#ISOJ

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About the Journal

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About Us

#ISOJ The Journal of the International Symposium on Online Journalism is an international journal devoted to advancing the scholarship in the area of journalism and innovative technologies. The editors invite manuscripts reporting original research, methodologies relevant to the study of journalism and innovative technologies (online, tablets, mobile platforms, etc.), critical syntheses of research and theoretical perspectives on journalism today. The journal maintains a social scientific and broad behavioral focus. We encourage submissions from scholars outside and within the journalism and mass communication discipline.

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Invited Essay: A Reflection by Joshua Benton

Director of the Nieman Journalism Lab

This year, the ISOJ co-editors and guest editor invited Josh Benton to write a special essay to discuss the state of the current digital media climate and how the accepted articles for this issue reflect the special journal theme and current media climate.

The journalist Charles Duhigg is a Pulitzer Prize winner (Explanatory Reporting, 2013) and a veteran of both the Los Angeles and The New York Times. But to the extent that the average airport bookstore browser knows his name, it's as the author of productivity books, most notably the bestseller The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business.

In that book, Duhigg — who, I suppose I should note, I went to college with, he and I working for rival student newspapers back when two-paper campuses were as viable as two-paper towns — outlines the latest research on what causes some habits to stick and others to fail unheeded. He notes MIT research that reduces habits to a three-stage cycle of cue, routine, and reward; align those properly and you can convince anyone to build an action into her day-to-day.

From within the contemporary cult of productivity, you might think of that cycle as: cue (My running shoes are staged, ready next to the door), routine (I go for a run!), and reward (Mmmm, two squares of dark chocolate). Or, in more behaviorist, even Pavlovian terms: cue (A bell rings), routine (Time to salivate!), and reward (Mmmmm, food!).

What both Duhigg and Pavlov found, roughly a century apart, is that once a habit's cycle is embedded deep enough into someone's psyche, it is free to shed one of its constituent parts. A Duhigg-trained knowledge worker would eventually learn to start that morning run without the promise of 86% cacao waiting as a reward. Pavlov's dogs eventually learned to salivate at each peal of a bell, whether or not fresh kibble was in the mix. In both cases, you're left with an unexpected correlation between two actions, their original intersection lost to history, for good or for ill.

That's not a bad description for much of how the legacy news industry has functioned in the Internet age. Much of journalism's fundamental infrastructure — its distribution models, its geographic targeting, its revenue streams, its relationship to audiences — has been either reshaped or blown to bits by the Internet. But many of journalists' workflows, belief systems, and editorial practices remain driven by structural or financial realities from decades ago.

Why are most stories still framed around what's happened in the past 24 hours? Why haven't the classic iterative updates of newspaper publishing been supplanted by forms smaller (the tweet-length update for the news junkie) or longer (the explainer that can serve as an evolving reference over time)? Why does most newspaper copy still get filed in late afternoon? Why are beat structures mostly unchanged from the days when newspapers played a very different role? Why is both-sides objectivity still held in the

same professional esteem despite the fact it developed in response to a very different competitive environment?

I don't ask these questions to impugn the many people working hard to ensure a sustainable future for quality journalism — or to imply that the right answers to these questions are always clear. They're not. But it's a point worth raising: An industry and its workers' mental model of that industry evolve at different paces, in starts and stops. (We still measure cars by their horsepower, long after all the buggy-pullers moved back to the farm.)

Which is why I appreciate the theme of this issue of #ISOJ Journal, "habits of thought," which pokes and prods at some of our field's misalignments of external reality and internal perceptions.

Henrik Örnebring's article on precarity notes that many of the traditional ideas journalists have about their roles — objectivity is important, we play a key role in democratic governance, we are the trusted verifiers of public claims — rely on a high level of stability in their profession. (It is no accident that they came to prominence in the United States around the same time the newspaper business achieved high profitability and monopoly pricing power in most American cities.) In today's disrupted journalistic labor market, those institutional impulses have been replaced with a more individualistic set of values — the idea that young journalists will have to fight for themselves, that a stable career is not a given, and that the first few years of post-college work function as a sort of hazing.

That rings true to me, based on my conversations with young reporters, who often think in terms of entrepreneurship or of journalism being one part of a portfolio of jobs (and identities) that can be assembled into financial stability. (I'd note there's also a tension between those early-career realities and what many of those reporters were taught in journalism school, which many professors still see as an occasion to inculcate the old-time religion into young minds. We still have too many journalism students being prepared for jobs that aren't being posted any more.)

That connection between professional identity and feeling precarious also help frame the negative reaction so many working journalists had to the expansion of publishing power that arrived with the web. (Think of all the times bloggers were described as Cheeto-stained basement dwellers, or how often Twitter's 140-character limit was derided as a barrier to any worthwhile content appearing there.)

Kyser Lough and Karen McIntyre focus their article on how journalists perceive the idea of solutions journalism, which aims to both report on social ills and explicitly offer potential fixes for them. This conception of news work is at odds with many reporters' belief that their job should be strictly observational in purpose — that they might diagnose the illness, but it's up to someone else to find a cure. Their conversations, all with journalists who described themselves as familiar with solutions journalism, nonetheless found a wide range of definitions for the movement itself, as well as different views on how it intersects with traditional values of objectivity and editorial distance. But their respondents

were more unified on the question of what impedes editorial shifts such as this one: management, which can provide conflicting signals (or no signals at all) about how journalism's traditional frames might best evolve.

Of course, holdover habits (of thought or of action) aren't all bad. If a vision of tasty chocolate two years ago keeps you running miles today, terrific. And if you want to see the risks of breaking old habits of thought, look to Jonathan Groves and Carrie Brown's long view of the *Christian Science Monitor*'s digital evolution. For decades, the Monitor had an unusually strong sense of self for an American newspaper — distributed mostly by mail instead of home delivery, a second read for most subscribers rather than a first, and of course founded by a church with a distinctive mission. When the Internet came along to challenge its model, the paper's leaders took a number of bold steps — abandoning daily print, seeking more of a mass audience online, and leaning into search engine optimization. It was more substantial a strategic shift than nearly any other American paper could muster.

Unfortunately, they were making that shift in a world where they no longer controlled the distribution of their content. Instead of reaching reader's mailboxes, they had to reach their Facebook News Feeds. The shifting practices of tech platforms made what some considered a digital-friendly approach outmoded before long. And many Monitor staffers remained ill at ease with what had seemed a step away from the paper's values. Groves and Brown outline what has been something of a return to older habits of thought — once-daily consumption, a calmer reading experience, and a return to reliance on a smaller core readership.

The *Monitor*'s shifts illuminate a larger issue facing much of the legacy media, especially newspapers. Publishers and editors have been working for more than a decade to push their strategies (and their staffs) in a more digital direction. Knowing the difficulty of organizational change — but seeing what was happening, inexorably, to print — they considered it a tough but worthwhile effort. But now, to the extent they succeeded, they face a business environment where even digital exemplars like *BuzzFeed*, *Vice*, and others face revenue headwinds and are laying off staff. A strategy build around maximizing digital ad revenue has bumped into the harsh truth of two tech giants who've ingested the sector whole.

Figuring out which habits of thought need changing is hard; actually changing them is harder. But the mandatory prerequisite is identifying them in the first place — understanding why we do the things we do. Only if we figure out the cue and the routine can we reap the reward.

Guest Editor's Note

For the first time in ISOJ history, in 2017, the ISOJ journal co-editors invited Dr. Jane Singer to be the guest editor of a special themed issue. Dr. Singer identified the special theme, Habits of Thought for this issue. This special themed issue reflects papers that were blind peer - reviewed for the conference and journal that reflected the theme.

Special Journal Issue Theme: Habits of Thought

Dr. Jane Singer
Professor, City, Univertisty of London

This themed issue of #ISOJ is a response to, as well as a test of, two related premises. It is a response to the observation that we know far more about what journalists do differently in a digital age than about how, if at all, they think differently about what they do. And it is a test of the proposition that while "habits of practice" – what journalists do – have obviously changed enormously over the past quarter-century, "habits of thought" have been remarkably resilient (the positive spin) or resistant (the less-positive one) in the face of this transformation.

Observers in the industry and the academy have had a lot to document and assess since the mid-1990s. New technologies, tools and platforms have necessitated sweeping adaptations to how journalists report, write, edit and publish information. New metrics software has put excruciatingly detailed audience data in the middle of story discussions and decisions. And new digital- and data-savvy colleagues have joined the newsroom to carry out seemingly inscrutable activities that they try to explain using equally inscrutable vocabularies. In all these well-documented ways and more besides, the practice of journalism today is undeniably different from 20 or 10 or even five years ago.

In comparison, we know much less about "habits of thought," the ways in which contemporary journalists think about contemporary journalism – about what it is, what it is not, what it might become and what it should never be. What little we do know suggests that although most journalists have accepted that change is necessary for economic reasons, a majority are considerably less convinced that it is necessary or even desirable for journalistic ones.

As early as the mid-1990s, journalists were articulating concerns about the effects on verification, and therefore credibility, of the ability to publish at the press of the "send" button. Over the years, as digital, social and mobile technologies have dissolved all manner of boundaries around information and its providers, practitioners have steadfastly emphasized their own normative role and responsibilities in reasserting their occupational value. And journalism educators have revamped skills classes but continue to instill news values, ethical principles and concepts about the role of the media in democratic society that would have resonated with our grandparents' generation of journalists – not necessarily a bad thing, but not particularly reflective of the chaotic and deeply challenging

environment that graduates are entering, either.

So I confess that in soliciting manuscripts for this issue, my expectation was I would now be writing an editor's note describing new evidence for these sorts of old and firmly entrenched mindsets.

I was wrong.

Instead, #ISOJ 2018 offers six engaging and informative takes on ways in which journalists are changing not just their practices but also the mental processes that they bring to the job. Our authors highlight new patterns of thinking about stories and audiences, about the use and the purpose of new forms of data, and about journalists' own activities now and in the future.

Accommodating these new thought patterns is far from easy. In his opening essay, Nieman Journalism Lab director Josh Benton encapsulates just how ingrained they can and do become, motivating us and shaping our behaviors in ways we may not be able to define or indeed recognize. Even when we know how important it is to change habits that no longer serve their intended purpose, actually doing so can be remarkably difficult. "Figuring out which habits of thought need changing is hard," he writes. "Actually changing them is harder. But the mandatory prerequisite is identifying them in the first place."

The articles you are about to read will help.

In "'Don't Read Me the News, Tell Me the Story,'" Jan Boesman and Irene Costera Meijer explore the nuanced differences between journalists who think of themselves as storytellers and those who see themselves as news makers. Drawing on newsroom observations, content analyses and 148 interviews with journalists in Belgium and the Netherlands, they find that the news makers think about their work in more narrowly prescribed and even predefined ways, while storytellers are more likely to challenge structural conventions and to be more open to serendipitous stories. Both normative and narrative approaches to news also vary, with news makers more concerned with objectivity and storytellers open to literary and even cinematic techniques. More broadly, Boesman and Meijer found variations in how different types of journalists think about both truth and the nature of occupational boundaries. Habits of thought, then, are changing, but not uniformly.

The implications of shifting concepts of journalistic storytelling are further explored in our next article, "Journalists Perceptions of Solutions Journalism and Its Place in the Field," by Keyser Lough and Karen McIntyre. Although most research into "solutions journalism" has focused on audiences, the authors here explore how journalists think about framing stories around the ways in which people respond to and address social problems. Their in-depth interviews reveal that journalists draw connections with investigative reporting, given the emphasis on deep research and the goal of uncovering something, but also see solutions journalism as a way to engage readers and rebuild trust. Moreover, a focus on solutions begins with the way practitioners conceptualize both story topic and optimal approaches

to reporting it. "Journalists started with a thought process shift toward the 'how' of a solution," the authors write, "looking past the issue itself and beginning to understand how to ask questions, seek sources and obtain data" that point toward the resolution to a given problem.

A change in thought processes also underlines the accelerating move toward stories based on open-source data, as investigated by María Florencia Haddad and Elena Brizuela in "The Narratives and Routines of Journalistic Productions Based on Open Data." Drawing on interviews and a comparative analysis of 20 Argentinian publications, the authors describe a range of diverse narrative types used to create data-based stories, as well as newly emerging cooperative newsroom structures that facilitate their creation. This creation process, they argue, is intertwined with new ways of thinking about both audiences and collaborators, as well as about how to present information in visually compelling ways.

Data of another sort are driving additional changes in both thought and practice in contemporary newsrooms. In "Quality, Quantity and Policy," Kelsey N. Whipple and Jeremy L. Shermak consider the role of audience metrics in journalists' evaluations of their own performance and their employer's digital strategy. Their survey of more than 500 journalists at major U.S. newspapers suggests that management priorities are steering journalists to think more about the number of readers a story attracts but also, more qualitatively, about the impact of a story on the community. However, respondents also expressed concerns about strategic direction, a well as about the influence of audience data on editorial decision-making. In general, American journalists appear worried that their bosses are not thinking clearly enough about the future to position either their newspaper or its employees for long-term success in a digital environment.

Those concerns highlight the precarious nature of contemporary news work in a world of constantly shifting priorities and pressures, and Henrik Örnebring provides a closer look at the "new normal" in "Journalists Thinking about Precarity," our next chapter. Taking us back across the Atlantic, the author draws on more than 60 interviews in 14 countries to offer insights into how European journalists are thinking about professionalism and professional identity within an environment of decreasing full-time employment opportunities and permanent labor insecurity. He finds that journalists are making sense of precarity by falling back on norms that are fundamentally individualistic in nature; that is, they are "normalizing" the situation by mentally positioning the occupation as a meritocracy, one in which only those who are "really good" can succeed. Such thought patterns, he points out, certainly benefit employers – but not necessarily individual journalists.

In our last research article, though, Jonathan Groves and Carrie Brown take us inside one news organization where journalists have helped chart dramatic change in the form of a range of initiatives stretching across nearly a decade. In "Changing 'Habits of Thought'", the authors examine a digital evolution at the Christian Science Monitor that began when a newspaper born a century earlier announced in 2008 that it would drop its daily print edition to go digital-only. Their longitudinal case study identifies the shifting patterns of

thought that emerged from what they aptly describe as "the crucible of change" with a recommitment to the Monitor's core mission and "a refined sense of self." They conclude that experimentation and innovation are the route to successful transformation, but only if organizational values are clearly defined and widely embraced. \

Through this issue of #ISOJ, then, a fascinating and multi-faceted picture emerges of journalists' thought patterns in response to ongoing change – change in story structures and goals, in the use of data for reporting and for relating to audiences, in the nature of employment and the process of experimentation. Our contributors offer insights into the mental processes of journalists across three continents who, despite their geographical separation, all face a similar need to adapt not only what they do in a digital age but how they think about their stories, their audiences, their role and their work. I hope you will enjoy reading and learning from this important and insightful scholarship every bit as much as I have.

"Don't read me the news, tell me the story": How news makers and storytellers negotiate journalism's boundaries when preparing and presenting news stories

By Jan Boesman and Irene Costera Meijer

This study seeks to understand how journalists deal with story/truth-making in their daily news practice, based on in-depth interviews with 67 journalists from Belgium and the Netherlands. The findings revealed a difference between news makers and storytellers and related differences in the way journalists prepare and present news stories. In preparing stories, news makers consider pegs and predefined angles as vital, while storytellers see them as obstacles. In presenting stories, newsmakers defend many of the journalistic conventions challenged by storytellers. The findings are discussed in terms of boundary work and in the light of the ubiquity of online news.

Storytelling has become a buzzword in the news industry. At the same time, it is often seen as standing vis-à-vis journalists' truth-seeking mission (Groot Kormelink & Costera Meijer, 2015). Scholars have described journalists' storytelling function—making news meaningful for their audience—as at odds with their role as provider of facts (Hallin, 1986; Maras, 2013). We believe it makes sense to approach this ancient opposition through the relatively new lens of boundary work (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Following this perspective, we can see journalists, in the various ways they are "storytelling the truth," amidst a boundary struggle about "what counts as journalism, what is appropriate journalistic behaviour, and what is deviant … questions about how boundaries are constructed, challenged, reinforced, or erased" (Carlson, 2015, p. 2). In the digital age, journalists are forced to make it clear how they differ from other communicators.

While narrative journalism, for instance, has always been a genre that crosses traditional boundaries of journalism (e.g., Harbers & Broersma, 2014), nowadays, it is also seen as a way in which journalism can distinguish itself from blogs, aggregators and short-format news online (Neveu, 2014; Van Krieken & Sanders, 2016). Other storytelling practices

may cross boundaries by embracing the online environment, for instance, by adopting participatory approaches which potentially conflict with professional norms and news values.

Whether journalists distinguish themselves from new technologies or embracing them, the question is do their storytelling practices really challenge old habits of journalistic thought about truth and facts. In public discourses of journalism, "truth" is maybe more than ever played out as the core business of legacy media (e.g., Papenfuss, 2017). The possible tension between storytelling and truth-finding might cause tensions in the concrete practice of building news stories—tensions touching the boundaries of the journalistic profession.

While storytelling nowadays is mainly used in its narrow meaning as a journalistic genre—such as "narrative" or "transmedia" journalism—media scholars usually adopt a broader perspective, as they consider all news making as storytelling (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). This paper takes a somewhat middle position, following Schudson (2005, p. 126) that "all news is stories, but some are more storylike than others" because some "remind us of the novel, the joke, the campfire story, gossip, the moral caution, the various fictional and non-fictional but highly structured and purposive forms people typically associate with the word 'story.'" We prefer this rather vague description of storytelling over more precise definitions, because we want to remain as open as possible to the boundary work of journalists themselves: what they do and say in relation to the supposed tension between story and truth.

A Practice Approach to Storytelling

Carlson (2015) applied Gieryn's (1983) three generic types of boundary work (expansion, expulsion, and protection of autonomy) to three areas of journalism around which boundary work occurs: professionalism, participants, and practices. While not excluding the first two Ps, this study focuses on practices. A practice approach fits well within a boundary work perspective, as practice theorists reject a priori distinctions such as those between storytelling and truth-finding or even between "news consumption" and "news production" (Couldry, 2004; Domingo, Masip, & Costera Meijer, 2015; Postill, 2010). Practice theory emphasizes the practices that transcend the boundaries between them. It sees journalism as a set of practices that are not exclusively journalistic. Although this paper focuses on journalistic storytelling practices, it is good to keep in mind that storytelling is a practice that exceeds journalism (Raetschz, 2015).

The majority of storytelling research is focused on texts and/or its effects on audiences (for instance, by comparing narrative structures with the inverted pyramid structure, e.g. Emde, Klimmt, & Schluetz, 2016; Yaros, 2006, 2011). Inspired by practice theory, this study shifts the emphasis from the study of texts to the ethnographic study of people's doings and sayings (Couldry, 2004). Thus, storytelling is studied as practice rather than as an end product.

News ethnography has a long history. At first, it was mainly used to study bureaucratic

routines within the walls of elite news organizations (e.g., Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). In his plea for a "second wave of news ethnographies" Cottle (2000) invited news production scholars to rehabilitate journalists' agency by studying "cultural practices" instead of "administrative routines." Although its "embodied" nature is at the core of practices, we feel at home with Ahva's (2016, p. 5) emphasis on the reflexivity aspect of practice—"to avoid the idea that people would merely 'act out.'" Therefore, we include in our investigations journalists' reflections about their practices as (discursive) practices and take them as seriously as their performances.

The second wave of newsroom studies is mainly focused on online news making (Domingo & Paterson, 2011; Paterson & Domingo, 2008). The underlying idea is that, amidst the digital revolution, ethnographers must get their shoes dirty to produce first-hand reports of this "universe in construction" (Franquet, 2013, p. 198). Although this study did not specifically focus on online journalism, the digital environment inevitably influenced the storytelling practices of all studied journalists. According to Coddington (2015, p. 38), distinctions between "online" and "traditional" media are no longer useful since virtually all journalists are doing their work online in some form. By exploring storytelling as performative and as discursive practice rather than as end product, this paper aims to investigate the boundary work involved in and beyond the storytelling-versus-reality debate.

Methodology

This paper combines data from three different studies, in which different methods were applied: newsroom observations, reconstruction interviews, in-depth interviews, and (news) content analysis. This paper is mainly based on the field notes and the interview transcripts. In total, 148 interviews were held with 67 journalists.[1]

In the first study (carried out from February to May 2013), interviews were held with 33 journalists from four Belgian newspaper newsrooms. From each newsroom, five domestic news beat reporters were followed closely to reconstruct the development of their news stories through semi-structured reconstruction interviews. Reconstructing the "biographies" of news stories (Brüggemann, 2013) makes it possible to focus on recording actions "on specific stories rather than general estimations" (Reich, 2006, p. 501). Our reconstruction interviews consisted of both a narrative and a focused discourse section (see Boesman et al., 2016). In the first section, the field researcher encouraged reporters to retell the news report as it developed, as chronologically as possible. In the second section, the published news report served as a guideline (Boesman, d'Haenens & Van Gorp, 2016). Besides, in-depth interviews were held with these reporters as well as with their editor(s)-in-chief, with one of their news chiefs, and with one of their copy editors. In the second study (carried out from November 2014 to January 2015), interviews were held with 22 journalists from two newspapers belonging to the same media company, one in Belgium and one in the Netherlands. Seventeen were beat reporters (domestic news, politics, economics, foreign affairs and science), three were editors-in-chief, and two were copy editors.

In the third study (carried out from January to June 2017), extensive in-depth interviews

were held with 13 journalists from Belgium and the Netherlands, all working for different newsrooms (or as a freelancer). Six of them were broadcast journalists (working for television and/or radio), five were print journalists (working for newspapers and/or magazines), and two were multimedia journalists (making and/or coordinating broadcasts as well as text stories for digital platforms). Although these interviews also involved some reconstructions of concrete news stories, the interviews in this study are better labelled as "expert interviews" (Bogner & Menz, 2009) with experienced storytellers. The involved journalists were selected based on one or more of the following criteria: they have written storytelling handbooks; they are teaching their colleagues about storytelling and/or about making reportages; they have won prizes for narrative and/or investigative journalism; they are mentioned as excellent storytellers by colleague journalists.

Notes were taken for all interviews and most of them were tape-recorded.2 The interviews were transcribed and coded—depending on the aim of the study—in SPSS (study one), Nvivo (study two), Atlas.ti (study three) and manually (all studies). Using a grounded theory–based approach, the analysis consisted of three phases in which the research material was constantly scanned and compared (Böhm, 2004; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). During the open coding phase, we coded all textual passages in interview transcripts and field notes related to the development of news stories (phases, genres, interactions, causes, consequences, and so on). Because boundary work is a discursive struggle in which journalists engage rhetorically (Carlson, 2015; Ferrucci & Vos, 2017), we were especially attentive to word repititions, metaphors and figures of speech (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The extensive use of memos enabled us to provide meaning to the data. In the axial and selective coding phases, we built categories and looked through the data for evidence or disconfirmation. Finally, we arrived at two overarching "practices" and two overarching "positions," which will be presented below.

Preparing the news story

Finding news pegs

(Pre)defining story angles

Interviewing sources

"Stories no news"

Predefining (audiovisual)
vs. "reporter's luck" (print)

Listening to people

**News
making**

**Story-
telling**

Inverted pyramid/five w's

Balanced reporting

Respecting genres

(Linear) narrative

Transparency

Mixing genres
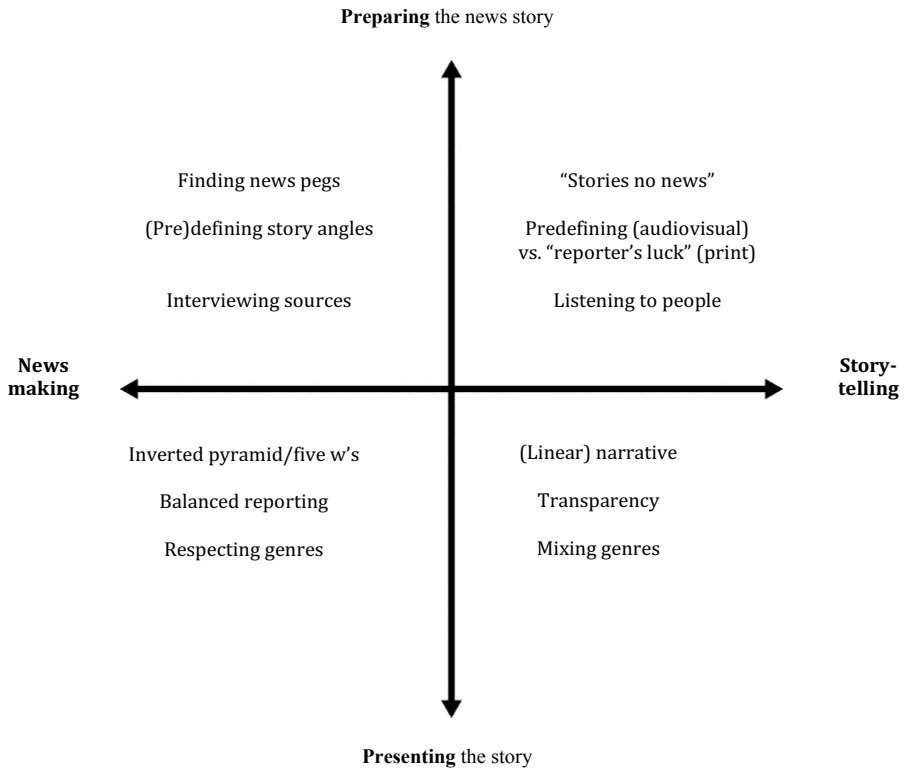
Presenting the story

Figure 1. How news makers and storytellers differ in preparing and presenting their stories

Results

The findings will be presented by means of a double distinction detected; first, between the positions of "news maker" and "storyteller," and the other between the comprehensive practices of "preparing" and "presenting" the story. Remarkably in all studied newspaper newsrooms, the printed newspaper was still considered more important than what would appear online. Although only a few journalists could be labeled "online journalists," the omnipresence of online news highly influenced the "traditional" practices of the journalists under scrutiny.

News Makers and Storytellers

First, we discuss the distinction we found between "news maker" and "storyteller." Although all news makers can be seen as storytellers, journalists may act more as a storyteller, for instance, when working on a reportage. In that case, storyteller is a role journalists adopt, depending on the news genre. However, we found that journalists could also identify with the role of the storyteller. When they took up the identity of storyteller, they draw its boundaries often in opposition to the identity of news maker.

The distinction between news maker (or news hunter) and storyteller was often emphasized by journalists themselves. While some explicitly labeled themselves or colleagues as such, others said that this is something everyone in the newsroom implicitly feels. According to these journalists, the prototypical news maker is an unremitting caller with an extensive address book and with "a nose for news." Although the news maker is not automatically a poor writer, some of them may be happy there are editors to "prepare a decent meal out of their hunt" (journalist, no. 22). In contrast, a prototypical storyteller is praised for having a "good pen" and/or for having "a sixth sense for the story" (journalist, no. 15). S/he knows how to recognize a story, often in the details of an event, and how to build a story line.

While most journalists in the first two studies could be labelled as news makers, most journalists in the third story could be labeled as storytellers. However, even journalists who see themselves explicitly as storyteller do have experience with "news making" as well. Thus, our data reveal how the news maker and the storyteller are sometimes described as roles, at other times as identities, and/or positions—depending on how journalists set up and experience their boundaries—rather than as specific journalistic professions.

Nevertheless, we argue that news makers and storytellers—experienced as roles, identities or positions—differ in their preparation and presentation practices when making news stories. With regard to their preparation practices, we detected differences in *finding* and *defining* stories. Regarding their presentation practices, we discovered different elements of form, style and genre.

Preparing the story: Predefined News vs. Serendipitous Stories

Finding the story: "news" vs. "stories"

First, we focus on how journalists find or bump into news stories. From our reconstructions of hundreds of news stories, it turned out that news makers usually need an occasion to write about something specific. For instance, the occasion for Belgian journalists to write for several days about science fraud was the dismissal of a medical scientist because he had tampered with data (journalists nos. 1, 2, 9, 19). The dismissal functioned as the news peg on which the broader story of science fraud was hung. A news peg can be described as "a recent event … which is used as a 'handle' on which to 'hang' their stories" (Gans, 2004, p. 168) or "to anchor them" (Fink & Schudson, 2014, p. 14).

A peg assesses an event at its topical value. It helps to explain why certain events are (not) selected by news makers. Gans (2004) observed that pegless stories were almost always the first to be eliminated from an overly long story list. In contemporary newsroom jargon, such stories "float" for a few days in the story budgets, waiting to be picked up or to disappear definitely in the "Bermuda triangle of lost stories" (field notes, December 2, 2014). A peg is closely related to the news values of recency and novelty, and its assumed necessity in news making is an aspect of journalism frequently criticized by academics (e.g., Bird, 2005; Hermann, 2017; Schudson, 1986).

Interestingly, the practice of finding news pegs is also frequently denounced by storytellers, who feel less bound by current events than news makers. Storytellers repeatedly claim that they have "no nose for news" or "no news drive." Moreover, they explain the success of their stories by being "no news at all." According to an award-winning Belgian newspaper reporter, the stories for which he received the most positive reader feedback "have nothing to do with current events" (journalist, no. 58). Another reporter, praised as a distinguished writer by his colleagues, calls himself a "truant," because he skipped the "news school."

> For instance, a bomb attack. That's news. So, the ordinary journalist goes to the scene to make a reportage. This is what journalists do. They go to the scene and ask questions.   That's news …. And I do the opposite: I try to go to places where no news happened. For instance, my story about the peep shows. There is no news in it. It just intrigued me. And yeah, then it turned out to be a great story. (journalist, no. 67)

In contrast with news makers, storytellers do not seem to get excited about a scoop. It is almost with pride some of them say they have never—"or maybe one time, by accident" (journalist, no. 62)—got the front page of the paper or the opening of the newscast. Because of that, storytellers sometimes describe themselves as "a bad journalist." Actually, they dislike the term "journalist" and prefer to be called "reporter," "narrator" or "documentary maker." From a boundary perspective, their reluctance towards the term journalist can be interpreted as a boundary struggle—aimed at enlarging the discursive space to practice journalism—rather than as a rejection of journalism in general. It can

be explained by their association of the term "journalism" with agenda setting "hard news" either based on current events, or on "investigative journalism." For instance, a Dutch television reporter refused to be called a "war correspondent," although he has been stationed several times in a war zone. "I just try to tell a million people a nice story every night" (journalist, no. 62).

Storytellers defended their approach by reference to the online news environment. Their boundary work—rejecting traditional news selection criteria—would be necessary to ensure that their stories are distinctive from what everyone can find everywhere on the Internet. Some draw on a marketing vocabulary to argue for "more stories, less news"— as they considered it a way to survive in a saturated news market. As one of them explained:

> "I am convinced [stories are] the only future of newspapers and magazines …
> Newspapers must find a new role with the emergence of the Internet…
> Why should I pay 360 euro per year for a newspaper? Not for news, I believe.
> Can newspapers still distinguish themselves with news? … [While] these
> stories have got such an incredible response by readers." (journalist, no. 58)

Defining the story: "Predefining" vs. "reporters' luck".

Journalists do not just "find" stories, they construct them as well. In their research, journalists are taking decisions: on what to focus, whom to interview, which perspective to take and what story to tell. In other words, journalists "define" to some extent what the story ought to be. The central question here is at what particular moment the angle for news stories originates. Generally, a story angle can be defined as "the chosen perspective, emphasis, bias or focus from which a news item is told" (Zelizer & Allan, 2010, p. 6). Although most research on story angles considers an angle as a textual or writing concept (e.g., Grunwald & Rupar, 2009), we found that angles may also be invoked in the preceding news production process, for instance during newsroom discussions.

From our reconstructions, it turned out that the story angles of news makers are usually predefined at an early stage of news production. As the outcome of morning meeting discussions, angles are often explicitly defined in the story budgets. In newsroom jargon, chief editors "order" a story and reporters are asked to "deliver" this story. Editors function as the "guardians" of story angles, responsible for fine-tuning "deviating stories" to their predefined angles. When a two-page news story was removed in a centralized newsroom because it "did something different than asked for in the story budget," the news chief in charge explained the decision as follows: "It was just the story with the facts. There was no 'but' in the story, no surprise" (field notes, December 12, 2014). This example may illustrate one of the main functions of predefined angles. They ensure that the story is distinctive enough from other media stories about the same event. More specifically, the editors-in-chief of another newspaper explained the necessity of predefined angles in the light of the omnipresence of news online:

> We want to send [our] journalists in a certain direction. We urgently need this with the emergence of online. "The news" as such is already been broken [online]. The added value of a newspaper today lies in its new and unique angles. (journalists, nos. 32, 33).

In this case, predefining might be considered a boundary practice whereby journalists distinguish their work from all kinds of aggregation news online (Coddington, 2015). It is precisely because news makers start most of their stories from other (online) news media (as empirically shown by Boesman, d'Haenens & Van Gorp, 2014), that they feel the need to emphasize the—not always so clear—boundaries between the way they use other news media as a source (by adding "a unique angle") and the way aggregators do.

With regard to storytelling, one should expect story angles are even more important. Accordingly, storytelling handbooks emphasize the importance of having a baseline and/or a scenario before gathering story material (Blundell, 1988; Hunter et al., 2011; Verheyden, Rumes, & Fluit, 2014). Journalists who fail to prepare would:

> waste time and energy discovering that there is no story after all, or that it is only a shadow of what they dreamed it would be …. Before flying out the door, a reporter should consider the range of his story, its central message, the approach that appears to best fit the tale, and even the tone he should take as a storyteller (Blundell, 1998, p. 70).

However, in practice there seems to be a remarkable difference between audio visual and written storytelling. With regard to preparing practices, the broadcast storyteller has more in common with the news maker in newspaper newsrooms than with the print storytellers. For audiovisual storytellers, forethought is important, due to the constraints of the medium. A newspaper journalist with a television background explains it as follows:

> If I cover a story for television, I have to know beforehand which shots to take. … What if I want to do a story about you and it appears you are addicted to pizza? As a television journalist, I have to know that in advance, so that we can take shots of you holding a pizza. While as a print journalist I do not have to worry about that. I can process it afterwards in my story. (journalist, no. 55)

Surprisingly, as it turned out, the practice of "predefining" is not merely less dominant among storytellers working for printed media, they often explicitly distance themselves from the idea of formulating an angle or baseline in the preparation process. The following commentary of a Belgian reporter is exemplary for the way print storytellers usually prepare their stories: "I never think of anything in advance. When I go on assignment, I'm guided by my gut feeling … I arrive without any idea" (journalist, no. 59). Broadly speaking, the reasoning of these storytellers is that the best stories are found by not preparing at all. In this context, journalists talk about "reporter's luck," "gold nuggets" or "catching pearls." A Dutch foreign affairs reporter:

When a journalist arrives somewhere for the first time, there is always the same fear: Jesus, how can I make a story out of this? Because the drama is not obvious … [But] if you are too prepared, you cannot be surprised anymore … You must leave as much as possible to chance … Do not board up your whole trip with appointments. Then you are writing a premeditated story. While it is nicer to talk to people spontaneously … the moment you talk with them, there is a lot going on. You encounter very unexpected things, the craziest things. (journalist, no. 65)

Whereas news makers often mold sources' explanations into predefined stories, storytellers tend to be more open to what sources say. Experienced storytellers even emphasize they dislike what they call "the journalistic interview"—which they associate with "roasting," "grilling" or "hitting" people. A Belgian general reporter noticed he did not have "interviews with sources"—like ordinary journalists—but rather "conversations with people" (journalist, no. 58).

Presenting the Story: Objectivity vs. Transparency

In this part, we discuss the results referring to journalistic conventions regarding form, style, and genre. Boundary work appears to be mainly about the writing or assembly stage of news production; for instance, the use of the inverted pyramid, the five Ws, balanced reporting, genre distinction, and literary and cinematic techniques.

News makers attach great importance to traditional journalistic conventions, such as the inverted pyramid, the five Ws and balanced reporting. According to a politics beat reporter, one should always include a counterword within the same news story. "More than ever, in a 24-hour news flow you don't have to wait with a counterword until the next story. Even in a scoop we always try to bring the other party's perspective" (journalist, no. 46). A copy editor of a Belgian newspaper described himself as "a journalistic guardian" of "the rules … such as balanced reporting … and of the journalistic reflex… [namely the question] do we really bring 'the news'?" (journalist, no. 30). Conventions such as the inverted pyramid have to ensure that "the news" is always put at the beginning of a news story.

A news chief of a Belgian newspaper denounced the blurring of journalistic genres. "Actually, there are only three news genres: the news report, the reportage and the interview. And maybe also the background story, but truly every good news report should be a background story as well" (journalist, no. 7). The news chief's boundary work involves the upkeep of the distinction between "factual journalism" and "opinion journalism." Somewhat surprisingly, considering his critical attitude towards the blurring of genres, he did not see a contradiction between factual journalism and good storytelling. On the contrary, "the more factual news stories are written, the more pleasant they are to read." While storytelling is often associated with jazzing the facts up, he believed the best storytelling is a "factual" approach in which audiences are taken seriously.

The prototypical storyteller is bound to challenge many of the conventions news makers

defend. For instance, the five Ws. "They are taught in journalism schools," said a general reporter of a Belgian newspaper, "but they are unsuitable for a pleasant read [because] they make your text extremely boring" (journalist, no. 59). For a Dutch television reporter, the five Ws were one of the main reasons why he no longer wanted to work for the evening news.

> I always had to throw away too much fun stuff … because it was very who-what-where. While I was much more interested in why … Why is that? … [His slogan is] "Don't read me the news, tell me the story." I wanted to know: What's all this about? What is the story behind [the news]? (journalist, no. 62)

While news makers emphasize news stories must start with "the news," storytellers prefer to start from synoptic details. A general reporter from a Belgian newspaper:

> Every encounter has two or three special details. If you put them below each other, and fill in between, you have three beautiful parts. Then the who-what-where-when-convention doesn't matter. … Your first sentence is the one on which you hang your story. A detail that characterizes the bigger picture. (journalist, no. 59)

While storytellers don't like the inverted pyramid, this convention is still dominant in newspaper newsrooms. When copy editors need to shorten news stories, they often routinely cut the last paragraph. To the frustration of the following reporter:

> It was a conscious choice to start and end with that. But my piece was 40 lines too long, so they cut the last paragraph. I was angry about that. I thought: Goddamn, you can do better copy editing than just wasting the end. There were enough other sentences that could be cut. (journalist, no. 25)

Another bone of contention in the newsroom has to do with storytellers' use of literary and cinematic techniques, such as plot lines, cliffhangers, beautiful sentences or nature depictions. A Dutch foreign affairs correspondent, by example, likes to intertwine the weather conditions with substantial elements of his stories. When former president Barack Obama made a poor show during a debate in the run-up to the 2012 presidential elections, the journalist's report made it appear as if "nature" predicted it.

> And suddenly, there was a wind. As though nature, or the Gods … had a hunch. Yes, it seemed like a sign, a bad omen for Obama. That's how I described it. That's nice to read, no? You create a kind of atmosphere. … But an ombudsman told me: "Actually you can't do that." You know, it is very strange journalism. I mean: you can't get a response … from the Gods. You can't ask them what they really thought. (journalist, no. 65)

For storytellers, balanced reporting has not the same sacred status as for news makers. A television reporter from the Netherlands described balanced reporting as "very lazy journalism" and as "a frame that suggests that you are able to tell everything." Instead,

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she prefers to provide space for "neglected perspectives" (journalist, no. 60). Storytellers tend to overstep the classic guiding principles of impartiality and representativeness. A Dutch documentary maker added that "our primary aim is [creating] unforgettable characters and not a precise statistical reflection [of society]" (journalist, no. 63). Instead of being detached observers, storytellers are often actors in their own stories. Sometimes subtle, by showing a tripod or a microphone, as the following television reporter explains:

> I always try to show that we are present with cameras … I never make a kind of closed universe. … I think it would be very good if journalism makes the making-of more part of its story. Not to personalize it, or turn it into an ego document, but to show the constraints under which a news story is made. (journalist, no. 60)

Being present as a narrator often conflicts with traditional genre boundaries. A Dutch freelance reporter complains that his "personal" stories are sometimes rejected because they do not fit in one of the available sections of the newspaper or magazine.

> A common argument is… well, what is this about? Is it something for the science section, because it is about medical things? Or for the economy section, because it is about money? … Actually, everyone may be interested in the topic. The problem is my approach. That makes it difficult. … It always has to be objective and on the background and that kind of things. It is the mixing of the personal with the general that makes it difficult. (journalist, no. 57)

By claiming "everyone may be interested in the story," he introduces an audience perspective to classify the news instead of traditional genre conventions.

Discussion and Conclusion

While much storytelling research focuses on texts, this paper aimed to study how journalists deal with the assumed professional boundaries between storytelling and truth-finding in their daily practice. However, a main finding of this study was that journalists' discursive boundary work often circled around the practices of storytelling and news making—within which truth-finding functions differently. While all journalists make news stories, some consider themselves or others—whether or not depending on the circumstances—more news makers than storytellers or vice versa.

This paper argued that news making and storytelling are professional patterns of speech, which differ in two ways: First, in the way journalists present their stories, but also in the way they prepare their stories. With regard to story presentation, for instance, news makers prefer an inverted pyramid structure, while storytellers will discuss their work in terms of a linear or reversed narrative structure. Both storytellers and news makers actively deal with the boundaries of journalism. They will even sometimes discount themselves or others as "proper" journalists or doing real journalism. Defending or criticizing the inverted pyramid structure and the five Ws can be seen as a way to defend or open up the boundaries of journalism, since such daily work practices are linked with journalism's

seemingly exclusive knowledge claims (cf. Anderson, 2009). In following both conventions, journalists "establish discursive authority over the material they present as to be a 'true' account of what happened" (Hanitschz & Hoxha, 2014, p. 5). While the news makers protect these boundaries, the storytellers try to expand them (cf. Carlson, 2015; Gieryn, 1983), for instance, by rejecting traditional news selection criteria or by embracing literary techniques.

While these differences in presentation practices may not be that surprising, the observed differences in preparation practices are more remarkable. Because storytelling handbooks (e.g. Blundell, 1988; Hunter et al., 2011; Verheyden, Fluit, & Rumes, 2014) emphasize the importance of forethought and planning, we expected this practice to be an important issue for storytellers. However, in everyday reality, most storytellers in our studies loosely prepare their stories. More specifically, "predefining" is seen as diametrically opposed to "good storytelling." It is precisely the lack of such preparation practices that storytellers point out as enabling them to "catch pearls" or to push "reporters' luck"— by which journalists mean bumping into people or details leading to nice stories.

In contrast, news makers showed and expressed themselves as unfaithful angle-seekers. Due to their adherence to classic journalistic conventions, the stories of news makers get a more "factual" impression than those of storytellers (cf. Ytreberg, 2001). However, these "objective" stories are often the result of a quest for facts or quotes which fit the predefined angle. While storytellers "bump into people," news makers select sources from within their preconceived angles. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) noticed that a predefined story angle

> provides reporters a theme around which to build a story. Reporters work most efficiently when they know what their interview sources will say. This sounds counterintuitive, but it helps to explain why reporters rely on familiar sources—they can predict in advance who will give them the information needed to flesh out their angle. (pp. 115-116)

For storytellers, truth-finding seems to be a difficult quest of which the outcome cannot be predicted, while for news makers it is rather a hypothesis-confirming practice. In explaining the different discourses around preparation practices of news makers and storytellers, two elements have to be stressed. First, there is the element of time. News makers are usually more concerned with covering current events. Working with short deadlines, the practice of predefining help to focus and "speed up the reporting process by determining from the beginning what is relevant to a given story and what is not" (Hermann, 2017, p. 7). A second explanation might be that news makers are usually "beat reporters" while storytellers are usually "general reporters." Beat reporters are more dependent on institutional sources for their newsgathering. Because public relation professionals are trained to deal with journalists, predefined angles might be very useful to avoid powerful sources take (over) the lead in the story. Storytellers are less often "experts" in a certain domain and deal more often with what academics usually call "ordinary people" (although storytellers would rather say "extraordinary" people). Dealing with stories of everyday life usually demands an open attitude and a listening ear, instead of

the more defensive stance fitting a critical position.

Interestingly, both strategies of making news stories are seen as a response to the emergence of online news. Although "online journalism" was not the primary concern of most journalists in our studies (see also Tameling, 2015; Usher, 2014), the "ubiquity of news online" was referred to by news makers as well as storytellers to legitimize their distinct practices. Since news makers are usually covering events that are "in the news," they feel the need to make their stories different from what's already widespread on the Internet. In other words, the assumed necessity of news pegs partly explains the practice of predefining. While some level of predetermination has always been part of journalism (see Altheide & Rasmussen, 1976), the journalists in our study considered it a valuable practice to strengthen the boundaries between journalism and, for instance, aggregation. Storytellers have no need to predefine their stories because these stories are usually less linked to current events. However, they use a similar "because of the Internet"—reasoning to argue why news media need more of their kind of stories. Like the news makers' claim to provide "unique angles" to the news, the storytellers claim to offer "unique stories" (preferably not in the news at all).

Some limits of the study must be emphasized. First, there is the focus on newspaper journalists. Although some of them had experience with broadcast media as well, only six journalists from the total sample (all from the third study) were working for audiovisual media at the time of the study. Remarkably, the preparing practices of audiovisual storytellers—in particular the practice of predefining—showed more similarities with the practices of newspaper news makers than with the practices of newspaper storytellers. Future research could include more audiovisual journalists to figure out whether the differences detected are persistent and how to explain them more clearly. Secondly, the focus of this study was still on "professional" journalists, most of them working in a traditional newsroom environment. However, a true practice perspective should additionally consider the storytelling practices of journalists not working in legacy journalism and even of non-professionals. Such a study can shed light on the question whether boundary work on storytelling conventions is shared with digital native journalism and participatory journalism, for instance because online-only working journalists do their job within a different news market.

Besides extending the study to broadcast and online-only and non-professional journalists, other studies could take an audience perspective. While there is already a lot of research about how audiences engage with presentation differences of news stories (for example, comparing the inverted pyramid structure with a linear or reversed structure), there exists little research about journalists' audience presuppositions that guide their preparing practices (but see Anderson, 2011; Matthews, 2008; Robinson & Nechushtai, 2017). Considering the rationale behind predefining practices, researchers could investigate if newspaper audiences really are "already informed by the Internet" about the basic facts of a story.

Endnotes

1. The higher number of interviews is explained by the fact that 20 journalists were interviewed several times. Not included are the numerous unplanned informal conversations in the newsroom. The latter will be referred to as "field notes, date." Quotes of planned interviews will be followed by numbers instead of journalists' names.

2. Twenty-five of the 145 interviews were not tape recorded, namely the interviews with the editors-in-chief and the news chiefs (because of confidentiality reasons) and all the interviews in the second study (because of arrangements made with the editors-in-chief of the studied newsrooms).

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Journalists' perceptions of solutions journalism and its place in the field

By Kyser Lough and Karen McIntyre

This paper uses in-depth interviews with 14 journalists to better understand the position of solutions journalism—rigorous reporting on how people are responding to social problems—in the field and in journalistic habits. We found that journalists familiar with solutions journalism accept and align it with investigative reporting, but with the extra step toward social response. They think it's broadly topical, but has the same objectivity concerns journalism is facing. When taking a solutions approach, journalists shift their thought processes but largely maintain the same reporting habits. Finally, they perceive management to be the greatest facilitator or impediment to their ability to adopt solutions journalism.

The nature of journalism is ever-shifting, with trends and themes coming in and out of favor as the institution continues to elaborate on what it means to do reporting. Some themes take hold in the minds of journalists and are adopted into their daily news reporting habits and, subsequently, into the research topics of academics. One such practice is solutions journalism, which is "rigorous reporting on responses to social problems" (Solutions Journalism Network, 2017, n.p.). This type of reporting fits into the contextual function of journalism, which seeks to add information beyond the immediate issue at hand, or to go beyond the "who, what, when, where" that often defines the problem, and focus on "What are people doing about it?" (McIntyre, Dahmen & Abdenour, 2016).

Solution-based reporting is gaining momentum in the industry. A recent survey of U.S. journalists indicated support for contextual journalism functions, including solution-oriented journalism (McIntyre et al., 2016). After learning about solutions journalism, respondents reported favorable attitudes toward it and said they would be most likely to practice this approach compared to other contextual genres (McIntyre et al., 2016). Further, more than 3,000 journalists have received formal training in solutions journalism (Solutions Journalism Network, 2017). And educators are beginning to teach it, seeing interest

among millennials striving to make an impact (Loizzo, Watson & Watson, 2017; Solutions Journalism Network, 2017; Thier, 2016).

This type of reporting, by its very nature requiring journalists to consider the impact of their work, has brought to the forefront debate about the role journalists play in a democratic society. Solution-oriented reporting pushes journalists to think about the social responsibility of the press and question whether they consider society's best interest in their daily thought processes and habits. However, research has yet to examine how journalists feel about this style of reporting. To address this gap, this study, through 14 in-depth interviews, asked journalists familiar with the solutions approach how they perceive this style of reporting and how incorporating this approach has altered their traditional journalistic thoughts and news production habits.

Theoretical Framework

Solutions Journalism

Solutions journalism can be considered to fit into the contextual function of journalism, a more thorough type of journalism that has also been referred to as "interpretative reporting, depth reporting, long-form journalism, explanatory reporting, and analytical reporting" (Fink & Schudson, 2014, p. 5). Drilling down, solutions journalism can also be situated within a similar, but more specific category called constructive journalism, which "involves applying positive psychology techniques to news work in an effort to create more productive, engaging stories while holding true to journalism's core functions" (McIntyre, 2015, p. 9). McIntyre (2015) describes constructive journalism as a "continuum" and not a dichotomy. This shifts the focus from the "versus" style of reporting (peace vs. conflict, oppressor vs. oppressed) back to an emphasis on comprehensive investigative reporting with an intent to better society.

This study focuses on the solutions journalism component of constructive journalism. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are other forms of journalism that share similar goals, including peace journalism, civic journalism, restorative narrative, and advocacy journalism. Peace journalism promotes peace initiatives versus a perceived media bias toward violence (Yiping, 2011) and focuses heavily on war/peace conflict coverage (Kempf, 2007). Civic journalism promotes democratic participation by giving journalists direct involvement with the population they serve instead of staying a separate entity (Benesch, 1998). Restorative narrative encourages coverage of the recovery and restoration process long after large-impact tragedies (Dahmen, 2016). And advocacy journalism, with its public relations implications, maintains no goal of objectivity and "remains a dirty word for legacy journalists" (Wenzel, Gerson, Moreno, Son, & Morrison Hawkins, 2017, p. 4). Additional similar forms of journalism exist. Although each is distinct, they share a common goal of improving society, which requires the journalist to play a more active role in reporting the story (McIntyre, 2015).

Solutions journalism has a growing appeal in the professional world for its principle of addressing what's being done to solve a problem rather than reporting solely on the

problem itself (Curry, Stroud, & McGregor, 2016). The approach has been most clearly defined by the Solutions Journalism Network, an independent nonprofit organization founded in 2013. The Solutions Journalism Network has hosted trainings for journalists in more than 80 newsrooms on how to effectively report solution-focused stories. In reporting on responses to social problems, they call for stories to include specific elements such as evidence of results, insights that can help others, and limitations of the response (Solutions Journalism Network, 2017). These elements, the Network says, are vital to ensuring stories remain comprehensive and critical rather than appear as "fluff" or "good news."

Still, solutions journalism, or the broader category of constructive journalism, tends to be mistaken for "positive" or "good" news (Sillesen, 2014). Constructive journalism, one opponent said, is only good "if you want a sleepy, complacent society, not if you want active, engaged citizens" (Tullis, 2014 para. 14). However, proponents of solutions journalism would say the approach is just as hard-hitting and questioning as traditional journalism. David Bornstein, CEO and co-founder of the Solutions Journalism Network, says criticisms of solutions journalism mostly come from people who misunderstand the practice (personal communication, November 30, 2017). That said, Bornstein did acknowledge some limitations of solution-focused news. He said reporters can misapply it by spotlighting people who don't deserve it or by focusing on do-gooders instead of on ideas or methods. He also said the approach could be overused and thus lose its relevance (personal communication, November 30, 2017).

Despite its growing popularity in the industry, solutions journalism has only been recently explored in academic research. In a systematic, but unpublished, study of solutions journalism, respondents who read solution-oriented stories reported more perceived knowledge about the topic, higher self-efficacy in regard to a potential remedy, and greater intentions to act in support of the cause than those who read conflict-oriented versions of the stories (Curry & Hammonds, 2014). A true experiment comparing a solution-oriented and conflict-oriented news story found that mentioning an effective solution to a social problem in a news story caused readers to feel less negative and to report more favorable attitudes toward the news article and toward solutions to the problem than when no solution or an ineffective solution was mentioned. However, reading about an effective solution did not impact readers' behavioral intentions or actual behaviors (McIntyre, 2017). Another experiment comparing solutions journalism to shock media found that solutions stories had some, but not overwhelming, benefits over shocking stories (McIntyre & Sobel, 2017a).

Additional studies have examined the photographs published alongside solutions journalism stories. One study found 64% of photos published with solutions stories portrayed a solution, while many of the remaining photos portrayed a conflict (Lough & McIntyre, in press). A follow-up study examined the effects on readers when the message in the photo was incongruent with the message in the text. Readers felt the most positive when the story and photo were congruent, when both represented a solution. However, surprisingly, readers reported more interest in the story and stronger intentions to share the story on social media when the solutions story was paired with a neutral photo (McIntyre,

Lough & Manzanares, in press).

Finally, Thier (2016) published a study about solutions journalism pedagogy, concluding that solutions journalism courses inspire students and faculty, and that teaching this approach "is important as disruption continues and need increases to find effective journalism practices" (p. 329). Additionally, students in a Journalism for Social Change Massive Open Online Course self-reported more interested in solutions journalism stories but found them harder to produce (Loizzo, Watson & Watson, 2017).

Framing

In his conceptualization of framing, Robert Entman revealed how the field of communication contributes to how information is transferred. While his definition connects to the overall goals of journalism, specific portions align clearly with the goals of solutions journalism:

> To select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993, p. 52, emphasis added).

Solution-related frames have been used as points of analysis in journalism studies (see Adisi, Mohammed, & Ahmad, 2015; Kensicki, 2004; Kim, Carvalho, Davis, & Mullins, 2011). In the definition above, two phrases are emphasized that play particularly well into the ideals of solutions journalism: treatment recommendations and salience.

First, the treatment recommendation. In solutions journalism, the goal of the reporter is to go beyond the problem and find existing treatments (not to generate the ideas him/herself). This is done by critically exploring what those in the public are doing in response to a problem. As mentioned above, research shows how the audience responds to this type of reporting, but there is little understanding of what journalists think about this particular emphasis on treatments/solutions.

Second, Entman's emphasis on salience ties into the journalistic function of taking the news and disseminating it to the public. Solutions journalism asks the journalist to make the response more salient than it may ordinarily be. By reporting on the response(s), the reporter thereby increases the "probability that receivers will perceive the information, discern meaning and thus process it, and store it in memory" (Entman, 1993 p. 53). But again, while the transfer of salience to the reader is understood, less is known about how the journalists themselves position this process in their daily journalistic thought processes and news production habits.

Another key solutions-related point in the Entman (1993) framing explanation is that the problem definition is included. Indeed, before one can explore the responses in progress one must first clearly understand and explain the problem. Constructive journalism (and its solution-oriented component), again, is not a dichotomy, but a continuum (McIntyre,

2015), and so it is important to provide the full context versus simply only focusing on problem or solution. Therefore, it is important to know how journalists feel about an emphasis on solutions, the transfer of salience to the reader and the problem-solution continuum in a story itself. However, it is also important to understand how these thought processes of solutions journalism are put into practice, and so we must turn to the intersection of thought and the actual news production habits of journalists.

Journalists' Production Habits

Shoemaker and Reese's (2013) hierarchy of influences identifies various levels for analysis affecting news production ranging from the individual to institutional systems. Solutions journalism can exist on many of the levels of the hierarchy, which are explored below. Nestled in the hierarchy, one step broader than the individual, is a level focusing on routines, or news production habits. The routines level asks questions of the shared practices of the individual journalists and includes a variety of aspects such as news values and objectivity.

Objectivity has a controversial history in journalism and continues to be debated (Blaagaard, 2013; Ryan, 2001; Wien, 2005). It cannot be untethered from some of the core concepts underpinning the institution, like truth and reality (Wien, 2005). The idea that journalists strive to report the objective truth legitimizes and distinguishes professional journalists from those who don't share the same commitment. However, Blaagaard (2013) said that niche forms of journalism such as public journalism and citizen journalism—some of which share qualities with solutions journalism—threaten objective reporting "by situating the journalist amidst the society and the story" rather than believing in "the journalist's objective ability to represent the world 'as it is' without affecting it" (p. 1078). Of course, media sociologists would argue that objectivity in its purest form is not possible because journalists are part of society and therefore unable to rid themselves of their own experiences, perceptions and biases (Berkowitz, 1997). This perspective does not de-legitimize journalists, however. Rather, it accepts objectivity as a goal to strive for so long as journalists acknowledge their own limitations. One journalism professor said he wonders if solutions journalism compromises objectivity because reporters "approach a story with the goal of proving that a specific solution is valid" (Dyer, 2015, n.p.). Media scholar Ethan Zuckerman said solutions journalists should stop trying to be strictly objective and that "purposefully motivating readers to act on the issues raised in stories is perfectly respectable—indeed, necessary" (Dyer, 2015, n.p.).

Høyer (2005) presented the news paradigm as a collection of cultural forms surrounding news production habits and how journalists define what's newsworthy and subsequently report on it. While not attempting to insert solutions journalism as an additional news value or narrative structure into Høyer's list, it is logical to conclude the practice itself may find a home for analysis at this level.

Past the routines, journalists also identify with certain roles that can play out on the same level. Examples include: the adversary, who is skeptical of government, big business and others in power; the disseminator, who neutrally passes information to the public; the

interpreter, who analyzes and interprets information for the public; and the populist mobilizer, who takes a more activist role (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2014). Through study of U.S. journalists, McIntyre, Dahmen and Abdenour (2016) proposed a new role: the contextualist. This role includes a function of social responsibility, where the journalist goes beyond basic information to include context, while considering the well-being of society. The contextualist highly values portraying the world accurately by reporting stories of growth and progress as much as those about corruption and conflict.

While little has been explored academically into routines-level analysis of solutions journalism, some insight exists. The aforementioned survey of U.S. journalists indicated support for a solution-oriented approach and connected various levels of news value and action to the practice (McIntyre et al., 2016). Further, a qualitative study of Rwandan journalists found how solutions and constructive journalism played a role in the press' role in reconstruction and recovery after the 1994 government-led genocide (McIntyre & Sobel, 2017b). This provides some knowledge into how the thought processes of journalists played into news production habits but leaves room for further exploration.

After defining and positioning solutions journalism within the practice of journalism, exploring it theoretically through framing and at the level of production through the hierarchy of influences, there is still little known about the thought processes of journalists regarding solutions journalism. Thus, the following question is proposed:

RQ1: What do journalists' perceptions of solutions journalism reveal about its place within journalism itself and within their news production habits?

Methodology

Prior research on solutions journalism has focused on the audience, with slight attention paid to the journalists themselves. That which has targeted journalists (McIntyre, Dahmen, & Abdenour, 2016) has done little to focus specifically on those practicing, or at least aware of, solutions journalism and what they think about it. Thus, the ideal method to gain this is through in-depth interviews that allow the participants to offer description on their thoughts and routines surrounding solutions journalism. In-depth, qualitative interviews allow for a richer understanding of a group through open-ended questions and discussion with participants with the goal of learning from people rather than studying them, ultimately developing contextual research that matters (Spradley, 1979; Tracy, 2013). The target demographic for this study therefore included journalists who were, to some extent, aware of a solution-oriented method of reporting. Contributions from journalists who are not familiar with solutions journalism would only add confusion and perpetuate misconceptions about the practice. To that end, the Solutions Journalism Network served as a useful source for recruiting participants.

In an effort to collect information from those knowledgeable enough to offer insight, subjects were recruited from the Solution Journalism Network's database of journalists interested in, and/or trained in, solutions journalism. This ensured awareness of the practice without necessarily seeking a particular level of involvement or support. The Solu-

tions Journalism Network has its own list of values and practices, and this paper would contribute nothing if it only contained regurgitations from the organization's teachings. The authors sought original insight from those who had been incorporating it into their reporting habits. Additionally, it was made clear to each participant that the researchers were unaffiliated with the Solutions Journalism Network, the study was independent and not seeking to promote the practice, and to therefore speak freely.

Under IRB review and approval, participants were recruited via an email sent by staff at the Solutions Journalism Network to members in their network, called The Hub. At the time of recruitment, the database contained 1,568 self-identified journalists from across the world (S. McCann, personal communication, September 19, 2017), and no geographic restrictions were imposed. The email connected the participants to the researchers, who then scheduled voice interviews via phone or Skype.

From the recruitment email, 25 journalists responded with initial interest, and 14 followed through with an interview. All interviews took place in July and August 2017. The participants were an experienced, educated and diverse group. Together they reported an average of 19.5 years working in the news industry as writers, reporters and editors. One individual was a journalism professor. These journalists worked at various organizations, including small, independent local newsrooms as well as large corporations. Half the sample did freelance work. Most worked in the United States (in eight different states), except for two in India and one in Sweden. They were 43% female and 57% male. All of the journalists reported having earned a bachelor's degree, and 50% said they held advanced degrees. Six individuals studied journalism as their highest degree; the others earned their highest degree in English, history, psychology, African studies, environmental science, law or education policy.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of questions involving their thoughts on solutions journalism, personal experiences with it and how it fits into journalistic routines, with flexibility for follow-up questions. Some questions were direct, asking them exactly how they feel about solutions journalism, to gauge their opinion. The rest of the interview was devoted to questions that dealt with how they conceptualize solutions journalism and how it actually fit into their day-to-day reporting. Did they use it? If so, under what circumstances? What were the barriers and facilitators to solution-oriented reporting? Interviewees were asked to provide examples and discuss their internal process of creating such a story and how that process differed, if at all, from their traditional reporting process.

Each interview ran for approximately 30 minutes, with the longest lasting one hour. Interviews were audio recorded, and the resulting 467 minutes of audio were transcribed. The researchers read the transcript text, searching for themes, and further analyzed the data using Dedoose, a collaborative software program which assists researchers in qualitative text analysis (Lieber & Weisner, 2013). The researchers applied 17 codes, or themes, to the data 286 times. The analysis by the researchers combined with the aid of computer software allowed for the data to be organized into categories and structured effectively while maintaining the nuance in interpreting the interview conversations.

Results

RQ1: What do journalists' perceptions of solutions journalism reveal about its place within journalism itself and within their news production habits?

Analysis of the interviews resulted in a better understanding of how journalists position solutions journalism within journalism itself and within their news production habits. Broadly, it was regarded as an intriguing and growing method of reporting that has obstacles but is a worthwhile pursuit. More specifically, several key findings emerged. Journalists revealed that they position solutions journalism close to investigative journalism. They believe it to be broadly applicable to topics but still complicated when it comes to objectivity. Additionally, the data revealed that journalists approach solutions stories with a different mindset than they approach traditional stories, and they feel that the success of the solutions journalism approach relies on support from management.

Solutions Journalism as a Concept

While it was expected for journalists in this sample to have a positive opinion of solutions journalism, our goal was to draw out details as to where they place it within the institution of journalism, the broader ring of the hierarchy of influences. To that end, their responses helped explain where solutions journalism is situated, what topics are well-suited for solution-oriented reporting and how they think solutions journalism affects the audience.

Situating solutions journalism in the field.

Journalists overwhelmingly compared solutions journalism to investigative journalism. In their minds, solutions reporting parallels investigative reporting in its rigorous nature of deep research into the topic and in its goal of uncovering something. Indeed, this thought mirrors the mission of The Catalyst Journalism Project, a recent initiative based at the University of Oregon, which seeks to bring together investigative and solutions reporting (University of Oregon, 2017). However, these journalists did not believe solutions and investigative journalism were completely similar. Some spoke of solutions journalism as an extension of investigative reporting, or investigative journalism with an extra step. As Journalist B, a reporter for an online local news site in Ohio, described it, "normally, journalists do not take that extra step … to present what other solutions are out there … I think [solutions journalism is] that final, extra step where you say, 'Here's something that could work here'" (personal communication, July 9, 2017). While the traditional five Ws of reporting include who, what, when, where and why, a sixth W of "what's next?" was a common theme in the responses, along with additional emphasis on "why?" and "how?" Journalist K, a freelancer in India, called investigative reporting the watchdog to identify the problems and solutions journalism reporting the guide dog to look at possible solutions. This calls to mind Bro's (2008) news compass and comparisons between passive, representative watchdog reporting and active, deliberative rescue dog reporting that seeks to "ensure solutions to the problems the news media help bring forward" (p. 316).

> I've always embraced investigative journalism, and uncovering, and watchdog journalism, but a lot of times I'll see a piece or read a piece and go, "Okay so, what?" ... Not, "What are we supposed to do about it?" We know we're supposed to fix it, but who's got an answer for it? (Journalist K, personal communication, August 22, 2017)

While advocacy journalism came up a few times, most journalists used it as an example of what solutions journalism isn't. "It's a little troubling to me the idea that I would write a story that says 'this is a great solution to the problem,'" said Journalist A, a journalism professor in New York, emphasizing that solutions journalism "is not a story about me and what I think. It's still a story about what's happening on the ground" (personal communication, August 17, 2017). This aligns with the objectivity messaging of the Solutions Journalism Network and its avoidance of advocating toward a particular solution. However, this stance was not clear to all journalists, as some embraced solutions journalism because of the advocacy elements they felt it would bring their reporting. Journalist G, a news editor at a large corporation in Philadelphia, said: "You might as well advocate for something, right? … Looking for a solution is being an activist" (personal communication, August 17, 2017).

Multiple solutions journalism "imposters" defined by the Solutions Journalism Network were mentioned by participants, notably including stories about speculation, hero worship and a public relations-style favor for a friend. Additionally, Journalist M, the managing editor for a collaborative public media venture in New York, cautioned that it is easy to get excited about solutions journalism and "then just for the sake of covering a solutions angle, you cover something that isn't really much of a solution and you trumpet this thing that is kind of B.S. or a hoax or whatever" (personal communication, July 24, 2017).

From the participants' efforts at positioning solutions journalism within the institution of journalism, it appears they think it aligns with the rigorousness of investigative reporting, with the additional step of seeking out what solutions exist for the problem uncovered, or the sixth W—"What's next?" However, the differing opinions of objectivity showed that practitioners have not yet reached a consensus on solution journalism's placement in the larger field.

Solutions journalism's applicability to specific topics.

The positioning of solutions journalism became clearer when talking to the participants about when the practice is best used. In their responses of what topics or areas of coverage they think are best suited for solutions journalism, they continued to position it within the broader field of journalism.

Overall, participants felt that solutions journalism is fairly topic-agnostic. Several journalists who were interviewed reported on specific beats, such as education or business, and said it was possible in their areas. Notably, as one participant spoke about a previous job as an example of where solutions journalism wouldn't fit, she realized mid-sentence how it would.

> I used to work for a major national newspaper that had a big focus on business and finance and it's hard for me to think about what the solutions approach would be to reporting about the banking industry—and yet even as I'm saying that I'm realizing people who are in industry are constantly thinking about solutions and problem-solving. (Journalist A, personal communication, August 17, 2017)

Though the participants felt that all topics had a potential to be reported on with a solutions focus, there was thought that some topics are more inclined than others. For example, Journalist C, a freelancer and editor for a U.K.-based narrative design studio that helps people tell stories, said it depends on the complexity of the problem (personal communication, July 19, 2017). Others identified specific topics that they thought were better suited. Journalist F, a multimedia broadcast journalist and freelancer in Virginia, said the solutions approach helps to address social and human rights issues specific to Pakistan (where she formerly worked) but also globally (personal communication, August 24, 2017). Only a few spoke strongly about how some topics are best suited for solutions journalism, and universally those topics were issues of human rights, social justice or the environment. While solutions journalism could be applied to most topics, the participants indicated they thought there are times it isn't practical. This is especially noted in cases of breaking news and what Journalist B, a reporter for an online local news site in Ohio, described as her daily reporting tasks (personal communication, July 9, 2017). The broad topic applicability responses from participants support Entman's (1993) definition of framing, which also does not take a specific stance on topics or types either and places focus on how the ideas are presented. While some topics may be better suited for solutions journalism than others, the participants believe it's a method that can apply to all areas of journalism.

Positioning the purpose of solutions journalism.

The positioning of solutions journalism matters little unless the journalists can also position its connection to the audience as well. Participants frequently brought up audience impact and engagement as a way of justifying, supporting and positioning the purpose of solutions journalism. The participants related solutions journalism to current issues of media trust and audience perceptions, saying that they think it has the potential to rebuild lost credibility and interest from their readers, viewers or listeners.

> One thing that really struck me and frustrated me while I was in school was that my teachers told us all the time, and my teachers were all working or formerly working journalists, and they're all like, "People aren't reading newspapers. It's harder to get a job. People don't trust the media." … If you're writing with an eye towards solutions, I think it's much more engaging. The reader can say, "God, that sucks, and what can I do about it," and the story answers that question. (Journalist G, personal communication, August 17, 2017)

As the participants discussed media trust and how they think solutions journalism plays a role in the future of journalism, questions of objectivity began to emerge. Journalist G, the Philadelphia-based news editor, went on to blur the line between reporting on a solution and taking a stance. Objectivity itself came up a number of times outside of direct questioning by the interviewers, which is a topic that will be explored more thoroughly below as it relates to practice. However, it is important to note that objectivity came up as a blurry area when participants attempted to position solutions journalism within the institution of journalism. This is not unlike how objectivity itself is frequently challenged as a tenet of journalism (Maras, 2013) and shows that threads of opinion run deep, even into other practices of reporting.

In summary, by asking journalists what they think about solutions journalism as it relates to journalism as a whole, three themes emerged that help show how they position the practice. First, they think it is similar to investigative reporting but with an added step of looking for existing solutions. Second, they find it appealing for a broad range of topics but think certain topics are more suited. Finally, they think it has a role in shaping the future of journalism in rebuilding audience interest and trust, though objectivity still can be a gray area.

News Production Habits of Solutions Journalists

The positioning of solutions journalism within the institution is important, but the researchers also set out to see just how these thoughts influence the production habits of the journalists. To that end, the second half of the interview focused on real-life experience with solutions journalism and how their thoughts connected to journalistic habit. Several themes emerged from these conversations, including further considerations of objectivity, how solutions journalism alters existing routines, and what facilitates and impedes journalists' ability to report using a solutions-based approach. These themes aligned with three levels of the hierarchy of influences (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013), mainly institutional, individual and organizational, respectively, and showed how each has an influence on the ability to practice solutions journalism.

Solutions journalism's relationship with objectivity.

While most journalists think there is a clear line between advocacy journalism and solutions journalism, the institutional journalistic tenet of objectivity still creates complication in the understanding and practice of solutions journalism. When connecting solutions journalism to practice, participants mostly positioned it away from advocacy journalism or opinion—something the Solutions Journalism Network does in its literature. As referenced above, however, Journalist G had a hard time separating advocacy, at one point saying "you might as well advocate for something, right?" (personal communication, August 17, 2017).

To reconcile the differences, journalists spoke at institutional levels of examples, positioning their work against the tenets of journalism and how they were trained (even if they didn't have a journalism degree).

> Objectivity is very important. I don't have formal journalistic training but yeah, I'm aware of that much. I think that without objectivity you don't have journalism whether it's solutions or not. (Journalist C, personal communication, July 19, 2017)

In bringing their own experience and practices into the picture, they said they think the best way to combat the risks of slipping into opinionating is also through the institutional tenets of journalism. When pressed for specifics past just "remaining balanced," participants brought up tasks such as rigorous reporting and making sure any claims are made through evidence of data. Journalist A (the journalism professor), in particular, compared advocacy journalism to a "monologue with itself about what is right and wrong" and solutions journalism as a "conversation with the full complexity of the problem," backed by deep sources and data (personal communication, August 17, 2017).

Of course, in practice it's not always so easy. Journalist B, the reporter in Ohio, recounted a story where a problem in the community was identified, a solution in other communities was found and reported on, and then suddenly the publisher decided the media outlet should have a hand in implementing the solution in the community (personal communication, July 19, 2017). The reporting worked so well that the publisher him/herself was sold. However, the journalist noted the ethical dilemma of being involved in the implementation, since she wanted to remain objective. While the journalist became known as the person responsible for bringing the solution to the area, she said she avoided much of the public relations aspects of it, such as stepping out of a group photo when the program launched. Even though the media organization decided to pivot toward taking a more active role, the journalist still felt institutional pressure to keep objectivity a priority.

Same habits, revised thought process.

Looking closer at the actual practice of solutions journalism, participants were asked about their processes and habits of reporting and whether it takes a shift at the individual level to report with a focus on solutions. Here, a key finding emerges—it all came down to the thought process. While some participants talked about tangible routine changes, they all generally did things the same—sought sources, data, and information and synthesized it in a critical and questioning way. The questions were geared toward tangible process change yet it was the thought process itself that guided the individual and distinguished solutions reporting from conventional reporting.

In particular, participants said they think more about the "how" of a topic when covering it from a solutions approach. This came into play when discussing how solutions journalism takes the extra step from investigative reporting; participants said they don't stop at the issue but instead think about how to find what the solutions are. Journalist L, a coordinator for an Oregon chapter of the Solutions Journalism Network, said by having the right mindset going into a story, one can ask the right questions of the sources to start to see where the solutions may lie (personal communication, July 18, 2017).

Journalist B described a tangible process that differed from her typical reporting routine, but even that turned out to be heavily thought-based. To handle the complexity of thought necessary to plan out a solutions story, the journalist uses a mapping exercise to organize her thoughts.

> I always take a huge sheet of paper, and I story board it out … It always helps me because if it's something I know is gonna be deeply investigated, and has a lot of sources, and has a lot of ideas. It helps me, number one to
> map everything out, to say like, "Okay, here's the problem, here's the solution, and then everything in between." (personal communication, July 19, 2017)

While tangible news production habit changes were mentioned by some, the overwhelming shift at the individual level took place in the mind. Journalists started with a thought process shift toward the "how" of a solution, looking past the issue itself and beginning to understand how to ask questions, seek sources and obtain data. Even when their routines did change tangibly, such as the mapping example above or how some participants said they would need to travel to the other cities where the solutions were taking place, their process always started with a shift in thought.

Support among management.

The final questions asked to the participants dealt with what facilitates and impedes their ability to practice solutions journalism. As the sample included a range of journalists, from freelancers who have to pitch stories to staff reporters who might be assigned stories, answers varied but did settle on one key factor: management. Endorsement by the organization, whether it be an editor, publisher or supervisor, was key to facilitating or impeding the journalists' ability to report on solutions. This connects heavily to the organizational level of the hierarchy of influences, and supports the model in showing just how influential the organization can be. This was seen in two ways: support and resources.

Support from the organization's management played a key role in how the journalists said they were able to conduct solutions-based reporting. Several mentioned difficulty pitching their story ideas unless their editor saw solutions journalism as a worthwhile and legitimate pursuit. This can make it harder for the journalist, as they not only have to go through a traditional pitch but also must inform and convince the editor about the value of a solutions approach. Journalist G, a news editor at a large corporation who also does freelance work, said she considers herself lucky to work with open-minded editors that allow her to follow the story as she thinks it should go (personal communication, August 17, 2017). Audience interest in solutions can also serve as a facilitator, as Journalist I, a Colorado-based technical writer, mentioned.

> What facilitates doing this? I would say the support of management for sure,
> the support of the editors, and even maybe the support of the community.
> Because if the audience, the readers, the community, does express interest in
> this kind of work, then maybe there's more reason for the news
> organization to support that and set aside time for that. (personal
> communication, August 25, 2017)

On the freelance side, Journalist J said she takes care to investigate the media outlets
in India that she pitches to in order to make sure they are organizationally-aligned with
the concept of solutions reporting (personal communication, July 21, 2017). This is not
something new, as many freelance journalists will craft a pitch to shape the scope of
what an outlet is looking for. But it does show similar organizational ties and pressures
for making sure a solutions story can be carried out.

However, some participants said they had no trouble getting a solutions story past the
editor's desk as long as the story was done well.

> I've never had a solutions pitch rejected because it was a solutions story. I
> haven't had any negative experiences in that regard personally, but I
> can believe that it happens. I can picture some old school newspaper
> editor in my head going, "No, let's get the bad guys," kind of thing, but it's not
> something that I have any experience [with] negatively. On the contrary, the
> people that I've pitched stories to have generally been pretty positive about the
> concept. (Journalist C, personal communication, July 19, 2017)

While it's important to have the support of management, journalists also mentioned
other practical resource barriers. Several participants mentioned shrinking newsrooms
and shrinking resources as an impediment to solutions journalism. They described it as
something still seen as a specialty practice that can only be added once the core report-
ing work is done, almost as an elective if there is enough time. As funding shrinks, it
becomes harder to justify sending a journalist to another city to report on a solution. This,
too, goes back to the organization as money may follow the priorities, and if solutions
journalism is not a priority then it won't receive the funding.

Overall, journalists described organizational support as a key component of facilitating
solutions-based reporting. It's not enough for the journalists themselves to think of solu-
tions journalism as a worthwhile pursuit, it takes management having the same thoughts.
While having an editor or publisher not on board may not completely block the practice, it
certainly creates an obstacle the journalist must overcome.

In summary, by asking journalists what they think about solutions journalism as it relates
to their production habits, three themes emerged that help show how thought translates
to action. First, at the institutional level, we see that objectivity tenets still create some
complication, similar to what Shoemaker and Reese (2013) saw in the outer levels of the
hierarchy of influences. Journalists still perform paradigm repair in defending the institu-
tion of journalism, even in describing sub-levels of the field. Second, at the individual

level, we see how the routines and processes of journalists change primarily at the thought level, in how they plan out coverage and shift their thinking in the questions they ask. The process of framing a solution requires more than just a style of writing, it also takes re-thinking the story and how the reporter will approach it. Finally, at the organizational level we see how critical support from management is in facilitating the practice. In order to raise a solution's salience, the story must make it to publication, which requires managerial support. The organizational level of the hierarchy of influences describes how often the bottom line impacts how coverage can be carried out, and we see how journalists sometimes find it even harder to pitch stories when they don't match what the management might see as a necessary pursuit.

Conclusions

This study set out to understand journalists' thoughts about solutions journalism and how those impressions position it within the institution of journalism and within their news production habits. From our findings, we see that journalists feel excitement about solutions journalism and liken it to investigative reporting but with an extra step. They think most topics are suited for a solutions approach, but those with less complexity are more conducive, as well as topics relating to social issues. Objectivity is still a challenge, as it is in journalism itself, but journalists think it can be addressed through rigorous reporting and strong supporting evidence. In their news production habits, journalists shift their thought processes first, and let that guide their routines while working on a solutions story. Finally, it takes more than just the journalist to facilitate the process: management must be on board and commit the resources necessary.

While the interview pool remained small, saturation in the key findings was found, eliminating the need for additional interviews. Future research should seek to expand this pool, though, in order to attempt to gain deeper insight into some of the findings. Additionally, the fact that the participants were members of the Solutions Journalism Network Hub might mean they were more supportive of the practice than a representative sample of journalists would be. However, as discussed, it was necessary to recruit journalists familiar with solutions journalism, and our recruitment method served that purpose. Interviewing journalists unfamiliar with the practice would not advance its conceptualization and would likely further muddy the concept. Finally, while our study did seek global representation, future work could target specific countries versus a whole-world approach, to be able to compare nations and seek out culture-specific nuances as other comparative journalism studies have done (e.g. Hanitzch et al., 2011; Schmitz Weiss, 2015).

This research extends our knowledge of solutions journalism by turning to the journalists themselves. Our findings support the hierarchy of influences model, in seeing how individual, organizational and institutional factors play into the process of solution-oriented reporting. Further, Entman's (1993) framing, which has been used as a theoretical foundation for solutions journalism, is supported based on how journalists think about the practice.

Professionally, our findings illustrate the importance of having a cohesive newsroom that is unified in its mission. Without the support of editors and publishers, it will be harder for journalists to carry out a solutions-based approach to reporting. Groups promoting solutions journalism, such as the Solutions Journalism Network, need to target management and the organizational level just as much, if not more, as the reporters themselves. Unfortunately, lack of resources is not a problem unique to solutions journalism, but the Solutions Journalism Network does offer funding for journalists wishing to carry out solutions-based reports, which is a step in the right direction.

Solutions journalism continues to grow as a practice, and while some impediments remain in securing its legitimacy, journalists who have encountered it are enthusiastic and positive about its future.

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The narratives and routines of journalistic productions based on open data

By María Florencia Haddad and Elena Brizuela

This research, based on a detailed comparative analysis of 20 online articles published in Argentina, aims to characterize the types of narratives that result from databases. Because professional routines change, mostly according to work groups, the study also included semi-structured interviews with two editorial leaders who have extensive backgrounds with data. Five narrative types based on data were identified: personalization, main trends, outliers, synchronic comparison, and diachronic comparison. Each one offers different possibilities for journalists; editorial choices rest on the type of information involved and on the questions posed by the journalistic team.

The idea of news as a factual account accessed by reading or viewing is now accompanied by news as a narrative based on the exploration of big databases. The increased complexity of journalistic work calls for a team approach and professional routines that differ from those of the past: Data as well as facts are now a starting point for journalists eager to discover unbiased truth.

In Latin America, the development of data journalism is taking place within an atmosphere that foregrounds the need for quality journalism to provide accurate and verified information. An exploration of data journalism enables analysis of its use as a research method and a tool for validating journalistic sources (Brizuela, 2015a).

It is challenging to unequivocally identify where to begin in defining data journalism. But one possibility is to examine its methodology: Data journalism results from finding databases, questioning them, and finally allowing these databases to be accessible to readers through a narrative that often includes visualizations (Crucianelli, 2013).

Three factors establish data journalism as a trend that is here to stay. These are information digitalization; perfection of free, cloud-based tools that allow databases to be refined and visualizations to be created without the need for expert programmers; and increased awareness of the possibilities in public and private databases. (Bruzuela, 2014, 2015b)

An increased emphasis on the value of credible information in the contemporary media environment also creates a new professional opportunity to foster trust, respect, and citizen engagement with journalists and media outlets. The result can be stronger democracy and increased social cohesion (Klitgaard, 1994). Open data development is of particular interest to journalists in this context, largely because of a desire to made better information available to citizens and thus to facilitate better civic decisions based on that high-quality information. (Ramírez Alujas, 2012)

However, this trend challenges journalists' previous habits of thought, as it requires a reconsideration of how their profession is linked to other disciplines, as well as the more practical concern of how to build narratives so that information based on data can be made accessible to audiences. Access to a vast and prolific flow of data calls for the professional mediation of a journalist to build stories, for instance by comparing data to uncover problems and discordances, analyzing data for their singular value and their relationship with other data, and generally bringing data closer to citizens in a way that affordably adds value to their daily lives. The pathway begins with the extraction of huge databases and ends with the creation of visuals or other narratives.

This study explores the way journalists think about narratives rooted in data, ranging from storytelling goals to the skills needed to create those stories. To do so, it draws on literature around narrative and the uses of data.

Narrative: Multiple Voices and Fluid Constructions

Narrative communication is based on discourse, built on a timeline, that acquires function and sense through its use and social practice. Narratives are generated in an effort to differentiate the diversity of potential uses and practices, which might be related to subjects including "institutions, social, historical, and cultural contexts" (Rodríguez Ruiz, 2009, p. 15). According to Bajtín (1982), we must think about narratives from heterogeneous perspectives involving intertextuality and interdiscursivity, rather than as structures imposed by authoritarian speakers. The idea that no speech can be considered finished has long existed, and digital hyper-textuality resides within this understanding. Moreover, every discourse has two participants, each with a distinctive voice: that of the person who produces it, and of the person who receives it (Heller-Roazen, 2008).

Bajtín (1982), who studied the novel as a narrative emblematic of modern life, emphasized that there are no words uttered for the first time. Instead, words are always inserted in a discourse communication chain. Language is chrono-topic: It relates to a specific time and place. Thus, narratives built in digital contexts are constructs located in a defined space and time, and both authors and users can access them to create new understandings. Bajtín thus enables us to connect senses and platforms, including hypertextual, interactive, and other digital platforms, and to engage a variety of stakeholders in their production and reception:

> Bajtín refuses to consider time and space as pure forms of man's consciousness. He understands that these are categories—in the sense that

without them, there may not be knowledge of the world—but that constitute objective entities that exist. (De Olmos, 2006, p. 69).

The idea of a chronotope projects time as a space coordinate, with residue of the past leaking into our present expression and influencing our perceptions of the future. For journalists, this suggests the need for conscious reflection on the production of a story, its organization, its form, and especially its effect. The narrative exercise is undertaken by both the narrator, who tells the story and draws attention to it, and the reader, who receives and pays attention (Rodríguez Ruiz, 2009).

In the contemporary communications environment, a paradigm shift has made it possible to describe a new way to narrate. New paradigmatic configurations are based on "indetermination, self-organization, complexity, essenceless reality, a world as representation, impossibility to separate the subject from the object, disciplinary borders vanishing, a reality that is built, as opposed to the idea of a given reality" (Rodríguez Ruiz, 2009, p. 38). In other words, modernity has produced hybridization, which takes a variety of forms. For instance, oral works have emerged as an alternative to written works, resulting in transposition phenomena that occur when a textual genre or product changes its form.

Our contemporary culture is highly unstable, with disorder, irregularity, and asymmetry now the norm. Among the changes is the fact that the representations of privileged writers are no longer seen as either the best or the only way of viewing the world. Readers, users, and other 'receptors' of information also produce contemporary narratives (Rodríguez Ruiz, 2009).

An aesthetic understanding of this new postmodern way of writing suggests a world of intertextuality, where borders no longer exist between reality and fiction. In addition, a belief in narrative authority has vanished, with authors now wanting their works to be problematized and fractured instead of being simply received as a hermetic and homogenous whole. Again, the process of generating meaning is no longer enclosed or determined solely by the author; both understanding and genre are subject to mixing and hybridization (García Canclini, 1989).

In a digital context, narratives also are continually created and recreated. The use of information technology, freed from the limitations of the written word, allows the creation of new discourse structures that can integrate non-verbal expression. Digital media therefore are platforms capable of a highly efficient artistic interrelation (Rodríguez Ruiz, 2009).

Rodríguez Ruiz (2009) suggests that digital aesthetics are built on six conditions: discontinuity, or an absence of predefined routes; interactivity, which facilitates and foregrounds readers' participation; dynamism and vitality, both in the making and in the interpretation of content; ethereal worlds, in which there is no clear matter but rather unlimited potential; ephemeral worlds, with language continually updated; and virtual community development, which involves a construction of new global awareness.

These new digital narratives thus reconfigure the roles of the "writer" and the "reader." The former must get used to "data manipulation, multimedia application and graphic design handling, and doing collaborative work with other professionals such as the programmer, the drawer, the designer, the audiovisual technician, etc." (Rodríguez Ruiz, 2009, p. 25). And users must develop iconicity, editability, and navigability in order to strengthen the hypertext elements, edit them, and rebuild them.

Interactivity promotes activities based on a collective construction of both artifacts and senses. "It is, it must be, a narrative that dissolves its forms and traditional functions, vir-tualizes them, reduces them to primary elements, to particles that must be later recom-posed through connectivity operations" (Rodríguez Ruiz, 2009, p. 25).

Applied journalistically in relation to narratives based on open data, such concepts sug-gest a need to imagine stories of heightened social or political utility, enabling citizens to use them to meaningfully to participate in society.

From Digital Informative Narratives to Data Journalism Narratives

A quarter century ago, before the rise of the Internet, Philip Meyer (1993) defined a virtuous circle, with quality content increasing both the credibility and the social influence of the media – in turn leading to an increase in circulation and therefore in profitability. Today, prestigious news organizations around the world are pursuing this strategy, in-cluding The Guardian in Britain, The New York Times in the United States and La Nación in Argentina. Each is among a growing number of news oultets forming interdisciplinary data journalism teams in their editorial offices.

This study was guided by an understanding of four key factors in training data journalism teams, as outlined by Zanchelli and Crucianelli (2012):

1. **Physical proximity**. The data journalists should be located physically near other editorial decision-makers. Zanchelli and Crucianelli (2012, p. 3) cite the editor at The Guardian, who recommends locating the data journalism team "near the editorial table " because "it is easier to recommend stories and to be part of the process when they are closer."

2. **Collaboration**. Journalists and developers, who each have specialized skill sets, should be encouraged to work together in order to generate data-based stories. Pro-ductivity results from combining the two groups' different views of reality (Zanchelli & Crucianelli, 2012). Developers have the ability to understand how to extract numbers, see patterns and trends, and interpret their meaning. Journalists know how to ask the important and meaningful questions; to extract insights from a story; and to place it in an appropriate political, social, and economic context. They also may be adept at spotting and analyzing trends.

3. **Shared skills**. Journalists and developers who bridge the skills gap should be re-cruited. Each should try to understand, and if possible acquire, some of the skills of the

other (Zanchelli & Crucianelli, 2012).

4. **Meaningful stories**. The end result of the collaboration should be stories that show the meaning of data and why they should matter to the readership. Data-based news about topics that affect readers' lives are not only socially valuable but also have an impact on Web traffic, highlighting the need for greater investment in data journalism teams (Zanchelli & Crucianelli, 2012).

In addition to focusing on aspects of its production within the newsroom, data journalism narratives can be understood in terms of three key features: hyper-textuality, multimedia, and interactivity.

Hyper-textuality is characterized by the links among disparate pieces of content, offering navigation alternatives through nodes of non-sequential writing with links that allows the user to choose (Díaz Noci, 2003 & 2016a). Hypertext is complemented by multimedia when elements such as images, audio, video, or computer graphics are introduced into the narrative, resulting in a multidiminsional form that can be referred to as "hypermedia." Finally, interactivity enables users to participate. In the context of data journalism, this participation can be more or less inclusive, with options ranging from fully inclusive open code journalism to more controlled structures that allow users to participate, "but not to the point they can interfere in the news item construction" (Díaz Noci, 2003, p. 31).

Data journalism therefore facilities new news narratives, particularly including interactive graphics produced from structured databases. These narratives can be analyzed in various ways, including through a focus on interactivity and its implications for message construction, and through the way in which human stories are enabled to emerge from the numbers.

Data stories differ from traditional narratives in important ways. For instance, newspaper stories typically represent a set of events in a controlled progression; visual data also may be organized in a linear sequence, but it also may be interactive, inviting user personalization, verification, queries, and pursuit of alternative explanations (Segel & Heer, 2015).

Such interaction possibilities suggest a dichotomy between "author-guided" and "reader-guided" visualizations. There arguably is a need to strike a balance between collective participation in narrative construction and the author's communicative intention, which runs the risk of becoming distorted.

Data visualization expert Jonathan Harris believes there is no need to choose one approach over another. He points out that human stories are, and will continue to be, powerful, which is why people should avoid changing "their sense of empathy for a fetish fascination with data, networks, patterns, and total information." Data, he says, are only a part of the story. "Human material is the main material, and data must come to enrich it" (cited in Segel & Heer, 2015, p. 2). This perspective both emphasizes the value of journalistic sensibilities in working with data and provides a reminder that data-based

stories can have a significant impact on citizens' lives. Individuals' life stories need to be rescued from the numbers, with the reach and interactivity of digital formats enabling global results to become local and personal.

Drawing on these ideas about digital narrative structure and data journalism, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How can we classify different journalistic narratives based on open databases?

RQ2: How do journalists draw on the affordances of digital data to create narrative structures and achieve journalistic goals?

RQ3: What training or skills do data team members need to produce data journalism narratives?

Methodology

This study applies a qualitative perspective to understanding the narratives and production routines of journalistic stories based on open data in the Argentine media. It includes a categorization and analysis of journalistic pieces based on data, and semi-structured interviews with two key data journalism creators, one in Argentina (Florencia Coelho, from *LaNacionData*), and the other in the United States (Ben Welsh, from the *Los Angeles Times*). Input also was provided by other members of their respective data teams. This design enables the connection of outputs to producers.

Twenty data journalism pieces published in 2015 from Argentine local, state, and national media were selected. The development of data journalism in Argentina is just beginning; therefore, the selection criteria related to geographic diversity and topical variety, including the significance of the outlets and outputs analyzed. Appendix 1 provides a list of the items included in the analysis.

Variables

These examples were deconstructed in an analysis matrix, which the researchers created based on adaptation of categories and criteria proposed by other scholars (Bradshaw, 2015; Díaz Noci, 2016b; Segel & Heer, 2015), Information about the publication was related to structural features of the content. The variables analyzed were: visual narrative, which is the device that guides the user through the visualization; interactivity, which allows the audience to participate in different ways; narrative structure, such as user-guided or linear/author-guided; topics covered; and journalistic goals, or the real purposes behind professional work.

The study was exploratory. Its purpose is to document what is happening in actual newsrooms, offering conclusions that can guide both data journalists in their job and journalism scholars in their further research.

Results

Five types of narratives based on open databases were identified in this research: personalization, main trends, outliers, synchronic comparison, and diachronic comparison. Before turning to these narrative categories, we first present contextual information provided by our interviewees.

Data Journalism Teams Continue to Change Newsrooms

Data journalism enables journalists to rethink narratives, informative production processes, and their own skills. It also substantially modifies the work place, providing an opportunity to create a cooperative team space for people with different yet complementary areas of expertise.

Although findings are preliminary, given the ongoing development of this field, they indicate that new competencies need to be developed by members of data teams, with convergence among developers and journalists to produce journalistic pieces based on data. New professional routines also emerge.

Both LN Data (F. Coelho, personal communication, October 30, 2016) and the data desk teams at the *Los Angeles Times* (B. Welsh, personal communication, August 29, 2015) share their physical space with the rest of the editorial office. This location enables them to be in permanent contact with their colleagues. Both teams meet periodically to get updates on their research or plans. Both also work on projects that may originate outside the team, for instance from another journalist, or that stem from access to or discovery of particular databases. A journalist with topical expertise may be asked to join the team to help create the content.

A mandatory condition for working in a data team is a willingness to learn. In this field, tools are continuously being updated; therefore, being open to new technology and constantly demonstrating a capacity to learn new things are essential. Visualization tools that are used to extract data (scraping) change frequently, again reinforcing the need to be willing to acquire new knowledge quickly.

Los Angeles Times data desk editor Ben Welsh said that everyone on the team shares two fundamental skills: They know how to tell stories, and they know how to write code. However, each journalist also specializes in a topic, such as infrastructure, transportation, police, or photography, among others. They differentiate themselves from the rest of the editorial office based on their skills in programming, data analysis, and Web content development.

Welsh said the data team helps make journalism more ambitious, contributing to a better reputation for the organization as a whole. He added that the team's work as Web developers also contributes to overall journalistic quality, by attracting more readers and generating more page views. The team also develops research tools for journalists.

Other *Times* journalists said their weekly meetings are called "Show and Tell," and overall feedback is offered without a specific project. Team members explained that there is not a single structured work process, but rather a high level of cooperation with different people in the editorial office.

La Nación's data team, which is funded by advertising and to a lesser extent through scholarships, is made up of journalists, lawyers, a librarian, and an engineer (F. Coelho, personal communication, October 30, 2016). These disciplines bring specific perspectives to common work, so that discussions turn into learning experiences among colleagues. When something new emerges, members of the team meet to familiarize themselves with how it works.

Data team members *La Nación* also described continuing education experiences, including attendance at conferences, special events, and training days, as well as exchanges with people from other countries who visit the newspaper. As at the Times, they said that team work, openness to the new and the different, and exchanges of information are constant.

Overall, data team editors cited goals related to the journalistic objective of public service. These included fostering transparency, strengthening democracy, avoiding or revealing corruption, and exploring topics in depth. Discovery of something new also was an overarching goal, as was the conduct of in-depth research via the data.

Five Narrative Types of Data Stories

These goals were evident in the 20 Argentine media examples of data journalism that we analyzed, as described in this section. We identified five categories of data journalism, each offering interactive pathways for initiating a dialogue with readers.

1. **Personalization:** The possibility to personalize content, to make it "a la carte," is one of the main advantages of data journalism. This capability means that users control the information they are exposed to, and they can link it to their own individual reality so that the information is not about unknown others but about oneself. The ability for users to customize data is central to this narrative strategy, ideally in a way that enables connections between personal experience and wider implications.

Personalization narratives in this study tended to be about politics and police matters.

Two examples come from La Voz del Interior. One, a piece of data journalism titled "Traffic Monitor," enabled users in the Argentinean province of Córdoba to see the most dangerous traffic intersections in their own neighborhood. Users also could search for victims by name. This narrative was created by applying filters based on geolocation of all automobile accidents. The other example offered voting results for each school where citizens voted. It displayed a map of Córdoba city, with filters allowing readers to see the 2015 city election results by winner, neighborhood, and school.

The main journalistic objectives in these personalization narratives involved data collection and systematization. Each piece sought to offer the audience access to a huge amount of information that would not be available any other way, with users then able to filter that information to make it more personally relevant. The more specific the database is regarding gender, age, geolocation, and other characteristics, the more possibilities the readers have to personalize the results, using interactivity options and filters to select variables of interest. In both these cases, the news organization provided explicit instructions to guide user exploration.

2. **Main trends (trend, mean, average)**: We use this term to identify narratives that offer a summary of data. For example, Cordoba's average retirement wage might be represented by calculating an average, but a more useful approach might be to find a trend, such as values that are repeated more frequently in the database. It is important to see the context of the data in order to avoid errors of interpretation or inappropriate data manipulation.

An example of this narrative was Clarín's piece on data from a "complex, lonely, educated, and unequal city," based on data from the Home Survey 2014. Among Clarin's conclusions were that the average family income in 2014 was ARS 16,578 in the north, while a freelancer in the north area had an average income of ARS 8,222. The Traffic Monitor piece cited above also made use of this narrative structure, for instance concluding that one person in the city dies every six days in a motorcycle accident. Another piece from Córdoba, titled "Growth of Crime in the City," indicated there was one crime fatality every two days.

In the analyzed examples, journalistic objectives are data collection and systematization, as well as discoveries that can be made by cross-tabulating data. Here again, filters were used to allow readers to search and select graphics. There also was an option to share content through social media, as well as to get a code to embed a graph

3. **Outliers**: Outliers are values that depart from the average, or from the behavior of the majority. Generally, the results are interesting because they often represent situations that lead to breaking news.

One striking example in this narrative category was a La Nación newspaper piece about Argentina's vice president requesting travel allowances for trips he did not make, along with the number of security guards assigned to his trips and the greater-than-average time spent traveling. This story was in line with the journalistic objective of uncovering something new by cross-checking data, which in this case revaled a number of anomalies that led to a deeper journalistic investigation. The piece also included interactive graphics using search and selection filters, as well as options to share on social media and to use a code to embed a graph. There were no explicit instructions to interact with the information in this story of political corruption.

4. **Synchronic comparison**: This narrative type appears when different types of variables are compared in the same period of time. It enables analysis of a phenomenon

from different viewpoints or through different spaces where a phenomenon occurs. Synchronic comparison narratives were the most used in the analyzed cases, and they covered the widest variety of topics, including not only police and politics but also international and economic news, among others. They answered such questions as: How many assets did political candidates have when they started campaigning? How many votes did each candidate get in each school? How many immigrants arrived in Europe this year?

For example, the piece about elections by school in Córdoba from *La Voz del Interior*, also cited under "personalization" above, offers a comparative map of the "winning candidate" variable in the same temporal event: the city elections in 2015.

The journalistic objective of this narrative approach is to collect and systematize data and to discover new information by cross-checking data. These pieces offer a range of options for interactivity, including adding comments, sharing via social media, applying filters, and using navigation buttons, along with an opportunity to take a code to embed graphs. The interaction typology for users is exploration.

5. Diachronic comparison: Our final narrative type proposes a comparison related to the evolution over time of the same fact, phenomenon, or circumstance in order to produce greater contextualization. For example, an interactive documentary on Lost Streets shows the spread of drug dealing in the city of Rosario; it offers graphs that show "homicides according to gender," to facilitate comparisons by month between January and December 2014.

This narrative type commonly complemented synchronic comparison, combining to support the journalistic objectives of collecting and systematizing data and of discovering something by cross-checking data. Topics included economics, statistics, politics and police.

In addition to the Rosario example, other questions posed – and answerable through the data – included how the amount of meat consumed by Córdoba citizens has evolved over the years; how long-distance bus destinations are distributed around the country; and how many crimes were committed in Argentine provinces in three different years in the early 2010s. The answers are provided by comparing the same databases in different time periods.

In these narratives, filters act as interactive options; also available are options to share graphs in social media or grab a code to insert the graph on another site. Explicit and implicit instructions are present in the analyzed cases, with user exploration again being encouraged.

Narrative Resources

The presentation of information in a visual format, accessible to audiences anywhere in the world, is also an aesthetic strategy worth noting. Although the data themselves are

different, visual presentation allows information to be harmonized.

However, a significant aspect of the analyzed cases is that they have been presented as independent pieces or embedded in other journalistic stories, with text and graphs the most commonly used formats. Even though we found several links and hypertexts, the use of video or audio was unusual.

This implies a gap in the expressive systems that make multimedia narrative possible. Other globally accessible visual formats exist, such as the presentation of slides, the structuring of stories in the form of comics, the display of counter-arguments, and the production of videos or animated films. These sorts of options offer other semiotic and expressive possibilities that may be more inclusive and more conducive to the use of multimedia.

A sequential structure was the most frequently used form of visual communication in our analyzed cases. Other options, such as the checklist or the progress bars, were unexplored.

The way relevant data are highlighted also is an important aspect of the visual narrative, particularly when complex graphs are included. In the analyzed cases, animated resources such as close-ups, zoom, and movement are set apart from other highlighting options such as use of icons or of different text styles (bold, italics, colors, and sizes).

Our interviews indicate a shared view that data analysis enhances the reputation of the media outlet by offering better-quality products. In addition, technology can be used to cut news production costs, enabling journalists to focus their efforts on the relevant material. For example, Welsh of the *Los Angeles Times* described software that automatically writes posts about earthquakes as soon as the government receives the information (personal communication, August 29, 2015). However, we found no automatically updated visual material among our analyzed cases. Moreover, with the rare exception of manual updates, data journalism follow-ups were not offered; results thus remained static, referring only to the time at which they were published.

Finally, we found only three examples of links to the original database used to create a journalistic narrative, meaning that only rarely could users – or other journalists – build on the stories offered or analyze the information from a different perspective. The ability to do this would be more in line with the "open-source" philosophy underpinning much of the work around the use of data, and would encourage more collaborative and comprehensive work among different professionals.

Conclusions

A public information access law was intended to be partially in place in September 2017 in Argentina. Yet even in early 2018, data made available from the government still often were irrelevant or outdated.

Paradoxically, most databases of the analyzed cases in this study came from government agencies, with others stemming from data collected by journalists. However, the database of the only case that corresponds to the journalistic objective of thorough research – the narrative around political travel expenses, described above -- was built and systematized with readers' contributions. Databases from other research centers were not used in the analyzed cases, although they offer an information source that might be of value to journalists.

It is significant that the first Argentine media companies to develop journalistic pieces based on data are those whose legacy product is a newspaper. Future research might explore why this is so, as well as the potential for initiatives from broadcasters and other news outlets.

This article is dedicated to: Elena; a brilliant and humble colleague.

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Quality, quantity and policy: How newspaper journalists use digital metrics to evaluate their performance and their papers' strategies

By Kelsey N. Whipple and Jeremy L. Shermak

Through insights from 521 editorial employees at 49 of the largest newspapers in the United States, this research explored the way journalists use audience analytics data, social media responses, newsroom strategies, performance evaluations, personal and professional feedback and other newsroom and content factors to make decisions about their readers, content and professional performances. The survey included both qualitative and quantitative assessments, and the researchers applied an iterative textual analysis to the in-depth answers to understand journalists' understanding of and fears about their newspapers' digital strategies.

When "all the news that's fit to print" became all the news that's fit to publish in the unfathomable amount of digital real estate afforded by the Internet and displayed across various new media platforms, the standards and routines journalists use to measure what, exactly, is fit to go where adapted to the new realities (Allan, 2006; Bivens, 2008; Singer, 2004) as well. The Internet has adjusted and increased the number and types of needs journalism gratifies for its audiences (Dimmick, Chen, & Li, 2004). As those standards and needs have shifted, so have shared perceptions of who's fit to create journalism and how, exactly, to judge that person's fitness, or their professional competence and performance. The digital age has brought with it many challenges, opportunities and changes for the professional practice of journalism. Revolution in the craft has even altered the way journalists consider and measure the success of their stories and other content online (Anderson, 2011; MacGregor, 2007; Vu, 2014). Traditional measures such as print circulation and pick-up rates, while still relevant, tell journalists nothing about their online audiences, which might not overlap—entirely or at all—with their print readership. Today, online audiences can be conceptualized via demographic data gauged through a variety of web metrics—page views, monthly active users, unique visitors, pages per visit, time on site, social media engagement and more—across a variety

of tools and platforms—Google Analytics, Chartbeat, Facebook Insights, Sprout Social, Social Flow, Hootsuite, Tweetdeck, etc.

Journalists use those web performance metrics to make gatekeeping decisions about online content, including prioritizing successful content on the homepage and other valuable parts of the website and increasing the media richness of that content in hopes of duplicating or spreading its success (Anderson, 2011; Vu, 2014). The degree to which journalists understand the monetization and financial impact of their readers, through those web metrics and other evaluating factors, influences how much they pay attention to and incorporate audience responses into their content (Tandoc, 2013). However, most research to date has focused on how these metrics influence the decisions editors make about content geared toward an audience.

This study explores the value and impact of audience analytics data on journalists' professional roles by examining the ways journalists measure and interpret the success of their professional performances. It considers how editors measure their output and how those means of measurement correspond with the journalists' knowledge and perception of their publications' digital strategies. Through a detailed survey sent to a purposive sample of journalists who work in a variety of editorial positions at 49 of the top U.S. newspapers, 521 American journalists assessed the importance and influence of various web performance metrics, including online audience size, social media shares and likes, total time spent on their content online and reader comments, as well as qualitative performance indicators, including the quality of the content, the impact of the content on the community and recognition from the public and other journalists.

The purpose of this study is to understand how newspaper journalists evaluate their own performances and those of their institution's digital strategies, both of which hold significant potential impact for the content they produce and the ways in which it is published. In doing so, this study expands the application of the hierarchy of influences (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013) in the digital age, particularly the influence of the organization and the audience in online journalism, as well as the potential impact of qualitative and quantitative performance metrics on the communications routines level of gatekeeping theory (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Both applications serve a practical purpose for the public by helping to expand a shared understanding of the institutional values and professional motivations of journalists and the ways they value and interpret their roles during an increasingly digitally focused era of the industry.

Literature Review

The Hierarchy of Influences

Journalists make professional decisions every day based on a number of internal and external factors that Shoemaker and Reese (2013) have explored and codified as the hierarchy of influences. Their hierarchy provides the framework for this paper, because it helps to explain the means through which the content that journalists create is affected by the attitudes and norms of the journalists who create it and the organizations to which

they belong. The hierarchy of influences is underlined by a series of basic assumptions, including the idea that journalists' attitudes and the newsroom osmosis (Breed, 1955) process through which they learn institutional routines influence the creation of news. That influence is significant to this study, which analyzed journalists' use of several means of judging quality of their content, their own performances and their attitudes about both.

This study explores the priorities of journalists at three levels of the hierarchy of influences: organizational, individual and routines. At the organizational level, the structure of the journalists' workplace, the institutional standards and character of that organization and the editors and other superiors who enforce the processes and priorities of the publication combine to exert an organizational influence on the content produced by that publication (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Most organizations prioritize their economic goals—the need to make money in order to continue creating content (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). This economic motivation is particularly strong in the era of Internet-based publications and failing and reactionary digital business models (Chyi & Tenenboim, 2017). For newspapers, this means a focus on the relationship between content and advertising. In this article, economic goals are manifested in the idea of measuring audience size and growth through online metrics. Other means of measuring economic health and growth include subscriptions (both print and digital), the size of a paper, the size of its staff and the revenue of the company that owns the paper.

The structure of an organization and the processes routinized within it also impact content creation. According to Shoemaker and Reese (2013), "Organizational structure is the playing field on which employees compete for scarce resources" (p. 155). This structure helps employees navigate conflicts and guarantee promotion and progression within the organization, and it is through this structure that they come to learn what is expected of them in their positions (Breed, 1955). The priorities of the organization tend to overrule those of the individual journalist (Epstein, 1973). This study explores the implications of the structure of an organization on journalistic content through survey questions about the means through which organizations determine the success of their employees. According to Shoemaker & Reese:

> Whenever media workers deduce what their supervisors want and give it to them, de-facto control has been exercised. Whether policies are overt or covert, if employees do not come to an understanding of acceptable and deviant behaviors, they are either fired or leave for a more palatable organization (2013, p. 159).

The way journalists work also influences the content they produce. The routines level of analysis considers the impact of the "patterned, repeated practices, forms, and rules that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, p. 165). These routines may be enforced by an organization or guided by individual attitudes and preferences, and they can also be guided by the audiences (Loosen & Schmidt, 2012) that media companies spend a great deal of time and funding tracking (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Analysts within these companies study the audience's demographic information and

behaviors to understand what types of content they consume and how they respond to it. "Time spent, number of clicks, and page views allow organizations to directly measure several dimensions of audience interest in content and advertisements" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, p. 170). The importance of the audience has expanded since the media made the transition to the Internet (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). This study explores the routines level of analysis through the journalists' attention to their audiences and peers, including through online metrics, social media engagement and metrics, reader responses and reception by peer journalists.

News Values and the Individual Level

Another accepted standard by which journalists make decisions about their content is a standard system of news values, the elements that give a story its importance and motivate a journalist to pursue it. According to Shoemaker & Reese (2013), "News routines provide a perspective that often explains what is defined as newsworthy in the first place ...Through their routines, [news workers] actively construct reality" (p. 182). This construction is routinized within the newsroom and within the academic study of journalism, and news values have been studied widely by scholars including Shoemaker and Reese (2013), O'Neill and Harcup (2009) and Schultz (2007). Traditional news values contribute to the level of quality journalists perceive within their content; these values include "prominence and importance," "conflict and controversy," "the unusual," "human interest," "timeliness" and "proximity" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013, p. 171). Determining what content is newsworthy and what isn't, "is a cognitive exercise, a judgment that any person can make" (p. 173).

However, journalists make that determination based on their understanding of the news values they have been institutionally trained to recognize and value. In this way, "journalists work within a complex institutional and cultural environment that leaves its imprint on the daily news. Decisions are not made by autonomous journalists, but are rather the product of the framework of social relationships at the newspaper" (Clayman & Reisner, 1998, pp. 196-197). This study analyzes how journalists assess the quality of journalistic work and how they use that value to gauge the performance of individual journalists.

Gatekeeping Theory

A more detailed means through which journalists make decisions about what to cover and how to cover it can be understood with the help of gatekeeping theory. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) parsed gatekeeping theory into many of the same levels reflected in the hierarchy of influences, including the organizational and communication routines domains, which apply directly to this study. The audience is an important consideration in the practice of gatekeeping, despite the fact that journalists usually have "modest exposure to their audience" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 53). This exposure is sifted through audience typifications created by editors (Sumpter, 2000), who use these mental models of their audiences as a standard for how to make decisions about what content to create for those audiences. In this way, "the audience has come to influence news content in as much as journalists develop routines based on assumptions or intuitions about the

audience" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 54). This study uses the relationship between gatekeeper and audience as grounding to explore how audience engagement and reception affect how journalists measure and define the success of quality journalism.

Measuring the Quality of Journalism

There are many ways, both quantitative and qualitative, to measure the quality of journalistic content. Measuring the quality and success of journalism is critical because "good" journalism is believed to "lead to better decisions by citizens and more accountability of government" (Lacy & Rosenthiel, 2015, p. 9). The glaring question, then, is: What is considered "good"? Journalistic scholars and professional practitioners define quality journalism differently.

Scholars have historically measured journalistic quality through the notions of demand and production. Demand considers the reasons why consumers seek journalism and how it serves particular needs—a perspective that often includes the theoretical framework of uses and gratifications (Lacy, 2000; Ruggerio, 2000). Meanwhile, production relates to an assessment of content whereby journalists can control elements of their work to meet the presumed needs of the audience in terms of civic and cultural influences (Lacy & Rosenthiel, 2015).

For practitioners, including reporters and editors, the criteria that determine quality may differ from newsroom to newsroom. Bogart (1981) attempted to solidify practitioners' definitions of quality, taking a quantitative approach to measure journalism quality in print newspapers by creating a scale that incorporated such data as average length of story, number of letters to the editor per issue and the presence of an astrology column. While laying a foundation for future quantitative measures to come, Bogart's (1981) scale is predictably antiquated in the age of digital journalism. Web platforms have given both scholars and journalists access to metrics capable of quickly and accurately measuring audience engagement. Both reporters and editors now regularly include these metrics in assessments of their publications and personal work (Lacy & Rosenthiel, 2015).

Use and Perception of Metrics in the Newsroom

Today, metrics, social media and online surveys enable journalists to create a more realistic picture of their audiences in the digital age (Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017). Despite these new insights, literature suggests that analytics are used most often to make changes in routines and story distribution. For example, journalists reported that they are influenced by audience metrics and Twitter feedback in choosing what to write about (Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017). Hanusch (2017) found that some reporters regularly tracked the metrics of their individual stories, even outside of regular working hours. Some reported going as far as adjusting elements of their stories online if they were not receiving enough page views. They would "slightly adjust stories using a different headline, angle or image to achieve better engagement or a wider audience" (Hanusch, 2017, pp. 1578). Journalists are more likely to write follow-ups and continue coverage of stories that received higher degrees of audience engagement as evidenced by digital metrics (Vu, 2014; Welbers,

van Atteveldt, Kleinnijenhuis & Ruigrok, 2016).

Journalists may also give more attention to metrics because of the lingering sense of financial instability in the industry (Tandoc, 2015). These metrics may quantify a sort of "symbolic capital" (p. 785) that represents meeting audience preferences, which, in turn, is believed to assess economic capital, therefore improving the economic stability of their publication (p. 793).

Despite the availability of seemingly helpful insights, journalists' attitudes about metrics vary greatly. Tandoc and Ferrucci (2016) found that "the strongest predictor of intention to use audience feedback is the journalist's attitude toward such practice" (p. 155). Karlsson and Clerwall (2013) believe that the value of analytics is driving journalists away from their norms, perhaps having a greater impact than the journalists who participated in their study would like to admit. Agarwal and Barthel (2015) found that journalists felt that reliance on analytics as a judgment of their work may lead to a lower quality of journalism, due in part to a lack of cohesion within their organizations, suggesting that "higher ups" offered little guidance or feedback.

And that assumes that journalists are acquainted with analytics data for the work they create, which is determined through institutional hierarchy. Access to and use of metrics depends significantly on an individual's position of power in the newsroom. Those with more senior, authoritative positions in the hierarchy—such as editors—are more likely to access the data, despite it being available to everyone in the newsroom (Hanusch, 2017, p. 1577).

Editors express a keen focus on analytics because these data represent revenue in a time during which there is great concern about the future of financial stability in journalism (Chyi & Tenenboim, 2017). Editors have admitted that stories receiving the most clicks on their websites and the most attention on their social media accounts were more likely to be updated and followed-up on through future successive stories on the same topic (Tandoc, 2014). These editors equated higher web traffic with "a job well done" (Tandoc, 2014, p. 569), indicating a relationship between digital metrics and perceived quality of content.

Using Metrics to Define Journalistic Quality

Journalists have shifted their assessments and definitions of quality over time because of changes in their audiences and advancements in media technology (Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017). The emphasis on data as an evaluation of journalistic quality is exemplified by the hiring of data-dedicated analysts at traditional outlets such as the New York Times, as well as digital-native outlets such as BuzzFeed and Vox (Lacy & Rosenthiel, 2015). Unsurprisingly, digital-only publications have more robust analytics with open access to many, if not all, in the newsroom. Print publications—even those with an online presence—use more basic analytics (such as lists of the top 10 most popular stories of the day) with more limited access (Hanusch, 2017). Both today and in the coming years, studying the effects and consequences of metrics on the newsmaking process will be

critical in this era of "big data" (Boczkowski, 2015).

Despite the proliferation of metrics in measuring the quality of content, these approaches are not without limits. One very prominent limitation is the absence of a true qualitative assessment of the work, where nuances in the stories may not be detected strictly by data analysis and might instead require human assessment. For example, Tandoc and Ferrucci (2017) found that evaluations from superiors were more influential than metrics in altering news production routines. However, there is little research about how evaluations from superiors blend with metrics to help journalists define quality. One example of integrating human assessment and metrics is the American Press Institute's "Metrics for News" program. This tool first "tags" stories based on editors' assessments and then uses engagement metrics to essentially see if the audience agrees with them (Lacy & Rosenthiel, 2015).

In their overview of many studies of journalism quality assessments, Rosenthiel and Lacy (2015) found that assessing journalist quality must take a multi-faceted approach in which both qualitative and quantitative considerations are factored in to the assessment. Although a great deal of scholarship has been devoted to how metrics alter work routines and content selection (e.g. Hanusch, 2017; Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2017; Welbers, et. al., 2016), an examination of how journalists view the quality of their work in today's data-driven newsrooms is lacking. This study seeks to fill that gap and build upon previous work to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What qualitative and quantitative values do news organizations use to think about and measure the success of their content?

RQ2: How often do editors and superiors use qualitative and quantitative values to gauge the performance of journalists?

RQ3: To what extent do digital performance metrics impact the content journalists create, and in what ways?

RQ4: How do print- and web-focused journalists evaluate the success of their newspapers' digital strategies?

RQ5: What concerns do journalists express with their newspaper's digital strategies and the state of digital journalism?

Methodology

This study was conducted through a survey administered via the online survey software Qualtrics and emailed in December 2016 and January 2017 to U.S. newspaper journalists working at the top 50 U.S. newspapers by Sunday circulation, according to the Alliance for Audited Media's (AAM) Q3 2016 report, of 100,000 or more. Sunday circulation was selected as the key factor in selecting newspapers to include in this research because the Sunday issue traditionally is the most popular. For the purpose

of this research, which asks respondents to identify whether their roles are print- or digital-focused, the existence of both products was necessary for inclusion. Therefore, two newspapers were eliminated from the original AAM list for the reason that they are online-only and do not offer a print product. After eliminating online-only entities, the Wall Street Journal was added to the list because while it still operates both in print and online, it was excluded from Sunday circulation numbers after discontinuing its Sunday edition in 2015 (Barthel, 2016). Lastly, the authors elected to include La Opinion, the highest-circulating Spanish-language newspaper in the U.S., to increase the inclusivity and diversity of the corpus.

This study surveyed journalists working at the top U.S. newspapers, according to their Sunday circulation, about their use of multiple qualitative and quantitative values to measure the success of their content and the impact of digital audience metrics on their content, as well as the values editors use to gauge the performance of the journalists below them. For the quantitative questions, we used median and interquartile range as measures of central tendency due to the fact that the data was not normally distributed. The following summary describes the results in relation to the research questions for this project.

Newspaper contact information was obtained using Cision, a database containing more than 1.6 million media contacts that pulls information from publicly available sources such as social media. The final list included 5,217 journalists. Eliminating 23 bounced emails, a total of 5,194 journalists were asked via their professional email accounts to complete the Qualtrics survey. Of that total, 521 journalists from 49 different U.S. news-papers filled out the entire survey (a response rate of approximately 10%) during the six weeks it was available (see Table 1 for list of publications).

Table 1

Newspapers Represented by the Survey Responses for This Data Set

Newspaper	Sunday Circulation
Arizona Republic	1,003,214
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	1,075,722
Austin American-Statesman	314,523
Boston Globe	871,150
Charlotte Observer	476,401
Chicago Sun-Times	908,122
Chicago Tribune	1,826,581
Cleveland Plain Dealer	704,877
Columbus Dispatch	556,395
Dallas Morning News	922,598
Denver Post	695,118
Deseret News	403,575
Fort Worth Star-Telegram	531,244
Fresno Bee	375,512
Herald (WA)	57,086
Honolulu Star-Advertiser	404,453
Houston Chronicle	1,191,414
Indianapolis Star	615,450
Kansas City Star	509,909
La Opinion	21,242
Las Vegas Review-Journal	397,341
Los Angeles Times	2,349,017
Miami Herald	795,541
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	613,793
New York Times	1,070,406
News-Press	187,048
Newsday	810,413
New York Daily News	1,786,364
Ocala Star-Banner	25,659
Omaha World Herald	122,029
Orange County Register	697,352
Oregonian	507,913
Orlando Sentinel	616,102
Philadelphia Inquirer	968,330
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	448,312
Press-Enterprise	328,992
Sacramento Bee	540,467
San Diego Union Tribune	584,075
San Francisco Chronicle	788,913
San Jose Mercury News	984,337
Seattle Times	756,782
South Florida Sun Sentinel	445,354
Star Tribune	1,008,764
Star-Ledger	705,591
Tampa Bay Times	717,591
USA Today	3,369,451
Virginian-Pilot	403,165
Wall Street Journal	1,197,098
Washington Post	1,516,082

Note. Two publications are excluded from this list because they are online-only.

This response rate represented 1.6% of the 33,000 full-time newsroom employees in the United States (Barthel, 2016). Among respondents, among those indicating gender (n = 335), 59.1% (n = 198) were male and 40.9% (n = 137) were female. There were 189 respondents who elected not to share their gender. The average age among all respon-

dents who elected to share (n=322) was 50.08 years. Females electing to share their age (n = 129) averaged 47.59 years while males disclosing their ages (n = 192) were an average 51.69 years old.

The survey consisted of 67 cross-sectional questions designed to assess journalists' understanding of their newspapers' print and online readership, as well as the degree to which the journalists know about their publication's digital strategies and how they assess those strategies. Questions about their publications' digital plans included, "On a scale of 1 to 7, how much do you think you know about your newspaper's digital strategy?" and, "How well do you think your newspaper's digital strategy is working? ['Not at all' to 'Very much']." Additional open-ended questions probed for details about their thoughts and thought processes.

In addition, questions asked the journalists to assess how both quantitative and qualitative factors are used within their newsrooms to judge the performance of the journalism they create. Sample questions in that area included, "How often do you use the following [page views, time spent on content, social media shares and likes, readers' online comments/other (please specify)] to track readers' responses to the content you produce?" and "To what extent do you think online metrics affect the content you produce? ['Not at all' to 'Very much']." Using the same metrics in addition to more qualitative options (quality of the content, impact of the content in the community and recognition from peer journalists) the journalists were asked to analyze the frequency with which those metrics are applied in their newsrooms and the extent to which they believe they should be used. The same scale of "Not at all" to "Very Much" applied to questions including, "How often do your editors and superiors use the following to gauge your performance as a journalist?" and "Do you think your news organization should use the following to gauge the value of content?" The researchers then analyzed the frequencies of the survey results and the correlations between the journalists' stated actions and perceptions. The quantitative survey results were analyzed using the statistical software SPSS.

Additionally, the survey also included a number of open-ended write-in questions, which were created with the goal of allowing the respondents to answer more complicated questions with detailed answers they could steer in any direct they'd like. The write-in questions had no maximum text limit. This study found footing in one specific open-ended survey question, which was posed as: "How well do you think your newspaper's digital strategy is working? Why or why not?" To achieve a deeper understanding of the way journalists perceive their newspapers' digital strategies and their concerns about the state of the newspaper industry online in light of those strategies, the researchers performed a textual analysis of the write-in responses (n = 230) to the survey question asking journalists to assess the success of their newspapers' digital strategies. The results of this textual analysis are explored in RQ5.

Results

RQ1 asked what qualitative and quantitative values news organizations use to think about and measure the success of their content. According to the results, both editors

and news organizations highly value online metrics. Indeed, online metrics ranked the highest for editors when journalists were asked to indicate the priorities of their superiors. When asked what their new organizations use more generally, the journalists agreed *(Mdn = 7, IQR = 1)* that their organizations most often use the perceived impact of the content on the community—a qualitative measure—as the most important means of assessing the value of their journalism. Organizations were also perceived to value the quality of the content *(Mdn = 6.5, IQR = 2)* and online metrics *(Mdn = 6, IQR = 4)*, though online metrics did not top organizational measures of gauging content the way they topped editors' priorities.

While the organizational level is believed to focus on the impact content has on the community, the editors and people in power in the newsrooms were seen as more likely to focus on quality. The journalists strongly believe their editors and superiors use quality of content *(Mdn = 6.5, IQR = 2)* as the primary factor in gauging its value. After that top value, they use the impact of the content on the community *(Mdn = 5, IQR = 4)* and online metrics (Mdn = 5.5, IQR = 4) equally often to gauge the value of content.

Both the organizations and the editors are equally unlikely to be influenced by recognition from peer groups *(Mdn = 5, IQR = 3)* when gauging the value of their content.

In the survey, questions about this topic asked journalists to write in their own, more detailed and open-ended responses outside of the multiple-choice options available. This allowed the journalists to form their own answers and include multiple levels of the hierarchy of influences, if they desired. In a write-in response, one journalist stressed that online metrics should not be an optional consideration. Instead, they must be mandatory. And maybe they already are: "Do they have a choice in this day and age?" Another journalist wrote that superiors use the content's contributions to advertising revenue to judge its value, while someone else wrote that editors should consider gauging the "impact of stories on possible advertising appeal, eg. boxing events." These two responses suggest that advertising revenue may be an additional consideration worth studying when it comes to how journalists measure the performance of their content, but one response suggests that it shouldn't be taken into account as such while the other suggests it should.

Table 2 *Factors journalists believe are used to gauge the value of a piece of content they produce*

Factor	Editors and Superiors (Median)	News Organizations (Median)
Quality of the content	6.50	6.50
Impact of the content in the community	5.00	7.00
Online metrics	5.50	6.00
Recognition from peer journalists	5.00	5.00

Note: Median scores reflect response frequencies on 7-point Likert scale

RQ2 examined how often editors and superiors use qualitative and quantitative values to gauge the performance of journalists. For this question, journalists indicated how often their editors use values such as the amount of content produced, the quality of that content, the attention it receives online and on social media and other factors to gauge their professional performance. The quality of the content (Mdn = 7, IQR = 3) was identified as the most important consideration. The journalists indicated that their editors do value the attention content receives online and on social media (Mdn = 5, IQR = 1), as well as the amount of content they produce (Mdn = 4, IQR = 2), though much less—and in that order of significance. For this, question, too, journalists wrote in their own suggestions for items they believe their editors use to measure their performance at work. Notably, one journalist mentioned that, because he or she is a freelance contractor, editors do not use online metrics as a means of evaluating his or her performance, though that is used to evaluate all other journalists in the newsroom. Another complained about the lack of feedback from editors in general.

Table 3 *Factors journalists believe editors and superiors used to gauge their individual performances*

Factor	Median
Quality of the content I produce	6.50
The attention my content receives online or on social media	5.00
The amount of content I produce	4.50
Other	2.50

Note: Median scores reflect response frequencies on 7-point Likert scale

RQ3 examined the extent to which digital performance metrics impact the content journalists create, and in what ways. Journalists were asked how much digital performance metrics influence the content they create. On a scale of not at all (one) to very much (seven), the median score was a five (IQR = 3), indicating that digital metrics are an important factor in the decisions journalists make about their content.

RQ4 analyzed how print- and web-focused journalists evaluate the success of their newspapers' digital strategies. We sought to gauge journalists' knowledge of their publication's digital strategies based on their self-determined dominant platform—print, online, or hybrid (both print and online)—as well as how they evaluated the success of that strategy. Unsurprisingly, journalists who identified as online-dominant were most knowledgeable about their publication's digital strategies (Mdn = 6, IQR = 1). Hybrid journalists were the second-most knowledgeable (Mdn = 5, IQR = 2), followed by print journalists (Mdn = 4, IQR=2). In general, the journalists surveyed indicated a mid-range level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of their newspaper's digital strategies. Online-focused journalists were most likely to believe their newspaper's digital strategies were working, while print-focused journalists were least likely. Journalists who identified as

falling into print-web hybrid responsibilities fell in the middle. Using ordinal regression analysis, we found that journalists' knowledge of their newspapers' digital strategies is a strong indicator of their beliefs that those strategies are working (Γ = .392). The more journalists know about their paper's digital strategy, the more likely they are to believe that strategy is successful.

RQ5 explored the types of concern journalists express with their newspaper's digital strategies and the state of digital journalism. We asked journalists to assess their newspaper's digital strategies and defend their answers by explaining why they were working or why they were not. The goal of this question was to understand the thoughts and processes of journalists when it comes to interpreting their newspaper's digital strategies—and their own positions and job satisfaction as they relate to those strategies. This question also provided respondents with the open-ended opportunity to share their concerns with their newspaper's digital plans, and many chose to contextualize those concerns within larger worries about the state of digital journalism today. More than 44% of respondents answered the write-in question, and most comments were notably detailed. They were also overwhelmingly negative. In their responses, which connected to the previous four research questions, journalists mentioned many online analytics they use to gauge the success of their paper's digital strategies, including page views, unique visits, clicks, likes, and digital subscriptions. Through a textual analysis of the (n = 230) responses to this open-ended question, we uncovered five distinct themes about which the journalists were concerned: The journalists worried that their paper's profit models aren't working, the print product is still the top priority, the quantity of content is prioritized over its quality, digital strategies are changing too quickly, and staff sizes are too small to carry these strategies out effectively. Each of these themes touch on the organization level of the hierarchy of influences, and each is explored in detail below.

Lack of profit.

Unsurprisingly, one big worry the journalists expressed about their newspaper's digital strategies was the fear that their papers aren't profitable online and the people in charge of their online strategies don't know how to become so. They expressed confusion and an overriding lack of faith in their paper's abilities to forge a successful digital future. "Last year we far exceeded all our goals for clicks and page views, and yet it appears we lost money as a company," one journalist said. "It suggests their business model isn't working." Others complained about the intrusion of analytics numbers in the newsroom, which might help journalists understand monetization of their content but also occasionally demoralize them. "I resist the idea of tailoring content toward fickle online audience that goes for clickbait," said one respondent, who also mentioned that his staff receives "daily click counts [that] I sometimes find dismaying."

Many journalists fear that the industry might have focused too heavily on the web side of the business too soon, at the cost of ignoring the part of the business that continues to generate the most profit. "Business model is not working for most newspaper websites," wrote one journalist. "Print still supports the digital side, even though there is very little recognition of this in most newsrooms." Even those who didn't express concern about

monetization included it as a goal of their paper's digital plans. "Our digital strategy is to develop content and apps that subscribers will pay for," wrote one journalist. These thoughts were presented as fears, concerns and frustrations that directly impact the journalists' job satisfaction.

Print is still king.

Another journalist described what he or she referred to as "The same problem seen everywhere," or the fact that, "The print edition pays the rent, but its resources are ravaged to feed the digital future, with little financial return in the short and potentially long term." In responses to this survey question, digital success was regularly compared to print success in terms of importance. "Our digital audience is increasing but not enough to offset print losses," wrote another journalist. "And the quality of what we produce has declined dramatically, because of staff cuts, etc. and the nature of our online world, which is not always interested in quality writing and reporting." This suggests that the print product is treated as more valuable than the online product, and that it is of higher quality—and that the two products are still different and have not been combined in journalists' minds or in the production process. Another respondent commiserated with that perspective, albeit with a historic outlook: "I just think it's hard to monetize that online traffic. It started with Craigslist gutting the classified ads that used to provide 40-60% of a newspaper's revenue."

Quantity over quality.

Other journalists feared that a newsroom focus on audience analytics data might distract the editorial staff from creating quality journalism or spread their time and priorities too thin to leave room to create it. "We are not catching up fast enough," wrote one respondent. "We are still worried about clicks and page views (aka, #s) when we should really be pouring resources into producing journalism that is actual journalism, impacting readers." The use of the phrase "actual journalism" might imply that some online journalism that gets clicks and page views does not adhere to the standards of print journalism. A focus on digital growth could also mean expanding a paper's online audience to the national level and moving past a strictly local readership, worried one journalist. "We get readers through search engines who are not engaged or loyal to our brand," worried one respondent. This fear suggests a concern about the long-term identity of the newspaper, and whether it will shift if its readers shift. Some people viewed technology as a potential curse for the industry:

> I think we [are] unwitting participants in our own demise. We've outsourced our digital distribution to Facebook and Twitter rather than spending the energy on creating an environment that people might consider a destination, i.e., a website they feel compelled to navigate to and where they know they will find curated content.

Too much change.

Respondents also complained about "sometimes incoherent and always ever-changing" goals that fluctuate according to a paper's finances. The more these goals change, the more journalists claimed to lose faith in them. To these journalists, even with a digital strategy, it's "not clear that it either produces better journalism or that it creates more subscribers," said one respondent. "The focus on how to best seize upon digital opportunities seems to change from quarter to quarter, as though corporate leadership and digital strategists are trying to figure out something that really works," wrote one respondent. "As such, there is a lack of consistency to the efforts over time." This lack of consistency breeds concern and frustration in journalists who must adapt and adhere to shifting strategies. Many journalists shared a similar hope for a sort of "magic bullet" solution that would make digital journalism profitable in one fell swoop. In the meantime, there's a great deal of experimentation. "Who knows the way forward?" asked one journalist. "We're certainly trying."

Another journalist was more pessimistic:

> I try not to think too big picture in my job. It'll give me a headache. I can feel the newspaper industry collapsing. And those in charge don't seem to convey confidence that whatever new model they're implementing at the time is working.

Even disseminating a digital strategy within the newsroom poses challenges. "It's not 'public' enough within the newsroom," one journalist said of his or her newspaper's strategy. "We've had a lot of system changes lately and are now part of a corporate arrangement, so we should 're-declare' our newspaper's online strategy so everyone is on board and knows how to proceed."

Lack of resources.

Resource concerns were also common, as journalists worried that their newsrooms don't have enough staff members to produce good journalism or don't have enough web support behind their editorial staffers. "Not enough money/resources expended on our digital strategy," is how one journalist summed up issues in his or her newsroom. These concerns also include technology quality; journalists worried about poor websites, mobile products and app design and weren't sure their newspapers had the technological skills to improve them. The journalists surveyed regularly situated their papers' digital plans in the context of recent or upcoming product releases, indicating a clear tie between the quality of a paper's digital technology and its potential to achieve digital success. "We are told another web redesign is around the corner," said one respondent. "I'd like to think it will be an improvement, but I'll believe it when I see it."

Discussion

Although this survey didn't directly ask journalists to describe their professional motivations, the factors they use in order to measure their own success can lead to understanding the goals they are motivated to achieve at the organization level of the hierarchy of influences. For newspaper journalists, both qualitative and quantitative measures of success are important considerations at the organizational level and in the way editors gauge the value of journalistic content, part of the routines level. Across the board, however, the most frequently used measure of success is the quality of the journalism, which speaks to the professionalism of the occupation and the institutional level of the hierarchy of influences. The results suggest that journalists use a wide variety of factors to understand the worth of the content they create, and those factors—including impact in the community, online metrics and recognition from peer journalists—span multiple levels of the hierarchy of influences as well.

The quality of the content remained the top consideration when journalists were asked to identify the priorities their editors and superiors use to assess their performance in the workplace, an indication that, in general, the newsrooms' overall philosophies for both content and professional performance focus on the same highest-ranked goal. However, when asked to assess their newspaper's digital strategies in an open-ended question, a number of journalists expressed concerns that those strategies prioritize the quantity of the content over its quality. This conflict in responses might represent a disagreement between the way digital strategies are envisioned at the organizational level and the way they are enacted at the individual and routines levels of the hierarchy. Further research could build on and clarify this conflict. At the same time, editors also use additional factors—again, both quantitative and qualitative—to measure the success of their staffers, including attention online and on social media and the amount of content journalists produce.

Digital performance metrics frequently influence the content that journalists create. This finding is consistent with existing literature indicating that digital metrics influence journalists during multiple stages of the writing process, such as editing (Hanusch, 2017) and determining follow-up and extended coverage of specific stories (Vu, 2014). Furthermore, this prevalence of digital performance metrics in journalists' work routines is important to note because it can diminish the quality of their work due to less guidance and feedback from editors (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015) and increasing institutional pressure to create content that "gets more clicks" (Tandoc, 2014). Previous research positing those ideas find support in these journalists' open-ended assessments of their paper's digital strategies, in which they worry about the influence of audience data on editorial decision-making.

Those who identified as online-only journalists indicated they were more knowledgeable of their publication's digital strategies than print-only or hybrid journalists. In fact, online journalists reported strong certainty in their understanding of digital strategy, while print journalists replied with consistently middle-range knowledge of digital strategy. This measure of knowledge aligns with each group's belief that their digital strategy is working.

Online reporters were more likely to believe in the success of their newspapers' digital strategies. In fact, for journalists across all platforms, the more knowledgeable they are of a digital strategy, the more likely they are to believe it is working. This relates to previous literature that found a direct relationship between journalists' attitudes toward digital feedback and their likelihood of integrating it into the work routines (Tandoc & Ferrucci, 2016).

Despite these results, journalists also expressed considerable fears and frustrations about their papers' digital strategies and how those strategies speak to the realities of online journalism today. In particular, they worried that the print product is still their paper's most important focus, and they feared that prioritizing the digital product doesn't mesh with a financial state in which the print paper is still more profitable than the website. This concern is reflected in research by Chyi and Tenenboim (2017), which suggests that media outlets may have jumped the gun when it comes to the digital revolution and placed too much focus on the digital potential of a business that continues to owe much to print. The journalists also worried about the ways their audiences are shifting online and the amount of resources available to them as they attempt to follow their supervisors' occasionally confusing and constantly changing digital strategies.

These results demonstrate a platform-based divide amongst journalists who may be working within the same organization. This division in the newsroom—where perceptions of digital strategy are split along print and online boundaries—could possibly result in fractured goals and ideologies for the news organizations at large. This fractured mindset is also reflected in journalists' thoughts about their newspaper's digital strategies, which are considered to be divorced from their plans for print; in many cases, the papers' print and digital products were referred to as entirely distinct. There appears to be a need for editors and superiors to solidify expectations and content evaluations towards a more unified team of journalists striving to meet shared, well-articulated and well-documented goals.

Limitations

This research was intentionally limited to the study of newspaper journalists who represent the 49 of the top major newspapers in the United States. It does not include journalists who work at smaller newspapers or other types of media outlets, including magazines, radio, television and online-only publications, and the results cannot be applied outside the realm of newspaper journalism. However, these results can be used as a bridge toward further research as applied to journalists who work in other media, and the way those journalists think about their jobs and professional performances, as well as their publication's digital strategies.

This research is also the result of a 10% sample of more than 5,000 journalists approached via an online survey. Future studies would benefit from a larger pool of participants, as well as different methods of research geared toward in-depth qualitative analysis. Because this study was conducted via a survey, the researchers were unable to delve into the motivations journalists tie to the measurements they use to understand

their work or to produce any sample anecdotes of how each value or metric is applied in regular newsroom interactions. Furthermore, the results can only provide us with initial insights due to limited statistical significance. While this was addressed by comparing median and interquartile range, continuing study would benefit from the statistical strength inherent of a larger corpus. The results of this study cannot be used to understand journalistic strategies outside of mainstream newspapers or applied to the general population. Future research would benefit from in-depth interviews or ethnography to help scholars understand in greater detail how these factors interact in real-time scenarios and how they differ according to journalistic roles and responsibilities. Because this study only divided journalists into print, web and hybrid (both print and web) categories based on the platform for which they conduct the most work, it relied on those distinctions to understand the difference between strategic understanding and decision-making, rather than the types of tasks the journalists perform in the newsroom: writer, section editor, managing editor, freelancer, etc. These factors are all important to future research about the professional roles and mindsets of journalists in the digital age.

Future Research

This study focused on a number of commonly used means of gauging content, such as reception by peer journalists, impact on a community and performance online and on social media, as broad categories through which to understand how journalists and their editors perceive the value of content and the performance of individual journalists. However, future research would benefit from moving beyond those broad categories into more specific examples—moving from social media to a division between shares, likes and reactions; between Facebook and Twitter and other social media platforms; etc. For example, this survey grouped all audience analytics data into a larger "online metrics" category; in the future, scholars should seek to understand the extent to which journalists use a variety of different metrics—including page views, visits, ad impressions and time on site—to make the same and other decisions.

This would be particularly helpful in understanding whether journalists value audience-focused engagement metrics or financially motivated monetization metrics more highly in gauging the success of their journalism. What is the key performance indicator? And when it comes to those online metrics, is there a standard measure of success? A benchmark of 2,000 page views might mean wild success for a smaller outlet, while it could indicate an unreturned investment for a larger, more mainstream online publication. Future research could expand upon these results by examining virality, how it's measured and what the average range of goals for digital success—measured via online metrics—is for different types of media outlets.

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Changing "habits of thought": An examination of eight years of digital evolution at the Christian Science Monitor

By Jonathan Groves and Carrie Brown

This longitudinal study combines data from ethnographic observation and more than 100 in-depth interviews to analyze the changing "habits of thoughts" over an eight-year period at the Christian Science Monitor. The research identifies four primary changes: embracing experimentation and rapid change, breaking down the firewall between the business and editorial departments, changing conceptions of audience, and redefining the newsroom's identity in the current news environment.

Years of industry upheaval have forced the 110-year-old *Christian Science Monitor*—like so many other daily newspapers—to adjust its practices, goals, and relationship with its audience. Since announcing in 2008 that it was going to drop its daily print edition, the national news organization has had to confront numerous challenges that have changed the way the newsroom's journalists think of their role as agenda-setters and as arbiters of the organizational mission.

Through its digital evolution, the *Monitor* has become more conscious of its audience's needs while struggling to move beyond chasing page views into meaningful engagement with its readers (Groves & Brown, 2011, 2013). It has learned to work more nimbly, despite stumbles along the way as ingrained routines and attitudes about the pre-eminence of journalistic judgment remain powerful. It has changed its routines in ways that helped grow its online audience, only to suffer as tech behemoths like Google and Facebook changed algorithms, rendering these techniques less effective. It has refined and tweaked its fundamental value proposition over the years, ultimately settling on one closer to its original religious mission than its previous push for broader appeal.

Most fundamentally, the existential threat to the newsroom has broken down one of the once-sacred tenets of journalism: the strict separation between the newspaper's busi-

ness and editorial operations. Since 2008, that firewall has fallen, allowing for closer communication and cooperation between the two departments to achieve shared goals. Although no evidence was found that the *Monitor* newsroom compromised its editorial independence, its journalists have become more aware of revenue and cost implications of their decisions, and are more willing to consider audience interests and needs.

This longitudinal study, drawn from ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews gathered over eight years of visits to the organization's Boston headquarters, reveals how some of the *Monitor'*s "habits of thought" have evolved while other aspects of its organizational culture remained steadfast.

Literature Review

American journalists have historically viewed one of their primary roles as that of gate-keeper: deciding what news is important enough to publish and keeping false or misleading information out of the public sphere (White, 1950). With this view, paying too much attention to audience desires leads to sensationalism and pandering. Because of the limited selection of news organizations in individual markets, journalists played a key role in determining what issues the public thought were important, as years of agenda-setting research confirmed (McCombs, 2005).

To ensure a predictable flow of content on tight deadlines, reporters gathered information through a routinized series of regular check-ins with prominent institutions and their sources, such as police departments and government officials at various levels (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 2004). Although journalists may have often talked about writing for an average citizen or "Joe six-pack," for the most part interactions with citizens were often limited to brief "person-on-the-street" interviews about issues that prominent official sources had raised. Although these routines were practical concessions to the demands of the job, over time they took on a life of their own, becoming ingrained in how journalists viewed their jobs (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). In the days before the World Wide Web, when it was difficult to gauge audience reactions to specific stories, journalists were primarily motivated to write for their bosses and peers (Breed, 1955).

Although American journalists see themselves as watchdogs who help preserve freedom and democracy by holding public officials accountable, many routines and "habits of thought" are also defensive in nature, designed to counter claims of bias and preserve their authority as arbiters of news (Gans, 2004; Schudson, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 2013; Tuchman, 1978). Journalists tend to rely on knowledgeable bureaucratic sources who are in positions of authority and can be easily categorized by partisan identity (Davis, 2009; Fishman, 1980). A somewhat nebulous notion of "regular folks" were privileged over activists who were believed to shade the truth, though at the same time the odds of any average person appearing in the news was idiosyncratic and rare (Gitlin, 2003).

Though the Internet disrupted this paradigm (Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2009; Domingo, Masip, & Costera Meijer, 2015), ingrained routines were nevertheless slow to change, and even today have power over how reality is constructed in the news.

Gatekeeping has become more akin to sensemaking as the power to publish became available to anyone with an Internet connection, leaving journalists to spend more time correcting or annotating information that was already "out there" rather than suppressing it entirely (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Audiences are able to respond to journalists directly, and through online metrics, editors now know exactly who is reading what, often revealing that some important subjects garner little time and attention (Singer, Hermida, et al., 2011). With the economics of news also upended by unbundling technology, journalists faced a problem of great urgency: If they were unable to attract the attention and trust of their audiences, their businesses would fail.

But this shift to a greater focus on understanding the people they serve did not come easy for journalists, mostly because of the way in which organizational culture inhibits change (Schein, 2017; Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002). Organizational culture is developed and embedded over time through successes that become transformed into myths and stories, and ultimately, underlying assumptions that form the basis for how organizations accomplish work (Schein, 2017). For lasting change to occur, the organization has to confront new challenges and succeed together to collectively craft new stories and embed different routines. To become a learning organization, it has to incorporate new systems that permit people to challenge the status quo without fear of retribution (Argyris, 2004).

Fast-moving experimentation often clashes with the cautious approach in established cultures, as reward systems typically favor guaranteed profitability over risk, especially in publicly-traded corporations (Christensen, 1997; Christensen & Raynor, 2003). Developing an "emergent strategy," one that embraces quick experiments, is difficult in well-established companies and organizations (Christensen & Raynor, 2003, p. 215).

The Web's diminution of the gatekeeping role of journalists also challenged their authority and professional identity in numerous ways, prompting discomfort (Deuze, 2005). Today's journalist faces far greater accountability and needs to be more responsive to the public than longstanding professional norms prepared them for, leading many to resist change even as it becomes increasingly clear that financial survival depends upon it.

Historically, news organizations have deliberately separated business and editorial operations to avoid the pitfalls of "market-driven journalism" (McManus, 1994; Picard, 2006), and journalistic norms have long dictated a strict separation between those functions, for fear that advertisers and profit pressures would compromise the integrity of the news report (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). New initiatives were often rejected because for many journalists they represented kowtowing to the bottom line (Singer, 2004). However, particularly for daily newspapers, the extreme decline in revenues and endless rounds of layoffs and budget cuts forced a reckoning with these norms. While journalistic independence remains a core value, more editorial staffers recognize that at minimum, better communication with the business sides of their organization is important. This kind of "survival anxiety" has helped push journalists into previously resisted cultural changes (Schein, 2017, p. 324).

This research will explore how one storied newsroom that has won seven Pulitzer Prizes in its history has tried to evolve—in its routines, in its view of the business operations, and in its perception of the audience—to remain relevant in the digital age.

The *Monitor* has long been infused by church founder Mary Baker Eddy's original mission, "To injure no man, but to bless all mankind." Interviewees over the course of the study period consistently mentioned that phrase as an animating force in the newsroom. Although the *Monitor* is not a religious publication and aims for a broad secular audience, the newsroom's stylebook captures its ethos:

> The *Monitor*'s writing should spring from its purpose. The fundamental operating policy of The Christian Science *Monitor* is to "injure no man, but to bless all mankind." This was set forth by Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, who established the newspaper in 1908. The same policy is followed today in an effort to report and interpret the news accurately and fairly.

> To blaze its own path of clean, constructive journalism, broad in appeal, high in character, powerful in helpfulness, the *Monitor* tries hard to develop stories that are not routine, articles that are original, interesting, and important to human progress...

> Our aim is to bring light rather than heat to a subject. The purpose is to heal. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 1997)

Methodology

This longitudinal case study involved nine visits over eight years to the *Monitor*'s Boston headquarters: two lasted six days including a weekend day visit (December 2009, July 2010); five were conducted over five workdays (January 2011, May 2012, August 2013, March 2015, May 2016); two involved one-day visits (August 2014, August 2017). During the one-day visits, interviews focused on key informants who had been interviewed previously.

The data include ethnographic observation of meetings and newsroom operations as well as in-depth interviews of key personnel at the *Monitor*'s Boston offices and phone interviews with *Monitor* journalists in the organization's bureaus. In all, more than 100 interviews were conducted over the eight-year period, encompassing a cross-section of staffers from different levels and departments, including both the editorial and business divisions. Interviewees were promised confidentiality to encourage honest, thorough responses, and all open-ended interviews—which ranged in length from 30 minutes to over two hours—were recorded and transcribed. For this study, selected interview transcripts, focusing on individuals who had been interviewed multiple times, were coded to track changing habits of thought over time. Researchers also collected a variety of memos, emails, and internal documents for analysis.

The lengthy longitudinal design of this study allowed for close tracking of how "habits of thought" evolved among different managers and staff members as well as within the organization's more formal established policies and goals. The external environment continued to change rapidly throughout this study, forcing many individuals to adjust their views but also revealing the areas most resistant to change.

A case study is a useful methodological approach for examining changing habits of thought because it allows for the deep study of phenomena in a real-world context (Yin, 2003). Over time, the researchers became familiar with the organization and could readily spot the changing dynamics.

Results

A century after its founding, the *Christian Science Monitor* faced a daunting reality. Its circulation had gradually declined from a high of more than 223,000 in 1970 to less than 56,000. The newsroom had relied on a mix of a subsidy from the Church of Christ, Scientist, revenue from a *Monitor* endowment, and revenue from subscriptions and advertising. The church had long subsidized the newsroom because of its inability to generate reliable advertising revenue, although the paper's content was largely secular and recognized for the depth of its international coverage. But by 2008, the church planned to reduce its direct subsidy to force the newsroom to stand on its own financially.

That year, new editor John Yemma took the helm, and working with publisher Jonathan Wells, crafted a plan: The mail-delivered newspaper would no longer be published daily, and it would move its news operations largely online, with a weekly print magazine. At the time, the newsroom had Web traffic of about 3 million page views a month. To generate sufficient advertising revenue to replace the declining church subsidy, top managers projected the news organization would have to hit at least 25 million page views per month, a goal it had hoped to hit within five years (personal communication, December 12, 2009).

Interviews, documents, and observation reveal the primary changes in the *Monitor*'s thinking among its journalists from this significant moment in its history to the present day, along with a number of new routines. However, these new ways of thinking did not develop without resistance, and remain contested and unevenly adopted among the newsroom's reporters and editors.

Over the eight-year study period, reporters and editors:

> * Embraced an ethic of experimentation, albeit with reluctance, by adopting new ways of structuring and distributing stories online.

> * Worked more collaboratively on projects with the business division, and became more aware of the revenue implications of their decisions.

> * Began to think differently about the audience and readers' connection to the *Monitor*'s content by monitoring analytics and incorporating search-engine optimization strategies.

Most important, those three shifts hinged upon a fourth deeper transformation: redefining the newsroom's identity in the context of technology and the current news environment.

Embracing Experimentation Amid the Need for Rapid Change

Even before the move to Web-first, the *Monitor* newsroom was willing to experiment, despite the many cultural challenges involved in questioning established practices that bred past success. During our first visit, some long-timers still recalled the expensive failure of the *Monitor*'s foray into television in the mid-1980s. More than $200 million was invested in the *Monitor* Channel, which folded in 1992 (Faison, 1992), and that failure made some nervous about the push into online. Also, some of the biggest competitors for news audiences' attention like Facebook constantly trumpeted a "fail fast" mentality, ginning up pressure for news organizations to do the same.

Yemma, with the help of online editor Jimmy Orr and outside consultants, pursued a new strategy driven by shorter articles, search-engine optimization, and a much faster filing process that sometimes resulted in multiple posts a day on the same subject from a single writer. But the newsroom was accustomed to a day-after, reflective approach to news coverage, with articles filled with multiple sources and 1,000 words or more. The switch was disruptive, and many interviewees expressed resentment and fear that their core values were being compromised. The looming economic reality did make the change more palatable to some, however. One editor said in December 2009: "It can become a little overwhelming in terms of the number of tasks you do in a day. But I think it's inevitable" (personal communication, December 11, 2009).

Change, much less rapid iteration, is never easy for award-winning legacy companies in which employees have built their careers on mastery of skills and tasks that may become less valued with new routines. But Orr was a change agent who wasn't afraid to challenge the status quo, a necessary component for a model of behavior to create a learning organization (Argyris, 2004). Although he sparked defensive reactions among many staffers, he did jump-start new habits that were more likely to accept rapid iteration in response to data.

When Orr began to encourage his newsroom colleagues to blog, he encountered much resistance. But Orr and his young online team decided to blog on their own, and their efforts began to build traffic. Eoin O'Carroll's environment blog became one of the most popular draws on the site. Orr then began blogging about politics at The Vote, a *Monitor*-branded Wordpress blog outside of the newsroom content management system but still under the csmonitor.com domain banner. The result: The online team's posts, which used an SEO-philosophy of writing about current topics that people might be searching for on Google, became some of the most popular on the site. This proof of concept helped other staffers to recognize what is possible and helped secure the support of top editors.

Soon, this search-driven traffic strategy dominated the *Monitor*'s approach. A consultant trained staffers on using search keywords in headlines and story leads, and newsroom staffers learned how to quickly adjust underperforming headlines. News meetings began to include reviews of page view reports and conversations about what was working to garner traffic and what wasn't. Some newsroom departments began more closely tracking performance metrics of individual reporters and posts. Even if reporters were unable to offer much additional information by way of multiple interviews with sources, they were encouraged to create aggregated posts about stories rising on Google Trends, or "riding the Google wave," as one editor put it (personal communication, January 9, 2011). Though metrics do not dictate news judgment, the newsroom still uses analytics to understand what content is engaging the audience online.

Over the study period, the newsroom experimented with many forms of content, including live events, quizzes, podcasts and a subscription daily news briefing delivered as a PDF via email, but leaders were not afraid to halt items that did not gain traction with the audience. It also tried different revenue products, including newsletters, news events, and premium paid content for business subscribers.

Some of these rapid changes caused many staffers to question whether the *Monitor* was moving away from its core identity and losing its commitment to serious news. Many also complained of burnout as they churned short posts throughout the day, with less time to make phone calls and reflect deeply on complicated issues. At the same time, the success of these new techniques was seductive. The organization felt relevant again, and many said it was rewarding to feel like more people were reading their work.

By July 2010, the site had reached its 25 million-page views goal, well ahead of plan, and within months, the newsroom was consistently hitting 30 million page views a month. Clear, measurable successes help an organization redefine its processes and create new stories that shift the organization's culture (Schein, 2017). Even if some staffers were not sure that the traffic spike constituted a meaningful win, it was still rewarding to achieve a set goal. Soon, editors for the print weekly began having a hard time finding staffers who wanted to write longer, harder-hitting pieces, typically a plum assignment, because they were caught up in the faster daily pace.

A staffer in July 2010 (personal communication, July 7, 2010) described it this way: "That was instant gratification and a barometer of success was watching the page view numbers jump when we hit something just right."

By 2011, anxiety had lessened as the *Monitor* newsroom had proved an ability to learn and adapt in the digital age with tangible metrics of success. One international editor, who had been skeptical of the changes in 2009, had this reaction after the page view goal had been reached: "Maybe it's possible. Maybe we could actually survive, you know, so I find it very encouraging that we've made this kind of progress in traffic" (personal communication, Jan. 11, 2011).

But these traffic gains did not reliably result in advertising revenues large enough to sustain the news organization. The paper had to continue to iterate, and the next push was toward engagement and building loyalty, which required a greater focus on understanding audience needs and engagement, and was far less straightforward in terms of the steps required to achieve targets (Groves & Brown, 2013).

Google posed a risk as well. The search engine regularly refined its algorithms to reduce the ability of organizations to game it, and some changes affected the *Monitor*'s traffic. Google also penalized organizations like the *Monitor* that relied on third-party ad products. The newsroom also was confronted with the rise of mobile, as its initial redesign was not responsive.

The newsroom also explored and tracked social-media promotion through Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Some reporters and editors embraced the new approaches, although much of the social-media component remained the purview of the online team. These efforts met both resistance and grudging acceptance among staff members who increasingly saw it as an "all hands on deck" crisis situation (personal communication, May 26, 2016).

The *Monitor*'s newsroom and business operations worked together to develop a variety of new verticals—topic-based portals focused on niches—in an effort to secure new audiences and advertisers willing to pay a premium to reach them. Over the study period, Global Monitor Outlook, a business intelligence and research service, and Passcode, a cybersecurity vertical, were among the products launched with significant investment in an effort to tap lucrative audiences.

In September 2015, the *Monitor* brought in a consultant to lead it through a design sprint, an innovation framework that pushes for concentrated bursts of well-coordinated work from an interdepartmental team to develop specific new product prototypes. The original team focused on how to make the *Monitor* distinction more obvious, and developed new modes of storytelling (personal communication, May 27, 2016). The latest experiment in 2017—known as The Monitor Daily—involved an editor-written news summary that was turned into a daily podcast each evening for subscribers.

Although both Passcode and Monitor Global Outlook generated revenue, the *Monitor* was willing to pivot and kill both products when leaders decided those initiatives didn't match the paper's renewed focus on its core identity and mission (personal communication, August 16, 2017).

Breaking Down the Firewall Between Business and Editorial

Over the course of the study period, interviews and observations revealed the steady crumbling of the traditional wall between business (or "publishing," as it was called in-house) and editorial, in part because of the economic realities facing the organization. While the paper was still careful to avoid slanting the news report in favor of a particular advertiser, by 2017, these two parts of the organization were more closely integrated, with several key staffers bridging both worlds. Instead of seeing business as a separate entity and even fleeting contact as a threat to journalistic integrity, several on the editorial side saw it as a critical partner in sustaining the paper's ability to carry out its Fourth Estate mission.

During the initial Web-first strategy shift in 2008, at least one newsroom staffer with reporting expertise switched to the business side. A major wake-up call for the newsroom came with reaching the goal of 25 million page views: Though the newsroom had met its metrics milestone, the advertising and revenue had not followed as projected. This shortfall led to some frustration and skepticism in the newsroom, and sparked a redoubled, broader effort to focus on ways to boost revenue across the organization.

One editor said in 2011:

> I've embraced the challenge of trying to make it work on the business side. … I'm talking a lot more with different people on the publishing side ad hoc about what we can do together to sort of break down the wall between publishing and editorial. And, you know, I feel good about that. (personal communication, January 11, 2011)

By 2011, the business side was communicating with the newsroom about ad campaigns that depended upon certain levels of Web traffic. One editor noted in 2011:

> We're all still wrestling with these issues that we've had from the beginning, you know. How much are we doing this to get traffic? And, you know, traffic also equates to jobs. So, fundamentally, we're all sitting here saying, if we don't do this, who's going to be left in the newsroom? (personal communication, January 11, 2011)

At that point, talking about page views—and the reality of their tie to revenue—had become a part of the morning news meeting. Another editor noting the focus on page views also talked about the financial pressures:

We all know the financial situation is page views drive the ads. And if we don't get them, we won't get the ads. If we don't get the ads, we won't have ad revenue. And if we don't have the ad revenue, our jobs are gonna be cut. That's just the way it is. So some people, I think, are still coming to grips with that's how it is. But I'm fully there. That's how it is. (personal communication, January 12, 2011)

By 2012, a few more staffers from the newsroom had moved over to the business side, and they had begun working on joint news/business projects. The research and development team, which included two former newsroom staffers, conducted a page view analysis that found the audience liked explainers, especially about politics. The discovery led to taking DC Decoder—originally a column by Washington reporter Peter Grier—and turning it into an online product to build advertising around.

Of course, a change this significant from standard journalistic practice did not come without resistance and ongoing concern. "I think there are a lot of fans of the Chinese wall," one staffer told us in 2015. "I'm not one of them because I don't know how you can meet the needs of the customer if you don't have product managers who are talking with marketing and tech and sales and you know, all of the different editors" (personal communication, March 17, 2015).

That more open attitude led to the verticals being launched, with editorial products targeting audiences likely to inspire large sponsorships. During the study period, the *Monitor* also experimented with a premium content product, Monitor Global Outlook, that provided enhanced coverage of international topics for business clients. The subscription-based product required close coordination with the business side but was ultimately abandoned after it failed to achieve revenue goals.

One of the most integrated ventures involved Passcode, a *Monitor*-branded site launched in February 2016 that focused on cybersecurity. The editors and reporters worked closely with the business side as they developed sponsorship-driven events, newsletters, and podcasts in addition to traditional Web content delivered on a mobile-friendly platform. Planning meetings included individuals from both departments and focused on content as well as thinking about the revenue implications (personal communication, May 26, 2016).

Said one editor in 2016:

> I think publishing has had a lot more clout. We've all been pushed to be partners and everything, lower the walls. And I'm all for that. I used to think everybody took the walls a little too seriously, but I think we went a little too far. There just started to be a feeling that we were a little bit in danger—not all that much, but a little bit in danger—of saying what's the coverage you want, we'll provide it for you. (personal communication, May 26, 2016)

Changing the Conception of Readers

Journalists feel strongly about their public service mission (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014), but many journalists believe they know better than the average reader what stories are most important. Several *Monitor* newsroom personnel acknowledged the newsroom had an "ivory tower" approach to its audience, engendered by years of reflective, day-after journalism, driven by the print cycle's slow mail delivery.

For many journalists at the *Monitor*, the focus on increasing page views at the beginning of its Web-only transition was an important gateway to becoming more conscious of how their work was received by their audience, a necessary step on the path toward the deeper understanding needed to make the news more relevant and inclusive.

As one editor put it 2½ years into the digital-first push:

> So, like, you were in daily print, then you go to Web first. The newsroom learns how to build an audience. They did a great job. Your reach increases significantly. Third-party ad network revenue increases significantly, you know, goes from $100,000 to over $3 million ... the model becomes more mature, and you start to go, 'All right, this will take you so far. … So where do you go next?' And that's what we're figuring out. (personal communication, May 21, 2012)

Where to go next for sustainable revenues was, newsroom leaders realized, a focus not just on drive-by clicks but on engaging the audience in new ways that could build greater loyalty and commitment—and thus, the likelihood of repeat visits and subscriptions. One manager summarized the shift in perspective:

> . . . page views drive revenue, so that's first and foremost, but the visitors—so the visits—is who the people are. So when we're looking to understand the customer, we look at the visit level. And then we look at, you know, what each of those segments or profiles—kinda how they perform and what the typical behavior is and see if there are any differential behaviors in them. So that's where the loyalty thing comes into play. (personal communication, August 7, 2013)

Later in the study period, the *Monitor* sought to define its target audience more clearly and developed the personas "Greg and Miranda," a couple in their 50s, middle or upper class, who are engaged in the world. The paper's top editor during the 2015 visit described them as the kind of people who might belong to a community organization, give money to charitable causes, and travel internationally. This ideal audience segment reflected about half of current visitors to the website at the time. This was one of the clearest conceptions of the audience expressed during the study period.

Redefining the Organization's Identity in the Current News Environment

From the beginning of the Web-first decision, the *Monitor*'s newsroom staff wrestled often with the issue of mission. Throughout the study period, staffers we interviewed were consistently engaged in moments of self-reflection as they sought to clarify the organization's identity in the digital environment.

In a 2008 YouTube video celebrating the paper's centennial, Editor John Yemma affirmed church founder Mary Baker Eddy's idea that the power of the press should be "used for good."

The organization crafted a unique value proposition early in its Web-first transition to think more deliberately about the audience, and the *Monitor*'s ability to satisfy needs. The "UVP," as it was dubbed, was an attempt to operationalize Eddy's historic "injure no man" motto for the *Monitor*. Specifically, it put the words into an audience-specific context: "Explaining world news to thoughtful people who care about solutions" (personal communication, December 12, 2009).

During the study period, the news organization often wrestled with audience and advertiser confusion over "Christian Science" in the *Monitor*'s name: Is it a religious publication? Is it only for Christian Scientists? On the About page of the *Monitor*'s website, however, the editors made clear that the *Monitor* had a broader mission that stretched beyond the church, a point the newspaper's editors had affirmed since its founding in 1908. In 2009, about 20% of the *Monitor*'s readership was Christian Scientist (personal communication, December 12, 2009).

An editor at the time said:

> The main thing is people subscribe to *Monitor* values, which is [a] humane approach to world news. But, that said, I do think that, you know, the Christian Science underpinnings of the *Christian Science Monitor* is one thing that makes it different … I mean, when you have a synonym for God in Christian Science, one of those synonyms is 'truth'. (personal communication, December 12, 2009)

In many ways, the early-transition, search-focused strategy seemed to many staffers to be the antithesis of the mission, as the strategy sought to capitalize on "heat," or popularity. One way staffers tried to reconcile with this conflict was by trying to offer a more measured, less-sensational "Monitor-esque" take on the trending topics of the day. One editor said in 2011:

> What we now can do in our best stories is we can combine that DNA that we have imprinted on ourselves for analysis and infuse it into articles that are much more urgent because we are following point by point what's

going on. People want to know about something that's happening. News is news for a reason. They want to find out what's new. So we can now serve that, and hopefully when we do it well, we can serve a way that elevates, that educates, that provides context, that provides a … calming kind of steady voice when other people might be, you know, tearing their hair out and saying that the sky is falling. (personal communication, January 12, 2011)

But with its push to garner page views, *Monitor* posts often didn't seem vastly different from other commodity content on these trending stories. Editors soon recognized that some newsroom strategies for building content such as quizzes and posts driven by trending topics was not developing a dedicated community of readers, and the metric of return visits, or loyalty, was becoming as important as number of page views.

If somebody goes 40 or 50 pages deep on a quiz, which is typical, that is engagement, and that's a good thing, but … it's not quite what we need. I mean, it's not quite what we want when we say "engagement." ... We want to convert people to people who want to come back. We want people who have a good experience, get what they want, and ... come back. (personal communication, May 21, 2012)

In 2014, Yemma retired after five years as editor, passing the helm to Managing Editor Marshall Ingwerson (Ellis, 2014). Ingwerson, a longtime *Monitor* journalist and a Christian Scientist, sought to reaffirm the organization's commitment to core *Monitor* values, and crafted a statement of aims that served as a guiding document for coverage moving forward.

A draft stated:

Here is a starting point for framing a consistent *Monitor* difference in the form of three core tasks. These are not new. They have been part of the *Monitor*'s figurative DNA for over a century, but we need to amplify them further into a distinction we deliver with relentless consistency. They are to:

1. Register progress

2. Surface models of thought

3. Promote understanding of others. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 2014)

The shorthand in the newsroom became known as "UMP," a mnemonic for understanding, models of thought, and progress. Like the business-oriented UVP from 2009, this document sought to bring Eddy's historic motto to life in a different way. It strove to provide a way to define the *Monitor* lens clearly and concretely for the digital age.

The document pitched a series of questions for each story idea. For example, for registering progress, it suggested asking: "Have we solved problems like this before? Who's

working on it? Is there progress to report?" For surfacing models of thought: "What was the shift in thought that led to a particular achievement or development? How did this development itself change thinking or alter the field of possibilities?" And for promoting understanding, it suggested to "narrow rather than amplify differences." Several in the newsroom lauded the document as a return to core values. The purpose was to connect identity, mission, and audience as completely as possible.

> The conversation's come full circle for us, too, because prior to going Web-first, the print organization—we understood what *Monitor* values were. Then, as we moved into the Web-first world and we produced lots more content with fewer writers, the distinction factor disappeared as we targeted—maybe didn't disappear, but became diluted, perhaps—as we produced more content and targeted news clusters. Now, we're back to focusing on what makes us distinct, and pushing hard on it. (personal communication, March 17, 2015)

The UMP perspective still privileged the role of journalists to serve as a gatekeeper to help the readers understand the world. Some in the newsroom, however, struggled making sense of the redefined perspective. One editor who was not a Christian Scientist noted a personal connection to the religion might have helped incorporate the ideas into his work process more effectively.

> Any issue that we write about in the news, obviously people have different perspectives on it. People see reality through different lenses, and consequently, they think differently about the—even if the facts are not in dispute, which of course is another issue that we deal with all the time— but even given, say, a set of undisputed facts, they're going to be perceived differently by people with different experiential prisms. So when we write about it, it would be instructive and enlightening to our readers to expand their consciousness so that they can appreciate how other people, other, you know, different people, view this event through their particular prism. So what hopefully what we would offer then in our stories is not going to be for the narrow view of, well, we're writing for Americans or writing for liberal Westerners. We're writing—we're hopefully, maybe, if those are our readers—we're explaining to Americans, liberal Westerners, how other people understand what's happening. (personal communication, March 16, 2015)

In 2016, the UMP philosophy was still being used to guide story construction. One editor talking a reporter through a story about a 2016 political debate said: "Make sure you hit the UMP. … It's not just a black-and-white issue. Who's mischaracterizing? Is it a story about the debate? Or is it a story about [how] the media is covering the debate?"

The church's overseeing board pushed the newsroom to refocus on its original core mission, one not driven by page views or revenue, further driving the focus on UMP.

Thus, the newsroom abandoned Passcode - which was seen as too far off the organizational mission - and began to pour its energy into the Monitor Daily, a refocused version of the subscription-based daily news briefing and the website specific content generated through the *Monitor* lens, one driven by the values articulated in Ingwerson's memo. Though the traffic is down, the newsroom now hopes to move toward a subscription model with the goal of focusing on the core, passionate community, instead of trying to please everyone.

Conclusion

After eight years, this study reflects on an organization that has come through the crucible of change, with far fewer journalists on its staff following multiple rounds of layoffs, but a refined sense of self. With mixed success, the organization took a reasoned, experimental approach to transforming its news product to deal with the economic realities of the marketplace. It embraced a mode of consistent experimentation, even in the face of typical newsroom resistance to change. It was the first major national newspaper to abandon its daily print product to focus on becoming Web-first, and tried different forms of stories over the study period ahead of its peers. And it adopted scrum approaches from the technology world to design new products to reach its audience.

The reality of declining economic fortunes drove this experimentation. That threat to existence also sparked another profound effect: the falling of the historic firewall between business and editorial. Early on, certain members of the newsroom recognized that survival depended on an awareness of traffic and revenue, and some from the news side, acknowledging the need of revenue for journalistic survival, actually emigrated to the business department with the hopes of preserving the *Monitor* brand. Interdisciplinary teams that included members of the business and editorial departments developed several new products over the years, and that bridging of worlds continues today. Now, some personnel with business ties are located in the newsroom itself. David Clark Scott, a top editor who has won numerous journalism awards in his career, now has the title "Chief Product Director" and does not hesitate to talk about the advantages of having a foot in both worlds: business and editorial.

Experimental successes are key for cultural change to occur (Schein, 2017), and failures can lead to fear and doubt. Initial collaborations, in the form of "verticals" that would focus on particular topics, did not achieve hoped-for revenue goals, and though the newsroom produced content for those ventures, some felt frustrated by the lack of return. Still, the cooperation continued with the development of several other projects, including Global Monitor Outlook and Passcode, which incorporated newsletters, podcasts, and events, much like business models developed by other online news sites such as the Texas Tribune and the Voice of San Diego.

The newsroom was forced to confront its traditional gatekeeper role as well. The online media marketplace—especially after the rise of smartphones—fundamentally shifted the power to audiences, a reality that was felt keenly by the *Monitor* staff. Traffic reports revealed that its international news content—revered by its staff—was not popular among

its readers, and the Web-first approach pushed a shift toward content with broader audience appeal. Though it moved from the "ivory tower" stance engendered by its mail-delivery print cycle, the *Monitor* did little to engage its audience through conversation in comments or participation in terms of user-generated content. Instead, the newsroom focused on audience-growth metrics to understand audience behavior and guide its decision-making, and efforts by the online team to have reporters engage on social media and through comments were not widely embraced

The economically-driven push to Web-first also forced a deep inward gaze as staffers redefined the organization's identity in the context of the current news environment. All of these changes and iterations in the organization's newswork forced conversations about the ultimate mission and purpose of the *Monitor*. At first, many struggled with an audience-centric approach, worried that appealing to a broad base of readers would diminish the intellectual and spiritual mission set forth by church founder Mary Baker Eddy. But over time, the organization evolved its goals to reaching a smaller but more engaged niche in a way that merges an audience-aware view with a journalistically valuable approach that better matches the newsroom's conception of itself.

The *Monitor*, with financial support from the Church of Christ, Scientist, is a special case of organizational change; most news organizations will not have the luxury of an endowment to subsidize experiments to connect with audiences. But the changes it experienced, spurred by the reality of a hypercompetitive news environment, represent what many legacy news organizations have faced over the past decade.

Journalists cling to their news values, their gatekeeping roles, and changing those habits is a years-long process that requires a threat to existence, an injection of experimentation, and staffers who will challenge the status quo. In this new era of journalism, many organizations including the *Monitor* have been willing to experiment, to innovate, forced by the financial realities of the changing media environment. But unless the organizational values are clearly defined and embraced, it will be difficult for transformation to take hold over the long term.

Indeed, the *Monitor*'s elimination of its daily print product freed it to create new routines and new models for its journalism, but its deeply embedded culture affected its change efforts over the years. Experimentation spurred by success proved to be infectious, but the *Monitor*'s example reveals that unless change is tied to mission and purpose, especially in a storied, award-winning organization with deeply ingrained values, change is not likely to persist.

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Journalists thinking about precarity: Making sense of the "new normal"

By Henrik Örnebring

This study analyzes the effects of precarity on thinking about professionalism and professional identity among journalists, based on a re-analysis of three different datasets of semi-structured in-depth interviews (gathered in 2008-09, 2010-12 and 2017, respectively) with journalists (n = 63, 55 and 11, respectively) across 14 European countries. The study shows that journalists in this cross-national sample are "primed" for precarity; i.e. they largely accept precarity as natural part of journalism because precarity is in line with key professional norms such as norms of entrepreneurship and meritocracy.

One of the defining features of contemporary journalistic work is that there is less of it—at least if you want to be paid. The journalism labor market has long relied on an oversupply of workers eager to enter the profession, but the mass layoffs of the recent decade—particularly in the daily newspaper sector—has made the current situation extreme. This insecurity is felt across journalists' careers: from j-school graduates desperately hustling to get their first job, through mid-career journalists having to cope with editorial office closures, to late-career reporters having to choose between retraining and early retirement (if even given the choice). In the United States and elsewhere, you cannot necessarily expect to make a living from just journalism anymore (Bakker, 2012); young, aspiring professionals in particular find that they have to supplement their income from journalism with other work. This is the "new normal" in a labor market where competition was always fierce, but where the reward usually was a full-time, permanent employment contract. As this prize is becoming ever rarer, journalists—budding and established alike—have to adjust to permanent labor insecurity. Precarity is thus a key characteristic of contemporary journalistic work.

Recent journalism scholarship has recognized this shift toward precarity in various ways, but there is still relatively little attention to how precarity influences journalists' ways of thinking about their profession and their work. In fact, many of the key concepts and heuristics that journalists use to describe and make sense of their work (e.g. "profession-

alism", "objectivity", "democratic role", and "verification") are contingent on a high degree of contractual stability. A (semi)coherent professional identity and shared professional norms can only emerge if practitioners in general enjoy significant employment security and autonomy within resource-rich organizations (for arguments along these lines, see Brennen, 2008; Donsbach, 2010; Örnebring, 2007; Schudson, 1978).

"Ways of thinking" include many different aspects of how journalists think about their work and the many different concepts used to do this thinking. Without any pretense to completeness, this study will focus on professional norms, identity and mythology as aspects of journalists' ways of thinking. Other concepts could be used (e.g. "values", "rules") but norms, identity and mythology are often treated as interrelated in the literature, particularly when it comes to professionalism (e.g. Aldridge, 1998; Aldridge & Evetts, 2003; Deuze, 2005; Van Zoonen, 1998) and as such there is theoretical precedent for choosing these three particular building blocks for the overarching concept of ways of thinking.

These components of journalists' ways of thinking about the profession emerged in a context of (largely) stable employment in stable organizations. The basic research question of this article is thus: what will happen to journalists' ways of thinking—particularly how they think of themselves as professionals—when the structural condition of stable full-time employment (a key factor in creating and maintaining these ways of thinking) no longer exists? Additionally, how do ongoing processes of digitalization and technological innovation of journalistic work contribute to precarity as a pattern of thought and feeling? These questions will be answered by re-examining three different datasets, all based on semi-structured in-depth interviews gathered in the period of 2008-2017 across 14 European countries.

Literature Review

Precarity in Journalism and Elsewhere

In the most general terms, precarious work is "…employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker" (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2). Continuing to precarity, Kalleberg writes:

> Employment precarity results when people lose their jobs or fear losing their jobs, when they lack alternative employment opportunities in the labor market, and when workers experience diminished opportunities to obtain and maintain particular skills. (2009, p. 2)

Precarity is thus about not only the formal arrangements of employment (and unemployment) but also about how living under these conditions makes you think and feel. Hardt and Negri (2009) define precarity as "….organizing all forms of labor according to the infinite modalities of market flexibility," and further, "… precarity is a mechanism of control that determines the temporality of workers, destroying the division between work time and nonwork time, requiring workers not to work all the time but to be constantly avail-

able to work" (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 146). In recent scholarship on the cultural/creative industries, of which journalism is a part, the term has come to more generally signify the "… existential, financial and social insecurity exacerbated by the flexibilization of labor markets" (de Peuter, 2011, p. 419). Precarity is thus a very suitable concept for studying "ways of thinking," as it captures not just practices and structures but also the underlying thoughts and feelings of individuals working under precarious conditions.

Analysts of precarity point out that employment insecurity is not a new phenomenon: "… it has existed since the launch of paid employment as a primary source of sustenance" (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2). What is "new" is essentially that precarity has upset the industrial, Fordist class structure so that insecurity now affects many occupational categories that were previously exempt from it. The security afforded by what is sometimes called the "standard employment relationship" (i.e. full-time, permanent employment, with benefits like social insurance and paid holidays) was primarily available to "… a relatively privileged group of disproportionately White, male workers in the global North" (de Peuter, 2011, p. 419, following Neilson & Rossiter, 2008). Journalism definitely falls into this privileged category.

Sociological works using the specific concept of precarity deal primarily with macro-level, structural changes (e.g. Hardt & Negri, 2009; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008; Standing 2011). Standing postulates that precarity has created a new class structure consisting of five groups (the following summary is based on Standing, 2011, pp. 8-9): the elite (the ultrarich); the salariat (those still in permanent, full-time employment), "… concentrated in the large corporations, government agencies, and public administration, including the civil service"; the proficians (a neologism combining the words "professional" and "technician"), who have the skills and resources to voluntarily choose a life of non-permanent contract work and high mobility; the shrinking working class (those still engaged in the manufacturing/industrial sector, the "model workers" of the welfare state); and finally the precariat, the growing class of people who has no option but to live their lives under a regime of permanent employment insecurity.

Following Gynnild's early work on freelance journalism, we could describe contemporary journalism as consisting of a large but shrinking salariat, a few proficians (the "star" freelancers of Gynnild's central "winner-takes-all" metaphor; 2005) and an ever-growing precariat. This new class structure has, in Standing's analysis, dire consequences for any notion of professionalism, and therefore by extension for how professionals-turned-precariat can think about their work:

> Once jobs become flexible and instrumental, with wages insufficient for socially respectable subsistence and a dignifying lifestyle, there is no "professionalism" that goes with belonging to a community with standards, ethical codes and mutual respect among its members based on competence and respect for long-established rules of behavior. Those in the precariat cannot be professionalised because they cannot specialise and they cannot construct a steady improvement in depth of competence and experience. (Standing, 2011, p. 26)

Hardt and Negri describe the emotional consequences and changes in thinking wrought by precarity in even starker terms:

> … the control imposed by precarity takes time away, such that when you are working in a precarious situation, none of your work is your own. You can, of course, think and produce affects on demand, but only in a rote, mechanical way, limiting creativity and potential productivity. (2009, p. 147)

However, these scholars do not base their predictions of emotional and cognitive effects on the micro-level on any systematic empirical evidence from this analytical level—the specific experiences of precarious workers are treated mainly anecdotally, if at all. Another problem with the theoretically-focused literature on precarity is that it frequently ascribes a key role to technology (e.g. digital networks, mobile devices, social media) in enabling precarity as a social regime, but without any detailed analysis of how technology is actually used by employers and workers at the micro-level. Neilson and Rossiter write about the important role of "border technologies" in locking migrants into a pattern of precarious work as well as "the corporate absorption of new digital social networking technologies" as a consequence of the Web industry boom-and-bust of the early 2000s (2005, 2008, p. 59) without offering any specific empirical analysis of how—in terms of practices and affordances—the assumed causal link between technology and increased precarity actually works. Similarly, Standing's influential work also mentions the role of technology in enabling "the tertiary workplace" (i.e. when work is conducted in a place that is neither the traditional workplace nor in the home, such as a café or other public place; 2011, pp. 138-9) and that "spending a vast amount of time online has become part of the precariat existence" (2011, p. 149) but again writes in general terms without any specific empirical analysis of (digital) technology practices.

In contrast to this sociological literature on precarity as a general phenomenon, research on the increased job insecurity in journalism is empirically rich and particularly quantitative data abounds. Theoretically-informed analysis is, however, sparse, and this research also by-and-large treats the role of digitalization and new technologies as a given background factor more than an object of sustained analysis on the micro level.

Journalism scholars (many of them former journalists) have also observed the increased precarity in journalism, though rarely using that particular term. Scholars have noted a rise in various forms of unpaid work in the news sector (Bakker, 2012; Compton & Benedetti, 2010) and the increasing role of contingent labor (i.e. freelancing) in the news industry (Cohen, 2012; Das, 2007; Edström & Ladendorf, 2012; Gollmitzer, 2014; Massey & Elmore, 2011; Mathisen, 2017; Obermaier & Koch, 2015; Ryan, 2009; Walters, Warren & Dobbie, 2006). There is also a rapidly-growing subfield of journalism research studying the consequences of job loss in the sector (Ekdale et al., 2015; Heinonen et al., 2017; Nel, 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2016; Reinardy, 2010, 2016; Sherwood & O'Donnell 2016; Spaulding, 2016; Usher, 2010).

So far, this research taken together has focused on charting the extent and self-reported experiences of job loss and of freelancing, as well as the consequences of job insecu-

rity on journalistic practice. Key results range from descriptive observations of whether journalists manage to get new jobs after being laid off (Heinonen, et al. 2017; Nel, 2010; O'Donnell et al., 2016; Sherwood & O'Donnell, 2016); noting that freelance work occupies an ambivalent position between being voluntary and involuntary (Edström & Ladendorf, 2012; Massey & Elmore, 2011; Mathisen, 2017); to finding that a climate of insecurity does not appear to have any great effect on journalistic practice, at least not practices related to innovation and organizational change (Ekdale et al, 2015). Critical and more in-depth theoretical analyses are lacking, though there are exceptions. Gollmitzer's work shows that journalists quickly internalize job insecurity and see no real options for improving their situation, like organizing collectively (2014). Cohen (2012) finds similar results in one of few analyses to draw upon the previously discussed Marxist literature on precarity.

We can thus see a division between two distinct literatures: the general literature on precarity, based in the sociology of work and inflected by (autonomist) Marxist thought, and the specific literature on job insecurity, job loss and non-traditional employment in journalism studies. The former is rich in theory but empirically speculative. Conversely, the journalism scholarship on job insecurity and job loss is empirically rich and detailed, and journalists' own accounts of their experiences take center stage—but a deeper theoretical analysis of what these experiences mean on an institutional level is lacking. Furthermore, both of these literatures ascribe a key role to digital transformation in a general sense, but pays little attention to the concrete experiences and uses of digital technologies among workers/practitioners. There is thus an obvious gap to be filled by studies combining a critical-theoretical perspective with an empirical consideration of practitioners' thoughts and feelings, particularly if such studies also include an analysis of how precarity and (digital) technologies are linked on the micro-level. This present study is a modest contribution in that direction.

Methodology

This article reflects the author's long-standing (about a decade long) interest in the increased precarity of journalistic work. The article does not report the findings of a single study but is built on the re-analysis of data gathered in three separate interview-based projects where the author was either lead or participating researcher. In all of the projects, precarity and working conditions have been an area of questioning, even if issues of precarity have not always been central to all projects. Re-analysis of "old" datasets is an established practice in many areas of social science, particularly when done by the original researcher (Fielding & Fielding, 2000; Heaton 2000, 2004), but are under-utilized in journalism studies—perhaps this has something to do with the relentless focus on novelty and "the future" in the field (Curran, 2010).

The analysis in this article is based on three separate datasets gathered at different times over a 10-year period (2008-2009; 2010-2012; 2017). All datasets consist of semi-structured in-depth interviews with journalists/editors and ex-journalists. The datasets are part of different projects and as such were not designed to answer a common set of research questions. However, issues of work and employment conditions in journalism

have been a central feature of all projects.

The *first* dataset (D1) is a series of interviews conducted with journalists in six European countries (Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) in 2008-2009. The total number of respondents were 63, evenly distributed among the six countries (i.e. about 10 respondents per country). The focus was on journalists engaged in traditional "hard news" production and a key criterion for sampling was getting a balance between early-career (≤5 years in the profession), mid-career (five to 15 years) and late-career (15-plus years) journalists. The interviews were part of a project (which also included an email survey of journalists in these six countries) specifically dealing with the comparative analysis of journalistic work practices and working conditions in Europe. Therefore, issues like precarity, layoffs, entrepreneurship and employment (in)security, as well as the structural conditions of journalistic work, were an explicit theme for the interviews and most participants talked about such issues. All interviews were transcribed and hand-coded using employment conditions as the overarching category and freelancing; entrepreneurial journalism; contracts; layoffs; and specific workplace conditions. The role of technology was also a central area of concern in this project, where the overarching category of technology was hand-coded using the subcategories cross-media/cross-platform production; technology in the workplace; and technology and competences/skill. These categories were re-examined when writing this study. Results from this study have been published (Örnebring, 2016), but the focus was not on precarity and its effect on ways of thinking, so the analysis presented here is original and has not been published elsewhere.

The *second* dataset (D2) is a series of interviews conducted with many different categories of actors (the main ones being journalists; politicians; and political PR/communication officials) in 10 post-Communist nations, which are also European Union members (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). The interviews were conducted 2010-2012. The total number of respondents was 272, of which 55 were interviews with journalists/editors. Respondents were roughly evenly distributed among the 10 countries (four to seven respondents per country). These interviews were part of a larger project (Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe/MDCEE; ERC Grant no. 230113) with a different focus and research questions that did not explicitly deal with journalistic work and working conditions. However, for two reasons, data on precarity and structural labor market change is still present in the material. First, at the time of the interviews, news organizations in this part of Europe were downsizing heavily due to the impact of the 2009 financial crisis. Second, the sample from each country included (at least) one representative of a journalists' union and one representative of the main employers' organization, where issues of working conditions, employment contracts and structural labor market change were an explicit area covered in the interviews. Again, the interviews were all transcribed and hand-coded. The categories employment conditions and digital technologies (both without subcategories) were revisited for this article. Some results of this data have been reported earlier (e.g. Örnebring, 2012; Štětka & Örnebring, 2013) but nothing specifically focusing on precarity and working conditions has been published previously.

The *third* and final dataset (D3) comes from an ongoing project on journalists who leave the profession (i.e. ex-journalists) in a local/regional Swedish context. This project seeks to integrate questions about working conditions and precarity with questions about the overall life situations of respondents (with a particular focus on gender and family relations). Therefore, issues of precarity and structural labor market change take center stage and is an explicit area of questioning in all interviews. This dataset is the smallest (11 respondents) as data gathering is effectively ongoing (all interviews were conducted during 2017; around 30 more interviews from across all of Sweden are planned). These interviews have been hand-coded and the primary coding categories revisited for this analysis are precarity in the workplace; precarity and family life; precarity, contracts and freelancing; and precarity and professional identity. In this study, technology/digitalization has not been used as an analytical category in its own right; rather, the main coding categories have had technology/digitalization as a subcategory (e.g. precarity and family life–technological aspects). Some preliminary results have been presented at a conference (Örnebring & Möller, 2017) but the focus there was the specific relationship between precarity, gender and the overall life situation of respondents, rather than on how journalists think about precarity in a general sense.

The disparate nature of the sample is in fact an advantage if we desire knowledge about general (cross-national, cross-media) patterns of thought. The respondents represent a broad selection of journalists, evenly divided by gender (the gender balance in all three datasets is very near 50-50), working in different media organizations (private/public, print/broadcast/online), at different career stages (early/mid/late career) and under different contractual conditions (in all datasets, there are freelancers among the respondents alongside permanently employed journalists). All datasets also include respondents from outside the capital region in their respective countries. Thus the datasets offer a broad overview of how European journalists think about precarity as a central feature of their work.

Results

Thinking About Precarity

The main research question of this article is: "What will happen to journalists' ways of thinking—particularly how they think of themselves as professionals—when the structural condition of stable full-time employment (a key factor in creating and maintaining these ways of thinking) no longer exists?" Additionally, how do ongoing processes of digitalization and technological innovation of journalistic work contribute to precarity as a pattern of thought and feeling?

From all datasets it is clear that precarity is real. The difficulty of getting a permanent job is keenly felt, particularly by those who are at an early stage of their career (five years or less as journalists) and by those who work or have worked as freelancers. Almost all younger and freelance interviewees describe some degree of anxiety and frustration about their life in journalism. Some older professionals remember this anxiety from their early years as journalists, too. This anxiety cuts across genders and national borders.

In general, employment protections are stronger in, say, Sweden and Germany than in most Eastern European countries, but Swedish and German professionals are far from immune to the mental toll of job insecurity. "Yes, I offered my topics and they either fit or they didn't, it's quite a hard way of life," said one German, late-career journalist of his early freelance years (D1). "My freelance career, or whatever you call it, was very involuntary. If they had offered me a permanent job at the radio station, I would have taken it," said a Swedish ex-journalist, now working in PR, of her decade-long journalism career without ever getting a permanent, full-time job (D3). "During the crisis [in 2009] some worked for 800 Litas [230 Euros/$250 USD per month]. They could earn that money being street traders. It's a bad situation when you get so little money for so much hard work," said a Lithuanian union representative with particular reference to younger journalists (D2). There can thus be no doubt that many journalists are now effectively members of the precariat in Standing's (2011) sense, and that this is anxiety-producing.

In the following, I will explore three interrelated themes emerging from a re-analysis of the data: entrepreneurship, the meritocracy norm, and non-exclusivity. These three themes are the main expressions of precarity, and its relationship to the new digital environment.

Entrepreneurship and the Internalization of Precarity

In Hardt and Negri's (2009) words, the problem of precarity is not that you necessarily have to work all the time but that you have to be available to work all the time. This is something that takes up the thoughts of many journalists across all three datasets, particularly among the young professionals. Any job or freelance assignment you can get becomes the means to a new end: getting another job. Many young professionals constantly have to think about how they can use their current position to build skills and to network in order to continue on to the next (insecure) job.

One early-career freelance journalist based in the United Kingdom (D1) described his current working arrangements as earning £210 ($290 USD) per week doing the listings for a "family" of six newspapers, £50 ($70 USD) per week editing the syndicated entertainment review page for the same family of newspapers, and then spending his spare time self-educating in film production and occasionally getting paid to shoot short video segments. He viewed his video work in particular as an important way to expand his network of contacts and eventually get bigger and better assignments in this area. This kind of "hustling" between a number of different short-term, per-item contracts is entirely typical of early-career journalists across all studied countries. Unpaid work is common and while some respondents are critical of it, they generally see no alternative to providing work for free at the early stage of their career:

> I think it's quite exploitative because, certainly with the work experience thing, you can end up working for months on end for no money because you're just desperate to try and get in there, and really you think it's better to work at the Observer for free rather than some crap magazine that no one ever reads. And certainly when I was at the Observer I wasn't paid very much and I was only

paid to work on those two magazines, the Food magazine
and the Woman magazine. So I wrote for news in my spare
time. Every weekend I would be writing either a channel thing or a television
review. Usually I was doing something at the weekend—totally on my own time.
That was never paid for. I didn't mind that then. (D1, United Kingdom, early-
career)

In the earliest dataset (2008-2009), entrepreneurial career development among young
journalists was strongly linked to learning new digital production technologies. Several
respondents mentioned learning digital video editing in their spare time, for example.
Many also felt it necessary to learn search engine optimization techniques. Learning to
work across the new digital environment was clearly seen as your own personal respon-
sibility and a necessary response to a precarious job market:

You need to give yourself a lot of skills [The respondent here talks specifically
about skills in digital multi-platform production.] so you can facilitate being able
to do something. When you get those skills you then give others an opportunity
to exploit those skills over and above the journalism, which is why you are in the
job in the first place. But if you are not multi-skilled then someone else
is. Especially at my age. (D1, United Kingdom, early-career)

When entrepreneurship becomes a response to precarity, networking and aggressively
socializing also becomes essential:

Yeah, relationship building, building trust. Letting people have a drink with you,
have a look at my face and generally let people get the word out about me
and figuring out what I want to do and why I'm doing this and what
my motivation is. … Yeah, it's the only thing that's working. The only thing. (D1,
United Kingdom, early-career freelancer)

Some journalists also describe having to think about (and to some extent strategically
plan) fallback options and/or secondary occupations that can help them keep afloat
when job opportunities in journalism dry up (this is also discussed in a later section of the
article):

Then two years ago they removed my post. I was opinion editor and they
did away with that job. But I could switch quite smoothly to full-time academic
work since I had done that before, so for me this was not so bad. I think this is
very typical. Many people who are active in journalism are also active in other
spheres of society. They can very quickly switch from one field to another. (D2,
Estonia, late-career, union representative)

Most respondents describe this as exhausting but also a necessity—there is simply no
alternative to constantly being entrepreneurial. Young professionals across Europe have
readily accepted that they as individuals have to bear the risks associated with their own
profession, individually manage their own careers and individually take responsibility for

their own professional training and development. Running from short-term job to short-term job is not a bug but a feature of journalism (to use the programming idiom). While respondents who belong to the salariat (in Standing's sense 2011) frequently refer to belonging to a professional collective and can describe a sense of community that extends to colleagues outside their own workplace, such references are considerably more rare among young professionals and freelancers—being in the precariat isolates you from a wider professional context. The norm of entrepreneurship—which has long existed in journalism, as expressed for example in journalists' biographies and accounts of their own work from the early twentieth century (see for example Salcetti, 1995, pp. 56-58)— contributes to the internalization of precarity among the respondents. Job insecurity is viewed as an inescapable feature of the industry and furthermore a key part of how you as an individual organize and manage your career.

The Meritocracy Norm and the Naturalness of Precarity

Precarity is thus seen as normal, and journalists are rethinking their views of their profession accordingly. Working on spec, non-salaried internships, moving from short-term contract to short-term contract and having no spare time are all conditions that "have" to be endured in order to get a (permanent) job. This is a highly embedded pattern of thought not only due to current conditions but also because there is a strong historical heritage of labor oversupply in journalism. The professional mythology is that journalism is mobile, bohemian, insecure, highly competitive—but ultimately meritocratic. Many young professionals see it as natural that preparation for a career in journalism has to begin early:

> I also knew that you have to work for it, that when you only just decide after school, hmm what should I do, maybe journalism would be a good idea, then it's actually already too late. In my opinion you should know whether you want to do it very early on, so to make the necessary experiences, because otherwise you won't have any experience to show for it when you apply. (D1, Germany, early-career)

Another sign of how the meritocracy norm works to naturalize precarity is that many journalists (particularly those in a position to hire other journalists) do not see their labor market as characterized by oversupply but rather undersupply—there may be many journalists but there are only a few good journalists:

> It's weird, but I think in Latvia there is a deficit of journalists. In the news department at LTV, I know it took them a couple of months to find a replacement for me, first they used a couple of students which is a weird thing for public broadcasting to do. (D2, Latvia, early-career)

Another late-career respondent is very explicit about the meritocracy norm when discussing the advantages and disadvantages of freelancing: "The disadvantage is that if you are not really good at it then it's going to be hard to get by" (D1, Germany, late-career).

Interestingly, young professionals in the early dataset sometimes saw competence in digital technology as a kind of "meritocracy trap", i.e. technological skills were necessary in order to land a job, but still not perceived as very highly valued in terms of prestige:

> It's a poisoned chalice becoming more skilled. … I can shoot, I can edit, I can do the online side of things, and I can look after the multimedia aspect. But quite often, because I am one of the few people who can do all of these things, I might get asked to do these things ahead of getting asked to do the journalism. (D1, United Kingdom, early-career)

This relatively low value of technological skills was also reflected in the survey study done as part of the first project, where journalists across the six countries studied uniformly placed multimedia production skills towards the bottom when asked to rate how important a list of 12 general journalistic skills were to the job (Örnebring, 2016, p. 98). So in one sense, skill in new technologies was seen as central to the meritocratic system (as something that would get you "through the door" in the first place) but at the same time as something that was not part of the further meritocratic system that would allow you to get more prestigious jobs.

Starting out your journalism career with a high level of job insecurity and then moving towards higher security is not unusual in itself (indeed it is the common pattern in many careers, not just journalism), but precarity at entry level is becoming significantly more widespread (this is also in line with other recent research). By way of contrast, note how this Polish respondent describes an institutional arrangement where he was first employed on a per-item basis with a (vague) promise of permanent employment if he did well, and then how a Swedish (ex-journalist) respondent describes the current situation:

> But it was a very good school for me [learning on the job at his first place of employment] because I had to write something really well in order for someone to take it. In other words, for a long time I was given such topics, and they'd tell me that if I did it well, then they would include it in the service in order to make it more attractive. … Then they extended the contract either three months or half a year, I can't remember. (D1, Poland, mid-career) [After that, this journalist did indeed get a permanent job with the same employer.]

> It doesn't matter how good you are or how much they like you, how much you like them. They just won't give you a permanent contract. (D3, Sweden, mid-career, ex-journalist)

These last two contrasting examples bring up a possible counter-argument to my argument that precariousness is now a defining feature of journalism; namely, that entry into journalism has always been highly competitive due to the oversupply of labor.

However, as argued elsewhere (Örnebring, 2016, pp. 186-188), the scale and scope of precarity in journalism today is of a different and higher order of magnitude than it was for previous generations of journalists. This is particularly noticeable when older respon-

dents talk about how they entered the profession: by responding to a classified ad and then subjected to the most cursory job interview (D1, Estonia, late-career); by coming straight to the BBC after graduating at Oxford (D1, United Kingdom, late-career); or by simply biking from your small village to the nearest town and its local editorial office to ask whether they needed someone to write village dispatches (D1, Sweden, late-career). These older respondents do not describe queues of young hopefuls battering down the doors of newspaper offices; rather, many of them describe getting a job ("job" here being a brief period of trial employment invariably followed by a permanent contract) simply by showing up.

Like entrepreneurship, meritocracy is an individualistic concept. Adhering to the meritocracy norm means young journalists can keep working under conditions of precarity for quite some time because they believe that hard work, talent and skill will eventually be rewarded with a permanent position. As one ex-journalist puts it, "When I finally left journalism, it wasn't leaving itself that made me sad but rather I was asking 'Why did I stay for so long under these conditions'?" (D3, Sweden, mid-career, ex-journalist).

Non-exclusivity and the Institutionalization of Precarity

Another important consequence of precarity is that for the journalistic precariat, it is rarely possible to make a living solely from journalism. Full-time, permanent employment is exclusive in the sense that the worker generally does not need to take on secondary employment in order to make ends meet. Contemporary precarious employment, by contrast, is non-exclusive. Young professionals describe a context of labor where you simply have to have some kind of fallback option:

> So, after starting our own [freelance] company, we quickly realized, 'OK, we need other part-time jobs to make this work,' so I worked half-time as a teacher in Molkom, I worked at the University for a bit. Our working situation was really like a quilt of different assignments, bosses, salary accounts. (D3, Sweden, mid-career, ex-freelance journalist)

Moving between journalism and PR, or working simultaneously in journalism and PR as a freelancer, is common, again particularly among young and mid-career professionals:

> They [e.g. many media professionals in Estonia, including the respondent herself] come to journalism from PR, from journalism people turn to PR. There you have more options. You can put yourself to the test. That's what I've done with different projects. Taken part in promoting some artist, been a press officer for some concerts. I have tried this and experimented and done rather well. Would it be my life's work, I don't know, but it's still media and communication. (D1, Estonia, mid-career, freelancer)

> [When I began working as a freelancer] the balance was like maybe 90% journalism and 10% PR. Towards the end, before I left, it was more like 70% PR and 30% journalism. More and more PR over the years. … That's the reality

of the market, above all. (D3, Sweden, mid-career, ex-freelance journalist)

Even though this experience of having to work both inside and outside journalism is more common among the younger respondents, it is not limited to them. One late-career Polish respondent, for example, describes working in finance and banking and then writing pieces of financial journalism on the side, later moving into business/financial journalism full-time, then moving back to becoming a financial analyst at a bank while still making extra money writing articles for various newspapers and weeklies (D1, Poland, late-career).

Overall, those who work in other sectors (mainly PR and other forms of media content production) in addition to journalism still think of themselves as journalists in the first instance—just journalists who happen to have to do something else in order to make a living. Earlier research on journalists who also work in PR has shown that "moonlighting" in PR is not seen as ethically desirable by those who do it and that it in fact causes additional job-related stress (Frölich, Koch & Obermaier, 2013; Obermaier & Koch, 2015), perhaps precisely because this category of workers see themselves as journalists first and foremost. Among the respondents, those who were working across sectors at the time of the interview did not express any explicit feelings of stress, guilt or self-recrimination but rather accepted the non-exclusivity of journalistic work as an inevitable feature, one that they hoped would disappear as they progressed in their careers. For those respondents who left journalism, the non-exclusivity of journalism was in fact a big reason for leaving the occupation entirely. If you cannot work in journalism full-time, it is better not to work in journalism at all.

This study thus supports the findings of Obermaier & Koch (2015) and others: having to split your career between journalism and other work—PR work in particular—has a stressful effect and erodes professional identity. However, this study observes a slight difference between on the one hand more experienced professionals (who also may have left journalism) and on the other younger workers at entry level. Younger workers do not see it as problematic to work across sectors. Furthermore, for many young professionals, working in the media sector in general may be the professional goal rather than working in journalism specifically. This is likely in part because professional identity in younger workers is not yet fully formed, whereas more experienced workers have a professional identity that they can perceive as compromised.

Thus both employers and employees to varying extents expect journalistic work to be conducted for no or very little pay. Journalism becomes a kind of luxury hobby that you need to support through other work (or possibly through being independently wealthy), the micro-level of individual work thus mirroring the macro-level issues of funding journalism as an institution.

Conclusions

Primed for Precarity

Journalists make sense of precarity using a set of long-established professional norms that are fundamentally individualistic in nature. It is also important that these norms are long-established, i.e. they have historical roots and are transmitted both through education and professional socialization. The historical weight and the individualism of these norms "prime" journalists to accept precarity as an unavoidable feature of journalistic work (particularly at entry level). This priming cuts across national borders and career stages; even though it is stronger among young professionals. More experienced professionals can remember a time when precarity was not the norm and thus have more scope for comparison and reflection.

The most noticeable cross-national difference in this regard is the one between on the one hand countries where general employment conditions and labor laws have been strong for a long period of time (e.g. Sweden, Germany, Italy) and on the other hand countries where employment—particularly in journalism—was always more precarious and permanent employment rare to begin with (e.g. Eastern Europe). Journalism in post-Communist Europe never fully consolidated as an industry after 1991, and thus journalists there have an expectation that their work will be precarious and that employment will not be stable. Following Standing's (2011) model, many Eastern European journalists interviewed already see themselves as part of the precariat, whereas Western European journalists (particularly those from countries with strong employment protections) see precarious work as much more of a threat and consider journalism to be fundamentally part of the salariat. The United Kingdom is in this regard much more similar to Eastern Europe (in that journalists expect and therefore prepare for precarity to a greater extent), likely due to the aforementioned wave of labor deregulation in the British media industry in the 1980s and 1990s.

The re-analysis of datasets gathered across a 10-year period also allows for tracing changes over time. In 2008-2009, respondents saw elements of precarity (notably the individualized responsibility for employability and career development) as clearly linked to digitalization and the technological innovation of the journalistic workplace. Young respondents saw a pressure to learn new technologies in order to be employable, and established professionals also saw developing technological skills as necessary in order to keep their jobs. Digitalization clearly added an element of stress and mental discomfort to many journalists' lives (also noted in earlier studies, e.g. Singer, 2004). In 2017, on the other hand, journalists were working in a digital environment as a matter of course, and none of the respondents in this sample really saw technological change and new skill demands as contributing to precarity. Some respondents had even found that the digital skills they acquired as journalists were sought after by other employers and thus enabled them to leave their precarious existence.

Since journalistic professionalism is not only about adhering to particular norms and/or ethical standards but also about being able to "do the job" (Aldridge & Evetts, 2003),

journalistic professionalism appears to work against itself in relation to precarity. The young respondents of this study rarely think of their situation in terms of belonging to a professional collective with which they may feel solidarity and where colleagues may feel solidarity with them. Rather, they keenly feel that they have to suffer through precarity in order to become a part of this professional collective. Precarity becomes a rite of initiation. Journalistic professionalism contributes to the individualization of precarity and prevents the emergence of a sense of professional community. The belief in meritocracy engenders a habit of thought where acquiring new digital skill sets and adopting to a technologized workplace simply is part of being able to "do the job". One aspect of professionalism thus contradicts another.

As in Cohen's (2012) and Gollmitzer's (2014) studies, it is almost physically impossible for journalists in a state of precarity to frame their problems as collective problems. The "habit of thought" to see precarity as a matter of individual responsibility prevents collective solutions. The individualized professional mythology of journalists has deep roots—consider, for example, how rarely journalists go on strike. When the printing profession was restructured with the coming of digital publishing in the 1980s, there was large-scale, wide-ranging industrial action in many European countries, not least the United Kingdom (e.g. Gall, 1998). When journalism is faced with savage staff cuts and an expansion of precarity that is rapid, wholesale and transnational, journalists have not as a rule attempted to organize collectively to resist these changes.

Thus, while professionalism among journalists is normally seen as a strong normative good, it is also obvious that some aspects of journalistic professionalism are not positive for the professional collective—but highly useful for employers. In this moment of precarity, there is an urgent need for journalists to critically examine their own notions of professionalism, lest the more destructive aspects of professionalism overwhelm the positive ones.

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