THE MUTUAL SHAPING OF TECHNOLOGY IN A NEWS

ESTABLISHMENT: SOCIAL JOURNALISM AND ORGANIZATIONAL

CHANGE

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

My wife Gaby supported me these past few years and demonstrated extraordinary patience throughout the researching and writing of this dissertation. We were married in June of 2002, shortly after I graduated from the Missouri School of Journalism for the first time. Nine years later, we are back where we began, and yet we have come so far, together. I dedicate this work to her.

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ABSTRACT

Efforts to understand the relationship between technological change and organizational change in the journalism industry have taken on a new meaning over the past decade. If it is not already the case, beginning in the near future, the survival of professional news media may rely on the ability of organizations to strategically manage technological change. This dissertation proposes the use of the Mutual Shaping of Technology (MST) construct, based on the Diffusion of Innovations theoretical paradigm as a means to examine the relationship between technological and organizational change in a newsroom. The MST construct imagines a dynamic relationship between efforts to diffuse technological innovations and efforts to shape those innovations, both in terms of physical design changes and abstract, socially constructed meanings. The MST construct is applied to the introduction and development of an innovative journalism platform in a news organization with more than 100 years of experience publishing a newspaper and with experience developing online communication technologies in the form of content management systems. I argue that this news platform is innovative in its use of social networking tools and in its open publishing format, which encourages a level of citizen participation rarely seen. I use the five levels of analysis from Shoemaker's hierarchical model to organize my discussion of this study of an extreme case. Using data from in-depth interviews, I explore the introduction, adoption and iterative development of this news platform and related organizational change. I ask if such a platform is sustainable economically and analyze institutional influences that may aid or inhibit growth. I also compare the model to the ideal models discussed and tested in the public journalism movement and to the model some scholars consider the highest ideal—Habermas' public sphere. In this dissertation, I introduce the concept of "social journalism," and I find that, as a model of news production, it lives up to many of the goals of the public journalism movement. In some ways discursive practice on the "social journalism" platform matches the ideal of the public sphere, but the survival of the platform, based on an analysis of its related business model, is questionable at best. Application of the MST construct suggests that the diffusion of the innovation is felt most strongly at the individual, routines, and organizational levels of production where the individual's role conception, the routine amount of work and newsroom beliefs about the future of the organization are shown to be in flux. At the institutional level, community input factors in as a powerful social shaping force, while at the social system level, little information of value emerges. Research findings are discussed in detail, and many suggestions for future research concerning social media and professional journalism are proposed.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

American journalism is undergoing a period of rapid change, much of it related to advancements in information technologies, but to assume that technological developments directly and unidirectionally cause shifts in news production is to take a myopic view of dynamic processes. Historically, the journalism industry has adapted to technological innovations and had a hand in shaping communication technologies in the process (Dooley, 2007). In the twentieth century, depending on the rate of technological change in a given medium, news organizations could take years to determine the best approaches for adopting and shaping innovations to suit their needs (Bliss, 1991; Dooley, 2007). The current acceleration of the development and diffusion of electronic communication technologies is proving more difficult to handle. News media channels are converging on digital platforms, which often have low barriers to entry. This enables numerous new forms of competition to arise quickly and challenge news companies for audience and advertisers (Rosenstiel, 2009). This environment of fast-paced innovation is not the sole cause of shrinking audiences or revenues (P. Meyer, 2009), but it contributes to a condition in which sectors of the industry, particularly newspapers, are speaking in terms of survival rather than growth ("News Investment," 2010; Rosenstiel & Mitchell, 2011). In an effort to adapt, many news organizations are changing production routines and personnel (Deuze, 2011). A few news companies have been able to successfully introduce profitable platforms and products (Kaye & Quinn, 2010), but success can be fleeting, and there are social norms bound up in the culture of news organizations that

many in the industry will fight to preserve even if it means impeding innovation (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Singer, 1997).

Two competing theoretical perspectives are useful for examining the dynamic occurring when an innovation is introduced in an organization. Rogers (2003) provides the definitive discussion of the diffusion of innovations theoretical framework (DI). This approach is primarily concerned with fully formed innovations and rates of their diffusion (Rogers, 2003). Researchers employing the DI approach consider culture primarily as an influence that helps to speed up, slow down, or bring about the rejection of an innovation (Rogers, 2003, pp. 1-3). Technological developments are seen as potentially powerful influences on society and are adopted at different rates in relation to their "perceived attributes" (p. 44). Providing a counterpoint to DI is the social shaping of technology theory (SST). MacKenzie and Wajcman (1999) describe both concrete and abstract ways that social forces shape technologies. They describe how social groups influence innovations under development, which may lead to design changes, and how cultural influences can shape perceptions about technologies as they are diffused through society (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p. 18). The SST approach does not deny that innovations impact society, nor does it deny that adoption rates may follow predictable patterns. Rather, SST argues that the emphasis of DI gives short shrift to social influence and leads to deterministic assumptions if left unchecked.

The mutual shaping of technology construct (MST) argues that both DI and SST can be thought of as existing in continuous, dynamic interaction. Boczkowski (2004a) defines MST as incorporating "the direction and pace of technological adoption and…the construction of media artifacts" (p. 255). Boczkowski (2004a) also details MST's

applicability in examining technological change as it relates to news organizations: "[There are] three crucial aspects of new media evolution: the simultaneous pursuit of interdependent technological and social transformations, the ongoing character of this process, and the importance of the historical context in which it unfolds" (p. 255). Social-technological interdependence, ongoing processes of change and historical context are key themes in this study. I argue that an examination of dynamic processes of "interdependent technological and social transformations" (Boczkowski, 2004a, p. 255) applied at the level of the individual news company should be considered a study of organizational change. The DI framework is often used to study the impacts of innovations on organizations, albeit in a linear fashion (Rogers, 2003, p. 421). Using MST, I propose a dynamic model of organizational and technological change that is useful in this study and potentially applicable wherever organizational change is studied. In this analysis of technological and organizational transformation related to a single prototypical platform for news production, organizational change is structural and cultural but limited. Technological change is contextual, meaning the news platform studied here is innovative but only in the context of its field as a reorganization of existing digital communication capabilities. Perhaps with further study across several cases or in representative samples of the news industry, broader structural, cultural and technological transformations might be recognized.

Throughout this dissertation the word "technology" is used to refer to a content management system, a proprietary software application developed for the Web by workers in the news organization studied here. MacKenzie and Wajcman (1999) define "technology" as "knowledge as well as artifacts" (p. 7). Thus, I am referring to a Web-

based platform as both an artifact and a system of knowledge referring to the news platform's functionality and intended use. This application of technology to describe a "web artifact" comes from Boczkowski (2005, p. 47), particularly in reference to participatory online news platforms. "This new regime emerges from tying together an artifact configuration inscribing users as co-producers and enacting multiplicity of information flows, work routines more geared to opening the gates of the site than keeping them" (Boczkowski, 2005, p. 143). Boczkowski (2005) refers to print and online media as "artifacts" (p. 92, 107). Specifically, Boczkowski (2005) is fond of the concept that online media "remediate" previous forms of media: "An important mode of inquiry in new-media scholarship has looked at the features that distinguish recent digital artifacts from their print and audiovisual predecessors" (p. 138). Thus, in this paper the media platform described as a new technology or as an innovation should be thought of as a new artifact under iterative development, a "digital artifact," to use Boczkowski's (2005) term. I intend "artifact" to signify anything made by humans and to connote in particular a useful tool.

What follows is an in-depth case study of a news organization with a history of successfully managing innovations in communication technologies that is now grappling with the challenges of an iterative development cycle (Mansell & Silverstone, 1998). Here, "iterative" is used as it is in the context of software development: characterized by incremental change with attempts to be responsive to new conditions and capabilities as they come (Larman, 2004, p. 51). This is an example of "the ongoing character" Boczkowski describes (2004a, p. 255).

I posit that the news platform discussed in this case study is a technological innovation because it takes several existing Web software capabilities and incorporates them into a unique platform for participatory journalism. Nip (2009) outlines seven levels of citizen participation in news, and this innovation is off the charts when it comes to platforms involving professional journalists.

To better explain how this platform qualifies as an innovation, it helps to compare it to Nip's (2009) seven levels of citizen participation. The lowest level is "'Professional incorporation'…where journalists seek out and incorporate the views or experiences of ordinary people in reporting their stories" (p. 136). Essentially, this is simply a category for news articles with quotes from affected citizens, experts, etc. Second is "'Professional co-option'…journalists follow up and re-purpose stories or comments published by citizens" (p. 137). Third is "'Citizen response'…Here, members of the audience take the initiative of reacting to stories published by journalists…A common form for it is comment boxes" (p. 137). Fourth is "'Guided professional reporting'…At this level, citizens may be involved in more than one stage of the news process, including shaping the news agenda…Thus, guided professional reporting seeks out considerably more citizen engagement than professional incorporation, although journalists remain responsible for producing the work" (pp. 137-138). The fifth level is "'Guided citizen reporting'…Here, citizens produce the work (news or commentaries) with journalists doing the guiding" (p. 138). Sixth is "'Citizen submission'…Citizens sometimes contribute entirely out of their own initiative without any journalistic prompting… Different degrees of input from professional journalists may apply…Usually the citizen publishing space is distinctly separate from the journalists' publishing space" (p. 139).

Finally, level seven is "'Citizen journalism'…This is the only mode in the typology that does not involve professional journalists" (p. 139).

The highest level of citizen participation in Nip's typology is "citizen journalism," which is limited to journalism produced solely by unaffiliated citizens. Thus, according to Nip the highest level a professional news organization might attain is the sixth, but the news platform examined in this study includes several tools for user participation that set it apart from this level. It incorporates interactive social networking tools for both citizens and journalists to use (e.g. following "friends," creating and joining groups, and sending direct messages). This element more than any other, sets this news organization apart in terms of its level of technological innovation. "A Bivings Group report published in December 2008, *The Use of the Internet by America's Largest Newspapers*, found that while individual journalists had adopted tools like social bookmarking, blogs and RSS, only 10 newspapers had built social networking into their sites" (Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p. 83). The news platform studied here requires citizens and professional journalists to publish to the same space using the same user interface. Citizens are involved not only in contributing multimedia news information to the site and in pushing paid journalists to cover certain issues and events, but *citizens may also help design the news platform*. Community groups have been involved in decisions about site design and functionality since the project's inception. Although the news organization maintains control over the final product, a mechanism for seeking community input is incorporated into the project. The company also plans to market the platform to other news organizations.

In addition, the site is focused on a geographical area and a single topical niche (health). It is one of eight niche sites the organization intends to introduce on the

platform, which its architect calls the "social journalism" model (newsmgmt2). (Please refer to Appendix C for a listing of research participant codes and descriptions.) The organization also manages two additional niche sites (sports and entertainment) that are not built on the "social journalism" platform. What was the online version of the legacy newspaper is now considered an aggregator of niche content. The introduction of the "social journalism" model played a role in this transition, which is described in this paper. Thus, the "social journalism" platform is innovative in that it heavily incorporates social media capabilities. It involves citizens in platform design, and it acts as a vanguard in a push to overhaul the role of legacy media in the organization.

Having made the case that this is a news innovation shaped in part by organizational culture, this case study does not ask "if" the mutual shaping of technology construct is applicable. Instead, this is an in-depth description of how the construct can be employed to describe change in a contemporary news organization. The case study method fits this type of inquiry best. Yin (2008) explains the essence of case study methodology: "The more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g. "how" or "why" some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant" (p. 4). Data were gathered for this study using the in-depth interview method, which is useful for "*integrating multiple perspectives*" and "*describing process*" (original emphasis) (Weiss, 1995, p. 9).

News organizations are complex groups of professionals with cultures all their own (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Kaniss, 1991; Paterson & Domingo, 2008; Tuchman, 1978). In order to organize the following discussion, I use the hierarchical model from Shoemaker & Reese (1996), who define five logical levels of analysis in news

production. The model is employed and updated in Shoemaker & Vos' *Gatekeeping Theory* (2009), and the Shoemaker & Vos version is used in this paper. These levels, from the "individual" to the "social system" are useful for systematizing analysis of MST processes throughout a news organization (pp. 31-32). In some cases the mutual shaping of technology in the organization relates directly to gatekeeping processes; however, this is not a gatekeeping study, per se. Where the MST dynamic relates to gatekeeping, implications are discussed, but at some levels the interplay between DI and SST has little connection with traditional gatekeeping theory. In some ways gatekeeping is not only less relevant; some aspects of the technology are specifically designed to reduce the journalist's role as gatekeeper.

In summary, this is a case study based on data gathered from in-depth interviews at a news organization currently developing a "social journalism" platform, a Web-based content management system (CMS) and social networking tool intended for further distribution. The mutual shaping of technology dynamic (MST) is a holistic approach useful for examining the interplay between the diffusion of innovations (DI) and the social shaping of technology (SST) theoretical approaches. In this study, bits of interview data are labeled as relating either to DI or to SST processes; then, groups of statements are compared in order to describe the MST dynamic at work. This is repeated for each of the five levels of analysis (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 31). Any broader theoretical implications extending beyond the MST construct are mentioned in the chapters on findings.

In addition to this examination of MST and organizational change in a news company, two other research areas are briefly addressed. First, it is important to

understand the business model underlying the "social journalism" platform. This discussion is framed in the context of theories of new institutionalism. Select theories of new institutionalism are useful for explaining why organizational change is difficult even when existing institutions are not functioning well. This chapter (Chapter V) addresses practical questions as well about the viability of "social journalism," and it contributes to a growing body of research on new business models for news in the context of networked communication technologies (Chyi & Lasorsa, 1999; Chyi & Sylvie, 1998; Kaye & Quinn, 2010; Schiff, 2006).

Finally, this paper delves into the concepts of public journalism (Lambeth, Meyer, & Thorson, 1998; Merritt, 1998; Rosenberry & St John, 2009) and the public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Public journalism provides the historical context Boczkowski (2004a) calls for. The "social journalism" platform under development is placed in the context of the definition, origins and objectives of public journalism (Charity, 1995; Glasser, 1999). Coyne (2001), Papacharissi (2002) and others (Blumler & Gurevitch, 2001) point out that hopes for digital utopias rising from the widespread adoption of networked communication technologies have been outmoded since the end of the twentieth century; however, many scholars continue to pursue an interest in understanding realistic possibilities and limits for an online public sphere (Alemán, 2004; Dahlgren, 2005; Moe, 2008).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This case study uses the mutual shaping of technology (MST) construct to add to our understanding of how a communication innovation may influence and/or be shaped by a news organization. It contributes to theories of technological and organizational change. This study does not claim to represent or predict what is happening in other organizations facing technological shifts, but it helps us to deduce what *may* happen when new technologies are introduced. The long-term intent of this work is to establish a set of expectations and further research questions about ongoing news industry transitions to be examined at the organizational level over the course of future research.

Why use such a broad approach? Since the diffusion of innovations theory (DI) is a well-established paradigm, why not simply use it to analyze the role of a technological innovation in a news organization in transition? The problem with relying solely on the DI perspective is its tendency to lead to technological determinism, which oversimplifies the role of technology in shaping societies and ignores human agency (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, pp. 5-6). The social shaping of technology theory (SST) offers an alternative: "instead of modernization ('progress') being a process that just happens to societies, it should become a process that is actively and democratically, shaped" (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, p. 5). Of course, just because technological progress *should* be democratically shaped does not mean that it is. The key theoretical contribution of this study is the explanation in terms of the MST construct of just how much of an impact the technological innovation in question is having on the news organization

studied (DI) and in what ways and to what extent news workers and community members (as observed by news professionals) shape the innovation (SST).

This literature review discusses a range of scholarship regarding relationships between technology, communication and society. It begins with the work of Innis (1951, 1972) and continues through a brief analysis of contemporary scholars researching communication innovations and journalism (Bardoel, 1996; Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Bruns, 2005; Deuze, 2003, 2011; Paterson & Domingo, 2008). Innis traces the impact of communication innovations back to the beginning of Western civilization, and he finds patterns linking certain dominant communication technologies with certain tendencies in social structure (Carey, 1967; Innis, 1951). McLuhan and Castells extend Innis' work. McLuhan's (1962; 1967) approach jumps headlong into technological determinism. Castells' contemporary approach is less deterministic in that he considers the role of social influences on technology (2010), but he too affords broad, socially transformative power to communication innovations (2009). These three foundational theorists help frame a discussion of what might be possible if certain technological changes gain in popularity, but this study does not presume to be able to predict the effects of changing media technologies on society in general. Instead it focuses on the news industry and on one organization in particular as a sort of proving ground for a communication innovation. Several contemporary scholars isolate the news industry as a logical field for examining communication technology change (Bardoel, 1996; Deuze, 2011; Paterson & Domingo, 2008; Singer, 2006). A small number of scholars focus specifically on mutually shaped communication technologies (Boczkowski, 1999, 2004a; Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). I argue that any relatively comprehensive study examining mutual

influences between technology and society should refer to those theorists who set the parameters of expectations for this line of inquiry, even if there is some tendency on their part to overreach.

The literature review proceeds as follows: First, I draw a theoretical line from Innis to McLuhan to Castells. I review issues of technological determinism and highlight key theoretical contributions. Then, I provide a more detailed breakdown of the underpinnings of MST in order to establish the main theoretical thrust of this paper. After this, I briefly define the "levels of analysis" from Shoemaker & Vos (2009, pp. 31-32) and then place this study in the context of contemporary scholarship, bearing in mind that the key purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how MST can be used to describe organizational change relating to communication innovation. Finally, I address the two other theoretical approaches included in this study. I present literature on new institutionalism and relate it to scholarship on new business models for news. Then I briefly examine scholarship on the public journalism movement and the public sphere as they relate to the news model examined here. Finally, I present research questions in a brief section at the end of the literature review.

Foundational Theorists and the Lure of Determinism

Mass communication inquiry contains a set of theoretical approaches that offer insights into the relationships between societies, technology, and communication. These provide a broad background of theory for this project. Some of the most popular theoretical claims are deterministic in nature. They describe communication innovations

sweeping up societies as if in floods of change (McLuhan & Fiore, 1964; Toffler, 1981). They ignore or discount the cultural influences that shape information technologies as they evolve. Well-known scholars, such as Innis (1951, 1972) and his more famous protégé McLuhan (1962; 1967) as well the contemporary Castells (2007, 2010), offer insights into the potential for communication technologies to impact culture and society. There is nothing in the MST construct that argues against the historical impacts of technological developments in communication; however, as noted by MacKenzie and Wajcman (1999) and Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002), the contention arises when changes are presented as inevitable, pre-determined by the logic of technology itself, rather than as a result of socially-influenced processes and effects (Carey, 2008). Here I demonstrate how contemporary mass communication scholarship can benefit from the MST construct as a tool to counter deterministic tendencies without necessarily negating the insights of Innis, McLuhan and Castells.

Harold Innis. Innis (1951, 1972; Innis & Watson, 2008) lays the foundation for much subsequent scholarship examining relationships between developments in communication technologies and society. His approach is not explicitly connected to the diffusion of innovations framework or MST, but it deals with similar concepts, issues of technological innovations in communication in dynamic relationships with societies over time across the Western world. Innis can be said to look at diffusion processes through the long lens of history with much more concern for the social and cultural impacts of new communication technologies than their rates of adoption.

The potent role Innis affords mass communication innovation in social and cultural change no doubt contributes to his popularity among media scholars. He assigns

a good deal of influence to developments in communication technologies, but his is not an entirely deterministic view (Comor, 2003), and Innis does not foster a utopian vision of communication innovation the way that McLuhan often does (Carey, 1967). In *Empire & Communications* (1972), Innis argues that a society's dominant medium is bound up with its social structures and culture. He suggests that social structures shift and that civilization morphs to follow.

> Concentration on a medium of communication implies a bias in the cultural development of the civilization concerned either on space and political organization or towards an emphasis on time and religious organization. Introduction of a second medium tends to check the bias of the first and to create conditions suited to the growth of empire (Innis, 1972, p. 170).

Comor (2003) explains that "bias" to Innis meant more than preference or predilection. Innis developed his conceptualization of bias in defense of social science in general against those who argue that human behavior is too unpredictable to be studied scientifically: "While agreeing that most behavior is spontaneous and that human beings (including academics) often act on the bases of ingrained behavioral patterns involving degrees of unreflexive thought…*these thoughts and practices are themselves developed and reproduced* (original emphasis). [Innis] called these thoughts and practices 'biases' and generally recognized them to be historically determined" (p. 92). Thus "bias" to Innis is deep-seated, influential and variable and therefore worthy of study. Changes in bias are shifts in "the sediment of experience" (Innis, 1935), quoted in Comor (2003, p. 93); hence, they are historical shifts able to open socio-cultural spaces where empires can expand.

Dissecting Innis' key theoretical proposition above, Carey (1967) provides an explanation focusing on the way Innis unites social and cultural factors:

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> [Innis] was concerned not only with the ways in which culture and institutions were interrelated but also the sense in which they were both epiphenomena of communications technology…Any given medium will bias social organization, for it will favor the growth of certain kinds of interests and institutions at the expense of others…At the level of social structure, a time bias meant an emphasis upon religion, hierarchy, and contraction, whereas a space bias meant an emphasis upon the state, decentralization, and expansion. But the terms "time" and "space" also had a cultural meaning. In cultural terms, time meant the sacred, the moral, the historical; space the present and the future, the technical and the secular. As media of communication favored the growth of certain kinds of institutions, it also assured the domination of the culture characteristic of those institutions (pp. 8-10).

Innis' great contribution to mass communication scholarship is a line of inquiry he developed late in life after a career examining Canadian economics (Carey, 1967; Comor, 2003; Innis & Watson, 2008). His argument, based on historical examples, is that changes in communication technologies may shape social institutions and culture in conjunction, but the rapid pace of change related to electronic communication was only dawning (mostly with commercial radio) in 1952 when Innis died (Comor, 2003). Just as technological developments in mass communication are not necessarily "progress," depending on one's perspective, the growth of empire is not necessarily considered by Innis to be a good thing. Innis' last academic push was to focus on the study of communication as a means to seek balance between the two competing tendencies of communication technologies as he saw them amidst a socio-cultural climate geared for nuclear war (Comor, 2003, p. 93). He hoped societies could strike a balance between a bias for time and a bias for space. Innis thought this would discourage the expansion of empires and encourage global peace.

Comor (2003) explains that, in Innis' view, social and political crises initiate shifts in communication technology and those shifts pit the bias for space against the bias

for time: "Efforts to control space and/or time also involve attempts to monopolise [sic] force which, according to Innis, involve a range of control activities from brutal oppression to the more subtle implementation of surveillance technologies" (Comor, 2003). Thus, a major implication of Innis' work is that conscientious people (himself included) should seek communication-power balances before they are determined by other means.

Further explicating the impacts of Innis' work, Carey (1967) zeroes in on Innis' desire to salvage oral tradition and what it stands for as a temporal medium (e.g. 'the sacred, the moral, the historical," p. 10). "Innis believed that an overemphasis or monopoly of either time or space, religion or the state, the moral or the technical, was the principal dynamic of the rise and fall of empire...Not only did print destroy the oral tradition but it also drove underground the principal concerns of the oral tradition" (pp. 13-14). Comor (2003) adds: "In the past, ignorance and a belief in quick solutions could produce military conflict. In the emerging nuclear age, this concoction could well lead to the annihilation of humanity" (p. 93). Thus, when Innis (with an introduction by Watson) (2008) explains the role of communication innovations in bringing about war in Ancient Greece, he is making a point relevant to his own times and the threat of nuclear holocaust:

> The effectiveness of the oral tradition in the development of the state became evident in the success with which the Greeks checked the expansion of the Persian Empire and in the cultural flowering of Athens in the fifth century [BC]...Literature in prose increased rapidly after the beginning of the Peloponnesian War...An increase in writing in Athens created divergences in the Greek community and accentuated differences particularly with Sparta...Athenian courts were unable to escape charges of favouritism [sic] to democratic states. Interstate co-operation imposed demands, which could not be met. The end came with the outbreak of war and the defeat of Athens. In the fourth century Plato attempted to save the remnants of Greek culture in the style of the Socratic

dialogues which in the words of Aristotle stood half way between prose and poetry (p. 43).

A balance between oral communication and print, between time-biased and space-biased forms of communication holds an allure for Innis. In his chapter called "A Plea for Time," Innis (with Watson, 2008) says, "In freeing ourselves from time and attempting a balance between the demands of time and space we can develop conditions favourable to an interest in cultural activity" (p. 90). Culture flourishes when the balance of space-biased and time-biased communication is found.

Innis is defined as "a rather soft-determinist" by Carey: "Innis assumes that man stands in a unique, symbiotic relationship to his technology" (1967, p. 7). The implications of Innis' work are broad, but Comor (2003) urges that Innis' conceptualization of bias not be misread as technological determinism. "In his writings, Innis always took pains to use words such as 'emphasise' and 'implies' when referring to bias" (Comor, 2003, p. 94). Smith and Marx (1994) published a series of papers on technological determinism and its implications in history and social science. Bimber, in Smith and Marx (1994), prefers the argument that "soft determinism" does not exist: "In practice, 'technological determinism' begins to lose its meaning when it is used as a malleable interpretive tool…An explanation of historical change that meets this standard of clarity is surely more useful than one in which the theory of change is hidden by less precise language" (Smith & Marx, 1994, p. 87). To associate a scholar with determinism is to associate him or her with an extreme point of view or an extreme set of claims based on a point of view. It is not particularly useful to say that Innis' views fall somewhere short of an extreme position; however, Innis' scholarship opens a line of inquiry into technology, communication and society that others carry to deterministic lengths.

Marshall McLuhan. A student of Innis, McLuhan extends observations made in

The Bias of Communication (Innis, 1951). Carey (1967) notes that McLuhan and Innis'

both subscribed to variations of the concept that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan,

1967). "Both Innis and McLuhan agree that historically 'the things on which words were

written down count more than the words themselves' (no citation provided)…Starting

from this proposition, they describe quite different kinds of effects deriving from this

technology" (Carey, 1967, p. 15). McLuhan's scholarship is not more deterministic than

Innis' because of his concept that the "medium is the message"; it is the scope and depth

of claimed effects that make McLuhan a technological determinist.

McLuhan (1967) argues that social effects *and* sensory effects automatically

follow the medium of communication regardless of content (Carey, 1967, p. 25). Where

Innis wrote of communication technologies leading to shifts in deep-seated biases in

social and political behavior, McLuhan sees technology-driven social homogenization

affecting individuals all the way down to the cognitive level (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967).

McLuhan (1967) claims that media "alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily

and without any resistance" (p. 31). These claims are difficult to prove, especially the

claim that this occurs without resistance. McLuhan (2003) argues that the effects of

communication technologies occur as unimpeded functions:

> Our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that
> counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot. For the "content" of a
> medium is like the juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the
> watchdog of the mind. The effect of the medium is made strong and intense just
> because it is given another medium as "content." (31).

Thus, for McLuhan, electronic media are compound media bombarding people with at least two formats simultaneously. The medium is the (key) message and that message is highly influential, stealthy, the burglar in McLuhan's metaphor.

McLuhan (1962) argues that electronic media permeate society and frame every thought and interaction. As extensions of our human selves, they carry our capacity to elicit responses from sensory stimuli, and they awaken narcissistic tendencies because we are said to be fascinated by seeing our own communication faculties mirrored back to us on a mass scale (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). For McLuhan, societies rely on their dominant medium and are as entrenched in its routine as are agrarian societies connected to a staple crop accustomed to the timing of the rain (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). Technology is the vehicle and the driver of social organization, culture *and* thought. McLuhan extends Innis' theories of communication, technology and society beyond the concept of bias to indicate a deterministic level of various presumed effects.

McLuhan sees media effects where there is arguably no content. For example, he argued that the electric light is a communication medium bridging the globe's gaps of space and time and bringing about widespread effects just by its existence. "The message of the electric light is like the message of electric power in industry, totally radical, pervasive, and decentralized. For electric light and power are separate from their users, yet they eliminate time and space factors in human association exactly as do radio, telegraph, telephone, and TV, creating involvement in depth" (McLuhan, 2003, p. 8). This passage is significant in that it makes a blanket claim that many types of media, including mass media and interpersonal forms of communication, not only eliminate the influences of space and time, they are also supposedly so engaging that they are "creating

involvement" (p. 8). McLuhan's point is that technology without content can effectively communicate behavioral cues and affect cognitive structures deeply, but he completely negates the influence of social groups throughout the twentieth century that demanded the expansion of electricity and sped its diffusion to certain parts of the world several decades before others.

McLuhan (1962) argues that the introduction of global electronic communication (telegraph, telephone, radio, television) unites global culture. The concept of the "global village," a world connected by electricity, reduced again to tribalism as if social progress were beginning again on a new plane, was revolutionary in the early 1960s (McLuhan, 1962) and again in the 1990s as the Internet gained widespread use (Levinson, 1999). "The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village…We live in a single constricted space resonant with tribal drums…our new electric culture provides our lives again with a tribal base" (McLuhan, 1962, p. 31). By the 1990s, Internet access was afforded to much of the West by personal computers and modems, and the World Wide Web provided a rich visual user interface (Rheingold, 1993). These developments helped make instantaneous electronic multimedia communication a global phenomenon, and McLuhan was treated as a prophet (Levinson, 1999). Virtual tribes, so to speak, appeared. For example, people began to participate in massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) where communities, not unlike today's Second Life or World of Warcraft communities, could form with no regard for space or time (Rheingold, 1993). McLuhan was and is viewed as prescient in many ways, and that makes him an important theorist with a one-sided approach. Many of his predictions based on technological determinism will not come to pass. Many will, but

success at predicting the general course of technological developments does not equate to accuracy in predicting their effects, particularly when they are predictions focused "not on social organization but on sensory organization" and when they ignore the role of social choice (Carey, 1967, p. 25).

McLuhan has a utopian outlook that clearly indicates his deterministic perspective, although Marchessault (2005) argues it is not necessarily contained in his view of the global village.

> While the global village may be marked according to McLuhan's formulation by an acoustic and oral character, its simultaneous character is profoundly discontinuous in a way that the village is not. This is why the global village is not a utopian concept or ideal state for McLuhan. In other words, the global village attempts to describe rather than celebrate a new situation, a new way of being in the Western world which is discarnate and discontinuous (Marchessault, 2005, p. 212).

Marchessault (2005) argues that McLuhan "preferred the term 'global theatre' to global village," the global theatre referencing American television images appearing in Canada (p. 213). The global village concept took hold, she argues, because news organizations, particularly those working in television, picked up on the term and preferred viewing their own work disseminating electronic communications as contributions to village discourse rather than banal living room theatre (Marchessault, 2005, p. 213). McLuhan's ideal refers instead to "a 'cosmic consciousness' capable of transcending language that constitutes the utopian horizon" (p. 214). Thus, the biases of communication towards space or time are not balanced but rendered meaningless. McLuhan (2003) suggests that escape from "verbalization" (p. 80) is paradise (Marchessault, 2005, p. 214). McLuhan's ideal is not that of a global village where individuals join around virtual campfires and share widely disseminated stories; it is one where consciousness is shared without being

fettered by communication. Carey (1967) argues that McLuhan's contribution is not in presenting arguments with strong empirical evidence but in presenting the myth of technological salvation (p. 38).

The major drawback of McLuhan's ideal is that there is no explanation of how societies are supposed to achieve collective consciousness. At some point, the agency afforded by individual communication must be lost if collective consciousness can rule. Will that be a mutually agreed upon process? How will that be arranged? Comor (2003) notes *Innis'* approach to the cause of communication innovation. "Because Innis believed that the development and implementation of significant new communication media often signal attempts to redress uncertainty or crisis, he thought that the social-economic collapse of historical empires reflects the failure of existing strategies to control space and/or time" (p. 96). Will we have to see modern empires fail in order for McLuhan's ideal to be realized? If empires arise to fill the space opened by shifts in bias, what power would be able to fulfill McLuhan's ideal?

> [McLuhan's] concept of the 'global village collapses the global into the local, making it impossible to discern relations of power of any kind. This is why his media theories have always been more attractive to corporations like AT&T rather than to political activists. This is why also the analogy between the village and the mass mediated world was for Raymond Williams…a senseless juxtaposition (Marchessault, 2005, p. 221).

Raymond Williams champions the type of criticism of McLuhan that is most consistent with the mutual shaping of technology construct, although Williams is not directly addressing the diffusion of innovations framework. "Williams acknowledged the appeal of McLuhan's discussion of specific media forms but accused him of a formalism that erased all social and historical context from discussions of technology" (Freedman, 2003, pp. 175-176). Thus, Williams also identifies the major break between McLuhan and

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Innis. Innis uses history to illustrate general propositions about the plasticity of bias, while McLuhan uses history in work after work in an a-contextual, almost anti-contextual mishmash. With Innis, it was clear where technological innovations originated. McLuhan's goal seems to be to present a system of thought where causation is not referenced and does not matter. That type of consciousness may one day be reached, but McLuhan does not describe the path or how to navigate it.

Again, in terms of diffusions theories, neither Innis nor McLuhan spoke in terms of the rates of adoption associated with DI (Rogers, 2003; first ed. 1962), but the implications for diffusions-related research are obvious. Innis and McLuhan have differing views on the ability of social groups to affect technological change. Innis allows for human agency, even if he does grant communication innovations the ability to shift deep-seated biases. McLuhan's technological determinism negates agency through the assumption of direct cognitive change related to electronic media and presents an ideal where human agency is perpetually subsumed without acknowledging that the transition to such a state might be painful. It is a stated goal of this paper to attempt to prepare strategies to cope with changes in communication technology. McLuhan offers little but the myth of technological salvation. I argue that too many scholars and journalists accept the myth without asking what it entails and how real people might try to manage change. McLuhan's determinism, his lack of empirical evidence and his popularity beg for a scholarly counterpoint. MST offers an approach that allows powerful, history-shaping technological change and human agency to coexist.

Manuel Castells. Castells is a widely cited contemporary scholar advancing the ideas of Innis and McLuhan without claiming to be their intellectual descendent. His

approach more closely resembles MST than either of his predecessors. Castells references Innis (2010, p. 460-461) when denying the importance of time in his conceptualization of the networked society. For Castells (2010), the importance of space and time is erased in the network society. "Timeless time belongs to the space of flows" (p. 495). The space of flows is the networked space. Castells argues that civilization has entered this space. The flows are communication flows shaping culture and being shaped by it (p. 494-496). "The space of flows has taken over the logic of the space of places" (Castells, 2010, p. xliv). In the "space of places," time and space on the globe mattered. The chore was mastering one or the other, according to Innis. The ideal was subsuming both, according to McLuhan. Castells suggests that networked communication has conquered both but only in the context of the network. Its power is growing, but not without social influence.

Although Castells claims no "intellectual lineage with [Innis'] theory" (p. 495), the themes are the same: time, space and the transformation of social institutions and culture through developments in information technology. "Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in process of production, experience, power, and culture. A network-based social structure is a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance" (Castells, 2010, p. 500). Castells (2010) posits that culture and communication networks are one in the "network society."

> Culture refers to Culture, having superseded Nature to the point that Nature is artificially revived ("preserved") as a cultural form…Because of the convergence of historical evolution and technological change we have entered a purely cultural pattern of social interaction and social organization. This is why information is the key ingredient of our social organization and why flows of messages and images between networks constitute the basic thread of our social structure…our species has reached the level of knowledge and social organization that will allow us to live in a predominately social world. It is the beginning of a new existence,

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and indeed the beginning of a new age, the information age, marked by the autonomy of culture vis-à-vis the material bases of our existence (p. 508).

It would appear that as more and more members of society become more deeply involved in the network that its power and systems will inevitably regulate our behavior, but before labeling Castells a technological determinist, it is important to recognize that he acknowledges a much stronger role for the social shaping of technology than does McLuhan, especially in terms of technology-related change in the workplace.

In a chapter called "The transformation of work and employment" Castells (2010) argues that "the maturation of the information technology revolution…transformed the work process, introducing new forms of social and technical division of labor" (p. 256). But this transformation was a two-way process.

> There is an old and honorable tradition of sociological and organizational research on the relationship between technology and work. Thus, we know that technology per se is not the cause of the work arrangements to be found in the workplace. Management decisions, systems of industrial relations, cultural and institutional environments, and government policies are such fundamental sources of labor practices and production organization that the impact of technology can only be understood in complex interaction within a social system comprising all these elements (Castells, 2010, p. 256).

Castells (2000) refuses to negate the sociology of organizational change, but he does argue that labor is much weaker than capital as a result of "the use of powerful information technologies and of organizational forms facilitated by the new technological medium" (the network) (p. 278). Castells argues for the profound effects of innovations in communication technologies while recognizing that nuances of change in an organization have many influences. He recognizes many forces at work but grants the most influence to advancements in information technologies, which he says are rapidly diffused. Marjoribanks (2011) summarizes Castells prime thesis well:

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As Castells argues, we are living through a period of fundamental societal transformation in which all aspects of life are being transformed. Vital to such transformation processes is the centrality of information to a globalizing society, and the significant role of networks as a means of social, political and economic organization. In such a context, as media corporations operate as key sites for the production and distribution of information, they become critical as sites of economic, social, and political power…in Castells' analysis, organizational practice across all forms of industry, including media, is undergoing profound transformation, in particular from hierarchical and rigid organization to networked, fluid and flexible forms of organization (135-136).

Thus, MST is quite appropriate for examining organizational change and reciprocal influences on technology, particularly in media. When news organizations no longer have a monopoly over information in the "space of place" because society and culture are transitioning to a greater focus on the "space of flows," news organizations are finding they must adapt, perhaps by adapting technology to suit their needs. This small study looks at one organization's attempt to do so.

It can begin to answer broader theoretical concerns. Without a monopoly over time or space, can news organizations establish some control over flows of information in the network? This study seeks to apply some of the most useful ideas from Innis, McLuhan and Castells in a way that is not deterministic but that acknowledges the power of communication technologies to shape social structures and the power of social groups to influence technologies as well.

Mutual Shaping of Technology and Communication Organizations

As previously stated, the mutual shaping of technology construct attempts to take a holistic approach to two competing frameworks, the diffusion of innovations theory

(DI) (Rogers, 2005) and the social shaping of technology construct (SST) (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). Media innovation scholars have noted the need to take a holistic approach to the history and future of communication technology development (Boczkowski, 2004a, 2004b; Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). As Flichy (2007b) puts it, "The linear science-technology-use schema no longer works today" (vi). This references the fact that DI is built on a linear framework imagining technological conception, introduction and diffusion. The assumption is that from scientists come technologies that people use. Flichy (2007a) points out that the invention and *direction* of the Internet "utopia," not far in some people's minds from McLuhan's collective consciousness, was developed by a culture of hackers with their own ethos and expectations about decentralization and freely accessible information (p. 68). In other words, looking back into history the Internet was socially shaped as it came into being, and there is no reason to expect that digital technologies in the future will not be socially shaped as well. Flichy (2007b) takes an anthropological approach, but mine is sociological because I am interested in the relationship between technological developments and institutional journalism.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory. When Rogers first published *Diffusion of Innovations* in 1962, there were already hundreds of published studies using a diffusions framework in a variety of disciplines from agriculture to communications (Rogers, 2003, p. xv). From the outset, Rogers (2003) uses examples that concern the cultural context into which new technologies are introduced, but the primary application of the DI framework is probably on the diffusion of products and rates of consumer acceptance (Mierzejewska, 2011): "Critics charge that diffusion theory is technologically

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deterministic because it treats innovations as given and focuses more on the effects or impact of innovations in social systems" (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, p. 187). I would argue that it tends toward a deterministic bias rather than state that DI "is technologically deterministic."

Technological determinism in DI research is not automatic. Scholars using DI do account for social agency in the form of "re-invention" (Rogers, 2003, p. 180), which can be applied to look at evolving technologies as a series of diffusions, but the analysis ultimately relies on the same unidirectional approach to the causes and effects of innovations (Rogers, 2003, p. 170).

The diffusions approach has often lacked a willingness to see the role of culture in the design phase (Bijker, Hughes, & Pinch, 1989). Rogers (2003) refers to this limitation in his field as "source-bias…a tendency for diffusion research to side with the change agencies that promote innovations rather than with the individuals who are potential adopters" (p. 118). Critics argue that the diffusions approach focuses far too much on technologies in "black box" form. The "black box" signifies a stable stage in development. The image suggests a "finished" product, a shiny black plastic box housing electronics ready to ship, as though the tinkering done by product developers were the only contribution that mattered in the construction of technology (Bijker, et al., 1989; MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999, pp. 114-115).

From SCOT to SST. If technological determinism is the extreme application of DI theory, the social construction of technology (SCOT) approach, a precursor to SST, was developed to counter deterministic assumptions (Bijker, et al., 1989). SCOT theorists picture themselves breaking into the "black box" and analyzing the design processes of

technologies with social groups in mind (Bijker, et al., 1989, p. 35). But the SCOT set of concepts has its own limitations. In MacKenzie and Wajcman (1999), it is argued that SCOT focuses too much on design: "SCOT…said little about the social structure and power relationships within which technological development takes place" (p. 114). The SST concept takes a broader view of social effects on artifacts from the same tack as SCOT (Williams & Edge, 1996). DI and SST comprise "[t]wo somewhat distinct bodies of scholarly endeavour…one concerned with the promotion of technology, and the other with its social assessment and control" (Williams, 2000).

The diffusion of innovations theoretical model focuses on the dissemination of a product innovation or a piece of information through a society. Its famous S-shaped growth curve is only concerned with the rate of dissemination of a product being purchased or of concepts being transferred. Adoption *is* the desired outcome, and the effects of adoption are often assumed. The SST approach holds up the same coin and looks at it from the other side. It includes research on the "social settings of innovation…social and economic forces which may shape technology…and [it] has highlighted the role of a broad range of involved and affected groups" (Williams & Edge, 1996, p. 880). Being based on diffusions theory, SST does not take issue with the observable facts that some technologies are more popular than others and that more popular technologies are generally diffused at a quicker rate. The issue of concern is how technologies and artifacts arise and what societies do with innovations beyond mere adoption. SST argues that social conditions are responsible for *how* technologies are adopted, not just *if* they are, and the way a technology is adopted influences future versions of the innovation. Williams & Edge (1996) describe "an iterative, or spiral

process that takes place through interactions amongst an array of actors and institutions involved and affected" (p. 875) that is quite similar to McLoughlin's (1999) "innovation spiral" (p. 34). By taking a look at the other side of the diffusions coin, SST sets it in motion. The SST approach opens up the theoretical possibility for an examination of mutual shaping processes. MST can then be used to examine technological evolution as a dynamic process.

MST and Mass Communication. In order to develop a holistic construct to account for this dynamic, Boczkowski (2004a) identifies MST as a separate theoretical construct. Both DI and SST have proven fruitful for researchers studying how digital media technologies develop (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). Boczkowski's (1999) use of the merged theories, an advancement of Lievrouw & Livingstone's (2002) "determination and contingency" (p. 183), is influenced by Williams & Edge's (1996) take on SST. Williams and Edge (1996) examined cross-disciplinary research in SST and found many scholars interested in refuting technological determinism were at risk of replacing it with another kind of determinism:

> Simply establishing that technologies are "socially shaped" leaves open many important questions about the character and influence of the shaping forces. In seeking to grasp the *complexity* [orig. emphasis] of the socio-economic processes involved in technological innovation, SST has been forced to go beyond simplistic forms of social determinism (p. 866).

Williams & Edge ultimately wonder if the boundaries between technology and society are being blurred: "[T]he 'success' of SST…may ultimately undermine the concept of 'technology' as a separate area of social activity" (p. 893). For Williams & Edge (1996), technology viewed as an extension of the social is much less threatening than society seen as an extension of technology.

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Both theoretical perspectives, DI and SST, recognize the levels of effort involved in tackling technological innovation, and both acknowledge that innovations have impacts. Scholars working with either DI or SST may incorporate aspects of the other theoretical point of view; however, scholars then tend to choose a side and argue from that perspective. The MST approach is important not only in avoiding the extremes of technological and social determinism. It enables scholars to look at the whole dynamic.

Boczkowski (1999) uses MST in two key journalism studies. First, he examines a service delivering news about Argentina via email. As the technology to manage the email list developed, the system administrator asked for help, and a council was formed by group members who gave advice about managing the list (which was relatively complicated in the mid 1990s). They also took up a collection for the purchase of hardware. Boczkowski called the process "administrative decentralization" (p. 97) brought on by the need to help manage technology. Users of the technology were able to communicate their wishes to a leader, form a "council" to give advice and contribute to enhance the technology, which at the time was one of the best ways to widely distribute niche information. As the technology developed, individuals responded, formed a group and acted as a social unit to shape the technology, at least within the confines of their own frame of reference, their own email list. This prototype for the use of the MST construct identifies several key aspects useful for its application in discussing the social role in shaping evolving communication technologies: decentralization of control, community response, and shared responsibility (Boczkowski, 1999).

Boczkowski (2004a) also examined the introduction and failure of videotex systems in the United States. During efforts to introduce these services, several processes

took place that Boczkowski associates with mutual shaping. "The interdependence of technological and social transformations, the ongoing character of this process, and the influence of the historical context in which it unfolds" were the three key elements of his analysis using MST (Boczkowski, 2004a, p. 263). Rather than measuring rates of adoption or writing an analysis of social approaches to technology, Boczkowski looked at how "the actors undertook a multiplicity of intertwined technical shaping and societal diffusion initiatives" (2004a, p. 263). In this study, interdependence, the iterative nature of development and its historical context are all included.

Boczkowski (2004a) argues that taking the point of view of either DI or SST would have caused him to miss key aspects of "the shaping of videotex newspapers" (p. 263). He calls for extending the model into specific areas of "new media": "Additional research is needed to further the development of the mutual shaping lens in the analysis of new media…future work could expand the process of theory building by linking general dynamics of technological and social change with an exploration of potentially specific features of various kinds of artifacts" (p. 263). Thus, Boczkowski calls researchers to look for initiatives where mutual shaping is present, where general technological development and social shaping are evident in new, media artifacts.

Levels of Analysis in a News Organization and MST in Organizational Change

The MST construct can serve as a bridge from Innis, McLuhan and Castells to the rich field of contemporary scholarship on new innovations in mass communication, but before entering into that discussion, I wish to present a brief explanation of the levels of

analysis used in this study. These levels help organize the literature review, data analysis and results into comprehensible compartments. Key themes can be isolated and fleshed out according to these levels, but a basic understanding of each must first be conveyed.

In order to describe news production efforts, Shoemaker & Reese (1996) developed a hierarchical model, utilized in Shoemaker & Vos (2009) as "levels of analysis" (p. 31) in gatekeeping processes. News organizations are complex. The processes for deciding what is news and what is not and how it should be gathered and presented are varied and often depend upon several people at different levels of an organizational hierarchy (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). "Levels of analysis are created by dividing up a continuum ranging from looking at the micro world of single people…to looking at the macro world of countries and continents, and of course everything in between" (p. 31). These include the following categories: "individual," "communication routines," "organizational," "social institution," and "social system." I briefly describe each level as defined by Shoemaker & Vos (2009)

The individual level of analysis is characterized by cognitive processes that occur in the mind of news gatherers and producers, and it also includes "their demographic profiles, their life experiences, their personal values and attitudes and their work experiences" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 31). In this study, this is operationalized to refer to indications on the part of interview participants regarding any effects of the news innovation on their news decision-making processes or their personal approach to their work that would indicate they adopt the innovation. In addition if they discuss ways that any of their existing "cognitive heuristics" or personal characteristics shape the

innovation and its use, these are also considered pertinent at the individual level

(Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 37).

The communication routines level of analysis refers to "repeated practices and

forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (p. 51). This is operationalized to account

for any references participants make saying that the "social journalism" model has shaped

or been shaped by their day-to-day work routines or their "orientation to the audience" (p.

52). Orientation to the audience as part of the journalist's routine is different from the

organization's relationships with audiences as social groups. At the routines level,

orientation to the audience indicates "an abstract, second-hand sense of what the audience

wants from the news media" (p. 53). This is neither written organizational policy nor is it

the individual's personal approach to working with website users. Instead, it is the

routinized expectation of "what the audience wants" (p. 53). Research at this level often

deals with typifications of news consumers and established "factors of newsworthiness"

(p. 53). One question for this research project is if typifications and assumptions continue

to emerge despite the fact that the journalist in this environment has a much greater

ability to learn specifically what the audience wants.

In this model, the organizational level of analysis refers to "the study of

characteristics that differentiate among communication organizations," and this includes

organizational structures as well as organizational culture (pp. 32, 67). Here this is

operationalized to mean references made by interview participants about the structure of

their news company and its characteristics, how they are shaped in ways that suggest

innovation adoption and how existing structures and cultural norms shape the innovation

in turn.

The social institutional level of analysis focuses "on forces outside of media organizations, such as advertisers and their audiences, governments, and interest groups…[that] reveal a web of cooperation that surface differences belie" (p. 32). In this study, this level of analysis refers to the relationships between the news organization and other social institutions, including but not limited to those listed above and to the ways they are said to be shaped by apparent adoption of the innovation and the ways, if any, the innovation itself is shaped by or for those other institutions.

Finally, the social system level of analysis in which "we look at the extent to which a country's political or economic system controls the gatekeeping process, as well as influences from the culture's ideology" (p. 32). This is a difficult level for individuals in a news organization to address with their insights. In a way, it is akin to asking them to critique the air they breathe, but to the extent that they do consider the social system in their work, it is operationalized as interview participants' perceptions of the news system in which they work and any ideals that they feel they have gained from it and then, of course, the extent to which their statements indicate adoption of the innovation diffused in the news organization or any indication of rejection or reconsideration of the technology on the grounds of the social system and its ideals. These levels of analysis and their subsequent descriptions come from an essential book updating gatekeeping theory; however, this is not a gatekeeping study. To some extent, the terms and context provided by the gatekeeping analysis apply, but the primary objective of using these levels is to organize the discussion according to a logically applicable framework.

Contemporary Media Scholarship on Communication Innovations and

Organizational Change

Bryant and Miron (2004) provide a good starting place for discussing contemporary scholarship and the need for more research into communication innovation. Their study references three key journals (*Journal of Communication*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*) in their taxonomy of theories appearing over the course of more than 40 years. Their analysis indicates that networked journalism and issues of technology-related organizational change were either not researched widely or were not considered worthy of frequent publication prior to 2000.

Bryant and Miron (2004) analyzed more than 1,800 articles from a sample that included one issue per journal per year between 1956 and 2000 (p. 664). They note that only 3.37% of the sampled articles dealt with media technology (p. 665). They find references to diffusion theory, but many of the studies they identify concern the diffusion of news and other information rather than information technologies. Bryant and Miron (2004) make no mention of SST, MST or related theoretical approaches, such as SCOT (the social construction of technology).

No doubt Bryant and Miron (2004) missed a good deal of networked communication or "new media" research by cutting off their analysis at the year 2000 and by focusing on a few of the most established journals rather than including any upstarts. Entire journals, hundreds of books and (an estimated) thousands of articles have examined Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and its related concepts since the

early 1990s (Acker, 1995; Jones, 1998; Rheingold, 1993; Walther, 1996). What Bryant and Miron (2004) show is that the focus of mass communication scholarship in some of the major journals was not on technology per se despite the numerous technological changes that took place in mass communication in the latter half of the twentieth century. In addition, their research suggests that it may take several years for research paradigms to develop and make their way into top-tier journals even as global interest in a topic, such as networked communication, takes shape.

A strong tradition began in the late 1980s and 1990s studying mass communication in the context of networks (Bardoel, 1996; Jones, 1998; Morris & Ogan, 1996; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Rafaeli, 1988). Even before the Internet and the World Wide Web were household terms, media scholars were writing about Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Fuchs, 2008; Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002) and CMC (Jones, 1998; Rheingold, 1993).

> Early scholarship on computer-mediated communication (CMC) was oriented toward organizational uses of computing. The primary questions asked were how CMC could enhance work processes such as group decision-making. Conducted primarily on organizations and laboratories, this research generally argued that computers are inherently inhospitable to social relationships. Scholarship has finally caught up with what many users of CMC had long known: Social relationships thrive on-line and have since the beginning of interactive computing (Baym, 1998, p. 35)

As Baym shows, early media research examining networked communication technologies was often an effort to defend them against assumptions that they were inferior. Of course almost as quickly, the threat of utopianism popped up. "It will be unfortunate if we do not make attempts to understand CMC as a social technology alongside other social activities and relationships and if we uncritically accept that CMC will usher in the great new era that other media of communication have failed to bring us" (Jones, 1998, p. 29). Carey

(2008) made a similar argument that previous assumptions of new media technologies bringing about utopias had all proven false (p. 93).

As mass communication research on CMC progressed, it was called CMC by fewer and fewer scholars. Salwen et al. (2005) discussed "online news" and mentioned discussion boards and online chats. Pavlik (2001) discussed "online journalism" and "new media" in his discussion asking if communication innovations would reshape the news and its role in Democracy (pp. 23-27). Flew's (2009) tome on new media establishes a list of key terms and tracks ten of the best known theorists of media in networks. The theorists Flew cites who are most pertinent to this study of communication and organizational change at several levels of a news company include Castells, who has been discussed in depth. Flew mentions Scott Lash, who argues "that critiques of relations of power, inequality, and domination of such technological and information culture can no longer operate outside it" (Flew, 2009, p. 65). In other words, Flew is summarizing Lash's take to mean that critical theorists cannot escape the network society. Finally, Flew (2009) cites Mark Poster who "argued that subjective identities were not only already being formed and shaped by technology—the ways in which personal information is coded, mapped, and organized on computer databases is a clear example of this—but there was also the scope to 'play' with subjective identity" (p. 71). The implication from Flew is that the key research involves mostly technological diffusion and impact on groups (even critics) and individuals. Perhaps this is what is most interesting to media scholars – to identify potential threats to the status quo (even the status quo of critical theory). Perhaps this is another example of "innovation bias" (Rogers, 2003).

Media scholarship concerning the impact of digitally networked communication technologies is becoming commonplace. One can hardly attend a session at a scholarly conference or glance at the cover of a mass communication journal without seeing the word "network" or a reference to social media or some other digital phenomenon. Even research not primarily focused on a specific emerging medium or technology may incorporate different types of networked devices or media as variables.

Deuze (2011) explains the need for more scholarship on communication innovations in news organizations that focuses on implications for the future of news work, media formats and new business models: "Scholarship on the production side of media industries is relatively scarce (when considered next to content analysis and audience research) but growing, as the prominence of media production…increases, next to global concerns about the changing nature of (media) work" (Deuze, 2011, p. x). Without referencing Castells (2010), Dueze is making connections to his claims about the changing nature of work in the "network society." Recall that Castells (2010) argues that social organization in places of work is deeply influenced by the spread of network technologies. Deuze's (2011) approach to changes in media production is sociological in nature and provides a fresh look at some of the same institutional media phenomena addressed in this paper.

> Journalists today enter a workforce that is built on the heyday of the 20th century era of omnipresent mass media but that is expected to perform in a contemporary news ecology where individualization, globalization, and the pervasive role of corresponding networked technologies challenge all the assumptions traditional news making is based on (Deuze, 2011, p. 117).

In essence, this study examines how these assumptions are challenged and to what extent, but it also asks how they may hold fast and bend the technology to established norms and traditions.

The Development of an Online News Business Model in the context of New Institutionalism

Interest in examining new business models for online news is shared in academic and industry circles (Chyi, 2005). In recent years, news workers, especially in the newspaper industry, have witnessed tens of thousands of layoffs and buyouts (Smith, 2011). Staff reductions followed the crackup of the newspaper business model, fed by decades of declining subscription rates and steep drops in advertising revenue as well as plummeting stock prices that dropped when newspapers leveraged outstanding profit margins to take on debt only to watch the margins shrink to the point that the debt was often unmanageable (Edmonds, Guskin, & Rosenstiel, 2011; "News Investment," 2010). Staff cuts focusing on short-term attempts to protect profits have journalists and scholars asking if technological changes are mostly to blame (Domingo et al., 2008; Meyer, 2009; Paulussen & Ugille, 2008). Laying blame is only useful if it sets the groundwork for developing strategic courses of action. I argue that contributing to strategic planning in communication industries is an essential goal of developing communication theory; therefore, an analysis of the underlying business model associated with the online news platform studied here is important to include in this study.

Schiff (2006), in an updated version of a paper first published in 2003, finds that advertising leads all sources of revenue in online news (n.p.). In addition, "Interactive networking offers perhaps the most potential for consolidating and mobilizing news audiences, but so far it is the least explored and fastest growing unique medium feature" (n.p.). This addresses the central purpose of this dissertation: to examine an innovative news platform that attempts to carve an audience out of the mass of citizens already online by attracting them to a news-focused online social network. Besides asking how the innovative news platform is adopted and shaped by the news organization (RQ1), it is also important to examine how the related business model functions and whether it appears to be viable in its environment. This analysis has two parts. First is a discussion of the business model in the context of other current efforts to fund digital journalism. Second is an examination of the institutional conditions surrounding the new model and whether the setting bodes well for its survival.

Digital journalism business models in mass communication research. Scholars of media economics provide background for the discussion of the business model as it relates to other efforts to fund digital news media (Chyi, 2005; Chyi & Sylvie, 1998, 2010; Chyi, Yang, Lewis, & Zheng, 2009), as do intellectuals who publish blogs about the industry (Glaser, 2011; Jarvis, 2011; J. Rosen, 2011). Using econometric modeling, Chyi (2005) examines whether people will pay for online news content and what factors might drive those decisions. Chyi (2005) finds, in this study based on a random-sample telephone survey conducted in Hong Kong, that few people are willing to pay for online subscriptions, and those who will pay tend to be newspaper readers already (p. 131). This paints a bleak picture for media companies hoping to grow online news products funded

by subscription models. Glaser, Jarvis, and Rosen each has his own evolving analysis of best practices and best hopes for developing a viable online news model. Jarvis tends to publish based on personal business experience (Jarvis, 2009). Rosen (2001) is a bit more academic in his approach, and Glaser manages MediaShift, an aggregator of the latest industry news with a focus on emerging digital media. These influential thinkers are generally not optimistic about setting up paywall-based subscription models. There may be some hope for growth in online advertising, but there are no sure-fire models for supporting large, generalized news operations online (Jarvis, 2009). Any hints at finding a successful model are eagerly awaited in industry and academia (Samuelson, 2009).

Kaye and Quinn (2010) examine several types of online news innovations. They describe a dozen current industry trends in the search for viable digital business models, including non-profit sponsorship, micropayment systems, citizen journalism collaboration models, partnerships between large metro news organizations and smaller websites, as well as the viability of news sold on e-reader platforms and the like. "Ultimately, we believe, news organizations will rely on a combination of revenue sources…It will be impossible to apply a one-size-fits-all commercial solution to the wide-ranging forms of news dissemination that are now possible" (p. 173). The business model examined in this study has at least three sources of revenue. These are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Kaye and Quinn (2010) combine their discussion of business models with analysis of distribution platforms. The business/media model that most resembles the one studied here was introduced in Singapore in 2009. "Founding editor Jennifer Lewis described *Stomp* as a bridge between traditional newspapers and young readers. The

focus would be on involving readers and interacting with them through user-generated content" (Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p. 84). Singapore's *Stomp* incorporates social networking capabilities and strives for user interaction. Although the site is focused on youth culture, "'[W]e also see an older demographic aged in their 40s who are very active in what we call Singapore Scene, which is our citizen journalism section'" (p. 84). There is a high level of collaboration between journalists and citizen contributors on the site. Thus far, it has been part of a successful addition of several digital offerings developed by a media company that also operates a newspaper (SPH). It has led to the publishing of a bestselling book, but Kaye and Quinn (2010) do not provide user stats or revenue reports. *Stomp* has an advantage in that Singapore's culture is tech-savvy. The organization in this study might have a more difficult hill to climb in America's midwestern suburban fringe. At the very least, the existence of *Stomp* suggests that so-called "wired" societies are experimenting in a similar fashion with social networks and journalism.

  New institutionalism and change in news organizations. The "new institutionalism" framework helps inform this analysis. Theories under the umbrella of new institutionalism help explain how organizational culture may enhance or limit change. Powell & DiMaggio (1991) point out: "there are as many 'new institutionalisms' as there are social science disciplines" (p. 1). The framework applicable here comes from sociology. Borrowing from Powell & DiMaggio (1991), I define institutions as social constructs that provide rules by which organizations can relate to one another in predictable ways (p. 9). Rules may be formal or informal. One of the only consistent concepts underlying definitions of institutions is that they form connections between groups that are themselves complex. "Institutions arise and persist when they confer

benefits greater than the transaction costs (that is, the costs of negotiation, execution, and enforcement) incurred in creating them" (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 3-4). Institutions provide stability (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1991). Institutional norms are costly to set up. They rarely happen according to a rational plan, but their existence is expected to save money, time, and/or effort over the long run. "Norms governing interpersonal relationships both constrain and facilitate behavior by defining the structure of incentives—material and nonmaterial—for individuals situated in a group" (Brinton & Nee, 1998, p. 19) Although it can be difficult to establish an institution, it can be even more difficult to ignore, modify or break one up.

Meyer & Rowan (1991) argue that formal structures in organizations derive from "myths embedded in the institutional environment" (p. 41). What makes up institutional environments? For Meyer & Rowan, they are constituted by rules, and it is important to differentiate these rules from "prevailing social behaviors…Institutions inevitably involve normative obligations but often enter into social life primarily as facts which must be taken into account by actors" (p. 42). Organizations will often follow institutional rules in order to "maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities" (p. 53). However, members of organizations have reasons for breaking rules: formal rules can get in the way of efficiency. "[A]n organization can resolve conflicts between ceremonial rules and efficiency by employing two interrelated devices: decoupling and the logic of confidence" (p. 57). Decoupling refers to a process where an organization will "maintain standardized, legitimating, formal structures while their activities vary in response to practical considerations" (p. 58). The logic of confidence is related and refers to the public maintenance of a façade suggesting that an

organization is operating according to institutional myths despite the fact that actual

practices deviate from the rules. Meyer & Rowan (1991) point out that "maintenance of

face" can be beneficial (p. 58). "The committed participants engage in informal

coordination that, although often formally inappropriate, keeps technical activities

running smoothly and avoids public embarrassments" (p. 59). Thus, there are institutional

pressures that appear in the form of rules so widely accepted they become myths, and

there are real-world practices that often hide behind facetious attempts to save face.

Lowery (2011) identifies the most prevalent form of decoupling in the news

industry in which news organizations maintain publicly that they are legitimate sources of

the information needed to fuel democratic discourse and practice, while internally they

must be at least equally concerned with competition and the economic bottom line. The

practice of seeking legitimacy by publicly keeping face, e.g. professionalizing news

practices, is important in this study because it may negatively affect efforts to innovate.

> This need for legitimacy may be slowing innovation efforts by news organizations…The institutional nature of newspapers requires maintenance of public legitimacy, and accord with norms and practices that have been widely accepted across the field. This contributes to change efforts that are fleeting, skin deep, merely ceremonial, or unpopular with staff (Lowery, 2011, p. 67).

Lowery identifies two paths for organizations attempting to innovate. They may follow

institutional leaders, to "bolster legitimacy" as they "seek to avoid uncertainty" (p. 68), or

they may pursue "active interaction and involvement with less familiar entities that offer

novel perspectives and expertise" (p. 68). Lowery's paper is concerned with the

antecedents to decisions about technology adoption. When it comes to the business model

examined here, the decision to pursue a "less familiar" innovation has already been made.

Thus this research can contribute, in a qualitative manner, to the line of inquiry

established by Lowery (2011) by asking if institutional conditions hinder or help the progress of an innovation even after a path has been selected. An example of the way institutional conditions might hinder innovation is if other organizations with which the news company does business demand legitimacy to the detriment of investment in the new platform. On the other hand, institutional relationships might contribute to the development of the new business model. Lowery's research is primarily focused on institutional journalism, perhaps other institutions will appreciate the novelty or the connectivity of the new platform and will support the business *because of* its technological leap of faith.

"Social Journalism," Public Journalism and the Hope for a Viable Digital Public Sphere

The potential for the "social journalism" platform to create a limited but functioning public sphere online is one of the most compelling reasons to study its development. Several mass communication scholars have examined the possibility that digital communication technologies might be used to create (virtual) spaces for rational critical debate (re: Habermas, 1989) (Curran, 1991; Dahlberg, 2001a; Dahlgren, 2005; Papacharissi, 2002). Papacharissi (2002) notes the dichotomous nature of new digital technologies. E.g.: The capacity for information storage and retrieval is immense, but access is unequal; Technology connects people around the world, but it can accelerate fragmentation into political camps; Political power could mold technology to its forms

rather than technology creating "new public space for politically oriented conversation" (Papacharissi, 2002, p. 9).

> The Internet and its surrounding technologies hold the promise of reviving the public sphere; however, several aspects of these new technologies simultaneously curtail and augment that potential…whether this public space transcends to a public sphere is not up to the technology itself (p. 9).

Scholars of journalism studies often find it necessary to point out that they are not espousing a utopian or deterministic view of the potential for digital media to beget digital democracy. They want to distance their hope for the construction of a functioning public sphere from the assumptions made when the Internet was first being widely adopted. Clift (1998) summarizes the zeitgeist: "The Internet will save democracy. Or so the early 1990s technohype led many to believe. With each new communication medium comes a wide-eyed view about its potential. I'd like to suggest that just as the television saved democracy, so will the Internet" (n.p.). Many scholars recognize that utopian hopes were expressed about every emerging media technology since the introduction of the telegraph (and possibly earlier) (Carey, 2008, p. 146; Nye, 1997). Often they would like to see the development of a functioning public sphere, but they take care to point out that it will take more than the logic of technology for this to happen.

Rheingold (2000), one of the first out of the gate with high hopes for the public Internet, does not promote a purely utopian point of view, but he champions the "virtual community" and the "social web," two concepts underlying the "social journalism" platform. Rheingold first published his book describing online communities of like-minded idealists in 1993, when access to online discussion boards was novel, exciting, and billed by the hour (2000). In it, Rheingold (2000) glorifies the friendships and discussions generated online: "About two dozen social scientists, working for several

years, might produce conclusions that would help inform these debates and furnish a basis of validated observation for all the theories flying around" (p. 54-55). Habermas might point out that Rheingold's intellectually rich online cadre was made up of others in the bourgeoisie or better.

Rheingold popularized the term "the virtual community" with the first (1993) edition of his book by the same name, but another of his phrases seems even more applicable to this study: "The social web, a notion journalists and investors found radical and futuristic in 1996, has emerged from both the grassroots and the big players in today's highly commercialized web enterprises" (Rheingold, 2000, p. 340). From the "virtual community" to the "social web," Rheingold was ahead of the curve and optimistic about digital media. "You used to need both money and expertise to set up a webconference, chatroom, or listserv. Now online communication tools are public goods…A huge social experiment is taking place, as people and enterprises take up these tools, are changed by them, and change the way others live, work, and play" (pp. 340-341). But before assuming Rheingold is purely an idealist, consider his conclusory call to action:

> Hope should not be vested in the tool itself…A tax break for corporations that donate to the public sphere, for example, might do more good than all the rhetoric and all the books decrying the deterioration of civic engagement…There is no guarantee that the potential power of many-to-many communications will make a difference in political battles about the shape of our future. Indeed, the odds are against a media-literate population seizing the opportunities the Internet offers. But I believe the opportunity for leverage is there, waiting to be seized, ignored, or mishandled. The hegemony of culture, power, and capital that critics from Marx to Fernback and Thompson describe is a potent force to be reckoned with. But if we don't try to make a difference in the way tools are used and people are treated, we definitely *won't* make a difference (2000, p. 390).

I suggest that several media scholars echo Rheingold and make virtually the same argument: digital communication tools could be shaped to provide deliberative discursive functionality, but it will take a great deal of human effort.

Bowman & Willis in *We Media* (2003) identify what they believe to be a cycle of discourse emerging between mainstream media outlets and citizen journalists:

> What is emerging is a new media ecosystem…where online communities discuss and extend the stories created by mainstream media. These communities also produce participatory journalism, grassroots reporting, innovative reporting, commentary and fact-checking, which the mainstream media feed upon, developing them as a pool of tips, sources and story ideas (n.p.).

But against the backdrop of this hopeful view, Terranova (2004) suggests society may not be capable of building a public sphere no matter how fertile the media ecosystem may be. "The problem is that this entity, this public which is deemed to exist somewhere at the end of the communication process…often do[es] not seem to embody the qualities of the 'enlightened citizen' at all" (p. 133). "What use is the social web," she seems to ask, "if society is not prepared to use it?" If what Terranova postulates is true, a successful platform would have to attract, educate and encourage discourse in society.

For many mass communication scholars, the public journalism model immediately comes to mind as relevant recent history. Conducted in newsrooms around the country in various formats, public/civic journalism projects were designed to educate citizens about the news media and to invite them to educate journalists about their most pressing issues (Merritt, 1998). Many of the projects invited community members to contribute by writing their own stories for special sections published in the newspaper or on newspapers' websites (Rosenberry & St John, 2009). Bardoel and Deuze (2001) note that the public journalism movement was a response to the perception that American

journalism institutions serve business interests first and communities second. Merritt (1998) and others (Charity, 1995) supported a brand of journalism that focused on public outreach. The debate over the public journalism movement mirrors the previous discussion about institutionalism. A key question was whether public journalism was a sincere effort or an attempt to save institutional face (re: Lowery, 2011).

Some scholars praised the public journalism movement as a worthy experiment while others criticized it as crass marketing (Rosenberry & St John, 2009). Much criticism reflected its implementation rather than its ideals; however, a vocal group of journalists and scholars consider communitarian ideals a threat to journalistic liberty (Merrill, Gade, & Blevens, 2001). The movement lost steam throughout the 2000s. Rosenberry & St. John (2009) argue that public journalism should not be taken as a failed experiment but as the first version of currently burgeoning online efforts in participatory journalism. In this study, I ask if the "social journalism" platform takes up the mantle of public journalism, considering what it entails both good and bad. I also briefly address the potential of the social journalism model to create a functioning public sphere. Bearing in mind the concerns of critics of the public sphere ideal, I hold the "social journalism" model up to three standards: Can it attract users to log on virtually, plug in mentally and turn out content?

Research Questions

This study looks at the development of a "social journalism" platform. It follows a tradition of mass communication research interested in the diffusion and impact of

communication technology innovations and employs a balanced theoretical framework

that looks at social influences *on* technology as well. I posit the following research

question in the context of the mutual shaping of technology construct and the hierarchical

model's levels of analysis. Its simplicity belies its demand for a complex, multi-level

analysis:

RQ1: What evidence exists of a mutual shaping of technology process at each of five hierarchical levels in a news organization developing a platform for social journalism? How does this process function?

After a thorough discussion of the previous question, the key portion of this study,

two other important concepts are addressed: the viability of the business model

underlying the innovative platform and the historical context of "social journalism," in

particular its relationship to public or civic journalism.

First, I examine the business model underlying the "social journalism" platform. I

place it in the context of other new models for funding digital journalism (Kaye & Quinn,

2010). Then, I discuss the influence of institutional forces on organizational change in the

context of efforts to fund "social journalism." Institutions, once established, are

generally resistant to change, even across (human) generations (Zucker, 1991).

"Institutionalized products…and programs function as powerful myths…But conformity

to institutionalized rules often conflicts sharply with efficiency criteria" (J. W. Meyer &

Rowan, 1991). This means following institutional rules may cause an organization to

function in an inefficient way.

In news organizations, it is possible that institutional conditions are blocking the

development of new business models (Lowery, 2011). Lowery (2011) addresses the

choices news organizations must make when trying to innovate without having successful precedents to follow. He essentially frames a question: "Do organizations follow the institutional myth or do they innovate and take an unfamiliar path?" In this case, I have already argued that the organization elected to innovate when it built the model, but the question remains whether institutional forces will limit the innovation's success by demanding that the organization return its focus to institutional legitimacy, i.e. to a position that does not threaten the myth of the institution of journalism. Alternatively, other organizations outside of the institution of journalism might welcome the change, and the institutional relationships in those cases might act to assist the development of the model. A third possibility is that the new model could prove to successfully reinforce the myths of institutional journalism in a new technological context.

There is broad interest in developing sustainable models for news, even if there will never be another one-size-fits-all model (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). The type of business model underlying "social journalism" should be examined in detail. There is interest in its potential viability, and there is significance in how it relates in institutional terms to other organizations. Thus, two research questions are proposed. The first aims to place the online business model in the context of others as identified in mass communication research. The second frames a discussion of the viability of the business model in the context of the theoretical paradigm of new institutionalism.

RQ2a: What are the key elements of an online business model associated with a social journalism platform?

RQ2b: How do existing institutional conditions and relationships appear to help or hinder the development of a business model for social journalism?

Finally, this study turns to an analysis of the news model in the context of other participatory approaches. Without expecting a digital utopia to flourish, it is interesting to ask how closely the model in this study matches the ideal public sphere and if it might be considered a reintroduction of the efforts of the public journalism movement. Just as scholars, industry leaders and journalists are interested in the viability of the business model, the "social journalism" model's viability as a platform for the social construction of meaning is in question. While the key analysis of this paper is couched in terms of technological development and the mutual shaping of technology construct, media scholars might be interested to see evidence from the so-called trenches of social journalism about its efforts to build a space for constructive discourse. Two research questions follow this line of inquiry. The first asks if this work constitutes a continuation of the public/civic journalism movement, introduced in the 1990s, that attempted, among other things to build partnerships between news organizations and their communities to create spaces for rational-critical debate (Glasser, 1999; Merritt, 1998; Rosenberry & St John, 2009). The other seeks to examine the news model and briefly, directly compare it to the ideal public sphere.

RQ3a: What evidence, if any, exists that this effort to introduce "social journalism" represents an extension of the public journalism movement?

RQ3b: In what ways is or is not the "social journalism" platform a model for a functioning online public sphere?

CHAPTER III: METHOD

The purpose of this study is to examine a mutual dynamic of technological and organizational change in a news company. Responding to economic and technological pressures, the news organization studied here is creating and shaping an innovative "social journalism," platform, which entails the development of a new business model and could lead to the reorganization of news production across the company. Citizen-users have been involved in the design process throughout the life of this innovation. This study examines the interplay between technological and social forces in a holistic manner enabling the inclusion of multiple factors viewed from multiple perspectives.

Three research questions guide this study. Two are divided into component pieces to simplify the analysis, but there are essentially three lines of inquiry. The first concerns the mutually influential technological and social forces viewed at various levels of news production in an organization. The second set of research questions calls for an analysis of the accompanying business model in the context of institutional theories of organizational change. The third set of questions frames the development of the news model in the context of the public journalism movement and compares it to the underlying ideal of the online public sphere.

Case study method

The broad nature of these research questions demands a method that enables all-inclusive analysis. In this study, the main research method employed is the case study

method, which enables the analysis of several concepts at once in a holistic, deeply descriptive format. The case study method will often develop more research questions than it answers (Yin, 2008). I argue that at this stage of relative crisis and innovation in journalism, exploratory research is not only justifiable, it is necessary. The term "case study" signifies: "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1989, p. 23 quoted in Platt, 1992, p. 45). This suits the current study well in that technological change is both context and variable, and scholars are still working in many instances to try to separate causes from effects.

The case study tradition comes in large part from the experience of sociologists originally trained in social work (Platt, 1992). "Historically, the origin of the idea of the case study seems to have had a lot to do with the social worker's "case history" (Platt, 1992, p. 19). Studies are built on aggregating the experiences of many individuals as observed either in the field or through an interview process and identifying, categorizing and synthesizing analysis of key themes. The case study method is challenging. It requires identifying the overarching case and delimiting appropriate research questions as well as justifying the study's contribution to theory and classifying the case as typical or unique. Careful documentation of data gathering methods and reflexive analysis are often required as well. The onus is on the researcher to infuse methodological rigor, since statistical mathematical rigor is not a factor in qualitative case studies (Yin, 2008).

Flyvbjerg (2006) identifies four different types of case study: extreme/deviant cases, maximum variation cases, critical cases and paradigmatic cases (p. 230). The case studied here is an extreme case. Maximum variation studies examine several cases that

are extremely different on only one variable. This is not applicable because this paper is based on a single case study, and if there were several case studies, they would differ in more ways than one. According to Flyvbjerg, a critical case is meant to be generalized from. This is not applicable either since there is no evidence that this case is quite like any other. An extreme case "can be especially problematic or especially good" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). It may prove to be a paradigmatic case if many other similar cases develop along the same lines, but Flyvbjerg (2006) notes, this would only be recognizable after the fact. A deviant or extreme case can offer a fresh approach to cutting edge problems. Whether it blazes a trail of success or goes down in flames, it is of interest to others with similar cases or in similar groups via its contribution to theoretical models.

Construct validity. Yin (2008) argues that case studies should connect data to theory through the development of a descriptive framework, which may be case-specific (Kindle loc. 2714, Ch. 5). Around this framework, evidence from the case is added in order to make meaningful, well-documented statements about the theory. This ensures a connection between data and theory. In this study, dovetailing the dynamic mutual shaping of technology construct with the five levels of analysis of the gatekeeping process from Shoemaker & Vos (2009) provides a strong descriptive framework. In addition, the levels of analysis from Shoemaker & Vos (2009) increase the expectation of reliability in future studies, since the same categories can be applied to news organizations in various contexts. Yin (2008) suggests exploring alternative explanations for causes and effects as a way to fend off "threats to validity" (Kindle loc. 2862, Ch. 5).

Data collection. This case study employs an in-depth, semi-structured interview method of data collection. Weiss (1995, pp. 9-11) lists seven reasons to conduct a qualitative interview study: "1.) The qualitative interview is good for developing detailed descriptions; 2.) The method helps at integrating multiple perspectives; 3.) It enables the researcher to describe processes; 4.) In-depth interviewing helps in developing holistic descriptions; 5.) It aids in investigating how events are interpreted; 6.) The method allows for 'bridging intersubjectivities,'" which means synthesizing multiple points of view (p. 10).

The in-depth interview method of data collection also helps with "identifying variables and framing hypotheses for quantitative research" (Weiss, 1995, p. 10-11). Most of these attributes apply directly to this study, designed to provide detailed descriptions of complex news making processes from multiple points of view, allowing for interpretation and synthesis of viewpoints as well as the identification of areas of interest and key variables for future research.

Interview-based case studies in mass communication. Previously conducted qualitative interview studies in mass communication research offer a few important lessons. Luscombe (2009) interviewed 27 BBC radio journalists about changes in technology and the changing culture inside the BBC. She found most journalists to be optimistic about the future of radio despite concerns about the medium's viability. Using the in-depth interview method of data collection and the case study method of analysis enabled Luscombe to discuss the nuances of technology acceptance from each individual's perspective in the news organization. Engwall (1986) used many sources of information including interviews to craft a case study about organizational change in a

Swedish Social Democratic newspaper. Engwall used in-depth interviews in particular to examine relationships between management and news employees and to shed light on organizational hierarchies and tensions throughout change processes. These studies reiterate the usefulness of the depth interview method for examining complex processes of change.

Case selection. This study is based on 21 in-depth interviews conducted at an American news organization in existence for more than 100 years. It offered a unique opportunity to examine the development of a news platform where journalists and citizens contribute to the same news space using the same online platform and user interface. In addition, citizen input is used in designing the platform itself. Another aspect that makes this case unique is its intended function in the news organization as stated by several members of management. The objective is to realign the news organization so that several niche news websites form a backbone of information gathering and (almost immediate) dissemination, and legacy media products serve as news aggregators. The process is underway, but there is no guarantee that this plan will be fully implemented. Should the "social journalism" site studied in this project fail to gain users and advertisers, the future of the overarching niche-aggregator model would be in question.

The social journalism platform is a fascinating object of study. It incorporates social-networking tools, group creation functions and private messaging capabilities similar to those available on social networking platforms, but the merging of social networking and participatory journalism make this an interesting case, particularly in the area of journalism studies. The best way to describe the novelty of this platform is to look at it from the user's perspective. By creating a profile and "following" groups and

other users, an individual can create a local niche news feed, accessible from his or her profile page. A group page may be created by users within the site who happen to share a common interest, or one may be created to represent existing organizations with antecedents in the "real world." Registered users must use their real names to contribute to the site. Users can post their own news stories, comment on posts or create individual blogs. Users post directly to the news site, their content appearing in line with a rolling feed of stories from reporters and other citizens. The news organization's reporters use the same user interface as citizens, although the professional reporter managing the site has the ability to delete comments. By registering for the site and following other users and groups, users can create customized social networks. They also have the ability to take any story or post on the site and repost it to another group. This depth of social networking capabilities, the fact that journalists and citizens publish to the same space and the fact that citizens help shape the platform itself makes this a relatively unique case, especially for an organization that still publishes a daily newspaper.

Data collection. Over the course of several weeks in early 2011, I conducted in-depth interviews with 21 employees from different departments in the organization including news, advertising, marketing, and web development with follow up interviews conducted as necessary. Interviews, on average, lasted between 75 and 90 minutes. I spoke with 15 journalists, four marketing and advertising sales professionals and two web designers (see). Each department is actively involved in attracting users and advertisers to the website in addition to their work promoting and managing other print and online products. To glean information relevant at each of the five levels of analysis from Shoemaker & Vos (2009), pairs of questions were formulated for each level. Each pair

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included one question designed to elicit responses relevant to the DI point of view and one relevant to the SST approach. Questions were phrased with efforts made to prevent shaping participants' perspectives (see Appendix A). The interview period was arranged to coincide with the release of an overhauled version of the "social journalism" site. Key social networking capabilities were not altered, but a few were added including the ability to repost stories. The layout was changed to feature more news content more heavily across all pages on the website and also to make it more visually appealing. It made for an exciting time to interview those involved with the project as the "social journalism" platform was entering a new phase, and many of the developments came as a result of citizen input.

Data analysis. Transcribing the 21 interviews produced about 500 pages of double-spaced text. Information from each interview informed follow-up questions for subsequent participants during each semi-structured interview. Most interview subjects were contacted via email to clarify a few statements as necessary. Analysis of each transcript was conducted using TAMS Analyzer (TAMS), a free qualitative data analysis software package for Apple computers. TAMS enables researchers to highlight portions of text and assign coded tags. These codes can be searched and compiled across cases for further analysis. Codes are hierarchical, so sets can be easily searched for and grouped. Dichotomized basic codes were established, in essence splitting MST into its component parts, the DI and SST approaches. These were then subdivided according to the five levels of analysis from Shoemaker & Vos (2009) (individual, routines, organizational, social institutional and social system). Subsequent codes were added to this framework as more specific themes emerged.

Operationalizing the Mutual Shaping of Technology. For a portion of a response to be coded as relating to DI, it had to refer to evidence of adoption of the "social journalism" model, whether the interview respondent was personally adopting the technology, encouraging its adoption or merely observing its adoption by a third party. The social shaping code was used to identify instances where participants reported observing members of the news organization (including themselves) and/or members of the broader community shaping perceptions or practices relating to the artifact.

When identifying how to place a certain statement in the hierarchical model, the key question to ask during coding was: Who are the two parties in this interaction? The news organization is always present. Categorization at the five levels of analysis is based on the other party involved. Just as in Shoemaker & Vos (2009), some areas are open to interpretation, and there is some overlap; e.g., a statement about the journalist changing her perceptions about her professional relationship with her audience as a result of working with the "social journalism" model is categorized in relation to DI at the routines level because it involves the concept of "role conception" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 47), a routines level concept, and that conception is reported to have been affected by working with the "social journalism" model. If a web designer reported that audience members from a specific group asked for a site feature to be changed, this would be categorized as relating to the SST concept at the institutional level. It involves institutional relationships, and the influence in this instance is exerted from an outside agent on the platform.

More than 500 codes were generated in all. As more nuanced codes were developed, it became necessary to return to previously coded interviews to check if any

of the more variegated codes were more appropriate. Basic codes were replaced as necessary. The process of coding was challenging, and codes for each interview were reviewed three or four times to assure internal consistency. As with all research, particularly qualitative case studies, there is a measure of subjectivity involved. In the findings section, specific examples are used whenever possible to demonstrate the claims made.

Since the coding structure is hierarchical, if a more nuanced code was developed based on a root theme, a search for the root term will still turn up the code. (E.g. "SST," "SST>institutional," and "SST>institutional>advisory_board" would all show up in a search for "SST.") Only *one* of these codes would be used per passage, depending on the level of specificity of the coded material. This ensures accurate code counts. If these three codes were used for three different passages, there would be three results for a search of "SST," two for a search of "institutional," and only one for "advisory_board." This is important to note because code counts are referred to throughout the analysis, and each count can only represent a single passage of interview transcript.

Often, an individual would make a statement relating to the mutual shaping of the "social journalism" platform, and immediately after making the statement, evidence would be provided to explain the point. In these cases, the entire passage was selected and counted only once. It was reasoned that the explanation of an observation should not count as a separate observation itself.

Throughout the analysis, care was taken to separate observations regarding adoption and social shaping actually witnessed from hypothetical statements about what might happen *if* the model were adopted. It is interesting to note the hypotheticals. Where

applicable they are mentioned in chapter VI, in which shifting ideals and hopes are relevant; however, hypotheticals do not provide evidence of MST and are not included in those findings.

Anonymity. It is understood that the descriptions provided in this study may make it possible to search for topics online and to guess at the identity of the news organization examined here. By not naming the organization or the health site, it is shielded from appearing in web and database searches that turn up this dissertation. The news organization in question was incredibly gracious for allowing me to conduct this analysis, and individuals were forthcoming. Their anonymity is of utmost importance. At times, participants were quite candid about their hopes and fears regarding the social journalism model and the future of their news organization, their newspaper, and their careers. Some of their feelings, if made public, might affect their standing in the organization. In order to protect their identities, participants are labeled in terms of their department in the news organization and then randomly given a number based on the total number of participants from their department. Categories include news (news: 1-11), news management (newsmgmt: 1-4), web design (design: 1-2), and advertising and marketing (ad_marketing: 1-4). Two of the participants in the ad_marketing category had duties that served both functions. This explains why these departments were lumped together. "News" and "news management" are separated because it helps to know which opinions are stated from positions of authority. Here, management is operationalized to refer to someone whose authority spreads across the entire newsroom.

CHAPTER IV

MUTUAL SHAPING OF TECHNOLOGY AT FIVE LEVELS OF A NEWS

ORGANIZATION

The mutual shaping of technology (MST) construct is an amalgamation of the

diffusion of innovations (DI) theory and social shaping of technology (SST) response.

Analysis of the development of a technological innovation in an organization using the

MST construct is expressed here as a clash between the two theoretical approaches. In

general, references to DI appear more often than references to SST throughout the data.

More detailed accounts of the emerging themes are presented in tables in each subsequent

section. The prevalence of DI-related statements could be related to the amount of time

that the "social journalism" model has been in use in the organization. One year is long

enough for the effects of a technological innovation to register, but the social shaping

process may just be underway. Journalists, news editors and marketing and advertising

professionals must first be familiar with an innovation before they can mold it to their

own purposes and/or redefine it. A completely redesigned version of the site, the "2.0"

version in internal references, was just being introduced as data were gathered for this

study. This provided some useful evidence of social shaping processes at work, evident in

changes made to that version as explained by interview participants, but it may take

several revisions of the platform for the effects of social shaping from inside the

organization and from outside, institutional, forces to become apparent. The interviews

conducted for this study provide more than enough data to identify key emerging themes

relating to both aspects of the MST construct.

The MST dynamic is apparent at all five levels of analysis. The total number of responses regarding the MST dynamic at each of the five levels ranges from 17 at the social system level to 177 at the organizational level. Counts are based on subjective analysis, but they give a good impression of the amount and types of perceived activity. At the first four levels of analysis (individual, routines, organizational and social institutional) the data are rich and provide more than enough information to identify and describe emerging themes; however, at the social system level of analysis, it was challenging for individuals to describe how their work fits into a broader social program. Attempts to aggregate the beliefs of all those interviewed in order to build a cohesive picture of MST at that level were not successful. The general themes that did emerge are briefly discussed, but this chapter focuses much more heavily on the other four levels of analysis.

There are some topics that appear across multiple levels. Overlap is expected. Shoemaker & Vos (2009) note: "There are no hard and fast rules about breaking the continuum into levels" (p. 31). Analysis usually focuses only on the facet of the topic that relates to the level of analysis in question; however, I do provide a recap of the journalist-audience/user relationship in the section on the social institutional level because it is a broad, essential topic that is better understood with a brief a summary. I include it in the institutional level of analysis because it is not mentioned in the final, short section on the social institutional level. Where applicable, suggestions for future research are made immediately following the discussion at each level of analysis. Most theoretical implications outside of the MST dynamic are dealt with in subsequent findings chapters and in the "Conclusions" section.

Findings for RQ1: The Mutual Shaping of Technology in a news organization

The first research question asked what evidence exists of a mutual shaping of technology process at each of five levels in a news organization developing a "social journalism" platform, and it also asked how this process functions. The greatest evidence of a dynamic process of the mutual shaping of technology is apparent at the organizational level. At the organizational level, 177 comments emerged relating to the MST dynamic with DI-related comments far outnumbering SST-related statements 106 to 71. The analysis suggests that changes are being made to organizational structure, to the assignment of roles, to policies, and to professional cultural beliefs in the news company as a result of the introduction of the innovative journalism platform. In response, there are competing definitions of what the platform signifies.

At the organizational level, MST processes are as much about beliefs as they are about practices. In terms of DI, there is widespread adoption of the belief that this is the organization's "platform of the future." This belief is much more widespread than the actual adoption of the "social journalism" platform by the organization. The belief accompanies changing production practices. These changes have several workers shifting their roles, and they focus news production on the development of relationships with site users and on producing multimedia and niche content. On the SST-side of the balance, there are different types of reactions to the belief that this is the direction the company has chosen to take. Some frame it positively as another step in a tradition of innovation. Others are generally skeptical about the "social journalism" model, especially because it

has not been particularly profitable in its first year. When more specific concepts can be identified that attempt to define the "platform of the future," they are best categorized as the concept of "the new hope" and the concept of "the risky experiment." Efforts to define the innovation continue.

In terms of the broader, MST dynamic at the organizational level, ongoing processes of change (Boczkowski, 2004a, p. 255) involve both practice and belief. There are more comments about beliefs, but the impact of changing practices and the way workers react to those changes may prove to be more important to the success of the platform and to the broader theoretical implications should something similar be adopted in other organizations. Beliefs provide an atmosphere that can help or hinder change, but the financial success of the platform is probably more dependent upon whether or not the organization can handle the structural shifts. In this case, the historical context of the organization gives it a leg up on managing these kinds of changes, but previous experience with changing communication technologies is not a guarantee of successful adaptation.

At the institutional level of analysis, evidence of social shaping processes outweighs evidence relating to the DI theoretical perspective 69 to 66. This is the only level of analysis for which this is the case. At the institutional level, the *creation* of an "advisory board" is considered a part of the innovation, but changes to the HealthSite (the stand-in name for the "social journalism" site) made as a result of the board's guidance are considered evidence of social shaping. At the institutional level, the "social journalism" platform development can be seen as an iterative process directly influenced by the involvement of community groups. This is a strong example of the MST dynamic

in action. The platform has a social shaping mechanism built in. As opposed to the organizational level, where there is a balance of data regarding belief and practice, at the institutional level, the heavy focus is on real-world activity. The institutional level analysis concerns community outreach, advertiser training, advisory board meetings and real changes made to the "social journalism" site by web designers, which come as a result of requests from the community. This is a quintessential example of an ongoing process of change in a dynamic of mutual influence. Although the amount of information is not as large at the institutional level of analysis as it is at the organizational level, the relative importance of the dynamic at this level is arguably greater.

At the individual and routines levels, the MST dynamic is less robust. Data for these sections mostly come from statements made by the reporter managing the HealthSite and a few others who anticipate managing sites of their own. At the individual level, only 38 relevant comments were found. Analysis of DI-related concepts at the individual level includes a discussion of the reporter's "professional role conceptions" (the ways she defines her duties as a journalist) (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 47) and "story conceptions," which refers both to cognitive heuristics (common-sense rules about what should or should not be considered news) and to news values. "News values" are usually associated with the routines-level of analysis (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 53), but I argue that it does not make sense to seek evidence of the routinization of general news values in an organization dedicated to producing niche news. Instead, I include references to news values developed on the "social journalism" platform through a collaborative process with site users. Some, including the journalist who manages the HealthSite, argue that their news values are not changing. I interpret this as a desire to

demonstrate adherence to generalist news norms even as niche practices are being adopted. Maintaining a different set of heuristics for niche news and for general news is not evidence of DI-related processes. Niche reporting is nothing new; however, I argue that the added element of direct collaboration makes this a different process for evolving heuristics and news values.

The implications for MST at the individual level are not as extensive as they are for the organizational and institutional levels. With only one reporter working full time on the social journalism platform at the time this research was conducted, it is difficult to say how these processes will play out in other situations. Most of the change and reaction to change discussed here are relative to the individual's cognitive processes and professional approach. The most important point to note here may be that professionals might ignore or deny change processes if they have a cultural reason to do so.

At the routines level, 68 relevant comments emerge. Fifty-nine of them are related to the DI perspective. Comments about the HealthSite reporter/manager's heavy work routine dominate the discussion, which also includes descriptions of how others in the organization contribute content to the site and how the reporter's orientation to the site's users includes service to them as an advocate and as a technology trainer. The term "orientation to the audience" (or users) makes reference to the routine nature of the relationship. These are practices repeated on a fairly consistent basis. On the SST side of the coin, the reporter is able to shift her own schedule from time to time, and others frame their contributions to the site as help they are happy to give.

One implication from the routines level of analysis for MST on a broader scale is that this may be evidence that social-technological interdependence leads to more work

on the part of the human. Rather than using computers to do most of her work, the reporter is beholden to a busy schedule and to a social network of users who expect instant replies to their comments.

At the social system level of analysis, only 17 comments emerged. Most interview participants could not define what differentiates the American media system from others. The nine DI related comments made general reference to the hope that the "social journalism" innovation would serve communities well. Eight comments on the SST side framed the innovation as a potential source of hope to preserve traditional ideals; however, there is not enough data emerging at this level to suggest that there are implications for a broader discussion of how MST functions. Perhaps that in and of itself is a commentary on the limits of the model when viewed through the lens of organizational change.

A primary goal for almost everyone involved in the development of the "social journalism" platform is to find a sustainable model for journalism in a networked environment. This study cannot determine whether the platform will be a success. At the time of this writing, the HealthSite is primarily supported by the local hospital. Without that sponsorship, the innovation (or the "risky experiment," depending on your point of view) would be in danger of being shut down. Success has not been immediate in terms of garnering massive amounts of users or instant support from a variety of advertisers. Some in the organization argue that the "social journalism" platform should be evaluated the way some technological startups are and given a few years to become profitable (newsmgmt2). Others want to see results right away, since the industry is in dire straits, and news companies can ill afford to waste money.

Besides the important economic goals, the site architect sums up the news goal of "social journalism," which largely comes from her own vision:

> I mean we're not inventing anything new for the Internet. We're catching up to it if you will, but we are inventing new things for journalism; and, I feel that journalism is very important still and that although there's lots of people besides journalists that can commit an act of journalism, there's a difference between that and creating this structure for what social journalism needs to be, and I think that's what we're doing here. I think by the very response we've had from our community and the kind of engagement that I have seen, I think we're on the right track (newsmgmt2).

The track she describes is one of deep collaboration with a geographical community on specific niche topics. Under this model, the reporter acts as a news gatherer, content provider, content curator, conversation moderator, community organizer, and part-time marketer. The goal of the next major iteration of the HealthSite (3.0) is to unveil a web application to help groups on the "social journalism" platform set community goals. The ideal, then, is for a news organization to act as an agent of social change.

It is apparent from the limited success of this model in its first year that community members are not necessarily enthralled by the chance to contribute content to this particular news niche, but the project is still in its early stages. There are plans to add several more niche sites to the platform. The true test will come if and when several niche sites are built and people have an opportunity to select those that interest them the most. It will take more time, more observation, and continued, detailed empirical study before it can be determined whether the "social journalism" model is sustainable; however, the theoretical implications of this research will hopefully prove useful regardless of whether the "social journalism" model thrives or not.

What follows is a level-by-level analysis of the data with tables identifying the prevalence of emerging themes. Each discussion is made in terms of the level of analysis

as operationalized in the literature review. Suggestions for future research are provided, and the usefulness and validity of the MST construct is addressed throughout.

Individual Level

Recall that the individual level of analysis was operationalized to refer to the *personal characteristics* and *cognitive processes* of news workers and the ways those processes and characteristics shape or are shaped by the "social journalism" innovation. When interviews for this study were conducted, only one reporter was working directly with the social journalism platform on a daily basis. Most observations (30, DI and SST combined) come from her and from fellow reporters anticipating the possibility that they may manage sites on this platform in the future. The total number of responses at the individual level is 38, and, of those, 29 refer to evidence on the DI side of the balance.

The themes emerging from the interview data suggest that an MST dynamic is present at the individual level of analysis, although it is limited in scope. Table 4.1 lists two main themes: the "journalist-audience/user relationship" and "story conceptions," and it shows the number of times each is mentioned on either the DI or SST side of the balance. In this study, themes do not always appear in matching pairs on either side of the MST dynamic. It happens at this level of analysis simply because there is a limited number of possible themes that apply. The "audience/user" term indicates that the conceptualization of audience is shifting for some in the news organization.

By far (19 vs. 3), most comments regarding the journalist-audience/user relationship come from the DI perspective. The reporter who manages the "social

journalism" site and a couple of others who manage beat blogs find themselves engaging in news-based conversations with members of the public. Additionally, on the "social journalism" platform the reporter/site manager shares publishing space with site users. These journalists are re-negotiating relationships that are simultaneously professional and personal, thus personal characteristics come into play.

The "Changing story conceptions" term refers primarily to "cognitive heuristics…the rules of thumb that people commonly use in making decisions" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 37). Here, there is more of a balance (10 vs. 6) between DI and SST-related comments. In fact, some individuals (news1, news2) appear to contradict themselves when explaining how the "social journalism" model relates to their thinking about news. Niche news judgment and general news judgment are often different (Stroud, 2011). A small number of reporters who contribute to the "social journalism" site appear to be developing and employing niche news heuristics while claiming to maintain a *strict focus* on general news values. I discuss the social reasons reporters might have for claiming that their news judgment never changes while demonstrating otherwise. Also, in 11 instances, interview participants mentioned rejecting the innovation. This does not fit nicely into the MST model, but I explain at the end of this section why these comments are important to include.

In addition, I make the case that it is appropriate to discuss news values at the individual level of analysis in relationship to the "social journalism" platform. In Shoemaker & Vos (2009), news values are said to relate to the "routines" level of analysis. News values instilled in journalism school (or in other news organizations) are refined at the organizational level and often redefined in the local community context.

Table 4.1

Mutual Shaping of Technology at the Individual Level

	Theme	Occurrences	Description
DI			
	Changing professional role conceptions in relation to the audience/users	19	*Journalists negotiate publishing space with user-contributors, which includes forming personal relationships, rethinking the role of advertisers and dealing with concerns for being "scooped."*
	Changing story conceptions	10	*In the "social journalism" model, the heuristics are similar to those of niche journalism; however, the unique level of collaboration shapes news values in a way not seen in other niche publications.*
SST			
	Unchanging story conceptions	6	*Journalists hold onto a definition of news as a constant that will not shift for niche news or for "social journalism."*
	Unchanging professional role conceptions	3	*Reporters vigorously argue that they must maintain some level of detachment.*

	Participant categories	Number of responses
DI		
	News	22
	News Management	3
	Ad/Marketing	2
	Design	2
	Total	**29**
SST		
	News	8
	News Management	1
	Total	**9**

News values are then put to use in journalists' day-to-day routines, "based, in part, on assumptions about the audience" (p. 53). But on the "social journalism" platform, when the individual is in constant contact with a network of users, and when the journalist is almost solely responsible for creating and curating niche-focused content, it may no longer make sense for the news organization to develop broad assumptions about news and to encourage reporters to apply those news values in their daily routines. Traditional news vales might be interpreted for each niche site by the individual site manger, the reporter, which would make it more appropriate to count them along with cognitive heuristics at this level of analysis. Of course, a journalist may experience a shift in news values and not admit it. This phenomenon is central to the SST discussion in this chapter.

Personal characteristics. Unpacking the ways the "social journalism" model is shaping and is shaped by the personal characteristics of journalists, three sub-themes emerge when looking at DI-related responses. First, journalists are navigating new personal relationships with web users. Second, they are reworking their relationships with advertisers. Third, journalists find they have new concerns about being "scooped" by site users. On the SST side of the balance, statements concern the desire on the part of a couple of journalists to maintain separation between themselves and their audience/users.

It appears that working with the social journalism model influences professional identity, particularly in terms of the individual journalist's relationship with site users. "I join all the groups, and I follow a lot of people, and my job is trying to catch all that activity because …I have a different interest in the website – as a system" (news1). Rather than filtering information to suit an audience, the reporter running the health site

is "trying to catch all that activity" to serve a network of collaborators. It is part of the design of the "social journalism" model that the concept of audience fades away. "It brings the [journalists and others] who work on the site together. It makes them users of the site. So you can't, as a journalist, you can't be off somewhere else just sort of sending things to the site. You have to be part of [the HealthSite] to use it" (design1). The reporter managing the HealthSite is considered a community organizer, curating the site's comments and user-generated content while still reporting on her own news stories. She recounts making personal connections as a result of working on the site. "I probably just know who [the site users] are now. Before I didn't. You know, they were anonymous when they commented. Now I know their names. I feel like I know them as a person more" (news1). Others in the news organization have recognized changes in her approach to the online community. "[The reporter's] connection in the health community is not just with organizations but with users. She knows what segments of people are affected by the things that she posts or by stories that she puts on the homepage" (news8). Working with the "social journalism" model is affecting the site manager's personal approach to her work. She has a closer connection to the HealthSite's users than she does to the newspaper's print or online audience. This is an important example of the influence of "social journalism" on the HealthSite manager's "professional role conceptions" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 47). This is an interesting individual level impact, but that depth of personal change is not widespread.

Generally speaking, the term "audience" appears a bit more often than the term "users" in these interviews, although web developers almost exclusively refer to "users" on their sites. The term "community" appears in several transcripts as well. I believe this

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indicates a slow shift in perceptions. For example, one reporter noted a critical way his relationship with the audience is changing. "[The "social journalism" project director] always says the community is our editor. Just write the thing and get it out there. The community will fix it. It will let you know. It's not that you just throw standards out the window, but we're all on the same team" (news 2). The reporter speaking in this case is only moderately supportive of this shared role, but the fact that he is open to allowing the community to edit his work is evidence of a nascent shift in the relationship.

Journalists familiar with the "social journalism" model are also finding their relationships with advertisers are changing. One reporter in the process of taking over the next "social journalism" niche site, a site covering the so-called "green economy," had this to say: "You're working a lot more with advertisers, and they have a different kind of role that they play. They're advertising a product, but they're also providing information. But so that relationship where there wasn't a relationship, where there was a line you never cross, I think you are expected to kind of cross that line" (news8). When advertisers are considered contributors of valuable information within a network of users, their role and journalists' perceptions of the relationship may change dramatically from the traditional view that there should be a "mythical wall" between advertising and editorial (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 65). The breakdown of the wall appears in several interviews, and it stands as a concern but not necessarily a debate. The reporter managing the health site elaborates: "I've gotten really close to the hospital people, and we have a close relationship; and a lot of times after the board meeting I'll just sit at the table, and we'll talk about story ideas and you know, share information and personal things" (news1). This is another example of a professional relationship becoming more

personal on the "social journalism" platform, but only those with close ties to the project describe this type of departure from the professional norm.

A few reporters noted a negative aspect of the diffusion of the expectation that they form closer, more personal relationships with members of the community. As site users are encouraged to contribute content, they may beat reporters to stories. "The only worry is you lose your 'scoop' because everybody's reading the same thing I am. You know, the thing where it used to be you would find things and connect the dots and people would be, 'Oh wow! What a genius. He found that out.' It's a little different when everybody's in the community reading all the same stuff you are, and it's like, hey I might do a story about this, and they are saying, 'We were wondering when you were going to get around to that.'" (news2). "I kind of worried about this, like what if people were posting stuff that I actually would do stories on" (news1). The journalist in charge of the site claims she has not been scooped on any major stories, but the concern is that the journalist's role as a professional who brings new information to light is diminished by the amount of access afforded to citizens; although, an interesting caveat to this fear of being scooped is that at times the reporter wants organizations, particularly non-profits, to post their own press releases and save her the work of writing another blurb. In many cases, members of the community would rather the reporter do the work. "They're like, 'Oh, you'll do a better job than I would do.'" (news1). It is ironic that the reporter cannot get scooped when she wants to, but she fears being scooped more often now that she works full time within the "social journalism" framework. There is an important distinction to note here: Not all aspects of the diffusion of the innovation are positive. Vice versa, not all negative reactions to a diffusion should necessarily be categorized as

social shaping. These reporters are not reshaping or redefining the innovation; they are reacting to a detrimental effect of its adoption.

The social shaping of the innovation in the context of personal relationships is minimal. It relates to the shaping of perspectives rather than the shaping of the technology itself. Despite the push to re-imagine the audience as a "community" of users, some journalists push back when it appears that public relations professionals might influence their work. The writer of one beat blog said he often gets links from public relations professionals at a nearby school. "Sometimes I include it. Sometimes I don't. If it fits with what I'm looking for, that's great. If not screw you" (news6). This is a defiant level of detachment. An editor defines the "social journalism" platform in part as just another avenue for advertisers to try to influence her: I'm inundated with that stuff day in and day out…I'm thinking just from an advertising standpoint, if we let whoever is advertising or sponsoring whatever we're doing in the news or on our niche sites, the HealthSite, whatever it may be, if we let them dictate or if they change how we do business, then we've lost sight of what we're supposed to do" (newsmgmt3). These participants make similar (if differently framed) arguments: Even on a platform designed for user participation, journalists do not want to be told how they should carry out their duties by anyone other than an editor. They are not rejecting the "social journalism" platform as much as they are maintaining their own agency in the face of the social network. This rejection of influence is bound up in industry norms. It is an example of a more traditional set of professional role conceptions at work. The "social journalism" platform makes it possible for advertisers to directly contribute content if they pay for a sponsored group. Journalists cannot prevent someone from paying for the privilege and

making posts, but a few reporters are adamant that they will protect their byline, particularly from the influence of those with a profit motive.

Cognitive processes. Information concerning "story conceptions" is more balanced than the "journalist-audience/user" relationship data in terms of MST. Evidence of efforts to socially shape the technology is more robust in this context than in the previous section. This section also includes a number of respondents who claim not to have been influenced in terms of their news heuristics. The claims do not represent pushback against "social journalism" or a redefinition of it. These are statements of the rejection of the diffusion—interesting and important to include in the discussion, although they cannot logically be said to align with either side of the MST dynamic.

In the ten examples of story conceptions being shaped by the innovation, it is important to ask whether changing heuristics are related only to niche journalism or if they are related to multiple aspects of the "social journalism" model. The organization on the whole is transitioning to a niche-aggregator structure. I am careful to differentiate between news heuristics that are part of the general push to deliver niche content and those that can be shown to directly relate to the "social journalism" platform. Here is an example of an instance where the point is clarified:

> Participant: There are stories that are HealthSite stories that normally wouldn't have been covered—fundraisers, fun runs, 5Ks, blood drives, hospital tours, even events like information meetings on how to become a Big Brother or Big Sister. Anything like that, [the reporter] can devote some time to, whereas in the past we may not have been able to devote the digital space or the print space or the man hours to do anything.
>
> Interviewer: Is that because it's a niche site or because it's a participatory site?
>
> Participant: Both.
>
> Interviewer: What do you mean?

Participant: [The reporter] is assisted a lot by the community 'cause she's constantly in contact with them on a personal level (news8).

These stories, ones "that normally wouldn't have been covered," are not only relevant to the niche, they are important to people in the social network. This demonstrates how personal connections and story heuristics are at times interrelated. The statement is categorized as a comment on story heuristics because that is ultimately the practice being affected.

Another example of the impact of the diffusion of the "social journalism" platform is that posts are often made with the goal of eliciting user comments (news8). Of course news articles are often selected for impact, but in the "social journalism" environment the reaction is immediate and personal, and this changes the dynamics of story selection. The organization's advertising director has an outsider's point of view and provides an eloquent description of how feedback in the "social journalism" model is different from feedback in other news models.

It's almost like performing live. You can sit in the studio as a musician and do your studio album, and you're making yourself happy, but if you go out in concert and do the same thing and you're getting no reaction from your audience whatsoever, it's a very, very different thing. And I think the audience and the feedback you get from the audience is just, it's breathtaking how quickly you get feedback about various things (ad_marketing1).

This can drive reporters to think differently about the way they cover news. "I kind of visualize how I want the story to look as a user, when I look at the page. I think about what I want to see, what information I want, where I'm going to look for that information, and it's a different thought process than it is when I'm thinking about the other sites" (news8). The next reporter to take on the "social journalism" model was preparing to manage a "green economy" site when we spoke. She is learning to cover

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some issues more heavily than others because of the immediate reaction they get from readers. "I did one story that mentioned changing out your light bulbs, we had comments like 'O-M-G, CFLs are the end of the world.' Other people saying, 'No, they're awesome'" (news9). In socially networked news, it is imperative not to exploit this minor controversy but to explore it. "We had a breakout question and answer about what you need to know. That's the kind of stuff that [the HealthSite] has kind of fostered, and some of that was totally comments.(news9). By causing journalists to think about users in the way they handle stories, the social journalism model is having a small effect on the way they approach news decisions.

I include in the section a few comments about changing news values. If cognitive heuristics are general rules of thumb about what is or is not news, news values are more explicit definitions for why some bits of information should be put into public discourse by journalists. In Shoemaker & Vos' (2009, p. 53) "news routines" are included at the "routines" level of analysis, but I argue that they can be internalized and almost merged with cognitive heuristics for journalists working on the "social journalism" platform. I think this is occurring because the level of personal connection with site users and the specificity of niches make it almost impossible to create general news values across an organization. The concept of "news values" is based on the belief that a news organization, through its institutional memory, can build and maintain a general sense of understanding of who its audience is and what its audience is interested in. This is necessary where "journalists have only an abstract, second-hand sense of what the audience wants from the news media" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 53). But with instant feedback in a social network, journalists can have a tangible, practical, firsthand sense of

what interests site users. As journalists mix personal connections in a socially networked

environment with niche-focused reporting, they can mutually develop an agenda of

coverage with site users. The list of universal news values from Brooks et al. (2008):

"relevance, usefulness, interest… impact, conflict, novelty, prominence, proximity and

timeliness?" (pp. 4, 6) might be amended or edited by the individual site manager to fit

the "social journalism" model, but what works for one niche does not necessarily work

for another. News values may be internalized as heuristics rather than being shared and

routinized throughout a news organization whose only niche is its geographical

community.

It helps to deconstruct a comment from the HealthSite manager to gain insight

into her news values.

> I think now a little blurb looks like a full-blown story because the posts are so
> different on the [HealthSite]. Short things, long things, in the paper it would be a
> little brief. There's a seed fair on Saturday. In the paper, I wrote two inches. With
> [the HealthSite], I know this is very big interest to [one of the larger groups] and
> to health in general, and so I pretty much rewrote the whole press release and
> have a whole schedule of activities, and I added photos and links.

This information is potentially quite useful to the niche audience interested in health, and

it may have an even greater impact on a specific group (those interested in eating local

foods). Therefore, it is relevant, useful and interesting *within the niche*. There is only

limited evidence that this process is beginning to unfold. It happens when the HealthSite

manager makes news decisions based on her knowledge of niche news and on direct

knowledge of user interests. In this context, news values can only be routinized to the

niche, but developing news values in this way forms the foundation for goal-oriented

journalism where the reporter's cognitive heuristics, the niche's routine news values and

community goals are merged and pursued. The next major redesign of the HealthSite includes an application for setting and tracking community goals.

Outside of the MST framework, many journalists and other professionals in the organization reported "no change" to their news heuristics. Several argued that their heuristics do not need to change for them to be able to work with the "social journalism" platform. "I mean some of the old ideas are still there. I think that some things will just always be stuff we're interested in regardless of the way we deliver it" (news6). The previous statement was from a reporter determined not to see any changes related to the introduction of the "social journalism" platform. He generally thinks it is a dubious experiment, but the reporter managing the HealthSite surprisingly made a similar comment: "News is news. It never changes" (news1). How can the reporter managing the "social journalism" site maintain that her news values have not changed despite stating to the contrary that she now takes users' perspectives into account in deciding what to cover and despite the fact that she must now be concerned that citizens will steal her "scoop"? Perhaps heuristics are changing whether journalists want to acknowledge so or not. Perhaps they are developing niche news values but holding onto general news heuristics ingrained through years of training. It is understandable if do not want to admit to compromising their news values. Those values are part of a shared sense of understanding in the organization, and they sometimes come from hard-learned lessons. Researchers have shown in several studies that different types of news values exist (Berkowitz, 1997, p. 82). In this study, journalists defend their generalist values, even if they practice a more integrated approach. They are not shaping the innovation but

defending the idea that they can still recognize stories of major impact even as they spend most of their time managing a niche news product.

At the individual level of analysis, evidence of DI is more prevalent than evidence of SST, particularly when it comes to journalists' personal connections with the audience/users but also considering developing news heuristics. Journalists in the organization are learning to consider participants in the social journalism model as site user-collaborators, but concerns for being scooped still shape the outlook of several reporters. When it comes to news heuristics (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 37), journalists will deny that they are changing while at the same time they will describe some specific shifts relating to the collaborative nature of the "social journalism" platform. These shifts lay the groundwork for the integration of cognitive heuristics, news values and community goals. At the individual level, it is difficult to separate the dynamic of changing personal relationships from the dynamic of changing news heuristics, but individuals are demonstrating changes in their news values, whether they wish to admit it or not.

Routines Level

The routines level of analysis was operationalized to refer to repeated practices of news production and to news workers' "orientation to the audience." Orientation to the audience often refers to news values, but I argued in the previous section that news values are difficult to routinize across niches in an organization. There are two elements of the "orientation to the audience" concept besides "news values" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p.

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53) that can be categorized as routine practices regardless of the variety of niche products in a news organization: The journalist may act as an advocate or as a technology trainer for users. These practices are discussed briefly in the analysis; however, the most important DI-related issues involve the journalist's myriad duties working on the "social journalism" platform and the contributions others make to assist in those efforts. These routine practices show a level of diffusion of the "social journalism" innovation that goes a bit more deep than the reporter who manages the site and a few others who work quite closely with it, but there is not enough evidence to suggest that the "social journalism" model has been adopted to the point that it has widely affected routines in the organization. On the SST side of the dynamic, few pieces of data emerged. Those issues that do appear include the journalist managing the HealthSite shaping her own schedule, the recognition of some flaws in the routine and the *characterization* of help from other professionals in the news organization as a worthwhile effort.

The themes emerging from the qualitative data suggest that an MST dynamic is present at the routines level of analysis, although the dynamic is once again limited in scope. Table 4.2 shows a total of 59 DI-related comments and 9 SST-related statements. Most statements in both categories come from the organization's news reporters. Three main themes emerge on the DI side of the dynamic. The site manager's day-to-day work routine is filled with tasks that are often specific to the "social journalism" model. Others in the organization find they are expected to contribute to the HealthSite, and the journalist managing the HealthSite relates to the audience as an advocate and technology trainer—relationships that may translate across the organization. Note that the topics

emerging on the DI side of the dynamic do not have clear SST-related counterparts. The topic areas will not always mirror one another as they did in the individual level analysis.

In 31 separate statements, respondents identified myriad duties in the "social journalism" site manager's routine. She must manage the site's content, including producing her own stories and curating user generated content. The HealthSite manager monitors comments and gets involved in as many discussions as she can. She helps to market the site, and she answers to at least three bosses: an assignment editor who works across platforms, the newspaper's managing editor, who also manages digital content but who must make sure the newspaper gets out each day, and the "social journalism" platform architect whose foremost interest is making the innovative project work. Because of budget issues, the site architect has been tapped to contribute content to the HealthSite as part of her routine. She ultimately views the HealthSite as a news startup trapped in a legacy media company, but that same company is backing her vision.

Reactions to the HealthSite reporter/manager's workload appear more prevalently at the organizational level of analysis than at this level. In that section, I discuss how other employees work to make sense of the level of work required. At this level, most of the comments are generic statements of how busy the reporter's daily routine is. "They've all told me: 'I don't know how you do it,' and they're kind of concerned about how they'll handle it, so it'll be interesting to see how it plays out" (news1). The organization had originally planned to hire a second reporter for the HealthSite at some point in the project's first year. "It's a tremendous amount of work to juggle the community, to keep the postings fresh, and I think there's been a lot of discussion— Should we add another reporter, add a clerk? To add bodies to that, we just haven't been

Table 4.2

Mutual Shaping of Technology at the Routines Level

	Theme	Occurrences	Description
DI			
	Journalist's heavy work routine	31	*The journalist in charge of the "social journalism" site has many tasks, from managing the site's content to monitoring traffic, and marketing the site.*
	Others in the organization contribute	20	*Many reporters are expected to contribute to the site.*
	Journalist's orientation to audience/users	8	*The journalist is at times an advocate and a trainer.*
SST			
	Journalist shifts time when possible	3	*The reporter managing the "social journalism" site may shape her own schedule.*
	Flaws in the routine	3	*Some flaws threaten lost content.*
	Happy to help	3	*Some in the newsroom shape efforts to help as a joy.*

	Participant categories	Number of responses
DI		
	News	43
	News Management	9
	Ad/Marketing	6
	Design	1
	Total	**59**
SST		
	News	8
	News Management	0
	Ad/Marketing	1
	Design	0
	Total	**9**

in a position to do that" (newsmgmt3). The reporter taking over the second "social journalism" niche site filled in for the HealthSite reporter as a way of training for the position:

> It was completely different, you know? You go and teach people how to use your website, and it's definitely more community involvement than just being a reporter. I was shadowing her once when she was showing people how to post stuff online, and you do a lot of email back and forth with people, and you comment. Part of your job is just to monitor your site, and you're looking at what other people are saying and if you should comment on what they say and if you should engage conversation, which is a little bit; it's a lot different than what you do as just a plain old newspaper reporter (news9).

Monitoring comments has the potential to be a continuous duty. Marketing the site means manning booths at events and helping organize a group for a walk-a-thon (news1). In this organization, it is not uncommon for reporters to help market the site by sitting in a booth at a community event. It is rare, though for a reporter to organize a group for a fundraiser. That is an extension of the marketing duties related to the expectation that the HealthSite manager will establish herself as a community organizer and/or advocate.

The HealthSite manager spends time tracking down other reporters to make sure they post their health-related stories. Since the process of adding stories on the "social journalism" platform is different from their normal submission protocol, journalists sometimes forget to cut and paste their stories into the HealthSite. "That's the only time I'm kind of telling them what to do, but I'm very like, 'hey'" (news1). With or without nudging, there are 20 instances where other reporters mention contributing to the HealthSite. "If I have a story that fits under the HealthSite banner, which a lot of my food stuff does, I will post it to the site" (news3). "One thing that I did come up with, and I was patting myself on the back, was I came up with newsmaker health. I don't write for the HealthSite every day…so what's a way to help drive traffic in a way to the site? So

what I would do is I would ask one of the sources in the story: 'What do you do to be healthy?' It could be anything" (news2). Contributing to the site takes time out of the schedules of reporters who have their own beats to cover. Still, some have incorporated these contributions into their routines. It is not likely that this will work if and when the other reporters have their own niche sites to maintain, but these contributions are an example of one small way the innovation is being adopted by several reporters in the organization, not just those assigned to contribute to the HealthSite or to a beat blog.

That leaves one other DI-related section to discuss – the "social journalism" site manager's routine work as an on-site technology trainer. The reporter managing the HealthSite will drive to other institutions, such as non-profit organizations and universities to train people to use the site. On one hand, this shows an extraordinary level of dedication to the project, but it also suggests that the site needs to have a more intuitive design. In follow up research, it will be interesting to see if some of the design changes made to make the site more accessible help reduce the number of training appearances the HealthSite manager needs to make.

> I spent two hours last week…which is a lot of time if you know my schedule…with somebody that has a group on [the HealthSite]. What happened is another person was running that group, and she left. [It's a group] trying to get wellness in the workplace. They really want to use [the HealthSite], and she wanted me to walk her through posting the stories and kind of walk her through the site, and I think it was well worth the time, but I do a lot of that stuff. I never did that before" (news1).

The logic is that a person who is motivated to use the site regularly is worth training because she or he will be a consistent source of content. This is an example of new duties in the socially networked news environment. It is an example of the innovation affecting the reporter's day-to-day routine.

The social shaping at the routines level of analysis is minimal. The journalist will time-shift her work so that some of it can be done from the comfort of home. Since the platform is publicly available, she does not need to be in the newsroom to do some of her assigned tasks. A few flaws in the routine are noted in the data. Some define the separate CMS as a flaw because reporters have to post their own stories to the website. "The reporter normally finishes the story and then goes away. And then we have to wait for them to respond or we have to call them, you know, we have to make sure that they're responsible for that content, and that's not a culture that they're used to, so that has been a very tricky thing for us to try and manage" (news8). On the other hand, some in the organization frame their contributions as assistance to the HealthSite manager, who is overworked. "It's not really a pain. It's usually just cut and paste and it's linked to my original article" (news3). In this case, the reporter routinely posts food-related stories to the entertainment site and then cuts and pastes a link on the HealthSite. This kind of cross-pollination can make direct connections between the various niche products, but since it has to be done by manually adding links, it can be time-consuming. That said, reporters are sometimes happy to help with the project viewed by some as the potential future of the organization.

At this level, several reporters stated that the "social journalism" platform innovation is not affecting their day-to-day. "I mean other than having to post it on their site as well, you know that would be the only thing. That takes 2-3 minutes, no big deal" (news5). This is another reminder that the MST conceptual framework should always include space for consideration of the "no impact" perspective, which is neither DI, nor SST-related. In this case, five reporters said that the introduction of the "social journalism

model had no impact on their routines. For this study, this is a relatively large number of respondents. It reiterates the argument that the "social journalism" platform is mostly being diffused to the reporters and editors working directly with it. On the other hand, contributing to the site is not so onerous a task that other reporters are complaining about it. The bulk of the work in the "social journalism" platform falls on the individual reporter. The economic limitations that prevent the hiring of promised help make for a difficult routine workload. Perhaps in the future this level of work will not be remarkable. As the monopoly model of production fades away, perhaps the work routine of the newspaper beat reporter will no longer be the industry's benchmark.

Organizational Level

Recall that the organizational level of analysis was operationalized to refer to "the study of characteristics that differentiate among communication organizations," including organizational structures as well as organizational culture (pp. 32, 67). In this study, this includes an analysis of the roles of professionals in the organization, strategies for growth laid out across the organization and the terms used to define those strategies in the abstract. Those terms and role expectations may become normalized, established policy and practices.

In this study, I look for changing roles and changing definitions of roles that might help form research questions useful for examining organizational change as it relates to technological change in general. This is another example of how this study seeks to define parameters of change, not generalizable explanations or expectations.

This should prove useful in future research, but it bears repeating that this is a singular study based on an extreme case. This section examines changes in organizational structure, culture and norms related to the introduction of the "social journalism" platform as well as ways that existing structures and culture shape the innovation materially and define it conceptually.

At this level, I am working with 177 observations from study participants. Professionals working in news, news management, advertising/marketing and design are all represented with 48 responses coming from news management and 94 emerging in discussions with other journalists in the newsroom. Twenty-five statements are gleaned from interviews with professionals working in advertising and marketing, and ten comments come from the two web designers interviewed for this study. Again, the DI perspective dominates; however, SST-related comments are well represented. At the organizational level, the MST dynamic is more robust than at any other level of analysis in this study.

Table 4.3 includes a general categorization of the themes that emerged. These include definitions of the "social journalism" model in relation to organizational strategy. The idea has diffused throughout the organization that this is the "platform of the future," and this has had practical and abstract implications. Here I use "abstract" to refer to cultural beliefs that are diffused along with the "social journalism" innovation whereas "practical" refers to observed changes that directly relate to behavior, such as performing different duties in the organization or producing content differently than before the model was introduced. At the individual and routines levels of analysis, it was apparent that the brunt of the impact on individual cognition and on day-to-day work occurred with those

Table 4.3

Mutual Shaping of Technology at the Organizational Level

	Theme	Occurrences	Description
DI			
	Platform of the future	30	*Many in the organization believe that the "social journalism" site is their best hope for survival and future growth.*
	Audience-centric definition	26	*"Conversation" & "community" are key watchwords.*
	Structural change	26	*Changes in job titles and hiring practices are some of the most profound.*
	Role switching across the org.	20	*Employees are often required to take on new tasks that were once reserved for other professionals.*
	Misc.	4	*This includes observations not easily categorized, including the argument that the design crew is being stretched thin.*
SST			
	Existing atmosphere sets tone of innovation but also skepticism	49	*The news organization studied here has a tradition of change but also a recent history of layoffs that when coupled with a strong desire to preserve the newspaper make for a skeptical uncertainty.*
	Negative spin on "social journalism"	13	*Some would redefine the effort to create a new model for journalism at a time of economic and industry-wide stress as a risky experiment.*
	Positive spin on "social journalism"	9	*Some in the organization have had a hand in reshaping the site or are more prepared to view it as a reason for hope.*

Participant categories	Number of responses
DI	
News	53
News Management	32
Ad/Marketing	15
Design	6
Total	**106**
SST	
News	41
News Management	16
Ad/Marketing	10
Design	4
Total	**71**

working closely with the HealthSite. At the organizational level, it is apparent that some concepts and practices related to the "social journalism" platform are reaching employees whether they work closely with the HealthSite or not, whether they agree with this plan of action or not. Practical impacts are felt with a renewed focus on multimedia and niche content. One of the challenges of this study is differentiating which technological pushes are held over from previous efforts and which relate directly to the "social journalism" model.

In addition to the abstract concept I refer to as the "*platform of the future*," two more terms are important at this level of analysis. These terms relate to the audience-centric nature of the innovation. I argue that the focus on "conversation" and "community" as essential watchwords throughout the organization represent redoubled efforts to focus on the social aspects of the innovation. It is interesting that there are equal numbers of comments (26) relating to these beliefs about "social journalism" as

there are comments about the *structural changes* occurring in the news organization. The impact of structural changes is arguably the most important element of this study. This is where the management makes crucial decisions in terms of layoffs, new hires and technology expenditures.

Related to comments about structural change is a discussion of *role switching and role sharing*, which was also prevalent in the data (20 comments). This is the kind of information that justifies the case study/in-depth interview method because it gets at nuances in roles that are often difficult to tease out in quantitative research. In this section, I discuss organizational changes that appear in practice but not always on paper. The implications of sharing and shifting roles suggest that *if* something like the "social journalism" model should gain in popularity, the collapsing of work roles that occurred with media convergence might be just the beginning of the re-definition of news work. On the socially-networked media platform, *some* news producing and news disseminating practices as well as advertising and marketing duties may fall to just about anyone in the organization regardless of her or his official title.

Atop the social shaping of technology side of this discussion is a broad category that refers to the *existing atmosphere* in the news organization in question and how it shapes the response to the "social journalism" effort. I also identify *negative spin* and *positive spin* categories. The 49 comments relating to the existing atmosphere represent more abstract notions of both positive and negative feelings about the "social journalism" model. These feelings relate to the organization's history of technological change, which has prepared some for the changes they face as the "social journalism" model is slowly diffused throughout the organization. Statements also relate the atmosphere of economic

difficulties and layoffs that hang like a cloud over efforts to innovate. I isolate the

negative spin and positive spin categories because they specifically refer to the

innovation as a "risky experiment" or "a new hope." These definitions represent a battle

between the organization's "party line" and an alternative description of contemporary

events from workers who have several reasons to be skeptical.

The "social journalism" model as the plan for the news company's future is an

abstract set of expectations reaching throughout much of the organization. It brings a

renewed focus on niche journalism and multimedia production. One of the ironic things

about this organization is that it was one of the first to jump into convergence journalism.

It did so by buying a cable television operation and (over the course of several years)

incorporating broadcast reporters and print reporters into the same newsroom. Now, the

cable television station has been sold. The television crews moved back across the street

to work solely for the cable station, and the practice of producing multimedia journalism

falls on fewer journalists who all contribute to the newspaper, its multimedia online

counterpart and often to a beat blog or niche news site. "What it's going to be is they're

going to say, 'Ok, go do your story.' If that means go do video. I do video if I think that's

the way it should be, and if somebody at the desk wants to repurpose it into the paper,

they repurpose it. All this stuff is convergence, it's just a different form of convergence"

(news2). The reporter speaking in this instance was heavily involved in the organization's

first efforts at convergence around the turn of twenty-first century, but when he worked

to simultaneously produce content for television and for the newspaper, he worked with a

news videographer. The difference now is that reporters and photographers are being

asked to cover news individually using multimedia techniques. "My point is that they're

going to get us all iPhones. To me this is fairly highly unusual for a newspaper to do this. They're getting us all iPhones so we can go out and shoot video." He points out that this multimedia push comes from the architect of the "social journalism" platform. "She wants [multimedia] big time. My thing is I'm up for it. I'll go shoot 50 billion videos if it means carrying around [a smartphone] instead of carrying around a giant TV camera" (news2). In this way, an organization that was ahead of the curve in terms of multimedia and convergence technology finds itself in much the same position as other news organizations transitioning to so-called "backpack" journalism. This is fascinating because it suggests to scholars and to those working in the news organization, that even when a news company is prescient and successful at managing emerging technology its success might not last. One form of technological success might not prepare an organization for future innovations, particularly when resources become limited.

In the section that follows, I often compare DI- and SST-related concepts back-to-back rather than describing one side of the balance at a time. This section is broad and somewhat complex, and the reader cannot be expected to draw comparisons between the first part of the DI-related analysis and the first part of the SST-discussion if they are separated by several pages of text.

The largest DI-related category at the organizational level defines the social journalism model as the platform of the future. Ideally, nearly everyone in the organization is expected to learn how the platform works and to participate, if not as contributing reporters then as contributing citizens.

> [F]or sure it's trying to be ahead of the curve, I guess you would say. You know it's trying to go out there and predict what's going to be successful instead of going back and doing the same status quo. I know a lot of newspapers are sitting

around doing things the way they've always been done, and it's not working as well (news10).

A few of the organization's recent hires are journalists in their late 20s who have moved from larger newspapers, some after being laid off or after temporary positions came to an end. They are more likely to readily adopt the "social journalism" concept. "We need a new model because the old model doesn't work, so I'm very glad we're throwing stuff up at the wall and seeing what sticks" (news6). I argue that this is an example of the adoption of the innovation, but it is closely related to the social atmosphere recognized by the same person, which I categorize as an SST-related response:

> I used to work at the KC Star, and they sort of dabble in this, but we are all much closer to one man bands than they ever were, at least when I was there. I was there from '06 to '08…That's what attracted me to this place. I mean it had at the time the cable station. I was interested in learning how to do video. I hadn't had that opportunity at the KC Star. I didn't do that very well. I was interested in new tools to equip me for the future of our industry. I thought this place had that going for it (news6).

On the other hand, SST responses mix that appreciation for innovation with a healthy dose of skepticism, and it is not simply a "new hires" versus "old guard" dynamic. There is plenty of skepticism among some relatively young staffers:

> It's just a website that we put all our health articles on. I mean there's no (pause)…We talk about niche sites and all this other stuff, and in actuality it's no different. And it probably gets less play because you've got to educate the community there's this new site, 'Go to this site.' If I write an article and post it on [HealthSite], no one ever comments. I don't know if I've had one comment on my story. I put it on [the online newspaper], and it gets 30 comments (identity withheld upon request).

Coming off of the sale of the cable news operation and dealing with the resulting layoffs, it is not surprising that some in the organization are wary of taking risks, and they cannot all be classified as Luddites. Even with the successful, forward-thinking venture into

cable news, the family owners ultimately decided to cash out, and a few layoffs resulted. Technological success is not a guarantee that a news company will avoid layoffs.

Some, particularly those in management, understand the decision not only as a short term sell-off but also as a logical move in light of long-term expectations of competition:

> From first glance, it makes absolutely no sense to most people, but from my point of view it makes a lot of sense in that more and more and more competition is coming into that arena…They were in on the ground floor of it years ago. It was smart to do it [then]. If the family wanted to take its money and protect its money and either use it for new ventures or whatever personal decisions they want to make, I think it was a well-thought-out decision (newsmgmt3).

But whether it proves to be a smart move in the long run or not, the resulting layoffs and restructuring challenges are bound up with some workers' feelings about the switch to a niche, socially-networked focus.

Besides success with cable television, the news organization studied here was one of the first to create a participatory, niche news site. The site is still in operation, but it does not garner much advertising, and it is being overhauled incorporating some aspects of the "social journalism" model. The following interview data comes from the site's third manager in two years.

> It was not what people considered successful, and I don't know what their metric is for success then. I don't honestly know what it is now, quite yet, but they had given the former people there time to turn it around, and from what I understand they had been resistant to it; and so finally they were let go and then someone else took it over for awhile, but he no longer works here. I should say we are going to add…some [HealthSite]-esque features…Now, to what degree and specifics, I can't really speak to yet because I don't know (news7).

This site received accolades from scholars and other practitioners for being innovative in the early 2000s (Kaye & Quinn, 2010), and yet it has struggled to survive. Its print partner, a weekly tabloid, was shuttered, and its staff is now responsible for arts and

entertainment coverage on the niche site, on the legacy newspaper website and in the newspaper. The journalist quoted just above (news7) was hired as an online editor and now finds himself editing a section of the newspaper. He has a vested interest in the survival of all of the organization's media formats, and he recognizes that academic interest and critical acclaim do not necessarily lead to viability.

A final factor contributing to the mixed atmosphere regarding technology in the organization is its other proprietary content management system (CMS). The organization created a web-based software solution, a CMS for online news that precedes the social journalism model. It also developed a related digital advertising platform that can be marketed along with the CMS. Both have seen some success, and it is likely that this helped lead to the attempt to build yet another news delivery platform, the "social journalism" model, but revenues in recent years have not been good enough to prevent layoffs in other parts of the company. Thus, the socially shaped atmosphere includes a sense of hope that technological solutions may prove successful, but that hope is mitigated by the fact that previous successes have not saved the company from layoffs and by concerns that the "social journalism" model is unproven. One 30-year-old reporter said, "I think for a lot of them it's like, 'Well, that's what they want us to do. Maybe it'll work. Maybe it'll help.' And that's great, but it's just hard to me to understand that it's some sort of huge innovation, you know?" (news5).

Categorizing interview data into these broad groupings, the "platform of the future" versus the "existing atmosphere" helps to drive this discussion, but at times comments are difficult to categorize, almost self-contradictory. The qualitative approach allows researchers to work with nuance, but it does not make it easy. For example, a

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member of news management describes the atmosphere surrounding the introduction of the "social journalism" platform, an SST-related phenomenon: "I think they had kind of a weird, hard time balancing that whole cynical thing and saying I see all the problems with it, which they all did and do, with thinking. 'Ok, where is the positive? Can we figure that out? Is this the next [big] thing?" (newsmgmt3). She followed with this statement: "I am not a believer that newspapers are dead. I think we've called in hospice, but they are not dead, and we would be shortsighted and foolish to flip off all of those people because there are some of them who are still reading newspapers in print" (newsmgmt3). This is the same manager who finds it advantageous to sell the cable television (and Internet) division because of increasing competition. I argue that these statements indicate a nostalgia for print fighting to coexist in a newsroom where the next big thing is either multimedia, niche, online, participatory or all of the above—anything *but* print-focused.

Having briefly addressed the "platform of the future" concept versus the existing organizational atmosphere, a discussion of the audience- or user-centric nature of the new model follows. This is primarily an abstract discussion. The terms "conversation" and "community" appear often in comments relating to this category. If it has an SST counterpart, it is included in the "existing atmosphere" category above, perhaps in the nostalgia for newspapers, a one-way form of communication, but so-called "legacy media" practices and concerns for community and conversation are not necessarily opposing ideals. Most of the 26 comments relating to this phenomenon come from reporters and news managers, but this is an example of concepts penetrating the organization well beyond the few who work directly with the HealthSite. The higher education reporter, who manages a beat blog, said, "I'm not talking at people anymore.

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We're talking with people, and if [the HealthSite model] has done anything, it's done that for me" (news6). The reporter managing the entertainment niche site has little to do with the HealthSite but said the following: "[The HealthSite] definitely made me think more in terms of what can we do that will actually spark further discussion, and how can we take this story to the next step, you know?" (news7). He considers the next level to be a type of collaborative story writing where users and journalists contribute in a back and forth style. That level of participation is possible wherever there are online comments sections, but comments are not often used this way. On the "social journalism" platform, this type of engagement in the comments is encouraged, almost required. The reporter managing the HealthSite will track down further information as requested by site users. "That's something that's very new. We monitor comments, comment back to people, get answers, so there's that part of it" (news1). The fact that the entertainment site manager sees promise in this type of reporting shows support for ideas behind the platform even in some who have little experience with the technology itself.

At the organizational level there is less pushback against the concepts of collaboration and community than there is against other aspects of the "social journalism" platform. The conversational aspect of the platform is acceptable to many in the news organization. "I'm more likely to listen. It's a two-way conversation instead of a one-way conversation. We're giving people the news the way they want it rather than the way we want to give it to them" (newsmgmt1). Workers in the organization, particularly journalists, appear to be more concerned about job security and the demanding amount of work involved in the "social journalism" model than in holding onto a certain level of authority. Remember that the person labeled newsmgmt1 is primarily the newspaper

editor. He manages online content and has some multimedia journalism experience, but his primary goal is to make sure that the newspaper continues to be published each day. He added the following comment about reaching his community with news: "I went to a conference and someone was talking about news coverage and where they were heading. It may have been 2005. I don't know who said it. He said, 'Cover life, not news.' That's something I put on my bulletin board in my office" (newsmgmt1). The news interests from the users/audience perspective are respected in the newsroom regardless of platform. Clearly there is a high degree of openness in this organization to community-oriented journalism and to participatory journalism. For example, the newsroom ran a citizen-journalism training camp for several years throughout the past decade. The hang up is not over a loss of control of the discourse. In fact, it comes as a relief to some in the newsroom that they no longer have to guess at what is important to their audience. Of much greater concern is the economic viability of the model, which is addressed in the institutional-level section of this chapter but also in a subsequent chapter focused on the business model.

The structural changes impacting the organization begin with the HealthSite manager and extend relatively widely in the organization. Some of the changes took place before the site prototype was even under development. "It's like a chicken or egg, with [the site architect]. She created the [HealthSite] but also a different organization structure within the newspaper…[the Assistant Director of Media Strategies] used to be the online editor, and then he moved to kind of help oversee all of these sites and less of the daily coverage" (news9). The former online editor's new role is primarily to evangelize the "social journalism" model in the region and to assist the project architect. "I switched

jobs really because of the [HealthSite] because we needed to take that model and that

approach and replicate it in other areas, and so in that sense, the [HealthSite] really is the

reason why I have a new job. It's to take the lessons and tools and skills and ideas and

transfer them to other places" (newsmgmt4). When the former online editor moved, his

replacement was the organization's social media editor, and a new social media editor

was hired from outside of the organization. In this way, a small addition or change can

result in several shifting roles.

Besides the positions shifted to make room for the site and to try to encourage its

growth, the HealthSite reporter has been moved around. "[The HealthSite reporter] was

off the grid, so that was an organizational change…job titles have changed" (news2). For

a period of several months, the HealthSite reporter/manager answered only to the site's

architect. Afterwards, she was told to report to the assignment editor just as all other

reporters in the organization do. Out of the structural change comments, 11 had to do

with the role of the HealthSite reporter/community organizer. "She spends a lot of time in

the community talking to people and not only covering it but being a champion of the

issue" (newsmgmt1). Regardless of the mix of reporting, video editing and site

moderating she does, her primary role is to produce content for the HealthSite and to

manage the various aspects of her niche-focused social network.

The effects are felt beyond the newsroom. A marketing professional recalls how

the progression towards cross-department collaboration seemed to take place effortlessly:

> I remember it had only been a week or so after [the site architect] had been here,
> and she was talking about niche sites and her vision of the future—about how
> you'd have a marketing person in it, a journalist, and a sales person that were
> working pretty closely together for each site, and we're kind of like the functional
> team for making that site go. It was so funny. I kind of put that in the back of my
> mind, but a year later I'm in a room with the sales person and the journalist and

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myself and we're visiting with a client. It almost naturally came to that point where we needed each other to make the decisions that were happening. You realize at that point it wasn't a forced idea. It was what was best for the situation. I tease [her] about it – how did you do that, magic?

The combination of layoffs and newly organized collaborations has flattened the hierarchy of the organization to some degree (newsmgmt4). Even the "social journalism" architect is required to research and write a column for the HealthSite each week. As job titles change and new hires with more multimedia, online and mobile experience are brought on, the complexion of the newsroom changes. The "social journalism" platform is the flagship project of a push to provide content in several local niches and to aggregate that content for a broader audience using the legacy online newspaper. A few tangible changes to the organizational structure emerge like ripples around the platform's continued development.

Role switching is the final DI-related category at the organizational level. In several instances, job titles and organizational hierarchies may not change, but roles will still be modified. Several examples of role switching exist, although perhaps the term "role addition" is more accurate because as new technologies are developed, new duties are added to the jobs of many in the organization, including journalists but also advertising and marketing workers. Advertising sales representatives are encouraged to share news tips. "The biggest evidence would be that there's more dialogue between some of my ad people saying, 'This business has an event. This is an actual news item. You should be there'" (admarketing2). On the other hand, the HealthSite manager has several roles wrapped into one. "I write print stories for the newspaper, and I do the online work. I take photos, videos. I enter calendar information. I really am kind of the editor. I manage the HealthSite in addition to doing the marketing" (news1). For the sake

of comparison, before she managed the HealthSite, the same reporter worked for the newspaper, and her stories were published to the newspaper's website, but once her stories were turned in and checks were made on pending story ideas and with regular sources on her beat, her work was mostly complete. There is a fear in the news organization that everyone will be expected to work as much as the HealthSite manager, and not everyone is prepared for that kind of transition.

Continuing with the last bit of SST-oriented analysis, negative spin on the "social" journalism project paints it as a "risky experiment," while positive spin takes the "platform of the future" idea one step further and labels it as "a new hope" for the organization. If there were no hope in the "social journalism" model, it is possible that the project would have been shut down after its first year. Instead, the major sponsor is still on board, and the process of redesign continues. For example, the advertising department made a few design suggestions to create more opportunities for revenue. "We have more banner positions, and with the tile design we have at the bottom of the webpage now…there's the flexibility to put a lot more advertising and sponsorship areas there" (ad_marketing1). These changes may not be sexy, but they are functional, and this instance of influencing the site's design is a quintessential example of getting inside the "black box" during the development process, one of the most clear examples of the social shaping of technology you will find (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). One interview subject acknowledged that creating the "social journalism" platform is a risk, but he frames the risk in a hopeful way: "I think you should be risk takers in terms of the stories you cover the products you deliver, the platforms you try out. I think you need to be constantly willing to embrace the next thing that's out there" (newsmgmg4). Some

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members of the organization are inspired to work for a company taking a pro-active

approach to designing new models for news:

> I think that the HealthSite contribution is very exciting and just a part of where
> we're trying to go, and where I hope that it leads is I think that we could redefine
> community news in the sense that we…it's a small town, but there are small
> towns everywhere. Every big city is made up of small towns and neighborhoods
> and city blocks, and that's the kind of community that the HealthSite spurs is
> being able to have your big city with your neighborhoods with your city blocks. I
> think that it allows people the freedom to communicate on a platform that's
> trusted that they've never had before, and I think that's an immense contribution.
> And I can't wait to see where it goes, and I hope it gets there quicker (news8).

This is a hope-filled picture, but it also hints at one of the main problems of designing an

iterative software platform from scratch in-house while still trying to publish a newspaper

and its online counterpart. (See Appendix B for a timeline of the development of the

HealthSite). All of the developments have to come from an overworked design staff, and

they have to be put into practice by a reporting and advertising sales staff with varying

degrees of interest in the model.

If the hopeful point of view paints the "social journalism" platform as an exciting

innovation with chances to redefine news production on an iterative Web-based software

platform, the alternative viewpoint is that this is a "risky experiment" with no clear path

to success into which the organization is sinking resources. The organization is having a

difficult time keeping a newspaper afloat, and it surprises some that it is trying at the

same time to introduce a new model for news production. "I think we're still in the

somewhat development stage, an unsure stage about: Was this a good business decision?

I mean we think so, but we're not there yet" (newsmgmt3). Changes must be developed

by a small staff of four web designers who are also responsible for creating special

projects for the online newspaper and for managing the sports and entertainment sites.

There are many demands on their time. "How are we getting to a place where things are focused on our creature? I don't know…If we want to do this we need to have an organization with authority to move. That's continually a struggle for us, and we're in some ways one of the better-positioned companies at least of our size, and we're having a hard, hard time with it" (design1). "Frankly, it still needs to be proven. It's not a done deal. It's accepted here because it has, it has been around long enough, but it's still an experiment" (newsmgmgt3). For many, the site will not have proven itself until it is making a much stronger profit. "The biggest question is if it makes money, and I don't know honestly how many people we will get. Those are things I'm not really sure about. I know that's a calloused answer, but I think those are really it—How many people are reading it? And, how much money is it making? I don't have an answer to either one of those" (news9). Thus a cloud hangs over the project and understandable misgivings are felt.

At the organizational level of analysis 20 comments emerged suggesting that the introduction of the "social journalism" model did not, in fact, have much of an impact. Several comments mentioned the lack of resources in the organization as their key cause for concern, and it was noted that the HealthSite has not had an immediate impact on revenues. Of the 20 comments that fit this description, six came from one reporter who was adamant throughout that the HealthSite was not the innovation I was making it out to be. "I think for us in practicality purposes it's just a site out there that every once in awhile I've got to do an extra thing to post to it…Philosophically it doesn't change anything other than the fact that it's one specific website about a specific topic" (name withheld). In his view, the resources being used to try to create an innovative news

platform are resulting in coverage that could be handled by a tab on the legacy news website. He argues that the site architect is well paid, which does not sit well when reporters and editors are being laid off every several months. His insight begs the question of whether the organizational changes might all be undone just as quickly as they were made if the "social journalism" platform does not show success in the next couple of years.

Several key questions arise from this analysis at the organizational level. Questions of the viability of the business model are dealt with in more detail in the next chapter, but it would be useful to delve more deeply into the topic to see if viability is the issue or if news organizations are holding this (or other) innovations up to a model of twentieth century profit margins. Another interesting area for future study is the transition of roles in the news organization. How drastically are organizational charts being shaken up? Does the flattening of hierarchies make it easier or more difficult for editors and reporters to work together? What happens as marketing professionals learn more about journalism and journalists practice more marketing? In several places in this chapter, I mention a "renewed focus" on one practice or another. This implies that the organization already had experience with multimedia, community-focused journalism. Are organizations with little to no experience in these areas recognizing more or fewer difficulties in transition as they get involved with social media? On one hand, having little experience can be a barrier. On the other hand, having preconceived ideas about the way convergence might function does not necessarily help journalists in this organization now that most of those with video journalism experience are gone.

Institutional Level

Recall that the social institutional level of analysis focuses "on forces outside of media organizations" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 32). As Shoemaker & Vos (2009) put it, "[we] recognize that communication organizations exist within a social system alongside other social institutions" (p. 76). In this study, those institutional relationships mostly occur in the local marketplace, since the "social journalism" platform is a niche product. The local market itself is an important institution to consider. The organization's relationship with advertisers is closely related as well. In addition, on this platform, sources and audiences are important, mutually influential groups that are sometimes made up of the same people. Given the participatory nature of "social journalism," audience members can contribute content and, in essence promote themselves to being sources of news.

At the institutional level of analysis, I found 135 comments in the interview data pertaining to the topics listed above. In Table 4.4, it is clear that this is the only level where SST-related comments outmatch DI-related statements, although the numbers are almost identical (69 vs. 66). In terms of the diffusion of the innovation, there are only two categories emerging in the data.

First, discussions of "usership" development made reference to groups of site users with institutional-level ties to the news organization. These users are both audience members and contributing sources, which are considered separate institutional-level categories in Shoemaker & Vos (2009). These data also make reference to non-profit

Table 4.4

Mutual Shaping of Technology at the Social Institutional Level

	Theme	Occurrences	Description
DI			
	Building "usership"	53	*Through various forms of outreach based on institutional relationships, the organization tries to generate group formation and facilitate participation.*
	Relations with advertisers	13	*Relationships with advertisers need to be fostered, and the platform needs to be explained.*
SST			
	User influence	64	*Site users, including the "advisory board" and advertisers help shape the HealthSite and expectations for the platform in turn. At times, this raises misgivings about the project.*
	Limitations on diffusion	5	*Institutional expectations in a few instances redefine the diffusion without causing it to be rejected outright.*

	Participant categories	Number of responses
DI		
	News	27
	News Management	14
	Ad/Marketing	24
	Design	1
	Total	**66**
SST		
	News	18
	News Management	21
	Ad/Marketing	19
	Design	11
	Total	**69**

groups, more specifically to an advisory board formed as part of project. Of particular interest is the policy of using real names on the site, which is an important aspect of the innovation to consider. The relationship with advertisers is listed separately because advertisers are dealt with a bit differently than other contributors, and information in that section is also useful for discussing the place of the "social journalism" platform in the local economic market, considered itself to be an institutional factor in the literature (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 76-78).

On the SST-related side, the impact of community groups on the model is of utmost importance. This is a key way in which this platform differs from other innovations in mass communication and particularly in journalism. The advisory board affects design changes. Advertisers shape the way the site functions and its design as well. General community concerns play a factor, and in a separate category, limitations imposed by the community based on institutional expectations are discussed. They are directly mentioned only a few times in the research, but they are interesting to note here. A more complete discussion of institutional factors and the business model takes place in the next chapter.

Allowing users to contribute materially to a news site using the same interface as the journalists who manage the site is a key part of what makes this "social journalism" platform an innovation. This ability, as has been discussed, has implications on the site manager/reporter's relationship to the users/audience. It affects concerns for being scooped and is occasionally met with a bit of defiance on the part of journalists protecting trusted norms. At the routines level, the journalist's orientation to users is shifting to more of an advocacy role. Although not widespread in the organization, this influence on

the routine is a significant change if it holds. On the organizational level, the audience/user relationship is reflected in the widespread focus on "community" and "conversation" in the organization, but that renewed focus is part of what makes many in the organization consider the endeavor "risky business." The focus on "community" and "conversation" as abstractions is more widespread in the organization than are the practices of community management and niche site curation, but the concepts have dispersed widely enough that they help to refine the newsroom's party line, although some would argue that the organization was already oriented toward community service before the "social journalism" platform was developed. At the institutional level the "social journalism" platform reaches beyond the walls of the news organization. Using mostly pre-existing institutional relationships, the company has had some success urging interest groups to join an advisory board, convincing them to create online groups of their own and encouraging users and groups to change the way they participate in online discussions. In turn, the social shaping at this level is more materially significant. At other levels of analysis, there are different forms of responses to user influence that shape the definition and practices of the "social journalism" platform, but at this level, particularly involving the advisory group, the changes are tangible. The advisory group has been a part of site design since the inception of the HealthSite. Their influence shapes not only this site but the way the platform functions, and this process will be refined before the platform is offered to third parties as a content management system solution. If at the organizational level, "community" and "conversation" have become the watchwords, at the institutional level community groups and conversational practices have become tangible, morphing tools of design.

There is no better example of the MST dynamic at work than at the institutional

level in relation the site's users/audience. Interest groups were brought in to help shape

the site and its functionality. They demanded a great deal of control over the conversation

happening within their own groups, and some of them jumped at the chance to begin

contributing (newsmgmt2). Handing the power over to these groups represents an

innovation, perhaps a risky one, since these groups, now in control of their own space in

the news system, required not only that site users register before commenting. The

community groups demanded that users register for each and every online group before

they could contribute. The site began with a few dozen groups, so if one wanted to

participate in several of them, this meant he would need to register several times. "When

we met with the advisory board, they wanted very strict controls over their groups and so

we said, 'Ok, we don't have any evidence that that's a bad thing, although the whole

thing about controls on the Internet are fairly much diametrically opposed.'"

(newsmgmt2). This is an example of immediate social shaping of the technology that

made the site difficult to navigate and in some ways defeated the purpose of having a

public-facing contribution format. Over time, the groups refined their thinking. Again,

this is counted as an SST-related influence. "After three months, we called everybody

back in and said, 'What do you want to change?' And they said, 'It's too hard to use. We

need to make it easier to use.'" (newsmgmt2). Thus it is an innovation to put control in

the hands of community groups, and when they exercise that control it is an example of

rapid social shaping. Combined, the MST process is in effect. The practical implications

are quite important. This suggests that handing over the reins to community groups is

risky. Perhaps ironically, one of the first things these groups did once given some control

of the news publishing space was to overexert that control. The organization studied here learned lessons such as these so that other groups do not have to.

It is easy to argue that perhaps these groups should not have been given this kind of control, but on the other hand now that they have asked for restrictions to be relaxed on the site, they can feel comfortable knowing it was their decision. In addition, they had reason to be concerned. On the legacy "online newspaper" site, that which is now the aggregator for niche content across the news organization, the comments sections are anonymous and are filled with vitriol. The organization's social media manager recounts an incident that occurred when the legacy news website was down. "I decide I'll go over and get some coffee, and there's this table full of really cranky 55-year old dudes with the broken home page on their laptops. They had come here with the express purpose of posting really snarky comments on the [legacy] website. Seriously, and they were upset" (ad_marketing2). Reporters have noticed the effects of this type of behavior on sources. "I think that a lot of times when I talk with sources, sometimes they're afraid to talk with me because they're afraid of what commenters will say. If I explain that it's going to go on [the HealthSite] and that comments are not anonymous, they might be more apt to talk" (news3). The advisory board's caution was borne out of this atmosphere of the online free-for-all. The website's designers argue that freedom is of the utmost importance online and that too many controls will limit traffic. They often argue for incentivizing good behavior rather than restricting against bad (design1), but through the MST process, the advisory board appears to have come to a compromise.

Of course, compromise is only a moral victory if the site fails to make money. This is a privately held news organization, not a public utility, and as such, the

marketplace is perhaps the most important institutional factor. Advertising-related issues were mentioned specifically in 13 DI-related comments. Often, this involved using institutional communication channels to develop relationships with existing advertisers. Also, the training of advertisers goes beyond the day-to-day work of a few newsroom employees and ultimately takes efforts on the part of several departments to work. "I feel like we've gone the extra mile in making sure advertisers know how this thing works and that it's a work in progress and that it's always going to be a work in progress and that it will always be changing and always be evolving, and if they want to be a successful advertiser on this site, they need to learn how to use it too" (news8). Training is a tedious process, but in some ways working with existing institutional relationships helps. For example, the social media manager can reach out to potential advertisers by offering to train them in using widely available social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter, and in the process, she can explain the value of a local social network. Another effort that has brought limited success is to identify self-promoters on the site and to invite them to create a paid group. This is one of the key new moneymaking opportunities on the "social journalism" platform. For-profit groups must pay to maintain a group presence on the site. In the first year of operation, the site added about one paying customer per month by identifying and recruiting those who were using the site for self-promotion. "We do charge businesses a monthly fee to have a sponsored group, and that allows them whole run of the site, sort of as advocates for their business' position in the conversations…We've had real good luck with just reaching out to people and saying, 'You really can't promote your business unless you're a paid business member on the site.' (ad_marketing1). Thus advertising protocol is negotiated as the site develops.

The reporter managing the HealthSite added that the training of advertisers and advisory board members is part of another long-term goal, one that defines the project but that has not yet been introduced. "All we're doing is showing them how to use it to their advantage as a tool to get information out. That's what it's really all about and then just to see the community coming together to reach goals to be healthier" (news1). The ultimate institutional diffusion for the "social journalism" model is to facilitate community groups to set goals for the whole community or for smaller groups and to help them track and reach those goals. "We just launched [HealthSite] 2.0, and that was even more integration, even more participation, towards our goal of getting half the content every day…from the community. We're not going to get that every day for right now, but that's our goal, and so [HealthSite] 3.0 is adding…a goals application – personal or community goals and a more personalized and interactive events calendar" (newsmgmt2). The site designer's plan is for the site to be functional as a tool for organizing daily activities and long-term social goals. This is one of the challenges of innovation, particularly when such broad institutional goals are set. The development never happens as quickly as one would like, and yet community members and the organization's management are often sold on a vision of a project that includes these types of broad sweeping, some might say idealistic, goals.

There are a few other ways that members of the community shape the platform and the product that do not directly involve the community advisory board. Designers are hesitant to make major changes to design. "Another problem is when you do make big changes like we do with the [HealthSite], when you change that much at once, there is a pushback factor. You moved their cheese, and that sucks. They can't do the thing they

used to do in the same way. You're making them think. They don't want that" (design1).

But the site's designer (newsmgmt2) and the web designers went ahead with the 2.0

version of the site because it did not feature enough content on each page. Only a handful

of recent stories were available on any given page on the site. They changed that so that

at the bottom of each and every post appears a grid of photo links to dozens of other posts

and stories from groups, sponsored and otherwise. The new focus on content opened up

space for advertising. Blocks within the grid can now be sold as display ads, which make

up 20% of the site's advertising. Ten percent comes from sponsored groups, and the

largest sponsor makes up the final key aspect of the institutional level of analysis that

must be discussed here, the site sponsor.

Sponsorship of the HealthSite is, by many accounts, the only thing keeping the

site and probably the "social journalism" model viable through its second year. The local

hospital pays for the sponsorship, and the implications of this relationship are vital. Major

sponsors have often been essential to keeping news organizations afloat. Local news

stations often rely on local car dealerships' advertising dollars. Department stores used to

fund dozens of pages of content in newspapers, but for some the relationship is

disconcerting, and where questions are raised, they are counted as social shaping

influences at the institutional level. The question of influence over content has been

raised. This is a concern to the reporter who is taking over the second "social journalism"

site, the "green economy" site: "I'm not saying you can't write things that would make

your advertisers look bad, but you definitely have a relationship with them you might not

have had before" (news9). On the other hand, since every citizen is invited to contribute

content, concerns over the hospital's strong influence may be mitigated. The HealthSite

manger continues to pursue negative coverage of the hospital when it comes up. "I think a bad story is going to be a bad story, but they'll be there to comment, and what I've learned from the hospital is just that they want to be able to comment because that would anger them more if there's a bad story and we don't give them the opportunity" (news1). According to another reporter (news9), the hospital will still call the newspaper's publisher when they want to complain.

Social System Level

Recall that the social system level of analysis was operationalized to refer to the way a political or economic system influences the news. Interview participants had a difficult time answering questions related to this level of analysis. It is not easy to come up with an assessment of how one's own work might fit into a broader social plan or how concepts like "the market economy" might be affecting one's work. Most research participants did not have a response when asked how they would define American society and how they want their work to contribute to it.

A few general ideals emerged in the context of the social journalism site. A handful of participants mentioned the ability to use social journalism to forge connections between people. "It's creating a safe place, a trusted place for people to have conversations about important issues, and I think that's the influence of the HealthSite on me, focusing on that is what I think is a cornerstone in the digitalization of news and information" (newsmgmt4). The previous example speaks to participation in a public

Table 4.5

Mutual Shaping of Technology at the Social System Level

	Theme	Occurrences	Description
DI			
	Journalism ideals	9	*Through innovation, communities may be better served.*
SST			
	New model for a new age	8	*The "social journalism" model is defined as a new model building on existing ideals.*

	Participant categories	Number of responses
DI		
	News	4
	News Management	3
	Ad/Marketing	0
	Design	2
	Total	**9**
SST		
	News	2
	News Management	3
	Ad/Marketing	1
	Design	2
	Total	**8**

sphere, but it also includes a marketing slogan used in promoting the site that must have been at the top of mind for the research participant.

For one participant, the use of social media shifted her conceptualization of the audience. "I had an 'Aha!' moment where I realized I'm talking to real people. I need to talk to them like I am a real person so that they know there's a real person on the other side of the conversation" (news8). This contributes to her belief that journalism-as-

conversation can be successful at building audiences and solving local problems. "To see a site like this that's trying to achieve defined goals. We want to make the community a healthier place to live. I think that's ground breaking" (news8). In these examples participants note a desire to foster the development of social connections toward solving social problems.

They have high hopes for social journalism, but by these definitions, it could be a tool that reinforces the status quo as much as it revolutionizes existing institutional connections, existing structures. The model is advertising-based, and that carries with it an inherent measure of pro-commercial bias.

> I'm concerned a little bit about the advertorial aspect of the [HealthSite]. I think if it makes money (pauses)…We need a new way, and if we can find a balance to bring that in without it being gross, I'm ok with it. Interviewer: How do you define gross? How much of that can I stomach and not give up all those other journalistic ideals, serving the citizen as to why I got into this in the first place. That's one of those things I'm watching to see (news6).

A focus on serving the citizen instead of pluralist groups could be read as a reference to a North Atlantic/Liberal Model of media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), but the structure of the social journalism site also encourages the formation of groups to solve local social problems. The site itself is a powerful tool and can be used in a number of ways. There is very little indication of a mutual shaping of technology process occurring at this level. The site itself does not necessarily have an ideology. It can be said to engage with social system-level variables, but these terms and references are difficult to elicit at the end of an hour-long interview with an advertising, marketing or journalism professional who is taking time out of her/his busy schedule. If respondents do not perceive an ideal inherent in the social journalism model, and if they are not concerned

much for the structures or systems in which they work, there can be no claims of any

strong MST dynamic at this level.

CHAPTER V: NEW INSTITUTIONALISM AND A NEW BUSINESS MODEL

The second set of research questions seeks to identify and explain key elements of the business model associated with the "social journalism" platform and to place them in the context of other contemporary efforts to fund digital news. In addition, this chapter examines how institutional conditions might help or hinder attempts to develop a successful business model. This chapter begins with a detailed breakdown of the model and a comparison to other forms of funding digital communication. I describe the funding sources under the latest iteration of the platform at the time of writing (June, 2011). I analyze the similarities between this business model and others currently being tested elsewhere. I also detail aspects of the model that appear to be innovative and explain the rationale behind them. Analysis then proceeds with a discussion of institutional forces that limit and/or bolster the model's success. Framing this analysis in the context of the theoretical paradigm of new institutionalism, I describe ways socially constructed institutional rules hinder and/or help support efforts to fund this type of journalism, and for each (hindering or helping) I look for evidence of influence coming from external institutional relationships as well as internalized institutional expectations, rules, myths. "[O]rganizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work" (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1991, p. 41); therefore, it is essential to ask where influences might originate and how they are being or how they have been adopted.

Data for this chapter come from the same interview questions and responses that informed the previous chapter (Appendix A). During the data analysis process, I

identified comments that refer specifically to the business model and analyzed them for

emerging themes relevant to the new institutionalism paradigm. Key quotes highlight the

observations in each section that follows. Rather than providing counts of codes, in this

chapter, I simply reference the general prevalence of certain observations provided by

interview participants. Information from the organization's advertising and marketing

departments is most prevalent in this chapter, but relevant comments and observations

from the newsroom are included where applicable.

Findings for RQ2a: New business models in digital journalism

RQ2a asked what the key elements of the business model associated with the

"social journalism" platform are. The most important aspect of the model is that is has

three funding sources. First, a major sponsor covers about 70 percent of the site's needed

revenue. Banner and other display ads pay for 20 percent, and sponsored groups cover

another 10 percent (ad_marketing1). This combination is in line with the expectations of

Kaye and Quinn (2010): "[N]ews organizations will rely on a combination of revenue

sources. Each news provider will employ models that are particularly well-suited to their

own style of journalism" (p. 173). In this case, the niche site relies on a sponsor that fits

the health niche. The local hospital, for the time being, continues to support the site

despite the fact that its traffic numbers are not very strong. The HealthSite gets about

100,000 page views each month. I asked the marketing director if the outlook was bleak

based on the weak initial level of interest:

> When we only had 20,000 page views in a month, it was kind of hard to monetize
> too much out of that…For being less than a year old, where the most recent

version we came out with—We're calling it 2.0, but really we're out of beta now because it was software that was written from scratch—to be socially enabled and all of the hurdles that come with that (pause)…If you look at [HealthSite] as a test bed of the sort of backbone of the software that we built, then I think we're doing quite well. For that traffic (100,000 page views per month), we're actually monetizing pretty well too (ad_marketing1).

Remarkably, despite the focus of this paper on the technological aspects of the site and its social-networking functionality, display advertising still plays a large part in its survival. Display ads are relatively cheap and easy to produce. The ads on the site include some animation, but they are intended to be unobtrusive. They are essentially boxes of a standard size. "With the tile design we have at the bottom of the webpage now, under the fold, there's the flexibility to put a lot more advertising and sponsorship areas there" (ad_marketing1). This means that a display ad can be shown across the site as a cell in a grid of news stories and photos that appear below the comments on every page and below the top stories on the website's front page. Display ads can be sold to various advertisers to run for varying amounts of time. Additionally, some of them are included in the overall sponsorship package and are more or less permanent fixtures. E.g. the hospital uses banner advertising to highlight its family birthing center.

In addition to site sponsorship and display ads, the third key revenue source for the "social journalism" platform in its current iteration is the sale of sponsored groups.

We do charge businesses a monthly fee to have a sponsored group, and that allows them whole run of the site, sort of as advocates for their business' position in the conversations. Individuals from businesses of course can contribute as private citizens, but we're pretty careful to keep their advocacy for their business down. We've had real good luck with just reaching out to people and saying you really can't promote your business unless you're a paid business member on the site.

The site added about one sponsored group per month over the course of its first year. This is an area of potential growth. It is hoped that as the social network grows more businesses will see the logic in paying to participate. One of the company's most experienced digital advertising sales representatives suggests in sales conversations that having a sponsored group could be a good way to drive traffic to the company's own website. "How do they get traffic to their websites? How do they get people to them? That's our conversation" (ad_marketing4). Sponsorship and display ads are carrying the weight to support the "social journalism" site, but group sponsorship is relatively innovative, and more than the other two revenue sources it matches the organization's "own style of journalism" (Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p.173). The organization's ability to profit from the social-networking aspects of the site may ultimately determine the fate of the platform.

The platform's iterative nature is a key element in its business model. When efforts to grow revenue are successful, they can be capitalized on in the next redesign. News companies relying on others to manage their CMS are able to save money on research and development in the short run, but they are at the mercy of other companies when it comes to making design changes. The iterative nature of design can be coupled with relatively pedestrian revenue sources to maximize profits, as seen in the effort to standardize and add additional positions for display ads. [After] our experiences with not having monetizable services there—we addressed in that 2nd round, and so now it's where there are a lot more things we can sell around the website. In a manner of speaking, the site has experimented with limited user access and a limited focus on display advertising and has learned and evolved. As was mentioned before, users at first

had to register on each separate group's page before being able to post. That was

scrapped. In the version called 2.0 by most in the organization, anonymous posting was

allowed. Up to three times, someone can post in comments sections anonymously,

although registration is needed to add story content. This is intended to drive traffic, but

the decision to allow anonymous comments came only after deliberation by the advisory

board (design1).

Another essential factor in the business model for the "social journalism" site is

its niche nature. It is not a source of revenue, but rather a *modus operandi*. The site's

architect explains:

> We have an opportunity where there's now a vacuum existing from traditional
> news organizations backing off from niche areas that we can move in, but if we
> don't somebody else will. The niches that are already taken (nationally)—
> obviously there's sports, entertainment, pets. Those are already done, but what's
> still open for local/ regional areas are health, sustainability, economic health to a
> certain extent, if you don't have competition with B2B sites, obviously, and
> weather, although that's beginning to be taken away too, and sort of outdoor
> activities too and state government.

Kaye and Quinn (2010) call it "passion content" (p. 101). "Broad and popular content

should be offered free to build online traffic. But hard-to-find niche material has high

value to specific groups and they are willing to pay for it" (p. 101). The niche nature of

the site is thought to be what attracts the local hospital as a sponsor. Some in the

organization argue that by signing up the community's hospital as a sponsor the news

organization is merely moving money around. "It's like well why not. Digital is the

future and print has fewer eyeballs. More eyeballs are going to digital, so of course

they're going to shift it and luckily they're spending it with us and not some other digital

organization, so that's what we're grappling with here" (newsmgmt2). The architect of

the "social journalism" platform makes some broad technological assumptions. It could

be argued that it behooves her to think in such terms, since she is a driving force in the organization for change. It remains to be seen if the model she champions is sustainable, and while it is not accurate to say that there is a battle between print and digital in the news organization in question, there are institutional challenges and benefits applicable to this discussion of the viability of "social journalism." The next section deals directly with institutional forces, how they promote and how they hamper the effort in the organization internally and externally.

Findings for RQ2b: New institutionalism and "social journalism"

Scholars of media economics interested in the economic viability of digital journalism agree that there are no silver bullet solutions that will restore profit margins enjoyed in the twentieth century. "In the mid-1990s, many news sites started by charging users a subscription fee for online news access, but most failed. The advertising model followed, with only limited success, and the effectiveness of online advertising remains questionable" (Chyi, 2005). It appears that, in myriad variations on myriad platforms, news companies have tried trusted models with limited success, but one of the difficulties in pursuing this type of research is defining success. If it is defined as a return to monopoly-type profit levels or preservation of the print medium or some other singular media delivery platform (i.e. radio or television), not only are scholars and practitioners facing likely disappointment, they are buying into institutionalized expectations that are easily challenged. This portion of the study questions institutional expectations about how journalism should be funded and what should be considered success. It looks at the

ways socially constructed institutional rules or myths appear to be affecting attempts to develop a new business model for online news within a company built on a newspaper tradition.

Throughout the organization, interview participants, whether they strongly support the "social journalism" model or not recognize that the focus of the company is on publishing digital, multimedia content first and foremost. "During the time we were converged with TV and print, we moved to the model of online first. Everything goes up online before it is on [other channels]" (newsmgmt3). But this does not mean that the "social journalism" form of online news production is widely popular. Perhaps the most important aspect of the institutional conditions surrounding efforts to develop the business model is the perception that the organization is a "newspaper company." This leads to some difficulty because the organization been in the community for more than 100 years, and advertisers have come to expect certain types of transaction. Just as there is an institution of news, there is an institution of advertising set up to streamline trade, reduce transaction costs, and provide both partners with socially constructed sets of expectations about how to relate with one another.

> I think internally, the biggest problem for a legacy media company is in legacy media – the bottom line is all out of whack. It's nowhere near as profitable as it used to be. They continue to miss expectations on revenue in print, and those resources that you've identified and secured for your digital future – suddenly there's an emergency on the print side, and those resources get re-tasked to being reactive in addressing the emergency on the print side, and that disallows you from using them strategically to grow your digital side, and there's…you hear that sort of universally (ad_marketing1).

These and other institutional limitations are the focus of the first portion of this section.

External institutional hindrances. The relationship between the news organization and its advertisers has been longstanding in many cases, and in terms of social

institutions, this is often helpful. Networks, expectations, even unwritten rules are established as part of the process of institutionalization. Institutionalizing advertising made it a simpler process, but technological changes present problems. In the digital space, the newspaper no longer enjoys near monopoly control over the local discourse, and it must fend off efforts to siphon away advertisers.

> It's very challenging right now because you have a lot of people who are very entrepreneurial about developing particularly hyperlocal and local news that are willing to bet the next four or five years of their life or two or three years of their life on not making anything more than minimum wage. [These are] sites where they're doing the reporting. They're doing the ad selling. They're doing the web management. They're doing all of those things themselves. I don't think that's sustainable, but it makes it very difficult for a company that's providing benefits and has hundreds of people on the payroll (ad_marketing1).

The news organization in this study has nearly 250 employees. Thirty-eight work in the legacy newspaper's newsroom (newsmgmt1), and the rest work in other departments. Before divesting itself of the cable company, the number was closer to 600, according to published reports. One way of looking at these changes is that the company is more nimble and able to better compete in a quickly changing media environment. Another way of reading the situation is that the company that held a near monopoly over news in the region is cutting its losses and focusing on shoring up key resources. This makes large advertisers all the more important to hold onto.

The difficulty for the news organization is that its institutional relationships are built for print advertising, but it now needs to compete in the digital advertising space. On one hand, the organization can and does educate some of its longstanding clients about how the "social journalism" platform works "because the nature of social marketing requires a lot more involvement on behalf of the advertiser than traditional

advertising does" (ad_marketing4). On the other hand, the news organization faces

difficulty in changing its image as a producer primarily of print products.

> We deal with a lot of local companies that bought print advertising forever and
> ever and ever, and they are run by pillars of the community, if you will, but trying
> to convince them that the method of communication is changing is a challenge
> sometimes, and they don't necessarily view us as the harbinger of the digital age
> because they view us as the newspaper company (ad_marketing1).

The institutional relationships that took more than 100 years to build now work against

the organization in some ways as it tries to innovate and to secure revenue sources to

continue developing its prototype on the "social journalism" platform.

Additionally, there is another issue for this news organization in the digital

advertising market. The dynamics of the relationship are different in the socially

networked environment. Paying for display ads is not particularly challenging for an

advertiser, but participating on the site as a major sponsor or as the patron of a for-profit

group page takes work. If advertisers view participation in social media as a chore, they

may not want to participate on the "social journalism" platform at all, much less pay for

the privilege.

These examples explain the many external challenges facing the news

organization. Institutional relationships developed over years to make the selling of print

ads a simple, if somewhat expensive process, now may work against the organization as

it attempts to innovate. To fully understand the limitations presented by institutional

relationships, internal factors must be considered as well.

Internal institutional hindrances. An organization may develop internal structures

to match institutional requirements. Some structures develop within news organizations

so that they will know how to relate to other news organizations in terms of

newsgathering and dissemination practices, but there are also internal norms that develop

to support institutional relationships for the sake of conducting business. Thus it is

important here to discuss internal institutional structures that may stand in the way of the

successful development of the business model for "social journalism." Two internal

structural holdouts persist. The first is the persistent belief *inside the organization* that it

should be foremost a newspaper company. This relates to the organization's self-

conceptualization as part of the institution of American newspapers. The second is the

structure of compensation for advertising sales professionals and their own ingrained

cultural expectations, which reflect the internalization of institutionalized relationships.

Some in the news organization find it important to maintain its status as a

newspaper company. If, as Lowery (2011) points out, legitimacy is essential to the

functioning of the organization in public, it is no wonder that some wish to preserve what

it means to be a newspaper, even as the financial situation for newspapers all over the

United States has worsened. The expectation comes from the family publishers of the

paper. As its owners, their opinion is second to none, and their ties to the institutional

constructs are strong. "I also think it's really hard for the family to give up the paper.

They see the paper as being journalism. I see it as being a format" (newsmgmt2). The

marketing director found pushback in terms of this set of institutional expectations even

though he is not a journalist.

> So, back to an internal struggle, we own a lot of different domains and so I
> changed my email address to one of the ".info" domains just because I thought
> that represented what I was doing for the company better than the [newspaper]
> company email that people use, and I got internal pushback on that. That's part of
> my education outside the company in saying we're not just the newspaper.

In this case, the marketing director changed his email address as a way to challenge external institutional limits, and he faced disapproval based on internalized institutional norms.

Unwillingness to change the structure of compensation for advertising sales staff appears to be designed to ensure that every effort is made to fund the newspaper despite its declining popularity. A litany of questions surrounds the "social journalism" business model from those primarily concerned about the future of the newspaper, which is a large majority of those in the organization: Where is the money coming from; Who has the money; and, Are we moving advertisers out of print? This makes it difficult to push the sales staff to sell the "social journalism" site.

> They have two different compensation plans in the way they're paid out on a monthly basis, and [for print sales representatives] if you don't reach a certain print level, you don't get that percent of compensation, whatever percent that it is; whereas, on the digital side it's a total percent of sales, so whatever you sell you get 10% of basically, regardless of what it is…It's just an old school model, and because it's not a decision I can make, I don't know how to get that shifted (ad_marketing4).

Advertising sales representatives cannot place all of the blame for not selling the "social journalism" model on compensation structures. Of course there is an organization-wide desire to continue to fund the newspaper because of the jobs it provides and because of its institutional value in terms of journalistic legitimacy, but there is also some stubbornness on the part of those who are used to selling print advertising, who developed work habits over the course of decades.

> In a conversation with leadership [advertising sales representatives] will say, "That's not what they want, making assumptions on behalf of the advertiser without having that full conversation and really exposing the advertiser to what there is available (ad_marketing4).

> I kept on hearing you can't sell digital, you can't sell digital… I just thought we need to do something about bringing that side of the building which I thought was as modern as this side of the building into play (newsmgmt2).

Making assumptions on behalf of advertisers may have served advertising sales representatives well in the past, but today it threatens their job (ad_marketing4).

External institutional benefits. Existing institutional forms that may benefit the development of the "social journalism" business model include the niche nature of the "social journalism" platform, the ability for advertisers to publish content, and the focus on community. Lowery (2011) argues that a focus on community relations correlates with innovation in online publishing (Lowery, 2011, pp. 73-74). As far as advertisers are concerned, research suggests that niche publishing can demand higher rates (Kaye & Quinn, 2010), and advertisers have long been eager to have more attention and more control over their image in community publications.

> Over the years almost every advertiser I talk to it's like, "How do I get a story written about me? From an advertising perspective it was always the same way, I was like, "Go away. There's no way. There's nothing I can do or say to anybody in the organization that's going to get a story written on you. However, now they have an opportunity to write a story about themselves every week or more frequently if they desire, so that's kind of exciting and it's definitely changed the tone of the conversation (ad_marketing4).

Forging connections with audiences is expected to keep advertisers happy, but there remains a concern in online publishing that only a very small percentage of people will contribute. A larger percentage will comment and a much larger group will merely "lurk." This suggests a model of participatory journalism and participatory advertising might have difficulty succeeding. The architect of the site claims that the cross between niche and audience foci creates a space conducive to participation, but it is an active pursuit.

> There's a core that uses the site every day. They use it as a method of moving things forward in their lives, work lives, advocacy lives. It's like a real estate section. When you're in an area, and you've got a real estate section every realtor is going to be on there because that's where the conversation is happening.

In this case, the core groups are health related non-profits and the hospital. It might make for a strange pitch, but one of the best reasons to advertise on the HealthSite may be that the local hospital is the sponsor. This suggests that the most knowledgeable and capable members of the community regarding this niche are already present. The hope is that existing institutions already interested in health with use the site to coordinate activities and any shared messages, talking points, so to speak, that they want to bring to the wider community. If a core "engine" based on institutional relationships and existing institutional structures can be tapped into, the role of advertisers and journalists is to bring lurkers in to comment and bring commenters in to participate by contributing content. Merely having the capacity to accept multimedia user generated content is not enough to guarantee participation. The match of niche and hard-fought targeting of organizations with a vested interest in the niche is key. Besides these external institutional relationships, there is an aspect of the internal institutional arrangement that is in some ways helping the HealthSite the way no other influence can.

Internal institutional benefits. Connecting the "social journalism" platform to the legacy niche news site has provided a strong growth in readership. It took months to do the coding to enable the sites to somewhat seamlessly connect for users. The publishing platforms are completely different, but the news organization's web designers worked to make it possible for journalists to push stories from the HealthSite to the front page of the legacy newspaper site with a single click. Journalists still log onto the public-facing CMS, but with the right level of access, they can directly publish a headline to the legacy

online newspaper. This brought a huge jump in traffic, and it suggested for the first time that the niche-aggregator model might work. With innovation, the odds of survival are often rough, but by tapping into existing institutional structures and ignoring or working to diminish others, the "social journalism" business model might survive long enough to continue to evolve.

From an institutional perspective, it will be interesting to see how institutional relationships develop in the future between other organizations and the "social journalism" site, its business end included. The iterative nature of development suggests that it may be difficult to develop protocol, bureaucratic expectations, or myths. Can change itself be institutionalized? By posing that question, I suggest that this chapter only scratches the surface of what lies ahead for research involving institutions and socially-networked models of news and their corresponding business models.

CHAPTER VI: FROM PUBLIC JOURNALISM TO "SOCIAL JOURNALISM"

The third set of research questions places the "social journalism" model in historical context. The questions ask if and to what extent "social journalism" represents an extension of the public journalism movement and how the "social journalism" platform may or may not be a model of a functioning public sphere. Boczkowski (2004a) posits that media innovations are built on underlying "infrastructures" that may develop over the course of centuries (p. 257). Habermas' (1989) analysis of the structural transformation of the bourgeois public sphere traces its development from the 1600s through most of the twentieth century. His conceptualization of the public sphere as a space for private citizens to debate issues rationally in the interest of reaching public consensus stands as an ideal for public political deliberation in the West (Dahlgren, 2005; Fraser, 1990; Habermas, Crossley, & Roberts, 2004; Papacharissi, 2002). The public journalism movement was a late twentieth century effort by American news organizations to better engage citizens in news production in the hopes that they would become more interested in politics and in making progress on social issues covered in the news (Black, 1997; Charity, 1995; Corrigan, 1999; Glasser, 1999; Lambeth, et al., 1998; Merritt, 1998; Rosenberry & St John, 2009). Of these scholars and practitioners of the public journalism movement, Black (1997), Glasser (1999), Lambeth et al. (1998), and Rosenberry and St. John (2009) make reference to Habermas. "Were public journalism to require a philosophical patron saint, Habermas, arguably, would appear to be a logical nominee…Habermas accepts as morally valid only those norms affirmed through rational, consensual, and impartial judgments of all moral agents affected by the norm

who are equally well equipped to articulate their interests" (Lambeth et al., 1998, p. 21). The social journalism model does not aim to identify who is equipped and who is not to address issues of public importance, but it seems to be built on this historical infrastructure that can be traced through both Habermas (1989, originally written in 1962) and the public journalism movement.

Historical infrastructures may impose expectations, capabilities, limitations, etc. on news innovations. In Boczkowski's example, the development of videotex in the United States differed substantially from its development in France (p. 263). "American dailies pursued videotex initiatives without the advantage of a publicly subsidized infrastructure, and not on [sic] the public interest but with a dual business motivation: to explore the new domain and to assess its threat to print" (p. 263). Instead of being supported by a government interested in providing services, videotex in the U.S. was developed by companies who saw it as a potentially competitive threat. Boczkowski (2004a) references an American Newspaper Publishers Association convention held in 1981 addressing "the opportunities and threats posed by electronic publishing" (p. 258). Boczkowski (2004a) argues that industry leaders had "ambivalent public reactions" to the failure of videotex experiments in the U.S. (p. 263). [T]hey pursued videotex less out of a conviction that they needed to alter their production procedures and values to create an entirely different media artifact than because this was something that they 'had to do'" (Boczkowski, 2004a, p. 263). A better understanding of the historical context into which an innovation is introduced can shed light on its hopes of survival and can help explain why certain strategies are employed or not. Understanding the historical antecedents of an innovation also helps us to better appreciate its social and cultural significance.

Findings for RQ3a: "Social journalism" and its connections to public journalism

Answering RQ3a is not a matter of merely listing similarities between public journalism and "social journalism." Several are readily apparent including a contemporary concern for decline in the news industry, a focus on community outreach, and the involvement of citizens in news production. The thrust of this research question is to examine what evidence, if any, exists that "social journalism" represents an *extension* of public journalism; therefore, similarities and differences need to be deconstructed and examined in depth.

In this chapter, I synthesize several definitions of public journalism, describe its origins and stated objectives and provide a few key examples. Then, I define "social journalism" and place it in the context of similar offerings. I describe the origins and objectives of "social journalism," comparing them to public journalism, and finally I briefly describe the ways in which "social journalism" does and does not extend the ideals and practices of public journalism.

Literature on public journalism is plentiful. It describes the movement's origins and objectives while providing detailed examples of protocols and projects developed in its name. For data to support the analysis of "social journalism" in this context, I refer once again to interviews conducted with managers and professionals in the news organization. During the process of gathering data for this project, in follow-up questions with those working closely with the platform, I often delved into discussions about the origins, purpose, functionality and future expectations for the model. I gained a great deal

of insight when speaking with the site's architect, other members of management and the site's web designers.

Public journalism. Public journalism has no simple theoretical or practical definition. There is some disagreement on whether or not the movement is "dead." I agree with Ryfe and Mensing in Rosenberry & St. John (2009): "Today, public journalism, as practiced in traditional newsrooms of the 1980s and 1990s, is dead (Nip, 2008)" (p. 33). Some related practices no doubt continue in newsrooms today. Certainly Jay Rosen continues to push for many of the ideals of public journalism, but I refer to public journalism as it was practiced at the end of the twentieth century in newsrooms, particularly in newspapers around the country, in the past tense.

Rosen (1999) "briefly" defines public journalism in four parts as "an approach to the daily business of the craft that calls on journalists to address people as citizens…help the political community act…improve the climate of public discussion…and help make public life go well" (p. 22). Part of the difficulty in defining public journalism is that it sought to overhaul journalism practice in general, which is a complex set of processes involving myriad institutionalized expectations and relationships. In addition, public journalism is difficult to define because its expectations were somewhat ambiguous. The public journalism movement for some was about changing the role of journalism in society and making it actively work for social change through community partnerships. For others, especially in practice, public journalism focused more on making changes to news content and assuming that social change would follow. This distinction cannot be stressed enough. Changing the way journalism is done in communities represents an ideal of public journalism that might have the capacity to foster social change. Changing news

content, no matter how drastically, is not likely to bring about structural social change. The effects of media messages are limited according to well-established theories on cognitive and behavioral effects (Bandura, 1986; Lang, 2007; McQuail, 1979). If there is a litmus test for whether something is a "real" public journalism effort or not, the question that needs to be asked is whether it changes *relationships* between journalists and their community or whether its ultimate result is primarily on content.

"Buzz" Merritt, one of public journalism's its most outspoken proponents often called it "a theory in search of a practice" (2009, p. 21), but this implies that there was a theoretical base for public journalism. Denton and Thorson in Lambeth, Meyer, and Thorson (1998) argue that scholars too often conflated public journalism with other concepts. "For at least fifty years, throughout the social-responsibility era of the press, journalists have seen prosocial initiatives as part of their role, and it has been a quarter century since McCombs and Shaw explicated public agenda-setting as an important function of the press. What is arguably new about public journalism is the active *involvement* of the public" (p. 146). In other words, Denton and Thorson express the "relationship vs. content" argument in terms of mass communication theory, and theory runs into practice, i.e. theories about content are well established. A theory of public journalism should focus on changes to the journalist-public relationship, otherwise it is merely a new term competing against some of the most trusted conceptual-theoretical links in our field (Chaffee, 1996).

Another problem with defining public journalism is that practitioners were not so concerned with giving it a name. "We settled on "public journalism" because the thrust of the idea was to make a positive impact on public life and because its practitioners would

be public—that is, open and unselfconscious—about what they were doing and why"
(Merritt, 2009, p. 25).

Public journalism as a practical movement sought, in part, ways to restore existing
institutional ideals in an industry known for having detached, aloof and/or elitist
practitioners. By Merritt's definition above, public journalism was about transparency of
practice in addition to collaborative practice. Transparency may be a step in the direction
of collaboration, but it is not a substitute for it or an example of it. It is challenging to
define public journalism succinctly because the movement had no coherent message on
the level of collaboration it advocated. Merritt (1998) writes: "Moving away from
detachment does not require the professional to abandon journalistic objectivity" (p. 25).
Perhaps abandonment of detachment and direct social engagement was an idea he
considered too difficult to market to American journalists in the early 1990s. Glasser
(1999) expresses his frustration with the inability to define what public journalism is
about:

> [T]oo much of the literature on public journalism glosses over inconsistencies and
> even contradictions in its premises and principles…few agree on what
> 'democracy' means, where 'public life' exists, or should exist, what constitutes
> 'participation'—and what role the press should play in making it all work (p. 7).

Thus, even when the terms of public journalism were agreed upon, the meaning and the
usage of those terms could still be vague.

Public journalism faced fierce opposition from the libertarian wing of journalism
scholars. Barney (1997) writes of the threat of the communitarian nature of public
journalism. "The need to perpetuate the organization reorders priorities to require that
Loyalty to the organization transcends commitment to Truth" (p. 79). His worry is that

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communitarianism will quash dissent and render journalism toothless. He tends to ignore the threat that corporate-control of news media has the potential to render journalism just as weak. Merrill (1997) puts his opposition in colorful terms: "Let us not give serious consideration to the communitarians' *non-negotiable principles* in journalism—those that supposedly define it as a profession and guide its practices. Let us seriously question the idea that morality makes universal and categorical claims on us…it is a rather ominous suggestion that a communitarian morality will rise like a gray and stupefying giant to erase cultural values and relegate ethical pluralism to nothingness" (p. 64). Alschull offers a simple, reasoned counterpoint: "I would like to agree with [Merrill], for I admire his cheerful optimism and his belief that somehow America's journalists will yet arrive at the sunny uplands that he sees as still within their reach. I used to believe that myself, before I had come to recognize that individual tilters at windmills are simply unable to challenge Money" (p. 145). The debate over public journalism strikes at deeper debates about social philosophy that will be debated as long as there is a practice of journalism. Suffice it to say public journalism has its supporters, and many of them are quoted heavily here, but on the opposing side, many well-cited, longstanding scholars view the champions of public journalism not as reinforcements for journalism's good fight but as "evangelists" of a communitarian future (Corrigan, 1999).

Perhaps it is best to leave the concept of public journalism broadly defined in order to proceed. Rosen (1999) steps back from trying to define public journalism directly and provides a comprehensive description of its forms:

[U]nderstand it in a least five ways: as an *argument*, a way of thinking about what journalists should be doing…an *experiment*, a way of doing journalism that corresponded to the argument and was tried in hundreds of communities across the country, as journalists attempted to break out of established routines…as a *movement*, a loose

network of practicing journalists, former journalists who wanted to improve their craft, academics and researchers with ideas to lend…foundations and think tanks…and other like-minded folk who wanted to contribute to a rising spirit of reform…as a *debate*, an often heated conversation within the press and with others outside it about the proper role of the press at a time of trouble—in newsrooms and in American democracy…[and] as an *adventure,* an open-ended…quest for another kind of press" (pp. 22-23, original emphases).

Public journalism was a movement led by journalists and scholars put into practice in experiments nationwide that opened up a fierce debate about the role of journalism in American society and whether journalists (and eventually it was hoped all of American journalism) should actively become involved with communities to improve social conditions, including the condition of political apathy. Public journalism did not develop a specific ideal, i.e. very few would come out and say they wanted something akin to a social-democratic press, but it built an argument that journalists needed to reconnect with audiences and that if they did society would benefit.

The 1988 presidential election and journalists' disgust with their own profession after the way it was covered are often cited as the impetus for the public journalism movement (Rosenberry & St. John, 2009, p. 10). More generally, there is often described a sense of disgust with the state of American society and the belief is expressed that journalism must have fallen short of its duties if progress had not been made against several social ills in the decades leading up to the movement's inception. "Most importantly, they saw that the very problems they had come to journalism to help solve still weren't being solved, or even being very intelligently addressed. Inner cities continued to decay, deficits to grow, schools to flounder; city hall and statehouse policies were as unfocused as ever" (Charity, 1995). Opponents of public journalism took issue with this premise: "it seems to be based on the intuitive feelings and the intellectual

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wanderings of [public journalism's] evangelists, rather than on any painstaking empirical research by a range of sociologists and political scientists…that political life is in decline, that public discourse is in decline—are all premises that may very well be false" (Corrigan, 1999, p. 59). Whether proponents of the movement were correct or not in their assessment of the nature of social problems, concern over social issues fueled the movement's inception.

Several individuals had a hand in pushing the public journalism movement forward. There was not a leader, per se, but a few key names are worth mentioning. Charity (1995) provides a list of some of the key players who helped to kick off the public journalism movement:

> Over time, people like Merritt, Iggers, and Rosen would read people like Broder, Dionne, and Yankelovich, digest their ideas, and write articles of their own that fertilized the thinking of other editors, media critics, and professors" (p. vii).

The ideas underlying public journalism already existed in the institutional culture. These and other outspoken proponents of the movement began as individuals but arrive at a common goal—to try to push newspapers to connect more deeply with their communities and to push for social change.

The public journalism movement did not have a single clear objective. For some, the goal was to improve coverage by inviting citizens to participate in the gatekeeping process. For others, the ultimate goal was social change. There is no clear line between content-focused public journalism projects and relationship-focused projects. Often times, short-term relationships were formed in order to generate news content, and it was hoped that the news content would help to bring about social change. I have argued that expecting news messages to bring about broad social change is somewhat misguided, per

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the limited-effects theoretical paradigm, but on the production end of that type of public journalism project there was community outreach, and connections were formed. Even when the objective was to change news coverage, some level of social outreach probably took place. Lambeth (1998) defines the movement's key objectives, to "listen systematically to…citizens," to examine alternative frames for stories that would encourage "citizen deliberation," and to contribute to "public knowledge of possible solutions" in a systematic way (p. 17). Put together, contributions to knowledge and systematic community outreach might be able to address social problems, but public journalism did not always live up to its objectvies.

Examples of public journalism are more disparate than definitions of the movement. Some involved direct citizen outreach, but journalists managed all of the content. In other cases, citizens contributed to their own special sections or to large community forums, but the connections were short-lived. Another approach to public journalism was change the way news was approached in-house, so to speak, rather than to directly involve members of the public.

Charity (1995) very briefly describes several efforts of various sizes all conducted at newspapers in the early 1990s. In these examples, citizen participation takes different forms. At the *Dayton Daily News*, "Two thousand people eventually participated in…forums" organized by Martha Steffens to discuss youth violence (p. 65). The *Daily News* provided a pizza for any group that would participate in the forums and found members of the public were eager to do so. In addition, "130 experts on juvenile violence" were called upon to try to develop solutions (p. 64). What had begun as coverage of "Kids in Chaos" morphed into a new project called: "Fixing our Families"

(p. 65). "People were almost always willing to pay higher taxes if it would help their kids, but overwhelmingly they talked about private responsibility rather than public policy" (p. 65). In this case, a large community outreach effort was funneled into the production and framing of news content.

A project at *The Bergen County Record* invited citizens to explain how they would cut the state's budget. Out of 100 respondents, the newspaper selected eight people to represent the community, and they suggested making several cuts, some which had been covered in the newspaper but others had not. "By the end, the eight panelists had identified $567.5 million in cuts…What's more, the citizens showed a decidedly independent streak, refusing to make cuts affecting seniors and education" (p. 77). In this example, (in 1992), 100 people called a newspaper hotline and left their names and addresses. Eight gave several hours of their time to look over the state budget. This is an example of a special project as an effort in public journalism. The outreach is interesting, although it was almost completely controlled by the news organization, and there is no mention of major newsroom changes.

In one case, the project was more lasting and focused on changing newsroom practices rather than conducting a single campaign. "Unlike a lot of other papers, the *Virginian-Pilot* didn't come to public journalism looking for a new angle on a big story such as an election, the redevelopment of a city, or tension over race. It came because its beat structure was in trouble" (p. 97). Editor Cole Campbell noticed that the newspaper's five reporters covering politics around Norfolk, Virginia were "producing not only uneven journalism, but unimaginative journalism as well" (p. 97). Campbell "lumped the five reporters together into a team, and told them to reinvent their coverage from scratch.

This got team editor Tom Warhover and his colleagues thinking about why they were covering government at all…they drafted a mission statement declaring their aim to 'show how the community works or could work' and to 'portray democracy in the fullest sense of the word' (p. 97). They met regularly with residents, and "What really changed journalism at the *Pilot* was the willingness to experiment itself, and the opportunity given to formerly isolated reporters to brainstorm together" (p. 97). Newsroom practices changed, and Charity claims there were instances of demonstrable effects. For example, "They changed tougher criminal sentencing from a polarized issue to something advocates of rehabilitation could support. They opened a sense of possibility for the Hall Place neighborhood" (p. 98). These changes, though, seem to be changes in perception not action, and it is possible Charity is referring to news coverage as its own proof of evolving discourse. For all that was promised about community outreach and all that was said about journalists needing to change their aloof ways, there is still an underlying assumption that what journalists or news organizations think or what they decide to think about is what matters most. This is implied not only by journalists but by some scholars as well.

Public journalism in the 2000s incorporated user-generated content directly, but it was then subjected to institutionalized news values. The *Virginian-Pilot* introduced the "Co-Pilot" section in 2007. It accepted reader contributions and was based on a successful model in a Spanish newspaper (*El Correo*), but "[the editor] indicated that Co-Pilot folded…due to a lack of quality submissions" (Rosenberry & St. John, 2009, p. 84). Looking at the values of the news stories that were included in the Co-Pilot, Burton St. John III found they focused on curiosity, citizenship, and kindness (pp. 89-92). The "lack

of quality submissions" concept is somewhat troubling because it suggests that the newspaper invited people to tell their stories but then rejected the issues citizens wanted to discuss because they did not reflect professional news judgment.

Across these examples at newspapers at different times in different cities, the public journalism movement fell short of inspiring the changes it sought. This led some to allege that public journalism was being practiced as a public relations effort not as an attempt at redefining journalism (Rosenberry & St John, 2009). "In fact, one of the editors of this volume has observed that professional journalism's own sociology of work and its self-definitions undermined any true deliberation about adopting public journalism (St. John, 2007)" (p. 183).

> As for public journalism, after a period of growth in the late 1980s and 1990s, peaking from around 1994 to 2002 (corresponding roughly to the lifespan of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism), it has largely melted into the media landscape. During its heyday, public journalism tended to take the shape of special reporting projects, usually by mid-sized metro daily newspapers. (Rosenberry & St John, 2009, p. 184).

Ryfe and Mensing argue that, while public journalism fell short of its ideals, "research has shown that in communities where a news organization practiced public journalism, civic life benefited (Haas, 2007). People voted in larger numbers, and talked about politics with one another more often. Citizens and public officials expressed greater trust" (Rosenberry & St. John, 2009, p. 40). Haas (2007) lists the successes of the public journalism movement, and these give hope to those who want to use journalism to improve discourse in communities, but as a plan to systematically change the meaning of journalism in America it did not succeed.

Social journalism. "Social journalism" is the term used by the architect of the platform to describe a form of journalism where (citizen) users and journalists contribute

to a shared publishing space, where social networking tools are made available for users to join in a conversational news format, a citizen advisory board helps shape the platform as participants in an iterative design process, and the reporter's primary tasks are to keep the niche news fresh with several posts per day and to moderate discussions and respond to comments and citizen-generated posts. As an innovation in journalism, "social journalism" is not exactly like any other, but for the sake of comparing it to public journalism and placing it in the constellation of journalism-related terminology dealing with professional/citizen partnerships in news, "citizen journalism" must very briefly be brought into the mix.

Nip's definition of citizen journalism strictly defines it as journalism "that does not involve professional journalists" (2009, p. 139). "Citizen journalism differs from citizen submission to news sites in that it is published without frames provided by either an individual professional journalist or a news organization" (p. 139), but others are more lax in their definition. Allan and Thorsen (2009) and Kaye and Quinn (2010) both list OhmyNews as examples of citizen journalism. Perhaps they would put the HealthSite in the same category as citizen journalism with a social networking component. For the sake of this discussion, the "social journalism" platform can be compared to efforts called "citizen journalism." Korea's OhmyNews serves as a good standard against which to compare the HealthSite. "As of May 2008, OhmyNews employed 60 special reporters while drawing upon the efforts of over 54,900 citizen reporters…The gender ratio is 79% male to 21% female. The age ratio is 8.5% teens, 38.4% in their 20s, 34.5% in their 30s, 14.4% in their 40s, 3.2% in their 50s, and 1.0% in their 60s" (Allan & Thorsen, 2009, p. 149). OhmyNews is a participatory site in a small, relatively homogenous country in a

media system where the mainstream is "authoritative" (p. 149). It hosts multimedia content and a running list of citizen submissions. The tone is one of youth and democratic empowerment (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Considering the ideals of public journalism, OhmyNews has democratic leanings and is certainly built on sustained community outreach. In fact, it may benefit from being an alternative to authoritative mainstream media. OhmyNews is successful commercially. It is popular. It has a permanent, deep level of citizen connectivity, and it fosters democracy. OhmyNews could favorably be compared to efforts in public journalism, and the "social journalism" site could easily be compared to OhmyNews.

Compared to OhmyNews, the "social journalism" platform is quite small. Both feature journalists collaborating with citizens, although editors review submissions to OhmyNews (Song, 2007), and citizens publish directly to the HealthSite. OhmyNews might best be described as a bold business venture (Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p. 79). The "social journalism" platform is considered by many in its organization to be an experiment. If not a last-ditch effort to fund journalism, it is one of a limited number of options being tried by the organization to sustain the enterprise.

CNNs iReport is designed to attract users to its webpage even as its cable network falters. The iReport site allows citizens to post content directly. The site, iReport, is most famous for an erroneous report that Steve Jobs had had a heart attack. The report quickly became rumor, and Apple's stock price fell (Allan & Thorsen, 2009, p. 2). This instance brought criticism to CNN and to citizen journalism in general. Other news organizations use it as an example of the value of gatekeeping (Allan & Thorsen, 2009). Considering the concerns and ideals of the public journalism movement, CNN lives up to some of the

goals. It has built a lasting relationship with users. It allows them to publish directly to the site, but it only puts its insignia on stories it has checked (Allan & Thorsen, 2009). By picking and choosing which stories it follows up on, CNN effectively uses iReport as a pool of story ideas submitted freely by citizens complete with photos and video in many cases. At least one scholar considers iReport a dangerous precedent of the corporate co-optation of citizen journalism (Kperogi, 2011).

One could easily make the case that citizen incorporation of some kind is making its way into mainstream media. "[T]he BBC has embraced citizen newsgathering as a vital resource…[it] recently established 'UGC Hub'—a 24/7 operation—staffed by 23 people to handle what on an average day typically amounts to 12,000 emails and about 200 photographs and videos" (Allan & Thorsen, 2009, p. 4). But the UGC Hub is a filter not a platform for users to submit content. Compared to OhmyNews and iReport, the UGC Hub is reminiscent of the public journalism collaborations where the news organization insisted on controlling all of the final product. Given the damage done by one error on iReport, it is not surprising that the BBC would limit the incorporation of user-generated content by instituting an email filtration system. This model enables user submissions but keeps control almost entirely in the hands of BBC journalists. This is a type of user collaboration that is easily shut down.

The "social journalism" model of news promises a constant connection between the news organization and its community in the future. The journalist managing the niche site has been instructed to work as a community organizer. She not only moderates discussions; she is encouraged to get involved in the comments and to seek out more information in a way that facilitates decision making.

For example, the week I conducted interviews, the reporter published a story on the local food bank, and when users questioned its need for money and wanted to know more about its budget, she contacted the charity and posted a detailed budget in the comments section of the story, helping users to decide if they wanted to support a fundraising effort. This is at a hyperlocal level, but the intent is that the reporter work for the community and not vice versa. In terms of forming and maintaining relationships with users, the "social journalism" platform exceeds OhmyNews, iReport and the UGC Hub in form but not in users.

Another way the "social journalism" platform involves community members is through the use of an advisory board, which was created before the site was developed so that community members could identify key issues they wanted to see covered and so that they could have a say in the site's design. The "social journalism" model stops short of political or social advocacy, but it does extend the definition of public journalism in terms of community connectivity.

At the time of this writing, the organization is working on a "goals application," that will enable community members to set and track progress on health issues. "[Version] 3.0 is adding topic pages including a goals application—personal or community—and a more personalized and interactive events calendar" (newsmgmt2). A "topic page" would track a community issue over time and follow progress towards a goal developed through community discussion. If this plan is carried out, it would make the "social journalism" site not only a continuation of public journalism in practice, but also a serious advancement of the model. Working to help the community develop and track goals, the journalist in this scenario is not an advocate, per se, but a facilitator.

The essential difference between the "social journalism" project and the public journalism movement is that social journalism is designed to exist in a world where newspaper use is drastically declined, for all intents and purposes, a post-newspaper world. The origin of the "social journalism" platform is the massive financial crisis from which the industry may never recover. The progenitors of public journalism were not considering that possibility in their design. To them, reshaping America's newspapers and reshaping American journalism were one in the same. The "social journalism" site's architect speaks of the project as a salvage effort to capture online audiences that have not already been spoken for.

The problem with the newspaper model is the revenues for that keep decreasing, so the only way to serve that beast is to keep laying people off. We have enough models out there of niche networks that are doing fine, thank you, and we have an opportunity where there's now a vacuum existing from traditional news organizations backing off from niche areas that we can move in, but if we don't somebody else will. The niches that are already taken…are sports, entertainment, pets, but what's still open for local/ regional areas are health, sustainability, economic health to a certain extent…and weather (newsmgmt2).

The long-term goal is to build a niche-aggregator for the community that covers approximately the same areas of news as the newspaper but in much greater depth with community contributions making up close to 50% of the content. Niche news coverage around the country tends to follow the national-vertical structure. A single niche topic, such sports is covered nationwide on a site such SB Nation (Kaye & Quinn, 2010, p. 104). It aggregates information across several blogs. One of the most famous aggregators is the Huffington Post, which gets much of its content from low-paid bloggers who get attention or "prestige" (ad_marketing1) for their efforts (Huffington, 2008). The site is not separated into niche communities, but it does separate content by topic. The "social journalism platform" is one of the only ones in the country, to my knowledge, that

proposed to create separate communities for each niche and to aggregate only the top

items into a wholly separate news platform. Individuals can aggregate from several

niches using RSS feeds, but this network would be self-contained, accessible and targeted

at a single community.

The site needs a much bigger audience to grow. If it does, the next step for this

organization will be to introduce the platform regionally, but as with many contemporary

issues in journalism and in mass communication research today, there are a cadre of "ifs"

that need to be addressed, and it will take much luck and much work for this to come to

fruition, in many ways fulfilling the hopes of public journalism by incorporating citizen

contributions in a participatory, socially-networked environment.

Findings for RQ3b: "Social journalism" and the public sphere

The second part of the third research question asked simply if the "social

journalism" is or is not a likely candidate to function as a public sphere. First, I cite

Habermas' definition of the ideal, then I temper hopes a bit with a very brief reference to

contemporary scholars, which is followed by my discussion of "social journalism" and its

potential to function as a public sphere.

Habermas' (1989) public sphere is defined as a space between the realm of

private citizens and "the sphere of public authority" (p. 18) that contains the political

realm, the "world of letters" (p. 51), which includes the news media, and the market of

"culture products" (p. 36). In the ideal public sphere, private citizens can come together

in public to debate issues of culture and politics. "Rational-critical" debate (p. 28) carries

with it a power to subject other forms of political power because it is the exercise of public reason. In this ideal space, it is not only discourse but also the use of well-challenged reason in the discursive process that legitimates whatever agreements, laws or policies are reached. Habermas saw the public sphere invaded and taken over by "manufactured publicity" (p. 211), which subsumed rational critical debate. "[E]ven the political realm is social-psychologically integrated into the realm of consumption" (p. 216). This results in a "refeudalization of the public sphere" because the legitimate power arrived at through rational-critical debate has now been replaced by consumerism. For Habermas, the commercialization of the space for public discourse robs it of its ability to derive power from the public through reasoned debate. This process robs societies of an essential tool for exercising the power that comes from being a private citizen in the public sphere over the sphere of public authority.

As private citizens in growing numbers gained access to the Internet, a global communication network, there was massive interest in whether this space could be captured and held by societies and used for rational-critical debate. "New technologies provide information and tools that may extend the role of the public in the social and political arena. The explosion of online political groups and activism certainly reflects political uses of the Internet (Bowen, 1996; Browning, 1996). Proponents of cyberspace promise that online discourse will increase political participation and pave the way for a democratic utopia" (Papacharissi, 2002, p. 10). On the other hand, limited access means that the private is not necessarily well-represented, and online discourse is not known for its rational-critical nature (Godwin, 1994). Dahlberg (2001b) argues that the rational-critical chicken must come before the public sphere egg: "The public sphere will not be

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extended merely through the diffusion of a new technological artifact [sic]. People must be drawn into rational-critical discourse before new technologies can be successfully employed to extend the public sphere" (p. 630). Dahlberg's argument is that political action and work are required for a society to build a functioning public sphere, that no technology guarantees it, and this is in line with similar concepts reference throughout this paper.

The social journalism platform embeds for-profit speech in a way that might not be conducive to supporting a space set aside for rational critical debate. Although commercial speech on the site is relatively unobtrusive when compared to television and other online sites because it is limited to a few animated display ads, advertisers in the community are encouraged to participate in the discourse. This could have one of three outcomes. It could have no effect if advertisers are not interested in using the site, or if they use it but do not publish much content. It could have a negative effect on the site's ability to provide space for rational-critical debate because news and items of public interest could be overrun by sites conducting self-promotion campaigns. Or, the third possibility is that advertisers, because they are local companies and to some degree involved in the specific niche, i.e. health, might be compelled to participate in the level of discourse that appears in the space.

The potential exists for the platform to serve very specific, delimited spheres of conversation toward productive ends arrived at through discursive practice, but a major caveat is that it features multimedia content and probably assumes site users have not only an Internet connection, but also a high-speed one.

The "social journalism" model, like other technologies does not innately carry with it the guarantee for the creation of a public sphere, but it could foster rational, focused discourse. Could a series of delimited discussions conducted rationally in a socially networked online space amount to a fully functioning, albeit partitioned public sphere? This would be difficult. So many of the public's issues are contingent upon others. Perhaps the best hope is that the aggregator itself will serve as a sort of super-sphere where the key issues of the day matriculate and can be debated by reasonable private members of the community in a public forum. A tiered system could work to build rational discussion on top of rational discussion, but Dahlberg's (2001) point is well taken. It will likely take some kind of educational and/or media literacy campaign to encourage rational debate and *if* people are interested in speaking in reasonable terms the function of this site would support their efforts. It is not lost on me that the aggregator, when all is said and done, is in many ways similar to the existing online newspaper. The one change that might make the most difference is the end of anonymous commenting, but the battle between traffic and reasonable discussion is in many ways a new iteration of the battle between manufactured publicity and Kant's moral, public publicity, the linchpin of Habermas' ideal (1989, p. 102).

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS, FUTURE INQUIRY

In the introduction to this paper, I suggested that it might be possible with further study to examine broader structural, cultural and technological transformations using the mutual shaping of technology construct as a theory of organizational change. The most logical applications of MST in the study of structural change are in scenarios where several organizations in the same industry are grappling with similar technological innovations at the same time. In this study I examine an organization developing and incorporating a proprietary social network into its production processes. There are not many news companies attempting this level of research and development in this rough period for the industry; however, many are grappling with how to incorporate social networking tools into production. Several findings from this study could help frame research questions and theoretical approaches to this type of inquiry. In this chapter, I review this project's key findings for each of the three research questions. I then propose suggestions for future inquiry based primarily on observations made in relation to RQ1, in the interest of expanding on the usefulness of the mutual shaping of technology construct.

MST at five levels, a brief recap

At the individual level of analysis, using the MST construct, it is clear that adopting the "social journalism" model has shaped the HealthSite reporter's approach to her audience. Her news values are affected in that she responds to group interests and

direct feedback. She has to allow users to help shape her news values if she is going to serve the community in the assigned capacity. And yet, she claims, "News is news. It never changes" (news1). Her desire to hold onto aspects of her institutionalized professionalism is strong. Reporters are adamant that they will protect their byline from outside influence, even as their own influence regarding the ability to project from a source of discursive power to a broad audience is diminished (news6).

At the routines level of analysis the reporter mentions working harder than she ever has before, a concept supported by trade publications referring to the cycle of near-constant posting in the daily routines of online journalists as "hamster wheel" journalism (Starkman, 2010), a mode of production in which one can run and run and never "get anywhere." Most of the bits of data at this level of analysis refer the "social journalism" site manager's constant push to post. On the SST side of the balance, some in the organization report trying to put on a happy face, so to speak, as they reference their efforts to help the HealthSite manager.

At these two lower tiers of analysis (the individual and routines levels), DI-related comments far outweigh SST-related statements. At these two levels, much of the data come from the HealthSite reporter. It seems there may be little she can to do shape the innovation *at these two levels*, which primarily focus on news selection and day-to-day work, but her input is registered at the organizational level, which includes a good deal of evidence of social shaping, and which includes the most robust example of an MST dynamic in the study.

At the organizational level, from a total of 177 comments, 106 relate to the DI perspective and 71 relate to the SST theoretical point of view. The organizational level of

analysis is the heart of the study. One of the most important findings is that whether a participant was a supporter or opponent, a reporter, a member of management, an advertising/marketing professional, or a web designer, he or she recognized that this "social journalism" venture is supposed to be central to the organization's plan for the future. Even those who strongly question the value of the "social journalism" platform or the HealthSite in particular understand that this is an attempt by the ownership and leaders in management to find a platform for news and advertising that sustains the company. It is interesting to note, though, that while there are more comments on the DI side of the balance at the organizational level, the "skeptical" responses outweigh the hopeful ones (49 to 30).

Workers in the news organization studied here have reason to be skeptical. They have had mixed success when it comes to technological innovation. Scholars and industry professionals have been impressed by the company's initiatives (Kaye & Quinn, 2010), but one of the organization's niche innovations, an entertainment news website that allows individuals to start their own blogs, has gone nowhere (financially), and even when the company has been successful at introducing digital technologies (for example in its investment in its own proprietary "online newspaper" CMS that it markets around the country) that success does not necessarily translate to the preservation of newsroom jobs.

The long-term goal of the "social journalism" model is to build out eight niche sites on the platform and to use the legacy online newspaper (and its trusted name) as a content aggregator covering the community with as much depth as ever, while the breadth will depend on the number of niche sites supported. Then, the next step would be to market the platform to other communities as this organization has done with its

existing CMS. It is not advisable to define something that is less than 10 years old as a "traditional" content management system, but the structure is largely based on one-way communication, from the newspaper as sender to the audience as receiver, a relatively "traditional" mode of publishing news. I argue that it is in contrast to this CMS format that the watchwords "conversation" and "community" can be counted as examples of evidence of a diffusion process at work. Of course, the organization has been determined to focus on its community for more than 100 years. And of course, there are elements of conversation in its existing entertainment and sports niche sites and even in the commenting capabilities on its "traditional" CMS. But the refocusing on community and conversation and the level of importance placed on both in the "social journalism" model represent the impact of the diffusion of the "social journalism" innovation.

An interview participant merely expressing the understanding that the "social journalism" platform is central to the organization's plans for the future is not evidence of social shaping, but in nine instances, respondents described it as a "reason for hope." This is a statement of belief rather than a statement of fact, and it stands in opposition to another aspect of social shaping, the 13 instances wherein interview participants referred to "social journalism" as a "risky experiment" or something similar. This is an indication that negative and positive sentiments may both register as evidence of social shaping. There are also many reasons to believe that both conceptualizations, held by several people in the organization, are true at the same time. The platform could be classified as an experiment, and trying any new initiative in journalism given the current climate is a risk. On the other hand, not many news organizations are in a position to spend on research and development. There may be reason for employees of the organization to

hope, even though the traffic numbers were not where anyone wanted them to be during the HealthSite's first year of operation. Once the HealthSite's headlines began appearing on the legacy online newspaper's front page, traffic began to grow. The site's new design gives it a fresh look and another chance to make an impression on members of the community. The introduction of a "green economy" site on the platform reinforces the idea that the organization is serious about the "social journalism" model, and it has the potential to attract a younger demographic.

The addition of the "green economy" site meant that a few more roles shifted in the news organization just as I was wrapping up field interviews. The changing of roles and structural changes to the news organization are also key developments at this level. It is not likely that anyone who is strictly a newspaper reporter or copy editor will be hired by this organization in the near future and perhaps not ever. Just in anticipation of the development of the HealthSite, several in the newsroom saw their roles switched, and job titles have changed. Copy editors who spent years working with print are now being tasked with posting stories online, and they will be expected to manage the flow of multimedia content from niche sites to the legacy online site to the printed newspaper in the future. The organization's structure changed and continues to change to support the "social journalism" model.

In addition to role switching, role sharing has grown. News reporters have been helping to promote the organization by sitting at booths at community events for years (news1), but now the HealthSite manager works directly with advertising and marketing professionals when they sit down with customers to design a comprehensive plan for marketing themselves in part through participating on the platform. Advertisers have a

great deal of control over their image on the "social journalism" platform, but a higher level of work comes with the bargain. They can no longer simply drop off copy and pay a fee to publish. Advertisers often need to learn how group on the HealthSite function, how to publish content, what to expect when people comment and how to manage the site's social networking functionality to promote themselves. Advertising content is considered valuable for all users in the social network. The site architect often suggests that many newspaper readers are just as interested in the "sale" ads in their area as they are in the news (newsmgmt2). Those who pay to sponsor groups on the site are encouraged to post. While the HealthSite manager/reporter has had experience marketing the news product in the past, it is the level of connection and concern she has for marketing her site that appear to have been affected by her transition to the "social journalism" platform.

Being able to discuss nuanced differences in practices and beliefs that are a matter of degree is only possible because of the qualitative nature of this study. In depth interviews provide quite enough data to work with, and by treating this case study as an extreme case, several expectations for the project were set. Comparisons are made against a perceived set of norms based on literature and/or against norms reported by interview participants themselves. This method of data collection was relatively painless for participants; however, data analysis was a challenge even with the aid of qualitative data analysis software (TAMS). This type of research generates many more questions than it answers, but given developing nature of the topic and the fact that this is meant to launch a research career, this method makes sense.

The institutional level is the last level where strong evidence of an MST dynamic emerges. Here, evidence of community outreach and efforts to spread the innovation via

institutional channels emerges. Much of the DI-related discussion at this level involves various forms of outreach including teaching key users how to navigate the site and how to contribute in the hopes that they will do so in the future. None of the individuals interviewed brought up the concept of free labor during our discussions, but the use of user-generated content concerns some scholars. It raises ethical issues because community members are, in a sense, being asked to work for free (Deuze, 2011). For some, the opportunity to share news may be personally gratifying, but for others, particularly non-profit organizations, contributing to the site is more akin to "real" work. Non-profit organizations appear to be more comfortable handing press releases off to the reporter. The HealthSite manager suggested that non-profit workers sometimes express fear about posting to the site. In addition, she adds, they are happy to try their luck that their press release might be published, and to let the reporter do the work (news1).

Social shaping at the institutional level is more prevalent than DI-related data. This is the only level for which this happens, and the key is that all (or most) of the comments relating to the community advisory board appear in this section. Here, existing institutional relationships led to the invitation being extended to several non-profit organizations to help shape the HealthSite as well as the underlying platform. Structuring the site and its development to afford for this level of influence suggests a sincere openness on the part of the organization to involve the community permanently in the production of news, in the "social construction of meaning," in other words (Tuchman, 1978).

What does the advisory board, comprised of non-profit leaders who provide health services in the community, want? One of the key findings of this study is that they

do not appreciate online anonymity, not as an advisory board with some control over the "social journalism" platform, not as part-time publishers to the site and not as news sources. The online vitriol of anonymous users on the legacy news website prompted many to demand high levels of control when the HealthSite first launched. Users had to register with every group they were interested in before they could post to that group. When the site was launched several dozen groups had already been set up. This made the site difficult to navigate, and by all accounts, this did not help drive traffic when the site was launched. In this way, listening to the community appears to have backfired by making the site unattractive on first impression for many users; however, when the community advisory board came together about a month after the site's launch, they demanded relaxed controls but maintained a "real names" policy for those who want to post to the site. Just as interviews were conducted for this project, the site relaxed the rules again. Now, people can post comments anonymously up to three times before they need to register. They must register to post since posts go up onto the website without moderation.

The final key element of social shaping at the institutional level is the amount of influence wielded by the site's sponsor. Without a sponsor, the HealthSite would not be sustainable, and the "social journalism" platform project (or experiment) would be in jeopardy. The relationship between the HealthSite reporter and the local hospital is troubling to some, since the hospital has played such a strong role in supporting the site and subsequently in assuring that the reporter has a job in the news organization. Concerns are voiced around the newsroom that money is merely being shifted around

from supporting the newspaper to supporting the niche site. The counterargument is that they should be thankful that these advertising dollars have been saved (newsmgmt2).

At the social system level, the main point of interest is that, when asked how their work fits into a grander scheme of "American journalism," very few people in the organization had an answer. Even after being provided with prompts asking about their ideals, most had little to say. A few expressed hope that traditional values would be preserved if the "social journalism" project succeeds, but respondents do not appear to give much thought to their role in society or to the role this or other innovations might play. Common sense would suggest that workers are too busy to spend time thinking about their place in society, even at one of the nation's more innovative news organizations.

Contemporary scholars dealing with technological change in journalism organizations express plenty of hope that users can and will step up and contribute to online news sites (Bruns, 2005). But in this dissertation, I suggest that users are not going to jump at the chance to contribute news content to an online platform, merely because they can. What I believe I have shown in this study is a comprehensive description of an organization's efforts to create a viable news product using social networking tools and focusing on exploitable niches. This "social journalism" platform is being developed to form bonds with users who are already online so that they choose to become more involved with this network than with others online. In other words, "social journalism" is a play to gain users' attention by connecting them to one another and to the news organization and to open up the publishing platform to them.

At least in the case of the HealthSite, users have expressed a desire that the journalist moderate the site, including user posts and comments, that she post most of the content and answer their questions, including those sent via direct message or posted in comments sections. On the "social journalism" platform, there is some need for gatekeeping. After all, the reporter is responsible for everything she publishes, and according to the highest hopes for user contributions, they would produce only about fifty-percent of the content. The gatekeeping role is diminished in this platform, but it is not dead.

Flew (2009) quotes Couldry (2003) calling for "new ways of consuming media…new infrastructures of production…new infrastructures of distribution" (p. 44). This is a recipe for alternative media, for taking power out of the hands of establishment media by creating "new hybrid forms of media *consumption-production* (Couldry, 2003, p. 45)" (Flew, 2009, p. 145). Does this mean that the "social journalism" platform is a form of alternative media? In a sense, yes it does. The news organization, which was once regional near-monopoly news provider, is giving up some control over its product and production processes in order to sustain itself.

New institutionalism and the business model behind "social journalism"

The first part of RQ2 seeks only to define the business model associated with the "social journalism" platform. It has three funding sources: A major sponsor pays for about 70 percent of the costs associated with running the site; Twenty-percent comes from display ads; another ten percent or so comes from advertisers who pay to sponsor

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groups within the "social journalism" site. The site is barely self-sufficient, but the advertising and marketing manager responsible for securing funding suggests that the balance of the mix is not bad, except he would like to replace some of the major sponsor's advertising revenue from a more diverse group. Just as the "social journalism" model is developed through a process of iterative development, so is its related business model. This means that experiments to gain new sources of revenue can be tried, and that any new developments that work can be incorporated into the design relatively quickly, since the design team is in-house.

From an institutional standpoint, it stands to reason that the local hospital would sponsor a health site. The hospital and the newspaper are two of the most well established institutional entities in the community. Their relationship is strong enough, apparently, that the hospital is willing to take part in this experimental platform. One reporter suggests, "They're the whole reason why we're doing this. That sponsorship, at least that's my impression is that we're doing this because this will sustain us for the long term" (news6). This is a fascinating interpretation of events. This reporter suggests that the health site may have been built in order to maintain the hospital's support. The site's architect had worked on a health site prototype before beginning to work for the organization, and that had some influence over the choice of niche, but local health was one of the niches she identified as being exploitable (newsmgmt2). The site's architect has never suggested that the HealthSite was constructed solely to maintain the hospital's advertising, but she has suggested that if the process moves the hospital's advertising investment from the print product to the digital one (a concept that bothers a few in the organization with a strong affinity for the newspaper), that would be considered a

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success. "It's like well why not. Digital is the future, and print has fewer eyeballs. More eyeballs are going to digital, so of course they're going to shift it, and luckily they're spending it with us and not some other digital organization" (newsmgmt2).

The organization is in a difficult position where it is known as the "newspaper" company in the community, and it cannot expect that advertisers will think of the newspaper first when it comes to placing digital ads. On the other hand, when working with longstanding customers, sales representatives find that they must explain technologies to advertising customers (ad_marketing4). Others in the community may not recognize the organization's technological advancements because of institutional expectations, and this can make it difficult to garner advertising revenue. Internally, print sales people are unwilling or unable to sell digital advertising, perhaps because the organization has internal quotas that favor print advertising based on a longstanding institutional culture. Another possibility is that the difficulty selling digital ads lies with stubbornness and unwillingness to change on the part of the print sales staff (ad_marketing4).

Social journalism, public journalism and the public sphere

The public journalism movement was relatively widespread in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A single definition is difficult to come by, but several books and journal articles agree that the movement focused mostly on newspapers reaching out to their communities with the goal of decreasing political apathy and making measurable

progress on social issues. Whether this constitutes a return to journalistic ideals of the past or a new form of journalism was debated.

Although the movement was widespread, it was often made manifest in single special projects with limited social effects (Charity, 1995). In Lambeth et al. (1998), Denton and Thorson point out that active involvement of the public was key to the theoretical significance of public journalism. In a manner of speaking this indicates that citizen involvement was the only thing truly fresh about public journalism efforts, e.g. setting a public agenda and speaking of the importance of prosocial issues in the press were common occurrences in American journalism and had been documented by scholars for decades (p. 146-147). There was a comprehensive nationwide debate over whether or not public journalism was a worthwhile endeavor (Corrigan, 1999; Merrill, 1997) but it had few if any sweeping social effects.

The first part of the third research question asked if "social journalism" represents an extension of public journalism. I argue that to get from public journalism to "social journalism," one must go through "citizen journalism." For the purpose of discussing the "social journalism" platform as an extreme technological case, it was important to differentiate it from citizen journalism, defined by Nip (2009) as journalism produced without any professional oversight, but other scholars often use "citizen journalism" to describe forms of collaboration between online users and journalists that make for good comparisons to the "social journalism" platform. Using a few widely used examples, I show that some of the tenets of public journalism live on in these partnerships.

There are levels of gatekeeping control and limits to user functionality on CNN's iReport, on OhmyNews's website and with the BBC's UGC Hub that do not exist on the

"social journalism" platform. Considering that dedication to community outreach is a key design element of "social journalism," that users have an easy time publishing and that the reporter works for the users and not vice versa, the "social journalism" platform appears to extend the public journalism model the furthest. If plans for a future "goals application" and for the development of "topic sites" to track community progress on issues are built out, it will quite closely match many of the goals outlined by proponents of the public journalism movement, and no doubt controversy will follow if it should succeed (Merrill, 1997).

The "social journalism" platform could function in a limited capacity to provide space for rational-critical debate, which is to say it could serve as a partially functioning public sphere. For Habermas (1989), the ideal public sphere serves as a space for private citizens to arrive at consensus in order to leverage their moral authority over public power structures. The "social journalism" platform works to help participating citizens arrive at consensus. It is designed to focus on collaboration rather than news in the conflict frame, i.e. news that pits two opposing sides against one another and focuses on their opposing views in order to claim it represents an objective truth. But the collaboration frame, user participation and professional curation and facilitation only extend to the niches that can be funded. The political niche might never be paid for in this community, and nothing would test the efforts to foster collaboration more. The required use of citizens' real names might help, but these conversations are limited to niches. Perhaps ideas reached by consensus in each niche and displayed by an aggregator would demonstrate a functioning public sphere with the ability to foster discussion and to reach

a wide audience. The question that remains is just how many niches the community can support and just how many social networking sites do citizens have time to inhabit?

Future inquiry in relation to findings

Extending this research and the use of the MST model in particular might best be done by looking for existing phenomena in which similar communication innovations are being introduced in a large number of news organizations. This is easier said than done because there are many different choices for news organizations looking to develop digital technologies, and none is a sure bet. Using a multiple case study method and/or survey methods in several organizations, it should be possible to examine structural or cultural changes in the news industry related to the incorporation of publicly available social networking tools, for example. This *type* of inquiry would apply to Facebook, Twitter, Ning, Yammer and any other social networking tools that come along that enable news organizations and members of the public to interact directly. It just so happens that Facebook is marketing itself to journalists at this time, and it matches the "social journalism" platform as well or better than the others, so I will use Facebook in a discussion of potential lines of inquiry that could be opened in relation to observations made in this study.

News organizations are negotiating (among other things) how to incorporate social networking tools into workflow and how to engage users on social networking platforms. At the same time, Facebook is inviting journalists to make better use of its platform. This study is not intended to predict how the relationship between Facebook

and the news industry will play out, but several research questions and suggestions for the application of the MST construct, immediately come to mind.

Starting at the individual level, does the level of integration with Facebook in a news organization's workflow affect journalists' role conceptions or story heuristics? Will reporters be able to identify the issue agenda of the users who "like" their Facebook page? Will journalists fear being "scooped" on Facebook? Will their news values be affected by working with the social network, and to what degree? Findings in this study suggest that the news values of the journalist managing the HealthSite are affected not only by the fact that it is a niche product but also by the close relationship she has with the site's users. Do journalists working on a social network managed by another corporation develop close ties to users that compare to the relationships the HealthSite reporter is working to cultivate? On the social shaping side, would journalists demand that Facebook make it easier for them to track the interests of those who "like" or "friend" them? This dissertation raises several interesting topics that could apply to research dealing with the way reporters and other individuals working in news organizations manage their interaction publicly available social networks.

In this study the key finding at the routines level of analysis is that managing a social network means a noticeable increase in the amount of day-to-day work. Many in the organization recognize that the "social journalism" site manager works more than almost any of the other reporters. It would be fascinating to attempt to quantify this phenomenon by surveying hundreds of journalists and asking if the level of work-related social media use correlates positively with the level of hours worked in a week for regular, full time employees. It would also be important to go into greater depth in

qualitative research and to speak with journalists who use social media tools often as opposed to those who do not and to examine their relative levels of stress and the ways they believe their work benefits or suffers from their involvement with work-related social media.

In Deuze (2011), Jane Singer describes a related phenomenon. She calls it the loss of work boundaries. "There also were boundaries of time; journalists worked to a deadline, after which the presses had to roll or the program had to air" (p. 107). In this single case with data from only one reporter, nothing can be generalized, but the HealthSite reporter's approach to a routine without time boundaries appears to be to work nearly all the time. From the social shaping perspective, what can reporters and/or news organizations ask Facebook (or other social networking services, such as Twitter, Ning or Yammer) to do to save them time or to allow them to break away from their digital tools for several hours at a stretch?

At the organizational level I document the widespread understanding that the "social journalism" model is supposed to be the company's news platform of the future. At the same time, there is widespread skepticism whether the model truly is "a new hope," or if it is "risky business." It will be interesting to see if news organizations put faith in social networking. It is not clear how a news organization could make money using Facebook's journalism tools. (Is Facebook planning to directly hire journalists and become a global news source, some kind of socially networked amalgam of CNN and Patch.com with 500 million built-in users? Are they expecting to become a global source of *original* reportage without paying anyone a dime? Perish the thought.) The news organization studied here has changed employees' roles and its organizational structure in

relation to the development of the "social journalism" platform. It has renewed its focus on "community" and refined it to mean that journalists should engage users online in "conversation." The concept of two-way communication explodes longstanding theoretical models of media distribution. The "Source-message-channel-receiver" model (Berlo, 1960) breaks down in a network where receivers can become instant sources and where channels are converged.

The institutional level of analysis was the only one in this study in which more references to the social shaping of technology than DI-related comments emerged. Mostly, this is because of the influence of the advisory board, which enables community members who are also key users of the site, to influence its design with each iteration. Most relevant in this case might be a qualitative study comparing different social networking tools in terms of the flexibility of their platform. Are any of these sites more responsive to news organizations in particular? If so, how and why? What institutional relationships existing between news organizations or within corporate ownership structures might foster and shape the incorporation of social networking tools in the online offerings of existing news giants?

On the DI side of the MST dynamic, at the institutional level, attracting users is the major institutional push of the news organization in this study. Facebook has demonstrated an ability to draw in users, but as is cited in this study, MySpace once led the world in social media "usership," and it has lost users and value steadily over the past several years. Can news organizations rely on social media partners to bring them users? If Facebook wants journalists to use it as a tool, it will certainly hold rights to the data gathered on its platform. What might news organizations demand in return? An

interesting qualitative study would be to supply questionnaires to media outlets and examine what they expect from a social media platform, how they would change it if they could, and if they have ever thought about building their own.

At the social system level, comparative media studies analyzing the relationship between Facebook and journalists in different cultural and different national settings is in order. It would be fascinating to ask how journalists in different cultures define their relation to Facebook. Are there cultural differences, and if so, what are they? At each of these levels of analysis from Shoemaker & Vos (2009), there are ways for the *meanings* of technological diffusions to be shaped. These are often difficult to anticipate, but fascinating to document as they arise.

One could spend days dreaming up exciting research questions about these topics. I have demonstrated here that some of the findings of this research can help inform these types of inquiry and that the five levels of analysis used in this study can be applied to help organize continued research.

The MST construct may be applied much more broadly than in the study of communication organizations managing technological innovations. It could be used to examine the adoption and shaping of technological advancements in organizations in many industries, particularly those with iterative development cycles. In some cases, industrial clout or institutional inertia will be strong. Organizations would be expected to reject change whenever they could and to try to shape its influence whenever they could not. In other cases, technological innovations might find relatively unproblematic paths to diffusion and even widespread social acceptance. In any case, I argue that diffusion,

social shaping, and outright rejection of technological innovations are valuable concepts to include whenever conducting research that employs the MST construct.

I presented a discussion of Innis, McLuhan and Castells in the literature review to drive home the point that technological determinism is alluring to mass communication scholars, especially those examining connections between innovations in communication technologies and society. Technological determinism claims to be predictive, and social scientists often strive to be able to hypothesize with more certainty, but descriptions of broad, blanket effects brought on by communication technology developments on social structures, behavior, and/or cognition are dangerous. Deterministic theories of technological advancement may discourage the search for and analysis of the social role in innovation. Theories of technological determinism may encourage generalizations about the relationships between communication innovations and social action. For example, the "Arab Spring" is a breathtaking contemporary political phenomenon no doubt supported in part by the widespread use of social media, but Facebook and Twitter do not *cause* revolutions, and the differences in each revolution and the American response to each are very interesting to examine. This nuance would be lost (or ignored) if one adopts a technological determinist's perspective.

I do not merely criticize technological determinism as a straw figure. Related theoretical concepts are cited quite often, and they threaten much that I hope to accomplish as a communication scholar. Dahlberg (2001a), discussing challenges to the spread of an online public sphere and Rosen (1999), critiquing public journalism efforts, argue virtually the same thing: That broad social change takes quite a bit of work, even on popular platforms or in industry-wide "movements." Assuming specific, broad social

changes will arise from certain technological developments ignores the ability social

groups have to affect technological design, and it ignores the ways social interpretations

of technologies do battle. In networks, developing strong relationships may be an

essential key to success. Recognizing that technologies are mutually constructed and

building community influence into communication platform design may prove essential

for news media organizations to survive. At the very least, it makes for an interesting

approach at a time when no one has all the answers.

Appendix A: Interview protocol (site name redacted)

Part One: Participant's Role, experience with "HealthSite"

1.) First, please tell me your job title and the tasks you usually do.

2.) Whom do you report to?

3.) Who else do you usually work with?

4.) Is anyone under your supervision? If so, who?

This study focuses on the introduction of the "HealthSite." I am approaching the "HealthSite" and the related content management system as parts of the same technological innovation.

If you refer to a specific aspect of the "HealthSite" that does not apply to the whole project, please let me know.

To keep it simple, I'm just going to refer to the site by name in the following questions.

5.) Please describe your level of involvement with the "HealthSite".

6.) What are the pros and cons of the "HealthSite"?

Part Two: Levels of analysis (The order of question pairs was flipped for odd-numbered participants.)

(Individual)

7.) Think about the decisions you make in order to decide what's news, which stories you choose to include or to pursue. Does the "HealthSite" factor into those decisions? If so, how?

8.) Is this different than it was before the "HealthSite" was introduced? How?

(Routine)

9.) Now think about your daily routine at work beyond selecting news items. Think about all the tasks you do and how you manage them. Does the "HealthSite" factor in to your daily routine? If so, how?

10.) Is this different than it was before the "HealthSite" was introduced? How?

(Organization)

11.) Now, think about the news organization, not just those who work on the "HealthSite". Does it factor in to newsroom organization? If so, how?

12.) Is this different than it was before the "HealthSite" was introduced? If so, how?

(Social Institution)

13.) Please think about forces outside of the news organization that may influence the news.
Scholars often discuss the news media market, audiences, advertisers, financial markets, sources, public relations efforts, governments, interest groups, other news media and news consultants. Has pressure from any of these other institutions or organizations affected the adoption of the "HealthSite"? If so, how? (Repeated as necessary)

14.) Has the "HealthSite" changed the way your news organization relates to these other institutions or organizations? If so, how?

(Special focus on users here, where Shoemaker & Vos place it)

15.) Please think back to the way you thought of your audience or the users of your news websites before the introduction of the "HealthSite". Do you maintain the same approach to the audience or news users that you did before? How so?

16.) Has your approach to the audience/users changed because of the "HealthSite?" If so, how?

(Social System)

17.) When you think of your work contributing to society, how do you define society? What influences, if any, do you want your work to have? What are your journalistic or other career ideals?

18.) Does the "HealthSite" factor into the way you think about your work and its influence on society?
19.) Are those concepts, for you, different than before the introduction of the "HealthSite"? If so, how?

20.) What am I missing? Is there anything you wish I had asked about the "HealthSite"?

21.) Whom else should I be sure to talk to about this?

Last, I have a few basic questions about you.

(record gender)

22.) What is your age?

23.) What is your highest level of education

24.) If you completed college, did you major in journalism?

Appendix B—Timeline of "HealthSite" development

July 2, 2009   A group representing advertising, marketing and the newsroom
met to discuss the potential of launching topic-based niche
news sites. They examined other niche news sites, discussed
options, and decided that health offered an opportunity for
growth and eventual profit. The advertising department
estimated revenues at $287,000 annually.

August 2009   First meeting with tech team to discuss how to integrate social
media.

August 2009   Advisory group holds meetings. Interim site launched. (Health
reporter begins beat-blog).

December 2009   First sponsorship sold.

December 15, 2009   Internal digital team starts development.

March 1, 2010   Launch "beta" site to advisory group and friends for testing,
front-loading content.

April 1, 2010   Launch public site. Plans were to test in community for six
months, then in September, add other features, redesign based
on community response and how community uses it.

                              Sale of cable system delayed development.

                              Ad sales rep assigned to HealthSite in April.

January 2011	Changed function to integrate HealthSite feed into legacy online newspaper's home page.
March 2011	Launched 2.0 version of HealthSite, changing home page and internal page designs, integrating online sales platform health businesses and services, integrating all posts into home page news stream.
TBD	Launch 3.0 version of HealthSite, including context/topic pages, goals application and interactive calendar system.

Appendix C—Interview Participants

Participant Label	Description
ad_marketing1	Director of Sales and Marketing. His responsibilities include development of digital products.
ad_marketing2	Manages social media for the advertising side of the parent company of the HealthSite. She maintains the company's presence on Facebook and Twitter across several products and platforms and participates in marketing events.
ad_marketing3	Marketing manager for the newspaper. She was originally hired to supervise the graphic arts department.
ad_marketing4	Digital Sales Manager for online news products. She leads all digital sales representatives and directs print sales representatives as well.
design1	Manager of all projects and people in the internal development team, which built the HealthSite and which manages several other online properties. He works as a liaison between the company and all stakeholders in digital product development.
design2	Interactive designer for digital products in the news organization. He is responsible for feature changes and reorganization of the HealthSite and user interaction features on all sites.
news1	HealthSite reporter and manager; health beat reporter for the newspaper, often referred to as the social journalism site manager.
news2	Reporter covering schools. He writes a beat

	blog as well and was formerly a convergence reporter.
news3	Features reporter with a focus on food and other issues.
news4	Reporter and manager of a community news site outside of the city represented by the social journalism site.
news5	General assignment reporter and graduate student.
news6	Higher education reporter who maintains a beat blog.
news7	Runs the niche entertainment site and is responsible for arts and entertainment coverage in the newspaper.
news8	Online editor. She directs the flow of stories for the legacy online newspaper.
news9	Sustainability beat reporter now in charge of the second social journalism site.
news10	Online editor for the sports niche site.
news11	Distribution Desk Chief. She supervises the copy desk.
newsmgmt1	Managing editor at the newspaper. He is responsible for news content.
newsmgmt2	Director of Media Strategies for the news company and conceptual designer of the HealthSite. She is often referred to as the social journalism project architect.
newsmgmt3	Community Editor. She supervisor news assignments.
newsmgmt4	Assistant Director of Media Strategies. He evaluates new niche markets where products may be introduced.

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VITA

I will begin in August of this year (2011) as an assistant professor at Loyola University New Orleans (LOYNO) in the School of Mass Communication. I research organizational change in the news industry as it relates to technological change. I also research news media changes in comparative perspective with a special interest in Latin America.

I will teach research methods in journalism and intermediate reporting classes to start, but my focus over time will be to teach journalism in digital social networks with emphases on video production and creating and curating communities in digital space. I will also be the Journalism Sequence Head at LOYNO beginning in the fall.

Before earning my Ph.D. at the Missouri School of Journalism, I earned a Master's Degree in Latin American Studies from the University of Arizona. There, I also taught courses in broadcast journalism as an adjunct instructor. I enjoy seeing my colleagues from Arizona at academic conferences, and my wife Gaby and I miss the Sonoran Desert from time to time.

Gaby and I have a dog named "Rusty," one of the sweetest dogs you will ever meet. He is our furry little beast. When we are not spending time at home relaxing, watching one television series or another via Netflix, we like to go to the mall or to hang out with "happy hour" friends or friends from school. I'm an avid fantasy baseball fan, a

Cardinals baseball fan (from Washington, Missouri), and I love to jog and to play soccer. I even played a little over-30 ball here in Columbia in my first year in the doctoral program, when I was 29 years old but so slow no one complained…except my teammates.

Prior to pursuing a graduate education, I worked as a general assignment television reporter at KOLD-NEWS13 in Tucson, Arizona and at KWQC-TV6 News in Davenport, Iowa, which is in the Quad Cities market. I was able to work in television because I earned a degree in Journalism with a broadcast focus from Mizzou in 2002, where I also took an English degree with a Spanish minor.

I love to teach. I love to imagine the possibilities ahead for the news media in the twenty-first century, and I try to disregard the doom and gloom that currently surrounds the industry. Crises create conditions conducive to creativity…for those who survive the storm and manage to maintain hope.