

Research on Chinese Investigative Journalism, 1978–2013: A Critical Review

Haiyan Wang and Francis L. F. Lee

Abstract

The practice of investigative journalism in China burgeoned in the early 1980s in the wake of the economic reforms, and it has been growing rapidly since the mid-1990s. Today, it is one of the most vibrant parts of Chinese media. As a thermometer for press freedom and a crucial site for examining the media–state relationship in China, investigative journalism has attracted a substantial amount of scholarly attention during the past three decades. This article critically reviews research, published both in mainland China and overseas, on the topic from 1978 to 2013. We first present a quantitative analysis outlining certain basic characteristics of the field of investigative journalism research based on a sample of 112 mainland publications and 14 overseas publications. We then present a qualitative review of existing knowledge about investigative journalism in China. Finally, we highlight some of the newest developments in the phenomenon and discuss several directions for future research.

Haiyan WANG is Associate Professor in the School of Communication and Design at Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangzhou, China. Her research interests include investigative journalism, journalistic professionalism, media and the public sphere, media and social movements, and media and gender.

Francis L. F. LEE is Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication, Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is the author of *Talk Radio, the Mainstream Press, and Public Opinion in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2014) and is the lead author of *Communication, Public Opinion, and Globalization in Urban China* (Routledge, 2013).