Professional Aspirations and Job Satisfaction: Chinese Journalists at a Time of Change in the Media

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This study examines how Shanghai journalists' professional aspirations are related to their job satisfaction in times of social change. Similar to their counterparts in the West, Shanghai journalists derive satisfaction from job autonomy. However, those who prefer party media as ideal news outlets demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction. The reverse is not true for those embracing Western professional media as ideals. Job satisfaction is also positively associated with the journalists' emphasis on the interpretive role of the media, a belief rooted in Chinese party-press ideology. Stronger positive valuation of professional media relative to that of the party media strengthens the positive relationship between job autonomy and job satisfaction. Implications of the findings are discussed in the understanding of media changes in China and journalistic professionalism in general.

If job satisfaction indicates a profession's well-being, the journalistic profession in the People's Republic of China (PRC) appears surprisingly healthy. A 1994 nationwide survey reports that 72% of PRC journalists were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their job.[1] The figure is comparable to that from a survey of American journalists in the early 1990s, in which 77% of U.S. journalists chose the same answers.[2] Another study conducted in 1996 and 1997 shows that, when compared with their counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan, PRC journalists reported higher levels of overall job satisfaction.[3]

However, one cannot neglect what these findings might disguise. China's media reforms in the past twenty-five years have been beset by tensions, setbacks, and contradictions. Researchers have characterized the precarious steps in terms such as "commercialization without independence"[4] or "professionalization without guarantees."[5] Chinese journalists are said to be torn between two masters: the party and the public.[6] While media reforms brought journalists higher degrees of day-to-day operational freedom,[7] government control still reigns. Journalism remains under-developed in terms of both professional ideology and institutional framework.[8]

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In such a context, from where do Chinese journalists derive their job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction)? What factors do they consider? The present study addresses these questions by way of the concept of professional aspirations. Professional aspirations refer to a set of normative ideals and beliefs that members of a profession uphold. For journalists, these include things such as job autonomy, journalism models, and ideal media roles.[9] Focusing on professional aspirations, we seek to understand journalists not merely as workers within organizations but also as professionals within a social institution. This allows us to link journalists' job satisfaction to the (under)development of professionalism, a central theme in China's media reforms. This conceptual approach is particularly useful for understanding China's ongoing media reforms, which are changing both media organizations and the relationships between journalism and other social institutions.[10] Although PRC journalists' professional aspirations have inspired many reform measures, they have also been tamed by persistent political control over the media on one hand, and by market corruption on the other.[11]

The perspective adopted in this study is also important for studying the journalistic profession in general. Often seen as a vocation serving the public interest, journalism is regarded by many not merely as a career, but also a profession built on commitment to a set of broadly shared ideals.[12] Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the journalistic profession as much as it seeks to understand journalism in China.

Journalists as Professionals with Aspirations

Job satisfaction refers to a worker's overall evaluation of his or her job. It involves synthesizing various attributes of one's work and work-related experiences in light of one's values, ideals, and beliefs.[13] Workers' job satisfaction could affect the efficiency and productivity of an organization.[14] At the individual level, job satisfaction could affect a person's everyday life and health, and how long the person will remain on the job.[15]

Many past studies have focused on the effect of organizational conditions on journalists' job satisfaction. Some find that organizational size affects job satisfaction negatively, as larger organizations have more rules and policies restricting employees' autonomy.[16] But Demers found a positive relationship between the two among top-level editors of U.S. daily newspapers. He attributed the positive relationship to the status, power, and prestige that they enjoy.[17] Other researchers studied how changes in organizational policies and structure affect job satisfaction, and found a general resistance among journalists toward such changes.[18]

Alternatively, one can look at journalists as professionals within an institution and examine how their beliefs about professionalism affect their job satisfaction. A general view among scholars is that journalists derive job satisfaction from both tangible rewards (such as salary and fringe benefits) and professional rewards (such as job autonomy and serving the public interest). A sense of professionalism is related to higher levels of job satisfaction. Both Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman, and Weaver and Wilhoit found that, among U.S. journalists, those who

upheld the dominant professional value of neutrality tended to be more satisfied with their job.[19] Pollard treated autonomy, authority, and control as "the hallmarks of professionalism" and showed that one's journalistic professionalism is related to satisfaction positively even after controlling for various organizational attributes.[20]

However, the notion of "professional journalism" is problematic even in the United States.[21] Some scholars have pointed out its deficiencies as a model of journalism and exposed its "dubious" empirical and historical validity. Critical scholars have argued that the overall effect of professionalism is to reinforce the status quo, that it masks the allocative control exerted by the business side of a news organization on news making.[22] Yet few would argue against the descriptive statement that canons of journalistic professionalism continue to inform journalists about their profession in the United States.[23] In contemporary China, "professional journalism" is even more problematic because no model of journalism is truly dominant.[24] The limited operational freedom allotted to journalists and media organizations during the reforms allows journalists to improvise practices derived from diverse normative models.[25] In the late 1980s, Polumbaum found that many journalists in China regarded increasing their job autonomy as a key objective of media reforms.[26] Such aspirations were crushed in the wake of the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989. When the reforms resumed and accelerated in the 1990s, "marketization" became the buzzword. Serving the public was now diluted as greater stress was placed on audience profiles and advertising revenues. As a result, the quest for job autonomy was often tied to the quest among journalists for personal financial gain.[27]

Nevertheless, professionalism remains an aspiration among Chinese journalists. Here, we use the term "professionalism" in a broad sense to refer to the conception of journalism as an institution independent from the control of political and economic powers, and in which practitioners' activities are guided by and justified in terms of professional norms and values. In the process of professionalization, many Chinese journalists treat their Western counterparts as models. Although their perceptions of Western journalists may be superficial or even wrong, many Chinese journalists adopt Western exemplars, and import the Western vocabulary of professional journalism into China's local context. They may do this in order to navigate through the political land mines and/or to justify their entrepreneurial adventure in financial or consumer markets.[28] Field observations have led some to detect among Chinese journalists a deep-rooted commitment to the interests of the public, to quality journalism based on the principle of factuality, and to practices consistent with ethical principles.[29] While marketization of the 1990s has bred what is called "junk-food journalism,"[30] it has also led to the emergence of a socially conscientious and at times critical journalism, of the kind seen in such productions as *News Probe* on China Central Television (CCTV), an investigative journalism show modeled on *60 Minutes*, and the highly acclaimed *Southern Weekend*, a weekly widely regarded as "the conscience of Chinese journalism" among practitioners and students of journalism. These productions, albeit in different forms, attest to the persistence of PRC journalists' professional aspirations.[31]

This study examines how two aspects of journalists' professional aspirations (their ideal models of journalism and their beliefs about media roles in society) relate to their job satisfaction ratings. Based upon previous studies,[32] we also examine the impact of perceived job autonomy on job satisfaction. Our first hypothesis is derived directly from past research:

> H1: Job autonomy is positively related to job satisfaction among Chinese journalists.

This study builds upon Pan and Chan's recent analysis of journalists' evaluations of selected media outlets.[33] These evaluations involved asking journalists how close each outlet was to their "ideal news media." A confirmatory factor analysis revealed two factors undergirding these evaluations: the party organs as ideal media and the Western media as ideal media. Those who regard Western media as ideals tend to place more emphasis on the information dissemination role of the media and on a broad liberal arts training in journalism education. Those who regard the party organs as ideals tend to emphasize the media's interpretive role and the training of journalists in party policies. Based on the evidence, Pan and Chan argue that the two journalism models embody two distinct journalistic paradigms, party journalism and "professional journalism." Following their logic, we examine how these models are related to journalists' job satisfaction.

The very existence of a model may impel journalists to emulate it because such a model allows journalists to ascribe meanings to their work. Having an ideal model means holding a bar for measuring achievement; it poses challenges to journalists. When their working environment allows them to meet such challenges, journalists are likely to feel more satisfied with their jobs. However, if an ideal is incongruent with their working environment, holding such an ideal may lead to frustration and thus dissatisfaction. Following this argument and considering the current conditions in China, where the fundamentals of the party-press system remain intact,[34] we set up our second and third hypotheses as follows:

> H2: Journalists who regard party organs as closer to their ideal have higher levels of job satisfaction.

> H3: Journalists who regard Western professional media as closer to their ideal have lower levels of job satisfaction.

Based on the relationships between ideal media appraisals and media role beliefs observed previously,[35] we follow the same logic to derive the following hypotheses:

> H4: Journalists who emphasize media roles that are congruent with the media environment in China have higher levels of job satisfaction.

H5: Journalists who emphasize media roles that are incongruent with the media environment in China have lower levels of job satisfaction.

Journalists with different professional aspirations may also derive satisfaction from different aspects of their job. More specifically, we expect a *differential* emphasis on job autonomy between those who adopt party organs as their ideal and those who adopt Western professional media as their ideal. Since job autonomy is a defining feature of journalistic professionalism, we expect that journalists who uphold the Western media as the ideal would derive their satisfaction more from their sense of job autonomy. This argument is stated as the following interaction hypothesis:

H6: Journalists who rate Western professional media as closer to their ideal exhibit a stronger positive relationship between their job autonomy and job satisfaction than those who rate party organs as closer to their ideal.

Similarly, one's ideal model of journalism may also condition the effects of media role beliefs on job satisfaction. The arguments for H4 and H5 and those for H6 lead to the following two interaction hypotheses:

H7: Journalists who rate party media as closer to their ideal exhibit a stronger positive relationship between their job satisfaction and emphasis on the media roles that are congruent with party journalism.

H8: Journalists who rate professional media as closer to their ideal exhibit a stronger negative relationship between their job satisfaction and emphasis on the media roles that are incongruent with the media environment in China.

Method and Data

The survey was conducted in Shanghai, a coastal metropolis in China, between February and May 2002. A probability sample of 515 full-time journalists, defined as those whose primary responsibility in an organization is to produce news and editorial content, was drawn from the staff rosters of ten media organizations through a systematic sampling procedure.[36] Trained graduate students delivered questionnaires to each organization, with the help of an internal coordinator. Respondents filled out the questionnaires in their spare time and returned them to the internal coordinator, who then returned the questionnaires to the graduate students. The procedure yielded 420 completed interviews, for a response rate of 82%. The final sample has 43% females and 29% broadcast journalists. The average age is about 34 years old. The respondents have been in the profession for, on average, nearly ten years.

Job Satisfaction. Job satisfaction has been approached as a multidimensional construct. In a classic analysis, Herzberg identifies two dimensions of job satisfaction.[37] Extrinsic satisfaction is derived from

tangible rewards such as salary and fringe benefits, while intrinsic satisfaction is derived from the more intangible aspects of work, such as autonomy, the feeling of having a challenging job, etc.[38] Some studies in psychology and management science, however, have adopted a more elaborate five-dimension conceptualization, capturing satisfaction with work itself, supervision, co-workers, promotion opportunities, and pay.[39]

There are similarities and differences between the two conceptualizations. Pay and promotion opportunities are "extrinsic" aspects of one's job, while satisfaction with work itself is basically equivalent to "intrinsic satisfaction." The five-dimension conceptualization is more sensitive to the fact that, even in bureaucratic organizations, workers are not simply cogs in machines. Their interactions with colleagues are human interactions involving emotional investment. This conception adds, among other things, relationships among colleagues as a unique dimension.

This study will examine job satisfaction as a three-dimensional construct that involves extrinsic, intrinsic, and relation satisfaction. We developed a set of 11 Likert-scaled questions on whether respondents are satisfied with various aspects of their job, followed by a twelfth question on overall job satisfaction. A factor analysis of the 11 questions resulted in 3 clean factors which correspond to the 3 dimensions in our conceptualization:

(1) Extrinsic satisfaction includes satisfaction with "income and compensation," "fringe benefits," "schedule flexibility," and "chance of promotion" (alpha = .73).

(2) Intrinsic satisfaction includes satisfaction with "sense of achievement in work," "social impact of work," "opportunities for creativity," and "job autonomy" (alpha = .83).

(3) Relation satisfaction includes satisfaction with "relations with colleagues" and "supervisor's ability" (alpha = .62).

Ideal Journalism Models. We asked journalists to rate 12 news organizations/outlets in terms of how close each is to their ideal news organization/outlet. The answers were recorded on a 5-point scale ranging from "very far" to "very close." These ratings form three factors. The first factor includes 5 party media organizations in China: *People's Daily, CCTV, Guangming Daily, Liberation Daily,* and *Xinming Daily.* The second factor includes 4 foreign media organizations: *NYT, CNN, the BBC, and Phoenix,* together with the critical *Southern Weekend.* The third factor includes 2 Internet-based news outlets, *Yahoo* and *Sina.com.*[40] An index of party media as ideal was constructed by averaging journalists' ratings of the 5 party media (alpha = .77). An index for professional media as ideal was similarly constructed by averaging journalists' ratings of the 4 foreign media and the *Southern Weekend* (alpha = .84).[41]

Job Autonomy. A set of questions asked respondents how much influence various actors (e.g., advertisers, interviewees, and supervisors) have on their selection of news topics, reporting and writing of stories, and whether the stories would be actually used. Respondents were then asked to rate, with a 10-point scale (1 = very low, 10 = very

high), their overall job autonomy by considering all the aforementioned aspects.

Media Role Beliefs. The survey included a battery of 18 statements about media functions, some adopted from previous studies[42] and some designed according to the situation of China. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important and 5 = very important), whether they regarded the functions as important or not. Based upon factor and reliability analyses, 4 indices were created using 13 of the 18 statements. The 4 indices, all having acceptable reliability levels,[43] captured the 4 media roles specified by Weaver and Wilhoit: interpretive, adversarial, dissemination, and popular advocacy.[44]

Control Variables. Control variables used in the analysis include respondents' gender, age, income, education, college major, years in journalism, media type of the current job, position within the organization, commitment to journalism, and overseas exposure.[45]

Results

Shanghai Journalists' Level of Job Satisfaction. First, it is useful to summarize the respondents' level of job satisfaction. As Table 1 shows, Shanghai journalists are quite satisfied with their jobs (a mean of 3.21 on a 5-point scale for overall job satisfaction), a result consistent with previous findings. In addition, Shanghai journalists are satisfied with the intrinsic attributes of their jobs and their relations with superiors and colleagues. However, they are much less satisfied with certain extrinsic aspects of their jobs, primarily salary, fringe benefits, and opportunities for promotion. Repeated measures ANOVA shows that levels of satisfaction with working relationships were significantly higher than satisfaction with the extrinsic aspects of the job. Moreover, at least in terms of mean scores, Shanghai journalists seem to align their overall job satisfaction more with their intrinsic and relation satisfaction than with their extrinsic satisfaction. Further analysis suggests that intrinsic attributes weigh more in their overall ratings of job satisfaction.[46]

A regression analysis was conducted to examine how demographic variables relate to job satisfaction. Consistent with the literature,[47] these models yield only weak to moderate predictive power, accounting for 6.5% of the variance in intrinsic satisfaction, 12.8% in extrinsic satisfaction, 5.2% in relation satisfaction, and 7.5% in overall satisfaction. Our hypotheses are tested after controlling for these predictors.[48]

Professional Aspirations and Job Satisfaction. To test the main effect hypotheses, the independent variables specified in each of the hypotheses were added as separate blocks in each regression model after the controls. This approach allows us to examine the effects of each set of predictors without the interference of the covariance across different sets of predictors.

Table 2 summarizes the analysis. H1 is supported, as job autonomy is strongly and positively related to all four measures of job satisfaction. It relates most strongly to overall job satisfaction, account-

TABLE 1
Mean Comparisons in Levels of Job Satisfaction by Domains

Satisfaction Measures	Mean	s.d.	t-value[1]
Intrinsic Attributes			
Social Impact of Work	3.21[2]	.91	4.62
Sense of Achievement in Work	3.10	.91	2.29
Opportunities for Creativity	3.14	.97	2.82
Job Autonomy	3.12	1.02	2.46
Extrinsic Attributes			
Income and Compensation	2.62	.89	-8.56
Fringe Benefits	2.74	.89	-5.85
Schedule Flexibility	3.16	1.02	3.19
Chance of Promotion	2.78	.87	-5.04
Working Relationships			
Supervisor's Ability	3.59	.97	12.19
Relations with Colleagues	3.78	.81	19.22
Intrinsic Satisfaction[3] (α = .83)	3.14	.75	3.17
Extrinsic Satisfaction (α = .73)	2.83	.66	-5.04
Relation Satisfaction (α = .62)	3.69	.74	18.17
Overall Satisfaction	3.21	.78	5.36

Notes:
1. Obtained via one-sample t-test against 3, the mid-point of the scale. A t-value at 1.96 is significant at $p \le .05$; a t-value at 2.58 is significant at $p \le .01$ level.
2. Actual sample sizes range from 395 to 409 for the individual indicators. Missing values were replaced with means before averaging, thus actual sample sizes for the indices are 420.
3. Alpha values are calculated after replacing the missing values.

ing for more than 12% of the variance. And it relates relatively weakly with extrinsic satisfaction, but it still accounts for 4.2% of the variance. These findings underscore the generality of similar findings from other societies.[49]

H2 and H3 predict significant relationships between job satisfaction and ideal models of journalism. H2 is supported, as journalists who hold party organs as close to their ideal have higher levels of job satisfaction across all four measures. Judging by the incremental R^2, which ranges from 3.8% to 8.4%, the variable of party organ as ideal is a robust predictor of job satisfaction. H3, however, receives no support, as journalists who regard Western professional media as close to their ideal do not have lower levels of satisfaction.

H4 and H5 predict relationships between beliefs in media roles and job satisfaction. Given the continuing party control of the media in China, it can be argued that the interpretive function of the media, expressed in statements including "providing explanations on government policies," "helping people understand party and government policies," and so on, is most congruent with the current media environment. At the other end, the adversarial function is least congruent with

TABLE 2
Multiple Regression Analysis on Job Satisfaction

Predictors		Intrinsic Attributes[b]	Material Benefits	Work Relations	Overall
Demographic Factors[a]	R^2	.065**	.128**	.052**	.075**
Job Autonomy		.333**	.208**	.249**	.356**
	ΔR^2	.107**	.042**	.060**	.122**
Media Role Beliefs					
Interpretive		.161**	.203**	.173**	.259**
Adversarial		-.078	-.100*	-.096#	-.081
Dissemination		.003	.074	.074	.081
Popular Advocacy		.072	-.083	.141*	-.003
	ΔR^2	.037**	.045**	.082**	.079**
Media Exemplar Assessments					
Party-organs as Ideals		.263**	.270**	.201**	.301**
Professional Media as Ideals		.046	.032	.042	.004
	ΔR^2	.065**	.067**	.038**	.084**

Notes:
a. Demographic factors include sex, age, years in journalism, educational level, college major, income, overseas exposure, media type, reporter status, and commitment to journalism.
b. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients and each ΔR^2 is from an equation with each bloc entered after the demographic predictors.
$n = 420$
$p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

the fact of government control of the media. The other two functions—dissemination and advocacy—are somewhere in between. Government control may hamper the media's ability to provide timely and accurate information to the public, as well as their ability to reflect public opinion. Nevertheless, being the public's advocate is actually recognized as a key media role in the theory of party journalism.[50] Hence, the advocacy function might not be incongruent with the state-controlled media environment.

Placed in this context, Table 2 lends clear support for H4, emphasizing the media's interpretive role is significantly related to all four job satisfaction measures ($p < .01$). The support for H5 is much less clear-cut, though. While emphasizing the media's adversarial role is negatively related to all four job satisfaction measures, only two of the four coefficients reach or approach statistical significance. The dissemination function is not related to any of the job satisfaction measures. The advocacy function is only positively related to satisfaction with working relationships.

Ideal Models of Journalism as Conditional Variables. Given the complexity of China's media reforms and the multiplicity of journalism ideals, main effects tend to oversimplify the influence of professional

TABLE 3

Analysis of Ideal Model of Journalism as Conditional Variable

Predictors	Scores on Foreign Media Relative to Party Media	Intrinsic Attributes	Material Benefits	Work Relations	Overall
Job Autonomy	Minimum	.090	-.044	.227	-.040
	Maximum	.687	.467	.256	.774
	p-value	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	<.05
Media Role Beliefs[a]					
Interpretive	Minimum	.510	.364	.490	.660
	Maximum	-.239	-.104	.050	-.233
	p-value	<.05	n.s.	n.s.	<.01
Adversarial	Minimum	.192	.022	-.026	.148
	Maximum	-.226	-.165	.096	-.154
	p-value	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Dissemination	Minimum	.183	.317	.077	.383
	Maximum	-.004	-.141	.379	-.049
	p-value	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Popular Advocacy	Minimum	.258	.112	.314	.536
	Maximum	-.052	-.140	.091	-.364
	p-value	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	<.01

Notes:
a. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients calculated when relative model preference was at the sample minimum (-3.20) or was at the sample maximum (4.00). Each interaction term was assessed separately, entered after all the demographic predictors and the main-effect factors. Each *p*-value is from the *t*-test of the regression coefficient of the corresponding interaction term.

aspirations on job satisfaction. The fact that H3 is not supported hints at possible complexities and calls for further exploration of how journalists' professional ideals affect their job evaluations. One way to explore this is to focus on the conditional effects of professional aspirations as stated in H6 through H8.

To test the hypotheses, we subtracted the respondents' scores on the party media index from their scores on the Western media index to produce a variable representing journalists' relative preference for professional media over the party media. This relative preference variable was then used to construct interaction terms with job autonomy and the media role indices respectively. Five two-way interaction terms were created by following the centering procedure to reduce multicollinearity.[51] Each interaction was entered into the regression model separately after all the demographic controls and the corresponding main-effect variables. To facilitate interpretation, we calculated the standardized regression coefficients of job autonomy and each of the media role variables at the sample minimum and maximum of the relative media model preference. The results are shown in Table 3.

The evidence yields some support for H6. Although only one of the four interactions is statistically significant, they are all in the same direction. Levels of job satisfaction are higher among those who feel a greater degree of job autonomy, but particularly for those who prefer professional media ($p<.05$). When the relative preference for professional media is lowest, job autonomy has no impact ($\beta=-.040$) on job satisfaction. When such a preference is at the highest level, the impact of job autonomy on job satisfaction is .77.

Relative model preference is also an important contingent condition for the effects of media role beliefs on job satisfaction. Consistent with H7, emphasis on the media's interpretive role interacts negatively with relative preference for the professional model. That is, the positive effect of believing in the media's interpretive role on job satisfaction is reduced when journalists strongly prefer professional media over party media. All four coefficients are in the same direction, and two of them (on intrinsic satisfaction and on overall satisfaction) are statistically significant. To a lesser extent, the same holds true for believing in the popular advocacy role of the media.

However, there is no support for H8, for which one would need evidence of a negative interaction between belief in the media's adversarial role and relative model preference. In Table 2, we have seen that preference for the Western media does not impinge negatively upon journalists' job satisfaction. Here, we see that the relative preference for Western professional journalism does not condition the relationship between the belief in media's adversarial role and job satisfaction. It is possible that PRC journalists, enjoying visible gains in autonomy in their daily work and official support for "critical investigative reporting,"[52] no longer see Western professional journalism as incongruent with their current situation. Another possibility is that Chinese journalists may not think that an adversarial posture on the part of the media is a logical derivative of only the normative model of journalistic professionalism in the West. Evidence for this latter argument can be found in the collaboration between the political authority and journalists toward supporting "critical media coverage."[53] We also observed in our field research that many of the journalists who look to the West for inspiration have become less sanguine about journalistic professionalism in the West. They often cite U.S. media reports of international conflicts, such as the first Gulf War and the NATO bombing of Serbia, as indications of ideological masking in Western "professional" journalism.[54]

Discussion

Shanghai journalists have moderately high levels of job satisfaction, especially regarding work relations and intrinsic rewards. However, they are less satisfied with their jobs' material rewards. Similar to their Western counterparts, perceived job autonomy has a positive effect on Shanghai journalists' job satisfaction, but the effect is stronger among those who prefer the Western model of professional journalism. Those who see party media as closer to their ideal show higher levels of job satisfaction. However, endorsing Western professional media as ideal does not have the opposite effect. Emphasizing the interpretive role of

the media, a belief deeply rooted in the Chinese party-press ideology, boosts Shanghai journalists' job satisfaction. But this effect is again conditioned by relative preference of media models. Emphases on the interpretive role, and to a lesser extent, the advocacy role of media contribute less to job satisfaction among those who prefer the Western professional model of journalism.

These findings point to the importance of taking into account journalists' ideal press models in understanding their job satisfaction. The ideal models reflect journalists' aspirations, and possibly determine journalists' career goals and professional identities. It is only reasonable to expect the levels and determinants of journalists' job satisfaction to vary as journalists understand their work differently. For example, job autonomy, widely regarded as a defining attribute of professionals, has a large impact on journalists' evaluation of their work. Such an effect, however, may be more meaningful in a liberal democracy, where professionalism is the dominant interpretive framework for journalists evaluating their work.[55] In a society where the media are undergoing major changes and diverse models of journalism are mixed in journalists' thoughts and work, as is the case in China,[56] it would be important to consider the contingent effects of job autonomy on job satisfaction.

Our results reveal that journalists' professional aspirations have significant but complex impacts on their job satisfaction. First, professional aspirations reflected in job autonomy, media roles, and journalistic ideals predict different job satisfaction indices, especially intrinsic and overall satisfaction. Second, journalists develop and maintain their professional aspirations and ideals in specific and concrete contexts. The (in)congruence between their aspirations and the realities they face thus also impinges on their job satisfaction. Lower job satisfaction may result when journalists aspiring to the professional model of journalism find it difficult to put it into practice in the Chinese context. More generally, journalists in Western societies may also have their job satisfaction dampened by the incongruence between their aspirations and the realities they encounter.

The special and changing features of China's media reforms explain some of our results. First, there is no evidence of a simple negative relationship between acceptance of the Western professional model and job satisfaction. Only among those journalists whose relative preference is for the Western model do we see some evidence supporting the hypothesis of lower satisfaction due to the ideal-reality gap. Yet even these negative relations are not strong enough for us to reach any definite conclusion. What is clear is that lower levels of satisfaction exist among those who accept the Western professional model and reject the party model simultaneously. It is possible that for many Chinese journalists, these two models are not directly contradictory in their everyday professional activities.

Second, the evidence provides some basis for us to address the issue posed at the beginning of this article. That is, Chinese journalists are found to enjoy a relatively high level of job satisfaction even though they work in an environment that still places many restrictions on their job autonomy and ability to serve the public. One possibility is that Chinese

journalists today are no longer the idealistic enthusiasts that they were in the 1980s. This may be the case to some extent, evidenced in part by journalists engaging in unethical practices for personal financial gain.[57] But this imputation must be made with extreme care, as field evidence suggests a strong emphasis on professional standards and public services in journalists' work.[58]

Another possibility is that, to most Chinese journalists, the party-press model remains hegemonic, so they see no great problem with the current media environment. Our findings show that this is not the case, as our survey respondents rated the Western professional media as closer to their ideal. A more plausible interpretation of the seemingly paradoxical evidence is that, although many Chinese journalists look to their Western counterparts for inspiration, they have different views on what professional journalism is. Many are aware of the gap between the ideal and the reality even in *Western* contexts. If the PRC journalists realize that the commercial Western media have their own problems, they will be less frustrated by the discrepancy between idealism and reality in their own context. Future research needs to examine the PRC journalists' understanding of the Western model of journalism and how it influences journalists' thinking on their jobs.

The findings should also be placed in a temporal context. Job satisfaction is often treated as something static, a matter of how journalists feel at a specific point in time. That is the case in our study with a cross-sectional survey. However, satisfaction has to be understood in terms of how the past, the present, and the future are related to one another. For the Chinese journalists who have accepted the Western professional model of journalism, a major reason for them not being frustrated by the current situation could be that they have their eyes on both the past and the future. They may think that the media environment in China has improved and will improve.

This argument is consistent with our conceptual focus on professional aspirations. In fact, an advantage of the term "professional aspirations" over similar and related terms such as "professionalism" and "professional ideals" resides exactly in the terms' temporality. Aspiration is future-oriented; it points to the existence of an imagined future and thus differs from any conception of professionalism as a static belief system.

Clearly, China's journalists do not operate in a dichotomous, "either-or" world represented by the Western model versus the Chinese model of journalism. For example, CCTV received a mean rating significantly higher than the mid-point of the scale (3.69 on a 5-point scale), contrasting sharply with two other major Party organs in the same list, the *People's Daily* and the *Guangming Daily* (mean at 2.36 for both).[59] Field research shows that *CCTV*'s daily 7 p.m. news program conforms strictly to the Party propaganda model, but journalists behind the weekly investigative show, *News Probe*, are sophisticated, public minded, and professionally oriented. However, while they model their show after *60 Minutes*, they are also willing to peg their investigative stories on the latest Party policies.[60] Such evidence cautions us not to think only in terms of the two models of journalism. These models are useful "ideal

types" in that they extract commonalities from variations and nuances in the real world, but they do not replace real-world variations and nuances.

The finding that Shanghai journalists are less satisfied with the material benefits of their job also deserves attention. Many Chinese journalists gained significant material benefits during media commercialization in the 1990s, often through unethical practices.[61] Linking the improved financial status of Chinese journalists to the realignment of political and economic interests in China's economic reforms, some have argued that Chinese journalists belong to the emerging middle class in urban China. Such a status, one may argue, dampens their idealistic aspirations and induces them to serve the joint interests of the Party-state and transnational corporations.[62] Viewed from this perspective, the journalists' lower extrinsic satisfaction might result from unmet expectations. Further research is needed to unpack the seeming paradox of journalists' improved socio-economic status and their dissatisfaction with the extrinsic attributes of their job.

The present study examines journalists from one metropolis in China. Yet the role of professional aspiration in understanding journalists' job satisfaction, and the finding that journalists upholding different models of journalism derive their job satisfaction from different factors, should have broader theoretical relevance. First, in countries undergoing social and political changes, journalistic paradigms often shift. Analysis of the journalism profession in such societies should avoid treating journalists as a monolithic whole; rather, it should take into consideration the multiplicity of interpretive communities that emerge in periods of transition.

Second, even in relatively stable societies where there is a dominant model of professional journalism, alternative views of journalism do exist. The set of democratic goals that media organizations attempt to achieve are often in tension with one another,[63] not to mention the fundamental contradictions brought about by the intrusion of profit-seeking motives into news practices. By empirically identifying the multiple interpretive frameworks within which journalists understand their work, and examining how different professional aspirations influence journalists' attitudes and behaviors, we could achieve a better understanding of journalism in society.

NOTES

1. Chongshan Chen, Jian-Hua Zhu, and Wei Wu, "The Chinese Journalist," in *The Global Journalist*, ed. David H. Weaver (NJ: Hampton Press, 1998), 9-30.

2. David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

3. Ven-hwei Lo, Ran Wei, Joseph Man Chan, and Zhongdang Pan, "Job Satisfaction of Chinese Journalists in China, Hong Kong, & Taiwan," *Mainland China Study* 45 (January-February 2002): 1-18 (in Chinese).

4. Joseph Man Chan, "Commercialization without Independence: Trends and Tensions of Media Development in China," in *China Review 1993*, ed. Joseph Cheng and Maurice Brosseau (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1993), 5.1-5.16.

5. Xu Yu, "Professionalization without Guarantees: Changes of the Chinese Press in Post-1989 Years," *Gazette* 53 (1-2, 1994): 23-41.

6. Judy Polumbaum, "The Tribulations of China's Journalists after a Decade of Reform," in *Voices of China*, ed. Chin-Chuan Lee (NY: Guilford, 1990), 33-68.

7. Zhongdang Pan, "Improvising Reform Activities: The Changing Reality of Journalistic Practice in China," in *Power, Money, and Media: Communication Patterns and Bureaucratic Control in Cultural China*, ed. Chin-Chuan Lee (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 68-111; Joseph Man Chan and Jack L. Qiu, "Media Liberalization in Marketized Authoritarianism," in *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State*, ed. Monroe Price et al. (London: Routledge, 2001), 27-46.

8. Zhongdang Pan and Ye Lu, "Localizing Professionalism: Discursive Practices in China's Media Reforms," in *Chinese Media, Global Context*, ed. Chin-Chuan Lee (London: Routledge, 2003), 215-36.

9. The normatively prescribed roles of journalism in democracy have inspired many critical analyses of not only the deficiencies of journalistic practices but also the inherent limitations of journalistic professionalism. See Daniel C. Hallin, "Commercialism and Professionalism in the American News Media," in *Mass Media and Society*, ed. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, 3d ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 2000), 218-37; James W. Carey, "American Journalism on, before, and after September 11," in *Journalism after September 11*, ed. Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan (New York: Routledge, 2002), 71-90; Herbert J. Gans, *Democracy and the News* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Empirical researchers have adopted the normative ideas and examined their manifestations among working journalists. See John W. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski, and William W. Bowman, *The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and Their Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalist: A Portrait of U.S. News People and Their Work* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*; Slavko Splichal and Colin Sparks, *Journalists for the 21st Century: Tendencies of Professionalization among First-year Students in 22 Countries* (NJ: Ablex, 1994).

10. Chin-Chuan Lee, "China's Journalism: The Emancipatory Potential of Social Theory," *Journalism Studies* 1 (November 2000): 559-76; Yong Zhang, "From Masses to Audience: Changing Media Ideologies and Practices in Reform China," *Journalism Studies* 1 (November 2000): 617-35.

11. Judy Polumbaum, "China's Journalists as Aspiring 'Professionals,'" in *China: The Crisis of 1989* (vol.1), ed. Roger V. Des Forges, N. Luo, Y. Wu (NY: Council on International Studies and Programs, State University of New York, 1990), 183-97; Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism"; Yuezhi Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China: Between the Party Line and the Bottom Line* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

12. There are extensive discussions on journalistic professionalism in the literature. Many approached the issue as an empirical question, and found that a significant portion of journalists possess the attributes of professionals, e.g., Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman, *The News People*; Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*. Others regarded the acquisition of these professional attributes as a process of professional socialization, e.g., Jack M. McLeod and Searle E. Hawley, Jr., "Professionalization among Newsmen," *Journalism Quarterly* 41 (autumn 1964): 529-39; Swen Windahl and Karl E. Rosengren, "Newsmen's Professionalization: Some Methodological Problems," *Journalism Quarterly* 55 (autumn 1978): 466-73; Splichal and Sparks, *Journalists for the 21st Century*. Still others took journalistic professionalism as a normative and interpretive framework in media criticism, e.g., Carey, "American Journalism on, before, and after September 11"; Hallin, "Commercialism and Professionalism in the American News Media"; Barbie Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10 (September 1993): 219-37; Stephen D. Reese, "The News Paradigm and Ideology of Objectivity: A Socialist at the *Wall Street Journal*," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7 (December 1990): 390-409.

13. Robert A. Baron, *Behavior in Organizations* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1976); Lori A. Bergen and David H. Weaver, "Job Satisfaction of Daily Newspaper Journalists and Organization Size," *Newspaper Research Journal* 9 (2, 1988): 1-13.

14. Edwin A. Locke, "The Nature and Causes of Job Satisfaction," in *Handbook of Industrial and Organization Psychology*, ed. Marvin D. Dunnette (Skokie, IL: Rand McNally, 1976); Paul M. Muchinsky, *Psychology Applied to Work*, 5th ed. (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1997).

15. David A. Statt, *Psychology and the World of Work* (London: Macmillan Press, 1990); Fiona McQuarrie, "Professional Mystique and Journalists' Dissatisfaction," *Newspaper Research Journal* 20 (3, 1999): 20-28.

16. Keith Stamm and Doug Underwood, "The Relationship of Job Satisfaction to Newsroom Policy Changes," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (autumn 1993): 528-41; George Pollard, "Job Satisfaction among Newsworkers: The Influence of Professionalism, Perceptions of Organizational Structure, and Social Attributes," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (autumn 1995): 682-97.

17. David P. Demers, "Effect of Organizational Size on Job Satisfaction of Top Editors at U.S. Dailies," *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (winter 1994): 914-25.

18. Stamm and Underwood, "The Relationship of Job Satisfaction to Newsroom Policy Changes"; George Daniels and C. Ann Hollifield, "Times of Turmoil: Short- and Long-term Effects of Organizational Change on Newsroom Employees," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 79 (autumn 2002): 661-80.

19. Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman, *The News People*; Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*.

20. Pollard, "Job Satisfaction among Newsworkers."

21. As a theoretical construct, professionalism presumes a state-society dichotomy (see Eliot Freidson, *Professionalism: The Third Logic* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001). It disguises the

expansion of state power, organizational control, and institutionaliza-tion of the dominant ideology in relation to knowledge-based occupa-tions (see Magali S. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977); Andrew Abbott , *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); Valerie Fournier, "The Appeal to 'Professionalism' as a Disciplinary Mechanism," *The Sociological Review* 47 (May 1999): 280-307. While addressing the complex theoretical architecture of professionalism is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to situate this study in these rich theoretical contexts and to reveal the ideologically loaded nature of the construct.

22. Daniel Hallin, *We Keep America On Top of the World* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 6th ed. (Boston: Beacon, 2000); Robert McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Robert A. Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, *Sustaining Democracy? Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1998); John Soloski, "News Reporting and Profession-alism: Some Constraints on the Reporting of the News," *Media, Culture & Society* 11 (April 1989): 207-228; Graham Murdoch, "Large Corporations and the Control of the Communications Industries," in *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed. Michael Gurevitch et al. (London: Methuen, 1982), 118-50.

23. Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities"; Reese, "The News Paradigm and Ideology of Objectivity."

24. Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

25. Pan, "Improvising Reform Activities"; Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

26. Polumbaum, "China's Journalists as Aspiring 'Professionals.'"

27. Chan, "Commercialization without Independence"; Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China*.

28. Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

29. Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

30. Judy Polumbaum, "Striving for Predictability: The Bureaucrati-zation of Media Management in China," in *China's Media, Media's China*, ed. Chin-Chuan Lee (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 113-28.

31. Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

32. Chen, Zhu, and Wu, "The Chinese Journalist"; Ven-hwei Lo, "The New Taiwan Journalist: A Sociological Profile," in *The Global Journalist*, ed. David H. Weaver (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1998), 71-88; Ven-hwei Lo, Ran Wei, Joseph Man Chan, and Zhongdang Pan, "Job Satisfac-tion of Chinese Journalists in China, Hong Kong, & Taiwan," *Mainland China Study* 45 (January-February 2002): 1-18 (in Chinese); Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*.

33. Zhongdang Pan and Joseph Man Chan, "Shifting Journalistic Paradigms: How China's Journalists Assess 'Media Exemplars,'" *Com-munication Research* 30 (December 2003): 649-82.

34. Yuezhi Zhao, "From Commercialization to Conglomeration: The Transformation of the Chinese Press within the Orbit of the Party State," *Journal of Communication* 5 (spring 2000): 3-26; Zhongdang Pan, "Spatial Configuration in Institutional Change: A Case of China's Journalism

Reforms," *Journalism* 1 (December 2000): 253-81.

35. Pan and Chan, "Shifting Journalistic Paradigms."

36. They include the three biggest dailies in the city (the municipal party organ *Liberation Daily*, the nationally influential paper *Wenhui Daily*, and the main local evening paper *Xinmin Evening*), three other daily papers, two TV stations, and two radio stations.

37. Frederick Herzberg, *Work and the Nature of Man* (Cleveland: The World Publishing, 1966); Daniels and Hollifield, "Times of Turmoil: Short- and Long-term Effects of Organizational Change on Newsroom Employees."

38. Grace H. Barrett, "Job Satisfaction among Newspaperwomen," *Journalism Quarterly* 61 (autumn 1984): 593-99; Harold C. Shaver, "Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction among Journalism Graduates," *Journalism Quarterly* 55 (spring 1978): 54-61; Stamm and Underwood, "The Relationship of Job Satisfaction to Newsroom Policy Changes."

39. Patricia C. Smith, Lorne M. Kendall, and Charles L. Hulin, *The Measurement of Satisfaction in Work and Retirement* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969); Terry Gregson, "Measuring Job-satisfaction with a Multiple-choice Format of the Job Descriptive Index," *Psychological Reports* 66 (June 1990): 787-93; Gloria J. Johnson and Roy W. Johnson, "Perceived Overqualification and Dimensions of Job Satisfaction: A Longitudinal Analysis," *Journal of Psychology* 134 (September 2000): 537-55; Patricia C. Smith, Olin W. Smith, and James Rollo, "Factor Structure for Blacks and Whites of the Job Descriptive Index and its Discrimination of Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 59 (February 1974): 99-100; Samuel Yeager, "Dimensionality of Job Descriptive Index," *Academy of Management Journal* 24 (March 1981): 205-212.

40. Detailed empirical validation of these factors can be found in Pan and Chan, "Shifting Journalistic Paradigms."

41. Web media are not included in the analysis because the conceptual meaning of "web media" is not yet clear, and our analysis here concerns only mainstream journalists working in conventional media organizations.

42. Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s* ; Chen, Zhu, and Wu, "The Chinese Journalist."

43. Five statements were discarded due to poor fit in the analysis. The 13 statements used are:

Interpretive function (alpha = .82):

(1) Providing explanations on government policies;

(2) Helping people understand party and government policies;

(3) Guiding/directing public opinion;

(4) Stating discussions on policy issues;

(5) Providing interpretation/explanations on complex issues.

Adversarial function (alpha = .91):

(1) Questioning and criticizing words and deeds of social organizations;

(2) Questioning and criticizing words and deeds of businesses;

(3) Questioning and criticizing government officials' words and deeds.

Dissemination function (alpha = .76):

(1) Providing new information speedily;

(2) Reporting newly occurring events factually.

Popular advocacy function (alpha = .84):

(1) Being people's mouthpiece;

(2) Helping people to constrain the decision makers;

(3) Promoting social change.

44. Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*.

45. Operationalization of the control variables are omitted for length concern and are available from the authors.

46. A regression analysis shows that the respondents gave more weight to the intrinsic than the extrinsic or work relationship aspect of their job in deriving their overall job satisfaction. The standardized regression coefficient after all the control variables is .389 (p <.001) for intrinsic satisfaction, .328 (p < .001) for extrinsic satisfaction, and .265 (p <.001) for relation satisfaction.

47. For example, Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*; Chen, Zhu, and Wu, "The Chinese Journalist."

48. Results are not shown here for presentational reasons. The full analysis is available from the authors.

49. Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 1990s*; Lo, Wei, Chan, and Pan, "Job Satisfaction of Chinese Journalists in China, Hong Kong, & Taiwan."

50. Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China*.

51. Leona S. Aiken and Stephen G. West, *Multiple Regression: Testing and Interpreting Interactions* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991).

52. However, to critical observers, the Party sanctioned "critical investigative reporting" of the official media serves primarily the political legitimacy of the Party. See Yuezhi Zhao, "Watchdogs on Party Leashes? Contexts and Implications of Investigative Journalism in Post-Deng China," *Journalism Studies* 1 (December 2000): 577-97. To the PRC journalists who take the ideal of independent investigative reporting seriously, Party control over serious journalism has led to frustration and disillusion. See Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

53. Zhao, "Watchdogs on Party Leashes?"

54. This observation was obtained in a multi-year field research project on China's media reforms that the first two authors, together with their Chinese colleagues, carried out before the 2002 Shanghai journalist survey. A small part of the results from this project is reported in Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

55. Certainly, research has documented various organizational and institutional constraints on journalistic practice in the United States. See, for example, Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978); Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980); Gans, *Democracy and the News*. However, such evidence is not inconsistent with the claim that journalists use professionalism as a dominant interpretive framework on their profession. See Zelizer, "Journalists as Interpretive Communities."

56. Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

57. Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China*.

58. Pan and Lu, "Localizing Professionalism."

59. For details, see Pan and Chan, "Shifting Journalistic Paradigms."

60. Ye Lu and Zhongdang Pan, "Imagining Professional Fame: Constructing Journalistic Professionalism in China's Social Transformation," *Mass Communication Research* 71 (April 2002): 17-59 (in Chinese).

61. Zhao, *Media, Market and Democracy in China*.

62. Yuezhi Zhao, "'Enter the World': Neo-liberal Globalization, the Dream for a Strong Nation, and Chinese Press Discourse on the WTO," in *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*, ed. Chin-Chuan Lee (London: Routledge, 2003), 32-56.

63. Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).