

5-1-2013

Watching the Watchdogs: Defining Journalists in the United States

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WATCHING THE WATCHDOGS: DEFINING JOURNALISTS IN THE UNITED
STATES

by

Wendy M. Weinhold

B.A., Hastings College, 2000

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Doctor of Philosophy degree.

College of Mass Communication and Media Arts
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2013

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

WATCHING THE WATCHDOGS: DEFINING JOURNALISTS IN THE UNITED STATES

By

Wendy M. Weinhold

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
in the field of Mass Communication and Media Arts

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

WENDY M. WEINHOLD, for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in MASS COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA ARTS, presented on MARCH 19, 2013, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: WATCHING THE WATCHDOGS: DEFINING JOURNALISTS IN THE UNITED STATES

MAJOR PROFESSOR: William H. Freivogel

The word journalist, and the domain of producers and texts that inhabit its boundaries, often lacks a clear and agreed definition. The dominant body of literature looks at journalists in the United States through a remote lens, locates them within a cadre of journalists operating out of a newsroom, and overlooks the multiple roles they inhabit at once. This dissertation represents an attempt to build on and extend the depth of definitions afforded the American print journalist offered in literature that dominates journalism studies. This dissertation utilizes critical textual analysis to analyze journalists' letters to editors of journalism trade magazines and identify the patterned ways journalists define journalists. Deuze's (2005, 2007b) theory of the ideological definitions of journalists provides a framework for the analysis.

Journalism trade magazines perform a special role as watchdogs of the press. Journalists who write letters to editors of these magazines are watching the watchdogs. This dissertation looks to those journalists' words to craft a nuanced

understanding of the factors that shape the forces defining these journalists, their labor, and their pursuit of democratic ideals. Drawing from the corpus of letters published in *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Editor and Publisher*, critical textual analysis identifies how discourses in the letters reflect or reshape traditional print journalists' self definitions. The result is a catalog of information that shapes an understanding the letters within the individual ideological framework of the community of people who volunteer their opinions for publication in these journals. The dissertation works to develop a more complete picture of the ideology of traditional print journalists as it is defined in their own words.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has been a long time coming, and many people merit my gratitude for their help in this project. And so, a little background begins this section. I study journalism because I love writing. I learned to write because Dorothy Miller was once my teacher, and for this I am very fortunate.

Milestones along this path also merit mention. I began graduate school in 2005 certain that I possessed the ability and knowledge to answer the question: Who is a journalist? After all, the previous five years of my life were dedicated to my career as a professional journalist. Newspapers in Nebraska and South Carolina ran my columns and stories on arts and entertainment, business, local and state government, college and professional athletics, crime, education, and more. Nebraska Public Radio broadcast my recollections of a childhood embellished by L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. The *Associated Press* ran my stories and photographs. It seemed only fair that my work gave me authority and credibility to define who was in and who was out when it came to journalism. Thus, I owe Steve Frederick thanks for giving me the job at the *Scottsbluff Star-Herald* that started me down this merry path. Thanks, Mom, for encouraging me to apply for that job.

The faculty of Southern Illinois University Carbondale and cadres of journalists working at the *Daily Egyptian*, my

newspaper home away from home, shaped my ideas as a scholar. I specifically thank Eric Fidler for his mentorship. I am indebted to my chair, Bill Freivogel, for his many contributions to my career at SIU. Bill made it possible for me to teach the subjects I enjoy, challenged me to write what I mean, supported me, and stuck with me through a lot, and for that I will be forever grateful. He worked with me at a pace that only a journalist (or a former one) has the stamina for, and it was a pleasant experience to work under and remember journalistic timing and deadlines. Thanks also to the members of my committee, Aaron Veenstra, Uche Onyebadi, Angela Aguayo, and particularly Janet Fuller, who has read many iterations of this document and offered valued encouragement. This project began under the guidance of John Downing, and JD's guidance is deeply appreciated.

My family molded me to be the human being I strive to be, and I am deeply thankful for my parents and siblings, whose love and care nourished me. I love you all. Additionally, my family of friends helped me endure the dissertation experience. I would be utterly remiss if I did not thank Jessie Stewart, who is the best cheerleader a friend could want.

Finally, I thank David Miller, who made me laugh when I needed it most. David helped me find levity in life's challenges. David gave me hope.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Journalists: Laborers Caught "Between Tradition and Change"

Attempts to define journalists are often beset by the amorphous nature of their work. Journalists working for media in the United States are arbiters, entertainers, interpreters, and educators for everyday life and extraordinary moments in history (Schudson, 2003). As Dougherty (2012) suggests, "Though 'journalism' is an amorphous term capable of various meanings, its traditional media are familiar" (p. 297). Many of the definitions embraced by traditional print journalists have endured since the first journalists produced newspapers and sold them to the public in the colonies (McChesney, 2003; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009; Schiller, 1981).

Employment by a newspaper long served as a gateway for accessing the title and privileges of journalists (Ugland & Henderson, 2007; Usher, 2010). But people working in new media, also understood here as media with uncertain terms and uses (e.g. bloggers, "citizen" journalists, twitterers, Independent Media Center staff members), present situational and market challenges to the traditional, employment-driven boundaries of who is included under definition of the journalist (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001; Kidd, 2003; Peters, 2009). These new media competitors, along with harsh economic conditions, pose threats

to the future of mass communication in general, and print journalism specifically (Hardt, 1996; Siles & Boczkowski, 2012; Usher, 2010). As a result, journalists' identities, and the daily routines that shape those identities, are "between tradition and change" (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009). The implications of these changes are the main thrust behind this dissertation.

Part of the challenge to identifying and classifying journalists is that they lack a clear definition. In contrast, clear codes, educational standards, and definitions are available for other careers in highly specialized occupations—welders, doctors, lawyers, and cosmetologists, for example. Entry into each of the professions listed in the previous sentence depends upon demonstration of skills through completion of accredited degree programs, examinations, and licensure. Education and regulation function to establish definitional criteria for these professions, but there are no comparable standards for journalists. Defining journalists is a much murkier project.

This dissertation is concerned with a particular kind of journalist — journalists who are employed by and report for newspapers published in the United States and who write letters to editors of trade magazines that cover the media. The journalists' letters that are published in the years 1998 to

2008 serve as the data for the analysis presented in Chapter 4. The analysis focuses on how a select group of journalists define journalists through their participation in a space reserved for public debate – letters to the editor pages of journalism trade magazines.

Scholars have considered the watchdog role of letters to editors in enhancing and expanding media's role in the public sphere (e.g. Delgado, 1998; Newman, 2005; Reader & Moist, 2008; Webb, 2006). These discussions will be reviewed in greater detail in the literature review section of Chapter 2. Thornton (1998) explains, "letters to the editor are a directly accessible voice of some readers" (p. 3). Thornton describes how letters to editors are windows into historical periods and public opinion (p. 51-52). Wahl-Jorgensen (2001) studies letters to editors to understand the role they play in enhancing democratic society. She concludes the letters can "play a central role in defining public debate" (p. 317). This dissertation project is the first of its kind because it studies an unexplored area of letters to editors: journalists' letters to journalists, or letters *from* the editors.

This study examines the role print journalists' letters to editors play in upholding, expanding, and challenging definitions of journalists and journalism. Fengler (2003) studies media reporters and critics and finds journalists who

cover the media beat for major newspapers are considered the industry's experts on journalism standards. The distinctions print journalists draw upon when they define journalism as a "profession" often rely on notions of objectivity, editorial judgment, and employment (Deuze, 2005; Usher, 2010).

Claims to professionalism in journalism in the early 20th century benefitted journalists in many ways, such as establishing standards of practice, and creating communal boundaries for defining journalists (Carey, 2002; Janowitz, 1975; Johnson, 1977; McChesney, 2003; Schiller, 1981; Schudson, 2003; Tuchman, 1978). According to Plaisance (2005), "As a community of laborers, the field of journalism in the United States developed first from a trade to an occupation that sought the status of a profession" (p. 480). Zelizer (1993) describes how codes cemented in the early 20th century to guide journalists' work "generated an aura of authority" and afforded journalists the opportunity to be seen as professionals by the public and scholars (p. 220). Zelizer (1993) explains, "seeing journalism as a profession has long helped us understand how it works" (p. 220).

As the 20th century ended, several colossal failures in journalism—among them the downfall of *New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair—revealed moments when journalism did *not* work and ushered in renewed attention to and criticism of claims to

professional journalism. Blair's fabricated quotations and plagiarism posed potential damages to the ethical canons of professional print journalism and fueled "growing public discontent with the news media" (Fengler, 2003, p. 820). Journalists struggled to maintain the public's trust in the wake of media scandals in the late 20th century, and journalists responded with efforts to make their professional code clear and accessible to the public. Journalists tend to address ethical standards in times of crisis (Fengler, 2003). As Carroll (2006), a former editor of the *Los Angeles Times* suggests, the public is the journalist's version of the patient, and attempts to clarify journalists' beliefs seek to revive the public's trust. While journalism lacks some of the organizational expectations that define classic professions, many journalists see themselves as professionals and espouse professional values, such as autonomy and a commitment to public service. More details and examples of these codes are provided in Chapter 2.

Sociologists view a group of workers as "professionals" when they set certain standards, such as expertise, autonomy, training and education, external evaluation, codes of conduct, and licensure (Zelizer, 1993, p. 220). However, it is valuable to note that the status of the journalist as "professional" has often been disputed, particularly since the advent of online news production (e.g. Meyers, Wyatt, Borden & Wasserman, 2012;

O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Singer, 2003; Zelizer, 2004). This dissertation is not interested in resolving that discussion. Instead, this dissertation is concerned with the traditional *ideology* of journalism as an occupation at the turn of the 21st century. Meyers, Wyatt, Borden, and Wasserman (2012) describe this occupational ideology simply: "Prior to the Internet explosion, the easiest way to identify a journalist was to see if that person worked for a recognized news organization" (192). This dissertation begins from this point to develop a nuanced definition of the occupational ideology of print journalists as it is articulated in their own words.

Whether journalism is understood as a profession, an industry, or a culture, one thing is clear: Journalists' identities and work are changing. The introduction of online publication and new and emerging forms of media as valid journalism has afforded a cacophony of voices access to publication methods traditionally reserved for members of the commercial press (Berkowitz & Gutsche, 2012). Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009) suggest that "there is an unresolved debate about who is a journalist that has been exacerbated by the fact that what counts as journalism in the contemporary media environment is more open to negotiation than before" (p. 570). Nonetheless, much of the news produced today by professional, commercial journalists continues to replicate a model that

deploys the "same old sources albeit in newer bottles" (Phillips, 2010, p. 101). In light of the changes in media, many scholars have called attention to the need for a critical reassessment of the definitions afforded traditional print journalists in the United States (e.g. Gant, 2007; Hardt, 1996; Schudson, 2003; Singer, 2003). For example, the Journalism Studies Division of the International Communication Association's (2012) most recent call for conference papers expresses interest in "submissions attempting to clarify, define, and question core concepts in our field, such as 'news,' 'media,' and 'journalism,' which are increasingly vague in meaning" (p. 31).

Background and Context

Traditional print journalists in the United States face a challenging work climate. As Usher (2010) argues, "In the United States, traditional print journalism has turned topsy-turvy" (p. 912). Significant declines in newspapers' circulation, newsroom staffs, and advertising revenue are among the grim news in The Pew Research Center's (2012) State of the News Media report. Newsroom layoffs that the *American Society of News Editors* (2012) reports began at newspapers in 2006 continue, leaving 40,600 people employed as news workers, down 28 percent from the turn of the century employment peak. Many major metropolitan cities have lost newspapers. Since 2007, closures have included

the following newspapers: *The Tucson Citizen*, *Rocky Mountain News*, *Baltimore Examiner*, *The Cincinnati Post*, and *The San Juan Star*. Other newspapers are cutting back their daily operations and moving content online, such as the *Detroit Free Press*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and New Orleans' *The Times-Picayune*. These transitions signal fierce challenges to the future of newspapers, but they also signal opportunities for reinvention (Dahlgren, 1996; Gade, 2008).

One of the reasons definitions of journalists are ambiguous is that the word journalism, and the domain of producers and texts that inhabit its boundaries, is used to simultaneously connote an action and a product. For the purposes of this dissertation, which looks at journalists whose labor supports efforts of commercial newspapers, journalism is defined as the business of making and distributing news for a profit. Schudson (2003) explains that journalism operates under "a set of social, economic, and political institutions and practices" (p. 11, 13). News, a manufactured product, functions as a kind of cultural message driven by market expectations (Gade, 2008). Underlying these descriptions is the work of Marx (1911), who explains that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness" (p. 11-12). To put it simply, journalists labor to determine the news, and their labor

determines their self-definitions.

Journalists occupy an essential social role in democracies by serving as vehicles for communication between elites and general members of society. Journalists report on actions of people in power and people on the streets, and their work helps to connect these disparate publics (Schudson, 2003). But that democratic role is neither fixed nor guaranteed. As Carey (2002) warns: "The indifference to or tolerance of the erosion of democratic institutions including the press is predicated on the belief that times will always be good" (p. 89). Despite the fact that times were not so good—uncertain markets, technological change, declining readership, and ethical lapses—profit expectations remained high for newspapers published during the period of this study (Gade, 2008). Profit expectations today have adjusted to market conditions, and corporate owners no longer demand newspapers turn the 30 percent profit margins of the 1990s and early 2000s (Edmonds, Guskin, Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2012). In many ways, journalism has changed spectacularly in the past two decades, but one definitional force has remained constant—journalism's guiding ideology (Deuze, 2005). Journalism is a product of labor, and journalists are the ones doing that labor (Brennen, 1995). This has not changed since professional, commercial, American newspapers emerged more than 200 years ago.

Online news is a major topic of discussion in the letters, and it was in its relatively early stages during the beginning of the period studied here. Online news is a significant force in reshaping the definition of journalists. For the purposes of this dissertation, online news is defined as reporting created for and published first online, regardless of economic incentive. This definition is informed in part by the unique nature of news published on the Internet. As Akpan, Ifeanyi, Martin, Alexander, and Uchenna (2012) suggest, the defining characteristic of online news is its instantaneous nature (p. 712). This is an admittedly broad definition and includes original reporting published on blogs, Twitter, and nonprofit and commercial news sites. Information presented as opinion or commentary but not as original reporting would not qualify under this definition.

Online news was in its infancy at the beginning of the period studied here and thus necessitates a definition that casts a wide net to understand what journalists are grappling with and why they lean on ideology when defining journalists in their letters. Online news as understood in this dissertation encompasses everything from a private individual's blog, such as drudgereport.com, to a commercial site, such as Forbes.com. In light of this dissertation's concern with letters to editors, it

is fitting that Seipp (2002) describes a blog as a "never-ending letter to the editor" (p. 43).

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the scholarly conversation in journalism studies by building on and extending research into the ideological implications of print journalists' occupational identities. Newspapers are economic institutions that operate for the benefit of news corporations and their owners, and they are ideological institutions (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney, 2003; Zelizer, 1993). To borrow Lee's (2011) definition, "ideology is false consciousness that masks real economic relations" (p. 83). Journalists' ideology functions to emphasize the service nature of their labor while disguising their employers' profit imperatives. As Zelizer (2005) suggests, "Journalists are notorious for knowing what news is but not being able to explain it to others" (p. 67). Deuze (2005) explains: "Conceptualizing journalism as an ideology ... primarily means understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their newsworld" (p. 444). Incumbent journalists' descriptions of who qualifies as a journalist have significant ideological implications.

This dissertation turns a critical eye toward the cultural dimensions of the changing identities of traditional print journalists by looking at the words of print journalists who

write letters to editors of leading journalism trade magazines. The focus of this dissertation is the definitions journalists give to themselves and their work as expressed in letters to the editors of a select group of journalism trade publications, which are designed to cater to journalists. The journalists' words in these letters have the potential to reveal definitional patterns and offer data for analyzing the "community values" of journalists (Reader & Moist, 2008). Editors select letters that stand in for and give voice to a group's opinions; thus, individual letters have the potential to develop social solidarity (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2001, p. 304). As Zelizer (2005) notes, "Journalists talk about journalism in patterned ways" (p. 67). Zelizer explains that journalism textbooks, columns, and autobiographies are valuable sources for revealing journalists' thoughts about journalism (p. 67). Journalists' letters to editors are another such source.

Whether prompted by news articles, retirement announcements, market fluctuations, or desires to contribute to the ongoing conversation about their industry, letters to editors of American journalism trade magazines have the potential to offer insight into a debate where scholarship rarely ventures. Trade magazines devoted to coverage of the changes and challenges facing the American journalism industry and the practitioners of its craft are vital resources for

understanding journalism's terrain. However, scholars tend to prefer institutionalized, peer reviewed, qualitative and quantitative methods for the study of journalism, so these magazines-as windows into the field-have been underutilized as scholarly resources. Letters to editors of *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Editor & Publisher* feature unique, monologic conversations by a wide range of American journalism's laborers, profiteers, and consumers. This study of the turf dominated by people whose ideas about journalism are chosen by editors who shape journalism's ideology contributes to the broader sociological issue of journalists' identity construction. While the magazines' websites are teeming with comment spaces where people contribute ideas and opinions, the letters selected for publication in the magazines' increasingly scant and expensive printed versions represent an elite population of those viewpoints.

Competition from and the consequences of new media are often the focus of the letters. As such, this dissertation offers an opportunity to build on Lievrouw's (2004) call for scholarship that expands the theoretical and methodological repertoires used to study the implications of new media. Lievrouw challenges scholars to find a "better balance between micro- and macro-level research, in which both individual experience and whole-society/institutional influences are

brought together to produce more robust accounts of the role and significance of new media in society” (p. 14). This dissertation places what is happening at the micro-level—through analysis of journalists’ individual thoughts and experiences as expressed in the letters—into dialogue with macro-level discussions of the definitions of journalists in the digital milieu.

The sample for this analysis includes letters to editors published between 1998 and 2008 in *Editor & Publisher*, *American Journalism Review*, and *Columbia Journalism Review*. Critical textual analysis of the letters is conducted to identify how traditional print journalists understand their purpose while their industry struggles to assert its relevance. The study of journalists’ written self-descriptions reorients the definitional framework for defining journalists from a question of what to a question of how and redirects the focus of inquiry from acts to action (Usher, 2010). Inquiring into how journalists define journalism recognizes journalists and journalism as a process. From this perspective, journalists do not materialize in specific acts per se, but instead form through action that may encompass a number of activities.

This study of journalists’ letters to editors is significant because it adds to the growing catalog of research devoted to understanding journalists in the United States in a changing media environment. Studies of journalists abound and

will be discussed in further detail in the literature review that appears in Chapter 2. Qualitative journalism scholarship devoted to journalists includes historical analyses of journalism practice (e.g. Schiller, 1981; Schudson, 2003; Zelizer, 1993), critical analyses of the journalism industry (e.g. Gant, 2007; Carey, 1997; Schudson, 1997; Usher, 2010), and ethnographies of newsrooms (e.g. Eliasoph, 1997; Tuchman, 1972). These analyses further understandings of journalists in the field and of the market forces working upon journalists.

Three key research questions guide this dissertation: (1) What are the sources that inform how people whose job title is "journalist" talk about who is a journalist? (2) How do people employed as journalists in traditional news occupations define their professional identities and work products? (3) How do journalists describe the challenges threatening traditional journalism? Critical textual analysis of how these journalists perceive the ideals of journalism as the 21st century began offers insight into some of the challenges facing traditional print journalism as it struggles with economic and environmental shifts.

Chapter Outline

The second chapter of this dissertation reviews literature and builds a theoretical framework for defining journalists and researching letters to editors. The literature review is guided

by an attempt to answer the first research question, which probes the sources that inform journalists' definitions of their professional identities. The chapter begins with a consideration of the role of law and professional practice in defining journalists. Following the review of literature, Dueze's (2005, 2007b) theory of the professional identity and ideology of journalists is detailed to develop a theoretical basis for this study.

Chapter 3 begins with a justification for the use of qualitative methodology to study journalists. Critical textual analysis is detailed in order to develop a complete picture of the method used in this study. The chapter reviews literature on the role of letters to editors in demonstrating and defining community values. This chapter includes descriptions of the population of letters and the trade magazines that are studied.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis that is central to this dissertation. Critical textual analysis guides the study of letters to the editors of leading journalism trade magazines. Drawing from the corpus of letters published in *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Editor and Publisher*, critical textual analysis identifies how discourses in the letters reflect or reshape traditional print journalists' self definitions. The letters are not quantified in any way beyond compiling a basic count of the population; instead,

letters related to issues of journalism practice and multimedia are identified to assist in the emergence of themes. This chapter works to answer research questions 2 and 3, which probe elements that shape the definitions of and challenges to the occupational ideology of journalists. The result is a catalog of information that shapes an understanding the letters within the individual ideological framework of the community of people who volunteer their opinions for publication in these journals. In several instances, a more complete picture of the ideology of traditional print journalists, as it is defined in their own words, is developed.

Chapter five summarizes the dissertation findings and clarifies how the study and definition of journalists might be restructured to incorporate an understanding of the economic imperatives at work in newspaper decision-making. The results of the analysis are discussed in the context of the research questions and previous research. This chapter also discusses the study's limitations and suggests avenues for future research.

Summary

This dissertation represents an effort to craft a nuanced understanding of the ideological factors that influence a group of traditional print journalists who write letters to editors of leading journalism trade magazines. The focus of this project is journalists' definitions of their professional identities, their

labor, and their pursuit of democratic ideals in a time of rapid environmental change. This dissertation embraces a layered theoretical bed and qualitative methodological approach in order to reinvigorate and complicate normative definitions of journalists.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Journalists, Definitional Sources, and Definitional Theories

The setting for this study is a time when journalists struggled to assert their role as the world tuned in to the Internet. Changes in media, especially the advent of online news and the resulting growth in the volume of news production and competition for audiences, complicated conversations about what constitutes journalists and journalism. Scholars use a variety of labels to identify online news, including: citizen (Allan & Thorsen, 2009), open-source (Deuze, 2001), participatory (Bowman & Willis, 2003), grassroots (Gillmor, 2004), and networked (Beckett & Mansell, 2008; Jarvis, 2006) journalism. These shifts resulted in what Usher (2010) labels "the fall of a particular and lasting hubris of print journalists" in the United States (p. 912). This study turns to print letters to editors of journalism trade magazines to understand journalists' perceptions of the implications of the changing media landscape.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the question of what sources inform how professional journalists talk about who is a journalist in their letters to editors of journalism trade magazines. The chapter reviews what is generally understood as the "ideology of journalism" literature and grounds this research project on journalists' letters to editors in critical

theory. The dissertation's first research question, which queries the sources that inform how professional journalists talk about who is a journalist, guides the chapter.

Literature Review

Efforts to define journalists in the United States illustrate how defining who is a "real" journalist and what is "real" journalism is a gradual and communal project (Deuze, 2005, p. 444). Legal sources, including constitutional law, statutory sources, and special privileges, represent some of the clearest efforts to define journalists (Black, 2010). Journalists' work in a variety of mediums and forms is recognized through protections granted at all levels of the law. Uglund and Henderson (2007) describe the legal definition of journalists as "expansive," noting that legal definitions are shaped by the assumption that "society is best served by removing all but the most essential barriers to free expression" (p. 243). Examples of attempts by courts, legislators, and other public officials to define journalists are considered in the following pages.

Constitutional law.

Federal law defining journalists has been murky since the 1972 Supreme Court decision in *Branzburg v. Hayes* that journalists have no First Amendment privilege to withhold confidential sources from a grand jury investigation (Sims,

2007). The Court ruled in *Branzburg* that a journalist could not claim First Amendment protection as grounds to ignore a grand jury subpoena for testimony (*Branzburg v. Hayes*, 1972). Justice Byron R. White, writing for a 5-4 majority, declined to create a reporter's privilege on the grounds that the effective functioning of a grand jury and trial proceedings were of greater concern than the real but speculative danger of diminished news-gathering should reporters be required to testify (Calvert, 1999, p. 412). White's words reveal the difficulty of defining a journalist:

The administration of a constitutional newsman's privilege would present practical and conceptual difficulties of a high order. Sooner or later, it would be necessary to define those categories of newsmen who qualified for the privilege, a questionable procedure in light of the traditional doctrine that liberty of the press is the right of the lonely pamphleteer who uses carbon paper or a mimeograph just as much as of the large metropolitan publisher who utilizes the latest photocomposition methods. The informative function asserted by representatives of the organized press in the present cases is also performed by lecturers, political pollsters, novelists, academic researchers, and dramatists. Almost any author may quite accurately assert that he is contributing to the flow of

information to the public, that he relies on confidential sources of information, and that these sources will be silenced if he is forced to make disclosures before a grand jury. (*Branzburg v. Hayes*, 1972, pp. 703-705)

The Court expressly left the decision to grant journalists evidentiary privilege up to the states and asserted that “[t]here is also merit in leaving state legislators free within First Amendment limits, to fashion their own standards...” (p. 706).

Lower court rulings have also helped shape the legal definition of a journalist. Decisions from the circuit courts have upheld the ideal that efforts of the press to investigate and report the news advance key First Amendment values (Benkler, 2011). These rulings are distinct in that they do not proffer employment, training, or other advantages as qualification for protection under the reporter’s privilege. Hayes, Singer and Ceppos (2007) summarize the results: “legal rulings also support the argument that journalism is a ‘verb’ (Jarvis, 2005); that is, one ‘does’ journalism” (p. 267). Ugland and Henderson (2007) explain that these “more wide-ranging decisions...have effectively solved the ‘special rights’ dilemma by making the privilege available to any citizen industrious enough to seek and report the news” (p. 247). In short, the federal appeals courts have embraced a wide-ranging scope of contemporary newsgathering

practices. The following paragraphs review a sample of these rulings.

The Second Circuit's decision in *Von Bulow v. Von Bulow* (1987) provided a key test for determining who qualifies for the reporter's privilege. The opinion reasons that from the moment a person begins to gather news, her intent must go beyond private use, and she must display the intent to distribute information to the public (Calvert, 1999, p. 419). The Third Circuit grappled with the issue for the first time in *In re Madden* (1998). In *Madden*, a man asked the courts for protection under the journalist's privilege after he was found writing and then taping 900-number promotional telephone messages for his employer, the World Championship Wrestling, Inc. In its ruling, the appellate court observed, "Although we have determined that a journalist's privilege exists, we have never decided who qualifies as a 'journalist' for purposes of asserting it" (*In re Madden*, 1998, p. 128). The court found the man was not eligible for protection because his work was neither investigative in nature, part of the traditional press, nor news intended for publication. *Madden* is the first case to explicitly mention the World Wide Web when considering who is a journalist (Calvert, 1999, p. 416).

In one of the most well documented cases of a non-traditional journalist attempting to claim the journalist's

privilege, the Ninth Circuit utilized the *Von Bulow* test to expand the privilege based upon intent and substance of the reporter rather than employment or publication venue (Eliason, 2006, p. 433). The court found an investigative book author eligible for the journalist's privilege because "what makes journalism journalism is not its format but its content" (*Shoen v. Shoen*, 1993, p. 1293). Cases such as these suggest that the door for qualification under the reporter's privilege is likely to open further to include more people working outside the traditional media (Gant, 2007). In summary, decisions in lower courts have prioritized functional benchmarks over employment or expertise, thus expanding the potential for more people to fall under the definition of "journalist."

Statutory law.

A number of unique protections in statutory law have been enacted through state reporters' shield laws. The clearest, and most narrow, legal definitions of journalists reside in statutory law (Ugland and Henderson, 2007, p. 248). Because this analysis seeks to understand the legal definitions of journalists, it is important to note the scope of analysis will be limited to the definitions provided in these statutory laws and will not delve deeply into the protections the laws provide.

Over the course of the decade that this research encompasses, reporter's shield laws in a majority of the states

represented the bulk of statutory law. Court interpretations of the statutes enacted prior to 2008 usually shared two general conditions: first, protection was dependent upon employment by the traditional media; and second, traditional media activities were favored (Docter, 2010, p. 592). By prioritizing employment status and traditional forms of publication, the state statutes emphasize an insider's approach to newsgathering and definitional status. Ugland and Henderson (2007) describe this as an "expert conception of the press" (p. 248). However, interpretation of statutory law has in the past five years expanded to include bloggers as part of the protected class of journalists (Robinson, 2012, p. 42-43). For example, since 2010, statutes in Wisconsin, Arkansas, West Virginia, New York, Massachusetts, and Kansas have extended protection to journalists who publish entirely online (Robinson, 2012, p. 43). Robinson (2012) explains:

...The reach and influence of blogs and other forms of new media as sources of news and information continues to increase. And there is little reason why blogs and bloggers that operate in role(s) of information providers to their readership should not be covered by shield laws. (pp. 43)

At the time of this writing, shield laws protecting journalists from certain subpoenas are enacted in 40 states and the District

of Columbia.¹ A majority of states, beginning with Maryland in 1896, have enacted shield laws that recognize journalists as a special class worthy of unique protections (Cohen, 2007). Nine other states have protection in case law.² Wyoming is the only state without some kind of statutory protection for or definition of journalists. West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Kansas are the most recent states to pass shield laws. West Virginia's law, which went into effect June 10, 2011, does not provide bloggers with protection from subpoena to reveal confidential sources (W. Va. Code 57-3-10). Many of the states with shield laws also grant journalists other legal protections, including retraction and long-arm statutes (Dougherty, 2012, p. 289). Fee waivers in many states' Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) laws also recognize journalists as experts whose abilities merit special access to scrutinize and distribute information (Anderson, 2002, p. 432).

Definitions of journalists in the state statutes vary. Zelnick (2005) explains that most state shield laws "seek to strike a balance between the importance of the information, its relevance to the case at bar, and the possibility of developing

¹ The 40 states with shield laws are as follows: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

² The nine states where courts have granted reporters some form of shield are as follows: Idaho, Iowa, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Vermont, and Virginia.

it from other sources" (p. 549). One of the broadest laws, Nebraska's statute provides protection to those who "gather, write, edit, or disseminate news or other information to the public" (Neb. Rev. Stat. § § 20-144 to 20-147). In California, the protection is encoded for a "publisher, editor, reporter, or other person connected with or employed upon a newspaper, magazine or other periodical publication, or by a press association or wire service, or any person who has been so connected or employed" (Cal. Evid. Code § 1070). Pennsylvania's law defines journalists as those "engaged in, connected with, or employed by any newspaper...or magazine of general circulation" (42 Pa. C.S.A. § 594(a)). Some states specify frequent or regular employment as a journalist to qualify for an exemption. For example, statutes in Alaska, Oklahoma, and Louisiana require journalists to be "regularly engaged" in journalistic work in order to qualify, whereas Illinois allows reporters to qualify for protection if they work for news media organizations on even a part-time basis (AS 09.25.300-390; Okla. Stat. tit. 12 § 2506; La. R. S. 45:1451-1459; 75 Ill. Comp. Stat. 518-901 to 518-909). For examples of other state shield statutes, see Cohen (2007).

Courts have looked to state and federal court rulings and state media shield laws and found robust support to protect the identities of anonymous posters to Internet sites of newspapers and media organizations, such as Yahoo! (Burnham & Freivogel,

2010). According to Burnham and Freivogel (2010), anonymous posters on the Internet represent "a new issue of anonymity that is a hybrid of the anonymous source and anonymous pamphleteer" (p. 5). *Doty v. Molnar* is an example of a case where a newspaper utilized state shield law to protect the identities of anonymous online posters. In this 2008 Montana civil defamation claim, *The Billings Gazette* successfully argued that Montana's Media Confidentiality Act (MONT. CODE ANN. Sections 26-1-901 to 26-1-903) protected the newspaper from having to reveal the IP and e-mail addresses of commenters to its website (Burnham & Freivogel, 2010, p. 6). According to Burnham and Freivogel (2010), the judge in this case "gave broad protection to anonymous posters not because of their value but because of their lack of value" (p. 7).

Courts have varied in their willingness to apply shield law protections for anonymous sources to anonymous online posters, but cases such as *Doty* worry Burnham and Freivogel (2010). They contend rulings that protect "speech that contributes little, if anything, of value to public debate" risks diminishing the privileges state shield laws grant anonymous sources (Burnham & Freivogel, 2010, p. 18). They explain:

Anonymous sources are the basis of some of the most important news of the day, while anonymous posters are not. ...News organizations should continue to protect anonymous

posters against flimsy legal attempts to unmask them. But they should do so while cognizant of the potential risk to other legal protections that have far more value to their mission of reporting the news. (pp. 19)

Reader (2010) disagrees, arguing that protecting the identities of anonymous posters is part of the responsibility of the press, who defends the First Amendment. He writes, "...anonymity is the one true cultural equalizer, and that it is what the First Amendment was meant to protect all along" (p. 17). The issue of anonymous posters highlights the complexities of legal definitions of journalists. Rulings that have granted legal recognition to anonymous posters have the capacity to expand the law's view of who contributes to journalism, if not adding to a more expansive view of who is a journalist.

Special privileges.

The final area of law worthy of note comes in the form of privileges government officials grant exclusively to journalists. Time, space, and cost force a host of governmental bodies to limit the nets they cast to recognize and even attract media interest. Journalists are afforded special privileges in the form of press passes, press rooms, special seating and cameras in courtrooms, press secretaries, waived Freedom of Information Act fees, as well as being protected against discriminatory taxation (Dilts, 2002, p. 35; West, 2011, p.

1062). Today people working in online media are granted access to a host of major news events, such as seats on the floor of the Democratic and Republican national conventions and space in the Super Bowl Press Box, but that was not always the case (West, 2011).

Over the course of the decade studied in this project, access to special privileges generally depended upon a journalist's access to a mass audience and employment by a recognized news medium in order for the person seeking access to qualify (Gant, 2007). The White House first granted press credentials to a blogger in 2005, but access to privileged government spaces continued to be limited largely to journalists employed by the traditional, commercial news media (Russo, 2006, p. 260; Cohen, 2011, 48-49). When seeking access to the White House Press Room or a high-profile trial, non-traditional journalists often found themselves left out because they did not have a history of access, their medium was unlike traditional forms, and their work was perceived as unlikely to reach the mass audience for which those press-centered activities were staged (Berger, 2003).

Federal shield law.

There have been frequent, failed attempts to institute a federal reporter's shield that would protect journalists from having to reveal confidential sources and unpublished

information. More than 100 bills proposing the creation of a federal shield law have been introduced in Congress since the 1972 *Branzburg* decision (Tucker & Wermiel, 2008, p. 1310-1311). Lee (2012) explains the challenges to defining the journalist via a federal shield law:

...Justice Scalia facetiously asked if the term press meant people wearing fedoras with a ticket saying 'Press' in the hatband - in short, the classic old school image of a journalist. The fedora definition of journalist, however, is no more outdated and limiting than the definitions contained in many state shield laws. Defining who is entitled to coverage under a shield law is a most vexing problem; if coverage is too broadly defined, the law may protect terrorists or other criminal organizations. (pp. 35)

The abundance of attempts to issue a federal shield reflects recognition by journalists and legislators that the definition of journalists changes fast (Derrick, 2011). Previous versions of the bill, most notably the 2009 Senate version, took "a broad functional approach to the privilege" and included people engaged in online news production under the definition of "journalist" (Turner, 2012, p. 513).

The most recent iterations of the federal shield, H.R. 2932 and S. 448, died in committee. Commonly known as the "Free Flow of Information Act," the 2011 bill defined a journalist as

someone:

...who regularly gathers, prepares, collects, photographs, records, writes, edits, reports, or publishes news or information that concerns local, national, or international events or other matters of public interest for dissemination to the public for a substantial portion of the person's livelihood or for substantial financial gain.

(H.R. 2932, 112th Cong.)

Dougherty (2012) explains the above passage from the bill, which was understood to be "favorable to digital journalists generally, was believed to exclude any independent journalists who do not pursue the craft full-time or as a career" (p. 310).

A discussion of the federal shield law would be incomplete without mentioning a few recent cases—most notably that of former *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller. In one of the most significant media stories covered over the course of the period studied in this dissertation, Miller was jailed for 85 days in 2005 when she initially refused to identify vice presidential aide I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby as her source for unpublished information that Valerie Plame was a covert CIA agent (Freivogel, 2009a). Miller's case is among several that fueled renewed calls for a federal shield law (Freivogel, 2009a).

Miller's case highlights the federal courts' changing interpretations of *Branzburg v. Hayes* (Freivogel, 2009b, p.

101). After three decades of rulings that found support for “creative math” to interpret the Supreme Court’s decision in *Branzburg* to be supportive of constitutional grounds for a reporter-source privilege, the court in the Miller case switched course (Freivogel, 2009a). The court failed to recognize a constitutional protection for a journalist to withhold confidential information.

Another case that highlights the complexities of legal definitions of journalists in the contemporary media climate came in 2007. Kurtz (2007) describes how Josh Wolf, a then-24-year-old blogger and videographer, spent more than 200 days in jail (a record for contempt of court cases). Wolf refused to turn over video he shot of a San Francisco protest that turned violent during a G-8 meeting. According to Kurtz, federal prosecutors described Wolf as “merely a person with a video camera who happened to record some public events” while the Reporters’ Committee for Freedom of the Press joined groups filing briefs supporting Wolf. Wolf was not working for a media outlet when he recorded his footage, but he had previously sold video to news outlets (Kurtz, 2007). Wolf’s case highlights the challenges to defining journalists.

Theorizing Journalism as an Occupational Ideology

The ideology of journalism is constantly refined and reinforced in public and private conversations attempting to

define journalists. The ideological sources that inform the ways journalists are defined reflect the growing professionalism of journalism as media grew in the twentieth century (Schiller, 1981; Zelizer, 2004). Despite changes in media technology, scholars contend journalism's ideology has remained relatively unchanged across time (e.g. Berkowitz, 1997; Gans, 1979; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008).

The theoretical framework for this dissertation comes from the work of Deuze (2005, 2007b). Deuze (2005) defines ideology as "a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular group, including – but not limited to – the general process of the production of meanings and ideas" (p. 445). Ideological values "sustain operational closure, keeping outside forces at bay" (Deuze, 2005, p. 447). Understood this way, journalists' ideology helps to reinforce the boundaries of who can claim membership in the community of journalists (Lewis, 2011). Lewis (2011) elaborates on Deuze's thoughts about how the professional ideology of journalists functions: "the professional logic of control is closely associated with the boundary work of journalism—the former acting as the anchor point around which to formulate the latter" (p. 17).

Deuze (2005, 2007b) develops his theory based on a discursive study of the values and culture of journalism in the United States. Deuze (2007b) explains how journalism's

ideological values function in a media environment in flux:

"Journalism continuously reinvents itself-regularly revisiting similar debates (for example on commercialization, bureaucratization, 'new' media technologies, seeking audiences, concentration ownership) where ideological values can be deployed" (p. 164). To summarize, journalism is constantly reinventing the wheel in order to justify its social utility while holding on to relatively fixed ideological values.

Journalists rely on repetition of ideological narratives to reinforce their professional identities. Gaziano and Coulson's (1988) empirical analysis of reporters finds their news judgment rarely is controlled through direct instructions from management. They explain, "The process is far more subtle. Through newsroom socialization, journalists learn the established routines and paths to advancement" (1988, p. 870). Routinized adherence to the rules of journalism defines and confines the work of a professional journalist. The institution of journalism-its mores, canons, and actors-demands that journalists engage in repetition in order to maintain their membership as journalists. Skinner, Gasher, and Compton (2001) decry the ways reporters learn their craft through rote practices and forms. The authors highlight the role of functionalism in efforts to routinize newswork and create "a uniform product in the face of variable events, resources, and

time" (p. 273). Through repetition, the journalist is constantly becoming the individual and collective Journalist—exemplified in legal definitions, employment, press passes, press conferences, and bylines. People without access to those citational moments are denied access to the title, "Journalist."

Decades of journalism studies have produced many references to professional journalism as an ideology. For journalists, like all professional identities, ideologies develop over time and function to reify some views and invalidate others (Bettig & Hall, 2012, p. 172; Deuze, 2007b, p. 163). Scholarly references to ideology in journalism abound (e.g. Deuze, 2005; Golding & Elliot, 1979; Reese, 1997; Soloski, 1990; Zelizer, 1993, 2004). According to Gans (1979), "Journalists are neither much interested in ideology nor aware that they, too, promulgate ideology" (p. 68). Schudson (2001) describes the occupational ideology of journalists as cultural knowledge stemming from a deeply embedded consciousness that forms their news judgment (p. 153). The role of ideology in shaping definitional boundaries is key to defining professional journalists. Lewis (2011) defines journalists' ideology as a mechanism of control. He explains that ideology leads journalists to "take for granted the idea that society needs them as journalists—and journalists alone—to fulfill the functions of watchdog publishing, truth-telling, independence, timeliness, and ethical adherence in the context

of news and public affairs information" (p. 16).

Although there is ample scholarship on journalists' ideology, there is little agreement between journalism scholars and journalism practitioners about ideology's role in journalism. Deuze (2005) reasons the abundance of scholarship devoted to journalism should produce a consensus between journalism as a field of study and as a field of practice, but that is not the case (p. 442-443). Deuze suggests the concept of the occupational ideology of journalists serves as a potential meeting point for journalism studies and education. Deuze draws his model from studies that employ a wide range of quantitative, qualitative, and critical methods of analysis. In the article that introduced the theory, Deuze (2005) asks: What is journalism? Deuze's answer: The ideological values of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics (p. 447).

Deuze (2005, 2007b) tracks scholarship to outline the five traits or values that journalists generally agree upon and adopt. Deuze (2007b) summarizes the values as follows:

- Public service: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or 'newshounds,' active collectors and disseminators of information);
- Objectivity: journalists are impartial, neutral, objective, fair, and (thus) credible;

- Autonomy: journalists must be autonomous, free, and independent in their work;
- Immediacy: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality, and speed (inherent in the concept of 'news');
- Ethics: journalists have a clear sense of ethics, validity, and legitimacy. (pp. 163)

These values form crucial components of journalists' identities and "give legitimacy and credibility to what they do" (Deuze, 2005, p. 446). Deuze (2005, 2007b) asserts the five key concepts that form journalists' ideology have not changed significantly since journalism began. Deuze (2007b) notes how the values are regular conversation topics for journalists, who "talk about them every time they articulate, defend or critique the decisions they or their peers make" (p. 163). Deuze (2007a) explains:

As self-proclaimed gatekeepers, journalists have only their occupational ideology and news culture to rely on as a defense against either commercial intrusion or special interests. In doing so, journalism's representation of society tends to stay the same while at the same time reporting on a rapidly changing world. ...journalism makes sense of a modernity that seems unsettling at best, and out

of touch with the everyday lives of most of its inhabitants at worst. (pp. 671)

Deuze (2005) outlines the concepts through reviewing literature devoted to journalists and journalism. The following pages review literature dedicated to the five concepts and scholarship illustrating the way journalists rely on the ideological values to define journalists.

Public service.

Public service is the first key concept in the ideological framework. Deuze (2005, 2007b) explains journalists are tasked with the responsibility of being society's watchdogs and thus are responsible for tracking down and publicizing information of public import. Examples of this value come in the form of journalists' liberal democratic conceptions of their audience as citizens—rather than as consumers (Marijana, 2003, p. 112).

Ugland and Henderson (2007) describe the ways journalists in the United States have adopted values and codes that “emphasize the broader social impact of journalism and the responsibilities of journalists to act as stewards of the public interest” (p. 258).

Calvert (1999) notes how a journalist is understood to function as a “watchdog on the government, publicizing abuses, and, one hopes, arousing the citizenry” (p. 451). For example, journalism trends in the early 2000s reinforced notions of journalists as public servants through terms such as “people's journalism” and

"citizen journalism" (Deuze, 2005, p. 447). These new movements and their new approaches serve to galvanize the public service value of old while making room for journalists to adapt as the media culture changes (Deuze, 2005, p. 448).

Ultimately, it is growing ever harder for journalists to hide behind claims to public service while they chase dwindling audiences (Bagdikian, 1992, 2004). Nearly two decades ago, McManus (1994) argued that "market-driven journalism is spreading like a sniffle through a day-care center" (p. xii). Media critics and scholars agree that market judgment is replacing journalistic judgment (Cohen 2005; McManus, 1994, 2009). Bagdikian (1992) references journalists' public service role when he critiques market-driven journalism as working "not primarily for the needs and interests of the audience but for the audience-collecting needs of advertisers" (p. 8). Jackson (2009) notes the erosion of journalists' public service mission has grave consequences for liberal notions of democracy:

...An informed electorate is a public good just like education; it produces an external benefit in society, which is an educated citizenry voting on leaders and policy decisions. It helps foster a better, more equitable society for everyone. Thus, there are negative consequences to inadequate information or under-produced public interest news in the process of democratic interaction. Indeed,

there cannot be a true democracy without an informed electorate. (pp. 153-154)

Changes to news audiences and practices have the potential to change journalists' understanding of public service, but Deuze (2005, 2007) views this as a subtle shift that depends largely on public journalism movements for momentum. New media practices could shore up the boundaries of old media's public service identities. Marginalized communities are telling their own stories, and they serve to challenge antiquated journalism that favors top-down models for defining the public good (Brooten, 2005).

Objectivity.

Objectivity is the second value that shapes journalists' occupational ideology. Deuze (2005, 2007) explains concepts such as truth, impartiality, distance, neutrality, and fairness guide journalists to be credible, objective arbiters of facts. Objectivity and all the terms associated with this value play a crucial role in shaping journalists' ideologies and identities because they formalize what journalists do. A journalist who is taught to get "both sides of the story" is a journalist encouraged to think the world can be understood in simple, objective terms. So this is also a defensive strategy.

Critiques of journalistic notions of objectivity abound in literature (Eliasoph, 1997; Schiller, 1981; Schudson, 1978,

2003; Tuchman, 1972). Schiller (1981) describes objectivity's "distinctly evolutionary character" (p. 7). Schudson (1978) attributes the origins of objectivity to the overwhelming political and economic changes that took place during the period of 1830s Jacksonian democracy. Cultural, ideological, political, economic, and industrial shifts in the 19th century helped usher in objectivity as a practice that served the best interests of many institutions—news corporations, distributors, creators, and audiences. The "cultural configuration" of objectivity allows readers and journalists to indulge in the assumption that objectivity is possible and *preferable* (Schiller, 1981, p. 6).

At the same time the penny papers were burgeoning, the positivistic sciences were crafted. Schiller (1981) points to this concurrent dawn of positivism as a significant contributing force in the advent of journalistic objectivity. He explains that positivism's emphasis on unquestionable facts "nurtured widespread acceptance of a uniform, objective world" (p. 83). Schiller notes how this focus on empiricism "permitted a definitive separation of fact from fiction; indeed, the press itself testified to their disengagement" (p. 87). Positivism accommodates the notion that finite truth can be known, and journalism borrows from a much-critiqued form of science to affix that same, safe concept to faces on street corners and names in police blotters.

Reese (1997) claims objectivity reflects one of journalism's central, positivist claims: "The belief that the external world can be successfully perceived and understood" (p. 423). Glasser (1984) believes that positivism's lasting consequence for journalism is that it molded an objective stance into a safe one, requiring "only that reporters be accountable for HOW they report, not what they report" (p. 15). This notion of a knowable, reportable truth persists today.

The long-term practice and attribute of American newspapering has shaped objectivity into a de facto element of news making as a product and a form of production. Tuchman's (1972) landmark study of journalists offers a succinct account of journalism's changing face in the 20th century. Tuchman describes objectivity as a "strategic ritual" journalists use to isolate themselves from the consequences of reporting. Tuchman understands objectivity as a tool journalists use to "process facts about social reality" (p. 661). Because "processing news leaves no time for reflexive epistemological examination" (p. 662), journalists need a resource that streamlines their work process and preserves its market value. She approaches her study of "newsmen" from a largely sociological perspective and examines the trickle-down effect where information determined to be newsworthy moves from elite sources to journalists and through the news editing process. Ultimately, as Deuze (2005)

makes clear, whether embracing, rejecting or re-evaluating objectivity, such efforts reinforce objectivity's foundational role in journalism's ideology (p. 448). Rename it, reframe it—objectivity retains its hold on journalists' professional identity.

However, as new voices enter into the fray, journalists' conceptions of objectivity have the potential to expand. Deuze (2005) reasons, "The discourse of professional distance clearly stands in stark contrast to the rhetoric of inclusivity" (p. 456). New stories that feature cultural difference have a better chance for recognition with wider audiences and contributor pools. Calls for objectivity may not end, but journalists may find more encouragement to acknowledge and seek understanding of the complexity of everyday life and the lives of those they cover.

Autonomy.

Autonomy is the model's third component. Deuze (2005, 2007b) identifies the concepts of editorial autonomy, freedom, and independence under the banner of autonomy. McChesney (2003) writes, "professional journalism was born from the revolutionary idea that the link between owner and editor could be broken. ...Journalists would be given considerable autonomy to control the news using their professional judgment" (p. 2). As Schudson (2003) suggests, "The genius of American journalism is that it

operates out of commercial organizations built on the autonomy of news professionals" (p. 86). He notes how many reporters know the frustrating reality that the only events they are assigned for reporting are news that happens within 100 feet of the editor's front door (p. 45). As Schudson's tongue in cheek comment suggests, journalists are frustrated and should be more reluctant to offer simple, prescriptive definitions of themselves and their work.

Editorial support, training and continuing education, and a supportive work environment play key roles in journalists' sense of autonomy. Journalists' autonomy is a key to the expert model of the press espoused in many legal decisions (Ugland & Henderson, 2007, p. 247). Ugland and Henderson (2007) explain that in law, the expert model views journalists as a distinctly skilled, professional class of people who serve the public interest by creating and publishing news. Furthermore, the concept of journalistic autonomy reassures journalists that it is possible for them to work free of market influences and protected from censors. This approach is unrealistic in today's media landscape, however (Singer, 2007). Singer (2007) explains:

The Internet is a network—an environment in which no single message is discrete and in which message producers and consumers are not only interchangeable but also inextricably linked. All communicators and all

communication in this environment are connected. The notion of autonomy therefore becomes unavoidably contested.

Professional communicators lose control over their messages as those messages become freely copied, exchanged, extended and challenged by anyone with a mind (and a modem) to do so. (pp. 90)

As Hayes, Singer, and Creppos (2007) note, "Oversight of professional behavior has become a team sport, and journalists no longer control who gets to play" (p. 274). The interactive nature of online news enables anyone reading the news to perform as editor, checking and correcting stories in comment boxes, and demanding journalists provide further support and citation.

Innovations in journalism are often critiqued as potential threats to editorial autonomy. Brooten (2005) explains, "The introduction of each new media technology has sparked debates between those with pessimistic and utopian views of the changes it will usher in, and the introduction of the Internet into the media landscape has been no different" (p. 239). Deuze (2005) warns these criticisms function to legitimize the status quo of editorial power and judgment. The tautological reasoning works this way: Journalists cannot function without editors, so only people with editors are journalists. To put it another way, as a newspaper editor told Robinson (2007), "Someone has gotta be in control here" (p. 311). The problematic nature of this concept

has been highlighted by moves toward transparency and the inclusion of people formerly known as "the audience."

Journalists can no longer stand apart from the communities and people they cover (Deuze, 2005, 2007; Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007). This provides an opportunity for autonomy to take on new dimensions in a more collaborative light.

Immediacy.

Immediacy is the fourth concept that is central to the model. Given the contemporary climate of media saturation, it is not surprising that the ability to deliver information quickly and completely is key to defining journalism professionals. Davies (2008) describes the current media climate as one of a "culture of immediacy" where constant change is naturalized (p. 84). The need for rapidly delivered information is inherent in journalists' product, news, a word that connotes speed and significance.

Rapid delivery of news is not a new goal for journalists; in contrast, it is as enduring a concept as the other four. Bauman (quoted in Deuze, 2007a) points to the influence of rapid information transfer in shaping journalism when he calls it "a profession running after itself, it is never as good as its last moment. It constantly reinvents and reproduces, as always exclusively focused on the new" (p. 677). When time is of the essence, the essence of the journalists' labor suffers. Singer

(2007) describes the ways the "pressure for immediacy" can conflict with newspaper journalists' focus on accuracy and depth, but she also found journalists who appreciated immediacy when breaking big news (p. 846). But journalism focused on breaking news only is out of date and unable to compete with the multitude of competitors, and newsroom diversity and sourcing suffers (Deuze, 2005, p. 457). Immediacy must take on a new meaning—delivering important news quickly and with an intimate knowledge of the story.

Ethics.

Ethics is the final component that shapes the occupational ideology of journalists. Deuze (2005, 2007b) explains this concept instructs journalists to have a sense of right and wrong, or ethical, practice. It also functions to legitimize their labor. Journalists aspire to do socially valid, truthful, objective work. The watchdog role adds legitimacy to journalists' work, and its value to society reinforces the importance of journalists' ethical practice (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995). For example, when its members gathered over a span of four years to evaluate the condition of the American press, the Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947) assigned ethics a paramount role in the professional ideology of journalists. The commission concluded media have a responsibility to provide the public with "an accurate, truthful

account of the day's events" (p. 67). By adopting a code of ethics as part of its professional ideology, professional journalism avoids excessive external regulation while loosening the likelihood of restraints on its profit-oriented activities.

Ultimately, Deuze's (2005) application of the changing media climate to journalists' ethics is slight. He notes that scholars and journalists promote the embrace of an ideal ethical horizon that overcomes specifics of medium or culture (p. 458). Ugland and Henderson (2007) explain ethical standards and core values are the hallmark of journalistic practice and point to the *Associated Press Stylebook* or the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics as examples (p. 254). Ugland and Henderson (2007) explain, "What really matters—indeed the only things that matter—are the standards of practice that journalists follow in their pursuit and dissemination of news" (p. 256). Singer (2008) illustrates this idea:

Without them, as journalists see things, democracy comes apart. Information is central to democracy, and the journalist is central to information. Its provision is the journalist's *raison d'être*. Ethics are necessary to protect the quality of that information and thus the value of the information delivery role. Without the ethical gatekeeper, in this view, information may circulate—but it may be disinformation or misinformation that, according to

the journalist, is worse than no information at all. (pp. 63)

In all, ethics are a claim to higher ground for journalists.

After he describes the key values of his framework, Deuze (2005) theorizes how technological developments could reshape and expand journalism's ideology. The model questions whether and how journalism responds to changing terrain in the digital milieu. He notes how developments in media technologies challenge one of the hallmarks of defining the professional journalist—"the one who determines what publics see, hear, and read about the world" (Deuze, 2005, p. 451). This shift to news created by many, as opposed to news created by a few, has changed the way news is selected, produced, and distributed, and it is changing the way journalists are educated (e.g. Bromley, 1997; Deuze, 2007b; Meyrowitz, 1985; Robinson, 2011).

It is important to note the interrelated nature of the five concepts in the model. Deuze (2005) emphasizes how the concepts sometimes blend and bleed as "journalism constantly reinvents itself" (p. 447). He explains, "...these values can be attributed to other professions or social systems in society as well, and that these values are sometimes inevitably inconsistent or contradictory. To journalists this generally does not seem to be a problem..." (p. 447). Although they are used as tactics to exclude some communities from consideration for membership in

journalism's cadre, the key values' boundaries themselves are insecure. The definitions and characteristics of the model's five steps often overlap, and journalists alone claim the rights to indulge in such slippage.

Finally, it is important to point out that these values are not exclusive to journalism. Many careers, such as accounting and conservation biology, emphasize the value of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics. Deuze's (2005) model explains how journalists decide "who's in" and "who's out." Deuze explains: "Conceptualizing journalism as an ideology ... primarily means understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their newswork" (p. 444). These values shape journalists' sense of identity.

Deuze's Theory in Perspective

In the wake of news about Jayson Blair, Judith Miller, Stephen Glass, and other print journalists whose failings shook public confidence in journalism, a number of news agencies drafted codes of ethics. Many of these codes echo tenants of Deuze's (2005) framework. For example, *The New York Times* drafted its "Ethical Journalism Handbook" in 2004, drawing from an earlier "Newsroom Integrity Statement" crafted in 1999 (*The New York Times*, 2004). The guide calls for journalists to follow "rudimentary professional practices" such as fact checking, correcting errors, and civility (p. 6-8). The ethics policy

emphasizes the newspaper's public service mission and autonomy from sources.

Many news organizations' codes of conduct echo the values of Deuze's (2005) theory. For comparative purposes, the Society of Professional Journalists (1996) identifies four principles in its code of ethics: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable. In its "statement of principles," the American Society of News Editors (1975) identifies the following values: responsibility, freedom of the press, independence, accuracy, impartiality, and fair play.

Following a three-year study by practicing journalists concerned about business's growing hold on the press and the ethical decline of journalistic practice, veteran journalists Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) wrote *The Elements of Journalism*. Intended as a template to guide journalists' work and citizens' relationships with news, the book offers a relatively ideal portrait of the qualities a newsmaker should possess and echoes much of Deuze's (2005) theorizing on the ideology of journalists. Kovach and Rosenstiel describe the book as a "description of the theory and culture of journalism" (p. 6). Kovach and Rosenstiel's theories are repeatedly offered as evidence of a clear dictum for journalists, and the book is a standard textbook in journalism schools across America.

According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), the 10 elements

of journalism are:

- 1) Its first obligation is to truth.
- 2) Its first loyalty is to citizens.
- 3) Its essence is a discipline of verification.
- 4) Its practitioners must maintain independence from those they cover.
- 5) It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
- 6) It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
- 7) It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
- 8) Its practitioners must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
- 9) Its practitioners have an obligation to exercise their personal conscience.
- 10) Citizens, too, have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news. (pp. 6-7)

The list is designed to offer guidance to journalists and audiences. It was created out of a perceived need to define the purpose of journalism and characteristics of journalists (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). The book is founded in the authors' desire to articulate a call to arms in the midst of some colossal failures and triumphs of journalists.

Since its original publication, Deuze's (2005) theory has

been widely cited and is generally accepted as the standard for normative models defining journalists. More than 10 years before Deuze's writing, Zelizer (1993) theorized that interpretations of journalism as a profession restricts understandings of journalism practice. Zelizer offers the term "interpretive community" to describe journalists (p.219). Zelizer counters the concept of journalistic ideology and instead contends journalists are members of "an interpretive community, united through its shared discourse and collective interpretations of key public events" (p. 219). Zelizer explains,

Journalists, in this view, come together by creating stories about their past that they routinely and informally circulate to each other – stories that contain certain constructions of reality, certain kinds of narratives, and certain definitions of appropriate practice. (pp. 223)

One way to understand journalists, Zelizer argues, is to focus on "how journalists shape meaning about themselves" (p. 222). Like Deuze (2005), Zelizer emphasizes how journalists' words are the key to understanding journalists.

By examining journalists' self-descriptions and interpretations, it is possible to understand how journalists articulate their own legitimacy. Berkowitz and Gutsche (2012) build on Zelizer's (1993, 2004) theories and emphasize the ways journalists use "collective memory" to draw professional

boundaries (p. 644). They explain the concept of collective memory: "social groups construct their own images of the world by constantly shaping and reshaping versions of the past" (p. 644). Berkowitz and Gutsche note how journalists engage in "boundary work" to reinforce community ties, redefine journalism standards, and boost public confidence in journalists (p. 644). Journalists' self-definitions are the keys to defining the boundaries of the journalism profession: "collective remembering of journalists *by journalists* has become a tool for shaping or strengthening their interpretive community" (Berkowitz & Gutsche, 2012, p. 645). In other words, as Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) assert, "Journalism evolves continually. At any given moment, one can point to trends of improvement and disorientation simultaneously" (p. 7).

One of the few studies to research newspaper journalists' self-descriptions in the midst of the changing media environment is Usher (2010). She looks to the words of newspaper journalists who have either been laid off, changed careers, or taken "voluntary buyouts." Usher uses the journalists' goodbye letters, emails, speeches, columns, and blog posts to study the cultural dimensions of the decline of legacy newspapers.

Usher shows how critical analysis of the ways the journalists said their goodbyes offers insight into the challenges facing traditional journalism in a climate of change.

Usher writes journalists are “defining their sense of self. However, they are defining that sense of self in response to a nostalgic version of what may never have existed” (p. 919). Nostalgia for an imagined past helps inform these journalists’ self-descriptions.

Analyses of journalists’ nostalgia offer insight into the ways journalists learn to define themselves. A recent study by Berkowitz & Gutsche (2012) builds on Zelizer’s (1993) work on journalists as interpretive communities to show how journalists construct narratives about journalists to make sense of their past, present, and future. The collective knowledge journalists utilize in their daily work directly informs how journalists define journalists (Zelizer, 2004, p. 101). Whether they are true or not, journalists’ rely on these stories to strengthen their definitional boundaries.

Conclusion

This chapter reviews literature that addresses professional journalists’ definitions of journalists in the midst of changing tides. The chapter establishes Deuze’s (2005, 2007b) theory of the occupational ideology of journalists as this dissertation’s theoretical framework. The next chapter of this dissertation describes the methods used for analysis of journalists’ letters to editors of journalism trade magazines. That critical textual analysis, which applies Deuze’s (2005, 2007b) framework to

analysis of the letters, is presented in Chapter 4. The dissertation builds on existing scholarship on journalists' self-descriptions. Letters to editors of niche publications, including the letters that serve as the primary data for this dissertation, are examples of a community – sites of public action where ideology is recursively constructed (Reader & Moist, 2008). Letters to editors are “a format for ordinary people to make their private voices heard in public,” according to Landert & Jucker (2011, p. 1422).

As it will be seen in the following chapters, letters to editors play essential ideological roles in the maintenance of community values (Reader & Moist, 2008). Berkowitz and Gutsche (2012) note how a sense of group identity “helps journalists bind to their profession” (p. 644). There is currently little critical analysis of letters to editors of journalism trade magazines and what those letters say about journalism and journalists.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Studying Journalists' Letters

This dissertation draws from qualitative research to build on and extend scholarship that examines the ways print journalists employed for newspapers published in the United States define themselves and their work. Deuze's (2005, 2007b) model of the ideology of journalists serves as the theoretical framework for this project. So far this dissertation has stressed the need to consider the spectrum of influences shaping the ideological definition of journalists in the U.S. In order to further this effort to develop a composite picture that offers a nuanced understanding of what these journalists' words reveal about the ideology of journalists, it is now necessary to consider the task of researching journalists. This chapter begins by providing background that identifies theoretical and operational traditions and hurdles to researching journalists. The next section describes and justifies the methods used and the analysis they inform.

Background and Context

Journalism in the United States has deep historical roots with empirically oriented theories and positivist approaches to information gathering. The idea that clearly defined, measurable variables are the best tools for understanding causal

relationships in the social world is at the core of quantitative research methodology (Amadi, 2011; Gitlin, 1978; Stempel & Westley, 1989). Studies of journalists in the U.S. are dominated by quantitative research methods, particularly those that emphasize structural-functionalist approaches to the sociological study of journalists. Schudson and Anderson (2009) write that these institutional studies "largely avoid the deeper questions surrounding journalism's unsettled occupational status" (p. 91). Quantitative methods, such as surveys, questionnaires, and content analysis, do not necessarily require researchers to be on site at the subject of study in order to develop statistical measurements and conclusions. These macro-level analyses collect and measure characteristics that define and describe the attributes of journalists and their journalisms.

Weaver and Wilhoit's recurring 20th century studies of the American journalist exemplify this work. Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) build on and extend the field of sociological study of journalists by examining journalists' work experiences and conceptions of "the things the media do or try to do today" (p. 135). Their empirical studies survey thousands of journalists working in media agencies across the U.S. in order to develop a quantifiable picture of the demographics, attitudes, and experiences of and in journalism. This method of data collection

is well suited to the hectic schedule of journalists and the territorial nature of newsrooms. Mailed questionnaires do not require extensive time for participants to complete, thus increasing the likelihood of participation. Furthermore, the empirical data collection method does not require researchers to gain entry into or interfere with the operations of the newsroom, so participants are less likely to feel vulnerable and protective of the information they share.

In contrast, qualitative research is focused on in-depth examinations of particular environments, individuals, and experiences. Thick description is a defining characteristic of qualitative research, which acknowledges the role of ideology in shaping research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Geertz, 1973; Janesick, 2000). A variety of methods are embraced to "describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). Qualitative research is open to the meanings provided by the people participating in the research, and researchers often embrace a bricolage of approaches to shape their studies. The point of qualitative research is not to identify hard truths that can be generalized to a large population; instead, the purpose of qualitative research is to facilitate knowledge about and understanding of particular groups' ways of life.

Qualitative research can require many hours of on-site

study, and researchers often are collaborators with the people they study. Singer (2009) notes, "a key strength of the method is that it enables the researcher to probe deeply for meaning in a particular, real-world environment" (p. 194). It should be clear by now that qualitative research methods pose many operational challenges for researching the real world of journalists, who are used to collecting information *from* others, not being the topic *of* study.

Securing newsroom gatekeepers is an essential step for gaining entry into newsrooms. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe gatekeepers as the people who hold the symbolic and literal keys of access to sites of study: "The researcher needs the approval of the gatekeeper far more than the gatekeeper needs the research" (p. 102). Securing the trust and approval of a gatekeeper is a particularly important task in the study of journalists and the interview sites and newsrooms where they work. However, in the case of this study, which did not require the researcher to gain entry into a newsroom, journalists granted permission to participate in the research project by submitting their letters to editors for publication. The presence of gatekeepers who influenced this work will be discussed later in the logistics section of this chapter.

To summarize, technical differences, rather than epistemological ones, distinguish quantitative and qualitative

research processes. To be clear, the point here is not to condemn the quantitative approach to studying social realms, including research on journalists. Instead, the point is to note that while there are many examples of quantitative communication research studies, there is a dearth of studies that embrace qualitative research methods to provide thick descriptions of journalists in the United States. This systematic discouragement of qualitative methods restrains journalism scholarship in the same way that the unquestioning embrace of objectivity and detached observation undermines the work of journalists. This dissertation represents an effort to help rectify the paucity of qualitative research on journalists in the United States.

Critical textual analysis is the qualitative methodology used in this dissertation, and it will be described in more detail in the methods section of this chapter. Textual analysis, McKee (2001) explains, is the process of interpreting a text. He notes, "There is no such thing as a single, 'correct' interpretation of any text" (p. 150). As such, objectivity is not the researcher's aim with this method of analysis. A single text may yield many possible interpretations, and the researcher's job is to determine which interpretations are more likely than others given the particular circumstances in which the texts appear.

Analysis can be done on many kinds of texts, including

newspapers, films, advertisements, and magazines. An example of a qualitative textual analysis is Berkowitz and Eko's (2007) study of *The New York Times* and France's *Le Monde* coverage of the controversy surrounding a Danish newspaper's publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad. They analyzed 19 articles printed in *The New York Times* and 31 articles printed in *Le Monde* to identify differing journalistic ideologies specific to the United States and France. Their findings suggest that identifying and interpreting journalistic and cultural paradigms helps uncover how the same news event could result in differing coverage in different countries. Interpretation is at the core of this method, and it is an attempt at what Lindlof and Taylor (2002) identify as "code cracking" (p. 232). In summary, the goal of textual analysis is to identify themes that emerge across the many elements of data that compose a study.

Studying Letters to Editors

Letters to editors of magazines and newspapers offer insight into defining group values, interests, and most importantly for this study, membership (Landert & Jucker, 2010). Economics are a key factor in some of these studies. For example, Wahl-Jorgensen (2001) examines San Francisco Bay area newspaper editors' attitudes about the democratic and market potential for their publications' letters to the editor sections. Her findings suggest the editors articulate a

normative-economic justification for public discourse. In a similar study, Wahl-Jorgensen (2002) found letter writers' views represent the idea that democracy and business are mutually beneficial (p. 28). Additionally, Newman (2005) analyzes letters to editors of *Australian Men's Health* and argues they represent a local mode of discursive resistance to hegemonic masculinity. She highlights letters that challenge four defining characteristics of masculinity: men's commitment to medical health, wealth, charisma, and beauty (Newman, 2005, p. 301). Newman explains these goals are expensive to achieve, and the letter writers argue money is not a prerequisite for men's health.

Other studies of letters to editors focus on social relationships. Delgado (1998) studies letters to *Low Rider Magazine* to understand the ways marginalized groups' discourses influence their relationships with their environments, experiences, and identities. He identifies Latina/o expressions and ethnic identities employed by the letter writers to demonstrate and reify membership within distinct and subaltern identity categories. Delgado contends the letters illustrate the ways group membership relies on frequent and complex deployment of identity markers (p. 431). Another study focuses on letters to editors as portholes to understanding a society's relationship with journalists in the United States. Thornton

(1998) compares letters published in 10 popular magazines between 1982 and 1992 with those in 10 popular magazines published between 1902 and 1992. His study finds a marked decrease in the number of letters addressing journalism ethics in the more recent magazines (p. 41). Thornton explores the differences and asks why fewer letters addressing journalism were published in the recent decade than in the past. Thornton contends the decrease offers insight into the public's changing expectations for journalists.

Economic and social factors have been studied together to understand reader-submitted content as indicative of community values in the marketplace of ideas. Although letters to editors are not the primary source of data for their study of *American Journalism Review* and *Columbia Journalism Review*, the work of Haas and Steiner (2002) is relevant. They study the content of stories and letters to editors published in the two trade magazines between 1992 and 2001 that critique the profit motives of online journalism, or what they call "public journalism" (Haas & Steiner, 2002). They note journalists' public service mission is addressed in several letters, including one by Aug (cited in Haas & Steiner, 2002, p. 338), who writes that "so-called civic journalism...is nothing more than a warmed over version of the old plea for 'good' news. ...Back then, what passes for 'civic journalism' today is what we lovely reporters called

'kissing up to the chamber of commerce.' Only the name has changed."

The study also reports views expressed in letters to editors echoed the ideological value of autonomy (Haas & Steiner, 2002). For example, Bartimole (cited in Haas & Steiner, 2002) writes:

Foundation executives are typically well connected to community power structures and serve those interests, not the requirements of a free press. ...To invite these same interests into the decision-making of the news media would be disastrous, no matter how high-sounding their message. (pp. 338)

Instead of acting as "agents of progressive social change," Haas and Steiner criticize the trade journals for serving as "agents of social control" (p. 337). The study's authors conclude the trade magazines are watchdogs that missed an opportunity to offer valuable critique of an industry in the midst of change.

A small number of studies identify the ways magazines function as community spaces and as means through which readers understand themselves as members of those communities (Webb, 2006). Anderson (1991) introduced the concept of "imagined community" to explain how print media inform, influence, and replicate readers' notions of their communities. According to Reader and Moist (2008), most studies of letters to the editor

analyze individual-level value engagement rather than community-level value construction. Reader and Moist label letters to the editor sections as "virtual communities," which are collective phenomenon, as opposed to "imagined communities," which are individual phenomenon (p. 824). They examine the ways letters expose cultural dynamics and the polysemic nature of community (p. 823). They conduct a qualitative textual analysis of letters in two distinct alternative magazines to determine shared values of the virtual communities and how reader/writers play a constitutive role in developing those values. Reader and Moist remark upon the ways letters reflect the common socio-political goals of a virtual community.

Description of Methods

Qualitative research methods are used in this dissertation to analyze the definitions a distinct group of U.S. journalists give themselves in light of conflicting theories of journalists' professional roles and experiences. The data for this dissertation were collected through a longitudinal, archival analysis of letters written by journalists who identified themselves by employment and title at newspapers published in the U.S. This analysis examines journalists deliberating journalism's terrain in letters to editors of leading journalism trade magazines. Critical textual analysis provides opportunities for layered understandings of particular

journalists.

Textual analysis of journalism trade magazines.

This dissertation is an analysis of letters to editors of leading journalism trade magazines. Critical textual analysis, a form of textual analysis, was used to understand ideology's role in shaping journalists' self-definitions as they are represented in the letters. Ideology is a guiding force for journalists although it is rarely identified in their public action (Gans, 1979). This analysis focused on identifying journalists' leading ideological guideposts and the ways ideology works to influence journalists' definitions of their work and professional identities.

Research activity and logistics.

This study assembled a catalog of information that aided in understanding the letters within the individual ideological framework of the community of people who volunteer their opinions for publication in these magazines. Whenever possible, the letters were examined in the context of the printed magazines in which they appeared. By reviewing the letters in their printed versions (versus online publication on the journals' websites or via a searchable research database), it was possible to consider the letters within the context of their historical specificity. Logistically, this limited data collection to libraries with subscriptions to the magazine's

print versions. Fortunately, Southern Illinois University's Morris Library and the School of Journalism library inside the Larry G. Brown Media Management Laboratory possessed copies of the entire data corpus.

Critical textual analysis method.

Critical textual analysis was the method used to analyze the letters to editors. Critical textual analysis is an interpretive method rooted in poststructuralism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), this method of analysis moves beyond descriptions and exposes underlying cultural meanings hidden deep within texts. As Kellner and Durham (2001) note, "all cultural texts have distinct biases, interests, and embedded values" (p. 6). The critical textual approach emphasizes the need for culturally located interpretations and departs from claims of objectivity and comprehensiveness that are typical of traditional textual analysis (McKee, 2001). Critical textual analysis emphasizes plurality of meanings and rejects fixed binary oppositions that premise identity upon stability and essence.

This critical textual analysis drew from the corpus of letters published in *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Editor and Publisher*. Letters to editors published in the magazines between the years 1998 and 2008 are the data for this analysis. The year 1998 was selected for the

first year of the data because 1998 is the year journalism, particularly work stemming from online publication, helped propel bloggers into the forefront of traditional, professional journalists' awareness (Haas & Steiner, 2002). Two of 1998's major journalism events—blogger Matt Drudge's online revelation of former U.S. President Bill Clinton's infidelity with White House intern Monica Lewinsky and *Forbes.com*'s breaking story of Stephen Glass's fraudulent reporting in *The New Republic*—were hailed as breakthroughs for online journalism in America. Internet publishers such as these demonstrated that quality journalism and this new-ish form of journalism were not mutually exclusive. The implications of this change are reflected across a broad spectrum of the media landscape, including the letters.

Throughout the data collection and analysis process the letters were not quantified in any way beyond compiling a basic count of the population; instead, letters related to issues of journalism practice and multimedia were identified to assist in the emergence of themes. Examination of the journals in bound collections at Morris Library and individual magazines in the stacks of the Brown laboratory took place over eight weeks of summer 2009. The 10 years of data constitute a total of 2,060 letters and 461 journal issues: 917 letters published in 313 issues of *Editor & Publisher*, 643 letters published in 88 issues of *American Journalism Review*, and 500 letters published in 60

issues of *Columbia Journalism Review*. As the letters were examined, notes were taken on the cover stories of the journals in which they were printed, the letters and articles to which they referred, and the monthly or weekly corpus of letters to which they belonged.

The data collection process for this analysis was a four-step process. First, the letters to editor pages were located, and notes were made on their location—early, middle, or end section—in the magazines. Microsoft Excel was used to create a separate spreadsheet and resulting data pool for each magazine. These spreadsheets were used to record each magazine issue according to the following characteristics: date of publication, cover story, location of the letters, and number of letters. The spreadsheets were used to keep track of the data.

Second, as the letters were read, basic, descriptive categories emerged. These categories guided the organization and recording of the sheer mass of data in this study. The categories unfolded over the course of the early months of the study and assisted in analysis of the letters within the context of their content, their writers' self-described profession, and the geographic location from which they hailed. The creation of categories progressed in a flexible and interactive process. In the same spreadsheets described in the first step of data collection, the letters were coded according to the following

items: 11 topic categories, six letter writer professions, and nine geographical areas. The 11 topic categories were: online journalism, digital technology, blogs, journalism industry, journalism's professional leaders, ethics, news stories, profits, diversity, professional practice, and miscellaneous. Many letters addressed multiple categories, and this inevitable overlap and fluidity was noted when determining their place. The six professions were: print journalism professionals, bloggers, parajournalists, non-journalism professionals, readers/unidentified, and academics. Categorization depended upon the letter writers' self-identification. Letters from journalists working in media outside the print and online industries were excluded from the corpus. The nine geographical regions were: North American, Great Britain, Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe, South America, Australia, and Central America. This categorization depended upon the writers' self-identification. The majority of letters writers came from North America and Great Britain. If any letter writers were from Antarctica, they did not identify themselves as such. As a result, the continent was excluded.

Third, notes on the letters were reviewed, and relevant letters were returned to in order to verify they had been accurately transcribed and recorded. If errors were found, they were corrected in the spreadsheet and transcriptions. Finally,

themes across the relevant letters were sought, and the relevant letters were organized and prepared for critical textual analysis. The aim of this data collection was to assemble a catalog of information that would help the letters be understood within the individual ideological framework of the community of people who volunteer their opinions for publication in these journals. These findings are discussed in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

This chapter reviews methods used in the analysis that comprises the data description and analysis section of this dissertation, which appears in the next chapter. The chapter begins with a discussion of the history of research methods used in journalism scholarship and argues for the benefits of increased use of qualitative methods to aid in constructing a nuanced definition of journalists. The chapter reviews studies that use similar methods and focus on similar data pools to situate the dissertation within the field of journalism studies. The dissertation research's background and design is described in detail to set up the analysis that follows in Chapter 4. The description provides in-depth, self-reflexive portraits of hurdles experienced in this research and that are likely for future research on journalists. The critical textual analysis detailed in the next chapter is devoted to building a definition of journalists based on their words.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Letters to Editors as Subjects of Analysis

The publisher creates a communication which is intended for an audience which not only reacts to the communication but which, in one form or another, itself initiates communications back to the original communicator.

(Janowitz, 1952, p. 9)

The previous chapter focused on the methods used to study letters to editors of journalism trade magazines. This chapter explores the theme of ideological narratives through analysis of the definitions of a journalist as it is articulated by print journalists who write letters to the editors of leading journalism trade magazines published in the United States. This chapter builds on Deuze's (2005, 2007b) framework of the occupational ideology of journalists, which is detailed in Chapter 2. Analysis focuses on the letter writers' self-definitions and the ideological narratives they construct to favor professional ideals and deny the realities of working in the newspaper business. The letters represent Janowitzian communication between people who write "back to the original communicator" with the assumption they are writing to an audience of peers (Janowitz, 1952, p. 9). The subjects of study

are letters *from* editors *to* editors.

This chapter focuses on letter writers' construction and maintenance of a definition of journalism that serves journalists' professional goals in the digital milieu. The study highlights ways the letters function as "virtual communities" with a common socio-political goal: to celebrate, critique, and preserve the ideological definition of professional journalists (Reader & Moist, 2008). The archival study represents a departure from previous scholarship because it focuses on an as-yet unexplored community of letter writers-journalists writing to, for, and about journalists. The project also marks a departure from the dominant literature because it compares and contrasts letters across multiple publications targeting a similar market-journalists. These journalism trade magazines are the focus of the next section.

Journalism Trade Magazines

Trade magazines, which are also called professional magazines, serve specific industries with specialized marketing and information. The magazines are not generally meant to be of interest to the general population. For example, they cater to the hospitality industry, such as *Hotel Management*; the beverage industry, such as *Food Arts*, and the landscaping industry, such as *Total Landscape Care*. The trade magazines *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Editor & Publisher* are

designed to serve anyone with an interest in the journalism industry. The magazines' readers include journalism practitioners, consultants, business partners, scholars, fans, and critics. Each hones in on a specific segment of the journalism industry; accordingly, their letters to editors' pages reflect distinct characteristics.

American Journalism Review and *Columbia Journalism Review* are known as journalism's "insider's press" and are the two largest and most widely read journalism reviews published in the United States (Haas & Steiner, 2002). Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) report that one-third of journalists in the United States read *Columbia Journalism Review* regularly or occasionally, and 22 percent read *American Journalism Review* (p. 131). A similar study of more than 1,000 newspaper journalists in the United States reports 48 percent of respondents read *American Journalism Review* regularly while 41 percent read *Columbia Journalism Review* (Maier, 2000, p. 45). Although both magazines are housed in universities, *Columbia Journalism Review* featured fewer scholarly sources and articles written by academics (Haas & Steiner, 2002, p. 327). Culbertson and Thompson (1984) analyzed journalism trade magazines, including *Columbia Journalism Review*, and concluded they do not reflect a wide range of perspectives on journalism. Trade magazines "focused heavily on traditional ideas, somewhat less on interpretation,

and relatively little on activism" (Culbertson & Thompson, 1984, p. 12). Over the course of the period studied, it was easily observed that each of the three trade magazines shrank in page size and number of editions printed annually (see *Figure 4.1*).



Figure 4.1. Bound copies of *Editor & Publisher* illustrate how the magazine shrank between 1998 and 2008. The volumes at the bottom of the photograph are the oldest in the study; the ones toward the top of the pile are the most recent years. Photo by Edyta Blaszczyk

American Journalism Review is a national magazine dedicated to coverage of the media landscape—print, television, radio, and online publication (see *Figure 4.2*). The magazine analyzes media ethics, focuses on trends in media coverage, and documents the effects of technology on journalism practices and products. The magazine has published six issues a year since June 2003; prior to that, the magazine published 10 times a year. Roger Krantz and Valerie McGhee founded *American Journalism Review's* predecessor, *Washington Journalism Review*, in 1977 (AJR: 25 Years, 2002). Krantz and McGhee sold the magazine to Henry and Jessica Catto,

who turned its operation over to the University of Maryland in 1987. The magazine is now housed and published by the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland and typically features stories written by professional journalists as well students. Letters printed in this magazine appear in the first 10 pages, and often more letters jump to the back pages of the issue (see Figure 4.3).

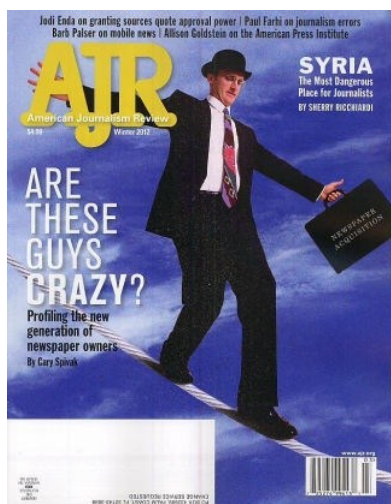


Figure 4.2. Example of an *American Journalism Review* cover page, Winter 2012. “Are these guys crazy?” is the cover story, which profiles the new generation of newspaper owners.



Figure 4.3. Example of an *American Journalism Review* Letters page, October/November 2007, p. 9. This issue featured two letters pages and eight letters.

Columbia Journalism Review covers the press in its many forms, including print, broadcast, cable, and online (see *Figure 4.4*). Its coverage includes analysis of media trends, news stories, and professional ethics. *Columbia Journalism Review* has since its formation been "devoted to criticizing journalism" (Boylan, 2011, p. 42). The magazine has printed six issues annually since 1961. In its founding editorial in 1961, the magazine pledged "to provide a meeting ground for thoughtful discussion of journalism, both by its practitioners and by observers, to encourage debate, and to provide ample space for reasonable dissent" (*Columbia Journalism Review*, 1961, p. 3). Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism publishes the magazine from its campus in Manhattan. Story submissions are welcomed from non-staff writers, and the magazine typically features stories written by professional journalists. The magazine also serves as a learning laboratory for the university's students. Letters printed in this magazine appear in the first 10 pages of each issue (see *Figure 4.5*).



Figure 4.4. Example of a Columbia Journalism Review cover page, September/October 2012. "The future of media (this minute, at least)" is the title of the cover story.



Figure 4.5. Example of a Columbia Journalism Review Letters page, June 1998, p. 9. This issue featured two letters pages and eight letters.

Editor & Publisher is the most industry-oriented magazine of the triad, and its focus is limited to the business of newspapering (see Figure 4.6). Widely known by its cover slogan as the "Bible of the newspaper industry," the magazine covers all aspects of newspapers, including professional practice,

production, and industry trends (Endres, 2004). Based in New York City, the magazine was first *The Journalist*, a weekly publication that was founded in 1884 and then became *Editor & Publisher* in 1901 (Plaisance, 2005). James Wright Brown purchased the magazine in 1912, and the magazine stayed in the Brown family until 1999 when New York-based BPI Communications bought and thus ended the magazine's longtime family ownership (Moses, 1999, p. 8). When it moved to monthly publication in 2004, the magazine cited financial problems and declining advertising revenues common to the newspaper industry (Mitchell, 2003, p. 30). Unlike the other two magazines discussed in this chapter, *Editor and Publisher* is heavy with industry-related advertisements. For example, it was observed over the course of this study that the magazine's cover featured large advertisements until a cover redesign was done in 1998. After the redesign, the magazine's cover appearance aligned more closely with the other magazines studied here (see *Figures 4.2, 4.4, and 4.6*). Letters appear in the "Contents" section, which was in the opening 25 pages of each issue (see *Figure 4.7*).



Figure 4.6. Example of an *Editor & Publisher* cover page, October 2008. “End of an era?” is the title of the cover story, which focuses on whether editors are correct that watchdog journalism remained a mainstay of journalism.



Figure 4.7. Example of an *Editor & Publisher* Letters page, September 2005, p. 4. This issue featured one letters page and three letters.

Writers of the letters to editors' pages in the magazines represent a wide community of people who voluntarily participate in the pages' conversations about journalism. Letters represent a broad spectrum of public and private interest in debates on

journalism. The letter writers are always identified by name and location, and often their professional relationship with journalism is noted either with the writers' names or in the body of their letter. Press managers, reporters, editors, publishers, advertising executives, paper suppliers, software technicians, bloggers, media activists, and media consumers all contribute letters.

Analysis of the Letters

This analysis begins by identifying the letters as cultural artifacts of a community of journalists. Letters printed in the magazines represent multiple levels of virtual community (Reader & Moist, 2008). To summarize the explanation of Reader and Moist's (2008) analysis of letters to editors offered in Chapter 3, virtual communities are a collective phenomenon where a community constructs its definitions and values (p. 824). On the most basic level, the letters studied here represent the views of a community of people who share an interest in journalism. At the next level, virtual communities form inside the individual trade magazines through letters that address differing and complementary viewpoints on particular topics. A single issue may contain multiple letters focused on a single topic, and threads of letters across multiple issues represent another layer of connection. These connections can also be drawn across the magazines when letters respond to coverage of the same

issue, such as when *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *Editor & Publisher* cover the Iraq or Afghanistan wars.

A dominant strain of letters emphasizes business pressures on journalism. Letters analyzed in the following pages that mention newspapers' profit imperatives include those by Robertson (2008), Effron (2008), Inglis (2009), Mickey (2003), Parker (2003), Brody (2006), and Wettenstein (1999). As Sturm (2006), who was at the time of his writing the president and chief executive officer of the Newspaper Association of America, tells *Editor & Publisher*, "Competition for audiences in a time of massive attention deficit means that we have to get full credit for all the people we reach and how we reach them" (p. 4). Sturm has a point: Large audiences mean larger profits (see Appendix A). Professional journalism is not just about serving publics; it is about selling them to advertisers. As a community, the letter writers struggle with this issue and its consequences for their identities and their work products.

Another way the letters as a collective printed across the three magazines function as a virtual community is through the advent of the occasional individual whose letters are published in multiple magazines. For example, Downes (2001, 2008) writes nearly identical letters to *Editor & Publisher* and *American Journalism Review* (see Appendices B, C). Downes identifies

himself as the editor of the *Northern Express Weekly*, a newspaper in Michigan. The letters, which describe online news as a serious threat to newspapers' bottom line, are published over a seven-year time period. The first letter appears in *Editor & Publisher* (see Appendix B). Downes (2001) writes: "Newspapers should take their cue from the music industry's battle for survival with Napster and destroy their Web sites en masse. It's time to draw a line in the sand before newspapers have their last stand" (p. 23).

Seven years later, Downes (2008) expresses a similar sentiment in a letter to *American Journalism Review* (see Appendix C). Downes suggests it is "Patently obvious how to stop the slide of newspapers into oblivion: Torch your Web sites. Burn 'em down. If people wish to be informed, make them pay for a good, quality product with a 300-year track record—the newspaper" (p. 7). In the letters, Downes' concern is purely profit, and the Internet is understood as mere competition for newspaper audiences. His letters echo a gloom and doom forecast for newspapers.

Whether written by multiple or single authors, printed in single issues or multiple magazines across a period of years, this analysis reveals how the letters collectively organize a virtual community. Together, the community articulates its shared ideological definition of professional journalists. In

the following pages, the analysis turns to identifying the ways the letter writers reference ideology as a method for defining journalists.

The analysis of the community of letters organizes them in themes according to Deuze's (2005, 2007b) five key concepts: public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics. While examples are pulled from all three of the magazines, the bulk of letters in this study are from *Editor & Publisher*. This is mainly a reflection of logistics. Because *Editor & Publisher* was the only magazine of the triad to be published weekly during the period of study, there were more issues published and thus more letters to consider. To recap figures provided in Chapter 3, almost half the 2,060 letters that inform this analysis were printed in *Editor & Publisher* (see Figure 4.8).

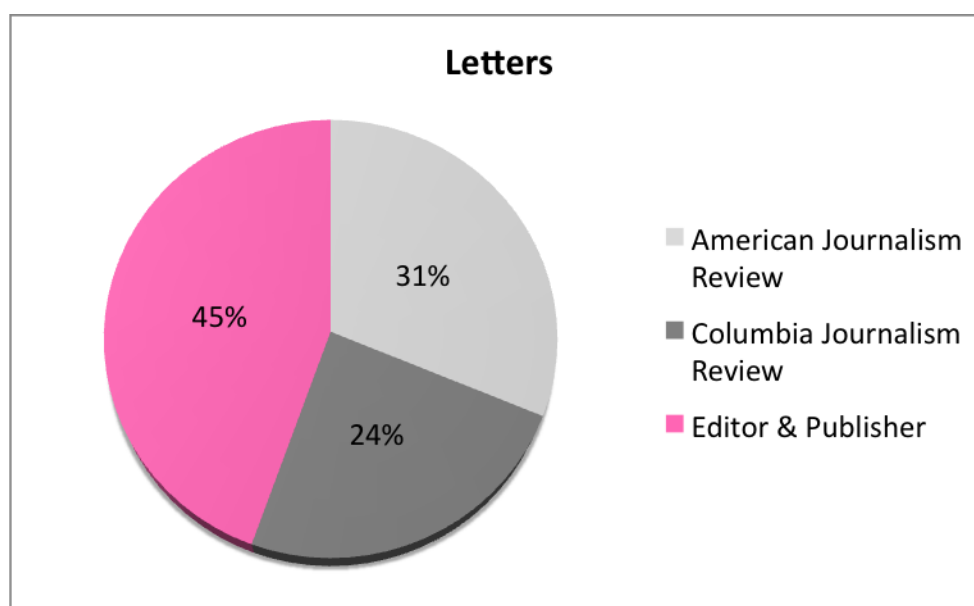


Figure 4.8: A pie chart showing the percentage breakdown of the 2,060 letters to editors that represent this study's data.

However, the letter totals should not be interpreted to mean that letters were of greater value to *Editor & Publisher*. In fact, *Editor & Publisher* printed far fewer letters per issue than the other two magazines. For example, *Editor & Publisher* released 313 issues and 917 letters in the 10-year period study. In comparison, *Columbia Journalism Review* released approximately five times fewer the number of issues—60—and 500 letters during the same time period. Additionally, compared to *Editor & Publisher*, *American Journalism Review* printed approximately four times fewer issues—82—and 643 letters during the same period. This means that on average, *Editor & Publisher* printed three letters per issue while *Columbia Journalism Review* and *American Journalism Review* printed eight letters per issue.

Public service.

Letters that discuss the value of the first layer of journalism's ideology, public service, represent the bulk of the data. Public service is defined in many ways in the letters. For example, Stevens (2008), a reporter for the *Associated Press*, writes to *Editor & Publisher* about the enduring importance of journalism as a public record: "When people want to keep a record of history, young or old, they turn to newspapers" (p. 4). Newspapers are public troves of history (see Appendix D). Preservation of history is a public service provided by

journalists and one that is important to their definition because they are employees of newspapers, which often proudly tout their role as a "paper of record" for the public.

Public service themes in these letters often overlap with the other values, especially objectivity. For example, Thomsen (2000), a reporter for the *Bainbridge Island Review*, emphasizes the roles journalists serve during important moments in history when he writes to *American Journalism Review* (see Appendix E). Thomsen criticizes the media for failing to serve the public: "The failure of the mainstream national press to critically examine the shadowy information-dissemination strategies of not only Dick Cheney but also George W. Bush, does a tremendous disservice to the American voting public" (p. 5). The notion that a newspaper is an objective source – a record of truth in perpetuity – plays an important role in these letter writers' perceptions of journalists as public servants. Here journalists' ability to inform and influence the electorate is an important factor in their professional definition.

The loss of community connections in the era of online news is another source of concern for writers who address the public service value. For example, Thomason (2008), publisher of the Florida-based *Walton Sun & Destin Log*, writes to *American Journalism Review*:

...community newspapers have just one franchise left that we

can truly call our own—local news. Sure, there are bloggers and Web sites with all kinds of crap out there, but in most communities we're still the trusted, authoritative source of local news with any depth. But where do the first cuts come? Newsrooms take the brunt of reductions in force because they are not "revenue producers." (pp. 3)

Thomason worries that newsroom layoffs hurt communities and newspapers' ability to deliver local content (see Appendix F). When owners cut corners by cutting newsroom staff, newspapers' public service suffers. Community trust is a key definitional source for Thomason to define journalists, and newspaper journalists — not bloggers and people working in online news — have exclusive access to the definition.

After 2007, two issues—market forces and public service—are almost exclusively the focus of letters relating to journalistic practice and online news. Often, letter writers use business analogies to make a point about public service. For example, Young (2007) remarks on the value of local media to serving communities in his letter to *Editor & Publisher*: "...articles written by real local reporters, compared to AP articles, usually are more insightful and personal, not unlike a local family-owned restaurant is compared to McDonald's" (p. 4). The letter connects business and public service to suggest that economic prosperity is the byproduct of providing a public

service – news of value to local communities (see Appendix G). Young defines journalists by their community connections and the insight they can offer because of them. Journalists are not outsiders or strangers; they are part of the locus of power that shapes local culture.

Profit is key to a newspaper's ability to fulfill its public service mission. For example, Robertson (2008), a community newspaper publisher, writes to *Editor & Publisher* about the connection between community news and profit:

Small papers that concentrate on providing news of relevance to the community can flourish and prosper if they can connect at a personal level to the readers. This good news about the newspaper industry merits bigger headlines. I understand newspapers face many challenges, not the least being the Internet. Nevertheless, newspapers possess a valuable franchise that others can only envy. (pp. 4)

Here the idea that public service is good for business is clear (see Appendix H). Furthermore, the letter makes it clear that high profits accommodate public service, which community newspapers do best at the hyperlocal level. Robertson's letter looks to local reporters to suggest that journalism is best when it is done close up. For Robertson, journalists working at small, hometown newspapers represent the hallmark of public service.

A similar focus on the value of the community press as public service is reflected in multiple letters to *Columbia Journalism Review*. Effron (2008), executive editor of *The Week*, writes that the discussion about the future of journalism needs to turn "toward a broader discussion about how, in the digital age when information 'wants to be free,' citizens don't merely end up getting exactly what they pay for" (p. 5). The letter is distinct in that it describes readers as citizens (see Appendix I). In the same issue, Record (2008), the editor/co-publisher of the *West Seattle Blog*, embraces the potential of online news to serve communities:

...I strongly urge anyone who fears that their old-media days are numbered to look at their new-media options with promise and hope, not dread and fear. So many community news sites are not only helping citizens become more informed, educated, and involved, but are also creating more of an appetite for news and information. (pp. 6)

Record's message seems clear: Online news may be low cost, but it does not have to mean low-quality journalism (see Appendix J). This letter contrasts old-media and new-media to conclude it is not the way print news is delivered that define journalists. Community connections, which make people want more news, define journalists.

Letters to *American Journalism Review* address a number of

ideological components that relate to journalists' public service mission. In response to an October 2008 story about citizen journalism and online reporting, Inglis (2008/2009), managing editor at the *Portland Phoenix*, chides professional journalists for being behind the tide of journalists working online. He writes: "The solution for many of you, is figuring out what is actually happening in the communities you wish to serve, and how to reach people who have long since given up on you" (p. 5). The letter identifies local coverage and accuracy as keys to defining journalists (see Appendix K). In the same issue, Grigoriev (2008/2009), a blogger for Brooklyn-based *outside.in*, discusses how citizen journalists are better at upholding the public service mandate:

Citizen journalists have stepped into the role of hyperlocal news reporter, when local papers have cut resources, shied away or simply ignored certain local beats. These folks provide a great service to their community, and in some cases have acquired hundreds of thousands of readers to their credibility, timeliness, and yes, trust. (pp. 6)

The letter references many of the ideological values, including public service, objectivity in the form of credibility and trust, and immediacy through timeliness (see Appendix L).

Public service is a concern for many writers, and its

central role as a definitional tool links it to the other values, thus increasing its definitional strength and by default supplementing the other values. The letters highlighted in this section demonstrate Deuze's (2005, 2007b) contention that the ideological values often blend and can be employed to defend and express conflicting viewpoints. As Deuze (2007b) explains, the move from dishing the news out to engaging in multi-level conversation has the potential to shift the balance of power that comes with creating definitional boundaries for journalists (p.112).

Objectivity.

Writers of letters to the editors of the three magazines are generally concerned with objectivity and its changing shape. The terminology used to call it up across the 10-year period analyzed here may change, but the ideological value remains intact. For example, writers complain journalists are too reliant on the public relations industry for news. The value of objectivity is key to *Salon.com* blogger Quart's (2001) letter, which was published in *Columbia Journalism Review* (see Appendix M). Quart writes, "I used to be so proud of America's free press. Then I found myself reading lie after easily detectable lie. There would have been no election coup if the press had told the truth" (p. 4). Quart defines journalists as people who should be objective but are not. The letter also refers back to

journalists' public service role – or their failure to uphold it in the midst of digital and market competition.

Many letters critique journalists for not being objective in their coverage of the beginning of the wars America launched with Iraq and Afghanistan after September 11, 2001. In a letter to *Editor & Publisher*, Steadman (2004), a former journalist, offers praise for “reporters who refused to parrot the Bush administration’s line regarding Iraq but actually checked out facts and reported the results...consistently seeking out and reporting the truth” (p. 4). She heralds the value of “shoe-leather journalism” in her praise for journalists who report objectively and autonomously (see Appendix N). Objectivity is not a concept like truth; it is a product of journalists’ work.

After *American Journalism Review* published a May 2003 cover story on the myopia of news coverage about the war in Iraq, several letter writers responded that the journalists failed to be objective. For example, Mickey (2003), a reporter at the *Fort Bragg Advocate News*, writes, “all journalists and news organizations need to remember that the truth is the only product that they have that is of any value in a free society” (p. 7). Mickey criticizes journalists who failed to question veracity of the Bush administration’s reasons for war with Iraq (see Appendix O). This reluctance to criticize the government defies the rule of objectivity that defines journalists.

Ultimately, whether calling for greater transparency or a return to journalism's unbiased, professional core, the writers are talking shop about objectivity.

Autonomy.

Autonomy, the third value Deuze (2005, 2007b) identifies in the professional ideology of journalism, is referenced in letters that are published throughout the study. Autonomy takes different shapes depending upon the conditions journalists are working under. Most of the letters that reference autonomy early on do not define the ideological boundaries of professional journalism in terms that value editors as key to autonomy. To illustrate, after an *American Journalism Review* article depicts bloggers as renegades, several people write to complain. Maizell (1998), editor of the Chicago-based *Near North News* blog, offers a clear perspective in the first published letter that addresses the question of multimedia: "The concerns expressed regarding online 'pamphleteers' not having to undergo the checks of an editor seem as much a matter of jealousy as concern for accuracy. This country was, in large part, founded by pamphleteers" (p. 5). The letter connects new journalists with the country's first journalists to reveal the complicated nature of the value of journalistic autonomy (see Appendix P). The letter also references legal definitions for journalists by drawing a connection to Justice White's use of "the lonely

pamphleteer" as a qualified journalist (*Branzburg v. Hayes*, 1972, p. 703-705). Here, autonomy is independence, not editorial oversight. Maizell is a blogger, and his experiences inform his definition of journalists and the role autonomy should play in shaping their definitions.

Most letters blame the erosion of autonomy on journalists' connections with business and industry. In a letter to *American Journalism Review*, Parker (2003), a copy editor at the *Oklahoma Gazette*, explains, "The real problem with American journalism is that it has become market-oriented and -driven. The resulting goal of pleasing our readers, viewers and listeners has watered down the textbook journalism most of us learned" (p. 67). Parker suggests that objective reporting is something that is learned through textbooks (see Appendix Q). Parker criticizes the journalism industry for focusing on profits instead of on reporting the news. Parker's employment as a copy editor is likely a significant factor in his decision to define journalistic autonomy in terms that focus on its erosion because of business interests. Copy editors' positions are usually the first to go in newsroom cuts, and Parker is likely defending his job security by decrying the loss of autonomy as evidenced in newsroom salaries and layoffs.

In the latter years of the study, the role of editors in ensuring journalists' autonomy reemerges as a key to defining

journalists. One letter writer insists editorial oversight, an important guardian of autonomy, is the key to quality journalism. In a letter to *Editor & Publisher*, Kimmel (2008), of *The Hudson Independent*, argues editors are invaluable:

In a time when news staff is being cut and harried reporters often are asked to update stories online, who could judge who was a genuine eyewitness contribution, as opposed to a phony one? I think it is going a bit overboard in trying to integrate basically unfiltered content adjacent to a Web story in order to conjure up more community involvement. Perhaps my five decades of association with the news business has left me a trifle skeptical and resistant to change, but I believe a professional eye is necessary to determine what is fact and what is fiction. And there may be too few "eyes" to handle the job suggested. (pp. 5)

Kimmel worries a journalist without an editor might not do a good job (see Appendix R). Such a preference for the "professional eye" reflects Deuze's (2005, 2007b) explanation that journalists close ranks when their ideological territory is threatened. Like the previous letter writer, Kimmel's definition of autonomy as editorial oversight is influenced by self-interest. His longtime experience in newspapers informs his preference for editors as guardians of journalists' autonomy.

Ultimately, letters addressing autonomy are among the most critical of professional journalists. The letters uphold autonomy as a value that is key to the ideological fold and lambast professional journalists for failing to preserve this defining factor. Public dissatisfaction dominates discussions of autonomy provided by the letters, and it is no wonder. Ideology guides many of journalism's routines, but there is no ideological principle to rescue the realities of journalism's inherent ties to the demands of the market. And when journalism's ties to industry and pursuit of profit become salient through market-driven reporting and news, journalists' protection in their ideological definition gets trumped business demands.

Immediacy.

Immediacy is the fourth concept Deuze (2005, 2007b) outlines in his model of the professional ideology of journalism. The letters to editors discuss this value in complex and conflicting ways. Immediacy is first seen as a threat to good journalism, and then it is identified as a way to connect with new audiences. Early in the data, the rush to publish news is targeted as a source of journalism's eroding quality. Take Mississippi-based *Daily Leader* Jacobs' (1999), letter to *Editor & Publisher*, where he writes:

My newspaper celebrated its 116th birthday yesterday. It has

survived this long only because of the trust and credibility we have established with our readers. The rush to competitive journalism has lowered the stature of our profession to all-time lows due to the loss of trust from the general public. This "damn the torpedoes, all speed ahead" attitude of our newest medium will continue that downward spiral and relegates us all to the supermarket tabloid status in the eyes of our most cherished asset—our readers. (pp. 33)

The pace of news is a concern for Jacobs, who sees it as a detriment to journalism in part because his newspaper faces competition from online news (see Appendix S). Similarly, Tierney (2001), a magazine journalist, writes to *Columbia Journalism Review* with a lament: "'Give me the news, but give it to me quickly,' the audience seems to be saying" (p. 5). Tierney worries the changing pace of news is changing the quality of news (see Appendix T). Tierney's letter discusses an article addressing journalists' education and employers' expectations for job candidates. An emphasis on immediacy as news snippets leaves Tierney bemoaning the fact that "the finely crafted sentence has become a lost art" (p. 5). Tierney worries she will not be able to hire a journalist who can spell words correctly or think critically. When journalists cease to be defined by their reporting and written work and turn their focus to speed,

the immediacy value loses its definitional power.

Letter writers often express concerns that online news presents challenges to long-sedimented newspaper practices. For example, McKenzie (2008), a reporter for the Tennessee-based *Germantown & Collierville Appeal*, writes to *Editor & Publisher* to express concerns about the increased pace of online news:

Industry practices have been handed down from one poorly trained, monopoly-spoiled generation to another. Changing culture is long, hard work. We don't have time to reinvent the wheel, or waste 30 minutes with a consultant who should know better. (pp. 4)

In short, media consumers' demand for immediate news leaves McKenzie questioning whether speed is good for their work and for their audiences (see Appendix U). Newspapers' history has left journalists ill prepared for culture change in a world where breaking news is not the most important factor in defining their worth.

The argument is different for Smith (2001), who reported for *Salon.com* during the 2000 U.S. Presidential election. Smith points to bloggers leading the charge to investigate election fraud and vents to *Columbia Journalism Review*:

Too often now we are seeing citizen activists who are ahead of the pundits and the reporters, who simply burp up superficial stories provided by the spinners. You all can

pay attention and catch up, or you can be in the dustbin.

(pp. 4-5)

In other words, professional journalists are flailing while online non-professionals are delivering the news quickly and questioning the status quo (see Appendix V). Smith criticizes the national press for ignoring citizen journalists' efforts to report on President George W. Bush's Texas Air National Guard year-long absences during wartime. Rather than invest the time to report on Bush's military service or lack thereof, the press jumped on a story about Bush being ticketed as a drunken driver. Smith's work as a blogger positions her outside established media, and she relies on her work experiences to define immediacy as a concern for news that should be reported but is often ignored by national newspapers. Immediacy is a matter of story selection, not just speed. Immediacy is getting the right story.

By the end of the period of study, most of the letters describe online news' rapid delivery as an asset. For example, Brown (2008), a retired journalist and educator, writes to *Editor & Publisher*, "The electronic media have the edge in immediacy (see Appendix W). The print media ought to figure out why their readers are going for the immediacy first. Perhaps journalism courses need a rewrite" (p. 4). Brown identifies education as a factor that shapes the value of immediacy and

defines immediacy as a key to keeping readers' attention. This attitude is also expressed in other letters. Brody (2006), a reporter for the Chicago-based *Midwest Real Estate News*, writes to *American Journalism Review* to explain what Brown leaves unanswered: "Give the information quick and dense. Leave Sunday for the long features when people spend an entire morning consuming the newspaper" (p. 8). Brody wants journalists to deliver immediacy and depth (see Appendix X). This letter builds a further case for immediacy as a matter not just of speed but of intelligent story selection.

Unlike letters in the early years of the study, the letters at the end of the study balance both values as compatible. The conflict in defining journalists through the value of immediacy is restored because it is in journalism's best interest for this ideological principle to persist. The quicker the news is delivered, the more information journalists can add to the newsfeed, regardless of the quality. When the news is reported in depth and well, it gets closer to audiences, and immediacy is understood in new light. The potential for profit increases with more news and greater audience sizes, and these are offshoots of immediate coverage. The overlapping quality of the key traits reassures journalists they will not only be able to do their jobs fast, but well.

Ethics.

Ethics is the final concept that Deuze (2005, 2007b) contends defines journalism's occupational ideology. Deuze claims ethics is the most researched of the concepts that form journalism's ideology, yet ethics are rarely the overt topic of letters to editors of the trade magazines in this study. This is in part because ethics are inherent in journalists' successful adherence to any of the ideological principles. The earliest letters addressing journalistic ethics discuss how blogger Matt Drudge reshaped what counted as news and objective reporting. For example, Bendix (1998), a former *Lake County (Ohio) News-Herald* reporter, writes to *Columbia Journalism Review*:

Can you picture a reporter saying to her editor, "I don't care what Matt Drudge is reporting! Marvin Kalb says we shouldn't run it until we have independent confirmation from two sources, so let's wait"? Neither can I. ...while the press will always indulge in half-truths, rumors, and misinformation, with enough competing voices, something approaching the truth will eventually emerge. (p. 9)

The letter connects ethics to public service through the democratic ideal of deliberation (see Appendix Y). The letter addresses the changing shape of ethics, which are defined by contemporary practices. Ethics were once defined by sourcing, e.g. the reference to two independent sources, but now they are defined by competing voices and multiple perspectives. Bendix

employs multiple values to arrive at his argument that a diversity of opinions will triumph in a society enriched by multimedia and multicultural perspectives.

In the early years of the data, letters express concern about online news and its consequences for journalism education and ethical practice. Following the publication of a story in *Editor & Publisher* about curriculum changes in journalism, Morgan (1999), managing editor of Texas-based Bartlett Newspapers, cautions against a move away from traditional journalism education:

..While an emphasis on technology is important, I hope that journalism programs will not forget about teaching people how to be a reporter. A young j-school graduate can know everything there is to know about the newest technology, but if he or she doesn't have basic reporting skills, the job offer will go to someone else.

The letter highlights how ideological values are interwoven and part of the fabric of journalism education (see Appendix Z). The letter connects to letters discussed in previous sections, particularly the letter addressing immediacy by Tierney (2001). Immediacy, one of the hallmarks of technological development, is not more important than the ability to report, which is key to journalists' ability to be ethical.

One clear example of an articulation of journalistic ethics

comes in a letter to *American Journalism Review* from Roesgen (2000), of the *Lincoln* (Nebraska) *Journal Star*, who offers a hypothetical:

Your publisher makes a multimillion-dollar contribution to endow a journalism chair at the local university. Does that mean the newsroom can't cover the university fairly and honestly? I've yet to learn exactly how a one-time special section partnership with a civic institution could damage the newspaper's credibility "big time." (pp. 5)

By highlighting newspapers' civic connections via financial contributions to the institutions they cover, the letter points to an issue of ethics (see Appendix AA). Ethics represent the struggle between journalists as people employed by newspapers that do business and people who are objective, autonomous public servants. Ethics is also about weighing the needs of others and finding balance. This letter calls attention to ethics as a value composed of other values.

Additionally, ethics surface as the subject of *The Dallas Morning News* columnist Wetteinstein's (1999) letter to *Editor & Publisher*. She writes that her work as a journalist leaves her especially concerned: "Media outlets are competing to win ratings (read revenues) by seeing just how far they can lower the bar—without getting hurt—particularly when covering celebrities" (p. 21). Journalists are not being unethical—media

businesses are the problem. Wettenstein separates individual guardianship of journalism's ideological commitment to ethics from the broader media system (see Appendix BB). Thus, her letter suggests how ethics can be summoned to defend against the profit imperative that is an inherent contradiction for the practice of ethical journalism.

Evaluating research question 1: what are the sources that inform how people whose job title is "journalist" talk about who is a journalist?

Based on the preceding analysis, it can be concluded that many public and private sources inform how journalists describe who is a journalist. The ideological sources are as varied as the definitions they offer, and three – work, education, and nostalgia – are worthy of special attention here. First, journalists' work and the experiences that result from their labor inform the ways they describe who is a journalist. In their signature lines, the text of their letters, or both, job titles and places of work are referenced by all the journalists whose letters serve as data for this analysis. As a result, the letters uphold the longtime, ideological practice that stipulates work as a journalist is a source for defining journalists.

It is unsurprising that journalists reference their employment as a source that informs their descriptions of

journalists. As seen in the literature review in Chapter 2, employment and work experience has long been a key factor in defining journalists, including definitions provided in the law, in scholarship dedicated to journalists, and by practitioners of journalism. Additionally, on-the-job training (Gaziano & Coulson, 1998) and repetition (Skinner, Gasher & Compton, 2001) are among the media industry practices that supply journalists with cultural knowledge about who is a journalist (Schudson, 2001).

Throughout the history of the United States, journalists resisted licensure and certification as keys to accessing the title of "journalist" and instead rely on their work – both as a product and a job title – to qualify as journalists. To illustrate, Rosenstiel (cited in Barton, 2002) explains how to identify a journalist: "You can't say, 'I'm a journalist, here's my press pass.' You have to say, 'I'm a journalist, here's my work'" (p. 11). Ideology encourages journalists to rely on definitions that are at once fixed and in flux. Codes of ethics created by news agencies and industry associations illustrate how work experiences influence journalists' definitions of journalists. Many of these codes were created when journalists' work suffered, and the codes echo the ideological values outlined by Deuze.

Across the spectrum of data, employment by newspapers and

work in online news is a source that informs how the journalists define journalists in their letters. For some of the writers, this is as simple as the use of in-group language through references that place the journalists inside the community of journalists. For example, Downes (2001) and Robertson (2008) identify themselves as journalists through use of the word "we" to describe journalists. Some of the letter writers take this a step further and directly reference their employment as insider knowledge. Thomason (2008) refers to "our industry" and Efron (2008) uses the term "our profession" to describe journalists. They are capable of defining journalists because they identify as journalists. Their choice to explicitly identify their work signals its significance as a source of their knowledge.

Second, education is a source that informs the definitions of journalists offered by a subset of the letter writers. Journalists are not required to have college degrees from journalism programs, but a majority of journalists working at newspapers in the United States are journalism school graduates (Dunn, 2012, p. 157). The journalists who reference education in their letters signal the ways journalism education is a source for their thinking about the skills and experiences journalists need to do their jobs. In a related finding, Hanusch (2013) concludes journalism education molds student journalists "into the image of industry professionals" (p. 48).

Analysis of the letters reveals a reciprocal relationship between journalism education and the letter writers' perceptions of journalists. Education is an important source of journalists' definitions of journalists and is referenced across the 10 years that constitute the data studied here. To illustrate, Morgan (1999) describes how changes in journalism curriculum that emphasize technology are important but should not replace courses on writing and reporting. Morgan describes his experiences interview job candidates with extensive prowess in multimedia but lacking in basic reporting skills such as interviewing, data analysis, and writing. The argument here is journalists cannot be journalists unless they have been educated in the foundations of journalism.

The letters suggest education is a source for journalists to gain skills and access to status as journalists. For example, Parker (2003) references the ways "textbook journalism" has been watered down to complain about poor reporting in *American Journalism Review*. Tierney (2001) echoes this assertion when she opines, "There is no love for the written word anymore. The finely crafted sentence has become a lost art" (p. 5). The job candidates Tierney interviews have journalism degrees, but they have spelling errors in their cover letters and need her help in finding the address to send their application packets. Tierney wants journalists educated in the basics of journalism, or they

are not journalists she is willing to hire. For these letter writers, failures in journalism are a result of failures in journalism education.

The letter from Brown (2008) offers the clearest demonstration of how education serves as a source to inform journalists' descriptions of journalists. Brown begins by offering his credentials: former newspaper reporter, retired spokesperson, and journalism instructor. He gives the "current media corp(se) an F" (p. 4). Brown's work experiences inform his educational experiences, which in turn serve as sources for his determination that journalism curriculum needs to change. Education plays an important role in shaping journalists' thinking about journalists, especially when journalists perform poorly. If journalists are not doing their jobs well, the letter writers point to the failures of education as sources of the journalists' shortcomings.

Finally, nostalgia is a source that informs journalists' descriptions of the community of journalists. Nostalgia is a common theme in the letters. It is present in Kimmel's (2008) reference to his "five decades of association with the news business" (p. 5) and Jacobs' (1999) mention of his newspaper's 116 years in business. Downes' (2001, 2008) letters are rife with nostalgia. Downes wants newspapers to revert back to the days before the Internet and leans so heavily on nostalgia he is

unable to see the necessity of the Internet for newspapers' survival. Downes represents the majority sentiment expressed in the letters, but not every letter looks to nostalgia for refuge. For example, Pittman (2000) calls out nostalgia by reprinting an excerpt from a book originally published in 1850. It is as if Pittman is shaking his finger at journalists such as Downes, who are so afraid of change they overlook the fact that journalism has always been a fluid process.

Furthermore, nostalgia for journalism of old is a source for defining journalists, but it also prohibits understanding of quality contemporary journalism practices and the need for fluidity. To review Chapter 2's description of Usher's (2010) conclusions, nostalgia plays a significant role in shaping journalists' self-definitions. Steadman (2004) laments the loss of "shoe leather journalism" as she celebrates Knight Ridder's award-winning journalists who reported on the Bush Administration (p. 4). The referenced to journalism done well through journalism practices of the past reflects a good bit of sentimentalism. While the journalists Steadman celebrates surely walked their beats to track down the story, it is also highly likely they spent a lot of time staring at computer screens analyzing data, sending emails, and scouring the Internet for clues.

It is worthy to conclude this section with a final point

connecting employment, education, and nostalgia as sources that inform how journalists define journalists. This connection is illustrated in the letter by Roesgen (2000), who notes, "some of the titans of our industry managed pretty well without benefit of either journalistic experience or a J-degree" (p. 5). This letter connects with others that gesture to tradition and highlights the fragility of the sources of journalists' definitions of journalism. This analysis points to journalists whose definitions of journalists are informed by their work with or without employment in commercial print media, educated by or absent journalism degrees, and protected or deluded by nostalgia. The sources the journalists studied here use to define journalists rely upon weak boundaries.

Evaluating research question 2: how do people employed as journalists in traditional news occupations define their professional identities and work products?

Based on the letters examined above, people employed as journalists define their professional identities and work products through terms that reference the occupational ideology of journalists (Deuze, 2005, 2007b). In their letters, the writers reference the ideological values of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics as essential to defining journalists. However, analysis of the letters also reveals weaknesses in Deuze's theory and highlights the

shortcomings of normative theory for critical analysis. The following conclusions review the findings for each ideological value and offer critique of constraints and limitations of Deuze's theory.

First, journalists are public servants. The journalists who write letters that are the focus of this study define newspaper journalists as public servants by referencing their sources (Bendix, 1998), their work as records of history (Stevens, 2008), their work creating citizens who are more informed, educated and involved (Record, 2008), their responsibility to reach people (Inglis, 2008/2009), and their service to their community (Grigoriev, 2008/2009). While journalists ideally provide this public service through community coverage, the letters do value online news as a window to the world. The result is a redefined public service mandate that attempts to be more inclusive.

Analysis of the letters highlights the complex and often contradictory nature of the public service mandate that journalists rely on to define journalists. Deuze (2005) notes how the meaning of public service has changed to include the actual public, or people writing news for online, non-profit, "public journalism" projects (p. 447-448). But Deuze seems to miss something key to public service that is highlighted in the letters – its multiplicity of meanings makes it hard to argue

for public service as a normative category. The letters analyzed here reference journalists as public servants who: disseminate truth to the nation's voters; connect to their communities; work at small newspapers, online news sites, and national press agencies; and cover local, national and international news events. The public service definition offered by Deuze (2007b) emphasizes journalists' watchdog roles and is overly tidy about the intricacies of defining this value.

Furthermore, the journalists' definitions are self-referential and informed by their employment status, which inform their standpoints for defining journalists. The journalists' definitions are at times self-reflexive and at others self-indulgent. To illustrate, Thomason (2008) writes that bloggers and online journalists are filled with "all kinds of crap" while community newspapers represent the "trusted, authoritative source of local news with any depth" (p. 3). Thomason is a newspaper publisher, who looks within to offer a definition of journalists as public service. In contrast, the letter from Record (2008) celebrates the original writing and reporting bloggers provide for communities, and she advises *Columbia Journalism Review* to "look a little bit further for your sourcing next time you tackle this topic" (p. 6). Record's account of online news is a direct challenge to Thomason's definition. Record also challenges letter writers who want to

re-inscribe definitional struggles based upon competition onto the public service of journalists and asks them to be self-reflexive.

Second, journalists are objective. Among the qualities noted in the letters, writers define journalists as objective by referencing their responsibility to seek the truth (Quart, 2001; Steadman, 2004; Mickey, 2003). Throughout the period studied, objectivity is an imperative. Objective journalists search for the truth and challenge the status quo. Journalists failed to be objective when reporting on the Iraq war, and many letters criticize journalists for not doing their jobs. This reveals how journalists' performance of objectivity is important to maintaining the public's trust.

Analysis of the letters also reveals the contradictory ways the value of objectivity can be deployed to define journalists. Objectivity defines journalists even when the journalists in question are not objective. This is clear in Quart's (2001) letter when she thanks a *Columbia Journalism Review* reporter for calling out the failures of the national press to report the truth in the 2000 presidential election. Quart references the objectivity value to define journalists who fail to be objective. She writes, "Christopher Hanson, thank you for calling a spade a spade. Unfortunately, it's a bloody shovel" (p. 4). Quart's letter reveals the tautological nature of the

objectivity value: Journalists are defined by objectivity because objectivity defines journalists, whether they are objective or not.

Additionally, the struggles these letters articulate relate to a connection between the public service and objectivity values that is missed in Deuze's (2005, 2007b) theory. This may be in part because Deuze relies on an antiquated definition of objectivity as neutral and impartial. This definition emphasizes balance as a key to objective journalism. According to Durham (1998), the notion of objectivity that is valorized in the United States is has consequences for the kind of objectivity practiced by journalists. Durham describes how objectivity conceptualized as balance denies journalists the ability to access their own moral compasses. Durham explains, "Journalists are expected to simultaneously fulfill their obligations to objectivity and pluralism by conscientiously including a multiplicity of viewpoints in a news story, while carefully excluding any manifest evidence of their own" (p. 119).

Another kind of objectivity is possible and empowers journalists to trust their values, intuition, and reporting judgment. Durham (1998) proposes an alternative interpretation of "strong objectivity" that locates the journalist's standpoint epistemology and transforms journalism from practice to praxis. This dissertation identifies journalists whose standpoints

inform their descriptions of journalists, and this analysis reveals how Deuze's model fails to recognize how their standpoints inform their perspectives. When the journalists define public service and objectivity through the lens of their experiences, they are following Durham and transforming practice to praxis.

Third, journalists are not autonomous, but they should be. Analysis of the letters reveals conflict within the letters about meaning of autonomy that is not addressed in Deuze's theory. To review, Deuze (2005, 2007b) defines autonomy as journalistic independence and freedom. Whether that means journalists need editors is unclear, and the letter writers weigh in on both sides.

In the case of this analysis, it is clear that journalists' definitions of autonomy are influenced by their work experiences. The letter writers define autonomy in terms of employment and journalists' ability to do their job and be compensated for that work. If the journalists work without editors, they define autonomy as freedom from editors. If the journalists work with editors, they define autonomy as editorial oversight. Letters defining journalists as autonomous professionals critique overemphasis on editorial supervision online (Maizell, 1998) while other letters want to restore the "professional eye" of autonomy preserved by editors (Kimmel,

2008). The conflict between the need for editors and freedom from them goes unresolved, and Deuze's theory offers few opportunities for clarification.

Another sequence of letters blame journalism's decline on business and industry pressures (Parker, 2003). When owners are more focused on their newspapers' bottom line than on paying their newsroom employees a living wage, there is no possibility to preserve autonomy. Here autonomy takes a different shape and references independence as freedom from business pressures. Journalists who are beholden to advertisers are not doing their jobs, and their work is not to be trusted. Good journalism is good business, but the letter writers do not want journalists to be in the pockets of business. They want journalism to be profitable and journalists to be impartial.

Fourth, journalists deliver immediate, high-quality work. Letter writers rely on the concept of immediacy to define journalists by referencing the fast-paced news climate (Teirney, 2001) and by differentiating between online concision and print thoroughness (Brody, 2006). Immediacy has long been a key to journalists' work. For letter writers, the advent of online news is at first a challenge to the value of immediacy, but this is largely because online competition is seen as a threat to profits, accuracy, and journalists' autonomy. The letters voice an old woe for newspapers: New competition – be it telegraph,

radio, television, satellite, or Internet – means newspapers have fewer chances to be a breaking source for news.

After the journalists start working with and in online media themselves, online news production is no longer seen as separate competition to professional journalists' labor and products. Furthermore, immediacy is re-imagined as not just a value defined by speed but also by depth and story selection. As a result, the conflict between online and professional journalism is resolved, and immediacy is restored as an ideological principle upheld by the letters. This is of little surprise because immediacy is a defining part of the medium in which journalists work. Media technologies deliver information at lightning speed, so immediacy is valuable as a definitional strategy.

Journalists draw their definitions of journalists dependent upon their industry's changing practices and modes of production, and the ideological value of immediacy has been reshaped and retooled to fit changing needs. The definition of journalistic immediacy through news delivery speed can be reshaped to mean immediacy through proximity to the news topic. The conflict and its resolution are not addressed in Deuze's (2005, 2007b) theory, thus highlighting the shortcomings of the value's normative definition. Deuze's definition relies too heavily on a fixed and ahistorical sense of immediacy as a value

defined by speed. Analysis of the letters identifies immediacy as a value that can be understood in a more complex and less tidy light than Deuze's ideological theory accommodates.

Finally, journalists are ethical. Letter writers use the concept of ethics to define journalists as fair and honest (Roesgen, 2000), as competing voices (Bendix, 1998), as knowledgeable about their craft (Morgan, 1999). Ethics guide journalists' practices and guard the other principles, so ethics bleed into all five ideological principles that define professional journalists. Journalists who are ethical show concern for their community's welfare. Journalists who are ethical provide accurate information. Journalists who are ethical maintain autonomous relationships and avoid the influence of others. Journalists who are ethical provide immediate coverage. In short, journalists who are ethical are good at being journalists and upholding the values that define journalists.

Ethics are powerful tools to define journalists because they guide so much of journalists' daily practices. When defined as ethical maneuvers, none of these strategies is about improving the bottom line and serving journalism's profit imperative. Ultimately, ethics are a crucial tool in the deployment of ideology because claims to ethical practice shield journalists from the business pressures that also influence the

principles.

Analysis of the letters reveals how Deuze's theory oversimplifies ethics and misses the ways the concept of ethics depends upon the other values for its own legitimacy. Deuze notes the abundance of scholarship on ethics but misses the role of journalistic practice in producing the clamor and concern for including ethics as a value that defines journalists. Of all the values, ethics is the most recent addition to the ideological definition of journalists. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, claims to ethics arose largely out of journalistic failures at the turn of the 21st century. Practitioners of journalism looked inside their walls and borrowed from existing ideological values to define journalists as ethical. Ethics is a value that does not exist outside of and independent from the other values.

Evaluating research question 3: how do journalists describe the challenges threatening traditional journalism?

Just as ideology is important to defining journalists, it also helps to identify the challenges they face. First, the threats to journalists' ability to provide a public service are of great concern to the letter writers, and they address many kinds of challenges for traditional journalism. The times are changing for journalism, and the letter writers recognize that communities are suffering as a result. Journalists used to feel

called to do their work, but now it is just another job (Toles, 2000). Newspapers' declining ability to hire reporters, and the resulting increase in publication of non-local articles written by the *Associated Press*, is a concern (Young, 2007). Market pressures are at the center of many writers' frustration, and journalism suffers when readers stop paying for information (Effron, 2008). In short, the greatest challenge for journalism to fulfill its public service mission is this reality: good news does not come cheap.

Second, journalists' ability to uphold the value of objectivity poses many challenges for traditional journalism. When writers call upon the value as a definitional force for journalists, they generally refer to journalists who have failed to be truthful (Quart, 2001; Steadman, 2004,). But their employers' bottom line is the greatest challenge to objectivity. The letter writers articulate the market pressures that threaten objective journalism by noting that truth is the greatest news commodity (Mickey, 2003). The letters call upon one of the great myths of American journalism—that in its heyday it was divorced from the demands of the market, and the economic constraints upon journalists are new threats (Schudson, 2003).

Third, autonomy is another hallmark of traditional journalism that the letter writers seem to think is waning in contemporary practice. However, the writers offer differing

perspectives on whether this is a positive or a negative. Those who complain about the absence of editors in online production are either jealous of journalists without obligations to editors (Maizell, 1998), or they are concerned that professional practices may suffer (Kimmel, 2008). Like the other values, market pressures are also a challenge to journalists' autonomy. When traditional journalists focus more on pleasing audiences than their responsibility to report the news, their work suffers (Parker, 2003). The letters reveal one of the greatest challenges to the contemporary notion of traditional journalism: In the 20th century, autonomy had come to mean a connection with or obligation to an editor, but the original journalists—the pamphleteers—were their own editors, as are many of today's journalists working online. Editors have a rulebook, but that does not mean that journalists without editors are journalists without rules.

Fourth, immediacy is a value where traditional journalists used to have an edge. Ultimately, the letter writers contend that immediacy should be understood to take a complex shape. When the letter writers first discussed immediacy, an over-emphasis on breaking news was eroding newspapers to the standards of supermarket tabloids (Jacobs, 1999). Letter writers critique the ability of online news to uphold multiple journalistic values—immediacy becomes a rush to spread news, and

public service and objectivity are sacrificed as the world's complexities are carelessly overlooked. In later years of the study, however, immediacy for newspapers is understood to mean being close to the news and offering stories people are willing to invest extended periods of time inhabiting (Brody, 2006). Maintaining a competitive edge for audiences in a climate of constant fluidity is less about being first to the news and more about delivering different levels of news through different media.

Fifth, it should be clear that challenges to journalists' ethics are a central concern for the letter writers. This is not surprising given the historical context detailed in Chapter 2. The letters were written at a time when journalists were flailing, failing, and forcing their work in light of some major ethical setbacks. Many of the letter writers decry the ways contemporary practices erode journalist's ability to be truthful and serve the public (Bendix, 1998). Journalists face owners' demands to deliver leaner stories, faster, to increase profits, not news standards (Wettenstein, 1999), and the skills they learned in journalism courses are suffering when technology, not professional practice, is considered the most important (Morgan, 1999). Ethics guide everything journalists do. They are a hallmark of the ideology of journalists, and the challenges to traditional journalism pose challenges to journalists' ethics.

Ultimately, the letters reveal how a challenge to one of the ideological values poses a threat to all the values.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes by drawing implications of an analysis focused on journalism's ideological framework. First, the study highlights what Cormack (1992) describes as the "ideological importance of absences" (p. 32). Cormack offers the example of a bypass to explain the concept of structuring absences (p. 31). A bypass road is created to avoid intersecting with another road, but the bypass only exists because of the place it was created to avoid. Structuring absences are issues intentionally avoided by and also the product of ideology. In the case of this study, profit is a structuring absence. The ideological definition of journalists does not mention profit though many of the journalists who write letters struggle with the value of profit to journalists' work. Ideology guides journalists to resist the market-driven goals of their industry. The ideological definition of professional journalists accommodates this reality by masking it with claims to public service mandates and objective, autonomous, and ethical standards.

Furthermore, just as digital communication is thought to be a potential source of liberation for some groups, it is important not to overlook the ways technology can be used to

constrain them as well. As Schiller (2000) warns, "This utopian vision—Internet as salvation—expresses ancient yearnings. Historical detoxification through scientific knowledge: the truth—information?—will make us free" (p. xiii). Any view of technological development should be wary of assumptions that do not account for history. In other words, while this analysis considers many letters that voice concerns about and celebrations of journalists' relationship with technology, this analysis should not be understood to support a technologically determinist perspective. As Fenton (2010) explains:

A non-technologically deterministic and anti-essentialist approach suggests that studying new media and news still purports that news is what those contributing to its production make it. And this is precisely the point—those who contribute to its production are changing. The social actors involved in the construction of news have expanded and extended outside of the newsroom resulting in the expansion of the locus of news production. (pp. 11)

In other words, journalists have been doing journalism for a long time, and one of their defining characteristics is changing practices and stable values. As Mattelart (1996 [1994]) suggests, "nothing takes us farther from the future than history caught in the obsessions of the present" (p. x).

On a related note, a final letter that is worthy of mention

has not yet been discussed because it did not fit any of the five ideological categories used in the analysis. *Editor and Publisher* printed an excerpt from a book published in 1850 detailing the invention of the electric telegraph (see Appendix CC). This excerpt came from a letter by Pittman (2000):

In the chief telegraphic stations in different parts of the country, besides the transmission of private messages, as sort of subscription intelligence, rooms have been opened, where the subscribers can daily and hourly obtain in common the general commercial information which is most in request, such as the state of the stock and share market, and of the money market; the state of the wind and weather at different ports of the kingdom; shipping and sporting intelligence; the rates of the markets of every description; and the general political news of most importance. ... Thus the public in Edinburgh are informed by 8 o'clock in the morning of all the interesting facts which appear in the London morning journals, which are not issued in the metropolis until 6 o'clock. (pp. 3)

As Deuze (2007a) suggests, journalism is a perfect fit for the contemporary lifestyle that values redefinition and improvisation while cruising the waves of permanent change. The letters uphold Deuze's (2007b) view that the future of journalism will not be shaped by online news alone: "Ultimately,

journalism is not going to end because of cultural or technological convergence" (p. 142). Ideology has a powerful and enduring connection for the definition of journalists.

Whether the potential for publication rests in the hands of few or many, it is worth arguing that the existence of journalists is key to the future not just of quality journalism, but of quality social life. As Deuze (2009) states: "for all its faults and problems, a profession of journalism without journalists cannot bode well for the necessary checks and balances on a future global capitalist democracy" (p. 317). In other words, there is a lot at stake and a multitude of forces shaping journalists' future definitions.

Finally, while it is important not to lean too heavily on perspectives that over-emphasize the potential of online news to reshape journalism's landscape, it is equally important to see journalists' ideology for what it is—a process of naturalization that becomes sedimented over a period of time. Furthermore, drawing on Williams' (2003 [1974]) study of television's deep historical roots, it must be remembered that "Technologies may constrain, but they do not determine" (p. xi). If people can use media to reign in social and economic deviants, it is equally possible that we will be able to use media as a method to bring about productive social and economic rupture in journalists' self-definitions. Judging by the strength of ideology's hold on

journalists' occupational mindsets, it is probably best not to put money on the professionals quite yet. Nearly every letter celebrating digital publishing's liberating potential was reigned back into the framework of established journalism practice and its guiding professional ideology. To borrow from the *Editor & Publisher* headline on Pittman's (2000) letter, the letters offer a reminder: Everything old can be new again.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Ideology and the Paradoxes of Defining Journalists

Despite its morphing face, journalism has been a key part of democracy in the United States since the Founding Fathers granted freedom of the press among citizens' essential liberties. As The Newspaper Guild (2006) attests, "Democracy depends upon journalism." Technological advancements, particularly the Internet, have ushered in a new era of concerns over who is guaranteed protection under the First Amendment. Consequently, defining journalists is a difficult task. The ever-changing dimensions of media leave journalists, whom Seipp (2002) shrewdly characterizes as "card-carrying members of the can-dish-it-out-but-can't-take-it-club," to debate and defend their turf (p. 42). It seems clear that the more media that are included in legal definitions, the more those working in traditional journalistic endeavors lose control over the definitional boundaries of their professional identities. In turn, their pursuit of the news, and the audiences and revenues that follow their work, could suffer.

This chapter provides conclusions based on the findings of the critical textual analysis of letters to editors presented in Chapter 4. This review of findings points to conclusions alluded to but not yet fully articulated in the document. The chapter

concludes with a discussion of the dissertation's limitations and directions for future research as well as a concise explanation of the study's contributions to the field of journalism studies.

To briefly review the work presented this far, Deuze's (2005, 2007b) theoretical framework for the ideological definition of professional journalists, which is detailed in Chapter 2, guides the qualitative analysis of the letters. Deuze theorizes journalists are defined by five prototypical values: public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics. As Bettig and Hall (2012) explain, "Journalism is an ideological institution that functions to support and negate certain ways of thinking" (p. 172). The findings show letter writers make common use of those values, relying on them to establish definitional boundaries for journalists.

The letters vary in the way they reference journalists' ideological values. Some writers privilege a single value when defining the journalist. For example, Mickey's (2003) letter alludes to a single value: "In the end all journalists and news organizations need to remember that the truth is the only product that they have that is of any value in a free society" (p. 7). In this letter, objectivity is the paramount value for defining journalists. Other writers advance multiple values as definitional sources. To illustrate, Wettenstein's (1999) letter

references several values by asserting that journalists “are the messengers entrusted to define and deliver fact-checked, balanced news, responsibly” (p. 21). This letter describes journalists as servants of the public’s trust, who deliver factual and balanced (i.e. objective) news, and they do it responsibly (i.e. they employ ethics to guide their work).

Analysis of the letters reveals how ideology functions to make the professional definition of journalists coherent despite change; though their practices and products might shift, the ideological values that define journalists persist. For example, Record (2008) writes about the public service that journalists perform, regardless of the platform through which it is delivered:

I strongly urge anyone who fears that their old-media days are numbered to look at their new-media options with promise and hope, not dread and fear. So many community news sites are not only helping citizens become more informed, educated, and involved, but are also creating more of an appetite for news and information. (pp. 6)

The letter calls upon ideological values to contend journalists’ work does not have to change even when their methods for reaching audiences do.

Overall, the findings emphasize the ways the ideology of journalists withstands shifts in technology and markets.

Ideology confers validity upon journalists like Downes (2001, 2008), whose letters urge newspapers to destroy their websites so journalists can get back to work informing people. The letters reflect Deuze's (2005) contention that "...ideology in this process of change and adaptation serves as the social cement of the professional group of journalists" (p. 455). Innovators are pushing the boundaries of journalism's traditional mediums, and ideology helps journalists preserve their identities despite change.

Major Findings and Their Implications

This section identifies three main points drawn from the critical textual analysis. First, journalists change their practices and products despite unchanging ideology. Second, letters to editors of trade magazines play significant watchdog roles within the journalism community. Third, static definitions in times of change leave journalists disillusioned about the future. These conclusions are discussed in the following pages.

Changing Journalists, Traditional Ideology

This review of findings begins with the most critical conclusion: There is no such thing as the "traditional journalist." Journalists who write letters to editors reference journalism's traditions, but they reference different and sometimes conflicting portrayals of those traditions. The range of journalists and journalisms described in the letters

illustrate this point. Journalists mentioned in the letters include Joseph Pulitzer, Matt Drudge, John F. Kennedy Jr., pamphleteers, bloggers, shoe-leather journalists, investigative journalists, and hyperlocal reporters.

Changing media, innovations in practice, and challenging markets color journalism's complex history. Journalists who have survived these changes favor innovation, not tradition. The endless growth of media with uncertain terms and uses serves to further blur the definitional boundaries of journalists (Singer, 2007). It matters less and less if journalists write for newspapers, if they have corporate publishers, or if they publish on the front page or in 140-character blasts. Some journalists referenced in the letters do all the things listed in the previous sentence at once, and others do none. Regardless of the journalistic practices, products, and modes of distribution listed in the letters, references to traditional values persist.

In other words, the letters reflect journalism's complexity, ripe with varied practices, modes of production, and subject matter. The letters also reveal the ways ideology maintains its relevance despite technological change. As Dueze (2007b) explains, "Technology is not an independent factor influencing the work of journalists from the 'outside,' but rather it must be seen in terms of its implementation, and therefore how it

extends and amplifies previous ways of doing things" (p. 153). References to "traditional journalists" wrongly represent journalists as monoliths when it is the journalists' ideology—not journalists—that is anchored in convention.

Furthermore, as journalism moves forward, media law and policy need to do so as well. The review of legal sources offered in Chapter 2 recounts how law has slowly shifted to accommodate more expansive definitions of journalists. The literature review shows how law and ideological definitions of journalists are connected. Law and ideology are often reinforced by one another and the social contexts in which they operate. Thus, the ambiguity of the law opens possibilities for changes in the ideological definitions of journalists.

Role of Trade Magazines

The second finding addresses the roles of trade magazines in serving journalists. Chapter 3 discusses studies of trade magazines that find the magazines generally, and their letters to editor pages specifically, play leading roles in ideological maintenance and revision (Haas & Steiner, 2002; Reader & Moist, 2008). Institutions of higher education that are recognized among the United States' top journalism schools publish two of the journals studied in this dissertation. As leaders for their industry, these trade journals should be trendsetters, but many of the letters they publish voice staid views.

Most importantly to this point, as the title of this dissertation suggests, trade magazines' letters to editors pages create spaces where journalists are watching the watchdogs. To revisit literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the watchdog role of journalism has a long history and a variety of interpretations and applications (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995). Trade magazines are watchdogs of the watchdogs, and letter writers are unique contributors to this effort.

Sometimes, the letter writers are critical of their peers. For example, Thomsen (2000) writes to criticize "members of the press who knuckled under to the Pentagon a decade before and now use straw men and smoke screens to avoid confronting their contemptible complicity today" (p. 5). Thomsen is watching journalists, and he is not impressed by their coverage of the Bush Administration. His letter allows him to vent and holds journalists accountable for weak reporting.

Just as writers use letters to condemn journalists' failures, some letters offer congratulations for journalistic jobs well done. Steadman (2004) praises Knight Ridder journalists for critical reporting of the Bush Administration. Steadman writes, "They certainly are deserving of a Pulitzer for upholding the standards of shoe-leather journalism while most of their colleagues were content to beat the drums mindlessly for war" (p. 4). Sometimes, the letters are watching and celebrating.

Here the important issue is accountability. The journalists' letters perform the watchdog role of journalism by offering a public vetting of journalists' concerns, celebrations, and musings about journalists.

Static Definitions, Disillusioned Journalists

The third finding addresses the consequences of static definitions in times of rapid change. Despite ample opportunities for change, the values that shape the ideological definition of professional journalists remain static. Journalists' words about journalists, which consistently reference the values, demonstrate the power ideology has over journalists' identities. The values that define journalists are worthwhile ideals, but they are just that—ideals. When the letter writers reference the values, they are calling for realities that never were, so they are not the ones responsible for questioning the status quo or changing their industry.

Furthermore, static definitions leave professional journalists disillusioned with their industry. Real-world journalism rarely corresponds with normative accounts of how journalists ought to function. The letters to editors studied here demonstrate the consequences of what Usher (2010) describes as journalists' self-limiting nostalgia:

It is pure nostalgia for journalists to believe that corporations ever cared just about the journalism. The good

public information that journalists pride themselves on was paid for by the journalism that made money and encouraged a diverse readership—the entertainment sections, sports sections, women's sections and most of all was supplemented by commercial and classified advertising. (pp. 920)

The letters want to return to the good-old-days of a journalism that may have never been.

As the journalists look back at what newspapers once were and look forward and try to imagine what they will become, nostalgia limits both of these visions. Journalists working for newspapers have done their work because they believe in the ideological values, but ideology prevents journalists from articulating the ways economics influence that work. Journalists work to uphold democratic ideals, but journalists working for newspapers also work for a paycheck. Newspapers are able to pay journalists' salaries because of advertising revenue.

Advertisement sales are not journalists' jobs, but they are not completely independent of them either. The ideological values do not resolve this conflict, and journalists are left to wax nostalgic and paint pictures in their letters of the good old days.

Journalism is a business, and this poses a challenge to journalists' ability to serve the public interest. Jackson (2009) describes the "inherently incompatible" relationship

between journalists and business: "When the news media are expected to be purveyors of the public interest while pursuing profits for their corporate owners, the result often is a clash of capitalist and journalistic imperatives" (p. 158). For example, Parker (2003) expresses frustrations with his profession's low salaries and market-driven journalism. He urges *American Journalism Review* to investigate greedy media corporations, exclaiming, "We need hard-hitting, unapologetic reporting now more than ever" (p. 67).

Ultimately, journalists' ideology is a weak protection against their employers' profit imperatives. The consequences of static definitions are the disillusionment and sense of loss voiced in letters, such as those by Downes (2001, 2008), Thomsen (2000), Thomason (2008), Young (2007), Quart (2001), Mickey (2003), Parker (2003), Kimmel (2008), Jacobs (1999), Smith (2001), and Brown (2008). Rather than looking forward, these letters look back.

Limitations of Study

The limitations of this study reflect limitations inherent in qualitative research. First, the dissertation focuses on letters to editors published during a limited time frame—1998 to 2008—and conditions for journalists have and will continue to change. Those changes may have an effect on the future relevance of these findings. It is also possible the letter writers'

thoughts about journalism have shifted since their letters were published, and this text-specific study has no way of uncovering whether their beliefs have changed.

The second limitation relates to the study's lack of generalizability. The findings in this dissertation should not be understood to be generalizable to all newspaper and online journalists or to journalists as a community across media. Instead, this dissertation is concerned with a specific set of journalists. The findings are limited to a deep understanding of how they define journalists through their words in letters to editors.

Directions for Future Research

This dissertation studies subjects that offer broad opportunities for continued research. The changing definitions of journalists and journalists' descriptions of journalists are areas that researchers should continue to visit for years to come. Changes in the media landscape have catapulted journalists into a new world that offers unique settings to test normative definitions of journalists. Ideological theories of journalists are particularly well-suited to studying journalists in times of change. Future studies can help answer questions of how definitions of journalists change as journalism changes.

Further qualitative analyses of journalists that advance wider, more field-spanning theories of journalists' changing

definitions are particularly needed. Qualitative research on journalists in the United States is dominated by single-site, ethnographic approaches. While this work is laudable, it suffers from a limited ability to understand the comprehensive changes taking place that are reshaping the definition of journalists. Mixed-method, mixed-site qualitative studies could provide more comprehensive understandings of the implications of these changes. For example, the project begun in this dissertation could be expanded to a mixed-methods study that utilizes ethnographic interviews of the letter writers. Editors of the trade magazines' letters pages could also be interviewed. These interviews could offer insight into how the letters are chosen and whether they are perceived to uphold journalistic values.

Implications for Studying Journalists

It became clear over the course of this research that letters to editors published in these trade magazines' printed versions are neither uniformly nor consistently transferred into the digital research databases that often serve as resources for academic studies. To illustrate, seven of the 29 letters included as appendices to this dissertation were transcribed directly from the printed magazines accessed in the bound books at Morris Library. Twenty-two of the letters were accessible online via research databases or the magazines' websites, but seven were not. Not only are trade magazines rarely considered

valid scholarly resources, their letters sections are growing harder and harder to study for those not willing or able to invest the time into archival research. Thus, this archival research highlights a unique kind of media production and hones in on a key topic of conversation in a virtual community long overdue for study.

This dissertation utilizes letters from journalism's recent past to illustrate Deuze's (2005) point: "revisiting an 'old' concept can provide added value to a more comprehensive theorizing of what journalism is, or could be" (p. 458). This analysis builds on and extends Deuze's theory through a critique of the values he identifies as central to defining journalists. Analysis of the letters highlights the need for greater clarity in the normative definition of journalists and suggests the need for two new values to be added to the definition. Even though the oldest letter in the study is only 15 years old at the time of this writing, one significant issue identified by this project is the value of archival studies of letters to editors. Studies such as this one keep alive conversations that could otherwise be lost to time or dismissed as resolved.

As this analysis of letters to editors makes clear, the definition of the journalist is far from decided. Rather, the definition is restrained by an ideology that offers little refuge from the market forces that stifle journalists' creative

and democratic efforts. Journalists, such as the ones who wrote the letters studied here, challenge the journalism industry to be a better steward of the values its laborers work to support.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter from Sturm (2006)

Editor & Publisher, November 2006, 139(11), 4.

Charting a new course

In Jennifer Saba's article, "Readership Ready to Sail?" (October E&P, p. 10), Prudential Equity Research Analyst Steven Barlow argues that "For all the noise made about readership, not enough newspapers are making an effort to measure it."

Prudential bases its claim on the Audit Bureau of Circulations' Reader Profile information, and notes that because some of the nation's largest newspapers don't subscribe to this data, "making newspaper-to-newspaper comparisons would be impossible."

In fact, readership of more than 300 newspapers, including all of the top 50, are measured twice a year by Scarborough Research, a third-party audience data supplier used by more than 500 advertising agencies to evaluate newspapers in their national media plans. Newspapers make significant investments to have their audience measured by Scarborough and other suppliers to ensure advertisers have access to current, credible, and comparable data.

In addition, the Newspaper Association of America's Newspaper Audience Database (NADbase), available at www.newspaperaudience.com, aggregates print and online audience data from Scarborough Research and newspaper Web site data from Nielsen//NetRatings. More than 100 newspapers representing almost all major markets participate in NADbase, including such "notable players" as The Wall Street Journal, New York's Daily News, and the New York Post.

The data are fresh, with updates every spring and fall. The database has been enhanced with the introduction of a new interactive tool built by Scarborough Research that allows advertisers—and Wall Street analysts—to easily generate their own reports on national and local newspaper print and online audience data.

While NAA believes both circulation and readership are important measures of the newspaper audience, simply counting circulation numbers in a vacuum obscures understanding of how consumers actually use newspapers. Competition for audiences in a time of massive attention deficit means that we have to get full credit for all the people we reach and how we reach them. Readership not only is ready for sail as a valid audience metric, but it's charting a new course.

John F. Sturm
President/CEO, Newspaper Association of America
Vienna, Va.

Appendix B: Letter from Downes (2001)

Editor & Publisher, March 26, 2001, 134(13), 23.

Caught in the web

Re: The "Web Race" articles in your Jan. 29 issue. It would be amusing to read all the chirping over breadcrumbs in your stories dealing with Web possibilities if it were not for the fact that the Internet is becoming the wrack and ruin of newspapers.

Talk about a threat hidden in plain sight. While greed-addled publishers are begging for nibbles from minnows at the front of the boat, the shark is chewing the stern to bits.

Millions of men used to buy newspapers each day for the sport scores alone, but no longer: They now get the scores off the Web. Ditto the stock-market reports, movie listings, and entertainment calendars. Those readers are gone now and won't be back. And the newspapers themselves are providing the information that is eroding their circulation.

Then, too, the Web will soon become the home of real-estate ads, auto ads, film ads, legal notices—all of the things that provide jobs (not to mention profits) at newspapers. Many of these advertisers are thrilled that they will soon be able to cancel their newspaper contracts forever thanks to the Web. What happens to newspapers when these engines are silenced?

Hello?

The law of diminishing returns tells us that if we keep eroding our base of readers and advertising, we won't have the revenue to hire reporters and editors, much less deliver a quality publication.

The Webbies have done a fine job of selling newspaper publishers on the emperor's new clothes, but unless newspapers start jealously guarding their valuable content, it's inevitable that they will endure the death of a thousand cuts. Loss of readers and advertisers to a medium that no person in their right mind wants to read for more than snippets of information and the occasional article adds up to a zero-sum game.

Then there's tradition. If the greed-heads in the front office of newspaper chains are so blind that they can't see their own destruction looming in the foreground, consider at least the tradition of Joseph Pulitzer, Adolph Ochs, and Thomas Paine. The Internet's journalistic tradition is that of Matt Drudge. Does any self-respecting reporter or editor really want to work for a Web site?

Newspapers should take their cue from the music industry's battle for survival with Napster and destroy their Web sites en masse. It's time to draw a line in the sand before newspapers have their last stand.

Robert Downes
Editor/co-publisher, *Northern Express Weekly*
Traverse City, Mich.

Appendix C: Letter from Downes (2008)

American Journalism Review, June/July 2008, 30(3), 3.

Confronting the future

Regarding the stories "Maybe It Is Time to Panic" and "Enough Is Enough" in the April/May issue, it's patently obvious how to stop the slide of newspapers into oblivion: Torch your Web sites. Burn 'em down. If people wish to be informed, make them pay for a good, quality product with a 300-year track record—the newspaper.

To borrow a metaphor from the media's current fascination with prostitution: If you're giving it away free out the back door of the brothel, the paying customers will disappear.

It's lunacy for newspapers to post their stories on the Web when there is no viable way to post the advertisements that pay for the reporting. The medium of the Internet simply doesn't support a practical model for the reader to observe ads in tandem with stories and never will.

But 10 years ago, publishers piled on to the Internet bandwagon, believing that if they got a head start with their own Web sites the riches would somehow materialize once someone solved the conundrum of advertising. Now, they're paying for their greed, pumping resources into a bad model for the newspaper. It's similar to the dotcom bubble going bust in the '90s when the geniuses of Silicon Valley learned that people would rather shop in stores than online.

The all-purpose local Web newspaper that is a "must-visit" for readers will never succeed because the Web is too amorphous and the medium undercuts the newspaper's age-old monopoly. Posting a newspaper Web site just adds more gas to the fire of burning down the institution of print.

Newspapers need to spend less time studying technology and more time studying human nature. If there was a national movement to scuttle newspaper Web sites and make our content sacrosanct, combined with a new commitment to jazzing up our pages, you'd see this downward spiral turn around.

Robert Downes
Editor/co-publisher, *Northern Express Weekly*
Traverse City, Michigan

Appendix D: Letter from Stevens (2008)

Editor & Publisher, December 2008, 141(12), 4.

Squirrel those editions away

Joe, As the son of a lifelong newspaperman from Iowa, I couldn't agree with you more. When people want to keep a record of history, young or old, they turn to newspapers.

Paul H. Stevens

Vice President, Central Region, *Associated Press*

Appendix E: Letter from Thomsen (2000)

American Journalism Review, November 2000, 22(9), 5.

Collective amnesia

Thank you for Jacqueline Sharkey's balanced, lively, thought-provoking story on Republican vice presidential candidate Dick Cheney's wartime policies against the press ("Collective Amnesia," October).

It strikes me that there are really two villains in this piece. First, Cheney clearly has no appreciation for journalists and no use for them except as a vehicle to magnify a darker and more self-aggrandizing purpose. And yes, his past oppression of the press is a valid present campaign issue. I can't see how a credible person can contend that his proven willingness to make the press the enemy in the eyes of a docile and spoon-fed public is anything less than a kick at one of the crutches that props up a functioning democracy.

The weak arguments offered against making the past a present issue point to the second, more obscured villain in this sorry episode—the members of the press who knuckled under to the Pentagon a decade before and now use straw men and smoke screens to avoid confronting their contemptible complicity today.

The failure of the mainstream national press to critically examine the shadowy information-dissemination philosophies and strategies of not only Dick Cheney but also George W. Bush, does a tremendous disservice to the American voting public.

In fact, it brings this episode of benign corruption full-circle—by refusing to bring this injustice to light, those members of the media are today as guilty of the same crimes against the citizenry as Cheney a decade before. The crime, of course, is the willful failure to give the American public undistorted, un-self-serving information that's needed to help all of us make the best decisions possible about whom to believe and whom to support—and why.

Jim Thomsen
Reporter, *Bainbridge Island Review*
Bainbridge Island, Washington

Appendix F: Letter from Thomason (2008)

American Journalism Review, February/March 2008, 30(1), 3.

Doing Less with Less

Perhaps what worries me most about our industry is that so many CEOs, COOs and publishers have failed to realize that community newspapers have just one franchise left that we can truly call our own—local news. Sure, there are bloggers and Web sites with all kinds of crap out there, but in most communities we're still the trusted, authoritative source of local news with any depth. But where do the first cuts come? Newsrooms take the brunt of reductions in force because they are not "revenue producers." I would beg to differ. Without our newsrooms and the content they produce, we are merely shoppers. And I would challenge ANY publisher to try to get the same ad rates in a community shopper that they get in a community newspaper.

Rick Thomason
Publisher, *Walton Sun & Destin Log*
Santa Rosa Beach, Florida

Appendix G: Letter from Young (2007)

Editor & Publisher, July 2007, 140(7), 4.

Down to the wire

After reading your May article about job cuts, larger workloads, coverage cutbacks, and more hours spent in the office for the same old pay, I wondered if corporations are trying to turn the newspaper business into a franchise-type operation they control. Especially for traditional newspapers with online content, I have difficulty finding articles written by a local reporter, regardless of which newspaper I read.

Why are nearly all articles posted online by papers written by someone affiliated with the Associated Press? This same article is posted in scores of online newspapers instead of having an article written by someone on staff. It makes news written by a real local newspaper reporter difficult to find.

I also noticed that articles written by real local reporters, compared to AP articles, usually are more insightful and personal, not unlike a local family-owned restaurant is compared to McDonald's.

Dave Young
Chandler, Ariz.

Appendix H: Letter from Roberston (2008)

Editor & Publisher, March 2008, 141(3), 4.

Learning from the little guy

Kudos to Mark Fitzgerald and Jennifer Saba for their story "Small Towns, Big Profits" (February E&P, p. 58). As publisher of a group of community newspapers, I have been concerned for quite some time about the flood of bad news painting a bleak picture of the newspaper industry. Our advertising reps constantly battle the perception that newspapers represent relics of bygone generations.

In reality, our weekly newspapers do quite well. In fact, we recently started a new paper, and it has received a fantastic reception from readers and advertisers. We are so bullish on newspapers that we invested in a new press.

Small papers that concentrate on providing news of relevance to the community can flourish and prosper if they can connect at a personal level to the readers. This good news about the newspaper industry merits bigger headlines.

I understand newspapers face many challenges, not the least being the Internet. Nevertheless, newspapers possess a valuable franchise that others can only envy. Your article provides a blueprint for publishers and editors to follow to increase readership, advertising, and profits.

Let's not write the obit for newspapers prematurely. As Mark Twain might say, the news of our death is greatly exaggerated.

Steve Robertson
Publisher, *The Horry Independent*
Conway, S.C.

Appendix I: Letter from Efron (2008)

Columbia Journalism Review, July/August 2008, 47(2), 6.

Voices of the tribe

When I first saw your cover story ("Lost Media, Found Media" by Alissa Quart, *CJR*, May/June), I figured it was going to be yet another old-media lament about the fickleness and shallowness of new (is it still even new?) media. But I found Quart's piece to be a nuanced and balanced look at both the promise and the downside of so-called Found Media. On the one hand, it is encouraging and even invigorating to see so many (mostly) young people jumping into the journalistic fray, even if they don't make much of a living at it.

At the same time, of course, the apparent demise of a sustainable business model to fund and nurture ambitious journalism poses a serious problem not only for media professionals, but for democracy itself. Our profession needs to move this debate beyond parochial, though significant, questions about job security and pay scales and toward a broader discussion about how, in a digital age when information "wants to be free," citizens don't merely end up getting exactly what they pay for.

Eric Efron
Executive editor, *The Week*
New York, NY

Appendix J: Letter from Record (2008)

Columbia Journalism Review, July/August 2008, 47(2), 6.

Voices of the tribe

Heavens, not another article about how bloggers are all young, and mostly unpaid, and recycling others' hard work. Please look a little bit further for your sourcing the next time you tackle this topic. We at the West Seattle Blog are not so young (a couple in the near-fifty/just-past-fifty range), paid (our ad sales continue to grow), and writing and reporting all original material, with the occasional link only provided if it's something so incredible that it's news all on its own. I'm the editor, and I worked in Lost Media for twenty-five-plus years. I made my own pathway out – although we didn't start our site to escape unfulfilling situations; it evolved because there was an aching community need for up-to-the-minute news, information, and discussion. Quart's article touches on this briefly but not enough, and I strongly urge anyone who fears that their old-media days are numbered to look at their new-media options with promise and hope, not dread and fear. So many community news sites are not only helping citizens become more informed, educated, and involved, but are also creating more of an appetite for news and information.

Tracy Record
Editor/co-publisher, *West Seattle Blog*
Seattle, WA

Appendix K: Letter from Inglis (2008/2009)

American Journalism Review, December 2008/January 2009, 30(6),
3-5.

The elite newspaper of the future

Philip Meyer's "The Elite Newspaper of the Future" (October/November) was very enlightening to me, but perhaps not in the way he intended. I absolutely agree with his assessment that "the newspapers that survive will probably [have] some kind of hybrid content: analysis, interpretation and investigative reporting in a print product that appears less than daily, combined with constant updating and reader interaction on the Web." And I agree that "the information age has created a demand for processed information. We need someone to put it into context, give it theoretical framing and suggest ways to act on it." Newspapers' core audiences will indeed be "the educated, opinion-leading, newsjunkie" people who "demand ... quality" that goes beyond "stenographic coverage of public meetings, channeling press releases or listing unanalyzed collections of facts."

But rather than being earthshaking in itself, I would argue that his apparently recent realization of these truths of the modern media market tells us a great deal about what has gone wrong in the mainstream media. Meyer's ideas could have been taken verbatim from the editorial and business plans of any of the hundreds of alternative newspapers around the country--many of which have been flourishing for years.

Now comes Meyer, saying the work we in the alternative press have been doing for years is the "future," even the "elite"! The daily papers that have turned up their noses at our work may now not only acknowledge our existence, but deign to follow our lead in search of what we already have: a sustainable model with extremely high print readership and rapidly growing audiences online!

Jeff Inglis
Managing editor, *Portland Phoenix*
Portland, Maine

Appendix L: Letter from Grigoriev (2008/2009)

American Journalism Review, December 2008/January 2009, 30(6),
5-6.

The elite newspaper of the future

This note is in response to Philip Meyer's article "The Elite Newspaper of the Future." It's very interesting to see a deeper historic analysis of newspaper readership ebb and flow, particularly the link between readers and quantity of reporters. Similarly, he makes a good case for newspapers holding "all of their eggs in one basket," by leaning heavily on classified advertising over the last 25-plus years. While I agree that newspapers must cut out a niche of core strength, I differ strongly from Meyer's point that core function is community influence.

I work at *Outside.in*, which is a Web site that aggregates both newspaper stories and blog posts about neighborhood happenings, and organizes them by location. Readers of the site can get a city, neighborhood or even block view of news happening around them. This facilitates the simple sharing of local news and members of a community becoming better informed and connected to one another. Citizen journalists have stepped into the role of hyperlocal news reporter, when local papers have cut resources, shied away or simply ignored certain local beats. These folks provide a great service to their community, and in some cases have acquired hundreds of thousands of readers to their credibility, timeliness and, yes, trust.

As an alternative, I believe the real core strengths of national papers are deep investigative journalism and the editorial section. As Meyer points out himself, the "educated, opinion-leading, news-junkie core of the audience" will continue to demand quality reporting that has a high barrier to entry (sending reporters across the state and country; giving them time to report a story; having close ties with important entities) and high expectation of accurate, unique, and informative reporting.

Nina Grigoriev
Outside.in
Brooklyn, New York

Appendix M: Letter from Quart (2001)

Columbia Journalism Review, March/April 2001, 39(6), 4.

Media malfeasance

Thanks to Christopher Hanson for "All the News That Fits the Myth" (CJR, January/February). I used to be so proud of America's free press. Then I found myself reading lie after easily detectable lie. There would have been no election coup if the press had told the truth.

Christopher Hanson, thank you for calling a spade a spade. Unfortunately, it's a bloody shovel.

Abigail Quart
Salon.com
New York, New York

Appendix N: Letter from Steadman (2004)

Editor & Publisher, May 2004, 137(5), 4.

Kneel and be knight-ed

The nation owes a debt of gratitude to the Knight Ridder editors in Washington, D.C., and reporters who refused to parrot the Bush administration's line regarding Iraq but actually checked out facts and reported the results. They certainly are deserving of a Pulitzer for upholding the standards of shoe-leather journalism while most of their colleagues were content to beat the drums mindlessly for war.

As a former journo and concerned citizen, I want to thank the Knight Ridder team for withstanding what must have been tremendous pressure to conform and for consistently seeking out and reporting the truth. Knight Ridder has set the standard by which all others must be judged.

Ethel Steadman
Virginia Beach, Va.

Appendix O: Letter from Mickey (2003)

American Journalism Review, June/July 2003, 25(5), 7.

Not doing the job

I would like to note that the TV networks didn't do their jobs during the Iraq war, and the sad fact was that the best news coverage on the subject of the war was to be had on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart." A comedy show practically broke the story on the Halliburton no-bid contract connection to the Bush administration.

Both Fox and CNN and all of the national network news served up nothing more than sanitized propaganda for the Bush administration.

In the end all journalists and news organizations need to remember that the truth is the only product that they have that is of any value in a free society. The networks failed to show America its war and its consequences.

Joe Mickey
Reporter, *Fort Bragg Advocate News*
Fort Bragg, California

Appendix P: Letter from Maizell (1998)

American Journalism Review, March 1998, 20(2), 5.

Online journalism

The concerns expressed regarding online "pamphleteers" ("Without a Rulebook," January/February) not having to undergo the checks of an editor seem as much a matter of jealousy as concern for accuracy. This country was, in large part, founded by pamphleteers.

Concerns about linking to sites that are related to stories are misplaced. A print newspaper story that refers people to works discussed in the story is not presumed to be endorsing them. Why should that differ online?

In addition to privacy concerns about cookies, there's a matter of principle: Web sites should not be storing information on my hard drive without my permission, or using it for their own purposes. The *New York Times*, which won't permit access without setting a cookie, is causing itself problems, wasting effort and money.

Why should we accept Webmasters tracking our movements around a site, when we wouldn't tolerate a store manager following us around to see what we're looking at? If we make a purchase they have a record of it, which should suffice.

I sometimes accept cookies, but delete them later. Less experienced users may have no idea about the subject at all, so are not in a position to make an informed decision.

That the *Times* gets a few when on-line readers buy something from their advertisers—or from a link in a book review—doesn't bother me. If they start to provide only good reviews, in order to increase revenue—that's another story.

Jerry Maizell
Near North News
Chicago, Illinois

Appendix Q: Letter from Parker (2003)

American Journalism Review, May 2003, 25(4), 67.

Not enough money

Please do not publish any more stories like "Vacancies in Vacaville" unless you get the basics down. How could the writer and editor(s) not think to interview MediaNews Group (the owner of the Vacaville Reporter) to get its executives' views of why they think paying journalists McDonald's-level salaries (or less) is aiding the American public? Owners control the purse strings, and it's a basic rule of journalism to "follow the money" for answers.

Please do not be afraid to ask the tough questions and demand high standards when dealing with our profession's woes. The real problem with American journalism is that it has become market-oriented and -driven. The resulting goal of pleasing our readers, viewers and listeners has watered down the textbook journalism most of us learned. Please don't let AJR fall into this hellhole. We need hard-hitting, unapologetic reporting more than ever.

John Parker
Copy editor, *Oklahoma Gazette*
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Appendix R: Letter from Kimmel (2008)

Editor & Publisher, September 2008, 141(9), 5.

Leave it to the pros, please

Steve Outing's idea ("Stop the Presses," July 25) to use Web-fed "eyewitness" reports "from the community" along with the reporters' stories opens up a can of worms. In a time when news staff is being cut and harried reporters often are asked to update stories online, who could judge who was a genuine eyewitness contribution, as opposed to a phony one?

I think it is going a bit overboard in trying to integrate basically unfiltered content adjacent to a Web story in order to conjure up more community involvement. Perhaps my five decades of association with the news business has left me a trifle skeptical and resistant to change, but I believe a professional eye is necessary to determine what is fact and what is fiction. And there may be too few "eyes" to handle the job suggested.

Bob Kimmel
Tarrytown, N.Y.

Appendix S: Letter from Jacobs (1999)

Editor & Publisher, April 17, 1999, 132(16), 33.

The opening session of E&P's Interactive Newspaper Forum in Atlanta (Feb. 17-20) held a disturbing discussion about accuracy and credibility of Internet publishing. As one speaker put it, Internet users "are more interested in immediacy, not accuracy. ... Users know errors will be made and if there is an error, it can be corrected immediately." The disturbing part of the comment is that with the exception of one individual from the audience, no one disagreed! If this is the attitude of our newest media, all of us are in trouble. My newspaper celebrated its 116th birthday yesterday. It has survived this long only because of the trust and credibility we have established with our readers. The rush to competitive journalism has lowered the stature of our profession to all-time lows due to the loss of trust from the general public. This 'damn the torpedoes, all speed ahead' attitude of our newest medium will continue that downward spiral and relegates us all to the supermarket tabloid status in the eyes of our most cherished asset—our readers.

William O. Jacobs
Editor and publisher, *Daily Leader*
Mississippi

Appendix T: Letter from Tierney (2001)

Columbia Journalism Review, July/August 2001, 40(2), 5.

The new English

Failing prospective job candidates for misspelled words in their cover letters: Andrew Cohen must be mad!

His article really stuck a chord with me.

In my years as a magazine owner I've acquired some of my own pet peeves when it comes to hiring able bodies. Example: Prospective candidate calls on the phone, says he wants to send in a resume, and proceeds to ask for our address. My response is to tell him that his first test toward getting hired is to find our address. Sometimes I even give a hint that the address can be found in the very magazine or which he wants to work.

Unfortunately this situation is just a symptom of a much larger problem. "Give me the news but give it to me quickly," the audience seems to be saying. They're now satisfied with fast clips and sound bites, or in the case of print, headlines, photo captions, and short stories. There is no love for the written word anymore. The finely crafted sentence has become a lost art.

Elaine Tierney
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Appendix U: Letter from McKenzie (2008)

Editor & Publisher, February 2008, 141(2), 4.

Change is slow, hard earned

When will newspapers quit coming up with seat-of-your-pants answers to do-or-die questions ("What's Needed in 2008: Serious Newsroom Cultural Change," by Steve Outing, E&P Online, Jan. 2)?

This isn't the first industry facing overwhelming change. Ask Kodak. Ask GM. Ask public schools and hospitals. Ask the Pentagon, unions, travel agents, and the mortgage bankers hitting the streets.

Reporting years ago on the American Society for Quality and the Malcolm Baldrige Award program convinced me that with few exceptions, newspapers didn't take organizational culture seriously. Industry practices have been handed down from one poorly trained, monopoly-spoiled generation to another.

Changing culture is long, hard work. We don't have time to reinvent the wheel, or waste 30 minutes with a consultant who should know better.

Kevin McKenzie

Reporter, *Germantown & Collierville Appeal*

Tennessee

Appendix V: Letter from Smith (2001)

Columbia Journalism Review, March/April 2001, 39(6), 4-5.

Media malfeasance

The mass moaning over the missed George Bush DUI story is all well and good, but it is a minor aspect of campaign coverage of Bush. A larger story that had been studiously avoided during the campaign despite the pleas of informed citizens was set to break in a big way on the Friday before the election. Medal of Honor winners Senators Kerrey and Inouye had conducted a press conference calling attention to George W. Bush's year-long absence from his post of duty with the Texas Air National Guard during wartime—a charge that could have resonated with millions of veterans poised to vote. That scandal was obliterated by the lesser DUI story within just a couple of hours.

Over six months prior to the election, the AWOL story was addressed only minimally by a few media outlets, despite the fact that thousands of e-mails, faxes, and phone calls had been made to members of the press and to members of Congress providing careful detail and documentation, including his own damning records that were obtained through FOIA by a citizen activist. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of flyers had been distributed, demonstrations held, and call-ins made to talk radio.

And yet, like so many other aspects of the unexamined George, the national press for reasons we can only assume were sloth, cowardice, or collusion—was mostly silent. In any other profession this would be malfeasance.

We won't be making the mistake again of trying to convince established news outlets to properly inform the American people. We will simply develop more avenues that go above and around the print and broadcast media. Eliminate the irrelevant middleman. (That would be you all.)

Too often now we are seeing citizen activists who are ahead of the pundits and the reporters, who simply burp up superficial stories provided by the spinners. You all can pay attention and catch up, or you can be in the dustbin.

Eileen Smith
Salon.com
Salem, Oregon

Appendix W: Letter from Brown (2008)

Editor & Publisher, August 2008, 141(8), 4.

Opinion is not reporting

As a former Ohio newspaper reporter, a retired federal government public information officer, and one who developed and taught media relations courses, I grade the current media corp(se) an F.

The print media apparently have somehow forgotten to remind themselves that their products are supposed to be newspapers. What we are getting now are too many Page One commentaries disguised as news stories. We used to call them news features. Too many news bylines identify the reporter as a "writer." That is likening a beat reporter to a rewrite person. Neither of those twains meet.

The decisions on Page One material are suspect. Case in point: *The Washington Post* features a Page One splurge in the form of a novelette about the unsolved murder of Chandra Levy on Capitol Hill. The electronic media have the edge in immediacy. The print media ought to figure out why their readers are going for the immediacy first. Perhaps journalism courses need a rewrite.

David H. Brown
North Bethesda, Md.

Appendix X: Letter from Brody (2006)

American Journalism Review, August/September 2006, 28(4), 5.

The future of newspapers

I just read "Adapt or Die" (June/July). As a former newspaper journalist, current trade magazine writer and young person, I am tired of industry analysts blaming (at least partially) the demise of newspapers on young people.

There are plenty of people my parents' age who do not read newspapers on a regular basis. Either one is interested in being informed or they're not. Is this an interest that grows stronger as we age? I am not sure.

I will acknowledge there are fewer young people reading the paper than their older counterparts. I believe it is due to the fact that newspaper reading was instilled in my parents' generation by their parents (my grandparents) who did not grow up with TV, Internet and other places to get news. Even today, seniors are the newspapers' stronghold.

Perhaps newspapers have not acknowledged they are not competing against one another so much, but they are competing for one's free time. There are so many more choices today about how a person can spend his or her time. I have heard newspaper journalists think "it's sad" when people refuse to read the jump for a story. Newspapers have to learn to get on board. Give the information quick and dense. Leave Sunday for the long features when people spend an entire morning consuming the newspaper.

If writers complain they aren't getting to fill their potential by writing long pieces, tell them to turn to magazines. That is, unless they are next in line to bite the dust.

Megan Brody
Staff writer, *Midwest Real Estate News*
Chicago, Illinois

Appendix Y: Letter from Bendix (1998)

Columbia Journalism Review, May/June 1998, 37(1), 9.

The scandal

I found the "What We Do Now" article in the March/April issue to be vastly entertaining. I'm sure the high-level editors and press observers you spoke to were sincere in their lists of dos and don'ts for covering the next big scandal. But let's get real: the next time a big story rolls around, their suggestions will mean zilch to the reporters, editors, and producers in the trenches covering it. They know their first obligation will be to get something, anything, on the air or Web or into print as soon as possible, because if they don't, someone else will.

Can you picture a reporter saying to her editor, "I don't care what Matt Drudge is reporting! Marvin Kalb says we shouldn't run it until we have independent confirmation from two sources, so let's wait"? Neither can I.

The reason we have a First Amendment is because the Founding Fathers assumed that while the press will always indulge in half-truths, rumors, and misinformation, with enough competing voices, something approaching the truth will eventually emerge.

Jeffrey Bendix

Director of Media Relations, Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Appendix Z: Letter from Morgan (1999)

Editor & Publisher, February 13, 1999, 132(7), 23.

Basics at j-schools

Ken Liebeskind's article ("J-schools enter Brave New World," Jan. 23, p. 22) goes into great detail about how the journalism schools mentioned are preparing students for journalism in the coming century.

The article cited instances where j-schools are adding high-tech courses on computer-aided reporting, designing for digital media, etc. These are important courses.

I am concerned, however, if j-schools are losing sight of the importance of the reporter's ability to actually write and report. I have interviewed students whose knowledge and skill with multimedia and current technology far exceeded mine. However, they lacked basic reporting skills such as the ability to interview, analyze data, and write a good article. Some of the interviewees were more interested in the technology of reporting than in the act of reporting.

While an emphasis on technology is important, I hope that journalism programs will not forget about teaching people how to be a reporter. A young j-school graduate can know everything there is to know about the newest technology, but if he or she doesn't have basic reporting skills, the job offer will go to someone else.

Clay Morgan

Managing editor, *Bartlett Newspapers Inc.*
Bartlett, Tenn.

Appendix AA: Letter from Roesgen (2000)

American Journalism Review, January/February 2000, 22(1), 5.

The *L.A. Times* controversy

Am I missing something?

As I understand it, the publisher of the Los Angeles Times decided to boost the new sports arena with a special magazine edition (From the Editor, December). I'm assuming the newspaper made a lot of money off congratulatory ads, as many newspapers have done with special sections touting big new civic projects in their communities.

To boost its ad revenue, as well as to show its money was where its mouth was, the Times agreed to share half the ad revenue it received with the sports arena.

I'm assuming the advertising department told advertisers about this, so they could feel they were helping support the arena, as well as the Times, when they bought ads. I'm also assuming that, knowing it was going to share in the revenue, the arena management encouraged advertisers to buy space. Maybe even wrote a letter.

The paper was doing well by doing good. So what's the beef? Ah, now I get it: Nobody told the newsroom!

Shift the circumstances a bit. The Salvation Army is building a new headquarters in your town. Your newspaper decides to run a special section publicizing it. You solicit ads for it, promising to share the profits with the Salvation Army. Is that a monumental ethical lapse? A perversion of the First Amendment?

Or take it a step further. Your publisher makes a multimillion-dollar contribution to endow a journalism chair at the local university. Does that mean the newsroom can't cover the university fairly and honestly?

And what about all those media tycoons who own ball clubs? Are the local teams sacred cows on the sports page?

In all the accounts I've read so far about the "whirlwind" in L.A., I've yet to learn exactly how a one-time special section partnership with a civic institution could damage the newspaper's credibility "big time."

The Mark H. Willes-Kathryn M. Downing team does seem to fumble the ball fairly often, and I share your annoyance at the notion that anybody can run a newspaper. But face it, some of the titans of our industry managed pretty well without benefit of either journalistic experience or a J-degree.

Bill Roesgen

Former publisher, *Lincoln (Nebraska) Journal Star*
Racine, Wisconsin

Appendix BB: Letter from Wettenstein (1999)

Editor & Publisher, August 21, 1999, 132(34), 21.

Boy in the bubble

As a journalist, I'm especially concerned about the role of the press in this new age of "Mourning TV" and "Limbo Journalism." Media outlets are competing to win ratings (and revenues) by seeing just how far they can lower the bar—without getting hurt—particularly when covering celebrities ("Shop Talk at Thirty," July 24, p. 54).

However, John F. Kennedy Jr. knowingly lived "The Truman Show" and chose to exercise and enjoy his role as a user-friendly celebrity and populist publisher to effect public service. He understood the world was his stage, with its attendant positives and negatives. As his forefathers knew best, celebrity and politics are interactive sports. To get elected—and perpetuate family legacy—they are dependent on their partnership with the public and the media.

It's our expectations that the media are the messengers entrusted to define and deliver fact-checked, balanced news, responsibly—even in celebrity stories.

Beverly Wettenstein
Columnist, *The Dallas Morning News*

Appendix CC: Letter from Pittman (2000)

Editor & Publisher, October 30, 2000, 133(44), 3.

Everything old is new again

In the chief telegraphic stations in different parts of the country, besides the transmission of private messages, as sort of subscription intelligence, rooms have been opened, where the subscribers can daily and hourly obtain in common the general commercial information which is most in request, such as the state of the stock and share market, and of the money market; the state of the wind and weather at different ports of the kingdom; shipping and sporting intelligence; the rates of the markets of every description; and the general political news of most importance. ...

Thus the public in Edinburgh are informed by 8 o'clock in the morning of all the interesting facts which appear in the London morning journals, which are not issued in the metropolis until 6 o'clock. (Excerpted from "Electric Telegraph" in Dionysius Lardner, "Railway Economy: A Treatise on the New Art of Transport," London, 1850, reprinted New York, 1968, pp. 306-7)

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