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This has proven to be a challenging century for constitutional democracies. In the fifteen years since the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy was established, a series of crises have the rattled public confidence in representative government. There are complex origins to the economic, geopolitical and electoral challenges that liberal democracies face. But many today point to a common factor exacerbating them all: our changing media environment, and the loss of broadly credible information sources.

For decades, democratic societies have relied on the press to inform citizens about their political system and to keep democratic communication and deliberation alive. Professional journalists convey vital facts about the world and its happenings, creating a shared understanding of reality; they also hold the powerful to account. Newsprint and television coverage likewise set the agenda for private and public discussions, from the kitchen table to the internet feed. At a time of destabilized narratives and fading institutional norms, the news media should serve as an additional set of guardrails, keeping our democratic societies from veering off course.

But lately, there are signs that journalism is losing its capacity to play this role. Only one-third of US respondents say they trust the news media in general, down from around three-fourths in 1976. For those on the Right of the political spectrum, that number is down to 14%. Meanwhile, large majorities in democracies around the world rank the spread of disinformation as a primary concern. The erosion of trust in media can partly be traced to the ease with which digital communications have propagated falsehoods. But declining public confidence in institutions as sources of factual information—whether they be traditional news outlets or scientific authorities—is also the symptom of highly polarized political systems. As one observer put it recently, the press has not been silenced in our political system; it has been discredited. And if that is so, the implications for democracy are dire.

To address these timely issues, the Clough Center adopted "Journalism and Democracy" as its annual theme for 2022-23. Both the Center's programming, and the research of our student Fellows, have focused upon this topic, culminating in our March Symposium—and in this volume. The collaborative work of many Clough Fellows, it explores the center's annual theme from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, reflecting the breadth of its contributors' research interests. Sometimes in broad strokes, and sometimes in pointillist detail, the authors investigate how the dynamics of journalism and democracy have played out in the past and in the present, from individual cities in the U.S. to the contemporary public spheres of Brazil and China. They highlight the crucial role of the media in every aspect of democratic life: as a mechanism of political mobilization, a shaper of religious identity, a conveyer of economic information, and a driver of public trust in our institutions. The contributions are organized into three thematic sections: I. Reporting on the Body Politic; II. Newsprint as Democratic Fabric; and III. Shaping the Mind of the Citizen.

To complement the Fellows' essays, this volume also includes highlights from the Center's public events on "Journalism and Democracy." First among these is a keynote address by Michael Schudson of Columbia Journalism School, one of the country's leading media scholars, who offers a panoramic view of what democracies should expect—and not expect—from the press and news media. Next, a journalists' roundtable grants a unique transatlantic perspective on the challenges faced by democracies, and journalists, internationally. It features Tiziana Dearing, host of Radio Boston on WBUR; Piotr Smolar, US correspondent for the French newspaper, *Le Monde*; and Renée Graham, opinion columnist at the *Boston Globe*. Finally, readers can peruse an interview with Jim Acosta, CNN Anchor and Chief Domestic Correspondent, who makes an impassioned plea for truth based on his trying experiences covering the Trump White House. Overall, the volume offers a rich sample of the ideas and dilemmas that motivated this choice for our annual theme. While its contributors are sometimes critical of the press, the cumulative effect is a celebration of journalism's role in preserving public conversation and promoting accountability in democratic institutions and societies.

WHAT VALUES GUIDE - OR SHOULD GUIDE - JOURNALISM IN A DEMOCRACY?

MICHAEL SCHUDSON
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Keynote Address delivered at the Clough Center Workshop, "Renewing Journalism, Restoring Democracy" (September 2022)

I am asked to reflect on what my studies of journalism add up to in this age of peril both to American constitutional democracy and to principles that I once believed to be our common heritage and our common cause of "liberty and justice for all". I bring you no magic resolution of today's crisis for journalism—or for democracy. I will just try to put a few things in perspective as preface to the important year-long dialogue that the Clough Center has planned.

I once wrote that journalism does or should do six or seven things to serve democracy. These are transmitting information, offering political advocacy, investigating, analyzing, providing a public forum, conveying social empathy for other people and groups of people with whom we share the planet but about whom we know little, and explaining how constitutional democracy works. I think mainstream journalism makes admirable contributions to the first six of these seven public services. And, I would add, better, more full-bodied contributions since the 1970s than at any prior time in American history, notably, in a commitment to analysis and investigative reporting. The golden age of both is the past 50 years, more impressive than at any prior time.

The seventh function—explaining how constitutional democracy works—is one the mainstream press past and present has largely ignored in its voting-and-elections-centered view of politics. Much of contemporary governing stands at a remove from voting and elections. It takes place in the huge administrative state, in the capacity of public and private interest groups to seek political objectives through lobbying and litigation; and in the changing role of citizens as they exercise their political interests 365 days a year rather than at the voting booth every few years.

Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, objected to my list of six or seven things journalism does for democracy. He is much closer to working journalists from all over the world than I am, and he asked, how about journalism tries to do ONE thing for democracy and do it well? How about it provides information to help citizens navigate the political world? Why don't we urge journalists to do this one thing well for democracy rather than six or seven things badly? I found this an important objection. I take from Nielsen the general caution that we should not inflate the role of the media either for good or bad, and that it should not try to do more than it realistically can.

The media matter, in fact, matter more than ever, but it is damnably difficult to specify just how or how much. It is also hard to recognize how dramatically the practice of journalism has changed

over time. We're in the midst of a huge digital revolution and, important as it is, it has blinded us, lay people and scholars alike, to how great have been the changes in journalism that immediately preceded the digital era. Let me share a sentence from a reference work on online journalism that gives you the flavor of this blindness: "it is now clear that newspaper and print journalism ... cannot continue in the same way as if nothing has changed in the last twenty years or so. For almost three hundred years it followed more or less the same principles, the same routines of production, the same 24-hour news rhythm, the same way of addressing its audiences, the same structures for reporting the news." What have media historians been writing about if nothing of any importance has changed in the 300-year stretch of Western news organizations before the digital transformation?

Let me quickly remind you that 1) early newspapers were weeklies and there was no 24 hour news rhythm, and most printed news was weeks or months old and randomly assembled; 2) early newspapers had an editor-publisher-printer who had a voice but otherwise no one in the newspaper addressed the audience of actual readers in a given location at all as there were no reporters and most news items were reprinted from other newspapers hundreds or thousands of miles away, and most printers did their best to avoid controversy; 3) the summary lead was invented in the late 19th century; interviewing on the record was also of late 19th century origin; 4) objectivity became an articulate ideal in journalism in the 1920s, not earlier; and 5) investigative reporting was rare until the late 1960s and until then practiced more outside than inside the mainstream press.

So how do we tell the story of American journalism? Once upon a time, in America, a group of heroes known as "the founding fathers" battled an evil king to bring forth a democracy. They recognized the inestimable value of newspapers for informing citizens about public affairs so that democracy could work. They wisely encouraged the press to engage in fearless reporting to hold government accountable to the people. Ever since, despite some ups and downs, U.S. journalists have done their duty to democracy. That story, of course, is a fairy tale. The journalism that merits our admiration and our gratitude today is an achievement that the founding heroes never knew and would not have recognized. It is a product of 19th- and 20th-century changes in the work that journalists do. We misunderstand this history. There is a business history of journalism, and it is important. There is a technological history of journalism, but journalism matters in the world not because it is commercial (or sometimes non-profit), nor is its influence defined by print technology or by telecommunications or by digital technology, or various hybrids.

The journalism that matters most is the product of key literary and social practices and central professional ideals that emerged in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Most people in most countries in the world including the United States get most of their news from television, with online news increasingly important. But most of this news is actually gathered and produced by newspapers and wire services. These remain in 2021 the primary producers of original news reporting. Even when people access their news from Google or Facebook or a television network, legacy news organizations—primarily newspapers — originate the lion's share of the news people receive, sometimes at the cost of millions of dollars and sometimes at the cost of journalists' lives.

Professional journalists may or may not have strong political allegiances, but they are invariably committed to a central professional norm, whether they call it "objectivity" or "fairness" or "balance." They put reality before politics. This is not the only sort of journalism, it is not the only valuable sort of journalism, but it is the heart of what makes the whole news industry matter.

The ideal of objectivity came to be an articulated principle of journalism only in the 1920s. People have loved to attack it ever since. Consider Rebecca Solnit, a wonderful writer and journalist, who declared, "Objectivity is a fiction that there is some neutral ground, some political no man's land you can hang out in, you and the mainstream media. Even what you deem worthy to report and whom you quote is a politi-

cal decision.... There is no apolitical, no sidelines, no neutral ground; we're all engaged." Well, at some level, that's true and worth acknowledging, but it's also deeply incomplete as well as cynical. Yes, we all have our underlying subjectivities. But that's exactly why we develop imperfect but pretty effective ways of holding subjectivity in check, not only individually but socially and collectively.

I have defended the ideal of objectivity in my work, and I do so still today, but I am as guilty as anyone in presenting objectivity as the reigning monarch in American journalism, neglecting other values that matter to journalists. What are other loyalties for journalists besides objectivity? I will just take up three here. First, there is a loyalty that shares the throne with objectivity – the value of engaging audiences through story-telling. Second, there are values that I'll call "civility" values that journalists hold because they are people as well as journalists. I'll illustrate some of these. And finally, there are some presuppositional loyalties – to democracy, to national patriotism and increasingly to diversity and inclusion. I'll focus on the presuppositional value of democracy.

I. STORYTELLING OR EMOTIONALITY IN THE NEWS

Journalists are not and never have been simply people who inform others about significant new developments in public affairs in a timely fashion. They are equally people who try to communicate with people, and that means more than just dropping news items in their laps. It means trying to touch people. Most of our news organizations do not provide news "items," but news "stories" and stories draw on shared human culture and speak to the heart as well as the head.

I have noticed myself this dual loyalty, the two-headed god of journalism, in my years teaching at the Columbia Journalism School. Both the importance of utter veracity in fact-gathering and in information dissemination, on the one hand, and the pride in telling a story well, with passion and with feeling, and conveying some human truths that are in no way subsumed under the concept of information. In the scholarship about journalism, this point has been made most fully by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, a Danish scholar who teaches in the UK. She examined the stories awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prizes, and found that the prize winners frequently make vivid and deeply felt emotional connections to the news audience. In practice, she found, the US journalism elite who judge journalism prize competitions emphasize the capacity of a news story to touch readers, not simply to inform them.

Let me add simply that journalists not only often seek in practice to forge an emotional bond with readers and viewers but also that they use the word "infotainment" as a term of derision and abuse. Entertain the audience? How ignoble! How embarrassing! What a falling off from our serious and sober enterprise of providing information! In trying to draw a boundary between serious professional journalism and sensational or tabloid or gutter journalism, leading voices in the field sometimes in this way deny a vital element in what they actually do and what they try to achieve.

II. CIVILITY

Journalists often have taken pride in their street smarts, in their willingness to provoke and to go to the edge of politeness, of civility. But there is a history to this, too. Steve Clayman, a sociolinguist at UCLA, and his colleagues examined in detail all the questions reporters have asked at presidential news conferences from 1953 to 2000, looking at how the questions changed over time. And the direction of change was unmistakable. In the 1950s and into the mid-1960s, the questions were mild-mannered, deferential, and meek. Beginning in the late 1960s, they became more aggressive, with more follow-up questions if the President did not answer the original question directly. And the objective of "holding government accountable" became a central part of journalism – as it simply had not been earlier. The term "watchdog journalism" does not appear in any books coded by Google Ngram before 1959 and the term comes into widespread use only in the 1990s. The term "accountability journalism" also emerged only in the 1990s.

The most important change in the content of journalism in my lifetime was not generated by new technology. It was the shift to a more investigative and more analytical journalism that is largely a product of the late 1960s through the 1980s. Most credible observers take journalism from the 1970s on to be stronger, tougher, more thoughtful than at any earlier time in U.S. history. Major metropolitan daily newspapers publish more serious investigative work today and since the 1980s than any of them did before 1970.

Civility is mostly taken for granted in journalism, but in both these respects – civility of deference to elected office-holders and civility of polite language – journalism changed sharply somewhere around the late 1960s. The civility of deference reaffirmed a social and political hierarchy and it also protected elites from their own crude behavior and language by simply deleting it in reports to the general public. In short, journalists censored themselves. They knew facts that they omitted—in the service of civility, to put it in a high-minded way, or to maintain access to powerful sources, to portray it as self-serving.

In a strict sense, there can be no justification for this self-censorship. Consider the remarks of Dean Baquet when he was managing editor of the *Los Angeles Times* and made the decision to go ahead to publish a story on accusations of sexual harassment against then candidate for governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. In a later interview Baquet observed, "Sometimes people don't understand that to not publish is a big decision for a newspaper and almost a political act. That's not an act of journalism. You're letting your decision-making get clouded by things that have nothing to do with what a newspaper is supposed to do." In a word, Baquet argues here, politics is one thing and journalism another. Journalism is not politics. What gets published gets published because it is something that has actually been said or done that journalists deem newsworthy.

III. PRESUPPOSITIONAL VALUES: CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE PRESERVED

At different times in U.S. history, the news media have served democracy in different ways. For most of the 19th century, newspapers were closely connected to political parties or factions of political parties and they took their job to be advocacy. It was only in the 20th century that journalism appeared to be guided by a sense of professionalism, dedicated to advancing the best concept of truthfulness. And from about 1970 on, journalism contended that it could and should present news with a greater emphasis on analysis rather than sheer he-said-she-said journalism.

The turn toward partisan politics was largely an urban development. By the latter half of the 19th century, an urban press was flourishing as a kind of subdivision of the mass political parties that the U.S. invented a bit ahead of similar institutions in Europe. As the urban press grew, partisanship was well established but journalists were also becoming a self-conscious occupational group.

As such, they began to see themselves as professionals, autonomous, and with a degree of craft knowledge. And in the years after World War I, journalists wrote ethical codes and sought at least the trappings of professionalism. They claimed their fact-centered practices more loudly and sought to enlarge their independence from both the state and from the advertisers – even, to some extent, from the owners they worked for. They rejected partisanship and emphasized fairness, accuracy, balance. Their descendants, like Dean Baquet, insisted that journalism is "not politics."

That, however, is so only if there is a political consensus around certain values – that violence, except in the hands of the state, is to be condemned; that politicians and state and federal officials have an obligation to Constitutional principles; that the President should aspire to serve the public good and not his own personal glory. This means that there are values that can fairly be called political that journalists hold. As Kathryn McGarr argues in a book soon to appear, World War II reporters shared a strong belief in the necessity of internationalism. Washington correspondents were essentially all anti-isolationists

in the years after the war. Their values grew out of the 1930s and a fear of fascism. Their internationalist views grew only stronger in the atomic era. For those covering foreign policy, objectivity took a back seat to preventing nuclear war.

CONCLUSION

Who really wants journalists to reject all values except a kind of meek neutrality, passing on facts of who said what to whom without comment or context? I don't want journalists to be neutral about fact-based evidence, constitutional democracy, and civility. They should favor the former two and practice the latter appropriately.

And when a leader or party explicitly embraces an anti-democratic philosophy or practice and threatens the existence of democratic rule in the country, journalism cannot be neutral. If we reduce journalism to its simplest promise – to provide news as fully and fairly as possible – the underlying assumption is that this supports a democratic politics. US journalists often advance this as the primary rationale for a free press.

The news media in the US are dedicated to defending and advancing some of the freedoms that define not democracy but liberal democracy, and notably the cultural standing and legal protections for free speech and a free press. So news coverage was hostile in 2017 to President Trump's declaration that the mainstream news media were the "enemy of the people." News organizations and organizations of news workers both hold deeply that they have obligations to journalists around the world who are threatened, attacked, and imprisoned or violently harmed by governments or others. Exercising rights of free expression in the service of a democratic public, the journalists almost unanimously declare, is what journalism is for.

The founding heroes of the United States explicitly wanted to establish "republican" government, not "democracy", and they spent much of their effort in writing the Constitution finding ways that elected representatives would be able to check one another, constraining the power of any one branch or level of government from tyrannizing over the others. Indeed, it has been

cogently argued that the central function of the press for democracy is the "checking function"– holding government accountable.

In the end, what do we make of this catalog of the values journalists hold dear? It suggests that a field so public and so engaged with the unpredicted and unpredictable, the wild and uncorralled, the events of the day more than eternal truths, is not going to end up with certainties. It is not going to end up with a single god but with multiple deities who sometimes bicker, who sometimes disagree with one another, who sometimes do not know where they stand, and who sometimes undermine themselves by pretending that their commitment is to objectivity alone. It's not so simple as that and journalism is going to be, like life itself, messy.

I. REPORTING ON THE BODY POLITIC

JOURNALISM & GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Relationship Between Corruption, Democracy, and Human Rights in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

One of the ways that the government influences media companies is through public expenditures on advertisements. This essay analyzes if this way of applying public funds is either detrimental to the ideal of independent journalism and/or should be considered inadmissible under a human rights perspective on democracy. The American Convention of Human Rights (a major legal landmark for the freedom of the press) is used as a benchmark, with a special focus on the current situation in Brazil.[i]

INTRODUCTION

Government sponsorship of Brazilian media has long been used to undermine journalistic independence and create political advantages for some groups in power. After a brief presentation of the relevant legal rules for public advertising in Brazil, this essay will discuss the specific example of *Folha de S. Paulo*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in the country, and will show that the influx of public money at different times affected how news was presented by the newspaper. The essay will then examine how government subsidies are regulated by the American Convention of Human Rights, a landmark agreement accepted as a benchmark in the majority of Latin American countries, including Brazil. The conclusion presents some suggestions for dealing with the problem at the policy level, through a regulatory adjustment—an example that could be followed by different countries as a way of avoiding undue political influence over journalism.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING: A PORTRAIT OF BRAZIL

The current regulation of government expenditures on advertising in Brazil has roots in the country's 1988 constitution. The first paragraph of Article 37 sets the tone for this regulation by declaring that "[t]he publicity of the acts, programs, public works, services and campaigns of government bodies shall be of educational, informative or social orientation character, and shall not contain names, symbols or images that characterize personal propaganda of government authorities or employees." Surprisingly, despite the fact that Brazil's constitution has been amended over one hundred times in less than 35 years, the text of this provision was never touched, so it has been in full effect since 1988.

At the time of this provision's enactment, Federal Statute 6.454, of 1977 already declared that "[i]t is forbidden, throughout the national territory, to attribute the name of a living person to a public good, of any nature, belonging to the Federal Government or to legal entities of its indirect Administration." The clear intention of the new constitutional provision was to prevent the use of public funds to pursue the personal promotion of politicians and their cronies, a practice that, despite being clearly contrary to a republican form of government, had been com-

"had been common for quite a while in Brazil, where the lines distinguishing public and private have always been blurred.[ii] In such a context, the rule from Art. 37 seems like a specific restriction that requires the government to be a non-personalistic political regime, addressing a problem that was presented to the Constitutional Assembly, according to the prevailing interpretation.[iii]

With every restriction, however, comes some form of authorization. Regulating the expenditure of public funds in advertising was interpreted to mean that such advertising was allowed, as long as there was no personal promotion of individuals. Although the problem of misusing of public money to promote individuals, usually politicians, was addressed by this provision, other challenges arose from the consequences of public spending on advertising.

In his comprehensive study of the future of the press, Leo Bollinger stated that "...if public funds are provided, then public control ought to follow logically," further asserting that "... the corruption and distorting power of censorship will manifest itself through controls enacted through the use of the public purse."[iv] Other scholars have likewise analyzed the effect of advertisements over editorial independence and found that it leads to a clear bias.[v] Further authors have bluntly affirmed that many governments use public funds to manipulate media coverage of the government itself, especially in nations without free markets: "In particular, media outlets in countries from Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union and the Middle East are the most affected by discriminatory disbursement of public funds."[vi]

Public money in Brazilian advertising has been at the origin of many recent political scandals. The "Mensalão" case, for example, involved a "votes-for-cash scandal that touched some of the country's most senior politicians - and sent some of them to prison."[vii] The "Blogs Sujos" case involved direct payments to digital influencers so that they would promote opinions favorable to the politicians in power.[viii] Since President Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva's first term began in 2003, public investment in advertisements has expanded considerably. Between 2003 and 2009, the amount spent on advertisements skyrocketed from R$ 796.2 million a year to R$ 1.17 billion.[ix] As a result, it has become common for some Brazilian media outlets to rely on public money, despite being privately owned. Jair Bolsonaro was elected Brazil's President in October 2018 for a four-year term that ended on January 1, 2023. His candidacy for re-election was not successful as da Saliva, who was jailed in 2018 for corruption and money-laundering, earned more votes than Bolsonaro. Living up to an anti-establishment image constructed during his campaign, President Bolsonaro's government cut public spending on advertising. During his term, the amount spent on advertising was drastically reduced. Bolsonaro spent a total of R$ 738 million (as of December 14, 2022), less than Lula spent in advertising during his first year as president (even before factoring inflation from the early 2000s). With the defeat of Bolsanaro, public spending on advertising will likely increase again. For example, a recent reform passed by the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of Brazil's parliament) raised the advertisement spending limits of government-owned companies.

Since journalists' responsibilities to fairly cover the government (and, at times, criticize government action) may suffer from the financial dependence generated by the influx of public funds, it is fair to ask what would happen if such a funding streams were cut off or severely reduced. The next section of this article will discuss an example of a specific media company and its coverage of the government to provide an answer to this question.

THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC MONEY & BIASED COVERAGE: THE CASE OF *FOLHA DE S. PAULO*

Folha de S. Paulo (*"Folha"*) is the largest Brazilian newspaper, "... with the largest printing and circulation among national dailies of general interest."[xiii] *Folha's* Editorial Guidelines officially state that it seeks "...critical, nonpartisan and pluralistic journalism."[xiv] Although this is how the newspaper frames its coverage formally, this was not realized in practice during

Bolsonaro's term: the newspaper was unbalanced, overcritical, and biased in its coverage of federal government policies. For example, the newspaper created new words to avoid saying that the economy was improving after the first period of the COVID-19 pandemic (a journalist used the expression "despiora," which would be something analogous to "un-worsening" in English).[xv] Conversely, whenever referring to former president (and then-candidate) Lula, *Folha* would attenuate many of his controversial utterances, using expressions such as "gaffe" or "falter."[xvi] These descriptions of Lula's remarks can reasonably be considered as a way to minimize speeches that might seem discriminatory to women and people from the countryside. The difference in coverage could be linked to the fact that during the Lula presidency, *Folha* received 185 times more public advertising funds compared to the Bolsonaro administration.[xvii] Data obtained by the Communications Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil show that the amount received from the federal government shrank from R$ 213 million (Lula) to R$ 2 million (Bolsonaro):

President	Term	Amount
Lula	2003-2006	213 mi
Lula	2007-2010	158 mi
Dilma	2011-2014	93 mi
Dilma/Temer	2015-2018	63 mi

The drastic reduction in public advertising funds represented in the above table may have prompted nostalgia for the "good old days" of Lula and his "Labor Party," under which public money was flowing freely to many media outlets, including and especially *Folha*. Even when compared to the more recent term of Dilma/Temer, the public payments for publicity decreased significantly. Though other factors may have also impacted this differential coverage, such as journalists' differential political preferences, this financial discrepancy is significant.[xviii]

The Brazilian case illustrates Michael Sandel's central argument in the book *What Money Can't Buy:* market incentives end up corrupting moral obligations. The example Sandel gives refers to day-care facilities in Israel that sought to address the problem of parents arriving late to pick up their children with a market-driven approach: a fine was created. Instead of decreasing, however, the number of tardy parents actually increased (nearly doubled), since the moral responsibility was converted into a contractual obligation— the fine was interpreted as a fee.[xix] But the worst part, according to Sandel, was that "[w]hen, after about twelve weeks, the day-care centers eliminated the fine, the new, elevated rate of late arrivals persisted." Indeed, Sandel continued, "[o]nce the monetary payment had eroded the moral obligation to show up on time, the old sense of responsibility proved difficult to revive."[xx]

The case of Brazil's public funds being siphoned by media vehicles offers an interesting comparison to Sandel's example. Unlike the Israeli example, the decades-old custom of public advertising in Brazil subverted journalistic objectivity. The practice of allocating huge sums for advertisements paid by the government was normalized in a way that the institutions addicted to such financing understood it as 'the right thing to do.' Instead of market incentives corrupting a moral obligation, an economic incentive corrupted a professional pledge of objectivity. The story of the "secret budget" provides one illustration of this. In a September 8, 2022 piece entitled "Learn What the Secret Budget Is and How it Works" which was published before the first round of presidential elections, *Folha* mentioned the use of the expression "secret budget" in one of the presidential debates. But any reference

to a "secret budget" is technically inaccurate: every part of the federal budget is published in the Official Journal of the Federal Government. This is an example of biased coverage.

After the runoff between Bolsonaro and Lula on October 30, the newspaper dropped the use of the expression "orçamento secreto" ("secret budget") in favor of the more technical expression "emendas de relator" (rapporteur's amendment).[xxi] Not satisfied with the casuistic (and somewhat opportunistic) change, *Folha* made a move that could be drawn from *1984*: around November 4, it retroactively changed the piece from September 8 (without any editorial notation) in order to defend the newspaper's claim that it never used the expression in its coverage.[xxii] The term "secret budget" was replaced by "rapporteur's amendments" in the headline, even though the URL still shows the original text.[xxiii] Later on, *Folha's* Ombudsman criticized the "sudden" change in the use of the expression and questioned the timing of the decision: "it makes no sense."[xxiv]

DEMOCRACY, THE AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS & GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Democracy demands the sincere consideration of human rights in the formation of public policy. For this, the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR) has been recognized as a binding legal document by 25 of the 35 members of the Organization of American States (OAS) and it is a substantial element of the Inter-American Human Rights System.[xxv] Such a landmark document was adopted at the Inter-American Specialized Conference about Human Rights, held in San José, Costa Rica, on November 22, 1969. Since then, the ACHR provisions have sought "... to provide an exemplar for democratic legal systems founded on the rule of law and human rights."[xxvi]

Article 13.1 of the ACHR enshrines the right to "freedom of thought and expression," guaranteeing to everyone the freedom not only to seek, but also to receive information and ideas of all kinds. Item 3 goes beyond stating examples of improper restriction of such a right, prohibiting the "abuse of government controls over newsprint, radio broadcasting frequencies, or equipment" and the "imped[ing] the communication and circulation of ideas and opinions" by any other means. Also, Article 13 of the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression (approved by the Inter-American Commision on Human Rights in October 2000) explicitly establishes that the "...use of public funds by the state, the granting of customs duty privileges, the arbitrary and discriminatory placement of official advertising and government loans; the concession of radio and television broadcast frequencies, among others, with the intent to put pressure on and punish or reward and provide privileges to social communicators and communications media because of the opinions they express threaten freedom of expression, and must be explicitly prohibited by law."[xxvii] In addition, the OAS parameters for interpreting the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression provides that "[t]he State must refrain from using its power and public funds in order to punish, reward, or favor social communicators or the mass media based on their approach to coverage."[xxviii]

In light of these OAS provisions, the freedom to seek information and ideas presupposes that there is a free medium to publish different ideas and perspectives. When the government uses public money to finance media outlets, it generates a market imbalance, distorting the freedom to receive information impartially. This happens two ways: in an environment where the media has been corrupted by public funds, there will be either 1) pro-government discourse (as long as the money keeps coming in), and 2) critical discourse (as long as the financing is withdrawn). Thus, a system wherein media outlets are corrupted by such dependency is legally incompatible with the human rights parameters set by the ACHR, which discusses the application of Article 2 of the same Convention: "the States Parties undertake to adopt, in accordance with their constitutional processes and the provisions of this Convention, such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to those rights or freedoms."

CONCLUSION: A PROPOSAL TO REBALANCE THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The use of public funds to buy advertising in media outlets must be reformed. It is a practice that has been common in Brazil for decades and is even regulated in the country's constitution, but in practice it undermines important values and rights. From a values perspective, it is clear that the use of public money to fund media outlets can have a corrupting effect on journalistic independence. If a media outlet is dependent on the government to fund its activities, it runs the risk of becoming a publicity agency instead of behaving like a real news organization. From a legal perspective, there is a clear incompatibility between such practices and the right to freedom of expression protected by Article 13 of the IACHR, which is reiterated in the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression. Consequently, public money should not be spent on advertising.

In Brazil's case, Article 37 of its constitution should be changed or revoked as a way to save taxpayers money for more appropriate expenses. While the procedure for changing the constitution appears to be arduous, the Brazilian Congress has shown an immense political knack for doing so: there have been over 130 changes made since 1988. A number of the constitutional amendments approved in this period were based on case-by-case concerns and did not relate to human rights. By revoking the first paragraph of Article 37, Brazil's Congress would be doing something rare in its history: rejecting the political interests of powerful government actors and strengthening the independence of journalism. Despite its unlikelihood, it would set a remarkable example for other countries in the world that suffer from a similar lack of independent media.

[i] Brazil, was chosen because of two factors: 1) there is a consistent history of government investment in publicity since at least 1988, with substantial changes starting in 2018 and 2) Brazil is the largest democracy in Latin America, with roughly 156 million citizens eligible to vote in general elections that are held every four years.
[ii] Raymundo Faoro, *Os Donos do Poder: Formação do Patronato Político Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Globo, 2001), 856.
[iii] That has been the prevalent interpretation of such regulation, as exemplified in one of the few rulings issued by the Supremo Tribunal Federal (Brazilian Supreme Court) on the subject. The decision refers to the provision as a rigorous ordinance that was set to ensure the "principle of impersonality" by linking "advertising to an educational, informative or socially orientated character," which thus makes public advertisement "...incompatible with the mention of names, symbols or images, including slogans, that characterize personal promotion or the promotion of public servants." See Extraordinary Appeal 191.668, Supremo Tribunal Federal of Brazil (2008).
[iv] Leo Bollinger, *Uninhibited, Robust and Wide-Open: A Free Press for a New Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 35. See also Michael Schudson, *Why Journalism Still Matters* (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018), 76.
[v] Eric Zitzewitz and Jonathan Reuter, "Do Ads Influence Editors? Advertising and Bias in the Financial Media," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2006): 197-227 See also Schudson, Why Journalism Still Matters, 74.
[vi] Marius Dragomir, "How Government Uses Public Money to Keep Media in Line," May 18, 2017.
[vii] H.J., "What is Brazil's 'Mensalão'?" *The Economist*, November 18, 2013.
[viii] Felipe Moura Brasil, "Quanto Você Paga para os Blogs Sujos do PT." *Veja*, July 2, 2015.
[ix] Rodrigo Rangel, "Gasto de Lula com Publicidade Sobe 48% em 6 Anos," *O Estado de São Paulo*, April 24, 2010.
[x] "What did Lava Jato, Brazil's Anti-Corruption Investigation, Achieve?" *The Economist*, March 9, 2021.
[xi] "Publicidade de Utilidade Pública," available at https://portaldatransparencia.gov.br/programas-e-acoes/acao/4641-publicidade-de-utilidade-publica?ano=2022. According to the Brazilian Central Bank calculation tool, the amount of R$ 100 in January 2003 would be equivalent to R$ 315,14, for September 2022. See "Calculadora do Cidadão," available at https://www3.bcb.gov.br/CALCIDADAO/publico/exibirFormCorrecaoValores.do?method=exibirFormCorrecaoValores&aba=1.
[xii] "Câmara Aprova Projeto que Amplia Limite de Gastos com Publicidade de Empresa Pública," Câmara dos Deputados, accessed December 12, 2022, available at https://www.camara.leg.br/noticias/928216-camara-aprova-projeto-que-amplia-limite-de-gastos-com-publicidade-de-empresa-publica.
[xiii] "Circulation," *Folha de São Paulo*, accessed December 12, 2022, available at https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/institucional/en/circulation.shtml?fill=5.
[xiv] "Editorial Guidelines," *Folha de São Paulo*, accessed December 12, 2022, https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/institucional/en/editorial_guidelines.shtml?fill=2
[xv] See Vinicius Torres Freire, "Despiora no Emprego Pode ter Ajudado Bolsonaro," Folha de São Paulo, April 6, 2022.
[xvi] Artur Rodrigues, "Bolsonaro Usa Nova Gafe de Lula para Atacá-lo no Interior de São Paulo," *Folha de São Paulo*, September 24, 2022.
[xvii] Edilson Salgueiro, "Verba Publicitária: Lula Pagava à Folha 185 Vezes Mais que Bolsonaro," *Revista Oeste*, September 25, 2022.
[xviii] In recent research conducted at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, roughly 81% of the researched journalists declared that they considered themselves politically left-leaning (52.8% as "left" and 29% as "center-left"). See "Perfil do Jornalista Brasileiro 2021", UFSC, accessed December 12, 2022, available at https://perfildojornalista.paginas.ufsc.br/files/2022/08/RelatorioPesquisaPerfilJornalistas2022x2.pdf.
[xix] "Introducing the monetary payment changed the norms. Before, parents who came late felt guilty; they were imposing an inconvenience on the teachers. Now parents considered a late pickup as a service for which they were willing to pay. They treated the fine as if it were a fee. Rather than imposing on the teacher, they were simply paying him or her to work longer". (Michael Sandel, *What money can't buy: the moral limits of markets*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 64-66).
[xx] Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 119.
[xxi] Thiago Resende, Danielle Brant, and Ranier Bragon, "Centrão e Aliados de Lula Aceitam Negociar Mudanças em Emendas de Relator," *Folha de São Paulo*, November 3, 2022.
[xxii] This claim was made on Twitter, and subsequently identified as false by third-party observers. See *Folha de S. Paulo* (@folha), Twitter post, November 3, 2022, available at https://twitter.com/folha/status/1588204514800275457?s=20&t=-1UeHDbtYgKIMkHEG20fWQ; Mastrocinque, (@A_Mastrocinque), Twitter post, November 3, 2022, available at https://twitter.com/A_Mastrocinque/status/1588214442675740673?s=20&t=-1UeHDbtYgKIMkHEG20fWQ.
[xxiii] The original version can be found here: "Saiba que é e como Funciona o Orçamento Secreto," *Folha de São Paulo*, September 8, 2022, available at https://web.archive.org/web/20220908160557/https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/09/saiba-o-que-e-e-como-funciona-o-orcamento-secreto.shtml. The "updated" version can be seen in: "Saiba o que é e como Funciona a Emenda de Relator," *Folha de São Paulo*, September 8, 2022, available at https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2022/09/saiba-o-que-e-e-como-funciona-o-orcamento-secreto.shtml
[xxiv] Ombudsman, "Secret Standard," *Folha de São Paulo*, November 21, 2022.
[xxv] "History," Inter-American Court of Human Rights, accessed December 12, 2022, available at https://www.corteidh.or.cr/historia.cfm?lang=en.
[xxvi] Claudio Oliveira Santos Colnago and Bethany Shiner, "A Distinct Right to Freedom of Thought in South America," *European Journal of Comparative Law and Governance* 8 (2021): 245-270.
[xxvii] "Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression," Inter-American Court of Human Rights, accessed December 12, 2022, available at https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/mandate/basics/declaration-principles-freedom-expression.pdf.
[xxviii] "Background and Interpretation," Inter-American Court of Human Rights, accessed December 12, 2022, available at https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/showarticle.asp?artID=132&lID=1.

CENTRAL BANK COMMUNICATION WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

In the twentieth century, the Fed and other central banks embarked on a "communications revolution'' by progressively increasing transparency. Following the Global Financial Crisis, central banks resorted to unconventional policies, including the management of expectations about the economy's future. Today, we are amidst a second wave of the communications revolution: the inclusion of laypeople in the audience. This article surveys the literature in economics that documents how different channels of central bank communication lead to different engagements with the general public. Communication with the general public brings about new issues for monetary policy: market prices do not always aggregate information, newspapers are imperfect means of communication, and "most people are not obsessed about the central bank; [...] they would rather watch puppies on YouTube."[i]

INTRODUCTION

"Good afternoon. Thanks very much for being here. I know that a number of you will want to talk about the details of our announcement today, and I am happy to do that in a few minutes. But because monetary policy affects everyone, I want to start with a plain-English summary of how the economy is doing, what my colleagues and I at the Federal Reserve are trying to do, and why." Jerome Powell, June 13, 2018.[ii]

The Fed and other central banks used to value the secrecy of their decision-making process. Things started to change in the late twentieth century when prominent central banks increased transparency in a "communications revolution."[iii] In the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, central banks resorted to unconventional monetary policies, including management of expectations about the future of the economy. Today we are experiencing a "second wave" of the communications revolution: the inclusion of laypeople in the audience. Speaking to the general public is important for modern economic policies and for trust in institutions that are crucial for economic growth. This article discusses the main channels through which central bank communication engages the general public, showcasing classical and recent contributions of the academic literature in the economic sciences. We categorize these channels as follows: a Hayekian channel operating through market prices, a news channel operating through various news outlets, and a direct channel governed by the relevant monetary authority.

The Hayekian channel postulates that information held by economic actors is reflected by prevailing prices[iv]. Thus, central bank communication that is already in place – although directed towards the financial market participants and not the general public – would reach everyone by means of market prices. This theoretical channel has been shown to exist only in special circumstances. Moreover, Keynes's observation that financial markets resemble "beauty contests" points to the failure of real-world

markets to aggregate all available information.

Today's central banks use "layered communication" to directly reach the public. Inflation Reports of the Bank of England, for instance, now include a layer of content that explicitly targets less-specialized audiences. There are initial signs of the success of layered communication, but also criticisms: a central bank essentially competes with other social media content for the users' scarce attention.

Professional journalists simplify central bank communications and broadcast them through newspapers, TV channels, and their social media accounts. This news sharing, in turn, reaches the general public. Recent studies have found that when indirect communication occurs through news articles, the limited credibility of newspapers dampens the effect of direct communication.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Reserve Act mandates that the Federal Reserve conduct monetary policy "so as to promote effectively the goals of maximum employment, stable prices, and moderate long-term interest rates." These are shared by other central banks. Monetary policy does not attain these goals by having a direct impact on interest rates. Instead, central banks have operating targets – reserve requirement ratios and very short-term interest rates, such as the federal funds rate. There are several channels through which changes in operating targets made by a country's central bank affect the overall economy: interest rates that banks charge on loans, asset prices, exchange rates, and so forth.[v]

In late December 2008, at the peak of the Global Financial Crisis, the target for the federal funds rate was nearly 0, and the U.S. economy would have benefited from a decrease in interest rates. The Fed and other central banks in similar circumstances resorted to unconventional monetary policies, such as quantitative easing and so-called forward guidance. Forward guidance is a monetary policy tool that deals with central bank communication. During the Global Financial Crisis, the Fed communicated that it "likely would keep a highly accommodative stance of monetary policy until a marked improvement in the labor market had been achieved", and, as a result: "Short-term interest rates expected to prevail in the future and longer-term yields on bonds fell in response to this forward guidance". This is an example of a communication that aims to guide people's expectations about future monetary policy. The way in which forward guidance works is through its impact on the expectation that economic actors hold about the future of the economy. Today's central banks would like to guide such expectations, in principle, because several important economic decisions involve a long horizon. The textbook example is how long-term interest rates are set. The rate charged on a long-term loan, such as the one requested to buy a house, is not related only to the current level of the federal funds rate, it takes into account how the economy is expected to perform over the entire duration of the loan. As a result, people's revision of expectations regarding future short-term interest rates affects the level of long-term interest rates. Modern monetary policy recognizes that a central bank's message about future interest rates and economic outlooks, as well as changes in the operating targets, have an impact on people's expectations.

Blinder, Ehrmann, de Haan and Jansen document that the Global Financial Crisis witnessed a sharp increase in the amount of central bank communication.[vi] This reflects a trend that originated a long time ago. Central Banks used to protect the secrecy of their decision-making process. In the late twentieth century, however, things started to change. Starting with the Freedom of Information Act of 1966 (FOIA), the Fed embarked on a new trajectory of increasing transparency.[vii] The Bank of England and other major central banks followed a similar development.[viii] Economists refer to this change as a "communications revolution", which occurred in the past 70 years. Central bank communication became one of the many tools of monetary policy. Alongside standard tools, such as overnight interbank rates, reserve requirement ratios, and the composition of the central bank's own balance sheets, central bankers now use inflation reports, monthly speeches, Q&A sessions, and so on. A major reason that explains the utility of the newly-added tool is the find-

ing that managing the expectations about the future path of the economy is a powerful aid in changing current interest rates, which is in turn used to reach the bank's policy goals.

In the current "second wave" revolution in central banking, the target audience has changed.[ix] Previously, financial market participants were the target of central bank communication. Messaging efforts by the Fed and other central banks successfully reached financial markets.[x] Now, however, central banks are also communicating with the general public. We know about the second wave of the communications revolution from the speeches of prominent central bankers. Christine Lagarde, for instance, made communication with the general public a priority of her European Central Bank (ECB) presidency, as per her inauguration speech, when she said: "The ECB needs to be understood by the markets that transmit its policy, but it also needs to be understood by the people whom it ultimately serves. People need to know that it is their central bank, and it is making policy with their interests at heart. One of the priorities of my Presidency, if confirmed, will be to reinforce that bridge with the public". Jerome Powell also made explicit his desire to be heard by the general public, as confirmed by the initial quote in the present article. Moreover, many national central banks in the European Union have institutional Twitter accounts.[xi]

THE HAYEKIAN CHANNEL

We know from the statements and actions of today's central bankers that we are witnessing the second wave of the communications revolution. This change, however, does not need to be revolutionary: central banks may also use less innovative tools to talk to the general public. Hayek argued that market prices can convey information possessed dispersed into separate economic actors: "in a system in which the knowledge of the relevant facts is dispersed among many people, prices can act to coordinate the separate actions of different people in the same way as subjective values help the individual to coordinate the parts of his plan". Recently, economists developed tools that make it possible to accumulate evidence that markets react to information released by central banks. Thus, one channel through which information released by a central bank reaches the general public is a Hayekian channel: market participants gather information made available by the central bank, market prices aggregate this information, and the general public observes the resulting informative market prices. There is a simple reason why studying this conjecture is crucial: if prevailing prices convey all available information, the fact that prices are observable by the public implies that there is no need to inform the public about the economy, after having informed market participants. Laypeople would understand what they need to know about the future state of the economy from, say, the interest rates that they are charged on their loans.

Modern economic research has formalized Hayek's intuition, starting from Robert Wilson and Paul Milgrom, in what is known as the large auctions literature.[xii] The essence of the formal arguments in the literature spurring from these two seminal contributions is as follows. Perfectly competitive markets are ideal markets, where a person's action has only a negligible effect on the economy; so if prices aggregate information under perfect competition there is the possibility that real-world, messy, market do so too, while if competitive prices fail to aggregate information there is little hope that information is aggregated in the real world. In a standard auction, a seller elicits bids from prospective buyers, and competition among buyers drives the transaction price down. For instance, buyer competition may take the form of the so-called English auction: the buyer who bids the highest number purchases the object for sale at their bid price[xiii]. Many real markets do not have as well-defined rules as, for instance, the treasury auctions for T-bills, which is similar to an English auction with many items for sale. But the availability of well-defined rules, data, and some similarities of auctions to real-world markets make auctions an ideal setting where economists can study markets and then subject their findings to external evidence. The large auctions literature asks specifically what happens to auctions when the number of participants is very large. This mimics competitive markets, given that a bidder's bid has only a negligible impact on the price. Large auctions can aggregate all information dispersed

among bidders, but only in extreme circumstances where a tiny portion of buyers know with certainty the exact value of the object[xiv].

The large auctions approach is useful because it informs us of circumstances under which even ideal markets would fail to aggregate information. There is another channel through which prevailing prices may fail to reflect available information: market participants may act as influenced by "animal spirits". Today's economists use the term "coordination motives" to refer to a kind of incentive of market participants that prevents information aggregation. Keynes made an analogy between stock markets and beauty contests, referring to a newspaper contest where readers are asked to choose the six prettiest faces out of a sample of 100 photographs. The key rule of the contest is the definition of the winner: whoever chooses the six pictures closest to the most popular from all submitted lists wins. As Keynes argues, listing your favorite faces is not the optimal strategy if you want to win. The crucial observation is that you win by correctly anticipating the faces that others will judge pretty. Let's unpack this observation. A myopic contest player would not read through the rules of the game in detail and list the 6 faces that they consider the prettiest. A good player recognizes how the winner is determined and lists their estimates of the 6 prettiest faces of the newspaper's readership. Furthermore, a very good player internalizes what the good players realize – i.e., that they, good players, pick their estimates of the 6 readership's prettiest faces –, and list the faces that others estimate that others consider the prettiest. The reasoning of even better players iterates ad infinitum. The key phenomenon at work in coordination-motive models is that investors underweight their private information when making their decisions so that prices do not always aggregate information. Robert Shiller argues that today's investors appear to behave as in coordination-motive models.[xv] Thus, coordination motives prevent markets from aggregating information that market participants acquire following central bank communication.

DIRECT COMMUNICATION

In many instances central bankers cannot hope to communicate solely with market participants, and anticipate that information would trickle down to the general public by means of real-world markets. (i) Even ideal markets fail to aggregate information, and (ii) Real-world investors are guided, also, by coordination motives. Monetary authorities around the world are already putting effort into communicating directly with the general public. Communication with the general public, made of non-experts, brings about a problem that communication with financial market participants, i.e. experts, does not feature: the general public has limited information processing ability, a.k.a. limited attention. "Ability" should be understood in a broad sense: the general public lacks financial literacy, has time constraints, limited attention span and perceives to have less at stake in economic terms than, say, managers of investment banks.

A recent attempt to communicate directly with the public is by the Central Bank of Jamaica. A video where inflation targeting was explained with a reggaeton background gathered thousands of views, because "In Jamaica, whether you're communicating about a glass of juice, or beer, or you are communicating complex monetary policy, music helps the communication effort."[xvi] The video is part of a communication strategy that includes podcasts, videos and so forth, which was announced in 2018. Another systematic effort goes under the name of "layered communication". The ECB and the Bank of England have adopted similar strategies in order to circumvent the limited attention problem. Both central banks use a layered information structure: a report has a simpler, and less precise, part, and a complex, and more precise, part, in order for experts and non-experts to self-select into the appropriate information source. As the next quotes demonstrate, monetary authorities intentionally started to use layered content. According to the November 2021 ECB Economic Bulletin: "The Governing Council decided to complement its monetary policy communication with 'layered' communication [...] A new visual monetary policy statement was added to explain the ECB's latest decision in a more attractive and simpler format, and in all 24 official EU languages. Using storytelling techniques, relatable visuals and language, the visual monetary policy statement aims to make the ECB's policy decisions more accessible to

non-expert audiences across the entire euro area". In 2018, Andrew Haldane (then Chief Economist at the Bank of England) and Michael McMahon documented that: "In November 2017 the Bank of England launched a new, broader-interest version of its quarterly Inflation Report (IR), augmented with new layers of content aimed explicitly at speaking to a less-specialist audience. This layered content was provided alongside the established (more technical) IR and Monetary Policy Summary."[xvii]

There are signs of success of layered communication. The November 2021 ECB Economic Bulletin asserts that the new strategy reached the general public: "Twitter traffic by non-experts intensifies around the time of the ECB's press conference, which suggests that the ECB's communication gets noticed and is discussed by non-experts. This implies that the first necessary step on the way to successful communication, namely that the sender manages to reach the intended recipient, is being taken." Haldane, Macaulay, and McMachon use a survey of two groups, one from the general public and the other made of graduate students in economics at the University of Oxford, to conclude that "the new layered content is easier to read and understand, even for technically-advanced [graduate] students". [xviii] However, there is also criticism. Alan Blinder suggests that any attempt to directly communicate with the general public has limited power because of competition: "Central banks will keep trying to communicate with the general public, as they should. But for the most part, they will fail. [...] most people are not obsessed about the central bank; [...] they would rather watch puppies on YouTube."[xix] In particular, direct communication with the general public can take place only through already crowded media: social media that laypeople use for many different reasons. Any message by the central bank, no matter how simple and tailored, has to compete with content from professional influencers for any single bit of a layperson's attention.

THE MEDIA CHANNEL

Newspaper journalists and social media creators are professionals who deal with two tasks in their day-to-day job. First, they simplify complex messages to make them digestible to a non-specialist audience. Second, they compete for their readership's attention. Can central bankers delegate the two tasks of message simplification and competition for attention to professionals, such as journalists?

Even if newspapers may reach households better than central bank direct communication, there are some downsides to delegation. In particular, the impact on people's beliefs about the future state of the economy is halved when going from a direct message to a newspaper article. Economists exposed American households to new information about inflation: households revised their original expectation about future inflation, but their revision depending on their sources of information.[xx] In particular, the revision in inflation expectation after reading the FOMC statement is twice the revision after being exposed to the coverage of the same statement by USA Today. In general, there are three reasons that explain the different effects of information exposure: language, content, and credibility of the source. The *USA Today* article that Coibon and coauthors select uses less technical jargon than FOMC statements, which would make USA Today a more effective source for expectations revision. Actually, the "ominous" note in the chosen piece is even more inducive of expectations revision than the neutral tone of the FOMC statement. The content of the two sources of information is the same. Thus, as Coibon and coauthors conclude, the sender of the message is the key factor that explains why newspaper articles have a dampened impact on expectations revision.

CONCLUSION

We distinguish between two audiences of central bank communication: financial market participants and the general public. As information recipients, financial market participants are financial literates who pay attention to monetary policy. There is a vast literature in economics about central bank communication with market participants and its successes.[xxi] The general public is made of people who do not have the time or interest to learn about today's monetary policy. Central bank communication with the general public raises new issues for mon-

perfect means of communication, and direct communication is hard because people have limited attention spans. Olivier Coibion and coauthors documented that the content in the tweets by Olli Rehn, governor of the Bank of Finland, impacts household economic decisions.[xxii] In particular, when the objectives of monetary policy were included, then Rehn's tweets are more impactful than when his tweets simply detailed monetary policy actions. We are likely to witness continued experimentation in central bank communication in the years to come.

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[i] Alan Blinder, "Through a Crystal Ball Darkly: The Future of Monetary Policy Communication." *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 108 (May 2018): 567–71.
[ii]Jerome Powell, "Transcript of Chairman Powell's Press Conference," June 13, 2018.
[iii]Andrew Haldane, "A Little More Conversation, a Little Less Action." Bank of England-Speech, 2017.
[iv] Andrew Haldane and Michael McMahon labeled this channel Hayekian in 2018 when Haldane was Chief Economist at the Bank of England. See Andrew Haldane and Michael McMahon, "Central Bank Communications and the General Public," *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 108 (May 2018): 578-583.
[v] For more details on monetary policy, see Michael Woodford, *Interest and Prices* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
[vi]Alan Blinder, Michael Ehrmann, Jakob de Haan, and David-Jan Jansen. "Necessity as the Mother of Invention: Monetary Policy after the Crisis." *Economic Policy* 32, no. 92 (October 1, 2017): 707–55. https://doi.org/10.1093/epolic/eix013.
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[viii] Andrew Haldane, "A Little More Conversation, a Little Less Action." Bank of England-Speech, 2017.Andrew Haldane, "A Little More Conversation, a Little Less Action." Bank of England-Speech, 2017.
[ix]Andrew Haldane, Alistair Macaulay, and Michael McMahon. "Staff Working Paper No. 847 The 3 E's of Central Bank Communication with the Public," 2020.
[x]Marek Jarociński and Peter Karadi. "Deconstructing Monetary Policy Surprises—The Role of Information Shocks." *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 12, no. 2 (April 2020): 1–43.
[xi]Iikka Korhonen and Elisa Newby. "Mastering Central Bank Communication Challenges via Twitter." *BoF Economics Review*, 2019.
[xii] Paul Milgrom, "Rational Expectations, Information Acquisition, and Competitive Bidding." *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society*, 1981, 921–43.
Robert Wilson, "A Bidding Model of Perfect Competition." *The Review of Economic Studies* 44, no. 3 (1977): 511–18.
[xiii] For an introduction to auctions, see Avinash Dixit and Barry Nalebuff, *The Art of Strategy: A Game Theorist's Guide to Success in Business & Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008).
[xiv] The large auctions environment where the aforementioned results hold is admittedly an idealization. The literature investigates the original conjecture in models that look more like real-world markets. See Alp Atakan and Mehmet Ekmekci, "Market Selection and the IInformation Content of Prices," *Econometrica* 89, no. 5 (2021): 2049-2079; Stephan Lauermann and Ashwer Wolinsky, "Bidder Solicitation, Adverse Selection, and the Failure of Competition," *American Economic Review* 107, no. 6 (2017): 1399–1429; Wolfgang Pesendorfer and Jeroen Swinkles "The Loser's Curse and Information Aggregation in Common Value Auctions," Econometrica: *Journal of the Econometric Society* (1997): 1247–81.
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Robert Shiller, "On Wall St., a Keynesian Beauty Contest." *The New York Times*, September 3, 2011.
[xvi] Nigel Clarke, Jamaican Finance Minister, as in Ali Donaldson, "Using Reggae to Communicate Monetary Policy," *Bloomberg*, April 19, 2019.
[xvii] Haldane and McMahon, "Central Bank Communications and the General Public," 578–83.
[xviii] Recent evidence that we do not cover in this article includes work from Ehrmann and Wabitsch (2022) and Haldane, Macaulay, and McMachon (2020). See Michael Ehrmann and Alena Wabitsch, "Central Bank Communication with Non-Experts–A Road to Nowhere?" *Journal of Monetary Economics* 127 (2022): 69–85; Andrew Haldane, Alistair Macalauy, and Michael McMahon, "Staff Working Paper No. 847 The 3 E's of Central Bank Communication with the Public," 2020.
[xix] Alan Blinder, "Through a Crystal Ball Darkly: The Future of Monetary Policy Communication." *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 108 (May 2018): 567–71.
[xx] Coibion, Olivier, Yuriy Gorodnichenko, and Michael Weber. "Monetary Policy Communications and Their Effects on Household Inflation Expectations." J*ournal of Political Economy* 130, no. 6 (2022): 000–000.
[xxi] See, for instance Marek Jarocinsky and Peter Karadi. "Deconstructing Monetary Policy Surprises—The Role of Information Shocks." *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 12, no. 2 (April 2020): 1–43.
[xxii] Olivier Coibion, Yuriy Gorodnichenko, and Michael Weber. "Monetary Policy Communications and Their Effects on Household Inflation Expectations." *Journal of Political Economy* 130, no. 6 (2022): 000–000.

JOURNALISM, DEMOCRACY & OBJECTIVE EMPATHY

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ABSTRACT

The rise in partisan journalism and social media in the United States has led scholars to consider what differentiates journalists from other members of the public who also write about current events. Journalism scholar Michael Schudson has argued that as political landscapes shift and sources of news information change, journalists must enter a new phase of professionalism that he calls "objective empathy." This article expands the definition of objective empathy to encompass social empathy as well as interpersonal empathy and provides a critique of the medical doctor analogy. The analogy of the sociologist is proposed instead, with the claim that it provides a better toolkit for practicing empathy with sources and cultivating empathy among consumers. To support this counterpoint, this piece includes an overview of the sociologist and considers empirical analyses which demonstrate that sociology uniquely assists its students with empathy development. Finally, a case study of the San Francisco Homeless Project is used to examine the importance of robust objective empathy in journalism that is interested in tackling pervasive social issues. The essay concludes that journalists have an obligation to practice robust objective empathy around social issues like homelessness that threaten our democracy and offer recommendations for steps on the path forward.

SCHUDSON'S OBJECTIVE EMPHATHY

In pursuit of legitimacy within capitalist and democratic economies, American journalism has undergone two stages of professionalization throughout the past century, according to Michael Schudson. During the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries, journalism functioned to cultivate normative law-abiding citizens instead of informed voters.[i] But, by 1923, journalism entered its first stage of professionalization after attempts to manipulate stories to benefit the powerful threatened the legitimacy of the press. This led to the development of a code of ethics which centered objectivity with fact-based reporting, and helped establish journalists as authorities on matters of political importance. The second stage of professionalization emerged out of the cultural and political shifts that began in the 1960s which produced wide-spread skepticism of authority. As a result, journalists sought to provide context and analysis of facts to aid in developing critical reader understandings.[ii]

Since then, threats to the legitimacy of professional journalism have emerged. Schudson contends that increased partisanship and social media can be mediated by a third stage of professionalization that includes the addition of objective empathy. [iii] Objective empathy calls on journalists to practice interpersonal empathy such that they temporarily set aside their opinions to tell fact-based stories that inform and instruct. Examples he provides are women who are pleased or displeased with their previous choices to have abortions but set aside their viewpoints to understand and relay someone else's.

He suggests that journalists model this aspect of their professionalism after the medical doctor who serves a public function and applies their expertise to the situations of individual patients.

However, medical doctors have not historically factored the appropriate amount of context into their work. They are notorious for failing to take the social determinants of health into consideration when treating patients, especially those who are from marginalized groups. This has resulted in inadequate care and the perpetuation of inequity. The lack of contextualized understandings that this approach involves renders the medical doctor an insufficient professional model for journalists who aim to embody objective empathy that yields truthful storytelling which supports readers in democratic engagement.

OBJECTIVE EMPATHY AS INTERPERSONAL & SOCIAL

Schudson's vision of objective empathy as the path forward for professional journalism merits further elaboration. A complete definition of empathy – expanded by the works of psychologists, neuroscientists, and social workers – would recognize its multiple dimensions, including interpersonal empathy and social empathy.[iv] According to these experts, interpersonal empathy encompasses affective response, cognitive processing and decision making, and social empathy involves contextualized understandings and feelings of social responsibility. Social empathy requires both historical knowledge and information about how systemic conditions impact individual lives, and is most essential for interpreting situations that involve disparities and inequities. In other words, interpersonal empathy allows for understanding feelings and actions in immediate circumstances and social empathy allows for their contextualization in the social structures within which they take place.

Segal specifically cites the news coverage of Hurricane Katrina as bringing her through both types of empathy during her struggle to understand reactions to the disaster, including looting and other illegal behavior. The initial stages of coverage broadcasting the first hours of the crisis and attempts at survival prompted her to consider how she would react if she were a victim of the event.[v] However, her understanding of the reactions of victims remained incomplete until the second stage of coverage which explained the structural inequalities that contributed to the magnitude of the crisis, including the neglected infrastructure and deliberate exclusion from emergency planning of the primarily low-income Black communities that were most impacted.[vi] Given the micro-, meso-, and macro-level dynamics involved in practicing a complete definition of objective empathy, journalists would be better served by the professional analogy of the sociologist.

THE SOCIOLOGIST & OBJECTIVE EMPATHY

The sociologist aims to understand patterns of social interaction and its products within specific contexts using a variety of research methods to develop theory that assists with conceptualizing the functionality of society. Behavior is regarded as influenced primarily by the institutions that individuals operate within based on how those systems shape opportunity and experience. Their methodological approaches include both quantitative and qualitative analysis, like multivariate regression, computational methods, textual analysis, historical comparative studies, interviews, and ethnography. The versatility of the sociological toolkit is especially useful since it equips those who use it with the ability to ask many different types of questions. Extensive reflection and guidance exist around these methodologies to assist researchers doing sociological work in their pursuits of knowledge production which the journalist could also utilize.

Upon establishing findings about the relationship between individuals and social systems, the sociologist may relay this newly gained insight to several audiences, but particularly to other actors in the academy. This includes academics and students, and empirical work on students has demonstrated a capacity for sociological understandings to cultivate empathy among them.[vii]

Central to the field is the concept of the sociological imagination, which is an approach to interpreting lived experience that prompts people to "use information and develop reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and what may be happening within themselves."[viii] Such structural analysis allows students to make sense of individual experience as contextualized by the social systems they operate within and assess the truthfulness of claims made by those in power. Many sociologists point to empathy as central to the ability to utilize this type of imagination and thus it is an essential skill they aim to develop in the classroom.

Instructors use several techniques to cultivate sociological imaginations and empathy among their students. This may include demonstrations of reflexively engaging their own lived experiences, contemplations of power and knowledge production processes, exposure to content that characterizes and deconstructs marginalized experiences, or exercises that require students to interrogate their lived experiences in structural contexts and consider what they would do if they were subjected to systemic violence.[ix] Rockwell demonstrated that simply participating in an introductory sociology course caused increases in student empathy that were linked to baseline content. This was especially the case for majors in business, engineering, and the physical sciences whose curricula does not typically account for social forces in individual outcomes. These classroom efforts are relevant to the journalist because they address a public that can be compared to students in need of assistance developing empathic skills. It is imperative that these structural explanations not be framed as attempts to achieve partisan goals since they are the result of the findings produced by scientific inquiry.

SAN FRANCISCO HOMELESS PROJECT & OBJECTIVE EMPATHY

The San Francisco Homeless Project (SFHP) is an instructive case study for contemplating the necessary elements of objective empathy. The project began in June 2016 when a group of journalists from 77 media organizations wrote an open letter to the city.[x] They stated that they had come together to inspire citizens, activists, and public and private entities to work together to explore solutions to homelessness and achieve policy change. The journalists qualified their call to action based on the 6,600 people in San Francisco experiencing homelessness at the time of their writing and asserted that they felt the issue was worsening. The project was regarded as one of the most innovative news initiatives of 2016 by the National Press Foundation.[xi] And it remains active, which suggests that it has a unique capacity for growth as researchers have had opportunities to conduct analyses of their efforts to assess efficacy and provide recommendations for improvement. Several researchers to date have taken the initiative as their focal point, including Moorhead.

Moorhead conducted content analysis of 977 articles pertaining to homelessness published by 134 news organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area from December 2015 through June 2017. Twenty-seven percent of the news organizations in the study were SFHP participants and 73% of the outlets were not involved with the project.[xii] Their research questions ask how the SFHP impacted the volume of articles on homelessness and the editorial frames used in those articles. Prior research has demonstrated that the frames journalists use when reporting on homelessness are either episodic or thematic, with the former involving individualized narratives and the latter locating individual circumstances within the larger systems that shape them.[xiii] They justify these questions based on the power journalists have to create cultural narratives when consistent framing is utilized in reporting and the lack of research that has been conducted around cross-sectoral partnerships on homelessness involving journalists.[xiv] Importantly, they note the increase in collaborations between media organizations and external agencies which address issues of resource insecurity that hinder their ability to produce in-depth content and to document public affairs.

The primary finding of Moorhead's re-

search was that the SFHP participants produced more articles were longer and had more pictures, but their framing did not differ significantly from the non-participant publications.[xv] Further, the SFHP participants actually produced more articles that depicted people experiencing homelessness negatively in the six months leading up to their release of the open letter, compared to the non-participants. However, for the duration of the study, both groups engaged in consistent framing that portrayed people experiencing homelessness as neutral (65%), negative (20%) and positive (15%). Rarely did the articles depict these individuals as making reasonable choices or as having strengths and abilities.[xvi] Instead, the journalists tended to frame their subjects as either deserving or undeserving of public assistance. The researchers claim this demonstrates good intentions are not sufficient for developing cultural narratives that work to address social issues. As such, they insist that journalists need to fundamentally shift how they report on homelessness.

To accomplish this, in addition to maintaining traditional marketing and public relations outreach, Moorhead recommends that community-engaged researchers and practitioners partner with outlets who are already publishing stories on homelessness with thematic frames to identify specific journalists with whom they can develop lasting partnerships.[xvii] They recommend that experts look to smaller news organizations specifically because they produced most of the thematic content during the study. The researchers hypothesized this was due to the journalists' greater ideological investment in their organizations, and due to the organizations' giving them more choice in their beats. Further, they insist that focusing on relationships with journalists versus their organizations is essential given the ongoing consolidation of the field and the high rate of journalists transferring among the organizations captured by their data. Moorhead also projected that with increasing numbers of freelance journalists, some may take on communications roles at nonprofits. Additionally, the author highlighted several expert panels that media organizations involved in the SFHP assembled to support journalists in working toward more complete understandings of homelessness, which they argue have the power to maximize objectivity with appropriate access.[xviii]

Since the SFHP began, the barrier of homelessness to comprehensive democratic engagement has grown. In 2020, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's point-in-time count revealed that at least 8,124 people were living in places not meant for human inhabitation, including on the streets and in shelters, in San Francisco.[xix] The city's total population increased by .09% from 2016 to 2020 and the population experiencing homelessness increased by 18.76%, over 200 times that amount.[xx] During 2020, the total number of people experiencing homelessness in the United States was 580,466, a 5.26% increase from 2016, compared to total population growth of 2.67%.[xxi] The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the industry's ability to conduct a comprehensive point-in-time count during the last two years, but it is set to resume in January 2023, and the numbers have surely continued to increase based on the widespread turmoil that has exacerbated resource insecurity and constrained service provision. Citizens who are subjected to homelessness face significant barriers to participating in democratic processes because addressing basic needs consumes much of their time, it is difficult to maintain private possessions without a private place to store them, and access to information to guide voting decisions is limited by the lack of readily-available internet. If journalists are committed to protecting our democracy, they must recognize this danger and practice both interpersonal and social empathy so their content helps the reader to develop the political consciousness, or solidarity, that galvanizes action to address the problem. This means intentional collaboration with experts to tell news stories that center the experiences of unhoused people within the social dynamics that have contributed to their circumstances and providing actionable steps forward for readers. Hopefully, the SFHP will continue to refine its approach to covering the growing issue of homelessness toward robust objective empathy, which social as well as interpersonal empathy.

CONCLUSION

By practicing a robust definition of objective empathy, journalists have the power to revitalize our democracy. The interpersonal and social dimensions not only allow them to better understand the individuals and organizations that provide them with narratives and the narratives themselves, they also support journalists in conveying those understandings to readers. This approach to storytelling empowers readers to think critically about the systems that shape their lives and the lives of those around them and to take action to contribute to structural change that better supports their communities. These critical-thinking skills are an essential aspect of the political consciousness that democracy requires to function effectively. People must be able to identify the sources of their experiences in a world that is characterized by social institutions which they contribute to developing. They cannot do so without the information to contextualize current events. It is not a partisan effort to tell a complete story, it is fulfilling the professional mandates of holding the powerful to account and improving the lives of their community members.

As outlined by Moorhead, there are practical barriers to telling stories with the necessary amount of context, including time and money—resources that sociologists have more of—which limits the value of the model. However, the recommendations that followed from the SFHP's analysis can be put into practice to minimize issues of resource scarcity. Moorhead's recommendations revolved around actions that community engaged researchers and practitioners can undertake to improve the effectiveness of the project. This essay, however, written with an audience of journalists in mind, recommends that they also seek out community-engaged researchers and practitioners to support them in developing the necessary understanding to tell complete stories and communicate viable solutions. These relationships can then function like any other information source, allowing journalists to consistently contextualize individual experiences with the findings of experts who dedicate their lives to understanding the social systems and outcomes that shape our democracy. These relationships will cultivate the robust definition of objective empathy set forth here, which is necessary to establish the solidarity our democracy needs to progress among journalists and their readers.

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[ii] Schudson, *Why Journalism Still Matters*, 51-3.
[iii] Schudson, *Why Journalism Still Matters*, 66-7.
[iv] Elizabeth A. Segal, Social Empathy: The Art of Understanding Others (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 11-3.
[v] Segal, *Social Empathy: The Art of Understanding Others*, 8.
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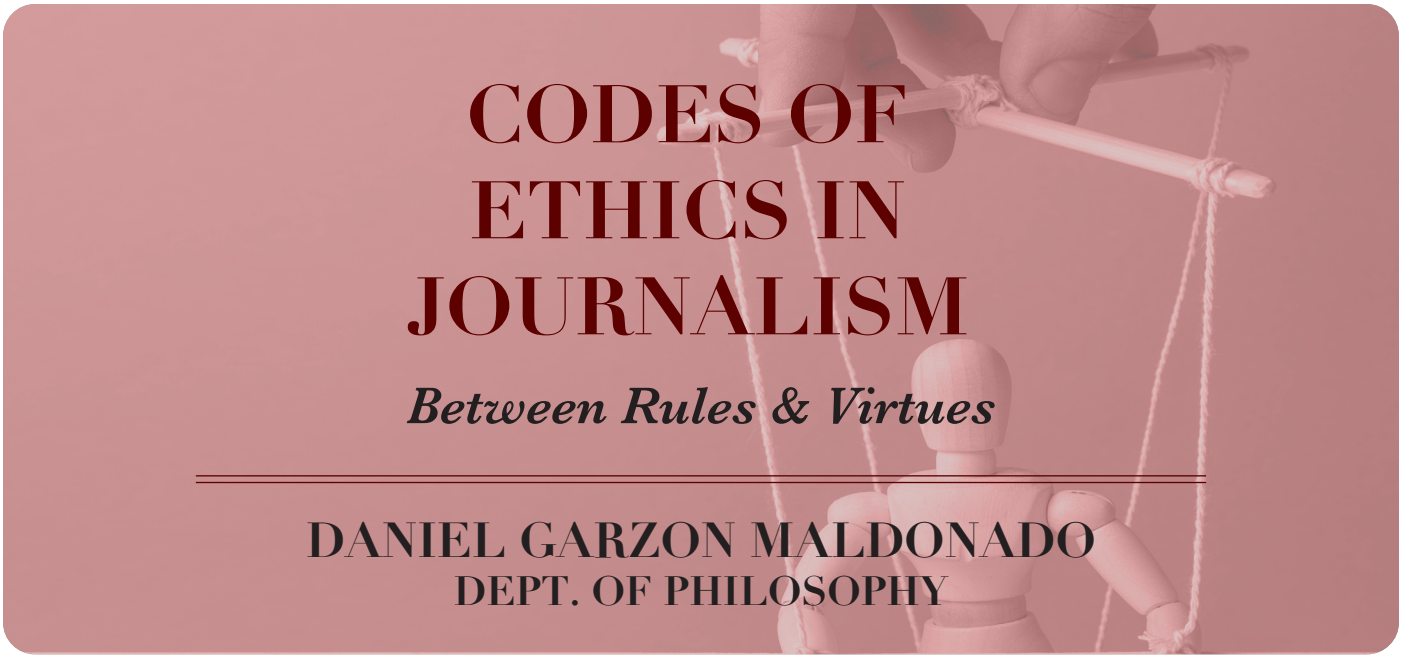

CODES OF ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

Between Rules & Virtues

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ABSTRACT

An appropriate relationship between journalism and democracy requires that the media abide by high ethical standards. This is the only way to maintain a journalism that is credible and relevant for democracy. Codes of ethics are a key tool to establish ethical standards in journalism. However, it has been often debated how codes can be improved and if there are better ways to set ethical standards. This article examines codes of ethics in journalism, emphasizing a tension between two of their key elements: rules and virtues. The first section introduces codes of ethics, understanding them in terms of their kind of normativity and their purpose. The second and main section identifies some arguments against codes of ethics from the perspective of virtue ethics, as argued by Colombian journalist Javier Darío Restrepo and British sociologist Nick Couldry. These authors encourage the adoption of fewer rules in journalism ethics in favor of virtues. For them, the advantage of a virtue ethics approach would be that virtues are a more general and flexible moral compass than rules. Virtues are also easier to approach and remember than a list of rules.

INTRODUCTION

Most journalistic undertakings aim, among other things, to keep power in check and strive for a stronger democracy. Democratic societies thus rely heavily on journalism to learn about and analyze local, regional, and world affairs. An appropriate relationship between journalism and democracy requires that the media abide by high ethical standards. This is the only way to maintain a journalism that is credible and relevant for democracy.

A code of ethics is a key tool available to set ethical journalistic standards . However, it has often been often debated how codes can be improved and if there are better ways to set those standards. The general insight that drives this article is that rules might not be the best theoretical or practical element to define ethics, at least in our current era. Accordingly, this article examines codes of ethics in journalism, emphasizing a tension between two of its key elements: rules and virtues. The first section introduces codes of ethics, understanding them in terms of their kind of normativity and their purpose. The second and main section identifies some arguments against codes of ethics from the perspective of virtue ethics, as articulated by Colombian journalist Javier Darío Restrepo and British sociologist Nick Couldry.[i]

CODES OF ETHICS: KIND OF NORMATIVE & PURPOSE

What is a code of ethics in journalism? One could initially think about it simply as a list of rules that can vary from a few paragraphs in length to dozens of pages.[ii] Those rules apply to media personalities, including reporters, editors, and sometimes even media owners. However, codes can also reach beyond rules and may include a statement of values or a declaration of rights for the profession and its practitioners. In a more complex definition, a code of ethics is "a declaration of the standards, ideals, practices and accepted behaviour of the journalistic profession," which includes "everything ranging from minimal expectations of conduct for all journalists to the perceived ideals towards which journalists should strive.'"[iii] Those minimal expectations might range from basics like not lying, stealing, or causing harm to more specific journalistic expectations (e.g., not accepting gifts from donors who intend to influence a publication's editorial line).

In contrast to minimal expectations, ideal rules can often be impossible to meet for journalists. Such unrealistic ideal rules may include "never to accept an assignment contrary to ethics; always to know the topics well with which they deal; leave their own opinions out of any report they give; always give several viewpoints; ceaselessly fight for human rights."[iv] These kinds of rules are often in conflict with the factual conditions for the practice of journalism. Other rules may have occasional exceptions for professional reasons. In those cases, the main goals of journalism may take precedence over usual procedures. For example, whereas it is not usually acceptable for a reporter to hide their identity or intrude on someone's privacy, that could be allowed if the story "exposes serious antisocial behavior or threats to public health."[v]

The normativity of codes of ethics, therefore, is far from straightforward. An additional complication is that minimal expectations, ideal rules, and rules with occasional exceptions are not necessarily distinguished within the code itself. Plausibly, the distinction between those kinds of rules is not always easily defined or even stable over time.

A CODE'S PURPOSE

A thoughtful, well-written code may "crystallize" important ethical guidelines and/or represent "the collective wisdom that has emerged from long discussions."[vi] However, what is the purpose of having these ethical rules and values written down in a code of ethics?

We can sketch three general purposes. First, codes of ethics are tools for professionalization, professional education, and consciousness-raising. For example, they are useful for journalism students and practitioners to identify conflicts of interest or to find guidance when they receive pressure to commit an unethical act. They are an instrument that helps "practitioners to understand the nature of their work and relate their practice into broader moral and ethical values."[vii]

Second, codes are also a mechanism of media accountability, not unlike like ombudspersons or press councils. A code of ethics creates moral pressure, which increases the more the code is known, both by media professionals and the public.[viii] Some codes also create sanctions and disciplinary committees to enforce them.

A third important goal of codes of ethics is to demonstrate ethical commitment.[ix] Public dissatisfaction with or mistrust towards media may lead to state regulation or intervention. This threat toward free media might be avoided by drafting a code, which could be seen as a sign of ability for self-regulation.[x] For credibility and financial viability, it is also important to demonstrate an ethical commitment to the public and advertisers.

Of course, these three purposes—professionalization and raising consciousness, accountability, and public demonstration of ethical commitment—are not necessarily equally important in every case. Some critics accuse the media of hypocritically focusing on the goal of demonstrating ethical commitment. Codes, then, would be "largely an exercise in public relations," "deliberate window dressing and camouflage."[xi] Purpose can also vary over time; for example, a code that was drafted with

the main purpose of avoiding state regulation can become an important ethical reference.[xii]

VALUE ETHICS APPROACHES

Codes of ethics may make mention of general values and virtues, but they tend to emphasize rules—and often prohibitions in particular. Some writers find this problematic. For example, Claude-Jean Bertrand considers that "codes proscribe a lot and do not prescribe much, probably because it is easier to agree on faults to avoid than on virtues to practice."[xiii] In a similar vein, others suspect that an excessive focus on rules, procedures, and accountability systems places more emphasis on avoiding harm rather than on imagining how to do good.[xiv] Some authors suggest the inclusion of general virtues or values in codes. For example, Julie Reid recently proposed a deeper commitment to an ethics of listening in South African media, which would include explicit mentions of it in codes of ethics and press councils.[xv]

Criticism of emphasizing codes of ethics is founded in a deep philosophical disagreement between giving ethical priority to rules or virtues. Normative ethics addresses the good ways to act and live and what is ethically valuable and praiseworthy. Two key elements for this are rules and virtues. For example, two different ways to explain what is good and praiseworthy are through listing rules (i.e., you have to do this and should not do that) or through listing important virtues (i.e., moderation, humility, or generosity). An ethical approach through a list of rules or duties is called "deontological" and looks to define specific behavior that is expected or should be avoided. In contrast, the approach through virtues, called "virtue ethics," focuses on character, habits, attitudes, and emotions—the general way of being of the moral agent. Virtue ethics do not necessarily dismiss rules; however, virtue ethicists always derive rules from virtues, which are the fundamental normative element. For deontological ethicists, virtues are secondary to rules.

Two authors that have recently directed general criticism towards codes of ethics in journalism from the perspective of virtue ethics: Colombian journalist Javier Darío Restrepo and British sociologist Nick Couldry. Their work represents two relatively diverse perspectives, both in terms of their professional field and geographical origin.

RESTREPO

In his book *La Constelación Ética* (*The Ethical Constellation*), Javier Darío Restrepo promotes a perspective of virtue ethics for journalism. Informed by decades working as a journalist and ethics advisor for fellow journalists, Restrepo concludes that many journalists think that ethics is about codes and being ethical is to obey the codes.[xvi] Restrepo himself acknowledges some of the uses for codes outlined above. First, codes send a signal to the government and the public that journalism's ability to self-regulate is, or tries to be, strong enough to not need external regulation. Second, codes serve as a pedagogical and mnemotechnical resource for journalists.[xvii] However, the ethics of the profession should not end with codes—especially, not with codes as a list of rules and prohibitions. For him, codes "reduce the dimensions of the ethical, prevent access to its true nature and hide its most ambitious goals."[xviii]

One of the problems with codes is that rules are too limited to deal with the variety and complexity of life and its circumstances.[xix] Ethics is better defined through the specification of the right attitudes, especially the care for the other.[xx] In contrast to codes as a list of prohibitions and duties, Restrepo suggests that good professional ethics should be concerned with constructing a model of a good life.[xxi] This would be complemented by individual work, in which one cultivates in oneself the right attitudes and way of being. Restrepo also advocates for moral perfectionism—the requirement to constantly strive to be better and to improve what already exists. Being good would not be enough, it would be necessary to pursue excellence. Ethics, therefore, "is a source of dissatisfaction with what is, because it creates the conviction that every reality can and must be improved."[xxii]

Moral perfectionism finds a second prob-

lem with an ethics that is prescribed through a list of rules because rules, for Restrepo, tend to prescribe the minimal whereas ethics searches for the maximum.[xxiii] It would be especially problematic when rules are formulated as prohibitions. Whereas prohibitions deal with crimes, injustice, and avoidance of harm, ethics deal with virtuous people, so that they keep themselves "passionately active in the realization of their human potential."[xxiv] In other words, abiding by prohibitions would not be enough to be virtuous. A code that is made of prohibitions can be improved if it is at least formulated in positive terms—i.e., if it defines what is best to do and not what should be avoided. This kind of formulation will be closer to proposing the necessary virtues for journalism and, more generally, a model of a good life.[xxv]

An alternative strategy to promote ethics in journalism is found in Restrepo's work as an ethical advisor for fellow journalists. For more than two decades, Restrepo responded publicly to questions about ethics from Latin American journalists through the ethics consultancy service of the New Latin American Journalism Foundation.[xxvi] This project did not try to produce a code as a result. Instead, it can be seen as an effort to encourage general ethical reflection among journalists beyond the pressure of deadlines for specific tasks.

In conclusion, Restrepo presents two main arguments of a theoretical nature against codes as a list of rules. First, rules cannot capture the complexity of concrete circumstances. Second, rules might create the impression that it is enough to follow or avoid certain behaviors, whereas ethics, conceived in a perfectionist way, would always require continuing the search for excellence beyond any concrete rule.

COULDRY

Nick Couldry, in the article "Why Media Ethics Still Matters," suggests that codes of ethics in journalism have some importance but also considerable limitations.[xxvii] He advocates, instead, for a perspective that does not seek to define rules but some general virtues which would guide media practice. These values could be, for example, accuracy, sincerity, or care.[xxviii] Couldry presents four arguments against rules and duties and in favor of virtue ethics. Some of them are more circumstantial and others more general.

The first concerns the current conditions for journalism practice. A review of international literature suggests that "the newsroom has become in the digital age congested to a degree that undermines more than ever before the conditions of ethical reflection."[xxix] In this context, in which time and resources are especially scarce, "the unethical situation of much media practice" has become "business as usual."[xxx] Time and resources for ethical considerations being especially scarce, a virtue ethics approach focused on the general values would be better suited to start ethical reflections than a "rulebook."[xxxi]

Second, Couldry points out that the contemporary media sphere goes beyond institutional journalism and includes social media.[xxxii] The interaction between journalism and Twitter seems to be a good example of this, even though Couldry does not mention it. Codes of ethics do not apply to this broader media sphere, because they are tied to the institutions or associations that create or endorse them. Given the broad nature of media defined this way, a project of constructing a media ethics would be easier if it focuses on virtues, which are always general, rather than on a list of rules, which are necessarily more specific.

The third argument addresses human moral diversity. Couldry finds, especially at a global level, "irreducible moral disagreement."[xxxiii] Journalism faces the challenge of "managing a global media interface between diverse peoples that overall secures peaceful interaction and mutual recognition rather than hostility and incomprehension."[xxxiv] However, there are no common moral frameworks that would allow the construction of rules in such a diverse space. Much easier than constructing a list of rules would be to reach an agreement at a more general level—that of moral values. For example, Couldry thinks that it would be possible to agree that accuracy

or sincerity are key values for media without agreeing on specific rules about how to apply those values in concrete situations. The perspective of values and virtues would allow us to "bracket out areas of disagreement (for example, about obligations to God or to humanity) where we know there is no agreement."[xxxv]

The last argument considers the diversity and complexity of situations that require moral decisions.[xxxvi] In Couldry's view, it is not possible to create codes that will define in advance how to behave in every specific situation. Concrete moral issues often involve conflicts between moral requirements. For example, a story about an affair between an important politician and a foreign spy would face a conflict between the right to privacy of an individual and the common good of the country.

In general, a decision on what is best to do will require weighing up the moral requirements according to the specific circumstances. Therefore, a list of rules would not be enough to identify the right behavior in advance, without considering the context. In contrast, a virtue ethics approach would only define the main values for media practice, without trying to establish in advance the right behavior. That would be defined in a concrete situation by a person (possibly a reporter or editor) who has cultivated those values and has the practical wisdom to weigh them up.

We can characterize the first two arguments, related to the conditions of journalism in the digital age, as circumstantial or historical. As such, they do not exclude the usefulness of codes of ethics in a different historical context. The third argument addresses human moral diversity, a characteristic of humanity that is much more permanent. However, if it was possible to reach an agreement about virtues for media ethics, an agreement about rules would possibly become easier. The last argument, about the impossibility of establishing the right behavior in advance, is the most general and abstract. This concerns the very viability of a list of rules for media ethics.

CONCLUSION

This article examined the issue of codes of ethics in journalism by emphasizing the tension between rules and virtues in the context of two general concerns. The first is the importance of ethics for journalism to remain credible and relevant, and contribute to a stronger democracy. The second is the general hypothesis that ethics in our time might function better and be better understood if rules are not its central element. Within that framework, the first section of the article analyzed codes of ethics in terms of their kind of normativity and purpose. The second section studied some objections against codes of ethics from the perspective of virtue ethics. I could identify two arguments in Restrepo and four in Couldry against lists of rules as the central element of journalism ethics. Restrepo and Couldry share a similar argument about the limitations of rules to account for a wide variety of contexts. Whereas Restrepo alludes in general to the complexities of concrete contexts, Couldry specifically mentions the difficulty of weighing conflicting moral requirements in particular circumstances. Couldry also considers three arguments related to the challenges of news in the digital age, media beyond institutional settings, and moral diversity. Finally, Restrepo finds that rules are not enough to create a constant demand to strive for excellence.

In most of these arguments, the advantage of a virtue ethics approach would be that virtues are a more general and flexible moral compass than rules. Compared to rules, they adjust better to different contexts, including cultural diversity and non-institutionalized media. This flexibility also allows virtues to be a perfectionist moral requirement that is never fully satisfied. Another advantage of virtues is that they are easier to approach and remember than a list of rules. Ultimately, these arguments call for reducing the emphasis on rules in journalism ethics, in favor of virtues. A list of rules might be the central element of many codes of ethics, but they can include more—for example, an explanation of the central virtues required for the profession. It would be possible, then, for organizations to maintain something similar to current codes of ethics with more emphasis on virtues. If they place less emphasis on rules, these documents would need a more accurate and realistic name, like "statement of values."

[i] See Javier Darío Restrepo, *La constelación ética* (Medellín: Tragaluz Editores, 2018); Nick Couldry, "Why Media Ethics Still Matters," in *Global Media Ethics: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. Stephen J. A. Ward (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 13–29.
[ii] Claude-Jean Bertrand, "Introduction: Media Accountability," *Pacific Journalism Review : Te Koakoa* 11, no. 2 (September 2005): 11, https://doi.org/10.24135/pjr.v11i2.837.
[iii] Brian Brennan, "Codes of Ethics: Who Needs Them?," in Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World, ed. Valerie Alia, Brian Brennan, and C. Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax: Fernwood Pub., 1996), 112.
[iv] Claude-Jean Bertrand, *Media Ethics & Accountability Systems* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2000), 46.
[v] Bertrand, *Media Ethics*, 46.
[vi] Yehiel Limor and Iné Gabel, "Five Versions of One Code of Ethics: The Case Study of the Israel Broadcasting Authority," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 17, no. 2 (2002): 151; Bertrand, Media Ethics, 60.
[vii] Kaarle Nordenstreng, "Professional Ethics: Between Fortress Journalism and Cosmopolitan Democracy," in *Journalism: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Howard Tumber (London: Routledge, 2008), 253–54.
[viii] Bertrand, *Media Ethics*, 113.
[ix] Bertrand, *Media Ethics*, 42; Restrepo, La constelación ética, 27–28; Limor and Gabel, "Five Versions," especially 137 and 150.
[x] Bertrand, *Media Ethics*, 42.
[xi] Brennan, "Codes of Ethics," 114; Melita Poler Kovańiń and Anne-Marie van Putten, "Reasons for Adopting or Revising a Journalism Ethics Code: The Case of Three Ethics Codes in the Netherlands," Medijska Istrańivanja : *Znanstveno-Stručni časopis Za Novinarstvo i Medije* 17., no. 1–2 (December 16, 2011): 34.
[xii] Limor and Gabel, "Five Versions," 151.
[xiii] Bertrand, Media Ethics, 61.
[xiv] Julie Reid, "Rethinking Media Freedom, Revamping Media Ethics," in *Tell Our Story: Multiplying Voices in the News Media*, ed. Julie Reid and Dale T. McKinley (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2020), 169–70; Marc Caldwell, "Between Proceduralism and Substantialism in Communication Ethics," in C*ommunication and Media Ethics in South Africa*, ed. Nathalie Hyde-Clarke (Claremont: Juta, 2011), esp. 73.
[xv] Reid, "Rethinking Media Freedom."
[xvi] Restrepo, 26.
[xvii] Restrepo, 28 and 47.
[xviii] Restrepo, 26. All translations of Restrepo to English are mine.
[xix] Restrepo, 47.
[xx] Restrepo, 20 and 67-70.
[xxi] Restrepo, 33.
[xxii] Restrepo, 15.
[xxiii] Restrepo, 45.
[xxiv] Restrepo, 15.
[xxv] Restrepo, 33.
[xxvi] Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Latinomericano, now known as Fundación Gabo after its founder, Colombian writer and journalist Gabriel García Márquez.
[xxvii] Couldry, "Why Media Ethics Still Matters," 17–18.
[xxviii] Couldry, 25–26. These are the virtues or moral dispositions that Couldry thinks are the most important for contemporary media ethics. He coincides with Restrepo about the centrality of care.
[xxix] Couldry, 20.
[xxx] Couldry, 21. For the British case, Couldry refers to Rupert Murdoch's News International phone hacking scandal.
[xxxi] Couldry, 26.

HOW JOURNALISM FOSTERS DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

A Case Study of the Henry Horner Mother's Guild

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ABSTRACT

The women who made up the Henry Horner Mother's Guild did not intend to become activists. Founded in 1983 by Maurine Woodson, the Mother's Guild was created in response to the horrific living conditions that characterized the Henry Horner Homes, a public housing complex run by the Chicago Housing Authority. This essay explores how local journalism was central to the Mother's Guild's civic and political activism. Furthermore, it demonstrates that without consistent media coverage, the Mother's Guild would not have been nearly as successful in pressuring city officials to respond to their demands for safe and equitable housing. Given the recent housing crises prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the history of the Henry Horner Mother's Guild exemplifies how journalism can support community-based democratic participation in response to state-led neglect.

INTRODUCTION

It could have easily been mistaken for a war zone. Standing dejectedly on Chicago's West Side, the fifteen-story building that had once been a physical testament to the well-intentioned but ill-conceived effort to create housing for low-income residents was now partially gone. Housed in the Special Collections and Archives Library at the University of Illinois at Chicago, a single photograph showed that an entire side of the building had been ripped away. Instead of windows, curtains, and maybe the occasional houseplant, twisted metal stuck out at odd angles, drywall hung on by a thread, and the floors of what had once been people's bedrooms, living rooms, and kitchens instead looked like cardboard that had been shredded. Nothing that remained of this building indicated that people had ever lived there, loved there, or raised their families in this space.

Nothing, of course, except for the brightly painted yellow, blue, and green playground that cheerfully stood directly in front of the now half-demolished building.

The Henry Horner Homes were not supposed to become one of the nation's worst examples of public housing. Built between 1957 and 1963, the Henry Horner Homes were named after Illinois' 28th governor. Comprising twenty-two separate buildings, the Henry Horner Homes were built by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and specifically designated for low-income resi-

dents. Although good intentions no doubt helped build each unit, by the 1980s, they were known as one of the most unsafe housing projects in the entire city of Chicago. Nevertheless, Horner residents refused to accept this new status quo. Indeed, for nearly a decade, residents pursued improvements to the Homes through a combination of democratic activism and a keen understanding that they needed to gain public support for their cause to apply adequate pressure on CHA officials and city authorities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, journalists and local media outlets played a crucial role in tenants' ability to publicize their work and demand greater accountability from city landlords and political representatives. Although the residents who engaged in this work may not have realized it at the time, they were displaying the closely intertwined relationship between journalism and democratic action. As (supposedly) equal citizens, Henry Horner residents understood that city officials were failing them by continuously neglecting to improve Homes. Their use of local journalists to emphasize this reality underscores just how important a free and impartial news media is to a healthy and functioning democracy.

BEGINNING ILLS

Resident Maurine Woodson founded the Henry Horner Mother's Guild in 1983 after moving into the Henry Horner Homes in 1975. A single mother with four children, Woodson explained to a *Chicago Tribune* reporter that she founded the Mother's Guild because "'people here didn't know where to go if they had problems. We wanted to have one group where they could ask for help or information.'"[i] After beginning as a small informal group, within a few years the Mother's Guild counted nearly 65 members. A locally based nonprofit organization primarily concerned with creating safer and cleaner conditions within the Henry Horner Homes, the Mother's Guild engaged in civic advocacy and sponsored a variety of educational and clean-up programs for residents. The Mother's Guild even brought a class-action lawsuit against the CHA, alleging that the CHA had breached the terms of its own lease by refusing to respond to tenants' complaints. Most dramatically, the Mother's Guild argued that the CHA had allowed the buildings to fall into a state of such significant disrepair that it constituted de facto demolition of almost half the development.[ii] All of these efforts were publicized by local media outlets across the city, once again highlighting just how important journalism was to the Mother's Guild. They strongly relied on local journalists to raise awareness that the condition of the Henry Horner Homes was a reflection not of the residents themselves, but rather of government neglect in a predominantly Black neighborhood.

The most prominent example of this crucial difference is found in the production of a four-minute 1992 documentary by the Chicago Video Project. Founded in 1990, the Project worked for a number of local community organizations eager to publicize their cause and gain both political and public support. The Henry Horner Mother's Guild was in fact the Chicago Video Project's first client and their video was reported by the *Chicago Tribune* as an undoubted success. Strategically released to coincide with Mother's Guilds' filing of a class-action lawsuit against the CHA, reporter Rick Kogan wrote that not only was the video story talked about in national publications like *Time* magazine and *The Washington Post*, but it was also aired on local TV outlets as well as "CBS This Morning" and "ABC World News Tonight." Finally, Kogan commented that "two days after the tape aired nationally, Jack Kemp, the secretary of housing and urban development, came to Chicago to tour the housing project and meet with the Mother's Guild."[iii] The video created the publicity that the Mother's Guild needed to get the attention of not only local but also federal politicians, and underscored what Chicago Video Project director Bruce Orenstein said about the power of local journalism in conjunction with civic engagement: "What's important is that people in the community see our video and get the message that they, too, can be a force."[iv]

Despite disbanding in 1991, the Mother's Guild accomplished a surprising amount during its short existence. In September 1994, the CHA submitted a proposal to the Department of Housing and Urban Development to spend

nearly $200 million dollars on rehabilitating parts of the complex and demolishing others. Today, the Henry Horner Homes are known as "Westhaven Park" and have been completely transformed into an attractive, modern mixed-income community. What once could have been mistaken for a war zone now seems to have had a storybook-like ending.

But accepting this tidy version of the Henry Horner Homes story, as tempting as it may be, also means ignoring questions about why and how the Homes became so decrepit and unsafe in the first place. It also requires that we ignore bigger questions about exactly who is "entitled" to adequate housing; what exactly city, state, and federal governments' responsibilities are to their citizens; and why it took a major media campaign to force the CHA and Department of Housing and Urban Development to come to the table at all. The Henry Horner Mother's Guild puts front and center the role that race, class, and gender play in urban protest movements. Indeed, the true story of the Guild is much greater than that of a concerned group of poor mothers hoping to get some lightbulbs changed or their plumbing fixed. Instead, the mothers who comprised the Guild were the physical representations of democratic activism in a major city during the height of welfare reduction, community disinvestment, and an embrace of neoliberal interests.[v] Their successful media campaigns through *The Chicago Tribune* and the Chicago Video Project exemplified how, when used with intention and a plan, journalism could amplify their efforts and demonstrate the importance of a strong relationship between grassroots activists and the news media. Without this connection, the Mother's Guild would likely not have gained a fraction of the exposure needed to undertake their initiatives.

FINDING THE END AT THE START LINE

In his 2009 book *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing,* historian Bradford Hunt wrote how early public housing residents often referred to their new homes as "paradise" and took great pride in their communities.[vi] It made sense that people felt this way. When public housing was first built in Chicago, the plan was to improve people's homes and living conditions. When the Harold Ickes Homes were built in Chicago's North Side, they replaced tenements built in the nineteenth century, a random grouping of warehouses, and a falling-apart hospital. Many of Chicago's other public housing projects, including Henry Horner and Cabrini Green, did the same thing. Born out of the New Deal, the intention of public housing was to eliminate slums and offer better opportunities to low-income families. What began as a good idea, however, soon became a living nightmare.[vii]

There is no easy answer to the question of how the Henry Horner Homes became a living nightmare. Nevertheless, there were causes and choices that turned public housing from "paradise" into a place that would eventually result in Alex Kotlowitz' (in)famous 1991 book *There Are No Children Here*. It was not coincidental that, by 1995, Henry Cisneros, who was secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, reported to Congress that eleven of the fifteen poorest communities in the country were Chicago Housing Authority projects, and that the large majority of people living there were Black and Brown.[viii]

As the flow and trade of business increased throughout the nineteenth century, Chicago rapidly became known as one of the major industrial cities of America, and it had the jobs to match. Immigrants from Eastern and Western Europe frequently settled in Chicago's neighborhoods, while Black southerners migrated north in search of more economic prospects and fewer incidences of outright racial violence. Sometimes these hopes were realized, but oftentimes they were not. In her path-breaking book *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939,* the historian Lizabeth Cohen describes how industrial workers frequently came amazingly close to building successful coalitions. Yet repression by employers, hostile or indifferent city officials, and workers' own ethnic, racial, and geographic prejudices kept blue-collar and poor workers from building lasting unions that

could advocate not only for good working conditions, but also better living conditions and more integrated neighborhoods.[ix] Thus, as the twentieth century progressed and public housing for low-income people was looked to as the solution for ending slums, decades of racially and class-biased bureaucratic systems did their jobs and shuffled more and more poor Black and Brown people away from the city's socio-economic centers.

WHY IT ALL MATTERS

By the 1970s and 1980s, the New Deal ethos that once helped public housing residents describe their homes as "paradise" had largely given way to President Ronald Reagan's free-market economy push and later President Bill Clinton's infamous promise to "end welfare as we know it." Tragically, even the Chicago Housing Authority's plan to relocate Henry Horner residents after demolition left many people, a significant portion of them single mothers, relocated to the city's poor, racially segregated, and violent peripheries.[x] Generations of racial capitalism, an embrace of neoliberalism, and a near-complete abandonment of poor people by the state and federal government had done its work. This was the environment that the Mother's Guild was up against when its members began advocating for better housing conditions and protesting the CHA's abdication of its responsibilities. This was the history that informed Alex Kotlowitz' book and shaped how residents felt when they lived, worked, and slept in their homes. Moreover, these were the human attitudes and policy decisions that created a scene where a children's playground could sit in front of a torn-up building that had barely seen better conditions even when it was still intact.

Learning about the Henry Horner Mother's Guild invariably means learning about the broader history of public housing in Chicago and across the nation. It is impossible to avoid the racism and rampant cultural stereotypes of the 1980s and 1990s that fed into ideas of the manipulative "welfare queen" or "crack mother" who misused public funds to support an irresponsible lifestyle while her children suffered. Scholars have debunked these public myths.[xi] The propagation of these stereotypes can also be traced back to the news media; journalists are not automatically exempt from spreading exaggerated falsehoods.

Most importantly, learning about the Mother's Guild celebrates the bold activism of women whom state officials would rather have not seen nor heard. Maurine Woodson and the other 64 women in the Guild exemplified what a civic organization could accomplish despite the obstacles faced by Black women in America. Their efforts, along with the journalists who showed up for interviews, documented the Henry Horner Homes, and publicized the Mother's Guild's story in ways both large and small, demonstrating the potent combination of responsible media and grassroots democratic activism. As Craig Calhoun writes in *Degenerations of Democracy*, "democracy is always a work in progress, being built, being deepened, or being renewed." Of course, on the other side of this picture is the opposite understanding: "when renewal and advancement stall, democracy degenerates."[xii] Each sector is weakened in the absence of the other, but democratic engagement and journalism working together form powerful forces that can hold politicians and state workers accountable for both their promises and actions (or lack thereof). The same children for whom that playground was built could one day become the next generation of activists to carry on their mothers' work.

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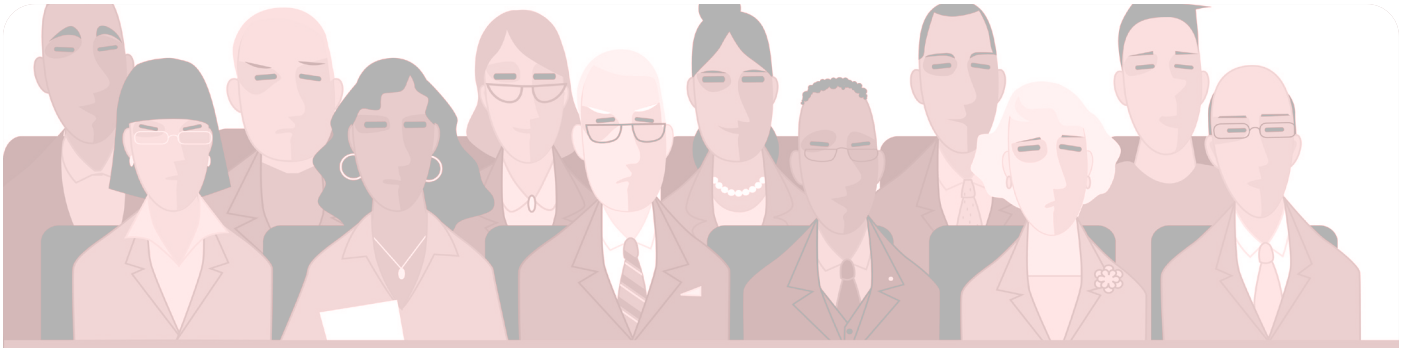
[i] Darlene Gavron, "A Lesson for CHA Tenants," *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1987.
[ii] Linda Gerber, *Henry Horner Mother's Guild: Tenants Go Public on Public Housing* (Bethesda, MD: University Research Corporation, February 1995): 5.
[iii] Rick Kogan, "Focusing on Change: Video Project Takes its Camera into Embattled Communities," *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1992.
[iv] Kogan, "Focusing on Change," June 22, 1992.
[v] By "neoliberalism," I refer to the mid/late-twentieth-century belief that a healthy state was characterized by deregulation, free trade, and reductions in government spending for social welfare programs.
[vi] Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3.
[vii] Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 6.
[viii] Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 6.
[ix] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3-4.
[x] Catherine Fennel, *Last Project Standing: Civics and Sympathy in Post-Welfare Chicago* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 6.
[xi] See, e.g., Laura Briggs, *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Nathalie Oraiz-Fixmer, Homeland Maternity: *US Security Culture and the New Reproductive Regime* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2019); Jeanne Flavin, *Our Bodies, Our Crimes: The Policing of Women's Reproduction in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); Dorothy Roberts, *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
[xii] Craig Calhoun, Dilip Gaonkar, Charles Taylor, eds., *Degenerations of Democracy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022, 48.



THE AMERICAN JURY & AMERICAN MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Trial by jury is central to the American legal system, both formally and informally. Yet, certain trends in recent decades—such as the growth of plea deals and the politicization of many trials—has created a situation in which many parts of the public have come to distrust not only the outcomes of jury trials, but the institution of "trial by one's peers" itself. These two types of distrust have been exacerbated by the media, which is incentivized both economic and ideological levels to politicize its coverage of most trials that appear before a jury. This essay begins by exploring the formal bases for the jury trial's importance in the Constitution and *The Federalist*, and then turns to its informal bases as described by Alexis de Tocqueville. It then discusses two recent trials, those of Derek Chauvin and Kyle Rittenhouse, in the context of the "new politics of jury distrust." This article concludes with a discussion of Robert Kagan's conception of "adversarial legalism" and Dennis Hale's analysis of the contemporary jury's ills. The solution to an ostensibly untrustworthy, politicized jury is public education to the institution's necessity, and a knowledge of the media's effects on average Americans—or, in other words, its tendency to politicize every issue to an unnecessary degree.

INTRODUCTION

Trial by jury is central to the American legal system. Article III, Section II of the Constitution states that "the Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment, shall be by Jury." The Bill of Rights clarifies this guarantee: the Sixth Amendment states that "in all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury," and the Seventh Amendment states that "in Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved." At least on a formal level, trial by jury is a necessary precondition for the United States' constitutional governance. It provides a check on the power of both the executive and legislative branches. As Alexander Hamilton notes in *Federalist* 83, it is "a safeguard against an oppressive exercise of the power of taxation" (a limit on Congress' power) and "a security against corruption" (a limit on the president's power). Moreover, the universal right to trial by jury protects us from each other. Hamilton, again in *Federalist* 83, argues that it is "in most cases, under proper regulations, [it is] an excellent method of determining questions of property."[i]

But trial by jury is not merely of formal importance to American governance. In one of the most memorable passages in *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville notes that:

The jury serves incredibly to form the judgement and to augment the natural enlightenment of the people. There, in my opinion, is its greatest advantage. One ought to consider it as a school, free of charge and always open, where each juror comes to be instructed in his rights, where he entered into daily communication with the most instructed and most enlightened members of the elevated classes, where the laws are taught to him in a practical manner and are put within reach of his intelligence by the efforts of the attorneys, the advice of the judge, and the very passions of the parties. I think that the practical intelligence and good political sense of the Americans must principally be attributed to the long use that they have made of the jury.[ii]

As Tocqueville argues in *Democracy in America*, the formal importance of jury trials is reinforced (or perhaps even precipitated) by their informal importance. They generate and reinforce, in his telling, the republican mores that are responsible for legitimating the law. Indeed, Tocqueville, asserts, "laws are always unstable as long as they do not lean on mores; mores form the sole restraint and lasting power in a people."[iii] Moreover, jury trials reveal to each citizen the duty he or she ought to feel towards another citizen. To Tocqueville's mind, "in forcing men to occupy themselves with something other than their own affairs, it [a jury trial] combats individual selfishness, which is like the blight of societies."[iv] Finally, jury trials link the average American to the nation's founding documents, which may otherwise be viewed as relics of days long past.

It may sound fanciful, but the constitutional requirement of jury trials links individual American citizens, who would otherwise be atomized by the nation's individualistic ethos, together. Jury trials teach equity, responsibility, and accountability. And, they instill a universal faith in human reason. As Tocqueville notes, the institution makes each "reckon that one must rely on the sense of all to discern what is permitted or forbidden, what is true or false."[v] These observations are analogous to those offered by Craig Calhoun, who spoke at the Clough Center in the Fall of 2022, regarding his new book, *Degenerations of Democracy*. In the book's second chapter, "Contradictions and Double Movements," he states that democracy is a "telic concept" in the sense that it is "defined by ideals that can never be fully and finally realized."[vi] Trial by jury, simply put, is as American as blue jeans and apple pie.

THE DECLINE OF THE JURY TRIAL

As American as jury trials may be, they have been in decline recently. In fact, since at least the Progressive Era, civil trials have become more and more complicated, and high-profile criminal trials have become inextricable from the most divisive political issues of the day. These two factors have instigated a profound distrust of jury trials on the part of the media. In popular coverage of complicated civil proceedings, reporters often ask why trial outcomes should not be determined by a panel of experts. Likewise, in politically divisive criminal proceedings, these same figures often quip that potentially biased jurors should not be allowed to serve on juries; if human beings are imperfect, their juries will be too. For each virtue of jury trials that Tocqueville once revealed, an equal number of vices seem to come to light.

In view of the increasingly critical attention to jury trials that has been seen in recent years, the public has become ever-more skeptical (if not cynical) about the outcomes of jury trials. This sentiment is illuminated by the media's reactions to two recent criminal trials that were especially publicized and divisive—namely, the trials of Derek Chauvin and Kyle Rittenhouse. When the former was sentenced for his role in the death of George Floyd, many publications decried the outcome as a failure of the American legal system. Even before the verdict, however, there were rumblings of institutional distrust. Many conservative publications agreed with Chauvin's defense team and argued that Judge Peter Cahill's denial of a change of venue prevented the case from being impartially adjudicated.[vii] And many conservative publications, perhaps on account of this fact, disagreed with the trial's outcome. On the other hand, many liberal and left-leaning publications celebrated the judge's choice and celebrated the trial's outcome.

A similar story can be told about the media's re-

ions to the proceedings and outcome of the Kyle Rittenhouse trial. As Jon Allsop claims in the Columbia Journalism Review, many in "the right-wing media have taken Rittenhouse for a cause célèbre, often lionizing him for defending a community against liberal rioters as institutional law and order broke down; many liberal commentators took the opposite view."[viii] Coverage of the trial either sympathetically fixated on Rittenhouse's emotional testimonies or was framed by claims that the eighteen-year-old was playing up his emotions for cynical reasons.[ix] This division extended to media coverage of the trial's outcome, with conservative publications largely celebrating the jury's decision and with left-leaning publications largely denouncing it. The media's treatment of the Rittenhouse trial and verdict, and of the Chauvin trial and verdict, points towards a widespread and growing public distrust of jury trials.

Distrust of this sort is a problem for two reasons. First, it indicates that there is palpable skepticism about the integrity of jury trials. Second, and more importantly, it indicates that there is a cynicism in the country about the centrality of jury trials to the American legal system. Given Hamilton and Tocqueville's beliefs about the centrality of the jury trial to American constitutional governance, the widespread distrust in juries' abilities to properly adjudicate legal proceedings calls into question the nation's perception of its system of constitutional governance more broadly. Indeed, if such distrust continues to spread, there may be a crisis of faith in the United States' government.

COMPETING PERSPECTIVES ON JURY TRIALS

Robert A. Kagan's work—and particularly his *Adversarial Legalism: The American Way of Law*—elucidates the vices of the American legal system. In Kagan's telling, adversarial legalism occurs when a system of fragmented authority (such as the American legal system) meets the demand for total justice. In particular reference to juries, Kagan notes that a spirit of amateurism pervades the American legal system. American juries, he argues, "[a]re uniformed about decisions in comparable cases, are not compelled to explain their decisions or coordinate them with those of other juries, and are subject to the competitive tactics of truth-manipulating lawyers, who all too often are unequally matched."[x] Tocqueville once noted that the American jury's amateur spirit was its greatest strength— that those whom the law compels to sit on juries would be educated and become better citizens on account of their experiences in the jury box. What Tocqueville missed is that jurors more often than not arrive for jury duty uneducated on the matters they will assist in adjudicating. This lack of experience is magnified, moreover, by other structural aspects of the American legal system. In *Adversarial Legalism*, Kagan stresses the unintended consequences of the fact both that American jurors "are not given written summaries of the issues and evidence in advance, [so] the whole story of the dispute must be presented to them orally," and that "American jurors are sometimes befuddled by the complexity of evidence and the tactics of skilled defense lawyers, whose reputations rest on winning, not merely ensuring that defendants reliably get a fair trial."[xi] The structure of the American legal system seems to be the cause of the media's distrust in it. If the average American cannot be considered an "expert" in the adjudication of complex civil cases or can be somehow biased in the adjudication of criminal cases, why should we trust juries consisting of average Americans?

This issue is only compounded by the dizzying effects of modernity: rapid technological innovation, the desire for democratization, and new understandings of "truth." The first of these three complications began to exert serious influence over the American reliance on jury trials during the Progressive Era (1890s-1920s). Effectively, the question became: how can an average American be expected to adjudicate complicated cases whose facts require the attention of experts and industry professionals? As Boston College's Dennis Hale notes in his *The Jury in America: Triumph and Decline*, "some things are just too hard for average citizens to understand, given their limited experience, and are better left to experts."[xii]

Expert testimony may help, but people who are called to the stand do not make final judgements. Furthermore, might expert testimonies even mislead amateur jurors with rhetoric that

that can outweigh real knowledge? These two questions amplify the importance of the second complication: the desire for democratization.

The popular thrust for the democratization of American politics began during the Jacksonian Era and continued to grow through the "rights revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s. One inadvertent result of greater political participation is that juries have become more amateurish over time. The pool of available jurors kept expanding at the same time that every case has become more complicated than those of the past. Likewise, how can one's experience on a jury be considered a civic education if the cases consider questions of events far removed from one's day-to-day life? Hale asks, "how can the many be made wise, or at least wiser than they used to be, or wise enough to render judgement in court?"[xiii] One cannot be considered to have been made "wise," at least in a civic sense, if their experience in a jury simply taught them about the vicissitudes of the side effects of a drug taken by a specific population, for example. The particularity of the cases now decided by the American legal system, combined with widespread democratization of the jury, has led to an almost postmodern crisis: what is "truth" (if there is such a thing), and how can average Americans become privy to it? Should a jury be made of the "best" or of the most "representative"? Which category is more just, more democratic, and more trustworthy? Hale complicates matters, writing the following with regards to the idea of a "representative jury:"

What does a "representative" jury mean, and how do we know a representative jury when we see one? How can we tell whether a jury venture has been chosen from a "fair cross section" of the local population? If we know what a fair cross section means, how much deviation from that standard should be considered intolerable? When measuring the venire against the population of the district, what are the "cognizable groups" to which special attention should be paid, other than racial minorities and women? Why do these groups deserve special attention, while other groups that are every bit as distinctive as African Americans, women, Hispanics, or Asians go unprotected? And whatever happened to the protection of laborers?[xiv]

A representative jury is a biased one, an intelligent jury is an elitist one. A combinatory jury is probably best, but it suffers a proportion of the vices natural to its two component ones. What can be done to rejuvenate trust in juries in spite of their obvious shortcomings? In particular, what can be done to curtail the media's seemingly growing distrust of juries?

THE FUTURE OF THE JURY

In his essay "Of Men and Angels: A Search for Morality in the Constitution," Robert Goldwin argues that every big-C Constitution is founded upon the small-c constitutions of citizens. It seems that, today, our small-c constitutions include a distrust in juries on account of our distrust of others. Our political institutions have somehow atomized us, we each understand "truth" differently, and we do not like the idea of letting others collectively judge claims of wrongdoing; after all, others might be biased. At the same time, Americans may be uniquely skeptical of expert or professional rule: juries, therefore, cannot be unrepresentative. One potential solution to the current media malaise regarding juries may be a lowering of expectations. If it is generally acknowledged that human beings are flawed, we should not expect the exactitude of science in law. To embrace this notion would go against trends in American politics dating back to the Progressive Era, but that is arguably what our system needs.

Doing away with the Progressive expectation of exactitude could herald a return to Tocqueville, who rested his political philosophy on the importance of community life. Our lives may seem atomized, but they are not; we rely on others every day in an innumerable number of ways. Life in a cohesive community also has a humbling effect. We no longer expect perfect solutions, but rather the best that we and our neighbors can do. As Tocqueville tells us, juries are necessary not despite of their occasional inaccuracies, but because of them:

When a man or a party suffers from an injustice in the United States, whom do you want him to address? Public opinion? that is what forms the majority; the legislative body? it represents the majority and obeys it blindly; the ex-

ecutive power? it is named by the majority and serves as its passive instrument; the public forces? the public forces are nothing other than the majority in arms; the jury? the jury is the majority in arms; the jury? the jury is the majority vested with the right to pronounce decrees: in certain states, the judges themselves are elected by the majority. Therefore, however iniquitous or unreasonable is the measure that strikes you, you must submit to it.[xv]

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[i] https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed83.asp
[ii] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, eds. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), I.II.8.
[iii] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.II.8.
[iv] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.II.8.
[v] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.II.10.
[vi] Craig Calhoun, Dilip Gaonkar, and Charles Taylor, *Degenerations of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 48.
[vii] See *Degenerations of Democracy*, Appendix 1.
[viii] Jon Allsop, "The Kyle Rittenhouse Trial, the Media, and the Bigger Picture," *Columbia Journalism Review*, November 22, 2021.
[ix] See "The Kyle Rittenhouse Trial," Appendix 2.
[x] Robert A. Kagan, *Adversarial Legalism: The American Way of Law*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 163.
[xi] Kagan, *Adversarial Legalism*, 127, 129.
[xii] Dennis Hale, *The Jury in America: Triumph and Decline* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016), 81.
[xiii] Hale, *The Jury in America*, 142.
[xiv] Hale, *The Jury in America*, 279.
[xv] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.II.7.

EXTREMISM, VIOLENCE & MEDIA DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, a series of physical attacks—the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in 2015 in Paris, the 2019 mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, and more recently, the 2021 storming of the US capital—have established violent extremism as a major security threat for today's democratic societies. These attacks, and the people and groups carrying them out, have been widely covered in the news. Consequently, media narratives have played a key role in framing the discourse around violent extremism. The media's discursive choices when reporting on violent extremism reflect views about the phenomenon, the societal conflicts that are interwoven with it, its origins, and where justice lies. This essay discusses the challenges and responsibilities of the media when reporting on violent extremism and argues for a revision of outdated media frames.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the salience of the topic, we lack a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between extremism, violence, and the media discourse. The 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks help illuminate the diversity of media frames applied to the coverage of violent extremism, and the potentially detrimental effects of the media discourse on public opinion and behavior.

The period after the events of 9/11 was marked by a constant increase in the number of victims of violent extremist groups as well as a series of deadly attacks in Europe that raised awareness and concerns about the spread of violent extremism, especially violent religious extremism, in modern democracies. Violent extremism can manifest as violent attitudes, violent actions, or both, and is interlinked with forms of political violence, most notably terrorism and civil violence. Over the past decade, the reality of violent extremism in modern democracies has continued to evolve. Recently, the declining activities of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq corresponded with a drop in attacks and fatalities linked to religious extremism in democracies. Nonetheless, many democratic states face a major increase in right-wing extremist violence.

As a society, we are influenced by news accounts and the narrative landscape and understand ourselves and others through it. Media narratives have been shown to shape behavior, with the ability to drive or mitigate conflict.[i] The way the news media frame issues can encourage social engagement and political action to address grievances and manage intergroup conflict. However, this can also increase polarization by inflaming grievances and weakening social trust, to the point of motivating conflicts and violence.

Whereas recent research has devoted much attention to the coverage of major social issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, we know much less about (1) the media coverage of violent extremism, and (2) the consequences of media coverage of violent extremism on public opinions and behavior. I address these issues with the help of a case study: On January 7, 2015, Said and Chérif Kouachi assaulted the offices of the French satirical

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assaulted the offices of the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*. The two men, who belonged to an Islamist terrorist group, killed 12 people and injured 11 others, including cartoonists and journalists working for the magazine.

The event attracted significant media attention and resulted in an agitated public discourse. Mainstream media around the world reported on the event. Countless stories, images, and comments related to the event were distributed across social media platforms. The hashtags #JeSuisCharlie, #CharlieHebdo, and many others referring to the event were trending for days. The 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks call for a deeper understanding of the relationship between extremism, violence, and the media discourse.

MEDIA COVERAGE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Media framing of political violence is a highly sensitive topic. This sensitivity is exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding how to define politically motivated violence. Indeed, news coverage of violent events struggles with framing and labelling the events, perpetrators, and victims, mirroring ongoing debates over definitions of terrorism and related crises, as well as normative considerations central to the maintenance of democracy. The coverage of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks clearly shows the diversity of media frames applied when reporting on political violence. At the same time, it points to common threads and universal concepts that feature prevalently in the international media landscape.

The attacks were anomalous in that a newspaper was itself the subject of international news. But it was also a highly symbolic event that singularly exemplified the tension between the right of freedom of speech and the respect for religious values. Autonomy or the right to determine how to apply occupational techniques is a key norm in the journalistic profession. In the editorial judgment of whether to reprint the cartoons, journalists and news organizations took different stances on the question of whether freedom of speech can be reconciled with other important values such as respect for religion. The editorial stances highlighted cultural and regional differences over how the media responded to the attacks. It also raised questions over whether when reporting on political violence media self-censor for fear of causing offense or, worse still, triggering a backlash.

For example, the coverage of the attacks in many of the leading international newspapers reflected a strong sense of solidarity in the aftermath of the attack. Generally, strong symbolic language was used to describe the attack, with most front pages calling out the attacks as 'massacre' and 'terror' or invoking support for the victims. In Western media, the event had harsh press responses that mirrored worries about freedom of opinion, constraints to media coverage, and the future of democracy. The event was framed in terms of the importance of (and limits to) free speech, the privileging of the freedom of the press, and the foregrounding of the editorial decision-making process. In another prominent media frame, journalists contextualized the attacks as related to the problems of marginalization and exclusion facing French society.[ii]

However, there were also regional differences in the framing of the attacks. Countries around the world also formed different views of the attacks, based on their economical, ideological, or political interests. The dilemma of whether to republish the Prophet Mohammed cartoons at the origin of the attacks was also strongly influenced by the linguistic, cultural, and journalistic proximities of the journalistic and news organizations to the country of the event.

In France, both traditional and newer media republished the controversial cartoons, to showcase their solidarity with the satirical magazine and in defence of an arguably absolutist interpretation of free speech. To France and the French language media, the episode constituted an attack on free speech in general, and satirical journalism in particular. For many observers, the coverage narrowly assigned responsibility for the attacks to non-French factors, such as foreign extremist organizations and overseas training, failing to touch upon issues of discrimination and marginalization of the Muslim community in France.[iii]

Newspapers outside of France frequently decided to publish their own cartoons and editorials that veered away from *Charlie Hebdo*'s more provocative sketches mocking Islam. In contrast to France, the coverage by the Anglo-Saxon media press was from the start critical and reflexive about the limits to the rights and responsibilities of the.[iv] In the U.K., with few exceptions, news organizations decided against distributing the caricatures of Muhammad in defence of the right not to publish and in the context of the multicultural ideologies and realities present within British society. The event was frequently framed as a product of the marginalization and alienation of Muslims in European Society. Still, the event was seen as a direct attack on democracy and freedom of speech, which were then celebrated shortly after the attacks at a march supported by journalists' unions. American news organizations were divided in their decision to either republish or not to republish the cartoons, with some publications, particularly newer, online-focused media, deciding to republish the images. Legacy media outlets, such as the *New York Times* and Associated Press, opted to withhold the images from their coverage, out of respect for cultural sensitivity and out of fear for the safety of staff members. Some news organizations, such as Associated Press, went as far as to call the cartoons hate speech, addressing the inflammatory nature of the images, and the need to balance freedom with responsibility.

Finally, the media in the Muslim world also published a wide variety of reactions to the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks.[v] However, compared to Western media, the overall coverage tended to be lower-key, with fewer newspapers covering the attacks on their front pages. Most noticeably, both conservative and reformist outlets criticized the magazine's choice for publishing cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. Generally, the media also questioned whether the magazine's choice constituted a legitimate expression of free speech. Some more conservative newspapers also blamed the attacks on France's policies in the Middle East or saw them as a response to the country's allegedly widespread support for anti-Islamic media and disrespect for religious values. Others reiterated that Islam was against violence, with leaders of the Arab League openly condemning the attacks. They criticized the worldwide attention that the attacks generated and the fact that this coverage helped promote the wrong stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. They also pointed out that killings in their parts of the world typically generated little international coverage and response.

THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA PRESS COVERAGE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM ON PUBLIC OPINIONS & BEHAVIOR

It is well-known that media frames are capable of inducing individual and collective emotions. Media coverage and labels can influence how governments and the public perceive the significance of the covered events, and how they respond to those events. This is especially true in the case of news from abroad, where the general public has less knowledge and direct experience. News organizations are therefore called to carefully weigh which frames and labels to apply in the aftermath of violent events.

Through an online experiment carried out with US citizens, researchers found that framing the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, similar to the events of 9/11, produced high levels of collective victimization among the participants and heightened the perceived responsibility of Islam in the violence.[vi] Contrarily, framing the event in reference to the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison had the opposite effect. It provoked a feeling of collective guilt among respondents who then tended to steer away from attributing responsibility for the attacks to Islam. Another study found that people who paid more attention to news media coverage of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, and thus had likely higher exposure to the free speech frame, were more willing to approve of the magazine's publishing of the cartoons.[vii] The importance of media frames also became evident when in 2020 *Charlie Hebdo* again republished cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed at the start of the trial for the attack on their Paris office —the issue immediately sold out in French newsstands. At the same time, it provoked condemnation from several Muslim countries, and al-Qaeda militants reportedly threatened a

repeat of the 2015 deadly attacks on the magazine's staff. As with previous terrorist incidents, the attacks resulted in diminished support for immigration in many countries, which is linked to the framing of the event in the media.

Media can also be drivers of the polarization of opinions. With the spread of social media use, the news consumer has been transported from a low-choice environment to a high-choice one with a greater and broader choice of content. In this environment, people are tempted to select whichever news source aligns with their political viewpoints, which enhances polarization. Social media also provides platforms for interacting, networking, and joining like-minded groups. This can further encourage polarization as individuals build ties with people with similar viewpoints and grow accepting of more extreme views to seek in-group approval.

For example, many social media users shared the hashtags #jesuischarlie and #iamcharlie on Twitter in the aftermath of the attacks as an expression of solidarity with the magazine and support of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. However, at the same time, the hashtag #JeNeSuisPasCharlie was also trending as a counter-narrative.[viii] Supporters of this hashtag typically did not endorse the violence committed nor did they want to disrespect the victims. Users tweeted the hashtag to challenge the mainstream framing that the universal democratic value of freedom of expression was threatened by religious intolerance and violence. Yet, the strength of the response to the mainstream frame varied. Whereas some of the users only indicated a reservation against the mainstream frame, others voiced their criticism by deploying an "us versus them" frame. They reverted to alternative frames, which included hate speech, Eurocentrism, and Islamophobia. In this context, the hashtag #JeNeSuisPasCharlie was used to criticize and at the same declare a self-identify that stood in sharp contrast to the mainstream frame.

The public discourse on the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks also revealed an interesting temporal dynamic. Initially, the attacks were discussed by a broad audience, but the discourse was mostly apolitical. With time, user engagement diminished dramatically. However, politically polarizing discussions surged that saw engagements of small, increasingly politicized, and polarized groups. [ix] Finally, the attacks illustrate how Twitter and other social platforms have become crucial communication channels during times of crisis. They also show that local news sources continue to play a key role on these platforms, since social media users typically draw on information from these sources when discussing a crisis.[x]

CONCLUSION

The media coverage of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks shows the importance of scrutinizing established media frames. The media and the public have the responsibility to engage in this debate. On the one hand, news stories reported on the attacks as a violation of two core values of democracy: freedom of speech and editorial independence. On the other hand, the attack led to an international political debate on the danger of disrespecting religious values and the stigmatization of religious groups.

Journalists, governments, and the public can draw on important lessons from the media coverage. First, the media apply common frames when reporting on violent extremist events, especially when these events occurred in Western democracies. To cite a few, threats to democracy and the upholding of Western values, such as freedom of speech, are common threads. Media coverage of equally deadly attacks elsewhere is rarely reported, suggesting a bias towards certain kinds of victims. Extremist violence is often portrayed as the product of the alienation and stigmatization of marginalized and minority groups, such as Muslim minorities in Western democracies. These frames reflect notions of integrative global media events and of a rational global public sphere that have accumulated in media coverage over decades. However, current media frames are being challenged. This is evidenced by the animated debates in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks on a range of issues: the limits to the rights of the press, the instrumental purpose of satire and journalism in the public interest, and the media's ability to balance rights with responsibilities. These debates ques-

tion the normative role of news media in today's democratic, secular, and multicultural societies. Common sense also dictates that current media frames need revisiting. In particular, there are persistent demands that the media provide more "thick" descriptions when covering violent extremist events, for example, by engaging in more supple heuristics that acknowledge and respect context, cultural history, and diversity. Simplified and decontextualized narratives around free speech, Islamophobia, and partisanship, which were common in the media coverage of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, do not help the reader understand how violent extremism emerges and how it can be prevented. At worst, these narratives that distinguish a world between "good and evil" can be dangerous and incite further violence. Media frames that prioritize "thick" descriptions and are mindful of labels are especially important in a world where news consumers oftentimes rely on social media platforms for news information and engagement. Social media employ popularity-based algorithms that aim at maximizing user engagement. Simplified and decontextualized narratives are amplified by this technology, increasing the level of polarization and partisan animosity. Traditional and social media will continue to fundamentally shape how we view and understand violent extremism and other threats to peaceful coexistence in society. The news media should behave as a watchdog of the fundamental values of our democracies. But news media should also be capable of aligning core values – such as freedom of speech – with broader cultural and journalistic codes, and work towards overcoming instead of worsening divisions in our societies.

[i] See Des Freedman, "Media Power and the Framing of the *Charlie Hebdo* Attacks," in After *Charlie Hebdo*: Terror, Racism, and Free Speech, eds. Guan Titley, Des Freedman, Gholam Khiabany, Aurelein Mondon (London: Zed Books, 2017), 209.
[ii] Eva Polonska-Kimunguyi and Marie Gillespie, "Terrorism Discourse on French International Broadcasting: France 24 and the Case of *Charlie Hebdo* Attacks in Paris," European Journal of Communication 31, no. 5 (2016): 568-583.
[iii] Joy Jenkins and Edson C. Tandoc, Jr., "Journalism Under Attack: The *Charlie Hebdo* Covers and Reconsiderations of Journalistic Norms," Journalism 20, no. 9 (September 2019): 1165-1182.
[iv] Joanna Paraszczuk, "Muslim Press Reacts to *CHarlie Hebdo* Attack," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 9, 2015.
[v] Nathan Walter, Stefanie Z. Demetriades, Ruthie Kelly, Traci K. Gillig, "Je Suis Charlie? The Framing of Ingroup Transgression and the Attribution of Responsibility for the *Charlie Hebdo* Attack," International Journal of Communiction 10 (2016): 3956-3974.
[vi] Jeffrey Gottfried and Michael Barthiel, "After *Charlie Hebdo*, Balancing Press Freedom and Respect for Religion," Pew Research Center, January 28, 2015.
[vii] Fabio Giglietto and Yenn Lee, "A Hashtag Worth a Thousand Words: Discursive Strategies Around #JeNeSuisPasCharlie After the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* Shooting," Social Media + Society 3, no. 1 (January-March 2017).
[viii] Nikos Smyrnaios and Pierre Ratinaud, "The *Charlie Hebdo* Attacks on Twitter: A Comparative Analysis of a Political Controversy in English and French," Social Media + Society 3, no. 1 (January-March 2017): 1-13.
[ix] Cody Buntain, Jennifer Golbeck, Brooke Liu, Gary LaFree, "Evaluating Public Responses to the Boston Marathon Bombing and Other Acts of Terrorism Through Twitter," Proceedings of the Tenth International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media 10, no. 1 (2016): 555-558.

II. NEWSPRINT AS DEMOCRATIC FABRIC

PROPAGANDIST PEERS

The Shared Projects of James Fenimore Cooper's The Spy, *& Early American Periodicals*

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ABSTRACT

In 1821, nearly half a century after America had separated itself from Britain through revolution, James Fenimore Cooper published his preeminent work, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, which fictionally recounted notable figures and places of the War. The text is the quintessential example of America's early republic literature: the novel is underscored by a palpable yearning for a distinct national identity, as well as a notable interest in establishing a uniquely American literary history. But neither *The Spy*, nor any of Cooper's works to follow, were alone in these pursuits – newspapers and periodicals in the early republic had been working through the same questions of national identity and historical inheritance since the aforementioned War of Independence. This project seeks to evaluate Cooper's early American novel in its historical context, alongside then-contemporary newspapers, in order to identify and speculate upon the ways in which the novelist's work intersects with the nationalistic enterprises of its cheap print counterparts. Following Russ Castronovo's work on early American newspapers and their propagandistic tendencies, this identifies a nation-building penchant in the emergent form of media. More specifically, by highlighting Cooper's and the press's shared deification of George Washington and engagement with apologetics for the institution of slavery, this project demonstrates that early American works of literature like *The Spy* must be considered in keeping with the biases and nation-building projects that characterize early American newspapers.

INTRODUCTION

It seems intuitive that the act of reading newspapers or periodicals is almost always ensconced in the practice of noticing explicit biases. Readers are compelled, or encouraged, to either seek out publishers because of their stated views or, at the least, identify an outlet's slant upon finding a text to parse. In stark contrast, audiences are rarely as driven to identify the partiality of authors who have written books which, while fictional, nonetheless blend history with historiography. Outside of the academy, placing authors and their works in a historical moment and treating their literature as commentary is unusual practice. This conundrum – the absence of a commonplace practice of historically-informed reading of literature – is worth investigating. Identifying the implicit biases and bends that underline literary works, in the same fashion that readers are tasked with identifying these phenomena in newspaper articles, helps to elucidate the interests of authors who would otherwise be taken as reliable historical narrators.

This essay aims to demonstrate the importance of identifying and reading historical influences in popular works of literature, with the goal of highlighting the importance of critically reading historical fiction, rather than consuming it without considerations made for authorial intent. To do so, this essay will evaluate James Fenimore Cooper's early American novel, *The Spy*, in its historical context, alongside then-contemporary newspapers from early America. Cooper's text operates as propaganda, much

to the same effect as periodicals from around the time of the novel's publication and setting. More specifically, by identifying the author's intentional projects of deifying George Washington and creating a space for slavery apologia, early American works of literature like *The Spy* must be considered in keeping with the biases and nation-building projects that characterize propagandistic early American newspapers.

PROPAGANDIST CAUSES & TENDENCIES IN EARLY AMERICAN NEWS

It is important to understand how early American newspapers produced and disseminated propaganda in the fledgling republic. By the time Cooper published *The Spy*, America had been separated from Great Britain for less than half a century and was characterized by a palpable yearning for a distinct national identity. Newspapers helped to depict early America as distinct from Britain while also pedestaling a burgeoning identity through the printing of pro-American literature alongside more conventional, familiar subjects in periodicals. As Russ Castronovo writes, many Americans in the Revolutionary period and early republic felt "anxieties about [the emergence] of a competing manifestation of Englishness" that seemed to plague their search for a distinctly American identity.[i] Countrymen sought nothing more than a congruence of qualities that made them more American than quasi-British. In response, that search for identity played out, as scholars have noted, in the press, which was utilized because it was the preeminent vehicle for the production and spread of information in the colonies and early states. Publishers were keen to self-identify with "the necessity of using print culture to impel [the] mass[es]" by developing – and then harnessing – a unique American history that laymen could recognize and build solidarity around.[ii] The propaganda of early American newspapers, referred to as such for the clear investments in nation-building projects, operated as much behind the scenes as it did in plain view. Identifying the mode of this persuasive and nationalistic practice helps to illustrate the extent to which later fiction engages in the same project.

Take, for instance, the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, which ran from 1775 to 1783. The paper, which was published three times a week, featured a variety of topics, including advertisements, write-ups of local events, and even the occasional song or poem. By many standards, it was as regular a publication as was possible for the time. Its bent became clear when, on July 6, 1776, the *Post* reproduced, in full, the Declaration of Independence for its readers.[iii] Not only was the paper making its allegiances clear, but it was also doing so in a manner that belied the importance of such an editorial statement – the Declaration preceded, front and center, the more recognizable advertisements for foodstuffs and clothing, or local stories that were more indicative of the paper's commonly printed subject matter. By prioritizing the nationalistic document for readers, the publishers were highlighting the importance of the Declaration for readers as Americans. Proceeding with the habitual content thereafter normalized the presence of nationalistic writings alongside more conventional, less nationalistically important topics.

The normalcy of nation-building propaganda in early American newspapers was not unique to the Revolutionary moment, however. In 1815, less than a decade before Cooper would write *The Spy*, Britain would fail to regain control of the States after a three-year campaign, and newspapers would once again meet the occasion by producing and disseminating nationalistic literature to the masses to drive home Americanism. For example, the March 17-21, 1815, editions of the Philadelphia Aurora, a paper founded and edited by Benjamin Franklin's grandson, included a lengthy article entitled "Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War with Great Britain," which detailed the conflict that had forestalled American progress since 1812. There, the publisher argued that it was "Great Britain alone," through repeated "aggression" which started and prolonged the war."[iv] The author of the articles is clearly continuing the project of creating American infallibility seen since the revolutionary and post-revolutionary newspapers began it decades before. By continuing the project of normalizing the of literature which sought to build defensible nationalistic perception among readership

more accustomed to advertisements and the frequently editorialized story, early American newspapers maintained their status as the preeminent medium for propagating mass-market depictions of the fledgling republic in remarkably – often unquestionably – good light.

UNDERSTANDING COOPER'S PROPAGANDIST PROSE

Early American literature is in keeping with this nationalistic project, and James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Spy*, is one notable case study. Like the aforementioned newspapers, this novel establishes a sense of nationalism early on, ensuring that the bourgeoning country would have yet another facet of print media which encouraged nationalism through readership. In the "Preface" to the first edition in 1821, Cooper wrote authoritatively about his position as an American writer and recorder of national history. While he opens with an acknowledgment that many of his peers thought that narratives like his were better suited for the backdrop of the old world (in Europe), he makes it clear that his project is one that seeks to capture the novelty and grandeur of the fledgling country.[v] Cooper is so confident in America's legitimacy as a setting for literature, as well as his obligation to set its history into type, that he guarantees his audience that, although the nature of the story to follow is fiction, "a good portion" of the narrative and its many actors depicted therein are nonetheless faithful to reality.[vi] The author's insistence upon the readiness of America for its own national canon, with its own national writers, produces two propagandistic effects for readers. On the one hand, Cooper's inclusion of European naysaying peers is an explicit denouncement of the notion that Americans were unqualified – being that their identity had so recently been forged – to generate literature about themselves for the world.

On the other hand, the author's insistence that, while fictional, his story contains reputable depictions of persons and moments five decades prior, speaks to the commitment of Americans in the post-Revolution, early republican era to convince readers of the nation's legitimacy by endeavoring to tell tales about its relatively new story. It follows, then, that Cooper's text should be read as wholly invested in the construction of a favorable portrait of early America that is, at once, worth writing about, and worth being one-sided in the depiction of. The author's attempt to elevate American history features two clear nodes of propaganda which make it comparable to newspapers from the period: the deification of George Washington, and the inclusion of not-so-subtle slavery apologia.

MAN, OR GOD: GEORGE WASHINGTON IN WRITING

The first way that Cooper carries out his propagandistic project of drafting, whole cloth, the legitimacy of the new country, is by deifying its most important founding figure: George Washington. Cooper's description of Washington, referred to by the pseudonym Harper throughout most of the novel, borders on worship. The general consistently captures the attention of the other characters, and even though his identity is hidden for reasons of proto-national wartime security, his reputation shines through the façade. When Washington first appears in the novel, cloaked by a disguise and inclement weather, he is described as recognizably "distinguished" despite not appearing in his regular general's regalia.[vii] Later, while still wearing his disguise, Washington is described as "benevolent," striking other characters as venerable, though they cannot explain why.[viii] Here, and elsewhere in the novel, Cooper is creating a mythos of Washington that finds his fore-fatherly American aura so powerful that, even when he is not recognizable as Washington proper, he nonetheless exudes character nearing godliness. This "metaphorical national paternity of Washington," writes Erik Simpson, is a manifestation of Cooper's search for an American Forefather or American God.[ix] In lieu of using a familiar figure from literature in the old world, Cooper instead sought to deify Washington, as had his journalistic counterparts, for the sake of establishing America as a place of literary originality – a place that could produce figures so powerful in their presence that costumes or concealments could not hide their reputation. In addition to Washington's ability to

enamor others in the novel, it is the founding father's presence which carries the plot forward.

The general's brief stay at the "Locusts" – the homestead in Westchester, New York that foregrounds the novel's plot – kicks into motion the dramatic story of patriotism which ensues.[x] And, in keeping with the idea that Washington is so benevolent that the narrative cannot function without his presence, it is his handwritten letters which save two of the novel's characters from their deadly self-made misfortunes near the book's conclusion.[xi] While the story itself revolves primarily around the lives and dramas of other characters, Washington's presence facilitates the story by providing resolution and guidance that seems otherworldly or too exceedingly divine to be read as anything other than deification by Cooper.

However unique his approach to deifying the character of Washington in his prose, Cooper was not breaking new ground with his god-like depiction of the general; early American newspapers had done the same kind of national character-building by publishing larger-than-life accounts of the first president, as well as publishing his words in excerpts for a mass audience. Depictions which extolled the grandeur of Washington and his ilk, like the one in the April 1789 printing of *American Museum*, were as commonplace as advertisements in the papers. Here, as in other publications, Washington is glowingly depicted as "distinguished" and "the first magistrate of a great empire."[xii] And, while the general was certainly important to the revolutionary movement, it is hard to imagine that he was the person solely responsible for "rescu[ing the country] from tyranny" or for the "freedom [that followed] independence."[xiii] Here, Washington's image and influence are exaggerated – more than likely on purpose – resulting in the creation of a version of the man which is, frankly, larger than life. Moreover, the general enjoyed an ever-expanding reach and presence thanks to the dissemination of his writings and addresses in early American newspapers. For example, in 1806 the January edition of *American Register,* a paper published in Philadelphia, printed personal correspondences from Washington to his interlocuters.[xiv] Closer still to Cooper's publication of *The Spy*, a run of *The Weekly Register* from February 20 and 27 of 1813 reprinted, for a wide-ranging readership, a speech that the former president had given decades prior – this, despite the fact that he had been dead since 1799.[xv] By inflating and spreading Washington's presence in the formation of America during and after the Revolution, newspapers, years before Cooper's work, published his legacy into the realm of national deity.

THE SPECTER OF SLAVERY IN PERIODICALS & POPULAR FICTION

But deification of the foremost founding father was not the only way Cooper, and newspapers before him, sought to propagandize readers on the notion of a praiseworthy American history and national identity. There was also the widespread presence of slavery in America which represented a stain on the new republic's image – an ignominy which both columnists and novelists felt obliged to obscure through writing. It must be said that, following the revolution, early America saw an uptick in abolitionist literature in newspapers. Even so, periodicals from before *The Spy's* initial publication can, according to Patricia Bradley, be understood by their "silence and selectivity;" an inclination which turned the focus of slavery's abolition away from the impact on the enslaved towards the slavers and beneficiaries of slavery.[xvi] The editorial choice to shy away from spirited coverage of the horrors of slavery, especially in northern newspapers Cooper likely read, demonstrates an unwillingness to place blame at the feet of the white colonists (and later countrymen) who perpetuated the cruel institution, and instead make responsibility and guilt an uneasy subject to broach. As an example, an 1819 edition of *The National Register*, written shortly before Cooper's novel, urges its readership to consider arguments from "on the one side and the other" before rushing to judge the institution, and by extension its supporters, using "passions" instead of logic.[xvii] While not a ringing endorsement for maintaining the institution of chattel slavery, the article illustrates a journalistic desire to entertain arguments that advocate

for it. By treating slavery as something 'up for debate,' in the early republic – through the publication of articles which weighed, in equal measure, concessions for and against the institution – newspapers contributed to an environment wherein slavery was prolonged, rather than challenged and ended outright. Consequentially, the nation benefitted from this unclear liability.

Likewise, Cooper sought to obfuscate the burgeoning country's relationship to the institution of slavery by framing the discussion in terms his readers were likely sympathetic to: inheritance and benevolence. More specifically, the author of *The Spy* dedicated narrative space in the novel to placing the blame for slavery at the feet of the British, while also minimizing the one-sided nature of slavery. In one lengthy back and forth, two of the novel's minor characters – a British soldier and an American doctor – debate the question of slavery. Near the end of the conversation, the soldier asks, quite pointedly, "is holding your fellow creatures in bondage, in conformity to [the laws of God]?" to which the surgeon replies "[i]t was [British] children, her ships, and her laws that first introduced the practice into these states; an on her institutions the judgment must fall."[xviii] Apart from a clear desire to avoid the question, the novel also demonstrates an unwillingness to find the early republic culpable for maintaining slavery – the blame is best assigned to its stately predecessors. In addition to blaming inheritance, Cooper further minimizes American slavery by implying that slaves were treated well because, in the novel, they appear as interlocuters for their white slaveowners: the main characters of the story are often seen engaging on friendly terms with Caesar, the story's main slave character, or speaking of him in paternalistic ways.[xix] The text suggests that, while the institution of slavery may constitute national baggage, there are nonetheless situations wherein slaves themselves were treated more like family or friend than property. In eschewing responsibility for slavery through arguments of inheritance, and further by portraying slavery as a somewhat positive or mutually beneficial relationship between the enslaved and slaveowners, the novelist, like columnists before him, sought to blur the nation's culpability for the history books.

CONCLUSION

Both Cooper and his journalist predecessors had a vested interest in depicting early America in favorable light. To do so, and to convince their audience of the new nation's praiseworthy history and figures, both mediums highlighted aspects of America's past that made it uniquely suited to house the future. By artificially creating a god-like version of George Washington through hyper-flattering portrayals, or by reprinting his words postmortem, the newspapers deified the founding father. Cooper would fellow suit in his novel by inflating, in equally artificial measure, the general's influence in American history. And by purposively creating a space to blur the nation's role in maintaining the global institution of slavery, both newspapers and novelist attempted to convince their readers of America's infallibility or, at a minimum, its relative innocence. The effect is the creation of a biased, largely fictionalized version of America for the sake of propagandizing readers of both mediums for nationalistic ends. Doing so helped to continue to strengthen the project of the creation of a new identity and history that separated America from Britain and, in many ways, portrayed it as superior.

[i] Russ Castronovo, "Propaganda, Prenational Critique, and Early American Literature." *American Literary History* 21, no. 2 (2009): 196.
[ii] Castronovo, "Propaganda, Prenational Critique, and Early American Literature," 184.
[iii] Benjamin Towne, "A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress Assembled," *Pennsylvania Evening Post* 2, no. 228 (July 6, 1776): 335-338.
[iv] Alexander James Dallas, "An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the Late War with Great Britain," *Philadelphia Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA: 1815), 28.
[v] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, ed. by James Paul Elliott and James H Pickering (Brooklyn, New York: AMS Press, 2002), 3.
[vi] Cooper, *The Spy*, 5.
[vii] Cooper, *The Spy*, 23 & 25.
[viii] Cooper, *The Spy*, 374.
[ix] Erik Simpson, "Loyalty, Independence, and James Fenimore Cooper's Revolution," in *Mercenaries in British and American Literature, 1790–1830: Writing, Fighting, and Marrying for Money* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 146.
[x] Cooper, *The Spy*, 30.
[xi] Cooper, *The Spy*, 387.
[xii] Thomas McKean, "To His Excellency George Washington, Esquire, L. L. D. President of the United States of America, Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy Thereof, &c. The Address of the Trustees and Faculty of the University of the State of Pennsylvania," *American Museum, or, Universal Magazine* 5, no. 4 (April 1789): 330.
[xiii] McKean, "To His Excellency George Washington," 330.
[xiv] George Washington, "Letter of General Washington to Sir John Sinclair, Containing a Short Description of the United States," *American Register,* or *General Repository of History, Politics & Science* 1, no. 1 (January 1806): 146.
[xv] George Washington, "To the People of the United States, Announcing His Intention of Retiring from Public Service," *Weekly Register* 3, no. 25 (February 20, 1813): 385; George Washington, "To the People of the United States, Announcing His Intention of Retiring from Public Service." *Weekly Register* 3, no. 26 (February 27, 1813): 401.
[xvi] Bradley, "The Boston Gazette and Slavery as Revolutionary Propaganda," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1995): 583.
[xvii] "Extension of Negro Slavery," *National Register* 8, no. 22 (November 27, 1819): 347.
[xviii] Cooper, *The Spy*, 184.
[xix] Cooper, *The Spy*, 50 & 421.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, AMERICAN SUFFRAGE & IMMIGRANT JOURNALISM

The Case of The Pilot

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the role of *The Pilot*–an Irish Catholic newspaper which catered to Irish-Americans after the Famine–in educating and encouraging the growing Irish population to participate in American democracy. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the paper used its platform to support voting rights for Boston's mainly working-class Irish population, and ran advertisements informing readership on ballot-box issues. At the same time, however, the debate over women's suffrage and Irish women's political participation was met with a far less welcoming tone. The newspaper grappled with the anti-Irish overtones of suffrage debates, and sought to balance Irish women's traditional role in anti-colonial activism with the apparently dangerous reality of female suffrage. The opinions of the Irish community (that usually opposed) suffrage were thus expressed frequently, giving interesting insight into how journalism can both foster democracy and sway public opinion against its full expression. Further, *The Pilot's* specific reasoning against women's suffrage reflected that of many Irish women themselves. As this paper shows, Irish women believed in their own intelligence and aptitude without demanding the right to vote. The logic of this complex position is contained within the pages of *The Pilot*, granting insight into how journalism can serve to both assuage the needs of its readership while failing to challenge the community's internal inconsistencies. This article attempts to elucidate *The Pilot's* dynamic and at times seemingly contradictory attitudes towards the structure of American democracy, particularly with respect to gendered participation, and illuminate the connections between ethnicity, democracy, and journalism in the atmosphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

INTRODUCTION

The *Boston Pilot* released its first-ever issue on September 5, 1829. The newspaper underwent several name changes in subsequent decades before ending up as the iconic mononym *Pilot*. Throughout its existence, the paper maintained a commitment to representing the interests of the Irish and Irish-American communities of Boston. Particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century, the paper diligently pushed back against anti-Irish stereotypes and encouraged its readers to participate in American democracy. Editors encouraged the city to amend its voting structures to include the Irish working classes, and ran advertisements informing their readership about the issues which would appear on upcoming ballots. Editors, including Irish nationalists like John Boyle O'Reilly and Thomas D'Arcy McGee, worked to ensure greater opportunities for Irish immigrants to participate in American democracy as educated, valuable residents. *The Pilot* represents some of the best aspects of American journalism and its relationship to maintaining democracy, particularly for immi-

grants and other marginalized communities.

Its success is a lesson for modern journalism, demonstrating the importance of actively appealing to and engaging with populations for whom democratic participation can be difficult. Irish Catholics eventually became one of the most politically involved groups in America, particularly in Boston, where they held powerful roles in the political machines of the 19th and 20th centuries. *The Pilot* holds myriad lessons to be learned on journalism's role in encouraging civic engagement and demonstrating to the public their stake in local and national politics. Simultaneously, its responses to certain controversial topics of the 19th century illustrate the limitations of reactive journalism, exemplifying the need for both diversity of perspectives and the ability to challenge apparently fixed ideologies in journalistic writing. A balance between the ideological positions of editorials and the objectivity of journalists themselves could be just the solution, combining the most effective audience-retaining practices of the late 19th century with modern standards.[i]

The women's suffrage movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries, for instance, did not receive enthusiastic support from the paper. The reasons for this included suffragette's reliance on arguments about the incompetence of Irish men who were allowed to vote while more enlightened American women were denied the right. Ethnic stereotypes of backwardness and superstition shaped conversations regarding who should be granted a say in American democracy. While Irish immigrant men embraced the opportunity to participate in politics, they felt alienated by certain suffragette arguments. Access to the vote – and debate over who deserved that privilege – was highly contested during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which coincided with mass Irish emigration after the Famine (1845-1852). These debates played out across the pages of *the Pilot*: Who had the right to participate in democracy? Did their recent arrival in America prevent meaningful participation? Were women suited for full democratic involvement, or were their energies best engaged elsewhere? By tracing the development of these discussions, we can see how the Irish community in Boston perceived American democracy, and elucidate their dynamic engagement in events shaping the future of the United States. The newspaper – and the community it represents – highlights the connections between ethnicity, democracy, and journalism in the context of late 19th and early 20th century America, as the country underwent sweeping national changes.

IRISH WOMEN & SUFFRAGE

Most Irish immigrant women felt that suffragettes' concerns did not align with their own most pressing needs. A distinct contrast arose between the goals and values of working-class women versus the middle-class advocates for women's voting rights. Mother Jones – the Irish immigrant born as Mary Harris Jones (1837-1930) who became one of the best-known labor activists of the 19th and 20th centuries – viewed voting as extraneous to democratic participation. Like many other Irish women, she drew upon centuries of unofficial, direct confrontation with authorities. For her, the most efficacious methods to enact change took place outside the electoral booth. As the *Pilot's* editorials make clear, the Irish community did not discount women's intelligence and political capacity. Indeed, as Katherine E. Conway argued in 1907, women were known to have a "high mentality and patriotism."[ii] Mother Jones agreed. As the most visible Irish woman involved in public political activities at this time, Jones' reiteration of the idea that Irish women generally were intelligent and capable enough not to need the vote indicates the ways in which women themselves justified their exclusion from official participatory politics while maintaining their right to a part in the political process. Recounting a speech made to a gathering of women agitating for the vote, Jones made it clear that she did not concern herself with such issues. "I have never had a vote," she recalled, "and I have raised hell all over this country! You don't need a vote to raise hell! You need convictions and a voice!"[iii]

Jones is significant because she encapsulates many of the contradictory attitudes Irish women themselves held. As one of the most civically engaged women of her time, she showed the willingness and ability of Irish women to partic-

pate in politics while rejecting certain American democratic values, like the necessity of voting. Political participation was important, but official access unnecessary. Jones was decidedly not a suffragist, nor did she wish to see women in careers. Despite the prominence she attributed to women in the labor movement throughout her career, Jones viewed women in the workforce as bearing another burden laid on top of their primary job to raise families. Similarly, editorials like Katherine Conway's emphasized that participation in the "strenuous" world of politics would "of a certainty injure women."[iv]

Similarly, in Jones's view, American democratic opportunities ideally protected women while respecting their intellectual contributions. Yet as long as Irish women were required to work – and agitate for better working conditions – to support their families, the security so many were seeking would remain inaccessible. This was unavoidable, but voting was not. Indeed, it was Irish women's labor which guaranteed American women the leisure to pursue intellectual activism. Should such women be allowed the vote, it was entirely possible Irish women would be forced to take up the work left at the wayside by women now engaged in formal politics. For Jones and women like her, the suffragette movement seemed alienating, its eventual rewards promised only to middle- and upper-class women already privileged by the capitalist structure of America. Should women's rights activists succeed, perhaps Irish women would only have further responsibilities as more and more middle-class women left their homes in the hands of servants in favor of political pursuits.

The mixed messages contained in Jones's writings and activism concerning women's "proper" place reflected that of a wider discrepancy among Irish women's internal priorities and expectations of democracy, which were further reflected in the pages of the *Pilot*. While they understood their participation in politics to be appropriate and necessary, they viewed such action as a separate and more crucial project than women's suffrage. That Irish women were clearly politically aware indicates that questions of suffrage and feminism – and a general Irish disinclination to seek the female vote – hold more layers of complexity and contradiction than is evident at first glance. As a result, the general opposition of the *Pilot* to women's suffrage should not be read as simple misogyny, or a desire to confine women to the domestic sphere, far from democratic politics. For example, in 1852, the *Boston Pilot* (pushing back against nativist rhetoric espoused by the Know Nothing party) contended that Irish Catholic women were "useful members of society" in their roles as economic contributors to family and community. They disregarded extraneous, unnecessary ambitions in order to effect direct change on their communities. American girls, on the other hand, were idle and snobbish, wasting their time on women's rights in attempts to "act as men." In the view of Irish Catholic Americans, women seeking the vote were only doing so because they were not already engaged with the day-to-day struggles and politics Irish women experienced as members of the working class. Further, women's rights and obtaining the vote were linked to anti-Irish Catholic prejudice here, as they would be many times by the *Boston Pilot's* writers. In fact, the feminist movement was most strongly tied to Protestant Anglo-Saxon communities, and occasionally used outright "anti-Irish [and] anti-Catholic" arguments, including questioning why ignorant Irish men were allowed to vote when intelligent American women were not. Such rhetoric made it difficult for Irish Catholics to identify with the cause.[v]

THE COMPLEXITIES OF SUFFRAGE ARGUMENTS

It is unsurprising that the Irish Catholic community would struggle to reconcile itself to suffrage, particularly when such movements contained heavy elements of prejudice against the Irish community. Arguably, it was this element of the American suffragist movement – not the idea of women voting in and of itself – which estranged Irish Catholic women from joining the cause, particularly when the liberation of Ireland seemed a far more pressing matter. As immigrants, they were both concerned with finding and keeping what they had sought by coming to America – for most, that simply was survival and a steady income, two things which proved evasive in post-Famine Ireland – and using the

stability of American employment to aid the efforts of Irish nationalists to end colonialism and establish full democracy. Based on a Massachusetts referendum regarding whether women should be allowed to vote, it seems Irish women were not invested in the issue. Despite an overwhelming Irish vote in the negative, few Irish women actually participated.[vi] Expending their energy and free time for a cause which benefited a constituency from which many Irish Catholic women felt alienated, and which brought no clear gains, seemed like a waste of time. Ethnic lines remained more important than gender solidarity in the nineteenth century. Relationships between middle-class white Protestant American women and Irish Catholics often took the form of servant-employer models, which did not generate solidarity. Both employer and employee were wary of each other, and interactions at work could often lead to a strengthening of oppositional identities for both women. To say Irish women were simply "fiercely hostile" to women's suffrage, as Hasia Diner does, is reductive. Rather, the American suffrage movement failed to cross class and ethnic lines in order to prove the cost worthy of the benefits to women already expending themselves on political causes which, even if occurring in another country, nevertheless hit closer to home."[vii]

Alongside articles detailing bigotry and debasement in American politics – especially in New England, the main circulating base for the paper – *The Pilot* ran articles and reader letters detailing the Irish community's opposition to the suffrage of women. As has been established, Irish women participated daily in political processes; most did not feel the need to be granted the official right to vote. Indeed, articles detailing proposed changes to facilitate Irish working men's ability to educate themselves on contemporary issues and access polling places demonstrates that voting was already inaccessible even to those in the Irish community with the legal right to participate. An article written by a group of women belonging to the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Extension of the Suffrage to Women points to previous disinterest in school board voting as evidence that women themselves largely did not desire access to the ballot. Further, women were already elected to the board through men's votes, proving their participation in politics was not hindered by the restriction of channels by which women could contribute. The argument was not that women should not be democratically involved; indeed, the authors admitted that both men and women needed to adhere to better standards of civic duty. In their view, however, such progress would be achieved via education and cultural advancements, rather than mere voting.

Women's indifference to vote is a thread throughout issues of the paper that sought to justify opposition to providing them with the vote. Feminine intelligence and morality are highlighted, but more important is their preference for civic engagement outside of the ballot box. This may have been especially true for Irish women, accustomed to operating outside the traditional bounds of official politics. Indeed, as an article from March 24, 1894 states, the women most likely to utilize access to the vote – mainly Anglo-Protestants – would never vote for Catholics due to innate prejudices. Perceived Irish women's indifference to the vote was thus not only a justification for opposing the extension of the franchise. It was part of a broader set of customs which American culture sought to eradicate. The author of the piece argues that should the vote be granted to women, they would be "compelled to vote with Catholic men against the enemies of true Americanism and true Christianity."[viii] The paper assured its readers that Irish Catholic women would be equal to the task of voting should they be required to in order to push back against Protestant agendas, though the practice is framed as a burden rather than a privilege. As in many other articles ran by *the Pilot,* themes of leisure and convenience colored the debates surrounding women's suffrage. Irish Catholic women, most of whom worked, would be more constricted in their access to the actual act of voting than women from advantageous economic and social backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The Pilot's role in suffrage debates – running original articles reflecting Irish American sentiment, including writings from other newspapers to frame the issue in a national

context, and printing letters from the reader community – reflects more generally the role of the press in mirroring and influencing Irish communities' perceptions of American democracy. Further, it illustrates how political traditions brought over from Ireland continued to affect how Irish Americans understood how best to engage in politics. The paper opposed women's suffrage, like Mother Jones did, based on a two-pronged understanding of women's social involvement. Firstly, women were perfectly able to partake in political, public life in direct ways – including strikes and demonstrations – that seemed to make their voice more immediately and forcefully heard than voting could. Second, the act of voting itself was far more inaccessible to Irish women than traditional protest politics were. Examining Irish American journalism through its most popular paper, the *Pilot*, reveals that attitudes like that held by Mother Jones were not isolated or as contradictory as they may appear on the surface. Irish immigrants and their children viewed participation in American democracy through the lens o through the lens of inherited colonial resistance tactics, and so did not value access to the vote as highly as other American communities. Women's voting, in particular, was framed as an encumbrance; the existing difficulties for Irish men trying to partake in elections no doubt influenced such views. Further, the rhetoric surrounding suffrage which denounced Irish Catholics alienated them from that particular political process.

Irish America's journalistic and community engagement with American democracy was thus framed according to colonial political traditions and continued anti-Irish prejudice in America. The paper's simultaneous promotion of democratic involvement and its dedication to restricting enfranchisement holds lessons for journalism's important work engaging marginalized communities in the political process today. The paper served as a sort of shield from American prejudice and an information source, as well as an obstacle to civic engagement for some of the most disenfranchised members of its audience. The opposition to women's voting was not irrational - rather, it was rooted deeply in colonial experience and legitimate Irish political traditions which did not quite fit American settings. *The Pilot's* complex relationship with democratic participation holds lessons for modern journalism and the necessity of engaging the disenfranchised - whether officially or circumstantially - and finding ways to incorporate the informal political practices of those communities into mainstream politics to better serve their needs. With hindsight, it is clear that Irish Catholic opposition to women's voting hindered their community's ability to fully participate in American politics. Yet assessing such opposition in its original context, as this article does, clarifies the prevailing logic of the 19th century and illustrates how important it is for journalism to challenge, debate, and ultimately defend democra-

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[i] Victor Pickard, *Democracy without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society* (New York: Oxford Academic Press, 2020), 17.
[ii] "Why Women Should Not Have the Ballot," The Pilot, March 9, 1907.
[iii] Mary Harris "*Mother" Jones, Autobiography of Mother Jones* (Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1925), Chapter 22, https://archive.iww.org/history/library/MotherJones/autobiography/.
[iv] "Why Women Should Not Have the Ballot," *The Pilot*, March 9, 1907.
[v] Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 146-48.
[vi] Timothy J. Meagher, "Sweet Good Mothers and Young Women out in the World: The Roles of Irish American Women in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Worcester, Massachusetts," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 5, no. 3/4 (Summer/Fall 1986): 339.
[vii] Meagher, "The Roles of Irish American Women," 339.
[viii] "Woman Suffrage and Practical Politics," *The Pilot*, March 24, 1894.

MAKE IT NEWS: THE JOURNALISM OF MODERN ART

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ABSTRACT

While modern literature is frequently described as being concerned with the new, this essay suggests that modernism was equally preoccupied with the news. Though they expressed reservations about whether or not the news was capable of truly focusing on matters of substance, writers from the mid-nineteenth through the twentieth centuries saw journalism as something of a twin of their own discipline. Beginning with Charles Baudelaire, these authors were inspired by journalism's attention to detail and its focus on everyday life. In seeking to emulate journalism, these literary figures revolutionized their art by downgrading its reliance on conventional aesthetic values and finding merit in what had previously been dismissed as insignificant. This defense of the ordinary made modernism's journalistic aesthetic a democratizing force, and many writers saw themselves as resisting both artistic and political authority that had become outdated and repressive. This essay explains the democratic artistic aims of major modernists such as Virginia Woolf and Mina Loy, among others, and concludes that questions of modern literary representation are essential to understanding democratic political representation.

INTRODUCTION

The ceaseless rush of pressing information and the onslaught of breaking news and daily briefings (some genuinely significant and many not) might seem like a very recent phenomenon—a result, perhaps, of the last few decades' advances in digital technology coupled with the increasing corporate concentration of media. While these trends are exacerbated today by the 24-hour news cycle and our constant access to social media, they go back well over a century. "We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new," Henry David Thoreau once said of the development of telegraph technology in Walden, "but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough."[i] A quick glance at today's headlines—in broadsheets as well as tabloids—shows that a keen interest in celebrity gossip has not subsided. Thoreau's main complaint was that the news is too frequently preoccupied with the inconsequential, peddling the merely popular while incapable of addressing those more important matters that are best considered through the creative and critical literary writing of his own essayistic practice.

Thoreau was not the only writer to pit the newsworthy against the literary. "Literature is news that STAYS news," Ezra Pound emphatically announced in his *ABC of Reading*.[ii] We lose interest in ordinary news, in the daily stories of the usual goings on of our world, but the significance of Confucius, say, or Homer—to use Pound's examples—does not wane. "The fault I find with our journalism," Marcel Proust wrote in *Swann's Way*, "is that it forces us to

take an interest in some fresh triviality or other every day, whereas only three or four books in a lifetime give us anything that is of real importance."[iii] How wonderful it would be, he continued, if we opened the daily paper and, rather than reading "that the Queen of the Hellenes had arrived at Cannes, or that the Princesse de Léon had given a fancy dress ball," we found in it instead something of real substance such as Pascal's *Pensées*.[iv]

These examples are just a few of the ways that major modern writers have articulated critiques of news, newspapers, and journalism. But rather than a one-dimensional antagonism, this critique is founded on a more complex ambivalence. For even in these cases, the authors in question rely significantly on what they criticize. Thoreau would have not been such a worldly thinker and incisive social critic if not for the news reaching him even at his pondside cabin. Pound may have prized literature's longevity, but he also famously exhorted fellow writers to connect the past to the present with his dictum "Make It New"—and the *Pisan Cantos*, his most admired poetry, makes important allusions to the issues of *Time* magazine he had access to as a prisoner of war. And much of *In Search of Lost Time* serves to demonstrate that what at first seems trivial, mundane, and gossipy turns out to be more serious and consequential to both private and public life.

On the whole, then, while dissatisfaction with the supposedly short attention spans and shoddy interests of journalism is a persistent motif for certain authors over the course of the last few centuries, particularly in the context of the rise of mass media and the news industry, the relationship between journalism and literature, and art more generally, is also complementary. During this period, artists found the news to be inspirational for the content and the form of their work, sometimes even taking journalism as a model for their own practice. "The problem of art in the modern era is the problem of the new," Audrey Wasser has recently argued, echoing Pound's above dictum.[v] In a related way, then, we can also say that the problem of art in the modern era is the problem of the news. This problem of the news has significant social and political stakes as well, as the relation between literature and journalism is at the crux of key questions concerning the role of art in representing and promoting democracy.

A NEWSPAPER AESTHETIC

The problem of art in the modern era begins with Charles Baudelaire's *The Painter of Modern Life*—itself published in a newspaper, Le Figaro, in 1863—because it provides what is now the canonical definition of what has since come to be known as" modernism." Modernity, Baudelaire wrote in that essay's most famous formulation, is characterized above all by "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent."[vi] Because modern life is dominated by a relentless rapidity, the modern artist must work quickly and take an interest "in trivial life, in the daily metamorphosis of external things."[vii] Baudelaire spent much of his essay suggesting that the modern artist should attend to the contemporary phenomena that classical art might banish in order to produce more timeless works. In modern times, he noted, it is wrong "to neglect particular beauty, the beauty of circumstance and the sketch of manners."[viii] Baudelaire's essay as a whole therefore constitutes something of a defense "of the present time and of things generally considered as frivolous."[ix]

This defense of frivolity, however, does not imply that the modern artist deals only with insignificant subject matter. By invoking the painter of modern life, Baudelaire was to some extent speaking of an imaginary ideal, but his model for this figure was a real person: Constantin Guys, a nineteenth-century watercolorist well-known for his travel sketches and illustrations of new ballets and operas, but who also employed the swift techniques of his art to report on the Crimean War. Baudelaire said he first encountered Guys's work in *The Illustrated London News*: "Since then I have seen a considerable quantity of those drawings, hastily sketched on the spot, and thus I have been able to read, so to speak, a detailed account of the Crimean campaign which is much preferable to any other that I know."[x] The prototypical modern artist is effectively a journalist.

But Guys was not just a journalist according to Baudelaire—nor was he merely an artist in the conventional sense. He was, rather, a "man of the world," a "spiritual citizen of the universe," because "he wants to know, understand and appreciate everything that happens on the surface of our globe."[xi] Moreover, he "sees everything in a state of newness."[xii] The temporal element of these descriptions is noteworthy. "The pleasure which we derive from the representation of the present," Baudelaire claimed, "is due not only to the beauty with which it can be invested, but also to its essential quality of being present."[xiii] No matter that Guys's sketches were produced in a hurry—while he took cover beside a battle, or as he hastily recorded the scene before the regiments marched off and the bodies were cleared. That rush only added to his works' fresh originality, "for almost all our originality comes from the seal which Time imprints on our sensations."[xiv] Even here the language of printing was at work, and the generation of artists that Baudelaire would directly inspire with this commentary, the Impressionists, also had an etymological connection to the press. The journalistic attention paid to matters that are best taken on a day-to-day basis are as significant in their own way as the events of world historical importance and as beautiful as classical subject matter.

These passages from Baudelaire are, along with Pound's dictum, foundational to the sense that modernism promotes an aesthetic of the new. And what Baudelaire was advocating for can also be understood essentially as a newspaper aesthetic: the point at which make it new blurs into make it news. In the elegant portrayal of Guys staying up late into the night in order to record the day's events—"darting on to a sheet of paper the same glance that a moment ago he was directing towards external things, skirmishing with his pencil, his pen, his brush, splashing his glass of water up to the ceiling, wiping his pen on his shirt, in a ferment of violent activity"—the painter of modern life almost sounds like a one-man printing press.[xv] This newspaper aesthetic is further reinforced in Baudelaire's confidence that Guys's sketches are destined to one day serve as "precious archives of civilized life."[xvi] The implication is that his work would be better preserved for future researchers alongside historical issues of *Le Figaro* than in a traditional art gallery next to works by Raphael.

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF ART

Among the most significant authors writing in the wake of Baudelaire's emphasis on the ephemeral, the fugitive, and the contingent was Virginia Woolf, whose essay "Modern Fiction" repeated Baudelaire's claims while lending them the sort of political language that would link art to democracy. "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day," Woolf suggested: "The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms."[xvii] This bit of psychological insight is instructive for literature, she argued, as it indicates what writers should depict: "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small."[xviii] Especially with that last refrain about the big and the small, Woolf's remarks sound as if they are promoting a political as well as an artistic revolution. Indeed, her essay becomes explicit, if metaphorical, on this score: the modern writer, she remarked, feels "constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall."[xix] This tyrant is literary conventionality, she explained, the compulsion to stick to "the proper stuff of fiction."[xx] Yet even as "the pages fill themselves in the customary way," she proposed, "we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion."[xxi] Literature's horizons are limitless, Woolf asserted in the conclusion to her essay, and the successes of her own highly unconventional fiction testify to the soundness of her own advice.

Woolf's remarks are just the most well-known of what is in fact a broader trend within modernism to make literature, and art more generally, more open to and engaged with the modern world. The

Swiss-born avant-garde writer Blaise Cendrars offered a typical statement of this sentiment with his boast, "Les fenêtres de ma poésie sont grand ouvertes sur les boulevards et dans ses vitrines" ("The windows of my poetry are wide open to the boulevards and in its shop windows").[xxii] Similarly, the British poet Mina Loy invited readers to contemplate the "considerable extension of time between the visits to the picture gallery, the museum, the library," and she issued a challenge to not rely on these institutional strongholds of what is traditionally classified as art and to instead find aesthetic value elsewhere: "The flux of life is pouring its aesthetic aspect into your eyes, your ears—and you ignore it because you are looking for your canons of beauty in some sort of frame or glass case or tradition. Modernism says: Why not each one of us, scholar or bricklayer, pleasurably realize all that is impressing itself upon our subconscious, the thousand odds and ends which make up your sensory every day life?"[xxiii]

Loy considers this artistic program to be distinctly political. Modernism's break with aesthetic tradition might sometimes make it seem elitist or effete, snobbishly reserved for those highbrow critics with the education and training—or even sheer pretense—to have the ability or interest to interpret unconventional art that does not fit easily within preexisting styles and idioms. But with her insistence on modernism's connection to everyday life, Loy's sense of modernism's politics could not be more opposed to its reputation for aloof posturing: "The pragmatic value of modernism lies in its tremendous recognition of the compensation due to the spirit of democracy," she suggested.[xxiv] And not only has modernism "democratized the subject matter and la belle matière of art," but through modernism, she added, "the newspaper has assumed an aesthetic quality."[xxv]

It is not completely clear what it means for the newspaper to assume an aesthetic quality in the way that Loy suggested. There are certainly many instances of literary works that incorporate fictional journalism to great effect and literary works that make use of newspaper formats, especially headlines—*Ulysses* being perhaps the most prominent of that era. Newspapers themselves became the subjects of artistic portrayal, especially in cubism, and were sometimes even physically incorporated into paintings and other works of visual art. However, it is more interesting, and maybe more productive, to take this assertion of the newspaper assuming an aesthetic quality in an even stronger sense, the sense in which art and journalism begin to mingle and even merge. By this I do not mean that journalism could be composed in a sufficiently artistic way that we could come to admire its aesthetic merit as such, that we should think of a particular journalist as literary or a news photographer as adept in the visual arts, however much we might laud the skilled work of a Jacob Riis, Upton Sinclair, or James Agee and Walker Evans. Rather, what I am suggesting is that we take notice of the less empirical and more theoretical idea that literature and journalism came to be seen by artists themselves as sharing a common identity and even becoming interchangeable to a certain extent because of their shared preoccupations with the particularities of modern life. "Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut / Voila la poésie ce matin et pour la prose il y a les journaux," the French modernist Apollinaire wrote around the same time that Woolf, Cendrars, and Loy were making similar remarks: "You read leaflets catalogues posters that sing aloud / Here's your poetry this morning and for prose there's the newspapers."[xxvi] The idea which began as a kernel in Baudelaire finally reached fruition at this stage of modernism. An art aiming for the new eventually became commensurate with the news, and it is rebelliously democratic by tearing down aesthetic tyrannies in the process.

THE RISING TIDE OF DEMOCRACY

Baudelaire already imagined something like a social mission for modernism when he praised "those chroniclers of poverty and the humble life" who are also capable of "the sketch of manners, the depiction of bourgeois life and the pageant of fashion."[xxvii] He envisioned his painter of modern life observing "the river of life flow past him in all its splendor and majesty," marveling at "the amazing harmony of life in the capital cities, a harmony so providen-

tially maintained amid the turmoil of human freedom."[xxviii] The painter of modern life was therefore already a political figure, already a democratizing force. "The artist," Baudelaire lamented, meaning the traditional artist, "lives very little, if at all, in the world of morals and politics. If he lives in the Bréda district, he will be unaware of what is going on in the Faubourg Saint-Germain."[xxix] By contrast, the modernist is attentive to morals and to politics and is well aware of what is going on in many places at any one time. As a "lover of universal life," the modernist "enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy."[xxx] Modernism is an art of, by, and for the people.

Amidst these egalitarian-sounding ecstasies, it is easy to forget that Baudelaire vehemently opposed democracy. His most famous comments on politics are found elsewhere, but even in "The Painter of Modern Life" he expressed serious anti-democratic sentiments. He explicitly bemoaned "the rising tide of democracy" and called for "a new kind of aristocracy"—a comment he meant more literally than figuratively as a disciple of the authoritarian political philosopher Joseph de Maistre.[xxxi] Furthermore, despite his prototypical painter of modern life working as a journalist, Baudelaire, like the authors quoted at the beginning of this essay, utterly despised newspapers, noting that they stimulated a "shudder of disgust" in him because of how they reveal "the most appalling perversity of man."[xxxii] Needless to say, these positions seem incommensurate with Baudelaire's other comments that read as at least implicitly pro-democracy and pro-newspaper.

This apparent contradiction of pro- and anti-democratic tendencies could be seen as peculiar hypocrisy particular to Baudelaire, a result, perhaps, of his toxic conservatism being inadequate to the more democratic potential of his literary imagination. Sometimes the poet cannot see as far as the poetry itself. But it might also be indicative of that deeper ambivalence between literature and journalism to which I referred above, and spotlighting this kind of major cultural ambivalence is key. That political ambivalences arise when reading literature should not lead to the exclusion of discussions of art from debates about democracy, as the uncertainty of what it means for literature to be democratic challenges us to understand what democracy means in the first place—and that is as much an open question today as it was a century and a half ago at the beginning of modern art.

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[i] Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden*, 150th Anniversary Edition, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 52.
[ii] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), 29.
[iii] Marcel Proust, I*n Search of Lost Time*, Volume 1: *Swann's Way*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin, and D. J. Enright (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 33.
[iv] Proust, *Search*, 34.
[v] Audrey Wasser, *The Work of Difference: Modernism, Romanticism, and the Production of Literary Form* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 1.
[vi] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 13.
[vii] Baudelaire, "Painter," 4.
[viii] Baudelaire, "Painter," 1.
[ix] Baudelaire, "Painter," 29.
[x] Baudelaire, "Painter," 6.
[xi] Baudelaire, "Painter," 7.
[xii] Baudelaire, "Painter," 8.
[xiii] Baudelaire, "Painter," 1.
[xiv] Baudelaire, "Painter," 14.
[xv] Baudelaire, "Painter," 12.
[xvi] Baudelaire, "Painter," 40.
[xvii] Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in *Collected Essays*, Volume II (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 106.
[xviii] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 107.
[xix] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 106.
[xx] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 106.
[xxi] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 106.
[xxii] Julia Briggs, "Hope Mirrlees and Continental Modernism," in Gender in M*odernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 262.
[xxiii] Mina Loy, "Gertrude Stein," in *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990), 244.
[xxiv] Loy, "Gertrude Stein," 244.
[xxv] Loy, "Gertrude Stein," 244.
[xxvi] Briggs, "Hope Mirrlees," 262.
[xxvii] Baudelaire, "Painter," 5, 4.
[xxviii] Baudelaire, "Painter," 11.
[xxix] Baudelaire, "Painter," 7.
[xxx] Baudelaire, "Painter," 9.
[xxxi] Baudelaire, "Painter," 29, 28.
[xxxii] Charles Baudelaire, "My Heart Laid Bare," in *Late Fragments: Flares, My Heart Laid Bare, Prose Poems, Belgium Disrobed*, trans. and ed. Richard Sieburth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022) 145, 144.

SENSUS FIDEI

The Catholic Worker *& Theo-Ethical Contributions to U.S. Democratic Culture*

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ABSTRACT

This survey of the *Catholic Worker* magazine demonstrates how faith-based interpretations of political events have helped to create a sense of what it meant to be Catholic, democratic citizens in a U.S. context. During the twentieth century, Catholics used media and journalism to create and develop Catholic theology and to understand how their faith informed their social participation, contributing to democratic ideals such as workers' rights, racial equality, and peaceful protest. In the mid-twentieth century, this move represented a break from previous approaches to religiosity that emphasized faith as a largely private affair of spiritual devotion. As sites of community formation where people develop ethical subjectivities, media that interprets religious symbolism in light of current issues can serve as a catalyzing impulse for democratic participation.

INTRODUCTION

Twentieth-century archives of the *Catholic Worker*, a popular Catholic newspaper, show how a particular aspect of Catholic journalism contributed to what is known as *sensus fidei*: the "sense of the faithful." By combining classic reporting on major events with discussions of Christian faith and mundane details about local communities, the *Catholic Worker* created a distinctly American Catholic approach to issues such as economic inequality and global conflict, thus encouraging participation in democratic culture, especially by appealing to recognizable images and symbols.

The Catholic Church teaches that the *sensus fidei* is created by all Catholics through the sacramental nature of baptism. In other words, the Catholic community — from the Church's ordained hierarchy to its lay preferies[?] — "manifest[s] a universal consent in matters of faith and morals."[i] In the conceptual framework undergirding the *sensus fidei*, there is a belief that faith is, to some degree, co-created in community. When the whole body of the faithful contributes to the ethical life of the church, by this logic, Catholics come closest to authentic Christian identity.

Given the emergence of political theology in the mid-twentieth century and the ecclesial changes enacted at the Second Vatican Council, the Church's participation in social and political life became a central location for discerning the theological meaning of the *sensus fidei*. In the United States, the emergence of the Catholic Worker Movement represented one such trend. Founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, the Catholic Worker opened a house in the tenement neighborhoods of New York City in the 1930s and practiced radical hospitality in service of the basic needs of the urban poor. At the same time, Day and Maurin served as editors of a monthly newspaper, the *Catholic Worker*, creating a forum for Catholic social thought and reflection on situations of injustice domestically and globally. The *Catholic Worker* embraced pacifist positions and critically engaged with the political possibility of nonviolence, denouncing the Vietnam

War with particular vigor. In this way, the *Catholic Worker* was actively working on and contributing to the Catholic corpus of social thought, which traditionally upholds a just war theory.

Viewing faith-based journalism as a critical aspect of democracy relies on an understanding of democracy as participatory and, to a certain degree, cultural—built from the ground up and worked out in daily circumstances by all citizens. In his foundational text, *On Democracy*, Robert Dahl gives five criteria for a democratic process: effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusion of adults.[ii] In Dahl's telling, effective participation requires that "all the members must have equal and effective opportunities for making their views known to other members."[iii] In the contemporary U.S. context, journalism and media are critical mediums through which citizens are able to connect to one another and therefore participate in local, national, and global issues.

The scholar Jesper Stromback acknowledges that different definitions of democracy often operate behind political conversations. In Stromback's definition of participatory democracy, which shares similarities with Dahl's model, democracy, from a normative standpoint, must mean something more than the actions of political elites. Democracy, he writes, "thrives when people engage in public life and different types of political action, when they bond through their activities, and when they develop democratically sound attitudes."[iv] This emphasis on democracy as social participation connects well with Jane Mansbridge's text, *Beyond Adversary Democracy,* in which she details the necessity of unitary democratic practices within democratic societies. Mansbridge defines unitary democracy as "consensual, based on common interest and mutual respect."[v] It is rooted in an Aristotelian extension of friendship into the public sphere: the costs of participation in society do not feel heavy and there is a possibility of uncovering a shared common good.[vi] Finally, in Craig Calhoun's text, *Degenerations of Democracy*, he identifies the importance of democratic ideals such as the public good and public virtue. Calhoun describes the public good as inclusivity of long-term ideals such as the sustainability of society and fair and equitable distribution of aggregate goods. The public includes members of different communities, including religions, and the public good that emerges from this heterogenous community includes moral standards.[vii] The emphases of these democratic theorists on a grassroots democratic culture of participation, a retrieval of shared beliefs in something akin to social friendship, and a public good with inherently normative implications motivate my understanding of the contributions of faith-based journalism such as the *Catholic Worker* to the continued sustainability of U.S. democracy.

THE CATHOLIC WORKER, DEMOCRATIC IDEALS & U.S. CATHOLIC IDENTITY

This survey of elements of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper will demonstrate how faith-based interpretations of political events helped define what it meant to be Catholic, democratic citizens in a U.S. context. Catholics used media and journalism to create and develop Catholic theology and to understand how their faith informed their social participation, contributing to democratic ideals such as workers' rights, racial equality, and peaceful protest. In the mid-twentieth century, this represented a sharp break from previous approaches to religiosity that emphasized faith as a largely private affair of spiritual devotion.

The *Catholic Worker* is still in circulation today, and its online archive holds over 680 issues dating back to January 1943. The Catholic Worker grew in size and prominence, especially among working-class and poor Catholics, from its initial inception in 1933. Circulation grew from 65,000 in May 1935 to 190,000 in May 1938.[viii] In 1965, with the onset of the Vietnam War, the *Catholic Worker* leaned into its anti-war orientation. In November of that year, for example, Dorothy Day gave a rare public speech in which she framed the pacifist stance as a moral obligation for Christians. Sara Ann Mehltretter writes that, by this point, Day represented "a central, matriarchal figure in the Worker Movement," and between 1,500 to 2,000 spectators came to hear her speech.[ix] In 1966, however, the U.S. Conference of Catho-

ic Bishops argued for the moral justification of the war.[x] Due in part to these new concerns, live questions, and ethical controversies, circulation of the *Catholic Worker* increased from its World War II lows during the 1960s.[xi]

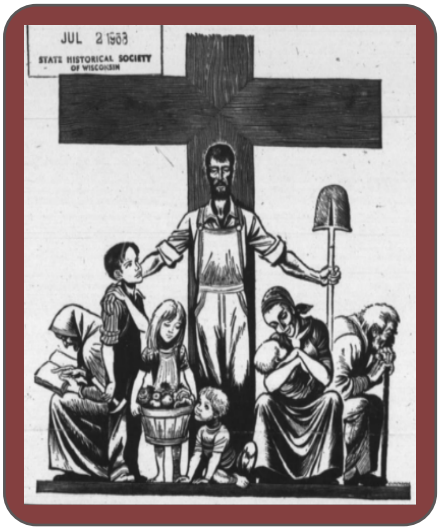
Here, I have selected images and excerpts from *Catholic Worker* issues published in 1968, a time when domestic and global justice issues such as the U.S. civil rights movement, student-worker solidarity protests in Europe, and the Vietnam War were all making claims on public life. During this pivotal moment for U.S. and global democracy, these excerpts show how the *Catholic Worker* reflected Catholic theological principles and provided spaces for community formation, thus contributing to the development a uniquely American Catholic political identity within a democratic culture of social participation.

The *Catholic Worker* contributed to a Catholic consciousness about racial justice through common, recognizable, and deeply meaningful religious imagery. In the April 1968 issue of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, Dorothy Day reflected on the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee. The accompanying front-page image of the cross stressed ideals of racial equality, with the banner "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."[xii] In Day's reflection, she connects the assassination of King to the Christian celebration of the passion on Good Friday, creating an ability to see the relevance and political meaning of the unjust death of King within the image of the crucified Christ. Another article described the incident in this way: "He was shot through the throat, the bullet pierced his spinal cord and he died at once. His blood poured out, shed for whites and blacks alike. The next day was Good Friday, the day commemorated by the entire Christian world as the day when Jesus shot through the throat, the bullet pierced his spinal cord and he died at once. His blood poured out, shed for whites and blacks alike. The next day was Good Friday, the day commemorated by the entire Christian world as the day when Jesus Christ, true God and true man, shed His blood... Martin Luther King died daily, as St. Paul said. He faced death daily[.]"[xiii]

In addition to this rhetorical affinity, the aesthetics of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper connected religious symbols and Catholic faith to social issues. In the September 1968 issue, an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared over the logo of the United Farm Workers, connecting a major devotional image within Latino Catholicism to labor and migrant justice issues.[xiv] On the front page of the June 1968 issue, a laborer holding a shovel in outstretched hands, surrounded by what appears to be a working-class, intergenerational family, with the image of the cross in his background.[xv] The image resonates with the *Catholic Worker* ethos that economic exploitation was an injustice, which had distinct implications for Catholics as people of faith. In these ways, the *Catholic Worker* made social appeals to the Catholic community and showed ways for Catholics to become engaged with U.S. democratic life.

Beyond aesthetics, the *Catholic Worker* newspaper also engaged with Catholic theological principles, including Catholic Social Teaching, in order to understand political issues. A variety of Catholic writers developed and applied Catholic tradition to daily life in this space. The June 1968 issue published an article from the Catholic contemplative

Thomas Merton called "The Wild Places," in which Merton engaged with the Christian treatment of the natural world and the wild. Merton writes that "American capitalist culture is firmly rooted in a secularized Christian myth and mystique of struggle with nature. The basic article of faith in this mystique is that you prove your worth by overcoming and dominating the natural world."[xvi] Merton counters this perspective by turning to transcendentalists to locate God in nature, reclaim the uses of spiritual wildness, and make the claim in accord with ecologists that "unless man learns this fundamental respect for all life, he himself will be destroyed."[xvii] In this way, Merton employed Christian symbols to both critique certain uses of Christianity in the public sphere and to make claims about the need to protect the environment.



In an article published in September 1968, "Incarnation and War," the Jesuit Philip Berrigan begins with a scriptural quote from the Letter to the Ephesians to critique the Church's complicity in certain U.S. government policies (e.g., military intervention). Berrigan ends his article with theological suggestions for Christians in regards to public life: "Implicit in this is a fearful familiarity with death—the death identified with injustice in oneself and in the institutions of this land. If such death is confronted, atonement and conversion ensue in oneself. And, in society, social revolution."[xviii] The Editor's note accompanying the piece informs the reader that "Father Berrigan recently began serving a six-year sentence in Allenwood Federal Penitentiary for pouring blood on draft records."[xix]

A Catholic theology of peaceful protest as a way of engaging with U.S. democracy can be detected in the mission of the paper. A third example of the use of religious tools to understand Catholic democratic engagement is an article entitled "The Gospel and Revolution," which was written by "Sixteen Bishops of the Third World." Printed in the April 1968 issue, the article raises issues from the global periphery, where imperial military interests often devastate local realities. The bishops turn to Populorum Progressio and Pacem in Terrim, two prominent papal encyclicals, to discuss issues of war, justice, peace, and the Church's ability to be a peacemaker.[xx] In this way, the global nature of the Catholic Church plays a role in creating Catholic consciousness around war and peace issues, and determining what the role of U.S. democracy should be in the world. Finally, when looking through *Catholic Worker* archives, it is impossible to miss the sense of community that is created through Day's updates in her staple "On Pilgrimage" column, in which she provides information about various comings and goings in the Catholic world. It is likewise impossible to overlook the newspaper's "Letters" section, where readers could submit various appeals, a section that was used for community organizing and political connections. In one letter, for example, community member Marie Kochaver writes, "In a southside Minneapolis neighborhood of poor whites, American Indians and black people, I'm working with a radical organizing project which hopes to build a real community union of poor people... The support of any CW readers, especially in the Twin Cities area... would be welcome."[xxi] The Catholic *sensus fidei* is perhaps most powerfully enacted in the idea of community connections to political projects such as unions. Seeing this type of social participation as distinctly tied to Catholic faith was a way in which journalism connected Catholics to aspects of democracy.

CATHOLIC JOURNALISM & DEMOCRACY AS SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

As sites of community formation where people develop ethical subjectivities, media that interprets religious symbolism in light of current issues can serve as a catalyzing impulse for democratic participation. Within the models

of participatory democracy previously explored above, journalism today that reflects the *Catholic Worker* has the potential to contribute to Mansbridge's idea of unitary democracy and Calhoun's understanding of public good and virtue. Calhoun notes that the public is composed of a multiplicity of communities, which are sometimes overlapping. In an increasingly pluralistic society, journalism that helps foment identity formation, both religious and otherwise, also helps communities to define and clarify their normative democratic ideals, as exemplified by the social issues taken up in the *Catholic Worker*. Defined as a search for the common good and social participation rooted in friendship, unitary democratic aspects of U.S. culture are rooted in communities understanding themselves and engaging with others on daily and sometimes mundane bases, even when this includes conflict and disagreement.

This view of democracy imbues the citizen with a degree of moral agency: on a community-level and through the tools of media and journalism, it is possible to create more or less democratic cultures with stronger or weaker ideas of common good and public virtue. The enduring influence of the *Catholic Worker* on Catholic theology and ethics, especially regarding the now-commonly held view that religious identity requires a degree of social participation, is a testament to the continued importance of grassroots conceptions of democracy that employ cultural analyses and do not disregard the role of special interest journalism.

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[i] International Theological Commission, "Sensus Fidei: In the Life of the Church," at The Holy See (2014), https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.
[ii] Robert Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 37-38.
[iii] Dahl, *On Democracy*, 37.
[iv] Jesper Stromback, "In Search of a Standard: Four Models of Democracy and their Normative Implications for Journalism," *Journalism Studies* 6 no. 3 (2005): 335-336.
[v] Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.
[vi] Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 8-9.
[vii] Craig Calhoun, *Degenerations of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 59.
[viii] Sara Ann Mehltretter, "Dorothy Day Union Square Speech," *Voices of Democracy* 1 (2006): 170.
[ix] Mehltretter, "Dorothy Day Union Square Speech," 170.
[x] Mehltretter, "Dorothy Day Union Square Speech," 170.
[xi] Mehltretter, "Dorothy Day Union Square Speech," 173.
[xii] Robert Hedgell, *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 4 (April 1968), 1.
[xiii] Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 4 (April 1968), 1.
[xiv] Rita Corbin, *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 7 (September 1968), 4.
[xv] *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 5 (June 1968), 1.
[xvi] Thomas Merton, "The Wild Places," *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 5 (June 1968), 4.
[xvii] Merton, "The Wild Places."
[xviii] Philip Berrigan, *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 7 (September 1968), 5.
[xix] Merton, "The Wild Places."
[xx] Sixteen Bishops of the Third World, "Gospel and Revolution," *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 4 (April 1968), 4.
[xxi] Marie Kochaver,"Community Union," *Catholic Worker* 34, no. 5 (June 1968), 5.

MUTUALLY ASSURED: PANTEX, PUBLIC PERCEPTION, & MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the historical relationship between the Pantex Ordnance Plant (based outside of Amarillo, Texas) and local and national newspapers during its seventy years of operation. It utilizes newspaper archives from the 1940s to the present day to argue that the way Pantex, the last remaining nuclear weapon assembly and disassembly plant in the US, has been reported upon has had a direct impact on the level of power and accountability the plant has had over its surrounding communities. Furthermore, this article argues that the trend toward weak or non-existent local journalism in rural areas—a term coined "news deserts" by the journalism and media program at University of North Carolina—has had a detrimental effect on impacted communities. In the case of Amarillo and other nearby communities, this has meant an overall shift away from transparency and accountability for Pantex, as well as a lack of community representation and discourse about a plant that has a disproportionate impact on both the economic and ecological health of the area. This history illustrates the consequences of a national trend of newspaper closures and underfunded local journalism.

INTRODUCTION

Pantex Ordnance Plant is the only nuclear weapon assembly and disassembly plant in the United States, located around 15 miles outside of Amarillo, Texas. Amarillo is the largest city in the Texas Panhandle, with a population of around 200,000. Despite its moderate size, the city is isolated—Oklahoma City and Santa Fe are her largest neighbors, and a four- and five-hour drive away, respectively. Once you leave the Amarillo area, you return to flat plains—occupied by the occasional small town, farm, or ranch, but otherwise, seemingly vacant. In some ways, this explains how Pantex came to exist here. And though Pantex's work makes it the kind of place that you imagine locals would react to with horror or worry, it has enjoyed relative popularity among Amarilloans since its construction in 1942. The plant's work offers a much-needed source of economic stability in an area that was once dependent on the boom-and-bust cycles of inconsistent agricultural years and fickle oil wells. In times of war, though the area trends towards conservative, small-government values, the patriotic mission of manufacturing the United States' ultimate defense weapon means that the government presence just outside of town is tolerated, if not loved.

How Pantex has been portrayed by the local media in its over-seventy-year tenure has not remained stagnant across time, despite its overall acceptance by locals and area media outlets—primarily newspapers—alike. By understanding the trends in Pantex's coverage across the decades, this article seeks to explain how local journalism reports and shapes a community narrative. How does a deferential media impact the community's relationship to the plant? By offering criticism of Pantex, can media inspire change to its policies? This history is

a cautionary tale: an example of how a lack of independent local newspapers—on top of the increasingly frequent closures or hollowing-out of existing local newspapers—diminishes a vital resource for nuanced community discourse.

Pantex Ordnance Plant was constructed in 1942 as a plant dedicated to producing conventional explosives. Newspapers in the surrounding areas report only the innocuous: the names of families who have moved into one of the many small towns in the surrounding area to work at the plant, bus schedules, want ads for carpoolers. One sign that this plant was something other than a particularly patriotic business can be found in an article headlined: "NO TRESPASSING PERMITTED AT PANTEX PLANT: Burgard Warns Site Is Now Military Reservation." Its advice, given by Major H.P. Burgard II, the commanding officer of Pantex, is practical: "Warning! Don't try to enter the Pantex ordnance plant site. It is a closed military reservation from which the public is necessarily barred."[i] Other than this caveat, Pantex is framed as an economic boon—encouraging young, patriotic families to move to the area and help the war effort. What is less discussed—if, indeed, it is mentioned at all—are stories like those of the farmers displaced to build Pantex.

Historian Alex Hunt writes that the land claimed by Congress for this plant "was part of a German Catholic community called St. Francis."[ii] He continues, "Pantex began operations in 1942, coincidentally the first really wet year since the Dust Bowl. That spring the finest crop of winter wheat in many years was near harvest when on April 6, 1942, nineteen farm families ... learned they had fourteen days to vacate their land." The loss of their lands and livelihoods was not reported, possibly because it was deemed a necessary sacrifice in the interest of protecting democracy. Steven Schroeder documents interviews that were later taken with some of these dispossessed farmers—noting the "severe hardships" the move placed upon the farmers. One, Margaret Bertrand, remembers:

The wheat question was a particularly knotty problem...the farmers were offered $2.50 per acre for their crops and later the harvest proved to be worth closer to $30 an acre. Also, when custom harvesters were brought in from Amarillo to harvest the crop, they were paid $6 per acre, twice the going price, while none of the dispossessed farmers were allowed to cut the grain. This entire incident of being knocked down again, just as they were about to recover from bad circumstances, has left a bitter legacy in the St. Francis area.[iii]

Local newspapers did not report on the plight of these farmers, though a headline in The *Panhandle Herald* did note the great wheat harvest of 1942. Instead, articles encouraging wartime resolve and quiet optimism dominate the portrayal of Pantex during this time. On May 15, 1942, one month after the farmers of St. Francis were evicted from their land, and one week before the article warning off trespassers, Major Burgard is quoted at a Lion's Club meeting in Carson County: "This war hasn't been won yet, and don't let anyone tell you it has. However, we will win, and don't let anyone tell you that we won't.[iv]"

Pantex first operated as a conventional bomb plant and had no nuclear capabilities. In 1948, when the war ended, the buildings and surrounding property were sold to Texas Tech University—based out of Lubbock, Texas—on the condition that the government could recapture the property in the case of a national emergency. Texas Tech conducted wheat poisoning experiments and educational studies on crops and livestock for around two years until the plant was reclaimed and reopened in 1951, under the purview of the Atomic Energy Commission. The exact mission of the facility under the AEO was unclear. Many articles from this time were characterized by attempts to suss out Pantex's new purpose. On January 21, 1951, The *Sweetwater Reporter* noted:

The atomic energy commission announced today that it is establishing a new production works at Pantex Ordnance reservation 17 miles east of Amarillo. The commission did not say what will be produced at Pantex but apparently it will involve a phase of atomic miles east of Amarillo. The commission did not say what will be produced at Pantex but apparently it will involve a phase of atomic weapons manufacture...the AEC said...

"there is no work complicated for Pantex which would involve radioactive materials.[v]

In an equally reassuring piece from 1952, *The Daily News-Telegram* from Sulphur Springs, Texas also insisted on the separation of the plant's explosive testing capabilities and nuclear energy presence—reporting that Pantex Field Manager Walter Stagg "said no work involving radioactive materials will be conducted at Pantex."[vi] This narrative, and the media's upholding of it, lasted into the 1970s.

MEDIA NARRATIVES DURING THE SEVENTIES & BEYOND

In January of 1976, Howard Swindle of the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal* wrote a widely-circulated piece discussing that which was likely suspected by locals, but carefully concealed by employees and officials: Pantex was responsible for constructing much of the U.S. government's nuclear weapon inventory. Where area papers once reported the claims of the plant at face value, Swindle now wrote: "The same agriculture-rich Texas Panhandle that feeds a hungry world also is manufacturing enough firepower to destroy it."[vii] He juxtaposed the incongruity of Pantex's location—the "red-brick, ramshackle plant...lying unnoticed among some of the nation's most productive farmland" with the existential horror it could produce. While other newspaper portrayals of Pantex—wedding announcements, obituaries, award ceremonies—still appeared in good numbers through the 1970s, there was a taste of counternarrative, a reaction. Swindle, in fact, ended his piece with the description of a road sign; he writes: "Across Farm Road 683, there's a sign faded by years, advertising five-acre tracts for sale. The dreams of a residential subdivision across from the nation's only atomic bomb plant are as dim as the lettering on the sign. Today the only neighbors of the Pantex plant are the residents of a single mobile home parked where a developer once envisioned Meadowlark Estates." This was a sign of a lost past but hearkened to how future residents would understand their relationship to the plant. Amarilloans' perception of Pantex would become complicated in a way it had not before when Leroy T. Matthiesen, a bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo from 1980 to 1997, entered the discourse about the plant in August of 1981. He wrote a statement for the *West Texas Catholic*, the Diocese of Amarillo's newspaper, to protest the stockpiling of nuclear weapons under the Reagan administration. As he explains in his memoir, *Wise and Otherwise: The Life and Times of a Cottonpicking Texas Bishop*, he was protesting the "neutron bomb" that would be assembled at Pantex in particular. In his statement for the *West Texas Catholic*, he made the following pleas: "We beg our administration to stop accelerating the arms race. We beg our military to use common sense and moderation in our defense posture. We urge individuals involved in the production and stockpiling of nuclear bombs to consider what they are doing, to resign from such activities, and to seek employment in peaceful pursuits."[viii] The Amarillo newspapers ran his statement with the headline "Bishop Urges Pantex Workers to Resign." He reflected in his memoir: "The statement had hit a nerve and sparked an anti-nuclear movement that brought the world to Amarillo." Matthiesen was ambushed by critics and supporters alike.

That same September, *The New York Times* reported on Matthiesen's statement—evidence of his narrative's momentum: "In this hub of beef cattle and nuclear weapons production, Bishop Leroy T. Matthiesen of the Roman Catholic diocese here, has begun an unpopular, one-man campaign against the neutron bomb."[ix] Indeed, in a paper closer to home—*The Baytown Sun*, writer Robert Walters confirmed this statement in an interview with Matthiesen. Writing several months after the publication of Matthiesen's initial statement, Walters confirmed that no Catholic workers (or any workers, for that matter) had resigned as result of his call to disarm. A dichotomy had formed, he wrote, even in the letters Matthiessen received: "The mail from other sections of the country was almost universally favorable, but the reaction in the Panhandle was overwhelmingly hostile."[x] Despite the knowledge of Pantex's work, despite the religious call for peace in a highly religious community, the reason for the hostility was the

same as ever: "One of the area's major employ ers, Pantex has an annual budget estimated at $75 to $80 million" he continued, "[l]ocal political, civic and business leaders were highly critical of the bishop. They 'apparently look at the question of nuclear proliferation as a chamber of commerce value,' responded an editor of the West Texas State University campus newspaper."

These two articles demonstrate that distance was operative in the way Pantex was portrayed: for *The New York Times*-reading audience outside of the Texas Panhandle, Matthiesen's moral argument was urgent and compelling, uncomplicated by personal connections. For the local audience, the larger moral and existential quandary posed by Pantex was dwarfed by the threat of what the plant's closure would mean for day-to-day lives and livelihoods of the communities that depended on it for economic stability. Yet, within Walter's own article, there was a crack in the "overwhelming hostility" he attributed to locals. The editor of the WTSU student paper expressed criticism of city officials and their ability to be bought off by Pantex. The nuance of local perspective was obscured with distance to the point where the entire conversation became one bishop against an entire community. One writer who read about Matthiesen in *The New York Times*, however, chose instead to see the discourse amongst the community, and in the media, as more complex.

Writer A.J. Mojtabai traveled to Amarillo in 1982 to write an article on Pantex and the ensuing culture war Matthiessen's criticism had sparked. Her book-length reporting on the area, Blessèd Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas, chronicled her time in Amarillo from 1982-1986 and her attempt to understand how Pantex's presence had become so entrenched. She interviewed Pantex employees, newspaper editors, city officials, religious figures, even strangers on the street. One interviewee, the local oil and art financier Stanley Marsh 3 (he did not care for Roman numerals), summed up what most of the newspaper archives over the decades show, even if not all would agree with his assessment. "It crept up on us, and I never quite knew...and I think they did an awful, stinking, dirty trick to the town, hoodwinked us, to make us into the murder capital without even telling us...and I think they did it intentionally because they knew that if they publicized the fact that this was going to be the one place... then I think that we wouldn't have let them do it."[xi] Like the homes that would never be built across from Pantex's gates, we can only speculate on a future that will never be. Yet Mojtabai's reporting is important in emphasizing the complexity that existed beneath the surface of a seemingly homogenous community stance.

THE CRITIQUE OF PANTEX

In the 1980s, the media backlash that Pantex faced, even if limited, was extraordinarily powerful. The media attention driven by Matthiessen's activism triggered a wave of protests to demand disarmament—or at the very least, accountability, from Pantex. Students from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas road-tripped to protest outside of Pantex's gates. Members of the Catholic peace organization Pax Christi engaged in a walking pilgrimage from Washington D.C. to Pantex, arriving by August 6, Hiroshima Day. And multiple local organizations formed to advocate for community concerns—such as Peace Farm, who still claim to act as 'witnesses' against nuclear proliferation at Pantex. In addition, groups like PANAL (Panhandle Area Neighbors and Landowners) and STAR (Save Texas Agriculture and Resources) organized to protect the property, livestock, and other agricultural resources in the region. Whether out of reaction to the negative press the plant received from these protests or to forestall the U.S. Government from consolidating the remaining nuclear weapon assembly plants somewhere else, Pantex made a move toward transparency beginning in the 1990s.

Advertisements in area papers invited residents to apply for the Pantex Plant Advisory Board. In a 1993 copy of *The Canadian Record*, the call came for a "16-member Selection Committee that represents diverse perspectives and interest groups and is ethnically, socially, and culturally diverse."[xii] The article continued, "The the advisory board is to provide informed recommendations and advice to the Department of Energy'' and "will address health, safety, envi-

mental, and waste management issues." In addition to this committee, in January of 1993, Pantex began to offer curated tours to the public—once a week, for 20 people at a time. The popularity of the tour among locals created a months-long backlog. They eventually expanded the tour to a maximum of 40 visitors, and twice weekly. A demand was apparently met for the veil to finally be lifted on the secretive government facility on the edge of town. And now, it seemed that the plant wanted to make a concerted effort to address the questions and concerns of a community that was only too willing to accept their answers—so long as those answers were good for the economy. For a time, it seemed, a sense of balance was struck between economic interest and environmental/humanitarian concerns, in large part because of the efforts of journalists and activists alike.

After September 11, 2001, the brief window of transparency closed once more. In his memoir, Matthiesen noted that the citizens' committee was disbanded as a result of the September 11 attacks. Tours of Pantex likewise ceased. "Once more," he wrote, "the shroud of secrecy [fell] over Pantex."[xiii] Citizens and local media outlets seemed only too content to return to World War II-era discourse on the plant—likely out of a similar sense of patriotism. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, *The Canadian Record*, a Texas-based newspaper, took aim at what it felt was a culture of overly subservient journalism in Amarillo. In a 1980 opinion piece, one author wrote: "The Amarillo newspaper [as well as other Amarillo news media] have at times reported guardedly about Pantex and its operations...but it isn't too popular in the Panhandle's capital city to probe too deeply into local military or industrial matters." And again, in 1990, when the local airport was at threat of closure to meet a request from Pantex, the paper wrote that "Amarillo officials seem torn between preserving service at the airport and catering to their sacred cow at Pantex." Though many of The *Amarillo Globe's* back-issues do not exist or are not readily available, what is accessible (2002-2022) only confirms The Canadian Record's critique. Wedding announcements, obituaries, articles lauding Pantex's philanthropy to area Girl Scout troops and the United Way make up the totality of their more recent records. In fact, many of these articles closely mirror the blog Pantex runs on its own website—the same information, with slightly different syntax.

CONCLUSION

The work of activists and journalists within and outside of Amarillo have, at various points in history, called into question Pantex's entrenchment in the Texas Panhandle. Post 9-11, the plant's work and influence on the area once more became shadowy and nebulous. And, though the Texas Panhandle and Pantex have weathered multiple seasons of wartime politics and calls for patriotism, though media coverage has trended positive during wartime and more critical during peacetime, there has been no such trend since 2001. Post-9-11 patriotism has certainly lulled, and yet the local narrative around Pantex remained uncritical and unchanging. Given the continual closure or weakening of local newspapers, even historically better-funded ones like The *Amarillo Globe News*—which is now owned by *USA Today* and boasts a total staff of four news writers and two sports writers—it is difficult to see how Pantex's role in the economy and local culture will ever come into question again. It is an institution—community lifeblood. The violence inherent in its mission is made to seem inevitable, like a force of nature. Perhaps it will always be necessary for a plant like Pantex to exist in the U.S., and perhaps it makes sense that this plant remains in Amarillo, Texas. Even still, the weakening and closing of area newspapers makes it more difficult to challenge Pantex's continued presence in the Panhandle and demand greater accountability and transparency from its leadership. The conversation about Pantex is lopsided, driven by the power of government-backed PR, and ultimately, by weak local journalistic presence.

[i] "NO TRESPASSING PERMITTED AT PANTEX PLANT," *The Panhandle Herald*, May 22, 1942.
[ii] Hunt, Alex, "'Host and Hostage': Pantex and the Texas Panhandle," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 118 no. 4 (April 2015): 341.
[iii] Schroeder, Steven, "On Learning to See Nothing: The Institution of Pantex" (paper presented at the national meeting of the Popular Culture Association, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1996).
[iv] "Major Burgard Is Speaker at Lions Luncheon Tuesday," *The Panhandle Herald*, May 15, 1942.
[v] "Atomic Works to Use Pantex Plant" *The Sweetwater Reporter*, January 21, 1951.
[vi] "Veil of Mystery Lifted at Atom Plant in Texas," *The Daily News-Telegram*, January 31, 1952.
[vii] Howard Swindle, "Panhandle Conceals Facility: Plant Produces Atomic Bombs, Weapons," *The North Texas Daily*, January 23, 1976.
[viii] Leroy T. Matthiesen, *Wise and Otherwise: The Life and Times of a Cottonpicking Texas Bishop* (Self-published, 2005), 140-141.
[ix] Kenneth A. Briggs, "RELIGIOUS LEADERS OBJECTING TO NUCLEAR ARMS" *The New York Times*, September 8, 1981.
[x] Robert Walters, "Bomb Is Big Industry In High Plains Texas," *The Baytown Sun*, December 22, 1981.
[xi]A.J. Mojtabai, *Blessèd Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986), 57-58.
[xii] "Citizens invited to apply for Pantex Plant Advisory Board," *The Canadian Record*, December 9, 1993.
[xiii] Matthiesen, *Wise and Otherwise*.

FROM AUTHORITARIANISM TO TOTALITARIANISM

The End of Chinese Investigative Journalism

OPHELIA WANG
DEPT. OF ENGLISH

ABSTRACT

It is well-acknowledged that access to alternative sources of information is one of the most important requirements for a liberal democracy. Plural media provide citizens with opportunities to discover diverse political ideas, receive comprehensive information of social events, and form objective opinions independently. The same logic can be applied to terminating democratization: taking control of marketized media outlets and establishing the dominance of state media are among one of the initial steps of power centralization. This paper is a study of the diminishing and the eventual "death" of investigative journalism in China during the 2010s when China's current President Xi Jinping assumed and tightened the grip on power. It argues that state sanction on investigative journalism severed a communication channel between the power-holders and the people, fostered a nationalist public, and discouraged civic participation, which ultimately encroached on people's freedom of expression and rights to knowledge. The extreme example of CCP's control on mass media illustrates the significance of media pluralism in fostering a liberal democracy as well as protecting people's civil rights.

INTRODUCTION

On June 10, 2022, a young woman and her three friends were repeatedly beaten by a group of men in a restaurant in Tangshan, Hebei, China. Security camera footage showed that before the assault, one of the men also sexually harassed the woman before attacking her and her companions, all of whom suffered injuries. The assailants were not arrested until the footage went viral on the internet the next day, at which time the authorities were finally alerted. The incident generated a public outcry, demanding justice for the criminals and new legislation to prevent gender violence. Although the incident itself received substantial media attention, however, there was little reporting about the victims. Other than a 30-second interview with of one of the victims by CCTV (China Central Television) aired two months after the attack, there was no investigative reporting about the incident from any privately-owned media outlet.

The 2022 Tangshan restaurant attack was not the only incident that was missing media coverage from non-state media outlets. In January 2022, a Tiktok video filmed in a village in Xuzhou quickly became a hot topic on the Chinese internet. In this video, a mentally disturbed woman was chained to a wall in a makeshift shelter. The individual who filmed the short video appeared to be her husband, who said the woman had given birth to eight children, and that the family was receiving financial support from the public. The Chinese internet public was appalled by what appeared to be domestic abuse, illegal imprisonment and potentially, human trafficking.

Investigative journalists and angry citizens attempted to travel to the village to learn about the family, but local authorities cut off the roads around the village, deployed military troops, and turned down any request for interviews.

In late February, the state media published a few reports about the incident, which answered some questions about the chained woman. Those became the only sources of information for the public.

The lack of alternative information resources meant that what actually happened to the victims, how they were recovering from the trauma, and the general accuracy of state media reports remained unknown to the public. These two cases could have attracted great media attention and would provided material for investigative journalists in China. Instead, they were silenced. This article explores the waxing and waning of Chinese investigative journalism and its ripple effect on Chinese society. It argues that the end of investigative journalism hinders communication between people and the government, has led to new waves of nationalist sensations, and discouraged citizens' participation in politics and public agenda. It concludes by arguing that the party-state's tightened control of media is indicative of a broader transition from an authoritarian state to a totalitarian one. At the same time, government credibility is likely to decrease since state media does not provide enough accurate information – which is untenable in the internet age.

CHALLENGES TO INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN CHINA

Chinese investigative journalism experienced rapid growth in the 1990s when China's economic reforms created new social issues that attracted media attention. The relaxed political atmosphere at the time also encouraged media practitioners to engage in professional journalism rather than party propaganda.[i] By allowing critical media voices, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) attempted to establish an image of "a caring state that is willing to solve citizens' problems" and regain trust from the public. Compared to the previous propaganda methods that mainly featured brainwashing, the new practices of "public opinion guidance" (*yulun daoxiang*) and "supervision by public opinion" (*yulun jiandu*) were more effective in terms of mitigating public opinion and maintaining the legitimacy of the regime.[ii]

From the 1990s to the 2000s, critical investigative reporting in China covered various social, economic, and political problems, such as corruption, income inequalities, and food safety. A number of media organizations that regularly carried out in-depth investigative reporting became popular around that time, such as *Southern Weekly, Southern Metropolis Daily*, and *Oriental Morning Post*. Even though the scope and content of these investigative reports were limited and usually subject to state censorship and self-censorship, they still played an important role in offering alternative information sources to the public and supervising the executive power of local government authorities.[iii]

This burgeoning investigative journalism did not last long in China. After Xi Jinping came to power in late 2012, the central leadership "upgraded" media governance in many aspects, including by launching internet legal regulations, intensifying censorship, and jailing journalists and activists. In 2013, the CCP issued an internal document titled "Briefing on the Current Situation in the Ideological Realm," which was widely circulated within the party. The document referred to the danger of western values and ideas that competed with the CCP's ideology and which should be uprooted from Chinese society. These included constitutional democracy, universal values of human rights, media independence, civil society, and market-driven neoliberalism. It also asserted that "the media should be unwaveringly controlled by the Party centered around General Secretary Xi." The document illustrated the direction of CCP's policy on media in the Xi era and foreshadowed the fate of investigative journalism in China.

An episode that took place in 2013 at the *Southern Weekly* signaled the beginning of the intensification of media control in Xi's administration. During this incident, a local government propaganda department ignored standard censorship practice and changed the headline and content of *Southern Weekly*'s 2013 New Year's message without first informing its editors. This prompted critical journalists all over the country to start an internal protest against local censorship,

an internal protest against local censorship, which soon subsided due to political pressure. In subsequent years, it became increasingly difficult for investigative journalists to cover significant domestic events. Local authorities prevented journalists from conducting interviews and intensified censorship on news articles before they were published. The fast growth of digital and social media also competed with traditional media such as newspapers and TV programs. According to one study, nearly half of Chinese investigative journalists had left their jobs by the end of 2017.[iv] In the 2021 annual report of the Committee to Protect Journalists, China remained the world's worst jailer of journalists for the third year in a row, with 50 journalists jailed.

THE RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM'S DECLINE

The rapid decline of investigative journalism in China was a devastating blow to Chinese society. First of all, it severed a communication channel between the power-holders and the people. In a democratic context, the press plays an important role in politics because it serves as an "informal power" that holds "formal power-holders" accountable. Journalists help citizens to carry out their basic rights to be informed.[v]

Some scholars propose that the relationship between journalism and democracy can be seen as a social contract, as only a democratic government will allow private media to exercise freedoms of speech, expression and information. At the same time, to make sure a democracy functions properly, media and journalism serve as the "watchdog" of the state and provide space for public discussion. They also offer decision-makers in government vital information to make policy choices that benefit the public interest.[vi]

China, though an authoritarian state, nevertheless benefited from private media, which to some extent did act as the "watchdog" of the party and helped keep local officials in check.[vii] Without media oversight, problems in governance are easier to hide from citizens, and there is more room for government cover-ups. Citizens do not have access to basic information about government performance and about the real problems facing society. It is also more difficult for the party-state to learn about societal sentiments from the bottom up.[viii] A unified media voice that only represents the harmonious side of the society will not provide accurate context to the central leadership. Hence, the struggles and difficulties of ordinary citizens are easily absent from the government's view, and citizens are forced to resort to other methods, such as social media, to inform the public and must hold out hope that a viral post will eventually get the attention of the authorities. In recent years, the forums of public opinion in China gradually shifted from traditional media outlets to digital platforms where people's voices are expressed individually. Only when a post asking for help or encouraging public caution receives a sizable amount of exposure and re-posting will it attract official attention.

The prohibition of critical journalistic voices has also contributed to the formation of a nationalist public. The party-state's rejection of media oversight reflects its intolerance of any external criticism. This conveys the message that the central leadership behaves flawlessly and always makes the right decisions. Together with Xi Jinping's propaganda narrative of "rejuvenating the great Chinese nation," this unwritten political principle has encouraged nationalist sentiments across the country, which is especially visible online. A group of patriotic bloggers has emerged to promote nationalistic content on their accounts and earn fame thanks to the endorsement of party media outlets.[ix] Nationalist citizens have taken pride in China's superiority in terms of economic development and political system, and they depict any critical voice of the government as "anti-China" and "anti-CCP."

The narrative of "colluding with foreign/western forces" has often been used to silence those who publicly state dissatisfaction with public authorities. For example, in the early days of Wuhan's COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the author Fangfang posted a series of Weibo (China's equivalent of Twitter) entries documenting her life in quarantine as a Wuhan local. In her daily installments, entitled "Quarantine Diaries," she shared with her online readers her changing

moods and emotions of being quarantined without reliable information. While the diary was well-received in the beginning, some nationalist commentators grew increasingly impatient with her candid comments and relentless calls for government accountability. Combined with the overseas publication of the diary's English and German translation, some in the public became furious with Fangfang's "treacherous behavior." They accused her of airing China's "dirty laundry" to the West and of casting a negative light on China's response to the virus. Fangfang was on the receiving end of massive internet trolling and death threats. She underwent this harassment because she had expressed concern about government efficiency and potential cover-ups and wrongdoing during the outbreak, despite the fact that she had the constitutional right to record the video testimonials.

Unfortunately, the political climate in China deems open criticism of public authorities as an unacceptable act of political engagement. This atmosphere has fostered populist and nationalist sensations that encroach on freedoms of speech and expression of any individuals who are brave enough to criticize authorities in public. Without investigative reporting, it is more challenging for citizens to participate in civil society and defend their constitutional rights. Alternative and relatively independent information sources are one of the prerequisites for a liberal democracy. Citizens need to gather information from sources other than those from the government to understand societal issues and form relatively objective opinions. And, to participate in a public agenda, citizens need access to a diversity of content that covers interests from different social groups and factions.[x] The state sanction of investigative journalism and critical media voices in general further hinders citizens' ability to know about their own country and engage with politics, as the media and press controlled by the government only present a positive image of the country and the government while avoiding possible issues in governance.

The development of civil society in China has also been affected in recent years by the downfall of investigative journalism. Chinese investigative journalists used to engage actively with lawyers, public intellectuals, civil society organizations, and other members of the public. They once established networks and communities through social media platforms, off-line salons, and annual conferences. Some of the investigative journalists were themselves active members of Chinese civil society. Wang Keqin is one of the most well-known investigative journalists in China, and founder of the Love Save Pneumoconiosis charity organization to support migrant workers with black lung disease. Civil society benefits greatly from investigative journalism, since it brings public exposure and attention to the issues that they report upon. Likewise, investigative journalists can use help from local civic organizations in the course of their reporting.[xi] However, as the party-state tightened its political control over journalists during the last few decades, both civil society and investigative journalists have become the targets of an iron fist. Non-governmental organizations that do not advocate for political movements or challenge the state are allowed to exist. But it is difficult for them to enter the public eye without professional news reporting; social media platforms are under increasingly intensified censorship.[xii] Organizations that advocate on politically sensitive topics, such as gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, often face accusations of "colluding with foreign forces" from the authorities and nationalist citizens.

CONCLUSION

The diminishing of Chinese investigative journalism signals the acceleration of its transition from an authoritarian state to a totalitarian one. Instead of allowing investigative reporting to raise social issues and improve government performance, the party-state regards it as a menace to social stability and to CCP leadership.[xiii] The CCP's intensified control on media, together with other surveillance methods that emerged in the past three years in the name of pandemic control, demonstrates the CCP's determination to contain the population and threaten any attempts to challenge its political legitimacy. The effects of totalitarian methods, however, cut two ways. The current administration risks losing credibility in its quest to monopolize the media and press, as demonstrated in China's sudden revocation of the "Zero-COVID" policy at the behest of activists. This rapid policy change has placed incredible

pressure under the Chinese healthcare system, with some doctors and nurses experiencing what medical staff in other countries had gone through in March and April 2020. These comments, of course, are vastly different than those shared by public media entities. The decision of whom to believe is thus left to Chinese citizens.

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JOURNALISTS' ROUNDTABLE: ON THE ROLE OF PRESS IN DEMOCRACIES

TIZIANA DEARING (WBUR/NPR), RENEE GRAHAM (*BOSTON GLOBE*), & PIOTR SMOLAR (*LE MONDE*)

Held at the Clough Center Workshop, "Renewing Journalism, Restoring Democracy" (September 2022)

TIZIANA DEARING

Why do we care about renewing journalism? Why do we care about restoring democracy? For me, it is the free flow of quality information and the ability to understand each other in community. Those are my "whys." What are yours? That's the first thing. The second thing is the difference in form, between digital journalism, print journalism, televised journalism, and radio journalism. The formats both constrain and permit how we tell stories, what kinds of stories we're good at telling, and the way you will connect with those stories as consumers. In an ideal world, you consume news through all of those media. The third thing is that profit matters. In itself, this is neither good nor bad; it just matters. The way an institution makes its money and, of course, the institution itself, has influence. Starting with how long a story you can tell. In in local television news, you're lucky if you get 90 seconds. Contrast that with the length of an acceptable digital or print piece, or the length that you can tell in a podcast or a documentary or an hourly live radio program. We represent here all of those formats. We also represent both news and opinion. And all of those things shape the way journalism plays into, supports, and/or undermines democracy. So Renee, now I'll turn it over to you for your opening remarks.

RENEE GRAHAM

Thank you. On September 8th, Queen Elizabeth II died. You might have heard something about it. A day later, her son, the King formerly known as Prince Charles, gave his first speech. ABC, NBC, and CBS all preempted their regular daytime programming and carried the speech live. Flashback to just a week earlier when President Biden, who, unlike King Charles III, actually leads our nation, gave a primetime address about the ongoing and very real threats to American democracy. Not a single one of those networks carried it live. Even as the president said Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic, network executives had already made a decision that what was more important for their viewers to see were repeats of "Young Sheldon" on CBS, "Law and Order" on NBC and on ABC, a new episode of "Press Your Luck". A president talking about our flailing democracy was no match for reruns and a game show. Whatever the reasoning, it was determined that attacks on democracy and an ongoing coup fermenting within our borders did not merit primetime attention on their airwaves.

This response, or lack thereof, falls egregiously beneath what this moment demands. That Biden felt the need to make that speech says a lot about how dire the situation is. Many Americans have long taken for granted the invincibility of democracy. Even in its flawed and incomplete state, it has

always been there so it would always be there. But come November, nearly every state will have at least one Republican nominee who denies the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election outcome. Even some who grudgingly admit that Biden is president continue to insist that there was widespread fraud when there was no such thing. And several of those Republican candidates have so far refused to say whether they will accept the results of their election if they lose. Call them ultra MAGA, MAGA Republicans, semi-fascist, or whatever, but they're all using the same playbook codified by Trump in 2020, the same one he was hinting at in 2026 when he often spoke of rig elections. He spent his entire presidency trying to de-legitimize elections and carving into the heart of democracy.

In this perilous moment, we as journalists must develop our own playbook to weed through the lies and conspiracies, to ignore the distractions, to be more than stenographers, and to report the truth. Tough, honest, and unflinching journalism is vital to democracy. A free press is democracy's guardian, a restricted or reckless press, its nemesis. There's a reason why one of the first actions undertaken by budding authoritarians is to clamp down on the media. They want to control the narrative to better suit their own political needs and ambitions while at the same time keeping citizens uninformed and fearful. What we should now recognize is that democracies can also die in broad daylight as well as in darkness.

All this is happening during a difficult time for journalism, especially newspapers. Since 2005, about 2,500 newspapers nationwide have closed. That's one fourth of them. By 2025, a third will be gone. Those that remain battle shrinking staffs and circulation. We're all trying to do a lot more with a lot less. We also know the stories about what happens in communities that lose their local newspapers and become news deserts. Local governments go unchecked and participation in elections drops. This urgent moment is too important to be left to TikTok, which is where 33% of its users say they get their news.

What we certainly don't need is a repeat of 2016. I sometimes wonder what might have happened, what might have been different if so many in the media hadn't promoted the false narrative crediting Trump's rise to economic anxiety, instead of calling out what it really was: pure, unadulterated racism and white supremacist grievance after the first black president. What we don't need are attacks on democracy treated as a sideshow. And the media, again, getting too smitten with spectacle and missing the real story. All journalists must learn to call a thing a thing. If it's a lie, call it a lie. If it's sexist, call it sexist. If it's racist, do not call it racially motivated or racially changed. Call it racism. There is no time for euphemisms and soft peddling hard facts. We must also examine our own biases and blind spots because we all have them. And too few journalists check those blind spots when decisions are made on what gets covered, who gets assigned which stories, what ultimately gets reported, published and aired.

For many of us, being a journalist isn't a job, it's a sacred calling. And every day we are called upon to do our best to get it right and tell it like it is. Facts are not partisan. Truth is not par-

san. Don't kowtow to both sidesisms where none exist. What we do as journalists, especially in these next few weeks leading to the midterms, may be some of the most critical work of our lives. As democracy's guardians, we, too, are under threat from far-right groups and politicians, yet with so much at stake, we can't afford to back down or disappoint readers and viewers who count on us. This time, our democracy is counting on us too.

PIOTR SMOLAR

I don't feel very comfortable when journalists are asked to fulfill the mission to become white knights, to defend a cause. I don't shy away from the dilemmas and challenges that we all face in liberal democracies. I'm a son of political refugees from Poland who sheltered in France. In my childhood, our family friends were in prison in Poland because they were launching underground newspapers. So I know what the weight of courage is and what it means to defend values. But what I mean is that today in liberal democracy there's a great risk, for our political system, but also for journalists, if they only preach to the choir. And I think we have to be very careful with this.

What strikes me the most right now is to what extent it has become difficult to even define journalism in the modern world. Of course, in a dictatorship there's no journalism. Very little in an authoritarian regime. I lived in Russia for several years, at the end of the Yeltsin era. And you had an incredible pluralism at that time. There were many different private TV channels and newspapers, but most of them were defending private interests. And, you know, they belonged to oligarchs. So right now, liberal democracy is the way of private owners and sometimes of their own political agendas. And so the very strong polarization of public debates has contributed to an unhealthy situation in which you have blurred lines. Blurred lines between entertainment and information, between opinions and facts, and between ideology and methodology.

Earlier in his remarks, Jonathan mentioned this quote from Jan-Werner Müller about the press's role in "Preserving democracy rather than promoting democracy." And I like that. I mean, obviously, there's no objectivity, no neutrality, no purity of facts for journalism. But I think in a very, sort of, modest and careful way that if we do our jobs vigorously, scrupulously, we will serve democracy.

RENEE GRAHAM

You know, you can both preserve and promote democracy. I don't see them as being separate entities. I am an opinion columnist now, but I was a news journalist for 30 years, and where we are right now requires frank conversations. It was absolutely maddening to me during the Trump years watching really smart journalists wrestling with whether or not to call a lie a lie. Of course, as an opinion columnist, I just called him a liar because he was lying. But the fact that they were fussing about that wasn't about their lack of objectivity, it was their inability to actually face the fact of a president who was out and out lying. All politicians lie, of course. But this was on a different scale entirely. We need to say exactly what's happening. And you can do that within the context of news. But saying that he misspoke? He didn't misspeak, he lied!

There was the same problem with calling him racist. Remember it was Dean Baquet, the head of the *New York Times*, talking about not wanting to call The President of the United States a liar and not wanting to call him a racist. And I just thought, but if he's saying racist things, then you should be able to call him a racist. Otherwise, you are complicit. You're covering up what he's doing. And I don't think that's what journalism is about.

TIZIANA DEARING

So Renee just talked about what was maddening to her. What is maddening to you as a journalist?

PIOTR SMOLAR

I wouldn't use the word maddening. I try to work with empathy in order to understand people with whom I don't agree. Because if I only speak to brilliant and sophisticated people, I will never understand the other part of society. So, for example, on Saturday evening, I was in Youngstown, Ohio at a Trump rally. It was my first Trump rally. And I was very surprised by the fact that there were no mainstream media, almost none. I think it's a problem if mainstream media don't cover the other side.

I understand what you're saying, Renee, and I understand calling a racist a racist. I see your point. But the basic mission of journalists is also being on the ground to collect facts and talk to people even if you don't agree with them. There's a lot to be said about common issues that we had in France and in the US regarding the far-right, well before the Trump era. In France, our media went through a sort of electric shock when a candidate from the far-right went to the second round of the presidential election in 2002. Since then, the terms of the debate have not changed. How do we report on the far-right? If we demonize them from morning till dawn, the supporters will feel obviously alienated and resentful. And if we treat them as any party, which they're not, we will help them to become respectable and it'll be like whitewashing of racist ideas. So there is no easy answer and I don't have perfect recommendations. I'm just underlining how difficult that is. And not only in the States, but also in France, in Italy, or in Poland.

TIZIANA DEARING

What I find particularly useful in this conversation is the modeling of different perspectives that exist in journalism right now. And part of the conversation that we are having about the role of those different perspectives is how we maintain the free flow of quality information, the speaking of truth to power, the building of empathy and community, all of which I would argue could legitimately be considered some of the objectives of journalism. So I'll model a third place. I have very strong opinions about what each of you said. But a third place that journalism can also sit is in keeping your mouth shut and bringing forward those perspectives for the listener, the reader, the viewer, to then draw conclusions from themselves. To draw out the best argument, the best information, stay out of it. And I cannot emphasize enough how hard that can be when you're doing, let's say, a live hour on the day the Supreme Court rules on *Roe v. Wade*! But that is the third piece of where journalism comes in. And I think it's useful to situate that, because it seems to me that part of the struggle is where to be on the continuum and how much weight to put on the various pieces of that continuum in order to do the two things we're talking about, which is renew journalism and restore democracy. So maybe I'll just turn it over to you to riff on from there.

RENEE GRAHAM

You know, it's interesting. I don't feel like I have demonized the far-right. I just write what they say and let them demonize themselves. I don't have to go out of my way to do that. So, a quick story. I was at *The Globe* for 18 years and then left and went to academia and thought, wow, that's wrong for me. And I went back to journalism. And I started on November 7th, 2016, the day before the election. I sat there and watched that ticker going from Clinton to Trump. I was getting a lot of mail from Trump supporters and early on I would respond to all of them and sometimes I could talk them off the cliff a little bit. They thought they were just yelling into the void, but when an actual person responded, they would go, "Oh my God, I can't believe I said that mean thing. I hadn't had my coffee this morning. I'm so sorry." That began to change. I can't talk to them anymore, because now everything is overwhelmingly n-words, everything is guns, everything is "I know where

you work." I don't even have a comment section on my columns anymore because it was so racist, other readers began to complain to *The Globe* about it. I don't know how to reason with that.

When Trump was on his "enemy of the people" kick four years ago, *The Globe* got all these newspapers around the country, and some around the world, to have editorials on the same day, to decry what Trump was doing to journalism. *The Globe* began to get bomb threats, to the point we had to have Boston Police officers in the building. We could not leave for lunch. The editor who organized it had to get armed escorts to work. I don't know how to reason with that person. I can't see that side because that is not how I operate. James Baldwin said, "We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist." That's where I am with this. I want to have that conversation, but they just want to call me the n-word and I'm not here for that. Your subscription does not give you that right.

PIOTR SMOLAR

I agree a hundred percent with what you just said. I want to talk for two seconds about the January 6th Committee, which I found jaw dropping. I couldn't believe the level of detail and the testimonies, and it was so incredibly shocking, the level of premeditation before January 6th. Every time the committee would gather on television, I would write a whole page in *Le Monde* because I thought it was absolutely crucial. Then last week I went to South Dakota, Sioux Falls, to write a story about the Republican Party. I met with many, many different people from many different backgrounds. Some of them were really MAGA supporters, totally fired up and extremists. Some of them were moderate Republicans. None of them watched even for five minutes the January 6th Committee. None of them. None. It's because I fear that there are two conversations going in parallel and they never cross paths. On the one hand there is a conversation about the threats to democracy, and this culture of violence and intolerance that is arising and which is really very scary. And on the other side there's another conversation going on, totally apocalyptic, about the end of the world under Biden, about inflation, about waves of migrants, etc. And it's like two parallel worlds that never meet. And what I find striking, if I am to believe the opinion polls, is that on many subjects in the US, there is a silent majority that exists. There is a silent majority basically on abortion, on gun control, on the price of drugs and healthcare. But there are two different conversations going on. It's a huge issue and you have the same thing in France. Is it possible to overcome this? Is it possible to find a way not to totally alienate the other part of society?

RENEE GRAHAM

In my career, I've covered all kinds of things. I worked in the South. I've never had a moment like this before, where there are people you can't even have a conversation with. I think what's different now is that Trump said that you don't have to be ashamed of the way you feel. He emboldened people. A lot of us know that mood was always there. The difference is that people who otherwise would've kept it to themselves or to their dinner table now have no problem saying it to your face. That's the difference. If you look at the assaults on journalists and the threats on journalists, it's a really scary time. I want to talk to as many different people as I possibly can, but I'm not willing to endanger myself to do that. If I wanted to be a war correspondent, I would be a war correspondent. I don't, and that's what it's begun to feel like.

III. SHAPING THE MIND OF THE CITIZEN

MOVE ON UP?

Reporting on the State of Economic Mobility in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Measures of both social and economic mobility in the United States fell in recent decades. Recent academic studies suggest that the tie between parents' and children's fortunes has grown stronger, the average U.S. worker is less likely to start a new business, and fewer workers switch jobs in any given year. However, many Americans remain unaware that they are living in a less dynamic economy and as a result, are not fully informed of the economic reality when it comes to matters of economic policy. Insofar as it is the press' role to accurately disseminate findings from researchers on prevalent changes in the economic landscape, the public conversation regarding policies to improve U.S. economic performance could be greatly enriched if the news media were to more thoroughly fulfill this responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

News reporting on the economy plays a critical role in formulating and enacting economic policies both in crisis and in normal times. Americans need to be informed about current economic conditions in order to demand appropriate action from their political representatives. People learn about the state of the economy by reading or watching the news, as academic research articles are often difficult to access for the common reader in terms of both content and availability. Therefore, journalists play a key role in summarizing, synthesizing, and communicating the results of academic studies and other efforts to measure and interpret economic performance. They are also responsible for contextualizing these results, as the average reader may not fully understand the broader importance of certain empirical findings if taken at face value. Healthy debates around economic policy require a citizenry that is well-informed of any economic ills plaguing the country as well as their underlying causes.

Unsurprisingly, partisan divides within the United States influence the manner in which the media reports on the state of the economy. Americans on both sides of the political spectrum seek out commentary that accords with their preexisting ideas about how the economy and society ought to be organized. Journalists have an incentive to frame reporting on key economic events in a manner more likely to resonate with their expected readership. News outlets aligned with the conservative side of the political spectrum in the U.S. may hesitate to emphasize recent economic developments that suggest that the U.S. is anything less than a land of opportunity for those who take advantage of it. By the same token, those outlets that favor liberal audiences may overplay the importance of sizeable changes in the economic landscape even when it is not entirely clear that they necessarily reflect negative developments.

To illustrate this dynamic, consider recent interviews conducted by two news outlets that lie on different sides of the political spectrum: *The Washington Post* representing the political Left and *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* representing the political Right. Within the

same month, each outlet published widely differing views about the nature of economic inequality in the United States. In September 2022, *The Washington Post* interviewed a prominent U.S. senator under the premise that economic developments during the COVID-19 pandemic "fed into inequalities that had been building over decades, making it harder for people to attain the American dream."[i] Though the interview featured nuanced views on the nature of various structural factors affecting American workers, the framing of the article suggested that the economic effects of the pandemic overwhelmingly exacerbated an already severe problem. Less than two weeks later, the *WSJ* conducted an interview with a former U.S. senator who argued that the notion of inequality in America is a "myth."[ii] Whereas the article was pitched by the *WSJ* as an effort to debunk commonly held beliefs about inequality, the substance of the interview offered a focused critique of the manner in which government statistical agencies measure income and transfer payments. Even in framing an interview, journalists' choices affect the conclusions that readers draw from a particular piece of text.

POLITICAL AFFLIATION & ECONOMIC BELIEFS: A BRIEF SURVEY

Differences in how different news outlets frame economic developments are especially relevant in a context where citizens' political beliefs are heavily intertwined with their views on the economy. Polling research has shown that perceptions of economic conditions track party affiliation closely. During at least the last three presidential administrations, Americans' views on the economy diverged sharply based on their political affiliation as well as the political party currently in power. This difference was most stark in the wake of the 2016 election, where the proportion of Republican and Republican-leaning individuals who viewed economic conditions as "excellent or good" increased rapidly from less than 20% before President Trump took office to over 75% by 2018. Over the same time period, this proportion fell slightly from 46% to 44% among Democratic and Democratic-leaning individuals.[iii] These large differences call into question the extent to which either group of voters' views are informed by underlying economic fundamentals or by perceptions of the effects of future policy changes on the economy.

Additionally, academic research has found that different groups of Americans are likely to hold differing views of economic phenomena based on their political preferences. For instance, belief in the "American Dream" and how likely individuals are to attain it varies considerably by political party. Republicans consistently overestimate economic mobility whereas Democrats consistently underestimate economic mobility. These perceptions hold among the general public as well as appointed and elected government officials.[iv] They also display persistence over time and do not necessarily change in response to underlying economic conditions. Consistent with polling data, citizens do not necessarily base their perceptions of economic performance on concrete evidence alone, but view any changes in the economic landscape through the lens of their political beliefs.

But do these different perceptions of the economic reality hold sway over economic policy-making? Within the United States, it is not necessarily clear, but lessons can be drawn by comparing economic policy in the U.S. to economic policy in countries that have fundamentally different attitudes toward the role of the state in the economy. For instance, Americans tend to value flexibility in the economic landscape and are generally wary of any government interventions that may compromise such flexibility. Americans generally place greater weight on the ability to find new opportunities should their individual circumstances change and view policy efforts to "engineer" economic outcomes with skepticism. However, European societies have traditionally been more supportive of policies that preserve a sense of economic stability for workers or guarantee a baseline level of well-being for citizens. In addition to policies that place restrictions on the ability of companies to lay-off their workers, many European countries offer citizens a more generous and expansive social safety net.

These differences in attitudes likely in-

formed the differential policy responses that played out across the U.S. and Europe in the recent COVID-19 pandemic. During the economic fallout from the pandemic, U.S. policy concentrated on providing workers with economic relief in the form of stimulus checks and unemployment benefits. These measures supplemented Americans' incomes, but did nothing to try and rescue the jobs they might have previously occupied. On the other hand, economic policy in many European countries focused on preserving current employment relationships between workers and businesses.[v] Countries such as France, Italy, Spain, and Germany enacted policies to protect jobs regardless of any undesirable outcomes: workers had jobs but were not able to work regular hours and some unneeded jobs that would have otherwise been destroyed were retained. In the U.S., workers may have lost jobs in larger numbers, but were able to use the income supplements they received to tide them over until new and better opportunities arose. In the aftermath of the economic crisis, a "Great Resignation" emerged in the U.S. when scores of workers across the country decided to quit their old jobs and explore different career paths.

JOURNALISTS & ECONOMIC POLICY-MAKING

Given the high propensity for citizens' views of the economy to shape actual economic policy-making, it is imperative that journalists report on changes in the economy in as clear and as unbiased a manner as possible. One contentious area where this is especially relevant is with respect to recent trends in economic inequality and mobility. In addition to Americans' views on the importance of economic "fluidity," the United States is often heralded as a dynamic society. New businesses, ideas, and methods of production replace older ones on a regular basis at higher rates than in other nations. Workers have ample opportunities to explore different career paths, allowing them to find new jobs that better utilize their skills. However, measures of both social and economic mobility show that this may no longer be the reality for current generations of U.S. workers. Moreover, the public perception tilts toward the exact opposite conclusion. News outlets commonly report on the prevalence of business "startups" as well as the alleged high frequency with which the current generation of young people switch jobs. Within the economics community, there is broad-based agreement on the trends in these key measures of economic performance, even if there is less agreement on their underlying factors. It is clear from several empirical studies that the rate of new business creation in the U.S. declined dramatically since 1980, even in high-tech sectors.[vi] The economy experienced a corresponding shift in the types of businesses currently in operation: with fewer new businesses being created, the share of larger, older businesses has gradually increased. Accompanying this shift in the types of businesses that occupy the economy has been a rise in market concentration and a decrease in the share of economic output accruing to laborers. There seems to be a growing gap between "the best and the rest" when it comes to the performance of businesses in the economy.[vii] High-profile firms such as Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Walmart dominate the economic, political, and cultural conversation.

Additionally, worker mobility has dropped precipitously over a similar time horizon. In the early 1980s, roughly 18% of workers switched jobs in any given year, but by 2019, that number had fallen to 10%.[viii] Moreover, despite the widely held perception that young people are switching jobs at the highest rate in history, this trend was largely driven by an especially big decline in job switching for individuals between the ages of 25 and 34.[ix] The process of "job shopping," whereby workers switch jobs frequently in search of businesses that make good use of their skillset or knowledge base, is thought to be important for life-cycle wage growth, especially for workers who are just starting out in their careers. Therefore, the decline in job switching could be a symptom of some underlying ill in the American economy's ability to provide good opportunities to workers.

However, declining job switching need not spell negative consequences for workers if instead it is a symptom of a much different development. Changes in information and communications technology have made it easier

for individuals across the world to connect, interact, and coordinate business activity. Particularly during the recent global pandemic, emerging platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet allowed businesses in service industries to continue to operate despite quarantine and social distancing measures. Similarly, the increasing prevalence of online job-posting websites has made it easier for workers to locate suitable jobs and for businesses to distinguish qualified from unqualified applicants. Therefore, if the decline in job switching instead reflects an increased ability of workers and businesses who are a good "fit" to locate each other, it would be a much-welcomed development, signifying positive trends in the U.S. labor market.[x] Despite the conceptual disagreement on whether declining job switching represents a positive or negative trend, the fact that individuals switch jobs less often is a widely agreed upon statistical regularity.

Lastly, many measures of economic mobility suggest that American children face lower chances of success as compared to previous generations. Recent academic studies on social mobility suggest that the link between parents' and children's fortunes has grown tighter in the past several decades, contributing to a rise in inequality. A series of highly publicized findings show that in certain regions of the country, children are less likely to earn more than their parents.[xi] Similar to the declines in entrepreneurship and job switching, the economics community has differing views on the underlying causes of these changes in economic inequality. However, economists generally agree on the fact that there have been significant changes in economic outcomes over this time horizon as well as the importance of future research in this area.

In light of these economic realities and the increasingly divided political landscape of the United States, reporting on the state of economic mobility and dynamism in the U.S. is especially important. Rising political polarization to some extent reflects the differing economic realities increasingly faced by different groups of Americans. The U.S. is a diverse country in terms of racial and demographic background, but also in terms of cultural, political, and economic attitudes. Disagreements on the nature of economic policy unsurprisingly stem from differing viewpoints on how society ought to function and the role of government. They also naturally emerge from differences in circumstance, as economic policies affect different groups based on their standing in society. However, persistent differences in views on economic policy ought not to emerge from disagreement on basic sets of facts.

CONCLUSION

Journalists play a crucial role in cultivating the basic set of facts necessary for Americans to make informed economic judgements. Not only the types of events that the press chooses to report on but also the manner in which they are framed affects citizens' understanding of the key factors at play in any given economic policy debate. If the news media chooses to report on certain key findings published by researchers but not others, their specific audience may develop a skewed perception of the economic reality. Failure to properly contextualize research findings also contributes to already differing beliefs on the state of the economy, as not every economic development deserves to be treated with the same degree of concern. Political "bubbles" can form based on individuals' political beliefs, the types of news sources they encounter, and with whom they exchange ideas. With the rise of modern technologies like Twitter and other social media outlets, Americans increasingly choose whom they interact with and which sources of information to amplify or diminish.

A body of citizens who do not share a common understanding of the most pressing economic developments cannot effectively pressure policymakers to take actions to remedy them. Disagreements on economic policy that stem from disagreement on economic facts cannot result in healthy debate or imprudent decisions. As the economic landscape in the United States has changed considerably over the last several decades, it is now more important than ever for journalists to recognize their role as purveyors of knowledge on the economy to the general public.

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REVISITING THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION & MANAGEMENT

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DEPT. OF SOCIOLOGY

ABSTRACT

The media plays a crucial role in informing the public and other social spheres about environmental issues and scientific findings related to those issues. Although the media acts as a link between different social spheres and the natural environment, media coverage of environmental issues needs to be accepted cautiously. Scholars on environmental journalism have discussed how the media covers environmental issues and how it influences the audiences' perception of environmental risks. This article aims to review the theoretical perspectives on the role of media in environmental communications, focusing on the views of "objectivists" and "social constructionists." The objectivist perspective holds that media coverage of environmental issues provides our understanding of such issues by translating the scientific findings for public audiences and policy-makers. In contrast, social constructivists argue that the media select the environmental issues and frame how they describe those issues, and thus they influence the emergence and mobilization of public opinions in certain directions. By understanding those controversial views on the role of the media in environmental communications and its potential influence on audiences, this article that the public holds a reflexive attitude when they acquire environmental information through the media, and and this reflexivity will encourage the rise of public attention and activisms for a sustainable society.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental challenges are a pressing concern of contemporary political, social, and cultural life. Increasing natural disasters, shifting weather patterns, decreasing availability of potable water, food, and shelter, the prevalence of pandemics and endemics, and pollution in air and water, are now treated as urgent and irreversible threats to our society.[i] Mostly, we obtain information on environmental issues on a local, national, and global level through the media, such as the news, newspapers, and social media in our everyday life. It seems obvious that the media is a source of information about environmental problems. However, it is easy to accept that information without critical thinking about the reliability of the news and the media's effect. Therefore, this article attempts to critically revisit the role of media and their influence on the public audience in environmental communications, focusing on two controversial perspectives on the role of the media as an intermediary that helps shape social perceptions.

THE INTERMEDIARY ROLE BETWEEN SOCIETY & NATURE: OBJECTIVITY & BALANCE

The media plays a crucial role in informing the

public about environmental issues, analyzing their causes and effects, and shaping and influencing public debates on environmental decision-making.[ii] The news media structure intermediaries in the conduct of public affairs,[iii] and journalism conveys conflicting images and discourses as a producer of news about environmental problems.[iv] The media help consumers interpret how and why environmental issues are occur based on scientific knowledge from reliable institutions and professional experts. In 2015, 196 nations agreed to the terms of the Paris Agreement which is a legally binding international treaty on multilateral climate change action to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Under this agreement, the 2022 UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presented that global temperatures have been 1.2 degree Celsius higher than the average temperature during the pre-industrial period from 1850 to 1900, showing the steadily increasing trend of temperature since the 1980s. Based on scientific evidence, journalists recapitulate the contents of the report and introduce these to the public. For example, a news article published by CNN illustrated the IPCC's warning on global warming and explain the record-breaking heat in the winter in Europe, borrowing the opinion of national scientific institutions in France and Italy.[v] The news media are in a central position in communication, connecting the environment, science, politics, and public audiences from a local to a global level. Journalists translate science and policy or readers, and disseminate the facts and findings related to environmental risks.

Communication research on environmental problems has highlighted the role of the media with balance and objectivity. Elite journalists with highly professional experience in climate coverage seek objectivity and recognize the importance of evidence.[vi] Well-balanced coverage of environmental issues is educational and delivers information on environmental risks and conflicts to individuals. Environmental journalism influences the public by informing them of environmental knowledge in great detail. The media coverage of environmental problems raises awareness about environmental degradation and promotes ecologically friendly ways of living including energy saving, sustainable consumption, recycling, and supporting climate change actions.

The presumption of media objectivity provides the rationale for social scientists to use the media coverage of environmental problems as a data source for studying environmental discourse and sustainable transition. The amount of media coverage environmental problems itself indicates the extent of social concerns in environmental issues. News articles and reports can be used as secondary sources to conduct historical research. And the content analysis of the media coverage of environmental problems provides an understanding of how environmental discourse is shaped and changed. Media coverage of environmental activism helps illustrate the interaction process among social actors, such as environmental activists, government agents, environmental experts, and local residents, in order to deal with environmental issues.

The recent development of computational methods and online media also offers insights into media coverage of environmental issues. Newspapers publish digital copies of their articles, news reporting scripts are posted online, and people upload videos of, for example, floods or blizzards and post their thoughts on social media. The sheer amount of digital information that is easily accessible is larger than the human capacity to handle it. Computational methods are therefore helpful in finding out the patterns of shaping an environmental discourse around various types of environmental issues and the dynamics of sustainable transition by analyzing the media coverage. Hase and his colleagues apply text mining approach to collect the news coverage of national newspapers in ten countries and they use a topic modeling approach to analyze the underlying meanings from the corpus of words in the articles.[vii] Their research shows how countries in the Global North and South have different levels of attention to climate change in general and varying interests in themes and topics of climate change issues. These range from the impact of climate change on the ecosystem, climate science, causes and solutions of climate change, climate politics, awareness and education, impacts of climate change on health, and

its economic impacts. The application of comp putational methods broadens the usage of the large data produced and accumulated by the media to understand how environmental issues are associated with our societies and life.

THE CREATION OF AGENDA & FRAMES: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Scholars of environmental journalism challenge the traditional professional dichotomies between "objective" and "balanced" versus "advocacy" journalism. The controversial position of the media on the coverage of environmental issues is rooted in two factors, and the unique features of environmental issues per se and the unique position of the media in social spheres. First, the environmental issues do not only consist of strictly objective scientific phenomena that can be directly translated into policy decisions or environmental activism with measurable outcomes. Rather, environmental problems are also likely to be socially defined and constructed.[viii] On the one hand, this indicates the relationship between the environment and society in that environmental problems often are caused and perpetuated by human actions and social structures. They can exacerbate existing social inequalities and create new types of inequality, for example, and they can provoke health hazards to marginalized communities. On the other hand, environmental problems are in most cases invisible, and scientific findings have to be communicated and legitimized in the public sphere. Thus, if there is no knowledge that certain phenomena are problematic, it is very difficult to define environmental problems. Even if there is scientific evidence, it is not certain that society would perceive it as a problem. The emergence of environmental problems should therefore be understood a process of shaping public perception of environmental issues as a social problem, as well as the scientific argument with evidence to understand technical, economical, and societal causes and consequences involved.

Second, environmental journalism is linked with political and economic factors influencing each other mutually due to the media's position at the intersection between politics, economy, science, and culture. Since the media are also businesses with economic interests, they need to deliberate what will be reported and how to interpret environmental issues. The commercialization of media also influences journalists to use drama, emotions, and scandal to promote environmental issues. News programs may broadcast provocative videos that stimulate anger toward environmental crimes, and newspapers may post articles exacerbating the risks of environmental problems and their impact on human health. These journalistic trends are sometimes referred to "infotainment."[ix] In environmental journalism, infotainment can lead to a catastrophic view of environmental problems. The media, therefore, should not be seen as a neutral actor. They are affected by other social, political, and economic actors in the public sphere.

Research investigating the media's role in environmental communication calls for a more comprehensive approach than traditional media studies. Understanding the media's roles in the construction of environmental issues as social problems is not only a question of how media coverage affects public opinion and vice versa, but also a question of mapping the dynamic interaction about how they are articulated and how meaning is created. Environmental problems are inextricably implicated with meaning our representations of the environment. These representations reflect our ideological, social, political, or economic interests and also affect them. Among various theoretical contributions of social constructivists in environmental journalism, the most important research perspectives on the social constructivism of environmental journalism are agenda-setting theory and framing theory.

Agenda-setting theory hypothesizes the correlation between the intensity of media coverage of an issue and the perceived issue salience by the public. It assumes that the media plays a role in determining which issues are important or newsworthy by the public, and which topics the media selects significantly influence the audience's image of the world. The media holds the power to set the agenda for public discourse and shape public opinion by their choices of issues to cover and how to cover them.

The public thus may attend selectively to a few events while ignoring and overlooking other insignificant events. In the context of environmental journalism, this means that the media can impact public perception of environmental issues by deciding which environmental issues to report and how to describe them. Anita and colleagues argue that agenda-setting for environment, social, and governance (ESG) controversies possibly strengthens the prominence range of issues when reach intensifies.[x] Consequently, the events become more impactful when the reach increases, catching stakeholders' attention for the embedded issues in ESG controversies. Although journalists believe that the ideology and agenda which guide the activities of the outlet are the constraint in environmental reporting, the political standings and economic profits of the news media affect the news choices from the mass of available information that they deem important to themselves. The news media is wary of the influence of their advertisers who might be unpleasant if a certain environment story is issued.[xi] Thus, the agenda-making of environmental issues demonstrates the media's role in selecting the environmental issues to publicize and how the agenda-setting processes are shaped by the dynamics of the media, politics, and economy.

Framing theory, on the other hand, focuses on how an issue is presented, or "framed," in the media. The concept of "framing" refers to a sense-making process of objects and events.[xii] Framing is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text in a way that can promote a certain definition, interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation for the item described."[xiii] Both framing and agenda-setting deal with how the media constructs reality for the public audience. However, framing theory emphasizes how the media shapes public perception of environmental issues by providing news stories in different frames, while the agenda-setting theory highlights the media's power to decide which issues are considered important to public attention. Therefore, scholars using the framing approach in the media coverage of environmental issues examine how the media constructs environmental discourses. In democratic regimes especially, how the media portrays environmental issues matters. The majority of people obtain information on environmental issues through newspapers, news shows, and the Internet. Media framing influences the creation of public awareness of environmental problems. Public perception affects on how to respond to environmental risks. Due to the linkage between media framing and public perception, studying the way the media frames environmental issues provides an explanation of the dynamics of the state's actions for environmental management and how environmental discourses have developed. Ford and King's research on the media coverage of climate change and adaptation provides insight into applying tje framing theory to environmental journalism studies.[xiv] They examine the coverage and framing of climate change adaptation in four major U.S. and Canadian newspapers between 1993 and 2013. Out of 271 newspaper articles with content related to adaptation, the majority primarily emphasized the necessity of adapting, rather than documenting ongoing preparations or showcasing real-life examples of adaptations that have occurred. Most of the adaptation reported in the newspapers is 'hard' adaptation, which focuses on techno-engineering-based solutions to mitigate potential impacts of climate change, instead of 'soft' adaptation, focusing on enhancing resilience. This trend is particularly pronounced in the reporting in 2012-2013. The authors argue that it is only in recent years, with the increasing acceptance of adaptation as a viable policy option, that the media began to include adaptation as part of the climate change narrative. The shift in media coverage of climate change has created opportunities for extreme environmental issues to bring attention to the need for both adaptation and mitigation efforts.

CONCLUSION

The role of the media is essential and central to environmental communication and management. On one hand, from the objectivist perspective, the media coverage of environmental issues, the media translates the scientific findings related to environmental risks to the public and support them to obtain environmental

communication and management. On one hand, from the objectivist perspective, the media coverage of environmental issues, the media translates the scientific findings related to environmental risks to the public and support them to obtain environmental knowledge. This approach also provides rationales to social scientists to employ the media coverage of environmental problems as a data source for further understanding of the relationship between the environment and society. On the other hand, social constructivists project the media as a social actor that generates the agenda and frames of environmental journalism. The media selects what stories to report and how they interpret and describe the specific aspect of environmental issues. Since the media can shape public opinion by increasing or decreasing public awareness of environmental problems, understanding the role of media in environmental decision-making provides the public and policymakers a reflexive and critical perspective on environmental issues and can help make better decisions for successful environmental management and sustainability.

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HAVEN'T WE HEARD THIS BEFORE?

Polarizing Narratives in the Catholic Church and Their Consequences

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church in the United States provides an example of the negative effect that faith communities who too closely resemble broader society can have on democracy. In the same way that mainstream, traditional media sources are subject to demand-driven bias, Catholic media also reflect the polarization to which demand driven-bias often leads. This tempts Catholics to "opt-in" to parishes and social media circles that reflect their own political values and confirm their biases. As Catholics become increasingly influential in the public sphere, the impact of polarization on the Church is becoming more apparent. Unless the Church as an institution and in its affiliated media can resist the temptation toward assimilating into US society's preference for facile, left-right or liberal-conservative categories, both the Church and democracy will continue to polarize – risking the future existence of both.

INTRODUCTION

On January 20, 2021, Joe Biden was inaugurated as the United States' second Roman Catholic president, 60 years after the inauguration of its first, John F. Kennedy. Since Kennedy's famous speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association—during which he assured influential Protestant leaders that his would not be a presidency subject to the will of the pope—Catholic membership in the US government has only risen. In Congress, Catholics have gone from 22% of House membership and 14% of Senate membership in 1965 to 31% and 24%, respectively, in 2021. In the same time period, the Supreme Court of the United States increased Catholic membership from one, Justice William Brennan, in 1965 to six of nine justices in June 2022.

It is hard to overstate the importance of these affiliations. Consider the Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned longstanding precedent set in *Roe v. Wade* and returned the issue of abortion regulation back to the states. While many Catholics viewed this as a victory, many Americans saw this decision as an overreach by activist Catholic justices and an imposition and intrusion of religion upon democracy.[i]

As the role of Catholics in U.S. political life grows, it is imperative to recognize the Church's influence and to consider how faith communities impact US democracy. In the Church's case, it seems as though what flows in and through the Church flows out and into society through its members, whether they be mere citizens, congressional representatives, or the president.

MEDIA BIAS, CATHOLIC MEDIA BIAS & POLITICAL POLARIZATION

Media bias has steadily increased in recent

years, spurred largely by the fundamental economic principle of supply and demand. Viewer demand has led media to supply information that confirms viewer biases. Conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats, especially, seek out "nearly inverse news media environments."[ii] Such disparate interests in viewing audiences leads to a demand-driven bias. For example, the events at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, are referred to as the "Capitol Protests" by Fox News and the "Capitol Riot" by MSNBC.

Further exacerbating this polarization are the blurred lines between these media outlets' news programming and their opinion-driven entertainment programming. While defending one of its most famous hosts, Tucker Carlson, against allegations of slander, Fox News's lawyers claimed that viewers should be able to glean from the "general tenor" of his show that Carlson "is not 'stating actual facts' about the topics he discusses and is instead engaging in 'exaggeration' and 'non-literal commentary.'"[iii] Buttressing their claim is the reality that Fox News maintains a robust lineup of opinion programs in addition to their news reporting programs—more than half of its daily airtime, which is also true of MSNBC. Although news stories convey the same message, even if less explicitly (as with the use of "Capitol Riots" or "Capitol Protests" above), it is the opinion programming that explicitly confirms these biases

Accompanying the rise in demand-driven bias is negative partisanship, a concept that Ezra Klein defines as "partisan behavior driven not by positive feelings toward the party you support but negative feelings toward the party you oppose."[iv] Negative partisanship emerged prominently in the congressional era of Newt Gingrich, who first introduced cameras into the House of Representatives. This provided minority Republicans a new arrow in their quiver against Democrats in the form of a televised world stage. With the news cameras looking on, they crafted new narratives from the House floor that painted their opponents as evil. As the practice grew, media outlets had only to air their favored side's partisan rant. The growing divide among Americans and the demonization of those from whom they have been divided has led to only higher rates of demand-driven bias.

Negative partisanship is also the currency of social media. With equal access to platforms and the ability to manipulate algorithms and user data, social media is an ideal venue for individuals on both sides of the political divide to polarize our national politics. This has in turn eroded confidence in the institutions that traditionally negotiated basic public consensus. In many important respects, social media can be understood as a national-level epistemic attack on our ability to distinguish truth from falsehood.[v]

Contemporary polarization thrives on market-driven and media-peddled narratives that demonize politicians and their supporters from the other party. No longer is there an ability, much less a willingness, to see beyond political differences to the human person on the other side. Instead, in-group versus out-group sorting creates a preference for the in-group and a belief in their infallibility, even if data could prove otherwise. And, as the world witnessed on January 6, 2021, the consequences are significant.

American churches are not immune to this division. The Catholic Church in the US—in both institutional and corporate forms—participates in this polarization through its own traditional media, social media, and communal discourse. For example, on October 23, 2022, the Catholic News Agency (CNA), an organization affiliated with EWTN—the conservative-leaning Eternal Word Television Network—ran the headline, "Archbishop Chaput: 'Biden is not in communion with the Catholic faith.'" Reading on, the first paragraph quotes the archbishop: "Any priest who now provides Communion to the president participates in his hypocrisy." The message was clear: faithful Catholics cannot support Biden or the priests and bishops who do. Six days later, the more liberal *National Catholic Reporter*'s Christopher White reported that Pope Francis told Biden that "he was a 'good Catholic' and that he should keep receiving Communion." This message was equally clear: faithful Catholics can support Biden. While the latter story was not reported by CNA, the former was only covered by *NCR* in a highly dismissive opinion piece.

The debate over Biden's faith is illustrative of the fact that, in the same way that liberals and conservatives can select the secular media outlet that reflects their political position (MSNBC or Fox News, respectively), Catholics can do the same with Catholic media outlets (EWTN or *NCR*, respectively). Polarizing narratives cause division within US society and also within the US Catholic Church. The polarizing narratives in the secular media and those within the Church are mutually-reinforcing. As society divides, so does the Church; and as the Church divides, so does society.

CASE STUDY: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, POLARIZATION & ITS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

History teaches us that the Catholic Church has experienced difficulties with "inculturation" and frequently tended instead towards assimilation. Unlike an assimilated Church, an inculturated Church would be one that is in and among its host culture, drawing from that culture the language (broadly understood) to communicate the truths of the faith in a meaningful way, yet maintaining a critical distance from that culture so that it may effectively denounce the realities inconsistent with the gospels and announce the way things ought to be. Assimilation, however, occurs when the Church has lost that distance: it is no longer distinct from its host culture, and participates in the ways of that culture, in the mode of that culture. The argument over President Biden's Catholic credentials provides one illustration of how the Catholic Church in the US is exhibiting tendencies towards assimilation by reflecting internally the polarization in the broader society and allowing itself to be divided into teams of "faithfulness" intent on winning the issue of the day.

Consider Bishop Joseph Strickland of the Diocese of Tyler, Texas, whose has made polarizing remarks that resort to negative partisanship. He took to Twitter in May 2022 to respond to Deacon Keith Fournier's tweet that said, among other things, "Joe Biden is a heretic. An apostate. Any Bishop who doesn't acknowledge that, call him to repentance, to the Sacrament of Confession, and INSIST he correct his error as a professing public Catholic is wrong." Strickland's response was short yet telling: "Time for truth…" Strickland is best known for his tweets challenging the morality of the COVID-19 vaccination, despite Pope Francis's claim that getting the vaccine is "an act of love."

These polarizing messages are readily available, not just in mainstream, traditional Catholic media, but also in specialized Catholic social media. It is not always clear that sources claiming to be Catholic are correctly labelled. Church Militant is a good example of the kind of organization that appears in searches for Catholic sites on the internet, as recommended by an algorithm. In 2018, the organization published a series of articles entitled, "Marian University: The Marxist Queering of a Catholic University." The author, Michael Hichborn, claimed to have received a tip about "all sorts of homosexual activism on the campus" and, after his own investigation, "discovered a haven of pro-abortion, pro-homosexual Marxists among the professors."[vi] Without further research, there is no way to know that the outlet has, since 2011, been forbidden by the local ordinary from identifying itself as Catholic. Yet despite this seemingly fatal blow to an organization that portrays itself as a bastion for Catholic faithfulness, Church Militant continues to wield significant influence.

But it is not only fringe Catholics who aid in the polarization of the faithful. Father James Altman made headlines in 2020 for his video, "Fr. Altman: You cannot be Catholic & a Democrat. Period." While Catholics might find themselves able to question the opinionated assertions of laypeople like those of Church Militant, that capacity for dissent lessens when the person speaking is a collared priest. Is the priest not an authority on matters of faith and morals? Is his bishop, who sanctioned him, silencing truth out of his own political preferences? These questions not only plague conscientious Catholics who encounter these messages, but they polarize the Church.

THE POLITICAL & RELIGIOUS RISKS OF A POLARIZED CHURCH

At the moment, there appears to be no escaping polarizing narratives. Secular journalists and Catholic journalists alike offer demand-driven, biased news stories. And with the proliferation of social media—and its inescapable presence—Catholics and those of other faith traditions are consistently encountering outlets that can affirm their political views under the guise of shared faith. Going to church on a Sunday, then, becomes a gathering of people who agree politically and share faith incidentally. And nothing from the ambo challenges that—it often even affirms that.

As members of this and other faith communities hear these messages in circles of common faith, they emerge from those places of worship and vote into office like-minded politicians who impact the course of the country's future from a foundation of a faith tainted by polarization. Simply put, the Church impacts democracy–a polarized Church polarizes democracy.

The challenge remains to find a way out of this feedback loop. Unless and until Catholics and their media can chart a middle ground, straddling the line between left and right—though not mistakenly espousing a false equivalency or naïve compromise position—and focus on the gospel message, the Church will continue to see growing division and polarization among its members. It will be unable to counteract society's polarization and will only continue to feed that same polarization.

This has dire consequences. First, as witnessed on January 6th, polarization is now no longer a simple disagreement among otherwise loyal citizens. Instead, it carries the risk of violent escalation and even a civil war. The polarizing narratives of secular media, proclaimed as well from Catholic media, tell a story about competing factions, the "other" which threatens to destroy the nation. Some Americans responded by resorting to confrontation – on the streets, in the pews, or at the Capitol. At its worst, this resulted in deaths and put democracy at risk. Second, because of the political grammar that dominates public discourse—that is, the way citizens talk about their shared life together—and the forced categories of liberal and conservative implying an essential nature within citizens, the Christian message of the Church is threatened by the taint of polarization. It is all too common that when Catholics are taught about the political implications of the life of Jesus at all, it is as a Democratic Jesus or Republican Jesus—either a Jesus who accepts abortion but desires social safety nets to prevent its necessity, or a Jesus who condemns abortion but lines his pockets with corporate profits. Absent is the nonpartisan Jesus who condemns the sin and affirms the virtue of each party, calling both toward deeper faith and higher truth.

CONCLUSION

While the separation of church and state is enshrined firmly in the constitution, their mutual influence is undeniable. Both contribute to the self-, community-, and worldview-forming narratives that human beings use to make sense of their lives. With the emergence of media platforms driven to respond to demand-driven bias and an abundance of social media platforms that offer an audience for any unchecked opinion peddled as fact, few are safe from their influence.

The Catholic Church is but one example of an institution that has been tainted by these polarizing narratives, internalized them, and contributed to their spread. Given the increasing role of Catholics in U.S. political life, if polarizing narratives continue unchecked in the institution and its media, the Church and democracy are at great risk.

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[ii] See Mark Jurkowitz, Amy Mitchell, Elisa Shearer, and Mason Walker, "U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Divided Nation," Pew Research Center, January 24, 2020.
[iii] See David Folkenflik, "You Literally Can't Believe The Facts Tucker Carlson Tells You. So Say Fox's Lawyers," NPR, September 29, 2020.
[iv] Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2020), 9-10.
[v] Jonathan Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2021).
[vi] Michael Hichborn, "Marian University: The Marxist Queering of a Catholic University, Part I," Church Militant, December 14, 2018.

SOCIAL MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

Lessons from Online Activism Against the Zero-COVID Policy in China

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses how social media can augment marginalized voices and stories in an authoritarian context. Some scholars have criticized social media for lacking substantial impacts on political participation and failing to facilitate formal and long-lasting informal organizations that are important for social movements and democratization. Others have lauded social media's democratizing effects on building civil society and forming online groups. Yet neither perspective applies well to non-Western or non-democratic contexts because the institutions and rules either facilitated or impeded by social media do not exist in non-Western, non-democratic contexts. Exploring the case of online activism in an authoritarian state like China, where professional journalism is restricted by state censorship, this essay demonstrates how social media can spread the voices of marginalized groups in a timely manner, and how this spread had positive impacts on offline activism.

INTRODUCTION

As an institution that can hold the state accountable, journalism plays an important role in the rise and durability of democratic governance.[i] Yet what happens when formal journalism is censored and controlled by authorities? What are the alternative forms of media, and how can they affect democracy, if at all? This article seeks to explore these questions through the case of waves of online activism and protests against COVID-related policies in China.

One alternative to formal journalism is social media. However, social movement scholars, along with communication scholars, have not yet agreed on the efficacy of social media. Some scholars are cautious about online activism and its democratic effects. Online activism using social media often lacks the capacity to form formal organizations that are deemed important by social movement scholars.[ii] Other scholars criticize online activism as "slacktivism," referring to activism that requires low costs such as sharing, liking, or changing profile images without substantial effort.[iii]

These critiques of social media, while legitimate in democratic contexts, cannot be applied to non-Western or non-democratic contexts. Indeed, in autocracies, social media uniquely facilitates democratic possibilities because of its capacity to form counter-publics, or traditionally marginalized voices and groups in society. In authoritarian countries without traditions of democratic participation,[iv] or Western conceptualizations of civil society,[v] or social capital that facilitates associations,[vi] social media offers a platform for airing opinions and sharing experiences — thereby creating potential for democratic coalition-building.

This essay illustrates how social media forums can facilitate democratic possibilities in authoritarian countries. Exploring three waves of online activism and protests in response to China's zero-COVID policy, this essay intends to make two arguments. First, during these three waves of protests, and as compared with formal journalism, social media forums were more efficient in covering the visceral experience of ordinary people living in oppression. Second, counternarratives generated from the two previous waves of activism nurtured offline resistance against authoritarian policies; the previous two waves provided the third wave of protests on the street with important narratives and strategies. Contrary to the popular belief that social media is less conducive to organizing power, I attempt to demonstrate that, at least in this case, social media has democratic possibilities because it provides a platform and outlet for marginalized voices.

SOCIAL MEDIA & THE COUNTERPUBLICS

Journalism is an important element within Jürgen Habermas's famous concept of the "public sphere."[vii] The public sphere, where people can gather as equals and engage in political participation through discursive interactions, is conducive to democracy. As it is typically understood, the public sphere, however, is never entirely inclusive.[viii] Traditionally marginalized groups, such as women, lower-class men, and people of color have been excluded from the mainstream or 'official' public sphere.[ix]

In light of their exclusion from the mainstream public sphere, conventionally marginalized groups form counter-publics, an alternative public with "goals of both legitimizing and communicating their lived realities and pushing the mainstream public sphere to acknowledge and respond to these realities." [x] Scholars argue that social media can be important platforms where counter-publics form: Twitter, for instance, is understood by many scholars as one of the important arenas that has formed the networked public sphere, in which individuals and platforms are "less subject to government control, and open to wider participation."[xi] Social media therefore, can display democratic possibilities for its capacity to form both counter-publics and networked public spheres. Using the case of online activism and street demonstrations against the zero-COVID policy in China, this essay first shows that social media played an important role in forming the counter-publics and networked public spheres during this period in China, because it provided timely reflections of on-the-ground realities for the marginalized, something not traditionally seen in formal journalism. Second, this article shows that the counternarratives and strategies which emerged during previous waves of online activism on social media forums became important resources that supported protests on the street. Even though virtual networks formed on social media might not sustain organizations necessary for mass mobilization or pro-democracy movements legacies such as counternarratives can inform effective street demonstrations.

BACKGROUND

Formal journalism is either state-owned or under strict surveillance in China. In addition, the state represses outright dissidence. This creates hurdles for most types of resistance to state authorities. It is perhaps unsurprising that social media became a more feasible and safer option for people to organize during the pandemic.

The counter-publics formed on social media during COVID-era China did not consist of traditionally marginalized groups. They did not organize around identity politics. Rather, they were ordinary people coming together to voice their grievances and anger toward the zero-COVID policy. In this sense, it almost seems inaccurate to apply the concept of counter-publics. Yet, given China's authoritarian context and the high price ordinary people can pay for airing their dissidence, the counter-publics framework does include these voices within a state-dominated media sphere.

To effectuate their opposition to China's COVID policies, many Chinese citizens looked to social media. This opposition had three waves, each of which was spurred by a trigger-incident, had key crowd-sourced elites, resisted certain policies, and had a discernable starting time.

These three waves are summarized in brief:

	TRIGGER INCIDENT	KEY CROWD-SOURCED ELITES	POLICY RESISTED	APPROXIMATE STARTING TIME
1ST	Death of Dr. Li Wenliang	Dr. Li Wenliang	Initial Mishandling of Early Outbreaks	Late Januray 2020
2ND	Shanghai Lockdown	Author of the Viral Video "Voices of April"	Shanghai Lockdowns	Late April 2021
3RD	Urumuqi Fire	College Students & Shanghai Urumuqi Road Protestors	Zero-COVID Policy	November 2022

The first wave of online activism began with the death of a whistle-blower, Dr. Li Wenliang. Li was a doctor working in Wuhan, the first city struck by the outbreak. He spread the information in a private group chat in late December 2019 about the potential outbreak of an "unknown pneumonia" that resembled SARS.[xii] This information was leaked and went viral on Chinese social media. Li was officially admonished by a local public security bureau for spreading rumors. The state media dismissed the early warning of Li as rumor-spreading and instead reassured the public that the publics' health and safety was under control. Li later tested positive for COVID himself and died soon thereafter. The first wave of online activism broke out when the public learned about his death and was frustrated by the initial non-response of the state despite Li's warning.

The second wave revolved around the lockdown of Shanghai that happened in late March 2021 and lasted for four weeks. The crowd-sourced elite during this wave was the author of a video that went viral, entitled "Voices of April." In this video, the author recorded various sources of voices, ranging from official government announcements to residents' outcry during Shanghai lockdowns.[xiii] People reposted and spread the video, which was soon censored and taken down from Weibo, a Chinese social media platform. It became viral regardless, as Chinese Internet users began to use innovative strategies to circumvent state censorship. These innovative strategies were replicated in the third wave of street protests to circumvent repression. In 2022, the third wave of online activism and later street demonstrations broke out because 10 people died from a fire in Urumqi. State media reported no causal relationships between the fire and the state's zero-COVID policy. Yet the public, who had suffered from the COVID restrictions for at least a year, believed that the deaths were caused by the zero-COVID policy, and especially its requirement that the exit to the apartment building be blocked off and sealed. This provoked widespread street protests across different localities in China. Colloquially referred to as the White Paper protest, protesters ranging from workers to college students held up pieces of blank paper, indicating censorship surrounding the protests and symbolizing the their mourning emotions as the color white is the funeral color in China.[xiv]

REFLECTING REALITIES

In all three waves, social media was more effective than formal journalism in displaying people's grievances and spreading their lived experience about the zero-COVID restrictions. State media were used as a propaganda tool during crises, so they never amplified marginalized voices. Even though not all western journalism was subject to censorship in China, it was not timely enough in reflecting the lived experience of the ordinary people.

During these waves of protests, the counter-publics constructed a narrative that differed dramatically from the state-dominated narrative. Since President Xi's rise to power in 2012, the regime has been marked by the consolidation of power in one man's hand.[xv] Journalism has always been under state control, but it has been able to do even less than usual under this regime. During COVID, the state exploited moments of disasters and crises as tools for propaganda. For instance, as director Nanfu Wang recorded in her documentary movie, *In the Same Breath*, throughout the initial outbreak and lockdown of Wuhan, state media emphasized the "positive" side of stories to manufacture a sentiment of how the party-state led its people out of the crisis.[xvi] This is in stark contrast to the stories posted by ordinary people on social media, which were full of heart-wrenching realities in which people sought out help for medical care to no avail. Under these conditions, citizens were only able to share their visceral experiences on social media forums. The suffering stories widely circulated on social media were exactly what the counter-publics could contribute to: spreading knowledge and information about their realities, thus pushing the mainstream to respond.

Western formal journalism was not timely in covering the stories. In some cases, western journalists were even unresponsive. Nanfu Wang, for example, claimed that during the initial outbreak in Wuhan, she reached out to *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* and asked them to cover the stories about the ordinary people in China who had difficulties securing hospital beds. Neither, however, answered her request.[xvii] Western media, and in this case formal journalists, were not fast enough to cover the stories picked up by social media. This disparity is not unique to in the authoritarian context – it is not unlike the differential response to the #Ferguson hashtag between social media and formal journalism in the wake of the killing of Michael Brown, an African-American man, by police officers in 2015.[xviii]

NARRATIVES & STRATEGIES FOR PROTESTS ON THE STREET

Social media platforms in China also nourished democratic potential because the legacies of online activism provided narratives and strategies to the third wave of street demonstrations. In the case of COVID activism, the first two waves identified social media elites who remained important symbols during the third wave of activism. The mobilizing strategies and narratives popularly used in the first two waves also saw replicates in the third wave.

Since the first wave of COVID activism, Dr. Li Wenliang has been held up as one of the most important symbols of opposition to China's COVID policies. Li's Weibo account and his last two posts became an important space where people shared their mourning and voiced their frustration to subsequent COVID policies. For instance, Li posted on Weibo about his admonition on January 30, 2020. This post has received over 500,000,000 reposts and comments to date. Now, since China has lifted its draconian zero-COVID policy, Internet users left "thank-you" comments on this post, considering him as a contributor to the end of the zero-COVID policy. Li's words were repeatedly used as a reminder of state repression. They were also used as slogans for later waves. When Li was admonished, for instance, two messages stood out on a document that the police asked him to sign. Li was asked to write that he "understands" what he did ("spreading rumors") was illegal and that he "is able to" comply with the state order. The third-wave protesters later appropriated these two emphasized phrases as slogans that expressed their resistance to state censorship. They claimed that "I don't understand" and "I'm not able to" [comply with the state order]. Moreover, Li's message that a "healthy society should not have just one voice" was repeated during subsequent waves of activism and protests.[xix]

The second wave of online activism provided the third wave with strategies. In the second wave, protesters deployed strategies to circumvent state repression. For example, internet users quoted sources of information that were considered legitimate in the eyes of the state, like a foreign ministry spokesperson's speech, to satirize its hypocrisy.[xx] The adaptation of the title of a viral video, "voices of April" to "voices of 404"

is used to refer to the censorship of the short video. Such strategies saw their parallel during the third wave, in which protesters widely held up sheets of blank paper. White paper signifies tacit defiance as a protester explained that it can be powerful even though they are voiceless.[xxi] The blank paper also symbolized a common message that everyone knew even without words. More importantly, it blurred the boundaries between what is defiant and what is not, as no violence or even message is necessary. It thus manifests a creative strategy for demonstrators on the street to avoid crackdowns.

CONCLUSION

Instead of dismissing social media as irrelevant to democracy, this article has explored how social media can be useful in the authoritarian context, where formal journalism is either absent or its power restricted. Through tracing three waves of online activism and protests against the zero-COVID policy in China, this article showed that social media provided democratic possibilities in forming counter-publics, providing narratives counter to the state-dominated discourse, and offering strategies later picked-up by offline protests.

Despite the benefits of social media for democratic participation in China, the effect of social media or online activism on democratization should not be overstated. The state did indeed lift its draconian zero-Covid policy. But the government never officially responded to these protest waves, nor did it admit that the relaxation of rules was a result of the protests. In addition, as with its response to other popular protests in China, the state has continued to repress outright dissidence by detaining protesters. In many ways, these waves of online activism and protests are unlikely to evolve into a pro-democracy movement. The significance of these waves of protests lies in ordinary people's participation in expressing defiance, even through vague and indirect forms.

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JOURNALISM'S FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL FRAMING MAY DRIVE MISCONCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Americans hold inaccurate beliefs about many topics, ranging from collective beliefs about climate activism to vaccine efficacy. Though these beliefs arise from a variety of factors, journalism may have a particularly outsized role in the production of these beliefs. One of journalism's core missions is to inform its audience about the subjects that matter to both reporters and consumers. But journalists often disproportionately focus on individual-level situations when sharing news with their audience. Journalists engage in this practice for both less deliberate reasons, such as shortcomings in statistical proficiency, and more deliberate ones, such as to increase profits. But regardless of why journalists place so much focus on individual-level contexts, it has become increasingly clear that this framing drives vast misperceptions. This piece will further examine the factors motivating journalism's focus on individual-level framing and its downstream consequences, and explore future steps to help de-emphasize individual contexts in journalism, and reduce audiences' misperceptions.

INTRODUCTION

Journalism is a ubiquitous part of Americans' lives. As of 2018, two-thirds of Americans consume news daily, resulting in record-high audiences.[i] News consumption has been linked to downstream changes in people's beliefs and behaviors.[ii] But not all of these changes have been beneficial. Nearly all popular sources of journalism, ranging from *The Huffington Post* to CNN to Breitbart are linked with increases in misperceptions of out-partisans' beliefs.[iii] In other words, consuming journalism from these sources likely causes people to believe members of opposing parties hold more extreme views than they actually do.[iv] Moreover, the more journalism Americans consume in general, the more they overestimate the extremity of out-partisans' beliefs.[v] In fact, people who say they consume political news "most of the time" are three times more inaccurate in their perceptions of out-partisans than those who consume political news "some of the time."[vi] The adulteration of Americans' perceptions of out-partisans has had severe consequences: some have lost faith in basic democratic principles like free and fair elections.[vii] Consumption of news has also been linked more broadly with harmful misperceptions, ranging from beliefs about masking during the Covid-19 pandemic to perceptions of immigrants.[viii] Why does news journalism appear to drive these dangerous misperceptions, especially when truth-seeking and telling are so central to journalism's mission?[ix] Journalism's focus on describing issues through an individual-level lens may be a major source of the misperceptions its audiences develop.

Episodic framing, the process of depicting broader topics through specific instances, is particularly prevalent in journalism.[x] Episodic framings often present a detailed occurrence of an issue detached from its broader context, such as highlighting a specific instance of gun

violence.[xi] This is in contrast to thematic framing, which focuses on the broader context from which issues arise and their collective impact, such as reporting highlighting the history of gun violence in America, and policy-level obstructions and solutions to the problem.[xii] Episodic content uniquely engages people's emotions.[xiii] This not only makes said content especially captivating but also particularly memorable.[xiv] Moreover, episodic stories often disregard the more complex structural factors that may cause or arise from the specific incident described, leaving a story that is particularly easy to grasp.[xv] Yet the engaging and relatively simple design of episodic content is also what causes it to promote misperceptions.[xvi] This essay aims to explain why, despite this risk, episodic content is heavily featured in journalism, how it propagates misperceptions, and potential methods of avoiding these issues.

EPISODIC FRAMING & STATISTICAL ILLITERACY

A major reason why episodic framings are both enticing and harmful is journalists' inadequate statistical expertise. Many journalists lack statistical literacy, a skill required to accurately report on more broad thematic content.[xvii] Journalists who receive inadequate instruction in statistics are ill-prepared to apply statistical logic to their news stories.[xviii] Furthermore, there are limited resources or opportunities to pursue this training after journalism school.[xix] An anti-numeracy culture has flourished in journalism to the point that statistical literacy is framed as antithetical to the spirit of journalism.[xx] Even statistically literate journalists are motivated to avoid thematic content. The tight deadlines and editorial pressure journalists face often prevent them from dedicating sufficient time to investigate and write with the appropriate contextual thematic framing.[xxi] As a result, it is easier for journalists to focus on data-free, episodic content.

The general public often has difficulty with statistical reasoning, which leads to further misperceptions when consuming episodic content. News consumers' lack of expertise can lead to broad and incorrect extrapolations from episodic content. In particular, they tend to devalue or outright ignore the base rates (the general probability of any given outcome) if they receive contrasting information from a specific event, especially when that information is coming from a trusted news source.[xxii] This tendency was particularly dangerous during the pandemic. Despite empirical data demonstrating the effectiveness of vaccines, many news stories sensationalized the deaths of individual vaccinated people.[xxiii] This bred misperceptions of the vaccines' actual efficacy and may have discouraged some from getting vaccinated.[xxiv] At the same time, coverage of the Black Lives Matters protests during the Summer of 2020 disproportionately focused on protests that became violent, despite these instances making up around 5% of all protests.[xxv] This portrayal may have contributed to the drop in support for the movement in the following months.[xxvi] This dynamic can also be detected in Americans' current perspectives towards transgendered individuals. There is an outsized media focus on people who regret or even reverse gender-affirming surgery, despite their representing less than 1% of people who transition.[xxvii] The misperceptions may contribute to more Americans opposing policies to make gender-affirming care more accessible and affordable.[xxviii] However, these stories do not just arise as a result of journalists' inadequate statistical knowledge. There are other, more deliberate reasons why journalists focus on episodic content.

EPISODIC FRAMING & THE STATUS QUO

They do so because it often involves surprising divergences from the status quo. Journalists are taught that the most surprising stories are the most newsworthy ones.[xxix] Furthermore, sharing these stories can help inform audiences about unexpected changes in topics they care about.[xxx] However, showcasing an individual narrative because it's unusual can cause misperceptions.[xxxi] Focusing on individual narratives because they are atypical can misrepresent to audiences how common these situations are, as occurred during the pandemic. Over the first few months of the pandemic, the majority of Americans supported and engaged

in mask-wearing to protect against COVID-19.[xxxii] However, there was a small, vocal contingent that was especially opposed to wearing face masks.[xxxiii] Media coverage emphasized the opposition to mask-wearing, likely because it diverged from the status quo.[xxxiv] But in doing so, it exaggerated how large the resistance to mask-wearing was, and normalized mask-wearing opposition. This not only likely deepened divisions between Americans but also decreased the efficacy of mask-wearing (which requires collective adherence to be effective), potentially costing lives.[xxxv] Journalists' use of episodic framing has not just illegitimately disrupted the status quo — but also, in the pursuit of objectivity, illegitimately maintained it.

EPISODIC FRAMING & OBJECTIVITY

Journalists often utilize episodic framings to make their stories appear more objective, even when doing so biases their reporting. The goal of objectivity has caused multiple issues in journalism. Objectivity is often defined by those in power, thus serving to maintain the status quo and inhibit social change.[xxxvi] Moreover, the rules of objectivity tend to be applied inconsistently across journalists.[xxxvii] In particular, journalists from marginalized groups have been expected to engage in more excessive steps – such as the *Washington Post* mandating that a female journalist who was a sexual assault survivor couldn't write about the #MeToo movement.[xxxviii] In addition to these flaws, aspiring for objectivity can motivate misleading episodic framing. For much of the 21st century, there has been a near-unanimous consensus amongst the scientific community that human-caused climate change is real and occurring.[xxxix] Yet for many years, in an effort to be objective, journalists would adopt a more episodic framing by focusing on situations where there was an equal representation of concurring and dissenting voices on climate change.[xl] This format, however, suggested to audiences that human-caused climate change was still a contentious concept in the scientific community and more broadly, likely contributing to Americans' doubts about climate change.[xli] Work from our Social Influence and Social Change Lab at Boston College has demonstrated Americans' climate misperceptions are particularly grievous. We find that while up to 80% of Americans support most major prospective policies to address climate change, they erroneously think that only at most 40% of other Americans support these policies.[xlii] The perceived lack of support for these policies dissuades Americans from publicly supporting or endorsing these policies, preventing these very popular and necessary policies from being passed.[xliii] We plan to investigate how news media's representation of climate change helps prompt this extreme misperception.

Finally, journalism emphasizes episodic content because it is a profitable economic model. Individual narratives are very compelling and they correspond to news consumers' desires. However, when journalists are driven by the pursuit of viewership and profit, it can result in biased and misinformative news. This was particularly evident during the emergence of local broadcast news in 1970s Philadelphia. Local broadcast news programs were innovative in their approach of presenting captivating and sensational local stories that catered to their data on consumer preferences.[xliv] They found that the best way to appeal to a White suburban audience and generate the most advertising profit was by sharing racially biased stories.[xlv] While news clips set in predominately white suburbs focused on positive stories such as community events, stories set in more racially heterogeneous cities focused on crimes committed by Black Americans.[xlvi] Furthermore, when reporting on these crimes, these programs deliberately ignored the structural factors that motivated them, to better appeal to White Americans.[xlvii] While this format of news was particularly profitable, it was also particularly destructive. White Americans viewed Black Americans as an exceedingly violent and criminal group, despite this both being statistically unfounded, and Black Americans actually being more likely to be the victim rather than the perpetrator of a crime.[xlviii] As a result, White Americans began pushing for harsher incarceration and policing policies that would cause severe damage to America's Black community.[xlix]

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite its shortcomings, there is clear merit to the strengths of episodic content in shifting public awareness, opinion, and action. In fact, a single individual narrative can be powerful enough to move global opinions, as happened during the Syrian Civil War. For four years, the Syrian Civil War raged on, with over a quarter-million casualties.[l] Despite this, Syrians were receiving little public support or aid from the rest of the world.[li] That was until early fall of 2015, when the body of Alan Shendu, a 2-year-old Syrian boy who had died with his mother while trying to sail to enter Europe, was tragically found on the shore of a Turkish beach. [lii] By the next day, articles with images of Alan and descriptions of his story had accrued tens of millions of views and ignited a massive shift in public concern for Syrian refugees.[liii] Within a week there was a huge upsurge in volunteers and donations to help Syrian refugees, along with support for policies to resettle them in Western nations.[liv] While the world was aware of the Syrian Civil war, it wasn't until they were exposed to a compelling individual narrative that they began to care. But even that care didn't translate into sufficient change. Within a few weeks, public attention and support turned away from the Syrian civil war.[lv] Politicians returned to promoting and passing anti-immigration policies, and some people even began reinterpreting Alan's story as a reason to support anti-immigration policies.[lvi] Even Alan's aunt noted that she was losing hope that people would respond to his death with support for the structural change that would prevent future victims — an end to the Syrian civil war.[lvii]

However, simply sharing broad, statistical data is insufficient as well. While a single individual or situation can generate feelings of empathy and a capacity to help, learning about an entire crisis — such as the Syrian civil war and the resulting millions of refugees — overwhelms our emotions. In response, people lose empathy as the number of victims increases and begin to withdraw their attention entirely from the issue.[lviii] The shutdown of emotions occurs particularly in response to statistical information about a problem, which reveals the scope of an issue without the accompanying emotional pull.[lix] As Slovic and Weber (2013) frame it, "statistics are human beings with the tears dried off", and often lack the draw to engage audiences without overwhelming them.[lx]

One potential solution is synthesizing both episodic and thematic content into news pieces. Most news stories already utilize a combination of both episodic and thematic framing.[lxi] However, they usually predominantly depict an issue through only one of these framings .[lxii]

In the Social Influence and Social Change lab, we are currently developing messages that merge these two types of framing, which may uniquely motivate individual-level engagements with societal issues while also building awareness and interest in addressing the structural factors driving these issues more broadly. Extant research suggests that merging these two types of framings will help prevent audiences from making broad and inaccurate inferences from new stories.[lxiii] Moreover, utilizing both of these two framings when discussing an issue may motivate audiences to not only personally act to rectify these issues, but also support structural changes, such as new policies.[lxiv] Beyond our lab, there are promising and prospective changes that can help journalism avoid the misperceptions produced by episodic content. Accordingly, journalism schools have increasingly explored how to better instruct statistics, which would give journalists the skills necessary to include more thematic content in their stories.[lxv] Additionally, some journalists have advocated discarding the current sense of journalistic objectivity entirely. Journalism, and inherent to that are the biases of the journalists on the broader news organization.[lxvi] Rather than attempting to appear impartial and balanced, journalists should focus on ensuring that their work is particularly truthful, which includes making their biases and values as transparent as possible.[lxvii] This would not only prevent the misperceptions that arise from journalists pursuing "objective" reporting, but it also enables journalists to take the initiative and actively advocate for certain positions or topics, generating change that otherwise wouldn't occur.

CONCLUSION

Individual-level framings are particularly alluring in journalism. Episodic content is often more captivating, surprising, and profitable — while also easier to align with journalistic virtues such as objectivity. But episodic framings tend to breed misinformation in audiences. Whether it's due to people's limited statistical knowledge, or news pieces' neglect of broader contextualizing information, episodic content in the news has led to misperceptions among Americans in areas ranging from the climate, to race and crime, to political beliefs. However, there are current initiatives to mitigate the misconstruals people form from episodic news. Our Social Influence and Social Change lab is one group hoping to make headway on this by merging episodic and thematic framings around the type of topics that commonly appear in the news. But there are other promising reforms, such as improvement in journalists' statistical training, and changes in what virtues journalists prioritize. Ultimately, episodic framings are an essential and inevitable component of reporting the news. But recognizing and attending to the misperceptions that arise from these news stories can help minimize the dangers they may cause.

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THE POLITICAL HARMS OF UNCRITICAL JOURNALISM

Covering the Fight for MENA Census Categorization

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s, Arab American scholars, activists, and academics have campaigned to add a new Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) category to the U.S. decennial census. While their efforts have been covered by the press, outlets have often focused on the superficial constructs of identity formation, rather than investigating more deeply the history and implications of racial category construction. The lack of this skeptical engagement from the press has enabled a particular vision of the relationship between race and equality within US democracy: 1) that races (and in this case the MENA race) exists as such, 2) that the enumeration of these races will facilitate distribution of services, and finally 3) that the distribution should not be means-tested, but instead based on the racial or ethnic identity of the receiver. In other words, the lack of skepticism in reporting on the specific mechanisms that link the creation of a new census category and the actual achievement of "equality," undermines the press's role as an independent institution in a vibrant democracy. The press coverage of a new MENA census category demonstrates a basic willingness to scrutinize the socio-economic outcomes, but journalists are distinctly unwilling to scrutinize the market-based origins of these outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Activism that began in the 1980s took on new momentum recently when the struggle to get a new racial category—Middle Eastern or North African (MENA)—added to the US decennial census would finally pay off. In 2015, the U.S. Census Bureau convened scholars, lawyers, activists, and other interested parties to advise how to enumerate the MENA population in the U.S.[i] The meeting was contested but cordial overall. The Census Bureau invited detailed feedback and promised further testing and engagement in the creation of the new category. When a 2018 memo from the Census Bureau chief statistician indicated that the issue would be tabled yet again for possible consideration at a later date, many academics, journalists, and activists involved in the efforts were distraught.[ii] Organizations who had lobbied for years for the category attributed the reversal to a political act by the Trump administration. Others—including self-described members of the MENA community—were not as perturbed, expressing skepticism toward their identities, locations, and ethnic belonging being classified and scrutinized by the US state.[iii]

The contested efforts to add a new MENA category to the census have elicited significant press coverage over the years. Journalists at outlets including the *LA Times, New York Times,* and NPR, among many others, have covered the lack of a new racial category on the census.[iv] These stories often highlight the disappointment of scholars and members of the MENA community, and in general do so without much additional context or history about

census enumeration and categorization schemas. Absent this context or any serious historiography, the creation of a new census category has the effect of reifying racial categories. This lack of critical perspective turns the press into a political functionary of the neoliberal state. By uncritically reporting that a community simply seeks to be "enumerated more accurately," and implying that this enumeration alone will address stratification, the press lends its credentials to a tired market logic: So long as inequality is racially proportional, it should be considered fair.

MOVEMENT BACKGROUND

Lobbying for a MENA specific designation on the census was inspired by an apparent mismatch between the lived experiences of MENA identifiable individuals and their official government designations. A 1977 decision by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) called Directive 15 established an official set of race and ethnicity standards to be used for statistical measurement on the census. This directive, revised in 1997, stipulated that "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa," would be considered racially white.[v] The designation of people with origins from "the Middle East" into a "White" classification was itself a reflection of earlier 20th century litigations. At the turn of the 20th century, various cases brought by Syrian immigrants involved these litigants to petition for recognition as "White" as they sought eligibility for naturalization in the face of strict racial quotas. Courts reclassified Syrians and other immigrants from the mid-East as "White," setting the stage for their eventual adoption into the official "White" racial classification. Just over 100 years later, social circumstances no longer provide civic and social mobility, leading some activists to argue that the same classification now makes MENA individuals worse off today. Scholars and activists who advocate for a new MENA racial category on the census argue that the experience of discrimination merits a separate category on the census to gather data on this racialized group.

Accounting for the change between the movement for acceptance into white legal classification and the emergence of a movement for non-white census enumeration complicates arguments that have prioritized the innate raciality of Muslim or Arab migrants in the US. This is especially the case when assertions of MENA racialization accord primary causal influence to "the concept of whiteness [as it] has mediated the provisions of rights," since they gloss over the contradiction that naturalization rights were granted to both "aliens being free white persons, and to aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent" at different historical moments and contexts.[vi][vii] In other words, acceptance into the American polity cannot simply be attributed to a conceptual attachment to white identity if African descent also qualified an individual for legally recognized naturalization rights at different historical moments. Instead of querying the paradox of a movement seeking to enumerate and institutionalize a non-white identity in an increasingly hostile environment, the press has largely played the role of neoliberal functionary: most coverage of the movement has simply narrated the lived experiences of MENA populations without seriously querying how the general decline in material conditions—falling wages, increasing rents, exponential inequality, etc.—have no doubt made the lives of the MENA poor and working class, in particular, materially taxing. In failing to take a more critical tone, the media has become complicit in peddling the troublesome narrative that the creation of a new category can itself ameliorate these conditions for the MENA community and beyond.

JOURNALISTIC COVERAGE

An example of this paradigm can be discerned by dissecting the following framing of the issue in a relatively recent *LA Times* article. The report documents the reactions of several Iranian Americans who claimed that the lack of a MENA box on the census felt like an erasure of their community. The piece quotes activists and organization leaders who find explicit and direct ties between the lack of a box on the census and the deprivation of funds for constituent resources:

Advocates say the [addition of the] category goes beyond issues of self-identity and has re-

al-life implications for Arab and Middle Eastern communities, including the allocation of local resources. "We are our own community," said Rashad Al-Dabbagh, executive director of the Arab American Civic Council in Anaheim. "It's as if we don't count." At stake in the decennial count is nearly $800 billion in federal tax dollars and the number of seats each state receives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Many of the services people rely on are tied to funds and programs determined by the census. In addition to those resources, advocates argue, the "white" label could hurt universities and companies that use the information to promote diversity and could result in the gathering of little or no statistical data on important issues, such as health trends in the community.[viii]

The style and method of coverage above is paradigmatic of the type of conflation that is present in most every article that covers the issue of a new MENA census category. Firstly, there is an implied connection between racial and ethnic identification and the receipt of congressional representation. While it is of course the case that population counts are necessary in determining congressional apportionment, it is not the case that ones' racial or ethnic identification has any direct bearing on those representational apportionment figures. And while enumeration and indication of a specific language spoken by residents can allow for a more accurate disbursement of federal tax dollars for services like language translation, it is also the case that representing language as equivalent to racial or ethnic identification is often inaccurate. After all, many MENA immigrants who came to the US in the early and mid-20th century are likely to both identify as "White" and benefit from translation services, while their first- and second-generation US-born children—who are more likely to identify as MENA—are likelier to speak English as their first, if not only, language.[ix]

What may be even more problematic, though, is the conflation of census enumeration and biological race. In the final sentence of the excerpted quote, the article argues that without accurate "statistical data" on racial and ethnic identity, important health trends of the MENA community cannot be studied. Attributing health outcomes with their correlation to racial and ethnic identity obscures how public health outcomes are much more fundamentally an effect of broader social relations than of anything that might be called a race, let alone a "MENA race."[x] The well-intentioned attempt to focus on the unequal accrual of poor health outcomes in minority populations effectively bolsters a connection between poor health outcomes and biological race, rather than identifying the material conditions and environmental factors subjecting people to cruel and unhealthy living conditions.[xi]

The adoption of race as a biological proxy is a common trope in much of the news coverage relating to this fight. The author of another recent article suggests a direct link between poor health outcomes and Mediterranean ancestry:

MENA populations, as well as those indigenous to the Mediterranean Basin, have in common a myriad of genetic disorders and dispositions, diet and lifestyle habits, in addition to some overriding psychological and cultural issues that remain overlooked and understudied, putting them at greater risk of COVID-19 infections and complications. Indeed, according to 2020 statistics, some of the main COVID-19 hotspots across the United States overlapped with the largest hubs of MENA populations, including in New York, New Jersey, Michigan, California and Illinois... If there was research available for other populations, specifically for MENA populations, then there would be guided interventions, a process to address pre-existing diseases and superimposed infections, and an opportunity for patient-centered care. [xii]

It is dangerous to make such claims about a correlation between areas with a higher proportion of MENA individuals and increased COVID transmission. The author reifies race as a genetic phenomenon—an assertion with racist undertones about inherently biological differences in minority populations. By legitimizing or associating MENA as a genetically, or scientifically real race, this rhetoric repackages an ideology common among slaveholders who used race to exclude black Americans from civic equality in the US. Asserting a genetic link between race and disease occludes how social relations in under-resourced city centers make poor and working-class segments of all racial

and ethnic groups particularly susceptible to infection from COVID-19 among other ailments.[xiii]

What is particularly unfortunate about this rhetoric is how it can obscure the mechanisms and opportunities for intervention. The claim that only a MENA racial category can help patients receive "guided interventions, a process to address preexisting diseases and superimposed infections, and an opportunity for patient-centered care," disguises a broken and inhumane for-profit health care system. The often disregarded truth about American healthcare is that we spend more money than other countries on healthcare, while having markedly worse overall outcomes.[xiv] This is unsurprising in light of the fact that 95% of new hires in healthcare sector between 1990 and 2012 (when the workforce grew by 75%) were administrative staff rather than doctors.[xv] In this context, focusing attention on the health benefits of further delineating someone's biologically untethered racial identity, instead of hiring more doctors, nurses, and actual staff for direct patient care, feels like shilling for insurance companies instead of advocating for patients. The insistence that accurate racial enumeration is a key mechanism for understanding the propensity for disease or biological illness obscures the social, political, and economic axes that create the conditions for poor health outcomes.[xvi] And what makes these claims so dangerous is precisely how it precludes political intervention. After all, destitution can be alleviated by different political choices, but ancestry is immutable.

BUT WHAT OF DEMOCRACY?

While it is descriptively true that an increasing number of individuals identify as, and are identified with, their Middle East ethnic origin over their census-enumerated white racial status, it is also the case that there has been a largely unspoken and implicit assumption embedded within the fight to get a new MENA racial or ethnic category institutionalized through the census.[xvii] These assumptions are not simply about the construction of racial and ethnic difference among Americans, but instead should be understood as reflections of a particular neoliberal postwar politics. This tendency has been labeled by some sociologists as race-reductionism—the belief that ailments stemming from a post-industrial declining welfare state can be attributed to the racial category of individuals rather than social and political policy.[xviii] Relatedly, advocates arguing for a broadened list of categorizations that includes a new MENA census box often assume that just such an "accurate" delineation of ethnic and racial identity will alleviate harms faced by MENA individuals including acts of discrimination, declining life prospects, and overall negative life outcomes. But these assumptions rest on several ideologically grounded and dogmatic beliefs about racial and ethnic identity in the US that have been honed in a post-Cold War ideological context where economic and "civic" rights have been largely decoupled.[xix]

The dominant narrative in the press's coverage of the fight for MENA enumeration uncritically parrots anachronistic understandings about census enumeration, race, and biology. Coverage of the supposed genetic links between a MENA "race" and health outcomes not only legitimizes race as a biological phenomenon—a notion that has long been debunked by social scientists and historians—but also relieves the for-profit system of responsibility. Instead of focusing on how resources have been shaped by a market-logic that allows for the concentration of misery among minority populations, journalism's current focus on a lack of enumeration as being the main road-block facing MENA populations greenlights a dangerous belief about what exactly enumeration can accomplish.

The style of press coverage results in a truncated vision of democratic civil society—one more interested in maintaining the appearance of equality through the proxy of racial proportionality. The underlying assumption within press narratives about MENA enumeration implies a democratic ideal in which no portion of the population is racially over or under-represented in terms of negative life outcomes. The problem with a such a narrow focus on racial proportionality is that this logic obscures the prevalence of broad inequality in favor of a "legitimate" market-distributed inequality.[xx] Within this context, the primary goal for MENA

poor MENA outcomes and MENA population distribution, rather than seeking to eliminate poor outcomes altogether. The hyper-focus on racial parity, rather than broad based equality, ultimately hinders the ability to have a more equal and thus sustainable democratic polity. Within the parameters of enumeration for racial proportionality, the democratic project for equality among all peoples is transformed into the specious project that disregards a certain amount of "fair" or "racially proportionate" level of inequality, poverty, destitution, or any other negative life outcome. In a truly equal and democratic polity, such caveats have no space.

The press, in lacking a skeptical engagement with the assumptions regarding how a new census categorization can provide material benefit to a disadvantaged community, greenlights a particular vision of the relationship between race and equality: 1) that races (and in this case the MENA race) exist, as such, 2) that the enumeration of these races alone will allow for distribution of services, and finally 3) that the equality of that distribution should not hinge on need but instead on the racial or ethnic identity of the receiver. In other words, the absence of skepticism in reporting on a specific mechanism that links the creation of a new category and the resulting achievement of equality, belies the press's role as an independent institution in a vibrant democracy. If a different, more equal, vision of what democracy can achieve is considered, then the press falls short in its agitations to identify a path forward.

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INTERVIEW WITH JIM ACOSTA, CNN

Conducted at the Clough Center Workshop, "Renewing Journalism, Restoring Democracy" (September 2022)

Q: Given all of the disinformation that is out there today, how do you struggle with the idea that has become mainstream in our body politic that there are two sides to a lie?

I don't struggle with it – the truth is the truth and facts are facts. As Carl Bernstein has said, we are searching for "the best obtainable version of the truth." We do that by putting together the facts, talking to experts and getting real world anecdotes. The pandemic, the war in Ukraine, or the 2020 election are all good examples of that.

You still have people who will not believe the election results. But there is only one lie in that situation: that Joe Biden lost the election to Donald Trump. The press did initially struggle with whether or not to refer to then-President Trump's half-truths and falsehoods as "lies." But when he kept repeating them after the record was corrected, at some point we had to say "Okay, now he's lying." That came across to some people as giving him a hard time. But we can't live in a world where somebody who lies gets to define reality: that is the road to 1984.

Q: Does the injection of opinion into news coverage make it hard for viewers to separate commentary from facts?

There is a difference between "perspective programming" and wildly irresponsible programming. We try to give people the facts. There might be some at home who say: "That's an opinion and you're giving me your observation on this." Sometimes the truth hurts, and it may come across as somebody else's opinion when it's just the truth.

Q: Between viewers who expose themselves only to "conservative" news outlets and those who only consume "liberal" news, there are two separate realities. How, as a journalist, and as an anchor, do you try to pierce that bubble?

There is a difference between living in an "information silo" versus living in a disinformation wilderness. During the COVID pandemic, some of us were living in reality while others didn't believe that the pandemic was happening and that the vaccines were all a conspiracy. Many folks were led astray with, in some cases, terrible consequences.

Q: Has the absence of moderate right leaning voices from many major TV and print newsrooms encouraged the rise of new hyper-partisan right wing media outlets?

It's not a matter of left versus right anymore in this country. It's really truth versus lies. It's democracy versus whatever that was on January 6th. The job of the press is to put those choices out before the American people and make this as clear as humanly possible. We may sometimes think that we're done for, that we're finished, that it's all going down the tubes, and there are real reasons to be worried. But what we have is worth defending and fighting for. I believe that the US is the best hope for freedom of democracy on this planet and if we go down the tubes, things are going to get pretty bleak in this world. We have to talk to one another and find a way out of this, because what we have here is worth salvaging.

Q: Do you think the next presidential election will lead to a peaceful transition of power?

That remains to be seen. January 6th was a blueprint for overturning election results that can be modified, perfected, honed: "How do we get around the courts next time?" We've seen candidates for secretaries of state saying they may or may not honor election results and there are efforts afoot to make state legislatures the ultimate arbiter of who wins an election in that particular state. That is the antithesis of American democracy – it goes against everything we know about how we're supposed to be running elections. We have to guard against that and get back to a place where we can all agree on what the truth is and have a common set of facts. Without that, we are on the dark side of the moon.

Q: What can the news media do better?

We have to keep trying to perfect what we do and look where we got something wrong and figure out if there is a better system that can be put in place. But when it comes to asking questions of people in positions of power and influence and holding elected leaders accountable, we've learned that pulling back is not an option. It's a position that we've been placed in. We do this because we think it's important to do the story, get it right, make sure as many people see it as possible so people will have the best version of the truth that we are always hoping to find.

Q: Have social media and other platforms made journalism better or worse? Have they made democracy better or worse?

There is a galvanizing potential for social media, which have the power to mobilize and energize people like we've never seen before. Protests and democratic movements have taken off thanks to social media, and there are many good things that have come from that. But disinformation can travel quickly without any kind of a filter, without any kind of fact check and it can be used by people who may not always have the best interest of democracy at heart. And so that is troublesome. I was recording from the White House on January 6th when the White House staff was imploring the president to "please tell your people to go home, put out a tweet to tell them to go home." How deeply in trouble we are as a democracy, when the aides to the president of the United States are going into the Oval Office to say, can you please put out a tweet so our democracy doesn't go down the tubes? From the standpoint of democracy, there's the potential for great trouble.

Q: How do you interpret the ambivalence of news organizations towards Donald Trump?

It can become a vicious cycle. It was almost a no-win situation when covering this back in 2016. He was the standard-bearer of the Republican party in 2016. It's hard to not cover the front runner. And he's saying blatantly racist things like, "Mexican immigrants who are coming to this country are rapists and criminals" – we have to cover that. But we have learned some lessons since then. Some of us were uncomfortable using the word "lie" at the beginning of his time in office, but we got more comfortable with it over time. If the record has been corrected, if the facts have been put out there and what you're saying runs counter to that and you keep doing it, you are a liar. And it has to be reported as such.

Q: How has being personally called out and attacked by Trump and his allies affected the way you relate to your coverage?

t makes it more difficult to go out there and do it on a daily basis when you're getting called "fake news," when you get called "the enemy of the people" by the President. It was absorbed by many of his supporters and directed back at us in the form of death threats at me and many colleagues at multiple outlets. People would go onto my social media account and say "you're dead," "you're next." To some extent, this went on with Trump's tacit approval. He knew that by retweeting memes of us getting shot, or squashed like a bug, or run over with a train, he exacerbated that phenomenon, and riled people up. To the point that a deranged Trump supporter sent pipe bombs to CNN and a number of other news outlets. So CNN gave me bodyguards – think about that, a political reporter going to a campaign rally in the United States of America with bodyguards! I worried

that something could happen to my family. So when you ask "Well, how do you do your job? How does that relate to what you do?" It became difficult, on a daily basis, to say "well now I'm just going back to the White House to stand ten feet across from this guy and ask him questions while his supporters are threatening me and my colleagues." It is a challenging environment.

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