. In other words, only people or organizations whose identities (without necessarily indicating names) were clearly specified were coded (see Table 5-5

on primary news sources and Table 5-6 on secondary news sources). I constructed 11 categories to identify the identities of the news sources.

Patterns across Epidemic News

As Table 5-5 shows, medical professionals and researchers (24.2%) constitute almost a quarter of all primary sources for all the four epidemics. They are followed by government officials at the local (19.8%) and national (18.1%) levels. These three source categories occupy more than 62% of all information providers in the six newspapers in total. Experts and professionals (6.0%) from areas other than medical science were also quoted more than the people who actually suffered from the diseases (4.0%). Businessmen’s voices (3.9%) were heard more frequently than the ordinary people (3.0%). Even though the civil society in China is growing fast, constituted by an estimated more than eight million registered and unregistered organizations, it is still the most neglected voice and force (1.7%).¹⁶²

Insert Table 5-5 About here

The layout of the secondary news sources is very similar to that of the primary sources. As Table 5-6 shows, except for the 67.7% of the news stories that do not include or indicate any sources,¹⁶³ medical experts and professionals (9.1%), local (5.7%) and

¹⁶² Given the small size of population, although they are ranked at the bottom of the table, celebrities (1.1%) cannot be said to be less invisible than the civil society.

¹⁶³ The category of “non-applicable or unclear” is kept in the final statistics because it tells us that a considerable amount of news stories (13.6% from primary sources and 67.7% from secondary sources) on epidemics does not contain any information sources.

national (5.7%) government officials were still the three largest groups of people quoted in the news. One difference is the rank of “ordinary people” (2.7%), who seem to have more chances of being quoted as a secondary source than as a primary source. Patients and their families (2.0%) were still treated with the same importance (or unimportance) as the businessman (1.9%) in the news on diseases. The voice of civil society (0.6%) was still weak.

Insert Table 5-6 About here

Therefore, in general, when covering public health crises, the most valued sources for China’s reporters and editors are from the medical/scientific field and the political field. If we look into the coverage on each of the four epidemics separately, there appears to be a few interesting variations regarding the primary sources (see Table 5-5):

- (1) Among the four epidemics, news on HBV (43.8%) seems to have used “medical professionals and experts” significantly more frequently than other epidemic news, whereas SARS news (14.3%) seems to have used them the least frequently.
- (2) News on HBV seems to be the least likely among the epidemics to quote from local (9.4%) or national (8.5%) governmental sources while H1N1 news seems to be the most (28.9% local governmental sources and 22.7% national) likely to quote these sources.
- (3) For HIV/AIDS news, the use of medical and governmental sources

always keeps up with the average. However, it quotes more from international and regional officials (8.9%) than the other three. By contrast, HBV news (0.1%) almost does not use any international and regional officials as sources.

(4) HBV news quotes a considerable amount from the patients and people associated with the patients (10.7%); while neither SARS news (1.4%) nor H1N1 news (1.5%) does the same. Although HIV/AIDS has been a highly attentive epidemic and reporting people living with AIDS is one of the most important news topics all over the world, their voices do seem not to be heard often from the news in China. Only 4.1% of all AIDS news quotes from them.

(5) News coverage of the H1N1 pandemic seems to be much more professional than the other three, if we regard more news source attributions as an indicator of higher professionalization in journalistic practices. Only 4.7% of all H1N1 news does not have a clear news source; whereas news on the other three epidemics has much more (15.9% for AIDS news, 13.9% for HBV news, and 15.8% for SARS news).

(6) The last interesting observation from Table 5-5 is that news on AIDS seems to have less interest in the business world. Only 0.5% of the AIDS news involved a source from the economic field, while the news on the other three epidemics involved at least 5% (5% for HBV news, 6.1% for SARS news, and 5.1% for H1N1 news).

Secondary sources found in the coverage on the four epidemics seem to have similar patterns: H1N1 news had much fewer stories coded as “non-applicable or unclear” (48.5% as compared with 71.0% for AIDS, 78.5% for HBV, and 68.8% for SARS); and it still quoted more of local and national officials than the other three. HBV news did not use international organization sources (0.3%), while SARS, H1N1 and AIDS news used some. It is H1N1 (17.6%), not HBV news (8.0%) that contained more medical sources. AIDS news (3.9%) seems to employ more patients’ accounts as secondary news sources than the other three, but it (0.1%) still seems to care much less about the business or economic fields too.

A quick overview of the primary and secondary sources tells us that the use of information sources in the news varies with the specific type of epidemic under coverage. The same as news types and news themes, we still need to look at the six newspapers individually in order to explain why there is such a broad range of variation.¹⁶⁴

HIV/AIDS & Primary News Sources

HIV/AIDS is a global pandemic, a national epidemic in China, and a local endemic in Henan province. The sources indicated in the news may present the attitude and standpoint of a newspaper and the power that the newspaper feels attached with. As Table 5-7-1 shows, when covering HIV/AIDS, the most frequently attributed sources are medical professionals, organizations and research institutes. This means AIDS news is still mostly focused on medical or biomedical development, hoping a breakthrough in science may lead to the end of this abysmal disease. Among the six newspapers, NW

¹⁶⁴ Because of the small amount of secondary news sources quoted in the news, here I only examine the primary sources across the six newspapers.

seems to be concerned the most about this issue. Almost one third (32.9%) of its information sources are from the medical/science field. The other two newspapers from the same media group with NW also used more medical sources than other three newspapers. ND had 27.6% sources and NMN had 22.7% sources from the medical/science field.

Insert Table 5-7-1 About here

For PD, the central party organ, the most important information source apparently was the national government and officials. About 26.6% of the attributed sources in PD's coverage on AIDS are from the national political field. Accordingly, to the two provincial newspapers from Henan, HD and DD, valued more the words from the local government and officials. Approximately, 31% of HD's and 22.4% of DD's news sources were obtained from the local political field. For the two Guangdong newspapers, ND and NMN, the provincial party organ—ND—seems to quote more from national government officials (19.5% in ND versus 14.3% in NMN), while the provincial tabloid—NMN—seems to quote more from local ones (14.6% of ND versus 21.6% of NMN).

It is the national elite newspaper—NW—again that shows a significant difference here. Within all NW's coverage on HIV/AIDS, only 8.4% of the quotes are from national government officials and 3.2% are from local officials, both of which are even less than quotes from people living with or affected by AIDS (12.9%) and quotes from

ordinary people (9.0%). By contrast, the three party organs—PD, as the central party organ, and ND and HD, as the provincial party organs—seem to care less with what the people think. PD only attributed 1.8% of the AIDS news sources to people who suffer from AIDS, and even less, 0.5% to ordinary people. ND attributed 2.9% to AIDS patients and relatives and 0.5% to ordinary people. HD, the mouthpiece of CCP’s Henan provincial central committee, only had 1.7% of its AIDS news sources from the patients, despite the reality that Henan may have large population of HIV infectors in its rural area. It is safe to draw the conclusion that AIDS patients and people who are affected by AIDS (such as children who lose their parents from the epidemic) were mostly ignored by the press in Henan. Even in the market-oriented newspaper, DD, quoted much fewer AIDS patients than ordinary people (2.9% versus 6.8%). If NW, the elite newspaper’s principle is to “lend strength to those lacking it, and enable pessimists to push forward,” then the party organs’ principle seems to “cut off strength to those lacking it, and push pessimists to the edge of desperate.” Without being heard, without being provided a channel to have a voice, the 740,000 Chinese living with AIDS do not seem to have any chance of being helped (MOH, UNAIDS, & WHO, 2010).

Among all the six newspapers, PD has the largest proportion of “non-applicable/unclear” group of news sources (20.6%), followed by the two provincial party organs—ND (17.4%) and HD (16.0%). The three market-oriented newspapers, NW (14.8%), DD (13.3%), and NMN (12.8%) have fewer unidentified sources or non-quotations than the three party organs. Besides, PD used more “international organization/officials” (19.1%) as news sources than all other newspapers, which is

consistent with the findings presented in Table 5-2 that PD has significantly more “foreign policy news” on AIDS as well. DD has 3.4% sources from members of NGO or other civil organizations, which is higher than any other five newspapers. But most of the sources are from the Henan Provincial Red Cross, a government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGO) that largely functions as a branch of the state. Therefore, even DD has a certain amount of coverage on the civil society on AIDS epidemic intervention or prevention. Just like the other five newspapers, the voices of grassroots NGOs or other social activists are greatly minimized in China.

HBV & Primary News Sources

When covering the HBV epidemic, medical professionals and institutes are still the most frequently quoted sources in the news (43.8%). However, people living with or affected by HBV had more opportunities to speak out than those with AIDS (10.7% versus 4.1%). As Table 5-7-2 shows, it is NW again which has the largest proportion of HBV patients (or relatives) as news sources among all the six newspapers (47.6%). NW also gave a considerable amount of attention to the professionals or experts in areas other than medical science (14.3%). Most people from this group of news source are lawyers who helped the HBV carriers with lawsuits against employment discrimination. Since rights defense is one of the dominant themes in NW’s coverage on HBV (see Table 5-4), activists from NGOs or the rights defense networks were also quoted by NW (4.8%).

Insert Table 5-7-2 About here

By contrast, government officials at all levels, from international to national and local, seem not to be quoted at all by NW. This is quite unusual because the government and its officials are always treated as the main source of information not only in China but also in other parts of the world (Schudson, 2002, p. 255). Except NW, all other five newspapers quoted a considerable amount from the government sources. PD, HD, and DD used more national government sources than those from the local government. ND and NMN quoted more from the local government and officials than from the national ones. International organizations and their officials were barely ever quoted, which is consistent with previous findings that HBV is China's endemic and is not reported from an international perspective (see tables 5-1 & 5-2).

The group of businessman and commercial organizations, which was the least quoted in AIDS news, seems to be more attended by journalists writing HBV news (5.0% of all six newspapers). However, only PD (5.0%), ND (7.0%), and NMN (6.0%) used business sources at a noticeable level. DD only had 0.5% of all the HBV news sources from the commercial field. NW and HD did not quote any. Ordinary people's voices are still very weak. Only NMN has paid a very limited amount of attention to them (2.3%). The other five newspapers almost quoted nothing. As for celebrities, almost no voices were published in any of the six newspapers either because the media paid no attention to them or because they paid no attention to the HBV epidemic.

SARS & Primary News Sources

For news on SARS, we have already seen that the importance of the government was significantly elevated during the outbreak than in any other public health crises. For

example, when coding the themes of news, compared with AIDS, HBV and H1N1, SARS seems to have a less medical theme and more governmental theme (see Table 5-3). This pattern is further proved in the use of news sources. According to Table 5-7-3, the first two most frequently quoted information sources of all the six newspapers are local (23.4%) and national (21.1%) government and officials. Unlike AIDS and HBV, medical experts and institutes were only quoted 14.3% of the time.

Insert Table 5-7-3 About here

If we look closely, we may find that the two provincial party organs, HD (37.2%) and ND (27.9%) more frequently quoted from local government officials than the other four newspapers. Whereas NW, the national elite newspaper, did not seem to care much about local government; only 2.8% of its sources are from there. For national government officials, PD seems to prefer quotes from them the most. About 39.1% of all PD's news on SARS quotes are from the national government. The rest five newspapers do not seem to show much difference on this category.

NW obviously shows more interest in professionals than in governments. About 28.2% of all NW's information sources are from medical experts and 15.5% are from experts in other areas. By contrast, even though SARS is a mysterious new type of infectious disease that killed 349 Chinese citizens within only a few months, the other five newspapers did not pay much attention to the medical development of the disease. PD only had 13.8% of its news sources obtained from medical professionals, only higher

than HD (8.9%), but lower than ND (14.1%), DD (15.6%) and NMN (16.4%). However, it is also possibly because the Chinese government was not honest and transparent about the SARS epidemic in the first few months of the outbreak; in order to help the government clear things up, these newspapers were more inclined to focus on governmental sources than doctors or scientists.

As for the people who were affected by SARS (including patients and their family and friends), only NW gives them certain space in the newspapers to speak out. Approximately, 5.6% of all NW news sources falls into this category. But the other five newspapers do not seem to care too much about them. NW, as always, listens more to the ordinary people too. About 12.7% of its news sources are from the people on the street or in the cyberspace. Among the other five newspapers, only DD paid similar attention to this group of people (10.2%). NMN, a similarly marketized provincial tabloid, only had 4.4 % of information sources be coded as ordinary people. The three party organs, PD (2.3%), ND (1.8%), and HD (1.0%), rarely let the people speak out.

Businessman or commercial organizations seem to have received more attention from the six newspapers. Compared with the news on AIDS and HBV, 6.1% of SARS news included information sources from the economic field, while AIDS news only had 0.5% and HBV has 5.1%. Among these newspapers, ND (8.3%) and NMN (9.1%) from Guangdong seem to have had more interest in business than the other four. PD had the least attention (3.1%), followed by NW (4.2%).

The last interesting observation from the SARS news is that PD only had 3.6% of the sources from international organization and its officials, almost the same as its use of

sources from NGOs and social activists (3.4%). In comparison, PD rarely put any attention to the civil society when it covered AIDS (1.3%) and HBV (1.9%), even though both GONGOs and NGOs in these two areas were relatively mature in terms of quantity and institutional development. Given the fact that SARS was spreading from China to other parts of the world very quickly and WHO had a substantial collaboration with the Chinese government, it does not seem normal for PD to have had so few international governmental sources. In PD's coverage of AIDS, news sources from international officials consisted of about 19.1%. Perhaps when the Chinese government decided not to inform WHO with the true number of SARS cases and prevented the WHO team of international scientists from landing Guangdong to inspect the real situation of infection there,¹⁶⁵ it was determined that the PD would not let the international society speak up more.

H1N1 & Primary News Sources

The use of information sources in coverage of the H1N1 pandemic seems quite routine (see Table 5-7-4). Local government officials, medical professionals and experts, and national government officials were the three most consulted group of people for the press to get information. NW is different from other newspapers since it heavily relied on medical sources (54.5%) and totally neglected local government officials (0%). PD,

¹⁶⁵ On April 1, 2003, in a press conference held by WHO, David Heymann, the then Executive Director of Communicable Diseases, complained that China had not yet allowed WHO's team of scientists to land in Guangdong to inspect the real situation of SARS there (WHO, April 1, 2003). One day later, on April 2, 2003, the team received an official "invitation" from the Guangdong government (WHO, April 2, 2003). On April 3, the team was transferred from Beijing to Guangdong for inspection. On April 9, the team presented an interim report to China's MOH and the then vice premier Wu Yi, expressing their concern over Beijing for its lacking of systematic daily reporting of SARS cases (WHO, April 9, 2003).

the central party organ, took the role of speaking for the central government and more than 57% of its H1N1 news sources are from the national government. ND (36.7%) and HD (100%),¹⁶⁶ two provincial party organs, spoke more for the local government. However, we need to be cautious here since the data collected for HD are too few to be representative. NMN and DD, two provincial tabloids, have the most variety of news sources: they have sources from each of the 11 categories. Although NMN listened more to the medical sources (29.9%) and DD more from the local government (27%), the general patterns of use of information sources from the two newspapers are similar.

Insert Table 5-7-4 About here

If we establish a rough time sequence for the four epidemics—with AIDS and HBV at the beginning, followed by the 2003 SARS epidemic, and the 2009 H1N1 pandemic at the end—we may find that “businessman and commercial organizations” as a group seem to have become more and more popular among the Chinese journalists: in AIDS news, this group is ranked at the bottom of all 11 categories of information sources being used in the press; in both HBV and SARS news, it is ranked as 6th; then now, in the H1N1 news, it is ranked as 4th, only lower than local and national government and medical sources. About 5.1% of all H1N1 news sources are from the business world, with the three Guangdong produced newspapers having the most (NW had 9.1%,

¹⁶⁶ Again this number might be misleading since there are only nine stories on H1N1 that I could find from HD’s online news database.

although the total number of news stories on H1N1 from NW is very small; ND had 5.7% and NMN had 5.5%).

PD seems to make up its relations with international organizations and officials. Approximately, 7.7% of its information sources are from that segment, only fewer than national and local government officials and medical experts. People living with or affected by H1N1 did not become a media hotspot; only 1.5% of all news sources are from this group. Unlike the other three epidemics, people who were infected by H1N1 were ordinary people, and the epidemic itself did not seem to involve any social injustice issues or governmental mishandling of the situation. Therefore, it is predictable that the press treated the crisis in a more routine way, and basically did not need to highlight any specific group of people.

In sum, in terms of using news sources, (1) except NW, the other five newspapers all rely more on local and national government officials and medical experts and institutes for information related to the four epidemics. This is not unusual for journalistic practices, since government and medical experts are the most important information sources during the time of a public health crisis. From the former, the press can make sure the most up-to-date statistics and policies regarding the epidemic are provided; from the later, the press can obtain more accurate scientific information of the epidemic and thus help the public be better prepared (see Table 5-7-5 for a summary too).

Insert Table 5-7-5 About here

(2) NW, a national elite newspaper and a famous liberal weekly for its investigative journalism practices, shows an obvious concern over the ordinary people and people who are affected by the epidemics. NW seems to serve as a platform for the less powerful group of people—who do not have government affiliations or expertise in knowledge—to speak out and to be heard. In return, with these “unofficial” information sources, NW seems able to make negotiations with the power status quo by showing the voices of the people and thus gains more space for its journalistic practices. However, this argument needs further evidence.

(3) A considerable amount of news does not indicate any information sources or uses “unclear” (unattributable) sources. This is not just happening to epidemic news reporting in China. Some researchers notice that the attribution of news sources is a “highly ambiguous matter in Chinese” (Scollon & Scollon, 1997). As they find, when written in English, even if it is a newspaper from China, the news sources are unambiguously and directly quoted. Further, the problem perhaps also resides in the heavy reliance on press conference briefings, government stringers, and the inertia developed from being the party press. It is obvious that the three party organs—PD, ND, and HD—have a higher proportion of unidentifiable sources than the two market-oriented tabloids, not to mention NW, the most professionalized newspaper in China.

(4) The use of business sources seems to increase over the years, as the four epidemics break out in different times. However, if we compare the six newspapers, we may find that the ND and NMN, the two Guangdong newspapers, are the most enthusiastic supporters for business sources. In most cases, they have the highest

percentage of quotes from the economic world. The two newspapers from Henan seem to be more reluctant than their Guangdong counterparts. PD and NW, two national newspapers, seem to care the least with businessmen. Therefore, do these differences imply that the marketization of the media is only secondary to the marketization of the social world? In other words, whether or not a news organization is affected by the economic field does not simply rely on the degree of commercialization of the organization itself; rather, it may also rely on the degree of commercialization of the “economic field.” In a more commercialized province like Guangdong, even its party organ, ND, is not as market-oriented as Henan’s provincial tabloid, DD. Yet, ND still seems more influenced by the economic field than DD.

Table 5-1 News Type Divided by the Four Epidemics

News Type	DISEASE				Total
	AIDS	HBV	SARS	H1N1	
Mainland News	66.6%	94.3%	78.9%	82.8%	78.5%
International News	22.7	1.9	3.2	11.0	10.6
NA / Unclear	2.7	3.0	11.7	1.8	5.5
Foreign Policy News	5.7	0.1	3.2	1.9	3.2
Hong Kong / Taiwan / Macao News	2.3	0.7	3.0	2.6	2.3
Total (N=)	1990	1136	1991	1077	6194

$\chi^2 = 840.84$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$

Table 5-2 News Type of the Four Epidemics Across the Six Newspapers

News Type		Newspaper						Total
		National		Provincial Party Organ		Provincial Tabloid		
		PD	NW	ND	HD	NMN	DD	
AIDS	Mainland News	47.5%	65.8%	53.4%	74.3%	79.2%	80.7%	66.6%
	International News	34.2	21.9	31.8	20.0	12.8	14.3	22.7
	Foreign Policy News	15.7	1.3	6.3	3.7	2.6	1.8	5.7
	NA / Unclear	1.6	10.3	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.7
	HK / TW / MC News	1.0	0.6	6.8	--	3.1	0.8	2.3
	Total (N=)	383	155	384	300	384	384	1990
HBV	Mainland News	90.0%	100.0%	94.0%	100.0%	93.8%	97.9%	94.3%
	International News	6.9	--	2.1	--	--	1.6	1.9
	NA / Unclear	2.5	--	3.1	--	4.8	0.5	3.0
	HK / TW / MC News	0.6	--	0.5	--	1.4	--	0.7
	Foreign Policy News	--	--	0.3	--	--	--	0.1
	Total (N=)	160	21	384	32	352	187	1136
SARS	Mainland News	75.8%	63.4%	83.1%	79.9%	77.9%	80.7%	78.9%
	NA / Unclear	14.3	28.2	8.1	9.6	13.8	9.6	11.7
	International News	2.1	4.2	2.6	4.4	2.9	3.6	3.2
	Foreign Policy News	6.5	--	2.9	3.6	1.8	1.8	3.2
	HK / TW / MC News	1.3	4.2	3.4	2.3	3.6	4.2	3.0
	Total (N=)	384	71	384	384	384	384	1991
H1N1	Mainland News	70.2%	63.6%	87.5%	100.0%	83.3%	79.5%	82.8%
	International News	19.2	18.2	6.8	--	9.9	17.3	11.0
	HK / TW / MC News	2.9	9.1	2.1	--	3.9	0.5	2.6
	Foreign Policy News	4.8	--	1.8	--	1.3	1.6	1.9
	NA / Unclear	2.9	9.1	1.8	--	1.6	1.1	1.8
	Total (N=)	104	11	384	9	384	185	1077
TOTAL	Mainland News	66.9%	67.8%	79.5%	78.8%	83.3%	83.3%	78.5%
	International News	16.5	15.1	10.8	10.6	6.5	9.1	10.6
	NA / Unclear	6.6	14.3	3.7	5.9	5.7	4.3	5.5
	Foreign Policy News	8.7	0.8	2.8	3.4	1.5	1.5	3.2
	HK / TW / MC News	1.3	1.9	3.2	1.2	3.1	1.8	2.3
	Total (N=)	1031	258	1536	725	1504	1140	6194

HIV/AIDS: $\chi^2 = 333.26$, $df = 20$, $p < .01$; HBV: $\chi^2 = 44.80$, $df = 20$, $p < .01$

SARS: $\chi^2 = 62.70$, $df = 20$, $p < .01$; H1N1: $\chi^2 = 44.18$, $df = 20$, $p < .01$

Total: $\chi^2 = 313.53$, $df = 20$, $p < .01$

Table 5-3 News Theme Divided by the Four Epidemics

NEWTHEME	DISEASE				Total
	AIDS	HBV	SARS	H1N1	
Medical / Scientific / Public Health	48.7%	38.1%	34.8%	69.1%	45.9%
Gov / Official / Politics	16.6	0.6	20.9	6.3	13.3
Policy / Law / Law Suit	11.5	16.4	9.8	6.4	11.0
Society / Life / Anecdote	9.5	8.3	7.4	5.9	8.0
Ad / Advertorial	1.6	24.4	1.5	1.9	5.8
Editorial/ Op-Ed / Commentary	4.0	4.2	6.5	2.6	4.6
Economy / Finance / Market	1.1	0.6	8.1	5.2	4.0
Civil Society / Rights Defense	4.2	4.8	4.7	0.1	3.7
Entertainment / Sports / Culture	1.9	0.5	2.8	1.7	1.9
NA / Unclear	0.9	2.1	3.4	0.8	1.9
Total (N=)	1990	1136	1991	1077	6194

$\chi^2 = 1682.71, df = 27, p < .01$

Table 5-4 News Theme of Four Epidemics Across the Six Newspapers

News Theme		Newspaper						Total
		National		Provincial Party Organ		Provincial Tabloid		
		PD	NW	ND	HD	NMN	DD	
AIDS	Medical / Scientific / Public Health	59.3%	51.0%	61.5%	40.0%	41.7%	38.5%	48.7%
	Gov / Official / Politics	23.5	3.9	10.7	35.7	13.3	9.4	16.6
	Policy / Law / Law Suit	3.4	5.2	7.8	10.3	14.1	24.2	11.5
	Society / Life / Anecdote	5.2	23.2	8.3	2.3	18.0	6.8	9.5
	Civil Society / Rights	2.9	0.6	3.6	5.3	2.1	8.6	4.2
	Defense							
	Editorial/ Op-Ed / Commentary	1.6	12.9	2.1	0.7	6.3	4.9	4.0
	Entertainment / Sports / Culture	2.1	1.3	0.8	2.0	1.8	3.1	1.9
	Ad / Advertorial	1.3	--	3.1	1.7	0.8	1.6	1.6
	Economy / Finance / Market	0.3	1.3	1.0	1.7	1.6	0.8	1.1
	NA / Unclear	0.5	0.6	1.0	0.3	0.5	2.1	0.9
Total (N=)		383	155	384	300	384	384	1990
HBV	Medical / Scientific / Public Health	55.0%	33.3%	31.0%	37.5%	40.1%	35.3%	38.1%
	Ad / Advertorial	16.3	--	48.7	18.8	7.7	16.6	24.4
	Policy / Law / Law Suit	11.3	--	11.5	28.1	21.0	21.9	16.4
	Society / Life / Anecdote	3.8	23.8	2.6	6.3	14.2	11.2	8.3
	Civil Society / Rights	4.4	28.6	2.6	3.1	4.3	8.0	4.8
	Defense							
	Editorial/ OP-Ed/ Commentary	4.4	14.3	2.1	3.1	6.3	3.7	4.2
	NA / Unclear	2.5	--	0.8	--	4.0	1.6	2.1
	Gov / Official / Politics	1.3	--	--	3.1	0.9	0.5	0.6
	Economy / Finance / Market	--	--	0.8	--	0.9	0.5	0.6
	Entertainment / Sports / Culture	1.3	--	--	--	0.9	0.5	0.5
Total (N=)		160	21	384	32	352	187	1136
SARS	Medical / Scientific /Public Health	34.1%	29.6%	41.9%	28.4%	36.7%	33.9%	34.8%
	Gov / Official / Politics	27.9	8.5	15.4	38.3	13.5	11.7	20.9
	Policy / Law / Law Suit	8.9	5.6	7.3	10.4	9.9	13.5	9.8
	Economy / Finance / Market	5.2	5.6	13.8	2.9	12.0	7.3	8.1
	Society / Life / Anecdote	5.2	16.9	5.2	2.6	10.4	12.0	7.4
	Editorial/ Op-Ed/ Commentary	6.8	23.9	4.4	7.0	7.6	3.6	6.5
	Civil Society / Rights	5.2	2.8	4.2	4.9	2.1	7.6	4.7

	Defense							
	NA / Unclear	4.4	5.6	2.3	1.8	2.9	5.2	3.4
	Entertainment / Sports / Culture /	1.6	1.4	3.9	1.3	4.4	2.9	2.8
	Ad / Advertorial	0.8	--	1.6	2.3	0.5	2.3	1.5
	Total (N=)	384	71	384	384	384	384	1991
H1N1	Medical / Scientific / Public Health	69.2%	54.5%	69.3%	11.1%	68.8%	73.0%	69.1%
	Policy / Law / Law Suit	12.5	9.1	7.3	33.3	3.1	6.5	6.4
	Gov / Official / Politics	12.5	--	6.0	55.6	3.9	6.5	6.3
	Society / Life / Anecdote	1.9	9.1	5.5	--	9.1	2.7	5.9
	Economy / Finance / Market	1.0	--	5.7	--	6.0	5.4	5.2
	Editorial/ Op-Ed/ Commentary	1.0	27.3	1.8	--	4.2	0.5	2.6
	Ad / Advertorial	1.0	--	2.3	--	1.8	1.6	1.9
	Entertainment / Sports / Culture	--	--	1.0	--	2.3	2.7	1.7
	NA / Unclear	1.0	--	0.8	--	0.8	1.1	0.8
	Civil Society / Rights	--	--	0.3	--	--	--	0.1
	Defense	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Total (N=)	104	11	384	9	384	185	1077
TOTAL	Medical / Scientific / Public Health	50.2%	43.8%	50.9%	33.4%	46.9%	42.0%	45.9%
	Gov / Official / Politics	20.6	4.7	8.0	35.9	8.0	8.2	13.3
	Policy / Law / Law Suit	7.6	5.0	8.5	11.4	11.8	17.4	11.0
	Society / Life / Anecdote	4.7	20.9	5.4	2.6	12.9	8.6	8.0
	Ad / Advertorial	3.4	--	13.9	2.8	2.6	4.3	5.8
	Editorial/ Op-Ed / Commentary	3.9	16.7	2.6	4.1	6.1	3.6	4.6
	Economy / Finance / Market	2.1	2.3	5.3	2.2	5.2	3.7	4.0
	Civil Society / Rights	3.7	3.5	2.7	5.0	2.1	6.8	3.7
	Defense	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Entertainment / Sports / Culture	1.6	1.2	1.4	1.5	2.4	2.5	1.9
	NA / Unclear	2.3	1.9	1.2	1.1	2.0	2.9	1.9
	Total (N=)	1031	258	1536	725	1504	1140	6194

HIV/AIDS: $\chi^2 = 440.48$, df = 45, p<.01

HBV: $\chi^2 = 300.81$, df = 45, p<.01

SARS: $\chi^2 = 287.45$, df = 45, p<.01

H1N1: $\chi^2 = 135.65$, df = 45, p<.01

Total: $\chi^2 = 1132.95$, df = 45, p<.01

Table 5-5 Primary News Sources Divided by Four Epidemics

Primary News Source	DISEASE				Total
	AIDS	HBV	SARS	H1N1	
Medical Expert / Org / Research Institute	21.9%	43.8%	14.3%	25.8%	24.2%
Local Government / Official	17.3	9.4	23.4	28.9	19.8
National Government / Official	18.1	8.5	21.1	22.7	18.1
NA / Unclear	15.9	13.9	15.8	4.7	13.6
Other Expert / Professionals / Org.	6.5	4.8	6.7	4.7	6.0
International / Regional / Org. / Official	8.9	0.1	3.2	4.2	4.6
People Living With / Affected By Disease	4.1	10.7	1.4	1.5	4.0
Businessman / Commercial Org	0.5	5.0	6.1	5.1	3.9
Ordinary People / Netizens / Anonymous	3.7	0.9	4.3	1.4	3.0
NGO / Activist / Rights Defense Network	1.6	2.6	2.1	0.5	1.7
Celebrity / Online Celebrity	1.4	0.1	1.7	0.6	1.1
Total (N=)	1990	1136	1991	1077	6194

$\chi^2 = 1050.03, df = 30, p < .01$

Table 5-6 Secondary News Sources Divided by Four Epidemics

Secondary News Sources	DISEASE				Total
	AIDS	HBV	SARS	H1N1	
NA / Unclear	71.0%	78.5%	68.8%	48.5%	67.7%
Medical Expert / Org / Research Institute	7.1	8.0	7.0	17.6	9.1
Local Government / Official	5.4	2.7	4.9	11.2	5.7
National Government / Official	3.8	0.9	4.1	8.1	4.1
Other Expert / Professionals / Org.	1.8	3.6	3.8	2.7	2.9
International / Regional / Org. / Official	3.8	0.3	2.7	4.0	2.8
Ordinary People / Netizens / Anonymous	2.3	0.9	3.8	3.3	2.7
People Living With / Affected By Disease	3.9	1.9	0.9	0.7	2.0
Businessman / Commercial Org	0.1	2.3	2.8	3.1	1.9
NGO / Activist / Rights Defense Network	0.5	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.6
Celebrity / Online Celebrity	0.4	-	0.7	0.3	0.4
Total (N=)	1990	1136	1991	1077	6194

$\chi^2 = 538.88, df = 30, p < .01$

Table 5-7-1 Primary News Source on HIV/AIDS across Six Newspapers

	Newspaper						Total
	National		Provincial Party Organ		Provincial Tabloid		
	PD	NW	ND	HD	NMN	DD	
Medical Expert / Org / Research Institute	20.4%	32.9%	27.6%	15.7%	22.7%	17.4%	21.9%
National Government / Official	26.6	8.4	19.5	15.3	14.3	18.0	18.1
Local Government / Official	5.5	3.2	14.6	31.0	21.6	22.4	17.3
NA / Unclear	20.6	14.8	17.4	16.0	12.8	13.3	15.9
International / Regional / Org. / Official	19.1	8.4	7.6	7.3	6.5	4.2	8.9
Other Expert / Professionals / Org.	2.3	7.7	7.6	8.0	5.5	9.1	6.5
People Living With / Affected By Disease	1.8	12.9	2.9	1.7	7.0	2.9	4.1
Ordinary People / Netizens / Anonymous	0.5	9.0	0.5	2.3	6.0	6.8	3.7
NGO / Activist / Rights Defense Network	1.3	0.6	1.6	0.7	1.3	3.4	1.6
Celebrity / Online Celebrity	1.6	1.3	0.5	1.7	1.0	2.3	1.4
Businessman / Commercial Organization	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.3	1.3	0.3	0.5
Total (N=)	383	155	384	300	384	384	1990

$\chi^2 = 350.60, df = 50, p < .01$

Table 5-7-2 Primary News Source on HBV across Six Newspapers

	Newspaper						Total
	National		Provincial Party Organ		Provincial Tabloid		
	PD	NW	ND	HD	NMN	DD	
Medical Expert / Org / Research Institute	56.9%	28.6%	49.2%	28.1%	33.5%	45.5%	43.8%
NA / Unclear	9.4	4.8	24.2	21.9	8.5	6.4	13.9
People Living With / Affected By Disease	3.8	47.6	3.1	15.6	16.5	16.6	10.7
Local Government / Official	4.4	--	7.6	12.5	13.6	10.2	9.4
National Government / Official	15.0	--	4.4	15.6	8.5	11.2	8.5
Businessman / Commercial Organization	5.0	--	7.0	--	6.0	.5	5.0
Other Expert / Professionals / Org.	3.8	14.3	3.1	3.1	7.7	3.2	4.8
NGO / Activist / Rights Defense Network	1.9	4.8	0.8	3.1	3.4	5.3	2.6
Ordinary People / Netizens / Anonymous	--	--	0.3	--	2.3	0.5	0.9
Celebrity / Online Celebrity	--	--	--	--	--	0.5	0.1
International / Regional / Org. / Official	--	--	0.3	--	--	--	0.1
Total (N=)	160	21	384	32	352	187	1136

$\chi^2 = 235.03, df = 50, p < .01$

Table 5-7-3 Primary News Source on SARS across Six Newspapers

	Newspaper						Total
	National		Provincial Party Organ		Provincial Tabloid		
	PD	NW	ND	HD	NMN	DD	
Local Government / Official	11.7%	2.8%	27.9%	37.2%	19.8%	24.2%	23.4%
National Government / Official	39.1	15.5	13.8	18.2	19.8	15.9	21.1
NA / Unclear	18.0	12.7	18.5	16.4	15.4	11.2	15.8
Medical Expert / Org / Research Institute	13.8	28.2	14.1	8.9	16.4	15.6	14.3
Other Expert / Professionals / Org	3.6	15.5	7.8	2.6	7.6	10.4	6.7
Businessman / Commercial Organization	4.2	4.2	8.3	4.7	9.1	5.5	6.1
Ordinary People / Netizens / Anonymous	2.3	12.7	1.8	1.0	4.4	10.2	4.3
International / Regional / Org. / Official	3.6	--	3.1	5.5	2.3	2.1	3.2
NGO / Activist / Rights Defense Network	3.4	--	2.3	2.1	1.0	1.8	2.1
Celebrity / Online Celebrity	0.8	2.8	1.8	1.6	2.9	1.3	1.7
People Living With / Affected By Disease	0.5	5.6	0.5	1.8	1.3	1.8	1.4
Total (N=)	384	71	384	384	384	384	1991

$\chi^2 = 324.30, df = 50, p < .01$

Table 5-7-4 Primary News Source on H1N1 across Six Newspapers

	Newspaper						Total
	National		Provincial Party Organ		Provincial Tabloid		
	PD	NW	ND	HD	NMN	DD	
Local Government / Official	14.4%	--	36.7%	100.0%	25.0%	27.0%	28.9%
Medical Expert / Org / Research Institute	14.4	54.5%	25.8	--	29.9	23.2	25.8
National Government / Official	57.7	9.1	16.1	--	19.3	25.4	22.7
Businessman / Commercial Organization	2.9	9.1	5.7	--	5.5	4.3	5.1
Other Expert / Professionals / Org.	1.0	9.1	3.4	--	6.3	6.5	4.7
NA / Unclear	1.9	9.1	3.6	--	6.3	5.4	4.7
International / Regional / Org. / Official	7.7	9.1	3.1	--	3.6	5.4	4.2
People Living With / Affected By Disease	--	--	2.9	--	0.8	1.1	1.5
Ordinary People / Netizens / Anonymous	--	--	2.6	--	1.0	0.5	1.4
Celebrity / Online Celebrity	--	--	--	--	1.3	0.5	0.6
NGO / Activist / Rights Defense Network	--	--	--	--	1.0	0.5	0.5
Total (N=)	104	11	384	9	384	185	1077

$\chi^2 = 169.67, df = 50, p < .01$

Table 5-7-5 Primary News Source on All Four Epidemics across Six Newspapers

	Newspaper						Total
	National		Provincial Party Organ		Provincial Tabloid		
	PD	NW	ND	HD	NMN	DD	
Medical Expert / Org / Research Institute	23.0%	32.2%	29.2%	12.4%	25.5%	22.4%	24.2%
Local Government / Official	8.5	2.7	21.7	34.3	20.1	21.8	19.8
National Government / Official	32.6	9.7	13.5	16.7	15.6	17.4	18.1
NA / Unclear	16.0	13.2	16.0	16.3	10.8	10.2	13.6
Other Expert / Professionals / Org.	2.9	10.5	5.5	4.8	6.7	8.2	6.0
International / Regional / Org. / Official	9.2	5.4	3.5	5.9	3.2	3.0	4.6
People Living With / Affected By Disease	1.5	13.2	2.3	2.3	6.2	4.5	4.0
Businessman / Commercial Organization	2.3	1.9	5.3	2.6	5.5	2.7	3.9
Ordinary People / Netizens / Anonymous	1.1	8.9	1.3	1.5	3.5	5.9	3.0
NGO / Activist / Rights Defense Network	2.0	0.8	1.2	1.5	1.7	2.7	1.7
Celebrity / Online Celebrity	0.9	1.6	0.6	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.1
Total (N=)	1031	258	1536	725	1504	1140	6194

$\chi^2 = 799.93$, $df = 50$, $p < .01$

Chapter 6

Political & Social Forces behind the News

In Chapter 5, I decoded the contents of the 6,194 newspaper articles on the four epidemics, according to their types, themes, and primary and secondary sources. As I analyzed and summarized, there emerged several noticeable patterns across the six newspapers. Although these patterns seem interesting when we look at them one at a time, there is no coherent explanation to answer the research questions that I raise in Chapter 3. When I was designing the coding scheme, I tried to isolate the three major forces dominant in today's Chinese journalistic field: state, market, and society. As the cases selected to study here all pertain to public health crises, it would only make sense to include measurements from a scientific, medical, and epidemiological perspective too. This rationale constitutes requires dividing and grouping the coding categories based on indicators of forces that work underneath the news on public health crises in contemporary China.

The first step in the second stage of data analysis starts with a consolidation of coding measures. The four main coding measures for the basic information contained in the news are: news type, news theme, primary news sources, and secondary news sources. Under "news type" there are four main categories,¹⁶⁷ which are grouped into two new ones: (1) domestic news, which is the same as the category of "mainland news;"

¹⁶⁷ The category of "Non-Applicable/Unclear" is not included in any of the regrouped measurements here.

and (2) international news, which combines the categories of “international news,” “foreign policy news,” and “Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao news.”

Under “news theme” there are nine main categories, which are recombined into five new ones: (1) political theme, including “government and officials,” and “policy, law and lawsuits;” (2) economic theme, which combines “economy, finance and market” and “advertisement and advertorial;” (3) scientific theme, which stands in for the original category of “medical science and public health;” (4) social theme, which combines “civil society and rights defense,” “society, life and anecdote,” and “entertainment, sports and culture;” and (5) journalistic theme, which corresponds to the original category of “editorial, op-ed and commentary.” The category of “journalistic theme” was created because news commentary could be the only section that the press has almost complete control over and can be regarded as an indicator of journalistic autonomy.

Under “primary news sources” and “secondary news sources” there are the same 10 main coding categories. They are assembled into four new ones: (1) political actors, which include “international organization officials,” “national government officials” and “local government officials;” (2) economic actors, which is the same as the category of “businessman and commercial organizations” in the original coding scheme; (3) scientific actors corresponds to the original category of “medical expert and research institute;” and (4) social actors, which combines “NGO activists and rights defense network,” “people living with or affected by the disease,” “ordinary people or netizens,” and “celebrity in the virtual or real world.”

To summarize, the newly consolidated coding measurements have the following characteristics:

- (1) News type: Around 83% of all news is about domestic areas, mainly focusing on mainland China; and only 17% is about international (see Table 6-1).

Insert Table 6-1 About here

- (2) News theme: Around 46.7% of all news has a “scientific theme,” 24.7% has a “political theme,” 13.9% has a “social theme,” and 9.9% has an “economic theme.” Only 4.7% of all news has a “journalistic theme,” which is assumed to reflect journalistic autonomy (see Table 6-2).

Insert Table 6-2 About here

- (3) Primary news sources: About 49.3% of all primary actors in the news are from the political field, 27.9% are from the scientific field, 18.2% are from the social field, and only 4.5% are from the economic field (see Table 6-3).

- (4) Secondary news sources: Around 39.3% of all secondary actors are from the political field, 28.2% are from the scientific field, 26.7% are from the social field, and only 5.8% are from the economic field (see Table 6-3).

Insert Table 6-3 About here

The data presented above gives us some basic impressions of the news on public health crises in China; that is, the major focus is on mainland China from a scientific perspective while relying more on information from the government and its officials. This conclusion apparently simplifies the dynamics and power relations embedded in the process of news construction and production. Therefore, the next step for the second stage of data analysis is to look deep into the relations among these four measurements. Meanwhile, I will articulate the results from the content analysis to my interviews with and observations on Chinese journalists in their everyday practices. By doing so, I hope to provide not only descriptions but also explanations and interpretations of the power relations and struggles involved in the process of health news production.

Before I start, I must emphasize that we should not treat “news theme” and “news actors” as two completely independent concepts. On the one hand, if we regard the measurement of “news theme” as the frames that the press uses to cover epidemics, then the primary and secondary “news sources” can be thought as representing the forces behind those news frames—the structural positions taken by the source/actors who are determined by (1) the type and volume of capitals they possess and (2) the hierarchy of capital within the field in which they implement practices. On the other hand, if we regard “news theme” as subjectively laminated—that is, seeing the theme as a perception of the journalist who covers the story—then “news sources” can be thought as being

“found” or “discovered” by the journalist through her subjective interpretations of an immediate condition, which is influenced by her habitus (the history of her life and the structural factors that are inculcated in her disposition) and the degree of improvisation she is able to lay out.

Against such a conceptual background, the first thing I want to examine here is the correlation between “news theme” and “news sources.” By doing so, I expect to find out who are the major forces behind the news and who makes a specific news frame salient. Or, who are the major forces that journalists value the most during their journalistic practices?

Insert Table 6-4 About here

As Table 6-4 demonstrates, the five news themes are very strongly correlated with the four primary news actors ($\chi^2 = 4045.51$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$, Cramer’s $V = .51$, $p < .01$). Political actors are the dominant source for the epidemic news reported from a “political” perspective (87.9%), and social actors are the dominant source for the “social” perspective (70.5%). For news framed from an economic point of view, both “scientific actors” (34.5%) and “economic actors” (34.3%) are equally appreciated. For the scientific news frame, political actors (45.6%) along with the scientific actors (47.4%) become the major forces of influence. The “journalistic theme” is news commentaries. About 58.9% of all the commentaries use “social actors” as main source of information and 28.6% use “political actors.” Even though all the news studied here concerns

epidemics, only 10.3% of the news commentary uses “scientific actors” as sources of information. “Economic actors” are quoted the least in commentaries, only 2.3%.

Insert Table 6-5 About here

In quantity, the number of secondary sources was much smaller than the primary sources (1,943 versus 5,271). But the patterns that emerged from the correlation test between the news theme and news sources are similar for primary and secondary sources. According to Table 6-5, the five news themes are strongly correlated with the four secondary news actors too ($\chi^2 = 728.26$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$, Cramer’s $V = .35$, $p < .01$). The sources for the “political theme” and the “social theme” are often homogenous; that is, about 52.5% of all sources for the “political theme” are from the “political actors;” and 52.6% of all sources for “social theme” are from the “social actors.” For the “economic theme,” there seems to be a higher percentage of “economic actors” (43.9% versus 34.3%) and a much lower percentage of “scientific actors” (34.5% versus 7.2%) found in the category of secondary news sources than in the primary ones. The “scientific theme,” again, seems to be a similar proportion of secondary news sources compared to “political” (43.4%) and “scientific” (41.6%) actors. The “journalistic theme” seems to have a similar pattern as seen in Table 6-4, too. About 44.3% of all its news sources are “social actors,” 29.1% are “political,” 22.8% are “scientific,” and only 3.8% are “economic.”

What does the correlation between news theme and news sources mean? When Bourdieu criticizes television journalism in France, he suggests that, in order to understand the journalistic field, one has to take into account the totality of the objective power relations, including the invisible ones, that structure the field (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 40). To follow this logic, I argue that the correlation between the theme and sources may tell us the “power relations” that structure the field of epidemic news reporting in China.

Thinking from a journalist’s point of view: when she decides to write a story on a certain epidemic from a certain perspective—which actually is largely determined by what news beat she is on or what specialty she has—the forces behind the information sources will affect the journalist’s cognition and perception before she even comes up with the idea of what news theme she wants to use. A journalist’s cognition, perception, and judgment are not formed during a short encounter with the news sources. There is a historical process for the journalist to get familiar with and be “cultivated” by the “macrocosm”—including a broad social, economic, political, and cultural context and the social networks—outside of the newsroom. Then, when it comes to a concrete news event, the journalist’s decision becomes a habitual way of making news, a routine, a “second nature,” often a snap judgment.

Journalistic practices are always constrained by structural elements. The journalist’s immediate environment affects her more than broad social contexts. By immediate environment, I do not refer to the newsrooms only. Certainly the newsrooms’ organizational structure and culture are crucial for journalistic practices, but the news sources or the actors that the journalist makes contacts with, spends time getting to know,

and even invests material and emotional into are at least equally important. Further, the process of a journalist-source interaction flows not only between the two agents but also between the two fields in which the journalist and source are a part. Hence, the purpose of examining the correlation between the news theme and news sources is to reveal the power struggle induced by journalistic practices in a certain area of news reporting as well as the reproduction of power relations in both fields.

Political Actors

For Chinese journalists who cover an epidemic from a political perspective, the most influential force is the “political field” and, embodied in it, the “political actors” such as government officials at the international, national, and local levels.¹⁶⁸ However, the influence of political actors is not only confined to the political theme. As Table 6-4 and Table 6-5 demonstrate, political actors are the most influential information sources across all five news-reporting perspectives. In total, almost 50% of all primary sources are from the political field and almost 40% of secondary news sources are from this field too.

The questions are: (1) How is the strong influence of political actors made evident in journalistic practice? How do the individual and organizational political actors interplay with the journalists in their everyday practices? (2) Since the political field, or the party-state in China, has an omnipresent power and is placed at an absolutely dominant position within the field of power, how do news organizations and journalists

¹⁶⁸ As Table 6-4 shows, 87.9% of primary sources for political theme are political actors. Also, as Table 6-5 shows, 52.5% of secondary sources for political theme are political actors.

bargain with political actors? Do they bargain at all? (3) What are the consequences of the political influence on public health news-reporting?

To answer these questions, I will first focus on political beat reporters—the most direct connection between the journalistic field and the political field—and their interactions with the government. Then I will discuss a popular discourse within Chinese news institutions, “political wisdom,” as an entry point to decode the power relations between the journalistic field and the political field. And last, I will focus on how the political forces penetrate the medical and scientific field of news coverage and the consequences of such a penetration.

Work for the Government & Work with the Government

Unlike the government correspondents in the United States, journalists on the political beat in China are sometimes regarded as the “staff” of the government: they do not keep their distance from the government; rather they have to get involved with government affairs as a means to win trust and fondness from the politically powerful. This arrangement is especially true for the journalists of the party organs.

First, not any journalist is qualified to work on a political beat. There are certain “hidden rules” for the editorials and the management to select the right person. For example, she must be a Party member, outgoing yet with a reliable personality. Sometimes, female journalists are preferred because it seems easier for females to get closer to top cadres.¹⁶⁹ Second, only the top government officials, such as the Provincial or City Party Committee Secretary, the governor, or the mayor, will be followed by a

¹⁶⁹ Interviewee 2007-04.

journalist from major party organs all the time. Officials at lower levels are not qualified.¹⁷⁰ Third, since they are so involved, the political beat reporter might even write press releases for the government. Fourth, it is typical for the reporter to maintain a good relationship with the government, she will be recruited to work at the secretary's or the mayor's office as a press secretary.

Veteran journalist Qi San,¹⁷¹ who had been working on the government beat by following the mayor for a few years, described her job responsibility as follows:

You try your best to follow (the mayor). You need to be with him all the time, because that's your job, your special mission, to report this (note: the mayor's activities). You work just like a staff, and you are under his control. Unlike other newspapers (note: non-party organs), he does not want them to follow, because there are some internal things that he doesn't need to let them know. Just like Hu Jintao, wherever he goes there must be either the Xinhua News Agency or CCTV with him, right?

When Qi San began to work as a political beat reporter, she did not have an easy time with the job. On the one hand, her daily routines had to change in accordance with the schedules of the mayor. On the other hand, her mentality had to be reconfigured. Before she was assigned to the government beat, she was an economic beat reporter focusing on automobile and electronic industry. As she recalled:

In the past, the job was easy. People asked you for favors, begging you to write and publish a story for them. Now things are different. After you go there, because you are the party organ under his administration, all officials there are above you, right? So you'd better be obedient. If there is something that you are not familiar with, you must get familiar, learn how to do it. You will need to write a lot of important articles. When your newspaper wants to ask something from the government, to talk or to communicate (with the government), it will ask you to help clarify or explain. There are lots of things like this. (You must learn)

¹⁷⁰ Discussions here only apply to big cities in China. In mid-sized or small cities, rules and structure of the field of power are very different. Interviewee 2007-03.

¹⁷¹ Qi San is a pseudonym of interviewee 2007-03.

how to deal with this kind of relationship. As for the secretaries (from the mayor's office), you need to establish a good relationship, and then it will be easier for you to do your job. Plus, in case there is something happened to your newspaper, you can "turn big problems into small problems and small problems into no problems at all" (*dashi huaxiao xiaoshi hualiao*). Your role (as a government beat reporter) has multiple layers. That is why it could be quite exhausting sometimes.

From Qi San's description of her job, we can see that when a journalist starts to work on a political beat, she brings the capital that she accumulated in her former sub-field—a space within the journalistic field that is more stretching toward the economic field—to the new sub-field, which is more pulled away by forces from the political field. Some of the capital does not work or might not be not valued in this new sub-field. Her prestige as a journalist, the symbolic capital, is not as important in political reporting compared to economic reporting. She needs to adjust her "mentality" by observing and learning from the new field, where power relations are now centered around and hierarchically arranged under the mayor. Also the journalist field that Qi San takes into the "game of political news reporting" is apparently under the domination of the political field; that is, all news papers are under the authority of the Party. This type of "double subordination" leads to a subservient position. Meanwhile, the social capital that Qi San accumulated in the old "game of economic news reporting" does not have the same value in the new game. She needs to build up new connections and get along with the "secretaries" who are the links between her and the mayor. To Qi San, all these efforts are undertaken on her own behalf, and also on behalf of the organization that she works for. The inter-institutional interactions seem to be condensed among individuals, just as

what Bourdieu says, a specific field is always “present in the form of persons” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 31).

Even though the journalistic field is subjected to the power of the political field, the power relation between them is not one-directional. The capital that a journalist gains from working in the journalistic field can be transferred to the political field and make her “stakes of playing the game” more valuable. Qi San gave me an example of one such type of shifted power plays. After the SARS outbreak in 2003, a spokesperson system started to develop across central and local government departments. Qi San’s provincial government established such a system. They called it the “press office for the provincial party committee” (*shengwei xinwenban*). The person in charge of the provincial press office was a former Deputy Director at the Editorial Office of the *Guangming Daily*, a Party organ of CCP’s Central Committee, directly led by the Propaganda Department, and oriented toward an intellectual readership. As Qi San explained, to hiring this person as the head of the press office and the spokesperson for the provincial Party Secretary meant:

Media at the central level have good relationships with officials on top (meaning officials at the central level). The provincial officials all must look at the top. (The person from) *Guangming Daily* is very familiar with CCTV and other central media. As a deputy director, he must have lots of experience, right? These people (that is, the higher officials or people from the central media) he can always ask for opinions. Plus, he can do the gate-keeping since he is a professional, right?

Clearly the Deputy Director from *Guangming Daily* was hired because of the social capital he had accumulated, over years, in his everyday practices. His social capital was valued more by the provincial government because it was generated at a

higher level of power in the political field. In other words, social capital itself is relational. The value of social capital is determined not only by how many connections that you have with others but also by the quality of these connections and the structural position of the connected person. The higher the link, the more power. The *Guangming Daily* director was important to the provincial government because of his relationship with persons at a higher level of China's political field. The provincial government, even though it was already an actor in the political field, still needed to find a way to be connected with a higher level. By detouring through the journalistic field, the provincial government added an indirect tie with the central government, could work as effectively as a direct tie (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973).

The relationship between the political beat reporters and the government is close. At the same time, the relationship is reciprocal. Although the government is located at a dominant position, the hierarchy within the political field, such as the dominance of the central government over the local government, and the association of news organization with the government at a higher level, also empowers the news organization and its journalists to exchange their social capital with the government at lower levels for other capital. As Qi San said, some central Party organs even regard the local cities as their "base camp" and the local governments treat them like "kings," providing nearly anything they need.

The intimacy between the political beat reporters and the government may explain why there is a considerable amount of news on public health crises written from a political perspective (24.7%, see Table 6-2). But there is another important reason, the

“hard” and “soft” control of the Party-state on information flow, which may lead to the politicization of epidemics in China.

Political Wisdom – A Pragmatic Strategy

The discussion above tells only part of the story between the government and the news organizations. Even though the political beat reporters take important roles in the process of establishing and maintaining relationships with the government, a large proportion of the interactions between the news organizations and the government occur outside of the political beat reporter’s control.

During my interviews with management officials from several newspapers, they mentioned a certain shift of focus from civil lives to political economy in their news routines. Among them, there is one influential national newspaper that is famous for muckraking journalistic practices. Lin Si was a mid-level official at the newspaper.¹⁷² He did not seem to be happy with the public’s appraisal of the paper as being courageous:

If you only use “courageous” to describe or to summarize the influence of a medium, then, in fact, it is quite sad, really very sad. What the Chinese media need is wisdom, not courage. (“How do you define ‘wisdom’?”) On the surface, the term seems to be mysterious, but it can be concretized in each news story and it can also be concretized in the strategies that the journalists use in their interviews.

Then Lin Si gave me an example on how to practice “wisdom” in his organization’s daily operations. As he described, his paper received an exclusive interview with the spokesperson of a city government, where there was a prominent social movement precipitated by ordinary citizens on environmental issues. The city

¹⁷² Lin Si is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-04.

government was severely attacked by the media both within and outside China regarding its decision to establish a highly contaminating chemical plant close to the center of the city. If it were a few years back, Lin Si's newspaper probably would have been one of the sharpest critics of this incident and would not have been chosen by the government to do an exclusive interview. But, at around 2000, his paper changed its muckraking style to something more "politically wise:"

It is because the official acknowledged our paper's power of influence and our ability to communicate, he accepted our interview...In addition to those authoritative party organs, the city government also needs to find a medium that has great influence in the market.

The transition that Lin Si mentioned meant adding a section of "political news" or "coverage on current political affairs" to the newspaper's regular reporting in the year 2000. Before that, Lin Si's newspaper was recognized as a "purely grassroots paper," mainly focusing on revealing social injustice and corruption. After 2000, the paper started to emphasize political news reporting, such as interviewing high-ranking officials. Even though this transformation encountered harsh criticism from its readers, Lin Si still thought the decision was correct:

Why do we do high-end interviews? We think, if you still do things in accordance with the characteristics of a grassroots newspaper, you will not affect the mainstream opinion, and you will not become an opinion leader of the mainstream. Then you cannot influence the group of people who have real power. Why do we want to influence these people? We still pay attention to the disadvantaged, although less than before. But we still keep the root in there. We expand our focus to other areas in order to influence the views of the mainstream crowd, especially the officials who control the governmental resources and make policies. We think, as an influential and credible medium, we have the responsibility to tell them (the officials) about the real China, through appropriate means, let them know, and then influence their thoughts, ideas, and even push forward the implementation of policies.

Therefore, to Lin Si, political wisdom meant getting closer to the political power center, building up connections with the center, and accumulating social capitals as well as symbolic capital (i.e., reputations among the government officials). This practice is not uncommon among China's market-oriented media. After a period of "primitive accumulation of capital" through bold and sharp critical reporting, these marketized media gain enough symbolic capital and economic capital. The stakes are high, and not only in the economic field or the social field. They have to face endless forbidden directives and punishments from the political field, within which the stakes they possess are not valued in the same way as in the economic and the social fields. Hence, they have an urgent need to make nice with the forces from the political field. Political wisdom becomes a slogan to cover up their real intention. If the market-oriented media eventually turn to political power for shelter, does this mean, in the actual journalistic practices, the news they produce is not much different from the party organs?

Let's go back to the case of epidemic news reporting here. In order to find out whether there is difference between the Party organ, the market-oriented newspaper, and the elite newspaper in terms of their choices on news theme and news sources, I divided the six newspapers into three groups (see Table 6-8, 6-9, and 6-10); that is, the three party organs, PD, ND and HD, were combined together; the two provincial tabloids, NMN and DD were also grouped together; and NW, the only elite newspaper was listed separately as a single type.

Insert Table 6-6 About here

According to Table 6-6, market newspaper (87.8%) has a higher percentage of domestic focus than either party organ (79.4%) or elite newspaper (79.5%). This is not surprising since the readership of the market newspaper is most likely located at the mid to lower level of the society, which may not care much about international news. After all, geographical and cultural proximity is one of the dominant forces in selecting news.

Insert Table 6-7 About here

However, Table 6-7 shows something interesting. The three types of newspapers all give a similar proportion of attention to the scientific theme of the four public health crises. But in terms of political theme, the percentage of the market newspaper (22.9%) is very close to that of the party organ (27.3%) and is much higher than the elite newspaper (9.9%). As for the social theme, (topics concerning patients, ordinary people, and civil societies), market newspapers (18.0%) have a higher proportion than the party organ (9.7%) but lower than the elite newspaper (26.1%). On the economic theme, market newspapers again sit in the middle, appearing to show fewer interests in economic issues than the party organ but more than the elite newspaper. Even on the item of “journalistic theme,” an indicator of how much autonomy or agency a newspaper has, the market newspaper seems to have much less agency than the elite newspaper and only

slightly more than the party organ. A similar pattern emerges when we compare the three types of newspapers' use of primary news sources (see Table 6-8).

Insert Table 6-8 About here

According to Table 6-8, both market (45.1%) and party organ newspapers (55.2%) tend to quote more from the political actors than the elite newspaper (20.5%). They both have a higher focus on economic actors than the elite paper, although none of them pays a substantial attention to this sector (4.8% for market newspaper, 4.5% for party organ, and 2.2% for elite paper). Market newspapers have about 27% of news sources from the scientific field, and party organ has 28%. By contrast, the elite newspaper gets a much higher proportion; 37.1% of its sources from this field. Finally, the elite newspaper pays the most attention to the social actors and provides them opportunities to speak to the public; while market newspapers only have 23.2% coming from social actors. Party organ newspapers have even less, only 12.2%.

In sum, from Table 6-7 and Table 6-8, we can see that the so-called market-oriented newspapers are not that socially oriented, not that autonomous, and not even as market-oriented as we might expect. In general, the market newspapers, as a group, intend to practice more similarly to the way of the Party organs. Then the question is why.

If, as some scholars argue, China's media transformation was indicated by a full-fledged market reform that may lead to a more professional media system (e.g., C.

Huang, 2007), then it would only make sense that the market newspapers diverge more substantially from the party organs as opposed to the elite newspapers, which are commercialized to a similar degree. Even if we acknowledge that emphasizing political news coverage does not undermine the level of professionalization of the market newspapers, their actual performance on the front stage of political news reporting still seems questionable.

Shi Qing,¹⁷³ an investigative news reporter from a city tabloid, provided me with an interesting example. A new governor came to the province where her newspaper is located. Since the newspaper had a bad relationship with the last governor, the editorial board decided to make a good impression on the new one. The news commentary section of the paper is one of its “star sections.” So the editorial board did some research on the new governor and came up with an editorial attempting to flatter the new governor’s speech on his policy initiatives. However, there was one sentence in the editorial that upset the new governor. The whole effort was made in vain. When I asked Shi Qing what kind of influence this unfortunate mistake would bring to the newspaper, he answered, “not much influence. It was not a big issue of principle. He knew that the intention was good, but it did not please him as the paper had expected. Well, there is always a next time.”

From this example we may see that commercialization does not seem to change some important features that China’s media inherit from the propaganda model. Even to a completely economically independent city tabloid, the will and emotion of the political

¹⁷³ Shi Qing is a pseudonym of interviewee 2007-04.

powerful are still top concerns. Hence it is not a total coincidence that a similar idea was elaborated by a journalist from a central Party organ.

Yao Bai¹⁷⁴ got her master's degree in philosophy and her doctorate degree in journalism. Then she got a job in a central Party organ and worked there for about 10 years when I met her. She defined "political wisdom" as "trying to fathom the real intention of the top political leaders." As she explained, "if you don't understand the leader's real thoughts, you just do as he says, then you may actually act against his real intention. (How do you what his real intention is?) Well, how do I put it? It's totally based on your experience. You should always follow the top leaders' speeches, listen to them and then think. Try to fathom and fathom, just like that."

Although both the city tabloid and the central Party organ make an effort to figure out the real intention of the political leaders, a difference between the two lies in their motivations. To Party organs, because of the strict self-censorship system, the possession of "political wisdom" only matters when maintaining or improving their relationship with the government or the Party-state. Qi San, the political beat reporter for a city Party organ, explained her understanding of the term in the metaphorical setting of a family:

Political wisdom is something, that you can (use to) move smoothly between the government and the society, or between the government and the commercial areas; and that you can handle these relations well...If you lack the wisdom on politics, (that is) you cannot deal with the relationship with the government, (just like) your home does not have peace...then how do you expect to talk about development? It's that simple. Because you are a member of the family, you are connected, right? The government is your family member too.

¹⁷⁴ Yao Bai is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-11.

But to market newspapers, whether or not they can master the art of “political wisdom” is a problem of life and death. Dao Ze¹⁷⁵ was a retired editor-in-chief of a news conglomerate in a big city in China. In his news group, there were several fully market-oriented newspapers that had caused political troubles. His understanding of “political wisdom” is different to Qi San’s. As he explained:

You must have a politician’s mind, politician’s ability, politician’s awareness, politician’s wisdom—you certainly must have this. As I said before, there are two possibilities for my newspapers. The first one, you are too lazy, you do not reform, and then the newspaper cannot keep going, it’s screwed, and you don’t want to keep it either. So you terminate it, and this is called suicide. Another possibility is that you may have gone across a redline. You blindly scramble and then you dash across a redline, you run into a restricted area. So your paper is forced to cease publication and be reconsolidated. This is a homicide. This is not a suicide, because others turn you off. This is a homicide. You must avoid both situations. Therefore, in these few years, I propose that, we need reform and opening up, we must go forward, but we also need to pay attention to the safety of the newspaper...this is determined by China’s national conditions, that you have to strive to survive.

In this long discussion of “political wisdom,” I try to explain the practical meaning of the expression in different organizational settings and by journalistic actors at different positions. By focusing on this single concept, I try to reveal that China’s transformation toward a market media system has not led to a decisive separation of the commercialized media from the old propaganda system; rather, to accumulate economic and symbolic capital is not the end of story. Since the state still occupies an overwhelmingly dominant place of power in the journalistic field—a heteronomous field that can be very easily affected by forces external to it, the media could easily lose its autonomy and re-submit itself to the state’s dominance. To adopt the idea of “political

¹⁷⁵ Dao Ze is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-01.

wisdom” is to adopt a pragmatic strategy as a survival skill. This observation concurs to Lee and others’ (2006) argument that the Chinese press now functions as Party Publicity, Inc.

However, I wonder, as a pragmatic strategy, where does this “political wisdom” come from? Even though the journalists that I interviewed could clearly articulate their understanding of “political wisdom,” are they practicing with the idea or could they rationalize their choices?

A senior news commentary writer, Fu Bo,¹⁷⁶ was the only interviewee who refused to use the term “political wisdom.” The newspaper Fu worked for had a competitive “sister newspaper” from the same news group. In the end of 2000, the editor in chief of Fu Bo’s newspaper was removed from his post because of some politically incorrect news reports. In the aftermath, the sister newspaper published a long article written by its editor in chief, claiming that “justice and conscience are provided by the government.” Fu Bo was so angry with the “shameless” article that he published a commentary in his newspaper, harshly criticized the editor in chief and his article. Though Fu Bo was often invited by the sister newspaper to write columns, his article wasn’t published again in that paper until its editor in chief left. When he was telling me this story, Fu Bo was still furious. In the end, he remarked, “they are all opportunists!” To Fu Bo, people who adopt “political wisdom,” no matter how strategic or courageous they pretend to look, are only trying to make a deal with the government. By doing so, these people lose their own conscience. Interestingly, Fu Bo immediately reflected on his

¹⁷⁶ Fu Bo is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-05.

own anger and added, “my generation is all poisoned by Communism and Lu Xun,¹⁷⁷ and that’s why we are not tolerant.”

Fu Bo’s commentary on his generation makes an interesting contrast. The concept of “political wisdom” is not something created in a vacuum. It is an embodiment of a type of habitus that is deeply cultivated in Chinese journalists’ mind and body. “Political wisdom” was embedded in the historical memory of lots of Chinese people as they experienced political campaigns and movements since the Mao era. It is practically a second nature for most Chinese to survive and keep living on the country’s soil. To practice with “political wisdom” not only involves a calculation of “political” capital, it involves economic calculation, too. The fear of being subjected to the state’s punishment is not the only reason; economic and symbolic losses can be more prohibitive. For Lin Si, in his calculation, if his newspaper does not do enough political news coverage, then it will lose the “mainstream” readership, which means losing big advertising clients who always target at the middle-class mainstream. For Shi Qing’s newspaper, flattering the new governor is akin to a business investment. For Yao Bai, working with the concept is based on her experience in the field, which may benefit her in the future. For Dao Ze, the wisdom matters because more than 1,000 people work in his organization and depend on him for their retirement plan. The tricky thing is, a journalist cannot always count on a single definition of “political wisdom.” The meaning and symbolic boundaries of this concept will change in accordance with the immediate context and the broader social

¹⁷⁷ Lu Xun was a famous writer of the 20th century in China. He was highly acclaimed by the CCP, especially after 1949. His essays are collected in textbooks and every Chinese student is required to read them starting in elementary school. His bitter personality, satiric tones, sharp writing style, and critical thoughts made him into one of most unforgiving intellectuals in modern China.

economic and political context. Dao Ze's skillful practice with "political wisdom" eventually led him to become a dean of a prestigious journalism school after he retired from the news group. While a follower of Dao Ze, who also emphasized on "political wisdom" during his entire career, was rejected for a similar position.¹⁷⁸

The power struggles within the field of political news coverage are highly unbalanced. The journalistic actors do not have enough bargaining power to fight against the Party state. There is only a very limited space for journalists to reverse the balance of power—a rare set of special conditions. The fissure between the central and the local political power hierarchies seems to create such special conditions for the journalist. But the Chinese journalist, whether she is from the Party organ or from the market newspaper, is still overwhelmingly affected by the idea of the dominance of the Party state and takes obedience for granted. To justify such docility, the concept of "political wisdom" was created and adopted. The hidden text behind the concept is to avoid both political and economic troubles. This cultivated habitus constitutes a foundation for the Party state to exert political power over the process of news construction.

The Politicization of Epidemic News

All news stories analyzed in this research are about epidemics; it is not usual to find such a high proportion of political actors used as information sources in the news covered from other perspectives. According to Table 6-4, the total percentage of political sources is almost twice as much as that of the scientific sources (49.4% versus 28.1%), not to mention the social (17.9%) and economic sources (4.6%). Even among the

¹⁷⁸ Interview with 2008-05. The most recent source on this case was found from China's most popular microblog (www.weibo.com) on July 12, 2011.

epidemic news covered from a scientific perspective (focusing on both medical science and public health aspects of the epidemics), the percentage of political actors (45.6%) is very close to that of the scientific actors (47.4%). Although the influence of political actors is not as significant as the themes of social, economic, and journalistic, it is still very hard to ignore their voices.

If we explore further, the influence of political information sources actually varies across the four different epidemics. Table 6-9 presents the correlation between the five news themes and the four types of primary sources generated within each of the four epidemics. From there we may find that news on HIV/AIDS, SARS, and H1N1 displays a very different pattern than the news on HBV (see Table 6-9).

Insert Table 6-9 About here

According to Table 6-9, it is obvious that political actors are absolutely dominant sources in all four epidemics when the news theme is related to government activities or policies. Coverage on SARS (93.7%) and H1N1 (92.6%), the two acute outbreaks, quote more often from political actors than stories on AIDS (84.7%) and HBV (75.8%), two chronic infectious diseases. When reporting the four epidemics from a scientific perspective, news on HBV seems to use the information sources in a relatively normal way. About 84% of all HBV news covered from a medical or public health perspective quotes actors from related areas, such as medical research institutions or epidemiological experts. In comparison, scientific news on AIDS, SARS, and H1N1 seems to be more

influenced by forces from the political field than the scientific field. Each one of them has a higher percentage of political news sources than scientific sources (for AIDS, it is 46.5% versus 45.5%; for SARS, it is 47.7% versus 42.1%; for H1N1, it is 61.4% versus 34.5%). Moreover, for news on the HBV epidemic, except those reported from a political perspective, the majority of the news sources are either from the scientific field or from the social world. Whereas in the news coverage of SARS and H1N1, the political information sources seem to be challenged by the social actors, both of which occupy a considerable weight in economic, social, and journalistic news themes. By contrast, it is only in news stories on HIV/AIDS that the political actors seem to cross themes and become the most dominant voices there.

Except the news on HBV, political actors seem to be trying to exert their “discursive power” in news topics. Does this mean there is a tendency toward “politicization” of epidemic news in China? If the answer is yes, why is there such a sharp difference between HBV and the other three epidemics? How is this difference related to the routine journalistic practices, especially to public health beat reporters? To answer these questions, first of all, we should explore the structure of the epidemic news release and the relation between the health institutions and the news institutions.

Health and News Institutions: How do they work together?

By and large, for popular newspapers, there are three groups of journalists related to public health issues: (1) medical and health beat reporters who are in charge of routine news reporting on the official health department, the food and drug administration, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, medical research institutes, medical schools, and so

on; (2) social news reporters who do not specialize in public health issues but will need to make occasional contacts with the health institutions if they are involved in a social incident, such as conflicts between patients and doctors, or a food poisoning accident; and (3) investigative news reporters, who are relatively freer than their colleagues working on routine news. Investigative journalists do not need to make a regular contact with the health institutions—sometimes they even need to keep them at a distance. Since the investigative journalists often conduct critical news reporting, they sometimes are required to have advanced knowledge of public health or medical science in order to secure the credibility of their coverage.

In China there is a considerable amount of bureaucratic newspapers and niche newspapers that focus on public health and medical issues only. For example, the *Health News (Jiankang Bao)* published by the Ministry of Health is a national bureaucratic newspaper targeting medical and public health professionals. The *Dahe Health News* is a niche newspaper published by the Henan News Group and managed by the editorial board of DD, which only reports health-related news and information. These specialized newspapers often maintain a much closer relationship with the public health sector of the government and the pharmaceutical and medicine industry. Almost every journalist working there is a health beat reporter.

For popular newspapers, depending on size, one news division may have one, two, or three health beat reporters. For example, Liu Xuan,¹⁷⁹ a reporter from a market newspaper in a municipality, was one of the three health beat reporters at her paper. Her

¹⁷⁹ Liu Xuan is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-06.

“beat” was MOH, the State Drug and Food Administration (SDFA), the Municipal SDFA, and major hospitals on the east side of the municipality. The second health beat reporter took care of the Municipal Health Department, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Chinese CDC), major hospitals on the west side of the city, and population and family planning departments. The third one is a part-time health beat reporter, who only kept in touch with military hospitals.

For niche newspapers, the division of work is more fine-grained. For example, under the framework of “medical policy and affairs reporting” (*yizheng baodao*) and “general health news” (*daweisheng*), reporters from a national health news weekly are grouped based on the type of diseases, such as chronic disease division and infectious disease division.¹⁸⁰

On one hand, MOH, health departments from provincial to country levels, and hospitals are the major sources for health beat reporters. But the actual communication process between the health and news institutions is more complicated than holding a press conference. The control and gate-keeping of health information by the health institutions are multi-dimensional. Usually they include formal procedures, such as requiring beat journalists to register with the institution and establishing a government news briefing and spokesperson system, and informal ones, such as establishing personal connections or hanging out with the journalists during after-work hours.

On the other hand, health beat reporters are not dealing with the health institutions alone; peer competition can be a real threat to a reporter’s career. Beat reporters need to

¹⁸⁰ Interviewee 2008-02.

maintain a relationship on their beat as well as the journalists on the same beat. But undoubtedly, the most crucial first step is to establish a trusting relationship with institutions on their beat, which not only involves the efforts on the part of journalists but also depends on the power relations between the specific news organization and the health institution. I will try to explain this argument by comparing the experience of two health beat reporters from two different newspapers in two different cities.

The first health beat reporter is Liu Xuan, the female journalist that I have already mentioned. Liu Xuan's newspaper is relatively young compared to other news media in the same municipality. It has to compete with at least four other city tabloids as well as news sources. But Liu Xuan's background is also different than many other young journalists. She had a college degree not in journalism but in law. When her husband moved from a mid-sized city to this big municipality and worked for the propaganda department there, Liu Xuan got a job at the newly established market-oriented newspaper, which operates under the management of a major party organ. Liu Xuan was first assigned to the social news beat, an exhausting and sometime dangerous beat that is often given to newbie journalists. In one interview, Liu Xuan got sprayed with a fire extinguisher by her interviewee and was hospitalized. Soon after, she was assigned to the health news beat. Her predecessor was fired because of missing a word in the title of a top central official. When I met Liu Xuan, she had been working on her new beat for just more than six months.

Before he left, Liu Xuan's predecessor gave her all the contacts he had accumulated on the beat over the years. Then he gave her certain tips on how to deal

with the individuals and institutions on her beat, such as whom she should call first and whom she has to meet in person. Liu Xuan did go to visit a few health institutions before she formally started her job, some of which asked her to bring a formal “letter of introduction” from her newspaper and saved her information in their archives (or databases). MOH required her to apply for a pass card, with photo and signature. All of this background work had to be done before she started to assume her job duties.

Building up trust with news sources often takes time and effort. However, to Liu Xuan it didn’t seem important to invest too much personal time and emotion. To her, it is not necessary to actively “engage (*jing ying*)” with the sources because their relationship was no more than a working one. She sneered at some of her colleagues’ involvement with their beats by hanging out at bars. In Liu Xuan’s understanding, “the beat is not *yours*, it is the newspaper who gives it to you. Anyone can be assigned to the beat. This is the same to him (meaning information sources from the health institutions). His position does not belong to himself; the hospital or MOH gives it to him. It is his duty to cooperate. I think, in essence, it’s just a working relationship.”

The second health beat reporter is Chun Tao,¹⁸¹ a female journalist who worked for a market newspaper in a provincial capital for about three years when I met her. She was assigned to the health beat because her predecessor had been working on it for more than 10 years and felt “beat-up.” Chun Tao got her master’s degree in journalism from a local university. Unlike Liu Xuan who had two other colleagues on the same beat, Chun Tao was the only person on the health beat from her newspaper.

¹⁸¹ Chun Tao is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-12.

But Chun Tao did not consider it hard to handle the whole beat by herself, mainly because there was not much news from the beat or, more precisely, the Health Department of the city, which constitutes the major part of her beat. As with Liu Xuan, one of the routines that Chun Tao accomplished daily was to check out the official website of the Health Department and see if they had updated anything new. When something important happened, such as the issue of a new rule or regulation, the Health Department would organize a briefing conference and inform the beat journalists to attend.

The relationship between the health beat journalists and the Health Department in Chun Tao's city was quite close and seemed to be more relaxed. Chun Tao did not need to register with the department or any health institutions. In the two days after she started the beat, she went to the department and other institutions, introducing herself and exchanging business cards with the stringers or press officials there. But Chun Tao also admitted that her job was easier than other "small" newspapers because her newspaper was a "provincial" newspaper and was quite influential in the region. "They (the Health Department) regard our newspaper highly because of our size. Sometimes, other newspapers would complain that they only accept our interviews but not theirs... We don't have concerns over missing any news, because as long as they decide to release the news, they will definitely let us know." From Chun Tao's perspective, it seems more like the health institutions want to maintain a good relationship with the newspaper rather than vice versa. Every summer, the Health Department would take all health beat reporters from the city for a group trip. No matter whether their connections with their

beats are close or remote, Liu Xuan and Chun Tao admitted that it is almost impossible to do critical reporting as a beat reporter.

To Liu Xuan, whether you can establish a trust relationship with the health institutions mainly depends on the quality of your work and your personality. “If you work harder, and show up more in front of them, they would get to know you better. Of course they read your articles, so they are observing too. The longer you stay on the same beat, the more trust you would get.” Since the newspaper she worked for was not the most popular one in the local market, sometimes the local hospitals did not treat them seriously. But to Liu Xuan, this had never been a problem: “If you don’t show me respect, then I don’t need to show it to you as well.” To Chun Tao, trust could be established at first sight. One colleague asked for Chun Tao’s help in getting a contact with a local eye hospital. Although she had only met the stringer from the hospital once, she already felt very familiar with the girl. So Chun Tao called stringer and arranged an appointment for her colleague.

The biggest similarity to their job as a beat reporter is their relationship with other reporters on the same beat. On the one hand, each newspaper has a strict requirement regarding the amount and quality of articles they need to achieve every month. This does not only relate to their income but also to the stability of their positions within the news organizations. On the other hand, both newspapers have a specific regulation regarding “missing a beat” (*lou gao*)—when the beat reporter misses something important published by other newspapers in the same city. It could lead to termination. Liu Xuan

and Chun Tao established a social network with other health beat reporters via QQ¹⁸² groups. Maintaining such a competitive while collaborative relationship can be challenging. It is a delicate process and always varies depending on the specificity of the situation.

In general, according to Chun Tao, when there is a news clue that is supposed to be shared with other journalists, such as a new policy issued by the government or a notice sent by the press office, the person who received the tip but did not share with others would be isolated by other group members. Liu Xuan, though she did not intend to collaborate with other beat reporters, still tried to fit in and be cooperative when others asked. Since Liu Xuan had two other colleagues on the same health beat, she was extremely careful not to step out of bounds. That is, when she needed to interview a source from her colleague's beat, even if she knew how to contact the source, she would ask for permission from her colleague first.

By comparing Liu Xuan and Chun Tao's their experience and interpretation of being a health beat reporter, I found something in common regarding health beat reporting. First, neither sees herself as a troublemaker. Since they are assigned to do the job, it is their responsibility to maintain a relationship with the health institutions. Therefore, health beat reporters, just like the political beat reporters, are docile and obedient. Second, they both acknowledge that their positions in the field of beat reporting and their relationships with the beat are settled not because of who they are but because of where they work. The individuals' body and mind become embodiments of

¹⁸² QQ is a popular instant messaging software in China, which is quite similar to Skype or MSN.

the power relations between two fields, between the journalistic field and the field of public health administration. Third, some of the beat reporters do not want to bring the social network established during work to their personal life (such as Liu Xuan); some of them take advantage of it (such as Chun Tao). The decision is very personal, depending on their dispositions cultivated at different stages of their lives. However, we could hardly tell what are the determinant factors (e.g., social economic status, income, educational background, etc.) that lead them to make different choices. To me, it is the immediate socio-cultural environment that makes the difference. For Chun Tao, the provincial capital that she was born into and grew up within was a small “acquaintance society” (*shuren shehui*) where everyone knows everyone else. It was much harder for her to refuse bringing the working relations to personal life. But to Liu Xuan, who relocated from a city she was familiar with to a new place with millions of strangers, the feeling of estrangement may have made her more detached from her job. Fourth, the coalition among the beat reporters can be interpreted as a disciplinary mechanism, under which no one would and no one could easily become a deviant from the same beat. Such a mechanism actually helps the health institutions and the Party state better control the flow of information as well as the availability of “discursive milieus” circulated within the journalistic field. This mechanism constitutes part of the “political control” of the Party state over news production.

How Does an Epidemic Get Politicized?

I perceive politicization of epidemics in terms of two aspects: first, a “hard” version, which simply refers to the Party state’s overall control of epidemics and all

relevant issues including news coverage on epidemics; and second, a “soft” version, which regards “politicization” as articulating ideological discourses with epidemics.

Hard Politicization

First of all, it is important to understand that even the MOH does not always have the freedom to release epidemic information to the press and the public. The SARS epidemic was the turning point. Zhao Kun¹⁸³ had worked at a national health news weekly for more than 10 years. He was assigned to follow the MOH during the SARS outbreak in 2003. As he explained:

When SARS broke out, the disease was not included in the quarantine list of communicable diseases or the surveillance list of infectious diseases. Therefore, MOH did not have a full power over the SARS crisis. It was not authorized to release the information of the disease to the public. MOH could not do anything other than quarantine...Then the Central Party broke its silence. When the Central started to talk, things were different...That is why MOH later established the spokesperson system and held regular press conferences. (So, after that, MOH is authorized to release information at any time?) No. I should put in this way. MOH has its own constraints. You cannot release whatever you want to. If it is formulated by law, then you must do whatever the law says. If the law says, when a certain type of infectious disease breaks out, you must inform the public, then you can release the information to the public. If you do not do that, you might be fired immediately. Before SARS, when an epidemic happened, the local government would not report it to MOH but to the government above, until it finally reached the Central government. MOH would only be informed if the treatment guidelines were needed. After SARS, the state issued a series of regulations and laws, which requires the health administration to report a certain type of diseases within 24 hours. This means MOH has been offered “an imperial sword” (*shangfang baojian*, a symbol of power and authority). Now it can tell the public right after the outbreak.

Information control has always resided with the central government and CCP’s Central Committee. At the same time, even though the Chinese government made an

¹⁸³ Zhao Kun is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-02.

effort to transform from “rule by law” to “rule of law” (Peerenboom, 2002), as I have reviewed in Chapter 4, the superiority of the unwritten Constitution—the Party law—over the written Constitution enables the Central Committee to entirely monopolize key policy decisions (S. Guo, 2001, p. 301). MOH’s function during time of public health crisis is actually quite limited. This limitation is further illustrated by another example Zhao Kun mentioned during the interview. As he recalled, it was not until Wu Yi, the then vice premier took over the post of Minister of Health during SARS outbreak that the HIV/AIDS epidemic later became one of the central political agenda for the Hu-Wen administration. As the vice premier, Wu Yi had the power to mobilize resources from everywhere, such as the financial department and the propaganda department, all of which were powers that MOH lacked.

It is quite clear that epidemics and the measures taken to respond to them are closely associated with politics. In China, the forces that try to “politicize” epidemics come from the political entity itself. When there is an acute outbreak, the disease becomes a threat to both the biological body of the people as well as the political body of the regime. Control and intervention measures, including information control, must be taken by the Central Party Committee since they are not only relevant to treatment but also to the “stability” of the regime. Chronic epidemics, such as HBV, have been around for a while and do not show any sign of threatening: no political action is warranted unless something new and intimidating emerges. In other words, the central committee does not need to act on HBV under the guidelines of MOH, as an ordinary disease. That

is why HBV news does not seem to interact with as many political actors as the other three epidemics.

Because of the actual players in an epidemic outbreak come not from the administrative sector but from the Party itself, health beat reporters who follow MOH and other central health institutions must not question or challenge the authorities, but must follow the instructions and be a good “mouthpiece.” But from an outsider’s perspective, the state in the post-SARS era seems to be more transparent than before. The reinforcement of the government briefing and spokesperson system¹⁸⁴ during SARS and the promulgation of the Open Government Information Regulations (OGI regulations) in 2007 have been praised as a great step forward to government transparency. The truth is, when the journalists, not just the beat reporters, cover the news on epidemics like SARS, they are still not allowed to draw the whole picture of the crisis to the public because the major sources still come from the Party-state; on the other hand, they cannot critique the state’s “openness” and “transparency” because it has made such progress. Some journalists call this new strategy “soft control”—a new method of monopolizing discourse that is much harder to break through than the old “hard control.”¹⁸⁵ As a senior media researcher worked at a news conglomerate remarked, “in a free and democratic society, the diversity of voices is fundamental; but now there is only one voice from a political mouth all over the country. Hence, it (the spokesperson system) is devolution

¹⁸⁴ The government briefing and spokesperson system was initially established in 1993 (W. Jiang & Chen, 2005).

¹⁸⁵ Interviewee 2008-07.

rather than evolution.”¹⁸⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that an absolutely dominant proportion of SARS and H1N1 news information comes from political actors.

This hard version of politicization of epidemics in China only taps into a small proportion of the relationship between disease and politics. Acute epidemics attract more attention because of its unexpectedness and the great psychological impact. For epidemics like HIV/AIDS, it is not its outbreak, but the way it appeared in China that turned it into a political topic. The Chinese government’s intervention into the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 2003, on the heels of the SARS epidemic, was also a political decision. “Dealing with AIDS is a rigid administrative order,” as Zhao Kun called it, “if the central committee did not actively involve, MOH could not take any actions, because AIDS is not just a disease and cannot be handled by MOH alone.” The process of how the AIDS epidemic became prevalent in China, especially in the central part of China, is a long story, which I will elaborate in the next part of the chapter. What I will argue here is that the political feature of AIDS in China lies in its entanglement with the power struggle between the local and the central, and between China and the global.

Soft Politicization

The first AIDS case was diagnosed in China in 1985. The patient was a tourist from Argentina (Balzano and Jia, 2006). A year later, four Chinese hemophiliac patients tested positive for HIV in the southern province of Guangdong (E. S. H. Yu, Xie, Zhang, Lu, & Chan, 1996). However, the government denied the fact via its party organ, the *People’s Daily*, declaring “there is no AIDS in China” (Xinhua, 1986). Since then AIDS

¹⁸⁶ Interviewee 2007-05.

had been treated as a “state’s secret” (The Guardian, 2003), a political taboo for state-controlled mass media, and an invisible disease for the Chinese public. In the 1990s, the government published official reports on the status of AIDS epidemic in China annually (Settle, 2003). However, the statistics of prevalence and incidence were greatly manipulated and minimized. In 2002, Chinese Ministry of Health claimed 40,560 HIV cases in China. A year later, in 2003, the number increased dramatically to 840,000 (Settle, 2003). However, three years later, in 2006, the number changed yet again, dropping steeply from 840,000 to 650,000. Chinese officials explained the change on statistical methodology rather than a drop in the incidence. But the continuing fluctuation of the number has raised serious doubts in the authenticity of China’s AIDS data, especially whether or not the Chinese government had intentionally lowered the estimate (Yardley, 2006).

Yet the number of AIDS cases is probably overestimated, rather than underestimated, according to one of my interviewees. Xi Yong¹⁸⁷ was a research assistant to one of the most established AIDS researchers in China. He helped him collect textual materials related to the epidemic. As Xi Yong recalled, in 2006, when the researcher told him that even the number 650,000 was probably much higher than the actual number of HIV cases, he was extremely shocked. “He insisted that 650,000 are too high. He said it should be much less than that. He said, they want to get money and thus inflated the number...He told me, HIV is not easily contracted...since Chinese

¹⁸⁷ Xi Yong is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-13.

people are not sexually active, especially they are relatively conservative to sex, he doesn't think the estimation should be that high.”

A few days later, Xi Yong attended a conference on AIDS and mass communication. A lot of important scientists and scholars on HIV/AIDS attended the conference, and many journalists were present too. Half-way through the conference, an attendee asked for the official estimate of HIV cases in China. One expert said 650,000. Many attendees booed this expert, since no one believed it was a real number. Some people asked if the expert could tell them how he came up with the number. The expert said no immediately. The reason he gave was that the method was too complicated for laypersons to understand, and it was a state secret. Xi Yong was very surprised, so he asked the researcher he worked for about how the estimation was calculated. The researcher said, since we both worked in academia, I can tell you how the number was made; but you should not let too many others know about this simply because this is indeed something that cannot be made public. This is what the researcher told Xi Yong:

There is a software used to calculate the estimation. But since we are not mathematicians, we do not need to understand the mechanisms behind the mathematic model. The software lets you enter a few independent variables, a few numbers, and then it will give you the estimation automatically. However, sometimes you do not have data on these independent variables. For example, the number of high-risk population, and the frequency of high-risk activities. We don't have the numbers, there is no number at all. Then what to do? There was a foreign expert on the spot. He said, you don't have number for this province, but you can conduct a literature research; some scholars may provide an estimated number. Although it's not accurate, it might be reliable. But what if there is not enough research in this field? Doesn't matter. If this province doesn't have the number, you can use the number from another province that has a similar size of population. This is rather ridiculous, right? We don't have number on a few national statistics either. Doesn't matter. You can find numbers from other countries. That's how you get this estimation. But that's not all. After a group of people's backbreaking calculation, you finally came up with a number. The next

day, a government official came by. He said, the number is too small, too small; too small to get money from anywhere. You have to readjust it, make it higher. Then the third day morning, the official came again and asked for an even higher number.

If what Xi Yong said is true, then all the accusations about how the Chinese government underestimates the real number of HIV cases loses their foundation. If this is true, then it might be more devastating to the press than to the government. The press always has a tendency to believe that the Chinese government tries to downgrade the severity of HIV/AIDS epidemic in China. On several occasions, I observed journalists, from Chinese and foreign media, interview activists and scholars in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention and intervention. One of the standard questions is: how do you estimate the number of HIV infectors in China. Most scholars would use the official statistics, ranging from 650,000 to 1 million. But the activists always tended to give a much larger number, such as 10 million.¹⁸⁸ Even though the journalists did not seem to fully believe the 10 million number, they would publish that number in their articles for its shock value or perhaps because they do not have faith in China's official numbers. Rarely did journalists question that the number might be too high. This kind of mental inertia leaves opportunity for the Party state to exert a soft control over the press.

I call this “soft politicization” of epidemics and epidemic news. It is soft, because it is the journalists themselves who associate the epidemics with certain political agenda. It is not forced by the state or any other external powers. It shares the same mechanism

¹⁸⁸ This number is not given without foundation. The 2002 UN report, “HIV/AIDS: China's Titanic Peril,” quotes from China's Mid-Long Term Plan on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control and gives an estimation of 10 million HIV infectors in China by 2010 if no countermeasures are taken (p. 12). This number has been frequently cited ever since. However, in China's Mid-Long Term Plan, there is no mention of this number. Since 2006, when the estimation dropped from 840,000 to 650,000, this “10 million” estimation has rarely been used on official occasions.

as bias and stereotype. However, the soft politicization is generated from the minds of people who think they are trying to fight against being misled by, in my research, the government. The symbolic resources, that is, the ideas that initially “mislead” the subject to a distorted direction, are located in both the subject’s habitus and the field where the subject acts. In the field of epidemic news reporting, it is because of China’s historical record on manipulating numbers and the government’s covering up of outbreaks, repeatedly, that it seems to become a “collective habitus” among the journalists to believe that the government is trying to downgrade the number. However, the structure of the power relations in the field of HIV/AIDS epidemic control has changed. “The problem of today’s HIV/AIDS epidemic is not too little but too much money.”¹⁸⁹ Therefore, the government does not care about an inflated number—what it cares about is how to make “HIV/AIDS” a new cash cow for the state.¹⁹⁰ There is a temporal lag between this news situation and journalists’ cultivation of it. This temporal lag makes a soft politicization possible because the subject may not realize their perspective is informed by a “misconception” at all. It is generated by the agency and it is misinterpreted as a “true” agency. That is, journalists may think they do not trust the government because of something they have witnessed. It is through their eyes that they draw the conclusion and make up their own minds. “[A]utonomy does not come without the social conditions of autonomy” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 183). If the journalists do not realize that

¹⁸⁹ Interviewee 2008-13.

¹⁹⁰ The Chinese government’s active search for global funds for HIV/AIDS and other epidemics has become controversial in recent years. It is not only because China has already been the second largest economy in the world, but also because the money was not appropriately allocated and used. Some grassroots NGOs complain that the money has been wasted on repetitive HIV test rather than supporting the people in need (see Chow, 2010; Jacobs & Zhang, 2009).

structural factors are changing—that the government does not need to deflate the number of HIV cases any longer because small numbers mean less money—they will keep being duped by themselves, keep criticizing the government, and keep saying that the real number of HIV infection is much greater. They perpetuate the cash cow themselves.

The above discussion on soft politicization can be further illustrated and demonstrated in the following example. Wang Ting¹⁹¹ was a health journalist from a major news magazine in China. She was a medical school graduate and practiced medicine for a very short period. Influenced by her father, a veteran journalist from a local newspaper in her hometown, she was more interested in journalism than medical science. Wang Ting first worked for a bureaucratic magazine affiliated with MOH, and then she got a job from a “real” news magazine and officially became a health journalist.

In 2005, a vaccine incident occurred in an eastern province of China. A child died after receiving a vaccine. However, the child’s death initiated a chain effects in the city where she lived. Many children who received the same vaccine became sick, experiencing nausea, dizziness, and so on. A journalist from CCTV heard of this “phenomenon” and thought the death and the sickness must have been caused by the vaccine. He covered the news on CCTV, creating a media buzz all over the country. Other media rushed into the city and kept spinning the incident. As a former doctor, Wang Ting realized that the incident might just be a collective hysteria. So she went to the city and interviewed the deputy director of the local health department. As she recalled:

¹⁹¹ Wang Ting is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-20.

The deputy director was actually an expert in collective hysteria. He had working experience in this field. However, from a political point of view, he did not dare to stand out and say something. The public opinion (on accusing the vaccine) was very powerful at that time. If just one single person stood there, he would be extremely vulnerable. So I wrote a story on the whole incident. I planned to report it from a different angle; that is how would media practitioners reflect on such a media rave. I interviewed two groups of experts. One is from psychology and psychiatry, and the other is from journalism. Those journalism professors, when I was explaining to them, their first reaction was saying that the deputy director must have played some tricks, there must have been an epidemic, and the local government was trying to cover it up. They didn't believe me, not even until the lab test results came out...These journalism professors are all senior ones. I was especially impressed by one of them. When I called him, telling him that MOH had drawn a conclusion on this incident, he asked me, "what is it?" I said, the conclusion is there was nothing wrong with the vaccine, and it was a collective hysteria caused by psychological factors. He said, that's impossible, meaning CCP is just that good at playing this kind of tricks...(How about the journalist from CCTV? Did he realize that he had made a mistake?) I don't think so. I remember very clearly that one day he was invited by *Sina* (the biggest Internet portal in China) for an online interview, and he sounded like a muckraking hero. I think that's really funny.

The incident ended with an order from the State Council. Premier Wen Jiabao issued an order to "thoroughly investigate" it. Even though MOH's conclusion was valid, the local police still arrested an illegal "vaccine" broker, who allegedly sold low-quality vaccines and caused the death of the girl and the sickness of the children. Hence the central government was regarded as the "justice Bao" —a historical figure, China's most famous graft-buster, a symbol of justice and righteousness. The local government was the one that took the blame.

Wang Ting's story illustrates that soft politicization of epidemics is deeply rooted in a discursive contest between the social field and the political field. After 1989, the Party state tried to shift the country's focus on political affairs to economic development. However, after 20 years of fast economic growth, the discrepancy between the poor and

the rich is growing larger as well. Since 2000, the number of “collective incidents” (*quntixing shijian*) has been soaring, from 8,700 annually in 1993 to more than 87,000 a dozen years later (O'Brien & Stern, 2008, p. 12). The challenge that the state faces is to maintain social stability and regime stability. The hard control through monopolizing information sources and the soft control through manipulating a social misconception of the regime (such as exaggerating the difference between the central and the local government) both constitute a major political force in the field of journalistic practice. This political force challenges the journalists' individual and collective habitus, cultivates news contents for the habitus, and eventually becomes invisible through being an internalized “second nature” of the journalists. But the political force is not without challengers, and actors from the social field are a major force as well.

Social Actors

In this chapter, the main purpose is to investigate the relationship between the news sources and the news theme. I am trying to find out if forces behind the epidemic news and news actors interact with journalists during the process of making news on public health crises. As Table 6-4 shows, the actors from political (49.4%) and scientific (28.1%) fields are the two most frequently quoted primary sources in the news on HIV/AIDS, HBV, SARS, and H1N1. Following them are the social actors (17.9%), which include (1) NGO practitioners, social activists, rights defense network members, (2) experts and professionals or organizations from areas other than medical science or public health, (3) people living with or affected by the disease, (4) celebrities in real or virtual society, and (5) ordinary people including netizens and anonymous sources.

Combined, the social actors show more power than the economic actors (4.6%); divided, some sections of the social actors are still more influential. According to Table 5-5 from Chapter 5, in terms of primary news sources, experts and professionals from areas other than medical science or public health (6.0%) and people living with or affected by disease (4.0%) gained more attention from the media than the economic actors (i.e., persons and organizations from the business and commercial field, at 3.9%).

Combined, the social actors are most appreciated by the elite newspaper (see Table 6-8). Their voices (40.2%) appeared in the elite newspaper and surpass even the voices of political (20.5%) and scientific actors (37.1%), both of whom seem to be more powerful than most groups of people included in the social sector. When we examine the social actors based on each of the four epidemics, we find that social actors as a group has shown a considerable amount of influences across the five news themes (see Table 6-9). More specifically, under the journalistic theme, which is news commentary that the newspapers have the most control of, the voices of social actors obviously go beyond others' in HBV, SARS, and H1N1 news, and closely match the voices from government officials. All of these factors indicate that the power of social actors should not be and cannot be ignored.

In this part, I will try to analyze the role of social actors, and their interaction with journalists, as well as actors from other fields, in the process of making news on epidemics. First, I will focus on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in China, especially how the "blood elegy" becomes exposed in Henan. Second, I will focus on the HBV epidemic,

try to compare it with HIV/AIDS and then discuss the similarity and difference between the two.

The Fifth H of AIDS – Henan

Almost immediately after China began its open-door policy, AIDS was recognized in the United States in 1981 (Myron, Henderson, Aiello, & Zheng, 1996, p. s223). Described as a disease originating in “foreign countries,” AIDS epidemic itself became a lively illustration of how decadent and unsafe the world outside of China was. In official narratives, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the West was associated with deviant Western lifestyles, such as homosexuality and promiscuity. Stigmas associated with HIV/AIDS had circulated within the Great Wall even before the virus entered.

It was around 1982 that AIDS started to be associated with the “4 H’s” – Haitians, hemophilia, homosexual, and heroin addicts. Three years later, in 1985, China found its first AIDS case. The patient, 34-year-old Oscar Messina, was an Argentine-American tourist from a San Francisco-based tour group that landed in Shanghai on May 27, 1985. He soon became very sick and was admitted to the Peking Union Medical College Hospital. His symptoms quickly deteriorated into a severe lung infection and respiratory failure, which led to his death on June 6, 1985. His family informed the hospital that he “was diagnosed in the United States as having contracted AIDS” (AP, 1985; Y. Zeng, 2005, p. 13).¹⁹² But it was not until two months later that China’s Ministry of Health

¹⁹² Oscar Messina, the first AIDS patient found in China, has rarely been mentioned in Chinese media. His name only appeared in English newspapers. There was no media coverage on the details of his sickness and death. Almost 20 years after his death, Xia Guomei, a professor from the Shanghai Academy of Social Science, gave us detailed description on the case of Messina: “At first no one knew that the man had AIDS, but when the news reached the hospital that this man was an AIDS patient he was quickly quarantined. His

made a public announcement to confirm the death of the patient. *The New York Times* covered Messina's death in its "Around the World" section on July 30, 1985. Yet 15 months later, on October 31, 1986, the *People's Daily* published a news story on its front page—a reprint from the Xinhua News Agency, the highest and most authoritative State news agency—trying to reassure people that "there is no AIDS in China."

Between 1985 and 1988, a small number (less than 100 per year) of non-indigenous HIV infection cases were detected (L. Wang, 2007, p. S3). Most of the identified cases were foreigners and overseas Chinese, except four hemophiliac patients who were infected with HIV after using anti-hemophilic factor (Factor VIII) clotting medicine donated by the Armour Pharmaceutical Company from the United States (Y. Zeng, 2005, pp. 12-13).¹⁹³ In 1989, 146 HIV infection cases were found among needle-sharing intravenous drug users (mostly ethnic minorities) living in Yunnan Province, adjacent to the "Golden Triangle" bordering Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam (L. Wang, 2007, p. S3; K.-L. Zhang & Ma, 2002, p. 803). This finding was regarded as the start of China's indigenous HIV/AIDS epidemic.

room was sealed and two nurses in special suits were the only personnel that the hospital permitted to attend to him. When he died, the hospital burned everything associated with the man, the nurses' clothes, and even the medical instruments. Lack of knowledge surrounding HIV and AIDS first led people to believe that they could seal China off from this strange, foreign disease" (quoted in Balzano & Ping, 2006, p. 188).

¹⁹³ According to Zeng Yi (2005), the four hemophiliacs might be the first Chinese patients infected with HIV. As he recalled, two American pharmaceutical companies, the Armour Pharmaceutical Company and the Alpha Therapeutic Corporation, gave a few different batches of Factor VIII concentrates to a hospital in China in 1982. From 1983 to 1985, a group of hemophilia patients took the concentrates as treatment. As a scientist working for the Institute of Virology at the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, Zeng realized that HIV might have already come across China's national borders via different channels. He started to conduct HIV antibody screening in blood and blood products in 1984. In 1985, Zeng found that among the total 19 hemophilia patients who received the same batch of Factor VIII, made by Armour, four were infected with HIV. One of them was infected in 1983, and the other three were in 1984. Zeng thus claimed that HIV/AIDS epidemic actually first entered China in 1982 (pp. 12-13).

The infection soon spread from the IV drug users (IDUs) to sexual partners of the IDUs and their newborn babies. In the early 1990s a great number of HIV infections were discovered among impoverished villagers in central China, most of whom were commercial plasma donors (Dou et al., 2010; L. Wang, 2007; Wu, Liu, & Detels, 1995; Wu, Rou, & Detels, 2001; Wu, Rou, & Gui, 2004). The outbreak among rural residents created a distinctive HIV epidemic in China, often called the “AIDS villages of Henan” (*henan aizibing cun*).

Henan came to be known as the fifth H in the history of HIV/AIDS. Henan, a province located in the central region of China. This heart-shaped area is the birthplace of Chinese civilization over 5,000 years ago. Until approximately 1,000 years ago, it remained China’s cultural, economic, and political center. Its name, Henan, literally means “the south of the river.” But the province actually lies to the north of the Yellow River. The size of the province is 64,000 square miles, about the size of the state of Washington in the United States. Its population in 2010 was more than 100 million, the first province in China that hit that record. It is one of China’s most densely populated and least economically developed area.¹⁹⁴

The home of 100 million people became the center of a “blood-head scandal.” During the 1990s, the impoverished rural population was recruited by the government to sell blood at unsanitary provincial and private collection centers. Their blood was collected, mixed into a central tank, the plasma separated out, and the remainder of the

¹⁹⁴ Although Henan’s provincial GDP in 2010 was ranked 5th (approximately 3.4 billion U.S. dollars), its GDP per capita only ranked 20th (approximately \$3,599 U.S.) out of all the 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous districts in China.

blood was re-infused from the central tank into the donors of the same blood type. This procedure resulted in the rapid spread of HIV. Henan was the first province to report having large-scale HIV infections among commercial plasma donors. But it is not the only one. More serious problems are reported from Shanxi, Shaanxi, Hebei, Gansu, and Hubei Provinces later (Wu et al., 2004, p. 9). However, only Henan becomes a symbol. It is probably because the whistleblowers are mostly from Henan too.

The Whistleblowers

Wang Shuping, a medical laboratory technician from Zhoukou City, Henan, discovered her first case of HIV infection in 1994. In 1995, she found a large number of HIV infections among the 404 blood samples she collected from blood donors. With four other colleagues, Wang reported the infection to the provincial health department but heard nothing back. In December 1995, Wang Shuping went to Beijing, with 62 blood samples, hoping to get more definitive results there. In Beijing, Wang met Zeng Yi, a prominent scientist on infectious disease at the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine. They tested 15 samples from the total 62 and found 13 were HIV-positive. Zeng and Wang immediately send a report to MOH, specifically pointing out the HIV epidemic was spreading among plasma donors. The Henan officials were informed by MOH right away too. But when Wang Shuping went back to Henan, awaiting her was punishment. Her clinic was shut down, and she was later forced to leave China and stay the United States (see Bandurski & Hala, 2010a).

Gao Yaojie, a retired obstetrician and gynecologist met her first AIDS patient in 1996. On April 7, 1996, Gao was invited to consult on a strange medical case in

Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan. After a thorough checkup of the female patient, she suspected that she might be infected by HIV, which was rarely seen or even heard in Henan at that time. However, neither the patient's husband nor her blood relatives were infected. It was impossible for the patient to have acquired the virus sexually. A few days later, the case was confirmed and the patient died. The patient's husband told Gao that they were happily married and he should not have let her get a blood transfusion after a minor surgery. His words hit Gao instantly. She decided to investigate the connection between blood transfusions and HIV infection. At the age of 69, Dr. Gao started doing AIDS prevention work and treating people afflicted with AIDS in Henan's villages at her own expense. Because of her uncompromised personality, Gao became the most famous whistleblower of Henan's AIDS villages (Gao, 2010).

Zhang Jicheng was a journalist from the *Henan Science and Technology News*, a small newspaper targeting rural readership. He graduated from a university in Zhengzhou, majored in public relations. In 1999, Zhang met four peasants on a train trip from Xinyang¹⁹⁵ to Zhengzhou, who were on the way to Beijing for more definitive blood tests. The peasants told Zhang that lots of people got a strange disease in their village, some had already died, and the village's name is Wenlou. In November 1999, hearing rumors about Henan had numerous villagers died from AIDS, Zhang decided to go to take a look at Wenlou—a village of Lugang Town, Shangcai County, Zhumadian City, in south Henan. On his first day in Wenlou, he met at least eight AIDS patients and their families, listened to their stories on selling blood and getting infected. There was a

¹⁹⁵ Xinyang is a prefecture-level city in the southeast of Henan Province.

big family with 50 to 60 members, almost each one of them had a history of selling blood and each one of them was infected. Zhang was in anger and desperation. The villagers also told him that people who were able to operate blood donation stations or clinics in hospitals were not ordinary people. Most of them were connected to or supported by people with power. In January 2000, Zhang published an article on Wenlou in the “West China City Daily” (*huaxi dushibao*) in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, which is also China’s first “metro newspaper.” This was the first time that AIDS in Henan became a public media issue. Even though the story had not become a media sensation, Zhang was still fired (C. Yu, 2001).

Wang, Gao, and Zhang did not know each other when they worked on the same problem. Wang was relatively unknown to the public because she was forced to leave Henan very soon after she reported the spread of HIV among plasma donors to Beijing. After Zhang was fired, he got a job in another newspaper and kept working as a muckraking journalist. After infuriating the local officials a few more times, Zhang failed a provincial journalistic professional exam on “the Marxist views of news” and lost his qualification to be hired by any news media in Henan. In 2001, Zhang Jicheng left Henan for Beijing. The night before he left, he went to visit Gao Yaojie, and that was the first time they met. In 2001, Gao was already internationally famous and had been under official surveillance since. On October 28, 2000, Elisabeth Rosenthal, the Chinese correspondent for *The New York Times*, published a full-length story on Gao, her activities in the rural area of Henan, and how she helped the villagers and the AIDS patients. The story made an international splash. It was the first time that information

about where the AIDS village located was revealed to the world. Shangcai County, Henan, received instant international fame.¹⁹⁶

However, although it is now recognized that the discovery of AIDS villages in Henan was a shared effort by domestic and international journalists (Bandurski & Hala, 2010a), these two groups of people did not seem to be aware of each other's existence for a long time. They worked independently and were only connected by a few AIDS activists. But within each group, there was a tightly knit social network, providing necessary support and assistance.

An American correspondent in China, RJ,¹⁹⁷ said to me that, during his 10 years being stationed in China, people asked, all the time, about his intention and purpose for being there. He replied, "I'm just a journalist, trying to do my job." When he first arrived in Beijing, the Beijing officials assigned a student of English to be his translator and assistant. Of the translator, RJ said, "She's probably not a spy. But definitely will tell the government about my activities if she is asked to." Being isolated from the real life of Chinese people, foreign correspondents sometimes seek their news sources from news clips prepared by their Chinese assistants, which was how RJ first got to know Gao Yaojie. As a former medical doctor, RJ was interested in health-related issues. One day, his assistant told him a story about a retired gynecologist who held anti-sexual harassment classes in Henan, and he thought that might become an interesting story. The retired gynecologist was Gao Yaojie, whose main job, before she met her first AIDS

¹⁹⁶ Wenlou Village from Shangcai County was first mentioned by the New York Times in May 2001, when Elisabeth Rosenthal started to run a series reports on AIDS in China's rural areas.

¹⁹⁷ RJ is a pseudonym of interviewee 2010-01.

patient, was to do lectures at colleges and universities in Henan and teach young female students how to protect themselves. When RJ finally got to visit Gao at her home, what he saw was a full house of print-outs and pamphlets on AIDS intervention and prevention. Gao told RJ about her discovery of HIV infection in the Henan villages.

By that time, RJ did not know that the Chinese media, including Henan's local media, had already started to notice these AIDS villages. He did not receive any contact from other local journalists, but from Gao alone, he got enough information and even a local taxi driver, a friend of Gao's, who knew those villages quite well. With help from the taxi driver a few days later, RJ went into one of AIDS villages and was appalled by a crowd of patients who approached him as if he were a savior. He told me, "Dr. Gao was amazing. She didn't even need to do anything. She just planted a seed and let it blossom."

It was not accidental that Gao became such a key person in revealing Henan's AIDS blood scandal. As a renowned gynecologist, even after retirement, female patients of hers would come to her two-bed room apartment in Zhengzhou to seek help. Among them were females journalists as well. Gao spread out information through her daily contacts with these journalists. Even though they could not run a story on the AIDS villages, they were gradually "cultivated" by Gao's ideas. The consequence was: whenever the journalists wanted to know something about AIDS, not only just the villages but also prevention and intervention knowledge, they would go to ask Gao.

But Gao Yaojie was only one crucial social actor that pushed the AIDS blood scandal in Henan up to prominence. At the local level, many journalistic activities are

not possible without assistance provided by a personal social network, a supporting peer group, and anonymous individuals, all of which formed a web of social forces behind the making of news. A news reporter from a local daily told me about how he got involved in the news coverage of AIDS.

The Social Web of Forces

In 1998, Guan Lian started working as a health beat reporter in a local market newspaper in Henan. In the beginning of December 1999 he decided to run a feature story on HIV/AIDS as a special report for International AIDS Day. The story had 3,000 words, he said,

...nothing substantially new or anything that had never been reported before. I didn't think it was sensitive. In the story, I basically was only telling how many AIDS patients live in Henan, what ordinary people's attitudes toward AIDS patients are, and how to treat them properly. Everything was about common knowledge. But during the process, I had to interview some officials from the health administration...I didn't know that they were so sensitive with my story. Just before it got printed, the Provincial Health Department began to interfere...he was very, very sensitive, he didn't know how much I know, and he asked the newspaper to stop publishing my story...I was very young. I thought that story was the most meaningful thing that I had ever done as a journalist...After they took away my story, the Provincial Health Department invited me and my boss to have a dinner together. I was forced to go. This was a compromise for us, but a big victory for the health department. I became very angry.

Guan Lian did not forget his anger. In 2000, another department in his newspaper decided to run an in-depth report on HIV blood contamination. The head of the department found Guan Lian and asked him to take charge. Although his was on the health beat and made some friends from the local health department, he still could not find a single person infected with HIV through blood transfusion. Guan Lian's sister worked in hospital, and she told him that she had met some blood sellers at work, but she

did not know whether they were infected by HIV or not. While he was still trying to find a breakthrough, a staff member from the local CDC called him and offered him a news clue: there was a four-year-old child infected with HIV through direct blood transfusion from a blood seller.

I actually never met him, not even now. He got to know me because of the unpublished story that I wrote in 1999. Another journalist from my newspaper talked about my case in an internal meeting with his department. That's how he knew me...After interviewing the child and his parents, we were still confused. We didn't know how many people were under the same situation. We went to ask Dr. Gao, but she didn't have an accurate number either...Then we went to Beijing to interview a sociology professor at the Peking University. We couldn't interview local scholars because they had already faced many obstructions...After we came back from Beijing, the local officials had known about our interviews. They called the editor in chief and asked about us. But he fooled them by saying that he had no idea about it. It was a long weekend holiday. We knew if we didn't make it published during the holiday, we would never make it. Therefore, we made a 10-page special report on this story, the child, the group of people in Henan who had been infected by HIV via blood contamination, social discrimination against them, the government's attitude, and so on. It was huge. The next day, we were asked, by local officials, to write a self-criticism (*jiancha*). But I never wrote it.

One year later, in 2001, Guan Lian was still concerned with the HIV blood incident. He went to meet Gao Yaojie from time to time, but even she could not give him a number on the size of infection. Guan Lian wanted to know the distribution of the HIV epidemic caused by blood contamination. Since the government had been sealing things up, there was no way to find out. Then Guan Lian decided to make himself available to HIV infectors. He published a hotline number and his name in the newspaper, asking people who had HIV or knew about it to contact him. At the same time he decided to sneak into one blockaded AIDS village in his hometown to try his luck.

The village he entered was not Wenlou. In 2001, due to foreign media's persistent focus on that village, it became a nationally well-known place. The villagers from Wenlou did not welcome journalists because the village's real name was revealed and local people could not find jobs. Social discrimination of people related to AIDS had already started. Guan Lian went to Donghu village, which is adjacent to Wenlou. There he met thousands of HIV infectors, most of whom were blood sellers. Guan Lian was surrounded by these patients. He crouched down with them and wrote their names. The patients were shouting, "Write down my name! Write down my name!" Guan Lian said, "I was aghast at the scene, trembling all the time." After he went back to the city, the story never came out, because the editor in chief who protected him was forced to leave.

Guan Lian's case only illustrated a relatively loose network that provided him certain opportunities to break into a tightly sealed incident. The story of another journalist from Henan, Lan Xiang,¹⁹⁸ may tell us more about how private connections work in reporting Henan's AIDS incident.

Lan Xiang was also born in Henan. He had changed several jobs before he finally settled down in a correspondent position at a market newspaper in Beijing. He is now a well-known investigative reporter. Before he went to Beijing, most of his jobs were connected with the rural areas of Henan, and that is how he built up an extended private network locally. Lan Xiang interpreted the personality of Henan's indigenous population as "*jianghu yiqi*," a Chinese saying meaning a strong sense of obligation for your friends or brotherhood. "We are all brothers from the same *Jianghu*," implies a community

¹⁹⁸ Lan Xiang is a pseudonym of interviewee 2008-07.

outside of the government's control with its own rules and culture. The first time Lan Xiang went to one of the AIDS villages for interviews, a local official sent his chauffeur to drive him into the village. After he completed interview, he called the official and the chauffeur drove him directly to the railway station.

I had been working there for so many years, friends everywhere. Sometimes even he knew what I was doing, he would be "one eye open, one eye close." He wouldn't give you any trouble...I haven't seen him for a long time. I don't even know what he is doing now. But sometimes, this is just based on "*jianghu yiqi*."

Lan Xiang admitted that this type of relationship was completely private, something that can only be taken advantage of in private.

Not all the officials are bad guys. Since he is in that position, he doesn't have any other ways. Sometimes he wants to tell things out, including those within the propaganda department, but he can't say it in public...We were friends in private. If the higher authority wanted to punish me, he couldn't do anything individually. But he could tell me about it in advance, or let me know the background and process of how it happened. (If he did something wrong, would you write about it?) I could ask somebody else to write. I couldn't do it myself. After all, we have this interest relationship, personal connections. This type of personal relationship is very complicated. I have so many news sources built up in this way. You have to have a very good personal relationship.

Sometimes a relationship is not enough. To establish trust with news sources, especially when covering sensitive issues, some extra attention must be paid. To Lan Xiang, it is important to know the "hidden rules" of the local bureaucratic field.

Once I went to an AIDS village. It was my first time there. A friend of mine, a local propaganda official, called the village Party secretary, asking him to host me there. In the night, the guy came, right after I arrived. He drove me to a hotel and treated me a dinner. Then he said, whatever you want to ask, ask. I just said one word. He stopped me. He brought two bottles of liquors over and said, if you drink them both, I will tell you everything. Then I drank them both, in one shot. He told me everything...He needed to make sure that he could trust me. We both needed trust. It's that simple. Of course, the person who introduced us was

important too. If it were not for that propaganda official, he wouldn't trust me either. They were both Party members. If the member at a higher level asked you to say something, he would have to say. However, if it were the local county Party secretary or officials higher than the propaganda official who asked him to talk with me, he wouldn't say anything either. This is a hidden rule.

The hidden rules embedded in the private social networks of Chinese society, or *guanxi*, are important features of local journalistic practices. From Lan Xiang's case, it is clear that his instrumental personal relationships contribute to his job. As Andrew Walder (1986) argues, *guanxi* is not an uncommon concept across socialist countries (in Russian *guanxi* is close to the term *blat*), where it thrives because the scarcity of social and economic resources as well as the "wide discretion that officials have in interpreting the rules and distributing resources" (p. 27). If we compare Guan Lian's case with Lan Xiang's case, we may find that Lan Xiang had more space to maneuver than Guan Lian. When Guan Lian was struggling to find a breakthrough into the AIDS villages or get contact with HIV infectors, Lan Xiang had already been in the villages and done his interviews.¹⁹⁹ Within the microcosm in which Lan Xiang lived, his private social networks were based on a local, even coarse, type of "brotherhood," which allowed him to obtain more autonomy than Guan Lian.

The question is: how was Henan's AIDS secret revealed? My answer might sound paradoxical. On the one hand, it was a result of social forces mutually worked out in a form of waves, which eventually blasted off the seal formed by the Henan local government and its patrons at the central level. On the other hand, the real power of these social forces is actually located not solely in the social field, somewhere entirely

¹⁹⁹ Guan Lian and Lan Xiang started to work on the AIDS village issues at about the same time. Lan Xiang in fact started even earlier than Guan Lian.

outside of the political field, but at the border—in a buffer zone between the political and the social fields. Within this buffer zone, social actors, including journalists, form personal ties with political actors. These ties are informal and more flexible than formal ones. In this sense, it is the forces within the political field, who do not necessarily consciously realize it, that dismantled the tight structural control over Henan’s AIDS blood scandal.

How important was the global spotlight on Henan that revealed its secret? No one can actually answer this question. It is very hard to deny that Elisabeth Rosenthal’s persistent coverage (along with many other foreign journalists’ reporting) of Henan’s AIDS villages made a contribution. When RJ commented on Elisabeth Rosenthal’s success, he said, “after all, 2001 was a slow news year. The *New York Times* did not have much to write about, until 9/11.” However, without the efforts and collaborations among domestic social actors and journalists, the secret might not have been exposed. The crucial role of domestic social forces can be more clearly observed in another highly prevailed epidemic: HBV.

HBVs: A Journey of Self-Healing

News stories on HBV are highly apolitical. According to Table 6-9, across all five news themes, the primary news sources from the political field are much less frequently quoted in the HBV news stories. If the discovery of the HIV/AIDS epidemic can be credited to both domestic and international forces, then the efforts of eradicating discrimination associated with HBV is a domestic victory—partly because HBV is endemic to China while HIV is a global pandemic. According to a 1992 national sero-

epidemiological survey, the prevalence of HBV surface antigen (HBsAg), the indicator of HBV infection, in the Chinese population aged between one and 59 was 9.8% (Luo et al., 2011, p. 695). These figures mean that more than 100 million Chinese are HBV-carriers.²⁰⁰

From the perspective of methods of disease transmission, HIV and HBV are very similar. Hepatitis B virus is transmitted through contact with the blood or other body fluids (i.e. semen and vaginal fluid) of an infected person. But HBV is 50 to 100 times more infectious than HIV. Unlike HIV, HBV can survive outside of the body for at least seven days. During that time, the virus can still cause infection in the body of a person who is not infected.²⁰¹ This trait makes HBV more easily transmitted among the general population. But HBV is not spread by air, water, or food, nor is it passed via casual contacts (such as shaking hands or eating together) in daily life or workplaces. It can be prevented by a vaccination that has been available since 1982. Being infected by HBV can lead to chronic liver disease or liver cancer. But compared with HIV, HBV is less malicious. In general, compared with news on HIV/AIDS, HBV seems to be more likely framed as a social problem than a political problem. In order to present a better outline on the commonality and differences between the two epidemics, I will first focus on the images of the patients and discuss how these two epidemics are understood and represented in China's media.

²⁰⁰ In this research, for convenience purpose, I use "HBV carriers" and "Hepatitis B patient" interchangeably. Scientifically speaking, only about a quarter of individuals infected with chronic Hepatitis B virus will develop symptoms and become hepatitis B patients.

²⁰¹ This summary is written based on the WHO's introduction on the key facts about HBV, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>, accessed on August 10, 2010.

Comparing the Images of HIV and HBV Patients in the News

In total, 1,136 stories sampled from the six newspapers talk about HBV. Fewer than 10% of them provide a relatively clear portrayal of the actual people living with HBV. About 110 HBV patients are identified from the stories. Each of them is described or discussed by at least two sentences in the news. In comparison, among the 1,990 news stories on HIV/AIDS, only 216 HIV patients are identified, which is only a little higher than 10%. The low percentage of discernible images of patients in the news implies that the Chinese news media are less interested in the real life of people who live with HIV or HBV, and that their reporting style is less human-interest oriented. Further, all of the 110 HBV patients are from mainland China, while the 216 HIV patients are from 23 countries all over the world, with mainland China (79.2%), the United States (5.1%) and Kenya (1.9%) on top of the list. The gender distribution of the total 326 patients is presented in Table 6-10.

Insert Table 6-10 About here

According to Table 6-10, the frequencies of male and female patients identified in the HIV and HBV news are quite close, too. In HIV/AIDS news, about 67.1% of all identified patients are males, and 31.9% are females; in HBV news, 69.1% are males and 29.8% are females. But when we look into the identities of these patients, the difference between the two groups of patients seems to be obvious (see Table 6-11).

Insert Table 6-11 About here

As Table 6-11 displays, a considerable amount of patients' identities are specified. In the news on HIV patients, about 42.1% do not mention anything about who these patients are or what type of job they have. They are identified only by the vague title of "AIDS patient" or "HIV infector." By contrast, only 29.1% of the HBV patients in the news are treated in this anonymous way. For those who are given a clear description by the news media, the most frequently identified group of people is peasants or immigrant workers (19.4%) in the HIV news and college students (30%) in the news on HBV. A majority of the former group of people are villagers who became victims of contaminated HIV blood. A majority of the latter are students facing discrimination in schools and careers. Infants, teenagers, and youth are likely to be reported by the media too. Fully 15.7% of the HIV patients and 11.8% of the HBV patients are identified in the news stories as children. Urban residents, including white collar workers, the unemployed, or civil servants, are less identified than rural residents. Sex workers (2.3%) are only mentioned in the news on HIV, while the disabled population (0.9%), including patients with hemophilia, is discussed only very occasionally in the news on HBV, despite the fact that the first few HIV infection cases occurred among the hemophilia community in the mid-1980s. In short, in HIV news, the most frequently identified social group is rural residents, and in the HBV news, it is students and young people. Knowing the identity of the patients does not tell us how they were infected. Table 6-12 gives us these results.

Insert Table 6-12 About here

Table 6-12 partially confirms the observation from Table 6-11. Almost 27% of the HIV patients are infected via blood—14.8% through blood transfusion and 12.0% through selling blood. IV drug-users (9.3%) are the third most frequently portrayed social group, followed by children infected during birth (8.8%). Sexually transmitted HIV infection is not the central focus in China’s media, even though reporters seem to be more interested in heterosexuality (6.5%) than in homosexuality (1.4%). Iatrogenic infection (infections that occurred during medical procedures, not including blood transfusions), is identified among 2.3% of the HIV patients. Almost half of the patients (44.9%) do not specify the means of their infection, but there is no misleading information either. None of the HIV patients claimed to be infected through “everyday life contact.”

By contrast, 2.7% of the HBV patients are portrayed in the news as being infected through everyday contacts. Although the percentage seems low, among all the identified infection vectors on HBV, “everyday life contact” still is the number one reason identified in the news. 93.6% of the news on HBV patients does not include any information on how they get infected.

In Table 6-13, I examine the “problems” that HIV and HBV patients have encountered as disclosed in the news. By looking into this measurement, we may generate an overall picture of how epidemics are articulated with social problems.

Insert Table 6-13 About here

For HIV patients, nearly 50% are not identified as suffering with any problems. For those who report having problems, most face difficulties in basic needs, such as medical help and treatments (11.6%), food and income (12.5%), and emotional support (10.6%). Discrimination in everyday life is also a problem (8.3%), but employment (0.5%) and education (0.5%) discriminations are not as serious as one might expect. This discrepancy is probably due to the fact that before basic needs are met, the patients do not have opportunities to encounter these discriminations. Then 3.2% of the HIV patients have problems with rights defense, which involves lawsuits or other legal methods to demand compensation or social justice from an authority. In comparison, HBV patients seem to have a much clearer pursuit in the news coverage. Only 9.1% of the patients do not indicate the problems they have met. Half of the patients are associated with employment discrimination, 18.2% with education discrimination. Pressures from rights defense activities, treatment, and emotional reasons each account for 4.5%. Only 1.8% of the HBV patients have survival problems, and even fewer face with daily life discrimination (0.9%).

By comparing the media coverage on HIV and HBV patients, we can come up with a relatively solid conclusion that the HIV epidemic in China is a “blood disaster,” which is closely associated with the rural population and which has made it difficult for patients to meet basic needs. On the other hand, the HBV epidemic is mostly about

“discrimination” and the most affected population are urban residents, especially young people, who are addressing discrimination in school and work. The question is: how does has this media concentration on discrimination against HBV carriers come into being? In other words, the media focus on HIV patients in rural areas seems to trace back to the massive domestic and global attention on the “AIDS villages” in Henan. There is no such a globally well-known incident for HBV, so how do HBV-carriers attract the attention of the mass media and focus them on the topic of “discrimination?” In China, HBV-carriers call themselves “HBVers.” I will briefly review the historical and social background for the discrimination against HBVers, and then describe the long journey taken by Chinese HBVers in fighting against the social injustice

The Foundation of Discrimination against HBVers

Discrimination, especially employment discrimination, against HBV-carriers started in the 1980s, growing up alongside the state’s labor market reform. Before reform, labor was regarded as a national resource and was allocated by the government. According to a survey conducted in Tianjin, a municipality in northern China, 95% of the urban respondents admitted their jobs were state-assigned (Bian, 1994, p. 971). After reform, enterprises obtained more autonomy in recruitment and hiring. It is generally believed that the 1981 state regulation, issued by the National Bureau of Labor (NBI; it is the same as the current Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security) and the MOH, on the “The Criteria and Implementation Details on the Physical Examination for Students Admitted to Technical Schools” (*jigong xuexiao zhangsheng tijian biao zhun ji zhixing xize*), was the first official document that specifically mandated that the hepatitis

B patient be treated differently. In Article 7 of the regulation, it says, “People diagnosed with chronic hepatitis, hepatitis B, should not be admitted.” Similar mandates can be found in almost all laws and regulations on school admissions and employment in the private and public sectors, despite China’s constitutional guarantees of equality.

These regulations further exacerbate the general public’s misunderstanding and fear toward individuals with a chronic HBV infection.²⁰² In 1988, Shanghai broke out a city-wide hepatitis A (HAV) epidemic, caused by shellfish contamination. About 300,000 residents reported symptoms and 47 patients died. This was the first major public health crisis since China started economic reform. A full-scale vaccination plan was implemented among students. However, during the media’s coverage on the outbreak, there was no differentiation between HAV and HBV, which misled the public to believe that HBV can also be transmitted through food contamination and everyday contact.²⁰³

In 1995, the Eighth National People’s Congress passed China’s first “Food Hygiene Law.” In Article 26, the law specifies that “Persons suffering from dysentery, typhoid, viral hepatitis and other gastrointestinal diseases (including pathogen carriers) should not participate in direct contact with food consumption-related work.” This item not only blocks HBV carriers from employment in food industry but also reinforces the public’s misunderstanding of hepatitis B as a disease communicable through everyday contact. Then, in 1993, China initiated a civil service reform program, which gradually

²⁰² Acute hepatitis B infection is much easier to cure than the chronic condition. Among China’s 100 million HBV-carriers, most of them are chronic hepatitis B infectors.

²⁰³ This conclusion is based on my personal experience and a report issued by Beijing Yirenping Center in 2009 (p. 6).

broadened the application of open recruitment in its civil service system (see a review by Chou, 2004). In June 1994, the Ministry of Personnel (MOP; it is the same as the current Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security) issued the “Provisional Regulations on State Civil Servants,” mandating that individuals who apply to be national civil servants submit to physical examination. One month later, MOP issued the “Items and Standards for Employing Civil Servants at Central State Administrative Organs,” which requires all departments and institutes directly under the Party Central Committee and the State Council to conduct HBV tests. If the candidate is found to be a HBV carrier with normal liver function, s/he can still be employed. However, when the regulation is replicated at the local level, this important prerequisite was distorted or ignored.

I need to briefly introduce how “normal liver function” is interpreted in China. By most medical standards, the typical tests for liver function include the following indicators: alanine aminotransferase (ALT/GPT), aspartate transaminase (AST), alkaline phosphatase (ALP), albumin (Alb), total protein, total bilirubin (TBIL), gamma glutamyl transpeptidase (GGT), lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), etc. In China, the first measurement, ALT/GPT, is most frequently used in pre-employment physical examination. And there are two more indicators for HBV carriers: the “three big positive indexes (*da san yang*)” and the “three small positive indexes (*xiao san yang*).”

Whether a person is infected by HBV is determined by the detection of HBsAg (hepatitis B surface antigen) in the person’s blood. The most frequently used test is the quantitative enzyme immunoassay (EIA) method. In a laboratory blood test, the following six items are used to determine whether a person is infected, immune, or cured:

(1) hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg), (2) hepatitis B surface antibody (HBsAb or anti-HBsAg), (3) anti-hepatitis B core (anti-HBcAg), IgM, (4) anti-hepatitis B core (anti-HBcAg), total (5) hepatitis e antigen (HBeAg), and (6) hepatitis e antibody (HBeAb or anti-HBeAg).

To judge whether a person is a chronic HBV carrier, there is only one standard: HBsAg and anti-HBcAg (total) are positive. Accordingly, if a person's anti-HBsAg is positive, that means s/he is immune because of vaccination against HBV. If a person's anti-HBsAg, anti-HBcAg (total), and anti-HBcAg (IgM) are positive, that mean s/he has an acute HBV infection. The indexes of HBeAg and anti-HBeAg only indicate whether or not the virus is replicating actively in the blood. If HBeAg is positive, that means the virus is replicating and the person may need treatment.

In most countries, there is no differentiation among chronic HBV carriers based on HBeAg or anti-HBeAg, because this pair of indexes does not indicate whether the person is an HBV carrier. But in China, HBV carriers are often differentiated based on this pair of indexes. If a person's blood test shows positive in HBsAg, anti-HBcAg, and HBeAg, s/he would be identified with "three big positive indexes" (*da san yang*, or Three Big Positives); if the blood test shows positive in HBsAg, anti-HBcAg, and anti-HBeAg, s/he would be identified with "three small positive indexes" (*xiao san yang*, or Three Small Positives). From a medical perspective, the difference between Three Big Positives and Three Small Positives only lies in whether the virus is under replication. If it is replicating very fast, then the patient needs to take certain countermeasures. Further

complicating matters, these two statuses can flip-flop depending on how well a person's immune system works and how active the hepatitis virus is replicating.

Having Three Big Positives or Three Small Positives doesn't mean the HBV carrier will infect other healthy persons via daily contacts. However, in many pre-employment and school admission regulations, people with Three Big Positives will be regarded as "infectious" and will not be allowed to be employed or admitted. Since the mid-1990s, as the labor market became more open and autonomous, private companies, including global ones, set up internal requirements on HBV tests and made employment discrimination against HBV-carriers the norm.

Meanwhile, some private medical practitioners and institutions, especially those that practice traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), find chronic HBV patients to be a goldmine. The population of HBV carriers is enormous (i.e., more than 100 million); many HBV carriers can live a full life, if the virus is stable; and HBV can be self-cured. These three features imply a huge and stable source of patients, low investment in research and treatment development, and a good chance of attracting more patients by "curing" some cases. Moreover, after China initiated its medical reform and health care reform, many hospitals lost state subsidies and have to rely on prescriptions and other channels to make profits. This change forces public hospitals to open their doors to private medical practitioners and allow them to practice within their wards. The chaotic situation and fierce competition within the private medical service market leads to a flood of advertorials and television commercials about HBV treatment. These advertisements often exaggerate the severity of HBV, the difference between the Three Big and Three

Small Positives, and distort the truth about how HBV is transmitted. Mass media's excessive spin on HBV aggravates discrimination against HBV-carriers, not only in employment and education, but also in marriage and social activities.

When all of these forces come together—the unconstitutional regulations on pre-employment and admission, the rampant competition in the HBV treatment and medical service market, the mass media's distortion and exaggeration on HBV's infectiousness, and the pervasive fears and prejudice toward HBV carriers—the lives of many HBVs have been changed forever.

The Fight Against Discrimination as a Collectivity

On March 2, 2004, Zhou Yichao, a 22-year-old college senior, the only son of a widowed mother, and an HBV carrier, was executed in Jiaxing City, Zhejiang Province. About 11 months before, Zhou stabbed two officials who were in charge of the civil servants examination that he had attended, killing one and seriously wounding the other. Zhou Yichao did not do badly on the examination—he was one of the top five. He was not offered the job because during the pre-employment physical examination, Zhou was found to have “Three Small Positives” and for this reason he would not be employed.²⁰⁴

Zhou's case unveiled rampant discrimination against HBV-carriers and became the start of a large-scale movement against discrimination based on HBV status in China. During Zhou's trial, members from an online forum named “*Gandan Xiangzhao*,” went to Jiaxing City and showed support by attending Zhou's court hearing and participating in media interviews. The name of the forum, “*Gandan Xiangzhao*,” literally translates as

²⁰⁴ Zhou Yichao was one of the many asymptomatic individuals with chronic hepatitis B. Before he went for the physical examination, he did not know that he was an HBV-carrier.

“liver and gall are close together,” a Chinese idiom meaning “close friendship and treating each other with sincerity.” Established in 2001 by a doctorate student in Shanghai, this forum soon became the most popular platform for HBVers to exchange information, discuss incidents of discrimination, share stories and experience in anti-prejudice and social injustice, and advocate equal treatment and policy change in health and labor laws.

Eight months after Zhou Yichao’s incident, Zhang Xianzhu, a 25-year-old graduate student, who was also rejected for state employment after testing positive for HBV, filed China’s first hepatitis B discrimination administrative lawsuit at the People’s Court in Xinwu District, Wuhu City, Anhui Province. Zhang was also a member of *Gandan Xiangzhao*. His lawsuit was a strategic action proposed by members of the online forum. During his trial, Zhang’s forum friends not only offered advice and support in the court, they also contacted media and submitted an open petition signed by 1,611 individuals to the Standing Committee of NPC, requesting for a constitutional review of existing regulations that prohibit HBV-carriers from civil service. Zhang eventually won the case—not because the discrimination regulation was changed but because his HBV positive markers were idiosyncratic and had not been included in the seven HBV groups that Anhui provincial health standards barred from public service. Zhang’s victory did not bring him employment. The recruitment season had already ended, and the court did not order the local personnel bureau to accept Zhang’s application.

Nevertheless 2003 is still called the year of anti-discrimination of HBV carriers (G. Huang & He, December 25, 2003). A group of social activists, using *Gandan Xiangzhao* as a grassroots base, started to work full-time on rights defense activities against HBV-discrimination. They employ a two-part strategy: using lawsuits to seek legal change, and using media to create public pressure and enhance public awareness of the issue.

Bo Yang²⁰⁵ was one of the leaders in *Gandan Xiangzhao*. He graduated from college in the early 1990s. Though an HBVer, he did not have trouble finding a job. About 10 years later, after Zhou Yichao's case was publicized, Bo Yang registered in the online forum and found many young college students had similar problems as Zhou. He was shocked. He became a very active member of the forum and felt it was his responsibility to contain the great discrimination against HBVers. Bo Yang soon became one of the moderators of the forum. To him, media have always been something critical. In his words:

Yes, we were very clear from the very beginning. Media is a magnifier, it can communicate, let more people know, and let the government hear. So we stress on making contacts with media from day one. Lots of our forum members have written to media, such as CCTV, and the letters worked. One editor from News Probe²⁰⁶ read an e-mail from our members. Then he followed the link in the e-mail and came to our forum to find out more information. It eventually became an episode of the program, titled "HBV discrimination." That was very influential...(Did the program make your situation better?) First, it is a big encouragement to all of us...Second, it let us know that what we do can actually make echoes from the society. Therefore we think we should do more. In 2004, we started working on joint letters, joint letters to Premier Wen. After we completed drafting the joint letter, we told lots of journalists about it. In the past,

²⁰⁵ Bo Yang is pseudonym of interviewee 2008-14.

²⁰⁶ News Probe is a 30-minute investigative news program of CCTV, which usually airs right after the 7 o'clock primetime news.

it was journalists who approached to us...Then lots of journalists came, and wrote about us...Later on, when we had new activities, we went to contact those journalists who had reported us before and told them about it. Some of them were interested, so those activities became news coverage too. In 2005, we became more professional. Sometimes we would write our own press release on our ongoing rights defense activities and send it to journalists.

None of the forum members had journalism education. They imitated articles published in newspapers to write the press release. Once, the *China Youth Daily*, the party organ of Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, published one of their articles, on the front page, without changing one word. This was regarded as a big success by the forum members. Besides the lawsuit of Zhang Xianzhu, Bo Yang and his colleagues knew quite well how to use media hype. “We need media hype. HBV is a cold topic in China. Unlike AIDS, AIDS is a hot topic. You have to make a cold topic noticed. In China, unless you bleed, there is no other way to achieve that. So, I think, hype up media is the only way, the only justified way of doing it.”

In 2006, the first HBV carriers’ grassroots NGO—“Beijing Yirenping Center” was established in Beijing. It is an extension of *Gandan Xiangzhao* from the cyber space to the real world. The word “Yirenping” refers to “equality for HBVers.” The center defines its role as a policy advocacy group focused on promoting anti-discrimination laws and perspectives and on defending the health rights of the general public (Beijing Yirenping Center, 2010). For example, the group initiated a national chain activity in a number of major cities, filing one lawsuit in each city. They named each of these

lawsuits after the city, such as “Shanghai Case No. 1.” This activity immediately attracted media attention.²⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the Yirenping center partially shared personnel resources with another famous grassroots NGO in China—the Aizhixing Center, a rights defense organization for HIV/AIDS carriers and groups at high risk. The founder of Aizhixing is Wan Yanhai, a high-profile social activist who has been active and outspoken on both domestic and international HIV/AIDS issues since the early 1990s. From Aizhixing, Yirenping learned how to develop its organizational structure, establish movement goals, and attract external funding resources. Yet when I talked with members from Yirenping during my fieldwork, they seemed reluctant to explicitly explain their relationship with Aizhixing.

A key movement strategy taken by Aizhixing was to directly confront the state, which makes Wan Yanhai and Aizhixing quite controversial among public health grassroots NGOs and HIV/AIDS activists in China. One activist who worked with Wan Yanhai a few years ago told me that some HIV infectors thought Wan was using them as cannon fodder; that is, sacrificing their safety by making them collect petitions and participate in public protests. His intention, as the interviewee speculated, was to attract more international attention and more overseas funding sources.²⁰⁸ But the interviewee also admitted that Wan was a very important figure in China’s HIV/AIDS advocacy. If it were not for Wan, there probably would not have been so much attention from the global society on China’s HIV problem. In 2010, Wan felt increasing pressure from the

²⁰⁷ Interviewee 2008-15.

²⁰⁸ Interviewee 2008-18.

government. He fled with his family to the U.S. About one year before Wan left, one of the whistleblowers of Henan's HIV blood scandal, Gao Yaojie, also left China for the U.S., due to the enormous mental stress he felt from the local government's constant harassment. When these activists became the so-called "exiled dissidents," their voices completely disappeared from any media in China.

It is indeed very tricky for grassroots NGOs to do rights defense activities in China. On the one hand, the government does not support collective actions. However, it does not delineate what constitutes "collective" action. When the political atmosphere is heightened, even a dinner with five or six friends can be counted as a collective action. On the other hand, if the rights defense network is too small, there is not enough support to make activities happen. Therefore, sometimes the grassroots NGOs have to learn how to avoid the state's minefield while maintaining their action principles. Bo Yang explained to me how to keep a balance between the two:

First, we only "discuss what is at hand as it is" (*jiu shi lun shi*). We never uplift things to the level of human rights or discuss it from the perspective of national politics...Second, we only interpret things from a legal perspective, not from the viewpoints of human rights...Interpretation is very flexible. For example, we went to Finland to protest Nokia's policy against HBVs. The *Global Times*²⁰⁹ interpreted it as patriotism. But lots of other media did not dare to report it, because protest is very sensitive...When you interpret it as a patriotic activity, things are different.

²⁰⁹ The *Global Times* is one of the most politically conservative newspapers in China. It has a large readership among the youth, especially those nationalistically inclined.

But sometimes no matter how careful they are, grassroots activists can still get into trouble. In 2008, one month before the Beijing Olympics, the forum, *Gandan Xiangzhao* was suddenly shut down by the government. Lu Jun, one of the forum leaders, was on a trip in the U.S for a conference. When he heard about the shutdown, he made two big banners and protested in Hong Kong where he transferred flights. Right after he arrived at Chinese Customs, he was detained by local officials for hours. As soon as he was freed, Lu Jun wrote a press release and sent it to all journalists he knew, including the foreign ones. “If you kept being silent, you would be eaten alive,” one of Lu Jun’s colleagues told me. “Our forum was reopened a week later.”²¹⁰

Such direct confrontation with the state is a very risky strategy and does not always end with positive results. However, without the civil society testing the water—“feeling the stone to cross the river”—it would be impossible to just rely on the media to find out the boundary of the state and its bottom line. An investigative reporter in Beijing who had been following rights defense activities for years remarked on the grassroots NGO as follows:

“It is not us (journalists) who are pushing the incident, there is a group of people, they are pushing. Media is, is helping them amplify their power. I think sometimes media is like a, an accelerator, just like the escalator that we on standing on now. You cannot say it is the media who is walking on it. It is us, it is people who are walking on it,

²¹⁰ Interviewee 2008-15.

and we are just pushing them. If there is no one on the escalator, no matter how fast it can run, it is just meaningless.”²¹¹

For this reason, journalists and social activists seem to have a natural alliance. In the case of HBVers’ journey of self-healing and self-defending, we can see how these two groups of people rely on each other. On the surface, it is the HBVers who try to attract more media attention; but in essence it is exactly because the HBVers know what journalists need that they can make issues successfully change from a cold to a hot topic. In the case of HBV anti-discrimination movement, both the media and the HBVers can be regarded as “policy entrepreneurs” (i.e., the politically non-powerful forces) who act as a crucial parameter in affecting policy-making processes (Mertha, 2009). The problem is: How much autonomy do journalists demonstrate?

This chapter focuses on the political and social forces behind the epidemic news reported in the six Chinese newspapers. I combine all data together and try to display a relatively coherent picture of the correlation between the news and the actors who supply information, accounts, and opinions to the news. The results are mixed. In a communist authoritarian country like China, the government’s information control over the press and the society is not new. However, it seems that both the journalists and the society are consumed by the state’s jurisdiction, voluntarily. It seems, after thirty years or economic reform, the state is not weakened by any counter-power growing from within or outside of China. Rather, the state becomes a real Leviathan. Under the omnipresent control of the Leviathan, is there any way out?

²¹¹ Interviewee 2008-17.

Table 6-1 Frequency of News Type after Data Consolidation

News Type	Frequency	Percent
Domestic News ^a	4856	83.0%
International News ^b	993	17.0
Total (N=)	5849	100.0

Note a – Domestic news includes “mainland news” only.

Note b – International news includes “international news,” “Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Maocao,” and “foreign policy news.”

Table 6-2 Frequency of News Theme after Data Consolidation

	Frequency	Percent
Scientific Theme ^a	2,840	46.7%
Political Theme ^b	1,502	24.7
Social Theme ^c	845	13.9
Economic Theme ^d	603	9.9
Journalistic Theme ^e	285	4.7
Total (N=)	6,075	

Note a – Scientific theme includes news on “medical science and public health” only.

Note b – Political theme includes news on “government and officials,” and “policy, law and lawsuits.”

Note c – Social theme includes news on “civil society and rights defense,” “Society, life and anecdote,” and “entertainment, sports and culture.”

Note d – Economic theme includes “economy, finance and market” and “advertisement and advertorial.”

Note e – Journalistic theme includes “editorial, op-ed and commentary.”

Table 6-3 Frequency of News Actors after Data Consolidation

	Primary News Sources		Secondary News Sources	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Political Actors ^a	2,638	49.3%	786	39.3%
Scientific Actors ^b	1,496	27.9	563	28.2
Social Actors ^c	977	18.2	533	26.7
Economic Actors ^d	243	4.5	116	5.8
Total (N=)	5,354		1,998	

Note a – Political actors include “international organization officials,” “national government officials” and “local government officials.”

Note b – Scientific actors includes “medical expert and research institute” only.

Note c – Social actors includes “NGO activists and rights defense network,” “people living with or affected by the disease,” “ordinary people or netizens,” and “celebrity in the virtual or real world.”

Note d – Economic actors includes “businessman and commercial organizations” only.

Table 6-4 Correlation between Themes and Primary Sources

	Political Theme	Scientific Theme	Economic Theme	Social Theme	Journalistic Theme	Total
Political Actors	87.9%	45.6%	17.9%	13.0%	28.6%	49.4%
Scientific Actors	2.9	47.4	34.5	9.7	10.3	28.1
Social Actors	9.0	5.9	13.3	70.5	58.9	17.9
Economic Actors	0.3	1.1	34.3	6.8	2.3	4.6
Total (N=)	1396	2521	458	721	175	5271

$\chi^2 = 4045.51$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .51$, $p < .01$

Table 6-5 Correlation Between Themes and Secondary Sources

	Political Theme	Scientific Theme	Economic Theme	Social Theme	Journalistic Theme	Total
Political Actors	52.5%	43.4%	22.3%	20.6%	29.1%	39.2%
Scientific Actors	13.8	41.6	7.2	22.0	22.8	28.4
Social Actors	30.4	13.2	26.6	52.6	44.3	26.7
Economic Actors	3.3	1.9	43.9	4.7	3.8	5.8
Total (N=)	448	918	139	359	79	1,943

$\chi^2 = 728.26$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .35$, $p < .01$

Table 6-6 Differences Among Party Organ, Market, and Elite Newspapers on News Type

	Party Organ ^a	Market Newspaper ^b	Elite Newspaper ^c	Total
Domestic News	79.4%	87.8%	79.5%	83.0%
International News	20.6	12.2	20.5	17.0
Total (N=)	3,124	2,510	215	5,849

$\chi^2 = 70.27$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .11$, $p < .01$

Note a – Party Organ here includes PD, ND and HD.

Note b – Market Newspaper here includes NMN and DD.

Note c – Elite Newspaper here includes NW only.

Table 6-7 Differences among Party Organ, Market, and Elite Newspapers Across Five News Themes

	Party Organ ^a	Market Newspaper ^b	Elite Newspaper ^c	Total
Scientific Theme	47.6%	45.9%	44.7%	46.7%
Political Theme	27.3	22.9	9.9	24.7
Social Theme	9.7	18.0	26.1	13.9
Economic Theme	12.0	8.1	2.4	9.9
Journalistic Theme	3.4	5.1	17.0	4.7
Total (N=)	3241	2581	253	6075

$\chi^2 = 267.81$, $df = 8$, $p < .01$; Cramer's $V = .15$, $p < .01$.

Note a – Party Organ here includes PD, ND and HD.

Note b – Market Newspaper here includes NMN and DD.

Note c – Elite Newspaper here includes NW only.

Table 6-8 Differences among Party Organ, Market, and Elite Newspapers Across Four News Actors

	Party Organ ^a	Market Newspaper ^b	Elite Newspaper ^c	Total
Political Actors	55.2%	45.1%	20.5%	49.3%
Scientific Actors	28.0	27.0	37.1	27.9
Social Actors	12.2	23.2	40.2	18.2
Economic Actors	4.5	4.8	2.2	4.5
Total (N=)	2,764	2,366	224	5,354

$\chi^2 = 222.02$, $df = 6$, $p < .01$; Cramer's $V = .14$, $p < .01$

Note a – Party Organ here includes PD, ND and HD.

Note b – Market Newspaper here includes NMN and DD.

Note c – Elite Newspaper here includes NW only.

Table 6-9 Comparing AIDS, HBV, SARS and H1N1 News on Correlation Between Themes and Primary Sources

	Political Theme		Scientific Theme		Economic Theme		Social Theme		Journalistic Theme	
	AIDS	HBV	AIDS	HBV	AIDS	HBV	AIDS	HBV	AIDS	HBV
Political Actors	84.7%	75.8%	46.5%	10.5%	40.0%	1.0%	14.5%	6.7%	41.2%	7.3%
Scientific Actors	3.2	2.6	45.5	84.0	14.3	74.0	11.3	10.7	19.6	12.2
Social Actors	12.1	21.1	7.7	2.9	31.4	3.1	73.0	81.2	39.2	78.0
Economic Actors	--	0.5	0.2	2.6	14.3	21.9	1.2	1.3	--	2.4
Total (N=)	503	190	826	382	35	196	248	149	51	41

	SARS		H1N1		SARS		H1N1		SARS		H1N1	
	SARS	H1N1	SARS	H1N1								
Political Actors	93.7%	92.6%	47.7%	61.4%	37.1%	10.3%	12.6%	21.8%	33.3%	23.5%		
Scientific Actors	1.9	5.9	42.1	34.5	1.3	8.8	6.1	14.1	1.5	11.8		
Social Actors	4.0	0.7	8.8	3.0	19.5	19.1	65.0	59.0	60.6	64.7		
Economic Actors	0.4	0.7	1.4	1.1	42.1	61.8	16.3	5.1	4.5	--		
Total (N=)	568	135	591	722	159	68	246	78	66	17		

AIDS: $\chi^2 = 94.20$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .23$, $p < .01$

HBV: $\chi^2 = 23.45$, $df = 12$, $p < .05$, Cramer's $V = .18$, $p < .05$

SARS: $\chi^2 = 302.89$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .41$, $p < .01$

H1N1: $\chi^2 = 250.41$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .39$, $p < .01$

Table 6-10 Comparing HIV and HBV Patients' Gender in the News

Patient's Gender	HIV	HBV	Total
Male	67.1%	69.1%	67.8%
Female	31.9	25.5	29.8
Na / Unclear	0.9	5.5	2.5
Total (N=)	216	110	326

$\chi^2 = 7.16$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$, Cramer's $V = .15$, $p < .05$

Table 6-11 Comparing HIV and HBV Patients' Identity in the News

Patient's Identity	HIV	HBV	Total
Not applicable or unclear	42.1%	29.1%	37.7%
Peasants/Immigrant Workers	19.4	6.4	15.0
Infants or Youth (Before College)	15.7	11.8	14.4
Other	10.6	16.4	12.6
Undergraduate and Graduate Student	1.9	30.0	11.3
White Collar/Mid-High Income	2.8	3.6	3.1
Unemployed	2.8	0.9	2.1
Civil Servant	1.9	0.9	1.5
Sex Worker	2.3	--	1.5
Disabled	--	0.9	0.3
Truck Driver/Hard Labor	0.5	--	0.3
Total (N=)	216	110	326

$\chi^2 = 71.93$, $df = 10$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .47$, $p < .01$

Table 6-12 Comparing HIV and HBV Patients' Means of Infection in the News

Patient's Means of Infection	HIV	HBV	Total
Not applicable or unclear	44.9%	93.6%	61.3%
Blood Transfusion	14.8	0.9	10.1
Selling Blood	12.0	--	8.0
Drug Abuse/IV Drug	9.3	--	6.1
Mother To Child	8.8	0.9	6.1
Heterosexual Activities	6.5	--	4.3
Iatrogenic Infection	2.3	0.9	1.8
Everyday Contact	--	2.7	0.9
Homosexual Activities	1.4	--	0.9
Other	--	0.9	0.3
Total (N=)	216	110	326

$\chi^2 = 91.44$, $df = 10$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .53$, $p < .01$

Table 6-13 Comparing HIV and HBV Patients' Problem in the News

Patients' Problem	HIV	HBV	Total
Not applicable or unclear	49.5%	9.1%	35.9%
Employment Discrimination	0.5	50.0	17.2
Treatment Pressure	11.6	4.5	9.2
Living / Survival Pressure	12.5	1.8	8.9
Emotion Pressure	10.6	4.5	8.6
Education Discrimination	0.5	18.2	6.4
Daily Life Discrimination	8.3	0.9	5.8
Other	3.2	6.4	4.3
Rights Defense Pressure	3.2	4.5	3.7
Total (N=)	216	110	326

$\chi^2 = 198.17$, $df = 8$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .78$, $p < .01$

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Journalistic Autonomy or Not

In the last two chapters, I explained and interpreted how the six Chinese newspapers constructed the news and views on the four public health crises in contemporary China. My interest centers on the political and social forces behind the news stories, as well as how the journalists interplay with these forces. However, the importance of incorporating a social dimension to the original “state-versus-market model” to study China’s media transformation is to propose that it is theoretically possible for the journalists to obtain a certain degree of freedom or autonomy from the control of the communist authoritarian regime. Then the question is: Is it still the case?

To answer this question, I assume that the degree of societal development varies across geographic locations. That is, I assume that Guangdong, the province that is more economically developed and more culturally liberal, has a larger society (or allows more space for its indigenous society, especially civil societies to grow) than Henan, which is relatively less economically developed and more culturally conservative.

This judgment can be further supported by the official statistics on the situation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in these two provinces provided by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. As I discussed in Chapter 4, CSOs are constituted by three types of organizations: (1) social organizations; (2) private non-enterprise units; and (3) foundations. According to the official data, in 2007, there were 10,818 “social organizations” registered in Guangdong, and 9,253 in Henan. Among them, 1,185

Guangdong social organizations were mandated to establish an internal Communist Party Organization (*dang zuzhi*), but only 383 of them had already done so (32.3%). In comparison, approximately 53.5% (N=2,048) of the 3,830 Henan social organizations had already set up an internal Party branch. Within the category of “private non-enterprise units,” the difference between the provinces is quite similar. Among the 12,027 Guangdong private non-enterprise units, 739 were asked to have a Party branch, but only 190 did so (25.7%). While among the 7,690 Henan non-enterprise units, 1,106 were asked, and 523 did (47.3%). The same pattern emerged in the category of foundations too. Among all the 152 foundations established in Guangdong, 22 of them were required to have a Party branch, but only 3 did (13.6%); whereas all of the 22 Henan foundations were mandated to establish a Party branch and all of them had already done so (100%). Through comparing the difference between the CSOs in Guangdong and in Henan, we may clearly see that there is a difference in social constitution and ideological intention between the two.

There is a second reason for me to choose the geographic location of the newspapers as a reference of comparison. In Chapter 5, when I compare the six newspapers separately, I find some interesting results that show a few significant differences between the newspapers in Henan and Guangdong. I also ask, in Chapter 5, whether the marketization of the media is only secondary to the marketization of the social world. Further, in Chapter 6, when I compare party organs with market newspapers and elite newspapers, there is actually *less* difference between party organs and market newspapers than between the two equally commercialized news media (i.e.,

market newspapers and elite newspaper). To me, using the degree of marketization without referencing to the domestic geographic difference does not seem to be a strong predictor of press freedom or journalistic autonomy. Therefore, I decided to compare the news content derived from the six newspapers based on their geographic affiliation rather than the degree of marketization. By doing so, I hoped to find out whether a relatively small-scaled, localized, and specified socio-economic-political-cultural context has more significant influence on journalistic practices than the large-scaled, nationwide-based, and generalized socio-economic-political-cultural context. It is the latter that constitutes a starting point for many studies on China's media transformation.

Geographic Difference and Journalistic Autonomy

As shown in Table 7- 1 to Table 7- 3, the two newspapers from Henan Province and the three newspapers from Guangdong Province are grouped together separately.²¹² PD, as the only central party organ, is listed in a separate column. I compare the difference among these three new groups of newspapers in terms of news type, news actors, and news theme.

Insert Table 7- 1 About here

²¹² It might be controversial that NW should be included in the category Guangdong newspaper, since it is a national paper rather than a provincial one. I include NW here for three reasons: (1) NW is not a “central” newspaper, which is a politically more meaningful definition of “national newspaper” in China; (2) The reason NW evolves from a cultural newspaper to an elite newspaper is deeply located in the regional culture and political environment of Guangdong. (3) I ran statistics for both conditions, that is, with or without NW, and the results do not show much difference.

According to Table 7- 1, there is no clear difference between newspapers from Henan and Guangdong on the proportion of domestic and international news published. Both of them have around 85% of epidemic news on domestic issues and around 15% from international perspectives. By contrast, the central newspaper has a higher percentage of international news reports than the provincial newspapers. Almost 30% of PD's coverage on the four epidemics in total has an international focus.

Insert Table 7- 2 About here

Table 7- 2 displays the difference among the three types of newspapers in their use of information sources. From here we start to see the difference between newspapers from the two provinces. The press in Guangdong seems to have less interest in quoting from political actors, that is, government officials or institutions, than the press from Henan or the central. Fewer than half of the information sources attributed in Guangdong newspapers are from the political field; while for the Henan news media, the proportion is almost 55%, and for the central newspaper, it is almost 60%.

Newspapers from Guangdong approached actors in the scientific field more than the other newspapers. Almost one third of the quotations from its newspapers are from medical and public health experts and institutes. By contrast, newspapers from Henan have a significantly fewer quotations from the same group of actors (21.2%), and the central newspapers sits in the middle with 27.4% of news sources from the scientific field.

In terms of social actors, both the Henan (21.0%) and Guangdong (19.2%) media pay much more attention to this sector than the central newspaper (9.9%). Regarding economic actors, Guangdong newspapers again have a higher percentage of quotations than newspapers from the other two groups. In sum, when selecting news sources, newspapers in Guangdong seem to be less political, more scientific, equally social, and more economic-oriented when compared with those in Henan.

Insert Table 7- 3 About here

According to Table 7- 2, we may postulate that, on the measurement of news themes, newspapers from Guangdong would focus less on political, more on scientific and economic, and equally on social themes when compared with the Henan newspapers. This is exactly what Table 7- 3 shows us. The general impression is: Guangdong newspapers seem to attempt to “de-politicalize” epidemic news, since only 17.9% of the news themes have a political focus, while the Henan press has 34.8% and the central party organ has 28.8%. At the same time, the influence of market or commercialization seems to be more significant on Guangdong newspapers than those from the central or Henan. In Guangdong, about 12.9% of the epidemic news themes are related to economic or commercial areas. In Henan the number is only 7%. The theme of social topics seems to be similarly presented in the three types of newspapers. The scientific theme is emphasized by both the central newspaper (51.4%) and Guangdong newspapers (49.4%), while the press in Henan seems less interested (39.5%).

Now let's take a look at the last measurement of news theme: the journalistic theme. Although the difference may not be significant, newspapers from Guangdong seem to have slightly more agency than those from Henan (5.4% versus 3.9%). While the central newspaper, PD, the most authoritative party organ in China, seems to be as equally restrained as the Henan press (4.0% versus 3.9%). Does this result imply that, in an economically and culturally more open region, the press can enjoy more autonomy?

As I have discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, Henan and Guangdong are two very different provinces in economic, geographic, and cultural senses. Located in the inland of China, Henan is regarded as the birthplace of China's civilization. However, it is also because of its long history that Henan has a relatively conservative culture than the coastal provinces, such as Guangdong. Guangdong was one of the first few regions in China that opened to the West. Because of its geographic closeness and linguistic similarity to Hong Kong, Guangdong has been greatly influenced by Hong Kong's popular cultural industry as well as the liberal ideas -signals delivered via broadcasting from Hong Kong to Guangdong. Therefore, on the surface, we may conclude that it is expected that the newspapers published in Guangdong have more journalistic autonomy than those in Henan.

The Critical Role of Social Capital

The comparison conducted above may lead us to believe that societal differences within China may make a difference for journalistic autonomy. However, there is always an exception. Shenzhen, China's first special economic zone, also located in Guangdong province and bordering Hong Kong to the south, has one of the most conservative press

systems in China. Even though the press in Shenzhen also follows market rules, according to Lee and his colleagues' (2006) study, it developed a two-tier Publicity Inc. to serve both the Party and the market. Therefore, if we only regard geographic and cultural variations as determinants of the degree of journalistic autonomy, our explanation might be seriously skewed. On questions as complicated as autonomy, we need to take more factors into account.

As Chapter 6 shows, the Chinese journalists have developed different types of skills when working in their own fields of specialties. For beat reporters, one of the most important jobs is to maintain a beneficial relationship with the news sources, although some beat reporters are less proactive than others. It is generally believed that social capital, that is, the social networks by which social actors are interconnected from which resources are produced and accumulated, are very critical to journalistic practices. As we have seen, for some journalists, their private relations with local officials has actually become a safety net even when they are doing critical reporting. For others, cooperation from the news sources and coalition among the peers mutually constitute necessary conditions for their work.

However, these private relations are sometimes exhausted by the endless demands from the news organizations, which eventually leads to the end of the journalists' career.

At least three of my interviewees mentioned this problem. One said,

Our newspaper recruited journalists from all over the country. Since people are from different provinces, we are asked to thoroughly make use of our relations from where we are from. Since most of our jobs are critical reporting. After a while, the old relations we accumulated for years are totally exhausted. People

from our hometown would not talk to us anymore. Then we just become useless.²¹³

For some journalists, especially for those conducting investigative news reporting, the only way to maintain a “useful” volume of social capital is to work with other journalists. The same interviewee told me:

Whenever there is explosive news, there is a big party for the journalists...journalists from all over the country would be there. The whole process of making news is a process of making friends. After you get to know each other, chances of working together are pretty high. Next time if you need anything, you may just call the journalists you know. Sometimes you two can work together, and co-author.

Such coalitions do not only exist between individual journalists, but also among the news organizations. Around 2004, the competition within the market of print media was greatly substituted by the competition between the press and the new media, especially the Internet portal services who often relay stories from the press without paying any fees. In October 2005, more than 20 metropolitan newspapers signed a “Nanjing Declaration” in a meeting, vowing to defend the copyrights of journalistic knowledge, and calling the whole Chinese press to unite, to use legal weapons to defend their own rights against the online news providers’ excessive violations. However, after the meeting, this first press alliance fell apart immediately. The cruel reality is that everyone is afraid that if the online portal services do not publish their news, it may eliminate their influence nationwide.

The importance of forming a solid social network between journalists and news sources, among journalists, and among news organizations is self-evident. It is especially

²¹³ Interviewee 2008-19.

true in China because many resources are still under the control of the state. Without these, even loosely connected networks, the maneuvering space for journalist may be greatly minimized. However, we may also need to realize that bringing a social network into the field of journalistic practices may sometimes hurt the integrity of journalism as well. For those journalists who strongly intend to accumulate social capital in the political field, the result is exactly what Zhao Yuezhi (1998) describes, a collaboration between the Party and the urban elites that hijacks the benefits of China's economic reform, suppresses the voices of other social groups, and consequently reinforces the status quo.

Journalistic Autonomy within the State Leviathan?

As this dissertation research concludes, let me review the main topics and viewpoints that I developed and discussed. First, my research starts with questioning the existing model on analyzing China's media transformation since the late 1970s. The state-versus-market model is theoretically powerful and analytically constructive. Under this model, studies on the structural and ideological transformation of China's media, whether viewed as moving toward pluralism and professionalization or as being double-oppressed or self-assumed subordination to the authorities, are mostly laid out under the tension or collaboration between the state and the market. What has been missing is the social dimension of contemporary China.

Society's existence seems to be taken for granted in many parts of the world. In China, it is not. Before the economic reform, thirty years of communist rule nearly destroyed the whole society. After the reform, society re-emerged. Although it is fragile

and still under tight control of the state, we have seen a gradually expanding space for actors from the social field to act, to collaborate, and to form a collectivity. One important indication of such a nascent society is the fast development of civil society organizations in China.

This nascent Chinese society is especially meaningful to Chinese journalists. In the past, journalists were propaganda instruments of the party-state, but now they have to be more professional. This does not mean the state has taken away its controls over the media field; rather it is the growing forces of the market and the society that have attracted more energy of the state and thus leaves a sort of fissure for the media field to develop under its own logic. However, the state is highly adaptive. Just as what we have seen in the process of China's market reform, the growth of a nascent society does not have enough time to develop its own logic; rather, it starts to grow hand-in-hand with the central state power.

Based on the interviews and the news content I have analyzed, it is clear journalists and social actors are not fearless. Many of them have concerns and worries about their future, and many of them choose to become closer with the state, the hierarchy of which basically constitutes the hierarchy within the field of power. The geographic difference between Guangdong and Henan in terms of news practice is only temporary. Examples have been seen in how the liberal newspapers in Guangdong start to cater to the needs of the government by promoting and placing local government

publicity advertisements in their papers.²¹⁴ As someone said, this is called “political wisdom.”

In *The Prince*, Niccolò Machiavelli concludes, in order to maintain the state (i.e., maintain the power), “fear is always preferable to affection in subjects, just as violence and deception are superior to legality in effectively controlling them” (Nederman, 2009, para.8). Is it because we, ordinary citizens in China, submit ourselves to this State Leviathan, that we are eventually deprived of our freedom? The answer is still unknown.

For future research in the area of Chinese journalistic practices, it is important to keep pondering on this question. Constraints imposed on news reporters and editors may not simply come from political, economic, and social structures. A more interesting research angle will be contending how the agents within the journalistic field internalize the structural constraints and act autonomously in accordance with the structural change. Limited by the scope of news topics and methods, my research cannot provide further evidence for that. Public health crisis offers us valuable opportunities to look into the dynamics among the state, the market, and the society during time of crisis and how such interplays are constructed and represented in the news. However, the most routine journalistic practices often occur in peaceful times, which may provide us a broader view of these dynamics and interplays. Further, as this study reveals, if the force of society is embodied in social capital, then we may need a systematic examination on the interpersonal and inter-organizational connections stretching across the journalistic field

²¹⁴ Interviewee 2007-06.

and the fields outside. A combination of more sophisticated quantitative and qualitative research methods will enhance our knowledge and answer these questions.

Table 7-1 Differences among Henan, Central, and Guangdong Newspapers on News Type

	Central Newspaper ^a	Henan Newspaper ^b	Guangdong Newspaper ^c	Total
Domestic News	71.7%	85.8%	85.0%	83.0%
International News	28.3	14.2	15.0	17.0
Total	963	1773	3113	5849

$\chi^2 = 106.30$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .14$, $p < .01$

Note a – Central Newspaper here includes PD only.

Note b – Henan Newspaper here includes HD and DD.

Note c – Guangdong Newspaper here includes ND, NMN and NW.

Table 7-2 Differences among Central, Guangdong and Henan Newspapers across Four News Actors

	Central Newspaper ^a	Henan Newspaper ^b	Guangdong Newspaper ^c	Total
Political Actors	59.9%	54.8%	42.9%	49.3%
Scientific Actors	27.4	21.2	32.0	27.9
Social Actors	9.9	21.0	19.2	18.2
Economic Actors	2.8	3.1	5.9	4.5
Total	866	1631	2857	5354

$\chi^2 = 163.93$, $df = 6$, $p < .01$; Cramer's $V = .12$, $p < .01$

Note a – Central Newspaper here includes PD only.

Note b – Henan Newspaper here includes HD and DD.

Note c – Guangdong Newspaper here includes ND, NMN and NW.

Table 7-3 Differences among Central, Guangdong and Henan Newspapers across Five News Themes

	Central Newspaper ^a	Henan Newspaper ^b	Guangdong Newspaper ^c	Total
Scientific Theme	51.4%	39.5%	49.4%	46.7%
Political Theme	28.8	34.8	17.8	24.7
Social Theme	10.1	14.8	14.6	13.9
Economic Theme	5.7	7.0	12.9	9.9
Journalistic Theme	4.0	3.9	5.4	4.7
Total	1007	1824	3244	6075

$\chi^2 = 257.77$, $df = 8$, $p < .01$; Cramer's $V = .15$, $p < .01$

Note a – Central Newspaper here includes PD only.

Note b – Henan Newspaper here includes HD and DD.

Note c – Guangdong Newspaper here includes ND, NMN and NW.

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Appendix

Codebook for Content Analysis

Codebook – 1: Basic Information

News Type	1. Mainland News: News occurred in Mainland China, including the stories on the people from Mainland China in other countries/regions (but not related to diplomacy or international political activities).
	2. Hong Kong/Taiwan/Macau News: News occurred in Hong Kong, Taiwan or Macau, including stories on the people from the three regions in other countries/regions (but not related to diplomacy or international political activities).
	3. International News: News occurred outside of Mainland China or Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau.
	4. Foreign Policy News: News on foreign policy or international politics, such as a state visit. It also includes news on international organizations or institutions, such as the UN general assembly.
	9999. Non-Applicable/Unclear: News that cannot be included in any of the categories above, such as certain de-contextualized commentary.
News Theme	1. Government (Party/State)/Officials/Politics: Activities of government, state, or party, and of its officials or members, such as inspections, meetings, governmental work in progress, etc. It also includes promoting the images of the government (party/state) or officials.
	2. Policy/Law/Lawsuit: (1) The making, implementation, and advocacy of all types of policies/laws led by the government (including medical/public health policies/laws); (2) Court news, legal news or lawsuits.
	3. Economy/Finance/Market: Issues and information related to economy, finance, or market. Different from “Ad/Advertorial” news, news from this category does not focus on promoting a specific product or service.
	4. Ad/Advertorial: A type of “soft advertisement.” It looks like an “objective” news article but it always mentions the brand/name of a specific product/service, and tries to advocate/promote its strength/effectiveness.
	5. Medical Science/Popular Science/Public Health: Focusing on the activities of medical institutions/organizations and medical practitioners, such as the rescue and treatment of patients, the release of mortality, morbidity, and survival rates, the popularization and education of medical/scientific/preventive/treatment knowledge, medical/medicine breakthroughs (not Ad/Advertorial), etc.
	6. Civil Society/Citizen Action/Rights Defense: Activities by individuals or groups outside of the state or the market, such as defending human or civil rights for the vulnerables, advocating a particular policy, or celebrity endorsement of certain issues or social groups.

	7. Society/Life/Anecdote: Stories about ordinary people’s everyday life, without a specific focus on “rights defense activities.”
	8. Entertainment/Sports/Culture: Entertainment, sports or news on culture. Celebrity activities irrelevant to civil/human rights endorsement are also included.
	9. Editorial/Op-Ed/Commentary: Comments and opinions regarding a specific news stories or social phenomenon.
	9999. Non-Applicable/Unclear
News Source (Primary & Secondary)	1. International/Regional Organizations/Officials: Organizations and officials at the global level, or for regional or inter-regional cooperation, such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, ASEAN, APEC, etc.
	2. National Government (Party)/Officials: Organizations and officials at the national level (Hong Kong, Taiwan & Macao governments are regarded as “national”). For example, the Ministry of Health and its agencies, the National People’s Congress, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, court, police force, the Armed Police Force, military force, etc.
	3. Local Government (Party)/Officials: Organizations and officials at the provincial (including municipalities and autonomous regions) and lower levels.
	4. NGO/Activist/Rights Defense Network: (1) Non-governmental Organizations and their officials, which includes international NGOs, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria or Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), and grassroots NGOs, such as the Beijing Yirenping Center. (2) Activists, such as Gao Yaojie or Nkosi Johnson. (3) Rights defense networks in real life or on the Internet, such as www.hbvhbv.com, an electronic Bulletin Board System established by HBV infectors for self-help and mutual support.
	5. Medical Expert/Organization/Research Institute: (1) Professional medical and public health institutions, such as hospitals, the Center for Disease Control, etc. (2) Medical and public health professionals, such as doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff. ATTN: The Ministry of Health does NOT belong to this category. It is a governmental institution.
	6. Other Expert/Professional/Organization: Professionals or experts from occupational areas other than medical science or public health, such as lawyers, journalists, writers, etc.
	7. People Living With/Affected by a Disease: Patients, infectors, their families and relatives, or children orphaned by disease such as AIDS, etc.
	8. Celebrity/Online Celebrity: People who are well-known to the public but who are not governmental officials, including those who become famous via the Internet. For online (or Internet) celebrities, it is common for the media to use certain words, such as “a famous ID” in description.

	9. Ordinary People/Netizens/Anonymous: Ordinary people of the streets, Internet users involved in online communities, and other anonymous sources that do not indicate attributions.
	10. Businessman/Commercial Organizations: Individuals or organizations that aim to earn profits.
	9999. Non-Applicable/Unclear

Codebook – 2: People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA)

News No.	The original sequence number of the news story										
PLWA's No.	Assign number to each PLWA mentioned in the news based on the order of their appearance. Re-starting from 1 for each news story.										
PLWA's Gender	1. Male 2. Female 9999. NA/Unclear										
PLWA's Nationality	List of countries is attached. (Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan are coded as "independent" country here.)										
Chinese PLWA's Province	List of provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions is attached.										
PLWA's Main Identity	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. Infant or Youth (before college)</td> <td>6. Sex workers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. College/Graduate student</td> <td>7. Unemployed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Peasant (Peasant worker/Villager)</td> <td>8. Disabled (including people with hemophilia)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. White Collar/Businessman (incl. both for-profit and non-profit company employees, middle to high-income class in urban areas)</td> <td>9. Hard labor workers (including long distance truck drivers and migrant workers)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Civil Servants (or Government employees)</td> <td>10. Others</td> </tr> </table> <p>9999.NA/Unclear</p>	1. Infant or Youth (before college)	6. Sex workers	2. College/Graduate student	7. Unemployed	3. Peasant (Peasant worker/Villager)	8. Disabled (including people with hemophilia)	4. White Collar/Businessman (incl. both for-profit and non-profit company employees, middle to high-income class in urban areas)	9. Hard labor workers (including long distance truck drivers and migrant workers)	5. Civil Servants (or Government employees)	10. Others
1. Infant or Youth (before college)	6. Sex workers										
2. College/Graduate student	7. Unemployed										
3. Peasant (Peasant worker/Villager)	8. Disabled (including people with hemophilia)										
4. White Collar/Businessman (incl. both for-profit and non-profit company employees, middle to high-income class in urban areas)	9. Hard labor workers (including long distance truck drivers and migrant workers)										
5. Civil Servants (or Government employees)	10. Others										
PLWA's means of infection:	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. Everyday life (e.g., saliva, sharing utensils or towels, etc)</td> <td>6. Selling blood</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Drug abuse/Injection Drug use</td> <td>7. Blood transfusion</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Homosexual activity</td> <td>8. Iatrogenic infection (including plastic and dental surgeries; blood transfusion is NOT included.)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Heterosexual activity</td> <td>9. Others</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Mother-to-child transmission</td> <td>9999. NA/Unclear</td> </tr> </table>	1. Everyday life (e.g., saliva, sharing utensils or towels, etc)	6. Selling blood	2. Drug abuse/Injection Drug use	7. Blood transfusion	3. Homosexual activity	8. Iatrogenic infection (including plastic and dental surgeries; blood transfusion is NOT included.)	4. Heterosexual activity	9. Others	5. Mother-to-child transmission	9999. NA/Unclear
1. Everyday life (e.g., saliva, sharing utensils or towels, etc)	6. Selling blood										
2. Drug abuse/Injection Drug use	7. Blood transfusion										
3. Homosexual activity	8. Iatrogenic infection (including plastic and dental surgeries; blood transfusion is NOT included.)										
4. Heterosexual activity	9. Others										
5. Mother-to-child transmission	9999. NA/Unclear										

PLWA's main problem:	1. Employment discrimination 2. Education discrimination 3. Discrimination in everyday life (e.g., eating separately, avoiding handshakes, etc.) 4. Pressure in everyday life (e.g., to survive from poverty, disability, etc.) 5. Pressure in treatment (e.g., lack of medications or money to pay for medications, etc.)	6. Pressure on defending rights (e.g., lawsuits, petition to higher authority, turn to mass media or the Internet for help, etc.) 7. Emotional pressure (e.g., lack of support from friends or families, marriage crisis, etc.) 8. Others 9999. NA/Unclear
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NOTE:

1. Please code only when the news story discloses information of or tells details about a specific person (or a group of people) who lives with HIV/AIDS.
2. The coding method is “multiple coding,” meaning each PLWA constitute a row in the coding sheet. One news story can have multiple rows.

Codebook – 3: People Living with Hepatitis B Virus (PLWHBV)

News No.	The original sequence number of the news story
PLWHBV's No.	Assign number to each PLWHBV mentioned in the news based on the order of their appearance. Re-starting from 1 for each news story.
Definition of PLWHBV in the news	1. HBV patient 2. Hepatitis B virus carrier 3. Hepatitis B positive (or Hepatitis B antibody positive) 4. “Three big positive indexes” (i.e., HBsAg, HBeAg, and HBcAb are positive) 5. “Three small positive indexes” (i.e., HBsAg, HBeAb, and HBcAb are positive) 9999. NA/Unclear
PLWHBV's Gender	1. Male 2. Female 9999.NA/Unclear
PLWHBV's Nationality	List of countries is attached. (Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan are coded as “independent” country here.)
Chinese PLWHBV's Province	List of provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions is attached.

PLWHBV's Main Identity:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infant or Youth (before college) 2. College/Graduate student 3. Peasant (Peasant worker/Villager) 4. White Collar/Businessman (incl. both for-profit and non-profit company employees, middle to high-income class in urban areas) 5. Civil Servants (or Government employees) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Sex workers 7. Unemployed 8. Disabled (including people with hemophilia) 9. Hard labor workers (including long distance truck drivers and migrant workers) 10. Others <p>9999. NA/Unclear</p>
PLWHBV's means of infection:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyday life (e.g., saliva, sharing utensils or towels, etc) 2. Drug abuse/Injection Drug use 3. Homosexual activity 4. Heterosexual activity 5. Mother-to-child transmission 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Selling blood 7. Blood transfusion 8. Iatrogenic infection (including plastic and dental surgeries; blood transfusion is NOT included.) 9. Others <p>9999. NA/Unclear</p>
PLWHBV's main problem:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employment discrimination 2. Education discrimination 3. Discrimination in everyday life (e.g., eating separately, avoiding handshakes, etc.) 4. Pressure in everyday life (e.g., to survive from poverty, disability, etc.) 5. Pressure in treatment (e.g., lack of medications or money to pay for medications, etc.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Pressure on defending rights (e.g., lawsuits, petition to higher authority, turn to mass media or the Internet for help, etc.) 7. Emotional pressure (e.g., lack of support from friends or families, marriage crisis, etc.) 8. Others <p>9999. NA/Unclear</p>

NOTE:

1. Please code only when the news story discloses information of or tells details about a specific person (or a group of people) who lives with HBV.
2. The coding method is "multiple coding," meaning each PLWHBV constitute a row in the coding sheet. One news story can have multiple rows.