

## **Organizational Construction or Individual's Deed? The Literati Tradition in the Journalistic Professionalization in China**

FEN J. LIN

City University of Hong Kong

This study examines how latent factors shape the complexity of localized professionalization in a transitional society. Analyzing interview and survey data of Chinese journalists, I abandon the conventional analysis which dichotomizes professionalization into a process of either Western professionalism or authoritarian journalism. Indeed, both normative ideal types are modified by the literati tradition. The study presents empirical evidence on the hierarchy of influences on the coexistence of these three elements. The political nature of the media decides which element becomes dominant within an organization. At the individual level, laissez-faire economic values lead to positive views on Western professionalism, while strong nationalist attitudes lead to positive views on party journalism. The complex value orientation on social and political issues associates a journalist with the literati tradition.<sup>°</sup>

Professionalization has been a key issue for the news media in transitional societies, especially in the globalization era (Pan & Chan, 2003; Reese, 2001). However, instead of a universal model being adopted, professionalization continues to be a contested terrain, one which needs to not only be understood within the local contexts (Pan & Lu, 2003; Lin, 2008), but also to be continuously renegotiated in response to the social shifts as it is affected by different power structures in various levels (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Reese, 2001).

During such a localization and renegotiation process, journalistic professionalization involves two common themes, even though its path varies by country. The first theme is characterized by the tension

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Fen J. Lin: [fenlin@cityu.edu.hk](mailto:fenlin@cityu.edu.hk)

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between the state and the media, with the state being the prime contingency of professionalization, as it has the power to institutionalize the labor market and the division of labor, to legitimize professional training, and to give credence to the professional ideology (Freidson, 2001; Macdonald, 1995). Such tension pushes the media to make a choice between being a watchdog or a lapdog (Bennett, 1990, 2003; Clayman, Heritage, Elliott, & McDonald, 2007; Gitlin, 1980; Sabato, 1991; Tannen, 1998). In a non-democratic country, local professionalization is quite often viewed as a response to the challenge of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of professionalism. In the PRC's case, Western professionalism is mainly associated with the disseminator role of the media and the desire for more liberal arts training in journalism, whereas party-journalism is customarily related to the interpretive and popular advocacy roles of the media and the desire for more Communist propaganda training (Pan & Chan, 2003). Such a dichotomy is inspiring in a normative sense; however, the nuance in reality might be oversimplified in such a way that not enough attention is paid to how both Western professionalism and party journalism paradigms are mediated by latent elements in a given local and cultural context. In the PRC, the old party journalism model is starting to phase out (He, 2000; Lee, 1990, 2003; Lin, 2006; Pan, 2000; Zhao, 1998), but the new model has yet to find its footing. The localized and renegotiated professionalization exhibits quite a bit of complexity. Even after the Confucian model of the press, which dominated from 1900 to the 1940s (Lee, 2004), was replaced by the party journalism paradigm, the literati tradition which upholds the preservation of the value system and champions the representation of the public conscience (Yu, 1987) has been blended and inevitably modified into the discourse of modern intellectuals (Lee, 2008). Chinese journalists still view themselves as intellectuals, and the elements of the Confucian intellectual are continuously shown in their journalistic discourses (Lin, 2008; Pan & Chan, 2003; Pan & Lu, 2003). Unfortunately, there is no direct empirical evidence on how this latent element has shaped the Chinese journalists' perceptions of professionalization in the transitional PRC society. Thus, this paper aims to explore the complexity of journalistic professionalization in the PRC by adding Chinese literati tradition into the conventional dichotomy of "Western professionalism vs. party journalism." Analytically, instead of classifying two opposite, clear-cut paradigms, this paper adopts an "element-based" analysis approach to explore how these three types of ideal elements — Western professionalism, literati tradition, and party journalism — coexist in the current Chinese journalism landscape.

The second theme involves the hierarchy of influence on the professionalization process (Reese, 2001). The levels of influence range from individual behavior and perceptions (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007; Weaver & Wu, 1998) to organizational routines and informal norms (Breed, 1955; Gans, 1979; Lin, 2008; Lin & Zhao, 2008; White, 1951), to ideologies and national systems (Gitlin, 1980; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Lee, 2004; Lin & Zhao, 2008; Schudson, 1989; Weaver & Wu, 1998). However, the linkage among the different levels of influence remains mysterious. Is it the organizations that make individuals, or the individuals that shape the organizations? Thus, built upon previous research on Chinese media transitions, this paper further explores the following: (1) the key factors which shape an individual's perceptions of the three elements of professionalization, and (2) the extent to which the individual's deed (including generational experience and professional liberalism) and organizational socialization account for the variation of journalists' perceived professionalization.

The analysis relies on data from interviews of journalists in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou between 2004 and 2006, and on a survey in 2005 of print journalists in Guangzhou, which is

considered the center of liberal journalism in the PRC. Since Guangzhou journalists enjoy the remarkable reputation of being modern and liberal, the tension between Western professionalism and party journalism would be most intense. Thus, the observations regarding Guangzhou journalists, which, given the huge regional variation, are hardly representative of all journalists, would offer insights on the potential development of journalism in the PRC.

This paper is organized as follows: The first section outlines the coexistence of the three elements of Western professionalism, party journalism, and literati tradition in the current journalistic professionalization in the PRC. The interview data show the validity of this threefold typology in the Chinese context. The second section hypothesizes three types of factors — organizational environment, generational experience, and professional liberalism — that shape journalistic professionalization. The third section presents the data and analysis. The last section is composed of a brief conclusion and discussion.

### ***Elements of Journalistic Paradigms***

More than three decades of reform has shaped a three-tier journalism landscape in the PRC (Lin, 2006). Tier classification of a city somehow echoes its economic development and political status. Journalists grouped Guangzhou, Beijing, and Shanghai into the first tier, wherein Guangzhou journalism has been widely recognized as the vanguard of Chinese modern journalism. Middle-scale provincial capitals are usually classified into the second tier, and the rest of the cities are categorized into the third tier.

The appreciation shown toward *The New York Times* has been tangling with the shadow of party journalism during the journalistic professionalization in China. In the interviews, journalists were asked their views and comments on journalistic professionalization and the three types of journalistic practices of muckraking, mandatory news release (*tong gao*), and internal reference (*nei can*). The comments of many of the interviewed journalists relate to the case of Sun Zhigang, a college student who was arrested by mistake, and then abused to death at the asylum. After the media reported Sun's story, the public grievance pushed the PRC Government to abandon the institution of asylum. At the time of the interviews, it was one of the most influential media events.

Muckraking refers to the practices that aim to expose and reveal misconduct in public life. Rooted in the progressive movement in the United States, muckraking has long been associated with investigative journalism, and it has been regarded as having a watchdog function (Mott, 1966). In the PRC, investigative journalists have conducted public surveillance on the state, and usually enjoy heroic reputations (Zhan, 2002).

Both mandatory news release and internal reference practices were typical party journalism practices. Under the paradigm of party journalism, the media is to serve the party by advocating the party line (Zhao, 1998). In practice, the propaganda department continuously feeds news media with mandatory news releases in order to control the flow of information available to the public. Meanwhile, journalists, usually the senior ones, who are regarded as the "mouth, ear, eye, and nose" of the party, can

write about sensitive and controversial stories such as crime, political corruption, and scandals, among others. Those stories are published in the internal publication system, which follows a strict hierarchical pattern. The internal reference provides information and analysis exclusively to the officials. While the system is designed to help government officials solve social problems by keeping them informed about the problems, its information-dissemination does not extend to the general public, who are consequently unaware of what is going on.

There emerged three types of justification for the interviewed journalists' views on the three elements of journalistic professionalization. Those who emphasize the *element of party journalism* are concerned with how to develop and reform party journalism under the market economy. Instead of stiffly using the "dying party language," they justify their advocacy of party journalism through the positive societal effects that party journalism practices could bring. The crucial function of news media is to serve the long-term goal of national development. For example, a respondent commented:

We used to aim to produce 'best news,' now we are going to pursue the 'best mainstream news.' Mainstream news refers to what happens in mainstream society, including news about the party and the government, and those related to the future of the nation and the lives of the people . . . Mainstream media should be constructive (aimed at nation building). Muckraking news won't last long. We cannot muckrake for the sake of muckraking, which will eventually lead newspapers away from readers. (Interviewee #019)

This case (Sun Zhigang) showed the media's public surveillance function. From a journalistic point of view, it was a great story. However, look at the crime rate after the act was abandoned: It increased. So from a societal point of view, the story did not have a good effect. The Act of course was not perfect; however, when they (the newspapers) pushed the government to abandon the act without offering a better alternative, a vacuum came into being. The result was the increase in criminal rates. (Interviewee #041)

On the other hand, journalists who emphasize the *element of Western professionalism* justify their opinion based on the individual's "right-to-know." They exercise caution and prudence in putting their trust in the government, as they believe the media should be independent from the state apparatus. An example of a comment:

We are the media, not the government. The government has so many departments to solve problems. So-called 'constructiveness' (jian she xing) is the government's responsibility, not the media's. Journalism in China, to some extent, is a combination of speculation and compromise. We have to evaluate all kinds of risk before publishing news. If the risk is significant enough to imperil ourselves or our newspaper, we compromise. Otherwise, we speculate (tou ji). Even so, the fountainhead of the media is still to tell the truth. The idea that the media has to be constructive is rooted in the compromised nature of journalism in China. (Interviewee # 087)

How can the internal reference offer enough pressure for the officials to solve the problems? In this process, the public is kept outside of the information loop. We are lucky if we happen to have a good official. What if not? Isn't it too risky? (Interviewee #109)

Meanwhile, journalists who adopt *the element of literati tradition* are focused on how to solve the concrete problems for the public, since they maintain that it is their moral responsibility to help the powerless. They do not regard muckraking as a "junk-yard dog" behavior, and they do not consider the advocacy of the government's policies to be necessary. Their main criterion in evaluating interactions between media and the state is whether the given concrete problem can be solved through such interactions. Thus, even though they criticize internal reference as a within-élite communication system, they think it might be an alternative that could help to solve problems, given the current state-media regime. Thus, in a few comments:

Writing internal reference is like to send *zhe zi* to the emperor in the ancient time. Responsible literati raise questions and offer good suggestions (*jin jian*), and a good emperor takes these suggestions into consideration (*na jian*). (Interviewee #090)

Regarding the case of Sun, the real victory is not to reveal the information, but to push the reform, abolish the unreasonable rules and solve the problem. (Interviewee # 003)

Rather than following the fashion of 'being professional,' we need to understand what being a professional means in Chinese context. A good journalist needs to understand the whole situation, to help find a solution and do something real for the powerless. Information dissemination should serve this purpose. (Interviewee #043)

To sum up, based on the basic postulates developed in Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's classic *Four Theories on the Press* (1956), these three elements differ in at least four aspects: (1) the nature of man, (2) the nature of information and truth, (3) the role of state, and (4) philosophical foundation.

Both party journalism and the literati tradition regard man as a member of the society who is subservient to the state in such a way that a person's duty is more important than his rights (Lee, 2005). Men have the capacity to acquire knowledge through their mental effort, but they widely differ in their ability to utilize mental processes. Thus, those who are more capable of analyzing and synthesizing information should lead the society and run the state. Given that media is a channel for information-dissemination, state control over the media, especially censorship, becomes necessary (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). However, party journalism and the literati tradition differ in their philosophical foundation. The former is rooted in the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist thought, while the literati tradition is based on Confucianism. In the paradigm of party journalism, man is restricted by organizational discipline, and truth is near the center of power; when the PRC shifted from a totalitarian regime to an authoritarian one, emphasis on the philosophy of absolute power and élitism began. In the literati tradition, on the other hand, man is constrained by the Dao, which is a set of moral values, and truth is more for society to attain justice.

Meanwhile, the philosophical foundation of Western professionalism can be traced back to the general philosophies of rationalism and natural rights, such as those espoused in the writings of Milton, Locke, and Mill. In this paradigm, man is supposed to be an independent, rational being, one who can reason and discern between a better and a worse alternative (Siebert et al., 1956). In this sense, knowledge and truth are also achievable through man's mental processes, but they are no longer symbols of power; they are the natural rights of man. On the other hand, "the state exists as a method of providing the individual with a milieu in which he can realize his own potentialities," (ibid., p. 41) and the society is of no greater importance than each of its individual members. Thus, censorship of media, which is the self-righting process of the truth, is no longer acceptable (ibid.).

In the Chinese context, it is important to note that not one of these three elements *alone* is enough to explain the ongoing journalistic professionalization. Quite often, the intellectual advocacy has been rooted in the Confucian impulse, but the emancipator's vision has been fueled by either Western liberalism or socialism (Lee, 2005). In reality, it is a mixture of these three elements, or their coexistence, which is the source of the complexity of journalistic professionalization in the PRC.

### ***Mechanisms of Professionalization***

The next questions are why and how these three elements coexist and correlate amongst each other in the current journalistic professionalization. Is the perceived professionalization an individual's deed or an organizational construction? Related with previous research on professionalization, three sets of hypotheses are outlined as follows:

#### ***Organizational Construction***

Through a series of surveys of journalists over decades and across countries, scholars have concluded that the organizational environment is predictive of journalistic role orientation (Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1972; Weaver, et al., 2007; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986, 1996; Weaver & Wu, 1998). Conformity is not automatic, but comes rather through organizational processes of socialization, such as the norms in the journalists' work routines (Breed, 1955; Sigelman, 1973), the newsroom structures and bureaucratic hierarchies, the organization's economic and political standing (Gans, 1979; Singer, 2004), and even the journalists' peer networks (Weaver et al., 2007).

In China, such social control exhibits differing patterns in party organ and market-oriented newspapers, as shown in their diversified journalistic behavior patterns (Lin, 2008) and media discourses (He, 2000; Pan & Lu, 2003), and in the public views of media exemplars (Pan & Chan, 2003). The difference between party organ and market-oriented media organizations was originally designed by the state. The party organ remained on the party line, while the market-oriented papers took care of the market line. Historically, the rise of Western professionalism has been closely associated with the emerging market economy in many transitional societies (Balikowa, 1995; Lin, 2008; Price, Rozumilowicz, & Verhulst, 2002; Sparks & Reading, 1994; Zhao, 1998). Thus,

*H1a: Journalists in the party organ media are more likely to emphasize elements of party journalism, while journalists in the market-oriented media are more likely to emphasize the elements of professionalism than their colleagues in the party organ.*

However, the various discourses on "press models" in modern China cannot escape their roots in history (Lee, 2004). Such historical connection is somehow shown in the literati tradition, which is backed up by the journalists' self-identification that they are not only middle-class, but also intellectuals (Lin, 2008). One important feature of the tradition of intellectuals is that they are identified not by the class to which they belong, but by the Dao (the way) with which they are associated. The Dao defines intellectuals as the defenders of the societal consciousness. Different from the Western tradition of intellectuals, for Chinese intellectuals, the Dao has more secular notation than its Western counterpart, which has religious origins. From the very beginning of the literati tradition, being actively involved in criticizing society and politics has been a part of the duty of an intellectual. The intellectuals criticize and provide helpful suggestions to the emperor, based on the standards of Dao (Yu, 1987). Meanwhile, the behavior of journalists is also evaluated by the criteria of Dao. Such a tradition was institutionalized in the model of "Confucian press" before the 1940s (Lee, 2004). When the Confucian press was replaced by party journalism, the tradition, even without the institutional support, still existed in individual values. During the reform era, such tradition modified the evaluative dimension (Larson, 1977; Freidson, 2001) of both Western professionalism and party journalism. Journalistic behavior was evaluated by its social effects, and not by the individual's right to know or the advocacy duty to the state. As a result, when the party press had to modify their ethics to respond to the challenges of the market, the literati tradition became a convenient expedience. The "constructive journalism" notion, that the press is responsible for constructing and facilitating the development of the nation, is the result of a hybrid of party journalism and literati tradition (Lin, 2008). Thus,

*H1b: Journalists' perceived element of literati tradition is affected by the organizational environment. Such impact is more similar to that of the element of party journalism than that of the element of Western professionalism.*

Organizational policies are influential in maintaining a journalist's conformity to the organization. There are two types of employment systems between journalists and their organizations. One is the market-based contract system (he tong gong), wherein an organization will decide whether to renew the journalists' contracts once a year or once every other year. The other is the bureaucratic quota system (shi ye bian zhi), wherein journalists are treated as members of the government staff. The journalists in the quota system seem to be more stable than those in the market-based contract system (Lin, 2008). Thus,

*H1c: Organizations with higher percentages of journalists in the bureaucratic quota system will enhance journalists' loyalty to dominant elements in the organization.*

*Generational Experience*

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there have been several generations of journalists in the PRC's modern history (Shi, 1989). Each generation grew up in different media environments, where they experienced different significant events in their early adulthood. Thus, differences across cohorts are to be expected. Since the older generation of journalists experienced the heyday of party journalism, they are more likely to have the experience of writing internal reference, as opposed to the younger generation, who had liberal arts education in college and have experience in Western professionalism. Thus,

*H2a: The older generation tends to have more positive views on elements of party-journalism, the younger generation tends to have more positive views on elements of Western professionalism, and having the experience of writing internal reference will enhance journalists' positive views on party journalism.*

The longer a journalist works in an organization, the more likely he will be in a position of high rank. Thus, the above cohort effect usually tangles with journalists' ranks. The three decades of reform have diversified the groups of journalists, even within the same organization. From the interviews, journalists classify themselves into three groups, which they interpret as different ranks, namely the bureaucratic, the professional, and the migrant.

Journalists usually regard those belonging to the bureaucratic group as those whose end game is not journalism, but achieving political rank. Journalism is regarded as a bureaucratic branch of the political system; thus, being a journalist is a springboard to the political hierarchy. In their peers' view, the higher the journalist's rank in the organization, the more likely he is to be recognized by others as belonging to "the bureaucratic group," even though this is not always identical to the journalist's self-reflection. When asked what kind of people are bureaucratic journalists, journalists tend to refer to them as "the above."

Those journalists who view journalism as a profession tend to consider themselves as belonging to the professional group. They think that journalism should be an independent entity, and they think of being a journalist as their primary identity. From the interviews, the middle-level managing editors or directors of a department are more likely to proudly label themselves as professionals.

The label "migrant" is a kind of self-mockery for most working journalists who are at the bottom of the hierarchy in the organization, usually younger and with less working experience, who have a contract-based employment relationship with the organization. Some of the working journalists do not have medical insurance, and they can be expected to change jobs relatively more frequently. Some of them even refer to themselves as "wandering journalists." The journalists belonging to the migrant group usually regard journalism as a job. They get paid according to what they have done, and the nature of their work is not much different from those of other occupations. In a comment:



Somehow I feel like the migrant worker, a construction worker is paid by how many bricks he moved and build up. I got paid by how many words I built up in my article.

(Interviewee #003)

Thus,

*H2b: Given that journalists within an organization are no long homogenous, individuals' views on different elements of professionalization will vary by their identities, as measured by their professional ranks.*

### *Professional Liberalism*

Media scholars in general agree that journalists are professionals, and there is a linkage between the values journalists hold and their perceived role of media (Plaisance & Skewes, 2003; Weaver, et al., 2007). By comparing professionals with the business élite and blue-collar workers, Brint (1985) found that, even though professionals tend to be liberal overall, their liberalness varies by issue. For example, on economic issues related to equality, professionals tend to be more conservative than blue-collar workers, much like the business élite. On welfare-related issues, however, professionals tend to support government spending on health and education much like the blue-collar workers (Brint, 1985). On civil rights and liberty issues, professionals take on traditional middle- or upper-class liberalism, as opposed to that of the lower class (Lipset, 1981). Such diversity in the liberalism of professionals might also apply to journalists, whose perceived professionalization would be affected by the values they possess. Thus,

*H3a. Journalists' perceived professionalization will vary by which kinds of issues that journalists tend to be liberal about. Journalists who are liberal on market-oriented issues are more likely to think positively about Western professionalism, while journalists who support state-oriented issues are more likely to think positively about party journalism and the literati tradition.*

The literati tradition directs that intellectuals abide by the Dao they believe in. But since the Dao does not usually have concrete forms, or is not usually identified with certain organizations, the intellectuals can only show the way through their individual behaviors and values (Yu, 1987). Thus,

*H3b. The impacts of individual values on journalists' perceptions of the literati tradition are more complex than those on their perceptions of party journalism and Western professionalism.*

### **Data and Method**

#### *Data*

A stratified (party organ vs. market-oriented media organization), proportional to population size (PPS) sampling was conducted from among three newspaper groups and 37 newspapers and magazines in

Guangzhou. Within each newspaper, 10% of the journalists whose names are listed in the registry of State Administration of Press and Publication were sampled. 146 responses to the 192 questionnaires issued were received, translating to a response rate of 76.04%.

#### *Control Variables*

Control variables include the individual's demographics, such as gender, income, political affiliation, marriage, income, education, and work experience (Table 1). Compared to their colleagues more than a decade ago (Chen, Zhu, & Wu, 1998), journalists in Guangzhou are younger, better educated, more likely to be female, and less likely to be a Communist Party member (Lin, 2008).

**Table 1. Basic Demographic Features of Guangzhou Journalists in 2005.**

	Mean	SD
Age	33.12	6.36
(Within working journalists)	32.06	0.59
(Within managing editors)	35.10	1.25
(Within executive editors)	44	2.04
Male (%)	0.56	0.49
Communist Party Member (%)	0.38	0.49
Married (%)	0.47	0.50
College education (%)	0.76	0.43
Master's degree or above (%)	0.19	0.40
Monthly income less than 5k RMB (%)	0.49	0.49
Working experience less than 2 years (%)	0.26	0.44
Fixed income is more 75% of total income	0.24	0.43
In market-based contract system	0.63	0.48

#### *Dependent Variables*

*Western professionalism* champions the independent watchdog function of media. In various surveys, journalists were frequently asked their opinions on the media's watchdog function as a proxy measurement of their attitude toward Western professionalism (Chan, Lee, & Lee, 1998; Pan & Chan, 2003). Following this, journalists were asked in this study, to rank in a likert scale the statement "news media should play an independent watchdog function" (role-as-ideal). Journalists were also asked to rank how well their current organizations perform this role (role-in-practice). The difference between the role-as-ideal and role-in-practice was then recorded. As shown in Table 2, the survey revealed that the organizations' actual performance of the watchdog function could not match the journalists' expectations ( $p = 0.000$  for one side sign test of "role-in-ideal is more important than role-in-practice").

**Table 2. Sign Test on Media's Watchdog Role and Advocacy Role.**

Media Role	Relationship	Observed	Expected	Sign Test
Watchdog	Role-in-ideal > Role-in-practice	64	36	Pr(#positive >= 64) = 0.0000
	Role-in-ideal < Role-in-practice	8	36	
	Role-in-ideal < Role-in-practice	59	59	
Advocacy	Role-in-ideal > Role-in-practice	21	32	Pr(#negative >= 43) = 0.0041
	Role-in-ideal < Role-in-practice	43	32	
	Role-in-ideal < Role-in-practice	67	67	

*Party journalism*, on the other hand, champions the advocacy role of media. Following the conventional measure of party journalism tendencies (Chan, et al., 1998; Pan & Chan, 2003), the journalists were asked to rank in a likert scale the statement "the news media should advocate the government's policies," as role-in-ideal, and then to evaluate, using the scale, how well their current organizations performed this role, as role-in-practice. As opposed to the journalists' views relative to the watchdog role of media, media organizations' actual performance to advocate the government's policies exceed the journalists' expectation ( $p = 0.004$  for one side sign test of "role-in-ideal is less important than role-in-practice").

The *Chinese literati tradition* was measured by the attitudes of the journalists toward internal reference. The respondents were asked whether they had prepared internal references and whether they agree with, disagree with, or are not sure about two statements: (1) "internal reference is a format for news media to carry out its watchdog function," and (2) "internal reference can effectively catch the attention from high-ranking officials and thus prove more effective in solving problems." The purpose of asking the foregoing is to elicit the journalists' views, behavior, and attitudes on internal reference, which will serve as a proxy for understanding the influence of the Chinese literati tradition on how journalists think about the effective methods to fulfill the watchdog function of the media.

Only 17% of respondents had written internal reports, while 80% agreed that "internal reporting serves as a watchdog function," and 67% agreed that "internal reporting can be more effective to solve problems." About 63% agreed with both statements, and only 4.7% disagreed with both statements (Table 3).

**Table 3. Proxy Measurement for the Chinese Literati Tradition.**

	Internal reporting serves as a watchdog function	Internal reporting can be more effective to solve problems
Disagree (-1)	7%	12%
Not Sure (0)	13%	21%
Agree (1)	80%	67%

If combining both statements:

Score	-2	-1	0	1	2
Percentage	4.7%	31.1%	18%	10.9%	63.3%

Readers might be concerned that the journalists' views regarding the advocacy role of media and their attitude towards internal reference may measure the same thing. Table 4 presents the relationship among the three elements which all coexist in the current journalistic practices: Western professionalism, party journalism, and the literati tradition. First, the perceived role-in-ideal of media is always positively associated to the corresponding role-in-practice, in both elements of Western professionalism (Kendall's Tau-b = 0.333,  $p = 0.000$ ) and party journalism (Kendall's Tau-b = 0.416,  $p = 0.000$ ). Second, the journalists' behaviors of writing internal reference are not significantly associated with their perceptions of media's advocacy role ( $p = 0.442$  for role-in-ideal, and  $p = 0.936$  for role-in-practice). Third, the journalists' attitudes toward internal reference are not associated with their perceptions of the watchdog function of media (Kendall's Tau-b = 0.095,  $p = 0.25$ ), but they are positively associated with their views on media's advocacy role-in-ideal (Kendall's Tau-b = 0.21,  $p = 0.009$ ). In other words, even though the practice of writing internal reference is part of party journalism, the attitude toward it reveals a value orientation that is more complex than overt identification with party journalism itself.

**Table 4. Relationship Among Three Elements.**

	Watchdog Role-in- ideal	Watchdog Role-in- practice	Advocacy Role-in- ideal	Advocacy Role-in- practice	Internal reference behavior	Internal reference attitude
Watchdog Role-in-ideal	1.0000					
Watchdog Role-in- practice	<b>0.3325</b> <b>0.0000</b>	1.0000				
Advocacy Role-in- ideal	0.0348 0.6603	0.1126 0.1400	1.0000			
Advocacy Role-in-practice	0.2489 0.0021	0.0412 0.5961	<b>0.4164</b> <b>0.0000</b>	1.0000		
Internal reference behavior	-0.0621 0.4655	0.0202 0.8081	0.0630 0.4423	0.0070 0.9360	1.0000	
Internal reference attitude	0.0951 0.2498	0.0292 0.7171	<b>0.2077</b> <b>0.0086</b>	0.1174 0.1480	<b>0.2168</b> <b>0.0104</b>	1.0000

*Independent Variables*

*Organizational environment* is measured by four variables: party organ, age of organization, circulation, and news media group (Table 5). On average, 35% of the organizations surveyed are party organs; while the average age of an organization is 24 years, with a range between 4 and 56 years. The average circulation for the previous year was 1.3 million copies. Beginning in 1996, it has become popular for Chinese newspapers to form newspaper groups. Within a group, newspapers share resources and administrative structure. Thus, news media group was included as a fixed effect in this set. Within party organs, 35% of journalists are in a market-based contract system, while in market-oriented organizations, a significantly higher 78% belong to said systems ( $t = 5.56$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

**Table 5. Organizational Environment Measurement.**

	Mean	SD
Age of Organization	23.8	20.8
Party organ (%)	0.35	0.48
Circulation in 2004 (000)	1,302	488
Group 1 (%)	0.46	0.50
Group 2 (%)	0.14	0.35
Group 3 (%)	0.40	0.49
Market-based contract system in party organs (%)	0.35	0.13
Market-based contract system in market-oriented organizations (%)	0.78	0.07

*Generational Experience*, on the other hand, is measured by age, experience in writing internal reference, and job rank. Table 1 presents the mean age for each job rank, with 32 years being the average age among working journalists, 35 among managing editors, and 44 among executive editors. The difference in the average age among the three groups is significant ( $F = 9.79$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). In addition, the average age of journalists belonging to party organs is 36 years, five years older than the average age of those belonging to market-oriented organizations ( $t = -4.216$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

*Professional Liberalism* is measured along social, political, and economic dimensions. Journalists were asked to indicate their opinions on three issues: homosexuality, nationalism, and property reform. The survey reveals that the journalists are inactively liberal, inasmuch as they hold liberal attitudes, but they do not want to actively persuade other people to accept their liberal views. Table 6 presents the basic summary of the surveyed journalists' attitudes on these three issues.

**Table 6. Journalists' Values on Social, Political and Economic Issues.**

## 6a on Nationalism:

Attitude + Behavior	Mean	SD
Support the movement + persuade others	0.08	0.02
Support the movement + don't persuade others	0.44	0.03
Don't support the movement + don't persuade others	0.38	0.02
Don't support the movement + persuade others	0.02	0.01
Don't care	0.08	0.02

## 6b. on Property Rights Reform:

	Mean	SD
Against the property reform	0.09	0.03
Support the reform but concern about its negative effects	0.36	0.04
Support the reform	0.54	0.04
Not sure	0.05	0.05

## 6c. on Homosexuality:

Attitude + Behavior	Mean	SD
Agree but don't want gay friends	0.42	0.02
Disagree and don't want gay friends	0.21	0.05
Welcome gay friends	0.35	0.03
Refuse to answer	0.02	0.03

Right before the survey was administered, Japan applied to join the United Nations, which triggered anti-Japanese sentiments among Chinese. There ensued an informal social protest against Japanese commodities at that time. 44% of the journalists supported the movement but would not persuade others to participate in it, and 38% opposed the movement but would not persuade others to do so either. Only 8% supported and would also persuade others to participate in it, and only 2% opposed it and would persuade others to do so as well. Also, 8% indicated that they do not care about the issue. In other words, about 52% of the surveyed journalists have a nationalistic attitude, but 80% of them do not want to promote their attitudes (Table 6a).

During the survey, the economist Lang Xianping's strong critique against the property rights reform triggered a wave of rethinking of the economic reform. 54% of the surveyed journalists support the reform, while 9% think the reform is heading in the wrong direction. The rest think the reform is on the right track, but they either blame the reform for the increasing wealth inequality or complain that the reform process lacks transparency (Table 6b).

When asked about their attitude toward homosexuality, 35% of the surveyed journalists did not mind having homosexual friends, 42% said they respect individual choice but do not want to have gay

friends, and 21% were against homosexuality and did not want to have homosexual friends. 2% refused to answer the question (Table 6c).

It might be a concern that the journalists' professional views (dependent variables) and individual values (political, economic, and social values) might measure the same thing. However, the correlations between these two sets of measurements are low. As shown in Table 7, none of the individual values have statistically significant associations with the professional views, except liberalism on homosexuality reform, which is negatively associated with attitude on internal reference (tau-b = -0.252, p = 0.002).

**Table 7. Correlations Between Professional Views and Individual Values (measured by Kendall's Tau-b, and 5% level).**

	Watchdog (Role Difference)	Advocacy (Role Difference)	Internal reference behavior	Internal reference attitude
Homosexuality	0.1223 0.1366	-0.0288 0.7140	-0.1435 0.0847	<b>-0.2516</b> <b>0.0017</b>
Property Rights Reform	0.0884 0.2945	0.0139 0.8640	0.0633 0.4592	0.1419 0.0845
Nationalism	0.0871 0.3057	0.1096 0.1794	-0.0974 0.2645	0.0466 0.5794

**Analysis**

The ordered logistic model has been a powerful tool for analyzing ordered categorical responses, assuming categorization of an unknown continuous response of a specified distribution type (McCullagh & Nelder, 1989). It transfers a cumulative probability (equation 1) into a cumulative logit (equation 2), and then models the cumulative logit as a linear function of independent variables, as shown in equation 3.

Define a cumulative probability  $\phi_{ij}$  as the probability that the  $i$ th individual is in the  $j$ th or higher category on a specific question:

$$\phi_{ij} = \Pr(y_i \leq j) = \sum_{k=1}^j \Pr(y_i = k) \quad (1)$$

and transfer  $\phi_{ij}$  into a cumulative logit as:

$$\eta_{ij} = \log \left( \frac{\phi_{ij}}{1 - \phi_{ij}} \right) \quad (2)$$

The transferred cumulative logit is modeled as:

$$\eta_{ij} = \alpha_j - \beta X_i \quad (3)$$

where  $\alpha_j$  indicates the logit of the odds of being equal to or less than category  $j$  for the baseline group when all independent variables are zero. In this specific setting, this model indicates how different factors affect the odds for a journalist to have a more positive view of Western professionalism, the literati tradition, and party journalism in his or her perceived professionalization.

## Results

Table 8 presents the results. The first set of hypotheses focuses on how organizational environment affects the perceptions of Western professionalism, party journalism, and the literati tradition.

The political nature of a media organization has dominant impacts. All other conditions being equal, it is less likely that the performance of the watchdog function by the party organ where a journalist works has failed said journalist's expectation, while it is more likely that the party organ's performance of its advocacy role has matched the journalist's expectation. It is also more likely that a journalist who works for a party organ will have a positive attitude toward the literati tradition than his colleagues in a market-oriented media organization. Furthermore, the odds that a journalist who works in an organization with more circulation will have more positive views of Western professionalism (and thus be more unsatisfied with the organization's performance of its watchdog function) are 2% higher than those of his colleagues in organizations with lower circulation. The same higher odds are true with respect to having a bigger gap between role-in-ideal and role-in-practice in the case of party journalism (1% higher), and in having more positive views of the literati tradition (2.4% higher). However, the type of employment relationship, after controlling other factors, does not present a significant impact on the three elements. And there is quite a lot of difference across these three media groups. In a nutshell, organizational constraints have similar impacts on the journalists' attitudes concerning party journalism and the literati tradition, as opposed to those on Western professionalism.

The second set of hypotheses concerns the influence of generational experience. On Western professionalism, age, rank, and experience in writing internal reports do not present significant impact. It seems that the rise of Western professionalism is more of an organizational construction than something that has arisen through the deeds of individuals. On the contrary, experience in writing internal reference



shows strong positive impact on the journalists' views on both party journalism and the literati tradition. The odds that journalists who had written internal reports would feel satisfied with their organizations' performance of media's advocacy role and would have more positive views of the literati tradition are 2.21 and 6 times, respectively, than the odds for those who had not written internal reports. Additionally, those belonging to older generations tend to think more highly of the literati tradition than those from younger generations.

The third set of hypotheses emphasizes the impacts on the three elements by professional liberalism, as exemplified in the diversified dimensions of the values of individuals. The laissez-faire values are the driving values associated with the journalists' attitudes on Western professionalism, while nationalism is the crucial value shaping journalists' views on party journalism. More specifically, the odds for journalists who hold liberal attitudes on property right reform to think positively of Western professionalism are 1.98 times higher than those for journalists who hold conservative positions on the property rights reform. Meanwhile, journalists with strong nationalistic attitudes think more positively of party journalism than those with weak nationalistic attitudes (the odds are 1.21 times higher for those with strong nationalistic attitudes).

**Table 8. Ordered Logistic Regression on Three Types of Elements.**

Mechanisms	Variables	Western Professionalism	Party Journalism	Literati Tradition
Organizational Construction	Party organ	-3.072 **	4.083***	5.723**
	Circulation in 2005	.018***	-.010***	-.024**
	Age of an organization	.011 ***	-.134***	-.112**
	Market-based employment system	.587	.004	.477
	House Allowance	-1.586 **	1.978	1.591
	Group 1	1.150	.021	.224
	Group 2	-0.614	1.205	-1.034
Generational Experience	Age	-.0180	-.003	.141 **
	High rank	-0.092	-.163	-1.609
	Middle rank	-.293	-.736	-.944
	Written Internal Report	-.679	.793***	1.866***
Professional Liberalism	Liberal attitude in social value	1.216	-.247	-1.404*

	Liberal attitude in economic value	.685***	.427	1.513***
	Strong nationalism	-.337	1.163**	1.073***
Demographic features	Male	.151	-1.308***	-1.228
	Communist party member	.817	.343	.901
	Bachelor's degree or above	4.008***	-.621	-.355
	Married	-.077	.416	-.981
	Low income	.741	.275	-2.050***
	Working years	-.257	-.190	-.963

\* For the elements of Western professionalism and party journalism, the difference between role-in-idea and role-in-practice is measured.

The impacts of professional liberalism on the literati tradition are more complex than those on Western professionalism and party journalism. A liberal attitude on homosexuality tends to lower the probability for a journalist to associate himself with the literati tradition, in contrast to the effect of a liberal attitude on property rights and a strong nationalism attitude, which are correlated with journalists' positive views on the literati tradition. Such a complexity echoes the characteristics of the literati tradition. On one hand, the Way (Dao) is the most crucial standard to which intellectuals endeavor to hold themselves in public affairs. However, the Way (Dao) does not have a concrete form; thus, intellectuals have to rely more on their behaviors and values as individuals to carry out the Way (Dao) in which they believe (Yu, 1987). In this sense, an individual's values present more complex impacts on the journalists' perceptions of the literati tradition than those of Western professionalism or party journalism. Meanwhile, organizational constraints deeply rooted in the connection between Confucianism and Maoism also cast huge impacts on the literati tradition. In the ideal type of party journalism, Maoism — also known as Confucianism in a Leninist jacket (Fairbank, 1979) — is the dominant ideology. Maoism shares some similarities with Confucianism, such as the belief in élites and the view that the collective interest is higher than that of the individual. However, in the tradition of party journalism, it is the party's discipline which is the institutional guarantee of collective interest (Lee, 2004), rather than the intellectual's consciousness (the formless Dao).

### **Conclusion**

To recap, this study presents evidence of coexistence of three elements — Western professionalism, party journalism, and the literati tradition — in the current journalistic professionalization in the PRC, and it examines how those elements are shaped through three mechanisms — organizational construction, generational experience, and professional liberalism.

By analyzing the data collected through a survey of Chinese journalists, the study abandoned the conventional dichotomous analysis of professionalization in a transitional society. Rather than viewing the journalistic professionalization as a process in which the Western professionalism rises as an opposite ideology to challenge the dominant party journalism, it is argued that the literati tradition has localized the meaning of Western professionalism, thus providing a latent alternative ideology to the dominant party journalism. Ignoring this latent alternative will lead to misinterpretation of the variation and complexity of journalistic behavior in the current PRC.

The study then further explores how the different elements are shaped in the Chinese context. First, organizational environment, especially the political nature of an organization, plays a significant role in constructing the journalists' professional ethics. Correspondingly, the circulation of the newspaper strengthens the journalists' identification with Western professionalism, but casts an opposite effect on their identification with party journalism and the literati tradition. Second, individual factors are more influential in promoting the Chinese literati tradition than both Western professionalism and party journalism. Third, the impacts of professional liberalism on the above three elements are not homogenous. Laissez-faire economic values lead to the journalists' positive views of Western professionalism, while strong nationalist attitudes lead to positive views on party journalism. The individual's social, economic, and political values combine to shape a journalist's attitude on the literati tradition.

Unfortunately, the survey data have some major limitations that could hamper further efforts to explore the linkage between an organization and the individual journalists. First, this is not a longitudinal set of data. Even though the analysis presents how organizational environments and individual factors affect the journalists' perceptions of their professionalization, there is not much that can be said on the long-term dynamics between the organizational and individual factors. Second, one group of newspapers which includes one of the oldest newspapers was under-sampled due to practical reasons, resulting in the possibility that the effects of the "age of organization" could have been underestimated.

In addition, the Chinese state-media regime has been diversified, differentiated, and even fragmented along various aspects, including news niches, commercialization, development of technology, professionalization, and so on. Various studies have been conducted at the state and organizational level. The heterogeneity at the individual level definitely deserves further scrutiny to fully appreciate the whole picture of political communication transition.

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