

**“PLAYING” WITH YOUR NEWS: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY  
ON “NEWS YOUR OWN ADVENTURE”**

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# “PLAYING” WITH YOUR NEWS: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY ON “NEWS YOUR OWN ADVENTURE”

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores how news consumers interact with self-directed news content on a tablet device. I sought to discover how visual design, interactivity and control impact the way people watch news. I conducted a focus group study of 35 student participants — one group of seven, two groups of five, and three groups of six — from the Missouri School of Journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Participants were given an opportunity to explore stories within “News Your Own Adventure,” a Beta version of an iPad app from Newsy. I found the ability to control and self-direct their viewing of a news product was highly valued in the news consumption experience and led to more engagement. This research is a first look at how consumers like to engage and interact with self-directed content. Future producers and researchers could benefit from this by applying these findings to future app development.

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## INTRODUCTION

I graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in the Spring of 2010 with a bachelor's degree in English. Morehouse is a prestigious historically black college, or HBCU, situated as a beacon of academic excellence within Atlanta's black community. Following in the footsteps of notable alumni — Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., politician Julian Bond and filmmaker Spike Lee, to name a few — I became a man with a social conscience, knowing my obligation to serve my respective communities. What I failed to obtain was formal training in what was to become a passion: journalism. I was an aspirant without the tools to fully succeed in a profession about which I knew very little.

I came to Columbia, Missouri after, what I consider to be, a life-changing experience in my hometown — Greensboro, North Carolina. In the Spring of 2011, a small, alternative weekly newspaper took a chance on me, a college graduate who had rarely flipped through the pages of an Associated Press Stylebook, and gave me an internship as an editorial assistant. Within nine months, I had written countless feature stories on real people in my community; there was the woman who wrote uplifting poems for terminally ill cancer patients, the unassuming hot dog vendor with a culinary degree and years of history as a curbside counselor to troubled souls, and I would be remiss not to mention the owner of a Jewish restaurant who sold cultural artifacts while preparing delectable dishes for his loyal clientele. My reporting put their lives and accomplishments into print for tens of thousands to read.

In that time, I also wrote two cover stories while under the tutelage of master journalists. The most rewarding part of my experience was the fact that my work was read by citizens in the Piedmont Triad, an area within and surrounding Greensboro, High

Point and Winston-Salem. They knew my name without knowing what I looked like, but responded to my work via e-mails, phone calls, and word-of-mouth, letting me know my articles were invaluable additions to their everyday lives. As a journalism neophyte, I felt like I was making a difference and upholding a tenet of democracy by informing the people around me.

Since beginning my graduate studies as a journalism student, I have reported and co-anchored local television news at KOMU-TV 8 (NBC affiliate). I have turned complex issues and breaking news into digestible stories within a day's time. I have also spent weeks thoroughly preparing longer-form stories to highlight seldom covered community issues that fall outside of the daily news cycle. My experiences at KOMU have helped me lay a firm foundation for video storytelling, news writing, research, news judgment, presentation, objective storytelling and taking the pulse of Mid-Missouri to see what issues matter most to our viewership.

In addition, I've written, anchored and produced video news stories for mobile devices at Newsy, an outlet specializing in multi-source, analytical video news. When a gunman went on a killing spree at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, I responded in real-time by contributing content as the story developed. I have been a part of presenting new touchscreen, multimedia video news stories to better engage our growing mobile audience; I have worked with Newsy's clients to ensure we deliver a news product unattainable anywhere else in the world; and above all else, I have contributed to the body of online and mobile content that is "multisource video news... the only news source that helps users compare news sources from around the world to see how a story

unfolds” (Newsy, 2012). My work at Newsy has helped me hone my news writing skills for national and international stories and my video editing skills for mobile platforms.

Holistically, these experiences have afforded me a wealth of knowledge regarding broadcast-style news writing and video storytelling. As we look ahead to the direction of video news on mobile platforms — somewhat of an overarching goal at Newsy — I seek to understand how people interact with the news they consume, particularly, on mobile devices. Little research has been contributed to the whole of journalistic study regarding this topic. It is a goal of mine to look into the phenomena of mobile video news interaction and self-directed content. I hope to move the conversation forward in a way that will inform and enlighten media producers on how this fits within the future of journalism. To accomplish that goal, I plan to use new video news technology developed by Newsy to give consumers more control over video news content.

“News Your Own Adventure,” affectionately known as NYOA, is Newsy’s foray into self-directed video news content on mobile devices. The application, which will be available on smartphones and tablets with touchscreen surfaces, builds on Newsy’s style of multi-source news analysis and places the user in control. Instead of passively watching a linear news video from start to finish, NYOA allows viewers to dictate their news-watching experience.

A presenter or anchor sets up the introductory information, then tabs, or video boxes appear on screen. Each tab or box links to a section of video on a specific topic. At the end of that video, the user can continue to move through the NYOA story options.

For the first installment — “News Your Own Adventure: The Romney Tapes” — the NYOA format was used to guide viewers through a recording of then-presidential

candidate Mitt Romney speaking to wealthy donors at a fundraiser. The candid nature of Romney's comments sparked a media frenzy, but the speech couldn't be shown in its entirety — it was more than an hour long and research informs video news producers that very few viewers would want to watch an hour's worth of video. The NYOA team picked out what might've been the four most criticized parts of Romney's speech and linked those to four video boxes hovering above the anchor. By tapping a box, viewers are taken directly to that portion of the video.

My proposed research topic will delve into how news consumers interact with NYOA. The “what's next?” for video storytelling lies within the hands of mobile device users, literally and figuratively. Upon the completion of this research, I plan to apply for reporting/anchoring jobs at local TV news stations. As eyes shift from newspapers and television sets to mobile devices, traditional print and broadcast outlets will look for ways to better reach readers and viewers, respectively. Hopefully, the results of my research and the knowledge gained throughout the process will help expand my brand as a multimedia journalist and aid my future employers in putting video news right where the consumer wants it.

## PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT

My journalistic experience only spans the course of two years, but within that time, I have written for an alternatively weekly newspaper, reported and anchored at an NBC-affiliate TV news station and written and produced videos at a the multisource video news outlet Newsy. My proposed research topic falls directly in line with the work in which I have done at Newsy.

Newsy is unlike any other news service for mobile devices in that the company specializes in highlighting key differences in reporting so news consumers can understand the different angles of a story. This is done by writing a broadcast-style script and placing news sources back to back to give consumers a fuller picture of a news story.

I consider this outlet to be on the cutting-edge of convergence journalism and mobile video storytelling. For this reason, I have chosen to carry out my graduate project at Newsy while working at least 30 hours a week from January 14 through May 17.

During that time, I will conduct my research while assisting with managing the workflow of students in the Newsy course (Global News Convergence, J4810/J7810). As a part of the course curriculum, I will be responsible for, but not limited to, helping students:

- Understand the elements needed to produce an effective multi-perspective video news report,
- Quickly research, analyze and prepare a multi-perspective report of roughly 1:30- 2:30 minutes length,
- Produce well-written scripts in broadcast style that are ready for transcript posting, with proper grammar, punctuation and style, and

- Learn and execute basic production skills, which include using Final Cut Pro X software to produce a final version of the story for air.

My final report will include detailed weekly observations of lessons taught and lessons learned through assisting with the Newsy course and working with developers on new mobile video storytelling technology. Jim Flink, committee member and vice president of news operations at Newsy, will supervise my work to ensure it is satisfactory with the aforementioned goals at the completion of my 14-week responsibility.

Hopefully, at the completion of my professional project, the information collected through focus groups and weekly observations will aid news producers in developing multimedia touchscreen interactive news videos applications for mobile devices that will better engage news consumers.

## WEEKLY NOTES

### Week One Notes

After a much needed — albeit abridged — Winter Break, I returned to Columbia and immediately began working on revisions for my graduate research project proposal. The area needing the most attention was the methodology portion. I decided the previous semester that focus groups were the best way to allow participants to interact with Newsy's "News Your Own Adventure" (NYOA) app. It also serves as a great setting for me to interview the participants collectively on their experiences with a self-directed content, video news tool.

I took time to include how many participants and how many focus groups would be needed. Per the research cited in my proposal, I settled on a total of 36 participants needed for my research. I will conduct six focus groups of six individuals and analyze their responses with a fine-toothed comb.

During week one, the Newsy class did not meet. This gave me time to begin organizing the "Newsy Class Hub," a blog created to give supplemental instruction to students in the Newsy class.

Newsy stories worked on during this week:

- Rastafarians Threaten To Sue Snoop Lion For Rasta Fraud
- Sarah Palin Parts Ways With Fox News
- Catholic Hospital Argues Fetuses Are Not People
- Morsi Declares State Of Emergency In Three Egyptian Cities

- House GOP Agrees to Lift Debt Ceiling, Refocuses on Budget
- J.J. Abrams To Direct Star Wars Episode VII
- Obama Calls For Gay Rights In History-Making Speech

## Week Two Notes

With class in session, I began meeting with students and working to integrate them into the Newsy system. Jim Flink, class instructor and vice president of operations at Newsy, instructed me to manage the students and keep a watchful eye on their individual progress.

To streamline that process, I created a spreadsheet containing student schedules and a contact list (Figure 1). Both of those were made available to the Newsy staff and students to keep everyone informed.

4810/7810 Student Schedules and Contact Information ☆

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Help Last edit was on February 8

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
1								
2	NEWSY AM (5a-2p)							
3	Producer:					Orto Bagchi (11a-3:30p) [4.6]	Orto Bagchi (9a-2:30p) [5.6]	
4	Writer:						Lucas Geisler (8a-1p) (WAITING CONFIRMATION)	
5	Student:		Lucas Geisler (8a-11a) (WAITING CONFIRMATION)	Jessica Reese (8a-11a)	Kylie Hennagin (6a-11a)	Elise Lopez (5:45a-9:15a)	Kylie Hennagin (6a-11a)	Michelle Schuelke (9a-2p)
6	Student:		Chris Long (8a-1p)	Chris Long (8a-1p)	Elise Lopez (8:30a-3p)	Jessica Reese (6a-11a)	Dalton Barker (10a-3p)	
7	Student:			Chris Long (9a-2p)				
8								
9	NEWSY PM (2p-11p)							
10	Student:		Sole Maldonado (2-3p-7:30p)	Blaine Stockdale (2a-7p)	Blaine Stockdale (2a-7p)		Jake Godin (8-30p-10:30p)	Dalton Barker (2p-7p)
11	Student:		Jonas Brown (4p-8p)	Sole Maldonado (2-3p-7:30p)	Jonas Brown (9pm-9p)		Jake Godin (8-30p-10:30p)	
12	Student:			Orisa Alexander (8-9p-9:30p)				
13								
14	TV REPLAY (7p-7a)							

+ Schedule Contact Information

Figure 1: Newsy Class Student Schedules

Revisions to my project proposal have proven to be more extensive than initially thought. Over the following weeks, I will work to ensure each goal, each statement, and

each claim contained within the proposal will be attached to research explaining why choices were made in my own research design.

Newsy stories worked on this week:

- Military Considers Physical Strength Of Women In Combat
- NJ Sen. Menendez Under Review By Ethics Committee
- Student Shot By Classmate At Atlanta Middle School
- Hurricane Sandy Bill Gets Approval From Congress
- Dutch Queen Beatrix To Abdicate Throne After 33 Years

### **Week Three Notes**

This week was an important one in integrating students into the Newsy system. One tool designed to help students succeed is the “Newsy Class Hub” or class blog (Figure 2). It contains step-by-step tutorials and “how to’s” in the various Newsy processes; the tabs and links found on the blog direct students to a class syllabus, a brief introduction to what Newsy is and how to become “vertically trained,” or how to take a pitch and turn it into a story that will appear on our website and mobile app.

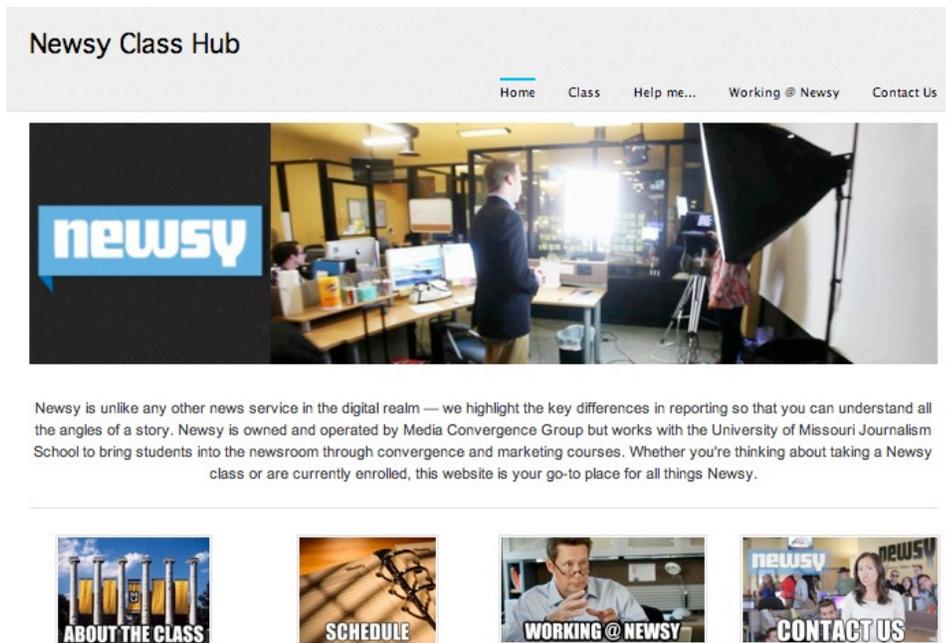


Figure 2: Newsy Class Hub

Newsy is protean. We add new components every semester and it's important the Newsy class and blog reflect that. I went through the class blog and updated certain pages to ensure that the information was fresh. That included re-touching the syllabus and mostly subtracting links that were no longer useful. The most tedious task was creating a form in Google Docs and embedding it to a page on the blog so students can submit reflections from their weekly shifts. Those responses go directly to a grading rubric to be reviewed by either myself or Jim Flink, the class instructor.

While at Newsy, I helped guide students through their second week of daily five-hour shifts — students work a total of two shifts a week throughout the semester. Most of the students spent time shadowing Newsy writers and helping them research stories. The biggest challenge for me was completing my tasks while explaining why I made certain

decisions or how something's done — definitely a telling process. Having someone peer over your shoulder to glean information forces you to be succinct and technically sound!

For my graduate research project, I took time identify which areas needed the most attention: uploading necessary forms for the Institutional Review Board and producing stories for the “News Your Own Adventure” (NYOA) mobile app. NYOA is up and running. It just needs content.

The mobile app allows for non-linear storytelling and is designed to let users self-direct their experience. Instead of watching news videos from start to finish, users will have the option of choosing what portion of a story they want to view in whatever order. This presents a chance for Newsy writers to redefine video storytelling. More information on that forthcoming.

Newsy Stories worked on during this week:

- Indie Hit ‘Thrift Shop’ Makes Billboard History
- Super Bowl Ads: Best And Worst
- Military Considers Physical Strength Of Women In Combat
- NJ Sen. Menendez Under Review By Ethics Committee
- Hurricane Sandy Bill Gets Approval From Congress
- Dutch Queen Beatrix To Abdicate Throne After 33 Years

#### **Week Four Notes**

This week — like previous weeks and, I’m sure, weeks to follow — presented some challenges in navigating work for my graduate research project while fulfilling my

duties as a teaching assistant for the Newsy class. Both tasks are important to my success this semester.

I found it particularly difficult to explain exactly how to write Newsy scripts, although it's something I've been doing since October 2011. With over a year's worth of practice and subtle changes to Newsy's scripting style, my approach to writing copy has become predictable, formulaic, automatic, etc. I liken my knowledge of Newsy script writing to an old tombstone; after a while, weather causes parts of it to erode. The stone is still recognizable, but it's not as pristine as before.

On Monday of this week, a student asked me to explain the intricacies of writing a Newsy script. *Why did you choose this source instead of that source? What does this production cue mean? I thought we weren't supposed to do that.*

Having a student over my shoulder asking me about scripting forced me to answer questions that have, at times, been tossed aside for expediency. For the sake of the student and myself, I answered those questions aloud and gave suggestions as to how I deal with scripting. Definitely a highlight of the week and a lesson in newswriting that was just as much learned by me as it was taught by me.

Christina Hartman, Newsy's news director, and I talked about ways to present stories in the News Your Own Adventure (NYOA) app. Christina has been a leading voice in NYOA content and someone I look to for advice, given her long(er than most) history at Newsy.

She suggested thinking outside of the box in terms of storytelling. For ALL of Newsy's products, there is a similar format: linear video, start to finish. Christina made a point that video, albeit more visually appealing than any other mode of storytelling, is

restricted... even more so than text. With a text transcript, your eyes can take you from one paragraph to another in any order imaginable.

With that in mind, Christina suggested presenting stories in a “shotgun” format, as we’ve been doing. We take multiple parts of a story or topic and display those all over the screen, spread out like a shotgun blast (hence the name). In addition, she suggested a way of storytelling akin to “two roads diverged in yellow wood.” No wood is involved, but two initial options will fill the screen, taking the viewer down two divergent paths within a single story.

Another example: Imagine telling a friend, “I’ve got good news and bad news. Which would you like to hear first?”

While my research asks if self-directed content is what viewers want, I also have the responsibility of helping create content within the NYOA app and brainstorm new ways to tell stories with the new technology.

Upon the completion of my research proposal revisions, I will begin contacting professors to recruit students to participate in the six focus groups.

Newsy stories worked on during this week:

- Alabama Hostage Situation Ends: Suspect Dead, Boy Rescued
- Super Bowl Ads: Best and Worst
- Experts Predict Alzheimer’s Patients To Triple By 2050
- Delacroix Painting Defaces At Louvre-Lens Museum
- U.S. Marine General Picked As NATO Forces Commander
- \$1-Million Bounty Offered For Ex-LAPD Officer

- Guests At SOTU: Faces Of America's Big Issues

### **Week Five Notes**

This week, I realized that even the most thought-out story ideas can fall victim to “shelf life.” I planned to put together a new NYOA feature breaking down the various sections of President Obama’s State of the Union address, and subsequent addresses by Republican Senators Marco Rubio and Rand Paul.

The idea behind NYOA stories, thus far, has been to present in-depth, non-linear feature news videos. The NYOA design is one that allows for self-directed content, but plugging the content into the app is quite a hill to climb on its own. Newsy staff writers usually spend a few hours on a single story for Newsy and other platforms. That process is fairly straightforward considering we’ve done tens of thousands of stories in a similar fashion. With NYOA, there is very little precedent for how we go about designing stories or how we focus the content. This is a valuable revelation in that the focus group portion of my research requires NYOA videos to be ready and available to participants.

For the Newsy class, I lead a discussion on writing scripts for Newsy. The class is split between convergence journalism and radio/TV students, yet, Newsy’s broadcast-like, highly-conversational style is something that usually takes weeks to learn. The most challenging portion of helping students learn the Newsy system is when they *almost* understand how to write an analytical script. Once students understand the process of scripting, it’s up to current Newsy staffers to really “nitpick” and carefully tailor edges the edges of copy to be satisfactory.

Newsy stories done this week:

- Canadian Parliament Discusses Preparations for Zombie Attack
- Senate ‘OKs’ Gay Marriage In Illinois
- Skype Announces Video Messaging Feature

### **Week Six Notes**

I contacted Mizzou’s IRB this week to get clarity on required documents for my research project this past week. The school’s review board notified me that a few items were missing from my application and I must submit those items before actually conducting focus groups. There’s good and bad news in this: the good news is that the requested documents are, essentially, different parts of my already written research proposal. I have fine-tuned those sections and will submit the documents this week.

The bad news is that I am a week behind on my schedule for this semester and waiting for final approval from the IRB may further exacerbate that issue.

However, I feel there’s time to properly adjust my schedule to ensure the research will be completed by graduation. IRB approval is a difficult process considering all of the parts involved. I implore other graduate students to ask IRB representatives for specific directions on the approval process so all research materials can be submitted at the same time without having to go back and resend documents.

I continued designing an NYOA story for the research project and settled on actually tackling this year’s State of the Union address. I initially thought the “shelf life” of that topic had expired, but I was wrong. The NYOA app is not yet available for public use, and for that reason, stories going into the app don’t necessarily have to be fresh and

up-to-date. The app lends itself to evergreen stories and feature pieces. Even though it's been more than a week since President Obama delivered his fourth State of the Union address, Jim Flink and editorial manager Christina Hartman suggested the story still be completed and loaded into NYOA.

Newsy stories worked on this week:

- Maker's Mark Rescinds Decision To Dilute Whisky
- Nestle Ensnared In Horse Meat Scandal
- Jackson Jr. Pleads Guilty To Misusing Campaign Funds
- Glenn Beck And WWE In Tiff Over Tea Party Villain

### **Week Seven Notes**

I finally completed my first NYOA video (Figures 3 and 4). As previously mentioned, the video centers around the State of the Union address and responses from Senators Marco Rubio and Rand Paul. Myself, Newsy Editorial Lead Madison Mack and Newsy Director of Development Geoff Pado worked tirelessly to ensure we had a solid, working product within a matter of days.



**Figures 3 and 4: "News Your Own State of the Union"**

I began by writing the script like I would any other Newsy story. I watched all three speeches, reviewed the transcripts, included brief analytic commentary, and then settled on four main topics: health care, education, immigration, and guns. The underlying theme of President Obama’s speech was rebuilding our economy and he made tangential references to that throughout the evening. That theme was reflected in the script:

(AOC or Anchor On Camera)

Hi, I’m Candice Aviles and this is “News Your Own State Of The Union,” a neatly packaged guide to the 2013 State of the Union address and the responses that followed. Call this the report on the *report* of the state of our union.

This year marked President Barack Obama’s fourth time delivering the annual address. The majority of his speech dealt with rebuilding America’s economy and lowering the nation’s deficit — either directly or tangentially. His closing salvo

mentioned the need for gun law reform... but between those two points, there was a lot of *this*:

(SWV or Sound With Video)

\*APPLAUSE VIDEO\*

(AOC) \*\*tabs appear\*\*

So, to make things easier, we picked out the biggest topics from Obama's speech and even included counterpoints from Republican respondent, Sen. Marco Rubio, and Tea Party respondent, Sen. Rand Paul.

Options will display *here*. Just tap the one you want to watch — Health care, education, immigration or guns. To get back to the topics menu or go to the end, tap the options on *this* side of the screen.

In keeping with the goal of NYOA — self-directed news content — I chose to place tabs on the left and the right of the screen. The tabs on the left allow users to move from one aforementioned topic to the other at will. At the end of each topic, tabs on the right allow users to view responses from either Sen. Rubio or Sen. Paul. I also included a tab on the left to take users to the end of the video/presentation, which is scripted as such:

(AOC)

We've come to the end of News Your Own State of the Union, but let's wrap things up before you go...

(VO or Voiceover)(Bullets)

President Obama made a few other announcements that got people talking:

- The president invoked the spirit of former presidential candidate Mitt Romney in calling for an increase in the minimum wage to \$9. (Bullet reads: Increase minimum wage to \$9)
- He pledged to end the war in Afghanistan by 2014. Beyond that time, U.S. troops will serve in supporting roles only. (Bullet reads: Troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by 2014)

(VO)

Rubio went after big government in his follow-up to the president's address, but most of that seemed to be drowned out by *this*:

**\*\*Rubio reaches for water bottle\*\***

(VO)

Congress became a verbal punching bag for everyone, but Sen. Paul might've taken the hardest swings.

(SWV)

“...if Congress refuses to obey its own rules, if Congress refuses to pass a budget, if Congress refuses to read the bills, then I say: Sweep the place clean. Limit their terms and send them home!”

(VO)

The Tea Party representative decried tax hikes and big government — maybe even more so than Sen. Rubio — and hinted to a soon-to-be proposed five-year balanced budget.

(AOC)

Thanks again for watching Newsy’s “News Your Own SOTU.”

I chose not to anchor or present the video myself for, what I’ll call, research purposes. To be honest, I thought it would be a bit pretentious to have research participants look at me in a video and then answer my questions during the focus groups. I also wanted to ostensibly distance myself from the actual story so that there would be no perceived bias.

It’s important to note that I wanted the “News Your Own State of the Union” video to seem like a non-linear production and I think that’s something we achieved. Although we placed the different sections of the video on a timeline in Final Cut Pro X, sequentially, the video moves however the user wants it to. From the start, people experiencing the NYOA product can literally choose what news they want to see at any given moment, and they can end the experience just as easily. That’s what sets this

product apart from viewing a linear video, from start to finish. In videos, the information is delivered in whatever order the producer sees fit. We put control in the hands of the user.

Taking on this project required me to do the majority of the work on my days off. I guess it's safe to say that in reality, there are no days off. I worked on fewer Newsy stories this week but spent a considerable amount of time anchoring videos for MSN, one of our partner companies.

Newsy stories worked on this week:

- Mozilla Debuts Firefox OS For Mobile Phones
- Obama Pushes For Overturn Of Prop 8

### **Week Eight Notes**

After toiling and re-researching for weeks, I finally submitted revisions to my research proposal. The two biggest sections needing attention were my explanation of NYOA and my reasoning for choosing a focus group-centered methodology.

Something omitted from the NYOA section was how the new endeavor came to fruition. The Newsy team noticed innovative things people were doing with videos on YouTube and asked if the same could be used to foster more interactivity with news videos.

Depending on who you ask, an impetus for NYOA was "MysteryGuitarMan," a musician who utilized annotations and timestamps in original YouTube videos to

establish more interactivity with users. It was a way to get people clicking and, essentially, “playing” (a nod to William Stephenson) with his work.

From there, the Newsy team created the first NYOA video (Figure 5) — which can only be seen on YouTube — and, subsequently, the NYOA app for mobile devices with touchscreen capabilities.

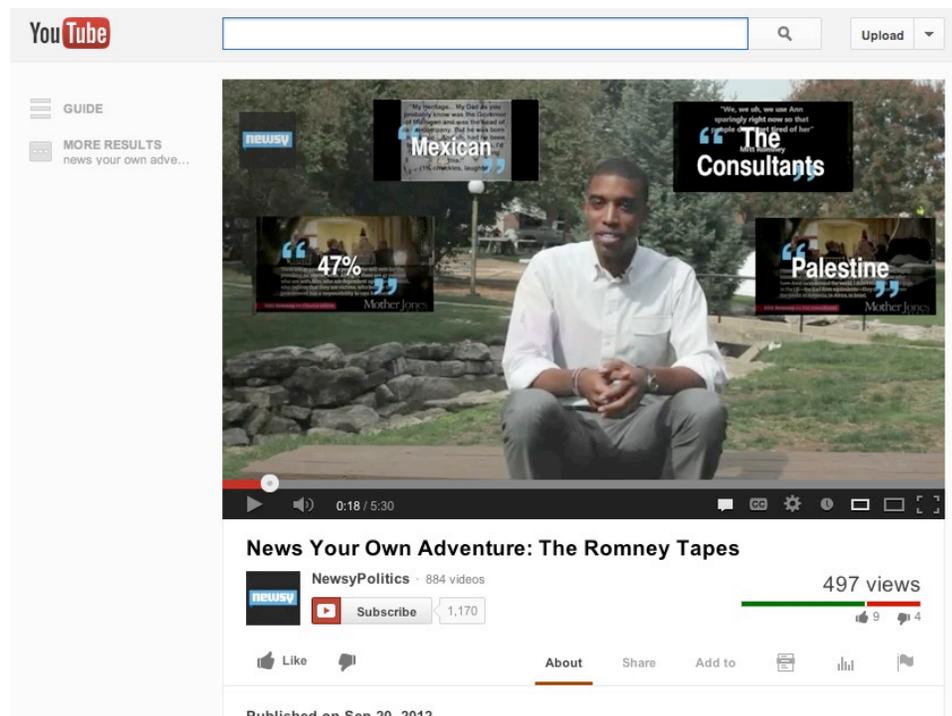


Figure 5: “News Your Own Adventure: The Romney Tapes”

For the focus group portion of my proposal, I needed to justify a few plans for my research. Those plans included why focus groups were best suited for my study and the number of participants I should recruit. I drew information from several medical journals that commented on the value of focus groups (over other research methodologies) and numbers of research participants.

I know that I don't have unlimited time or resources to conduct this research. Keeping that in mind, I wanted to speak to as many participants as possible in an informal setting. That way I could garner opinions in a communal and informal manner; thus, focus groups.

In terms of numbers, I finally settled on six groups of six participants. I felt that 36 research participants would yield satisfactory results without reaching the point of saturation.

Newsy stories worked on this week:

- Pandora CEO Kennedy To Step Down
- Female Kicker Comes Up Short At NFL Combine

### **Week Nine Notes**

I contacted the Microsoft Lab manager to set up times for my focus groups, but times still need to be confirmed. I decided the second week after spring break will be best, considering I still need to recruit students for the research. That portion will be done the week after spring break.

For the Newsy class, I organized a video editing assignment to give students more practice and ensure they are learning a key component of the Newsy system. Students were instructed to take elements (videos and images from news sources and the video of the anchor) and produce a Newsy story that had already been published to the website and other mobile devices.

Newsy stories worked on this week:

- CPAC Straw Poll Hints At GOP Contenders For 2016
- Lil Wayne Hospitalized For Seizures But Reportedly Stable
- Claims Resurface Tying New Pope To Argentina's 'Dirty War'

### **Week 10 Notes**

Spring break left me with a lot of time to work on the revisions of my revisions. I've included information on mass communication theories and focus group research, but I now have to go back into some of those cited sources and find information that legitimizes their claims.

Spring break also ushered in a week of absence; most everyone crucial to the success of my graduate project was away or unavailable. Besides working on revisions, I spent more time working on stories for Newsy.

Newsy Stories Worked On This Week:

- Penn. Gunman Kills Himself In Sporting Goods Store
- NRA Joins Gun Rights Groups In NY Lawsuit
- Suspect In Texas Car Chase Shootout Identified
- Is A Star Wars Theme Park In The Works?
- FAA To Shut Down 149 Air Traffic Towers
- Chicago Closing 54 Schools To Tackle Budget Deficit

## **Week 11 Notes**

I confirmed focus group times with Miles Keller, who manages the Microsoft Lab in Walter Williams Hall. I decided on April 15-19 and April 22, with all but one focus group meeting at 5:00 PM. The April 12 session will be conducted from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM due to time constraints.

Keller confirmed the necessary equipment — six Apple iPads and an audio recording device — were available. I'll be able to checkout the equipment, upload NYOA to the iPads, and get things set up before the focus groups begin.

I also continued a back-and-forth dialogue with the Institutional Review Board on their approval of my project. Interestingly enough, the more documents they request of me, the more I'm forced to refine my research proposal.

### **Newsy Stories Worked On This Week:**

- Syrian Opposition Leader Announces Resignation
- Tiger Woods Tops World Golf Rankings Again
- Malala Yousafzai Signs Multi-Million Dollar Book Deal
- Pope Breaks Tradition, Washes Woman's Feet During Ritual
- NASA Ad to Play Before New Star Trek Movie

## **Week 12 Notes**

After setting up a Doodle online sign-up sheet, I visited Greeley Kyle's class to recruit participants for the focus groups. I spoke to them about the aims of my research and explained that they would receive extra credit for their participation. The 36 students

I needed signed up and selected from six available sessions within a day's time. It was pleasing to see students taking advantage of an extra credit opportunity and showing their willingness to help out with my research. Whatever their personal motivations, they stepped up and I'm grateful.

I rented out six iPads and a marantz from the convergence equipment library for the sessions. Newsy's app developer Geoff Pado installed NYOA on each of the iPads and made sure they were up-and-running by the end of the week. Other materials included: notepads, headphones, and pens.

The Newsy class began work on its innovations projects in class this week. The students were put into five different groups last week and instructed to bring in project ideas for the next class period. The groups met and agreed on which ideas they would pursue for their final presentation at the end of the semester.

#### Newsy Stories Worked On This Week

- NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four Roundup
- Aereo Survives Major Legal Fight Against Broadcasters
- A Look Back At Siskel and Ebert
- Megachurch Pastor Rick Warren's Son Commits Suicide

#### **Week 13 Notes**

I feel that this week was much more significant than the mediocre importance I previously ascribed. Maybe that's a bit melodramatic, but I approached this week like I had done any other week throughout the semester: I looked over my tasks, completed

preliminary work and, above all else, acted like I had done it all before. It was business as usual... except it wasn't.

The “focus group” week could be labeled as one of the most important weeks of my graduate school tenure. It was the culmination of several research methods courses, countless hours of thumbing through journal entries, tons of research proposal drafts, tons of rewritten research proposal drafts, etc. All of that work was done months before I had a distinct vision of what my project would even look like.

Nevertheless, I completed six focus groups and had a total of 35 participants, just shy of my intended goal. As expected, a scheduling conflict prevented one student from attending a focus group sessions.

With the exception of one group, all participants were engaging and contributed greatly to each discussion. After interacting with the NYOA app, each group gave their impressions on their respective experiences. Participants critiqued and questioned the minutiae of the app, detailing their likes, dislikes and suggestions for a better product. The information collected will be amazing for Newsy, especially those directly involved in creating new content for NYOA. But beyond that, it is my hope the results from the focus groups will help news producers develop better ways to convey messages and engage news consumers.

There is much room to expand on self-directed news content that allows for self-discovery. In my humble opinion, the results from this research project will reveal ways to go about doing just that.

The Newsy class is currently working on the final assignment for the semester — the innovation project. Students were placed in five different groups to come up with new

and innovative ideas to improve on some aspect of Newsy. Those ideas can range from ways to display text sources during a video to an overhaul of the Newsy's app design on mobile platforms. Anything is fair game.

Newsy stories worked on this week:

- U.S. Struck Deal with Pakistan to Carry Out Drone Killings
- News Corp. Threatens To Move Fox To Cable Over Aereo
- Reebok Drops Rick Ross Over Controversial Lyrics
- Suspect Identified in Long Beach 7-Eleven Firebombing

#### **Week 14 Notes:**

At this point, the metaphorical present has been purchased. All that's left is gift-wrapping.

The focus groups presented me with a lot of information that deals specifically with NYOA but can be generalized or applied to other news apps in terms of giving users more control of their news consumption experience. Hopefully, the findings, limitations and suggestions for further research will be a launching pad for other ideas to help news sources produce self-directed news content.

Innovation projects from the Newsy class went over exceedingly well. What was interesting about the presentations is that there was a common theme: MORE CONTROL and the ability to further personalize the Newsy experience. What's the chance that a class full of Newsy novices would suggest some of the same ideas toward enhancing news content as my focus group participants? Obviously, the chance was greater than I

would've expected. The fact that the Newsy class innovation projects were congruent to my research findings shows that — at least in my small sphere of future news producers at Missouri's School of Journalism — allowing consumers to customize the way they receive content is a valuable characteristic of news sources.

Newsy stories worked on this week:

- Aussie Adam Scott Wins His First Masters in Dramatic Form
- NY Post Puts Innocent Men on Cover, Draws More Criticism
- YouTube Wins Another Legal Battle Against Viacom
- Conspiracy Theories Surround Boston Bombing Suspects
- Boston Bombing Threatens Immigration Reform

## SELF-EVALUATION

This project represents the most extensive academic endeavor of my entire life. It began at an intersection of idea and opportunity, then — through mistakes, effort and the guidance of people around me — flourished into a wonderful achievement.

I learned many lessons through this experience, some of which I'll detail below:

By January, I had spent nearly a year and a half at Newsy working as a writer, anchor and video editor. I feel this past semester helped me grow from a journalist with serviceable skill to someone with an exemplary ability to fill several different roles within the newsroom.

I was challenged to write better stories more quickly and more often — and succeeded in doing so. This involved applying my knowledge of Newsy's script style on the fly, in some instances. It required me to make swift judgments on news topics and I didn't always get it right. Of course, my mistakes were always lessons learned.

Serving as the teaching assistant for the Newsy class forced me to be transparent in my processes for completing tasks at Newsy. I explained to students why I made certain decisions to go with one angle over another or one source over another often while still writing a story. Being questioned on my processes for gathering information and editing video made me more succinct and technically sound.

I failed to find a good balance between research, writing and Newsy during much of my 14-week professional project. During that time I produced 54 stories for Newsy, but fell behind on the more academic portions of my project. And as a result I pushed things right up to the final deadline.

I view the results of my research project — “Playing” With Your News: A Focus Group Study On “News Your Own Adventure” — as a small step forward in understanding the future of mobile video news. I endeavored to find how visual design, interactivity and personalization impacted peoples consumption of self-directed video news content. To do that, I employed Newsy’s News Your Own Adventure app in focus group settings. This was the first time anyone outside the Newsy staff got a chance to actually use the app — with the exception of a handful of representatives from tech companies — and the results were fascinating.

What I found is that people who use mobile devices enjoy getting news on their own terms. “Control” was a word brought up in all six focus groups, and people value the ability to manipulate settings and personalize content on whatever news outlets they choose. You’ll find my results and my thoughts on the findings at the tail-end of my research report.

But the most important facet of my research this semester is the takeaway: At the end of the day, I find comfort in knowing that my research is relevant within the field of journalism.

A New York Times article from April of this year (“Playing for All Kinds of Possibilities”) uncovers how the zeal for play in children might have propelled human evolution. The author wrote:

Other species play, but none play for as much of their lives as humans do, or as imaginatively... And in doing so, they develop some of humanity’s most consequential faculties. They learn the art, pleasure and power of

hypothesis — of imagining new possibilities. And serious students of play believe that this helps make the species great.

The thoughts posited by the writer seem to almost echo some of the same ideas on play scribed and explored by William Stephenson, Johan Huizinga, Marshall McLuhan and Roger Caillois more than 40 years prior. An argument can be made now, just as it was in 1967, about how the play theory can help explain the evolution of mass communication, new media technology and news consumption phenomena. After all, Stephenson believed people consume various forms of media because it is fun to do so.

It is my hope that this research will be a starting point, a launching pad of sorts that will propel the next researcher to explore how people consume the news as technology continues to develop.

## PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF WORK

This section is comprised of the professional work done over my semester at Newsy. In that time, I produced 54 stories that appeared on Newsy's website and mobile platforms. Those are listed below along with a URL that will take you to the story. Below that, you'll find screenshots and transcripts of 14 of those Newsy videos each representing one week of my 14-week responsibility.

\$1-Million Bounty Offered For Ex-LAPD Officer

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/1-million-bounty-offered-for-ex-lapd-officer/>

A Look Back At Siskel and Ebert

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/a-look-back-at-siskel-and-ebert/>

Aereo Survives Major Legal Fight Against Broadcasters

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/aereo-survives-major-legal-fight-against-broadcasters/>

Alabama Hostage Situation Ends: Suspect Dead, Boy Rescued

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/alabama-hostage-situation-ends-suspect-dead-boy-rescued/>

Canadian Parliament Discusses Preparations for Zombie Attack

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/canadian-parliament-discusses-preparations-for-zombie-attack/>

Catholic Hospital Argues Fetuses Are Not People

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/catholic-hospital-argues-fetuses-are-not-people/>

Chicago Closing 54 Schools To Tackle Budget Deficit

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/chicago-closing-54-schools-to-tackle-budget-deficit/>

Claims Resurface Tying New Pope To Argentina's 'Dirty War'

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/claims-resurface-tying-new-pope-to-argentina-s-dirty-war/>

CPAC Straw Poll Hints At GOP Contenders For 2016

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/cpac-straw-poll-hints-at-gop-contenders-for-2016/>

Delacroix Painting Defaced At Louvre-Lens Museum

<http://www.newsy.com/videos/delacroix-painting-defaced-at-louvre-lens-museum/>

Dutch Queen Beatrix To Abdicate Throne After 33 Years

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/dutch-queen-beatrix-to-abdicate-throne-after-33-years/>

Experts Predict Alzheimer's Patients To Triple By 2050

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/experts-predict-alzheimer-s-patients-to-triple-by-2050/>

FAA To Shut Down 149 Air Traffic Towers

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/faa-to-shut-down-149-air-traffic-towers/>

Female Kicker Comes Up Short At NFL Combine

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/female-kicker-comes-up-short-at-nfl-combine/>

Glenn Beck And WWE In Tiff Over Tea Party Villain

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/glenn-beck-and-wwe-in-tiff-over-tea-party-villain/>

Guests At SOTU: Faces Of America's Big Issues

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/guests-at-sotu-faces-of-america-s-big-issues/>

House GOP Agrees to Lift Debt Ceiling, Refocuses on Budget

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/house-gop-agrees-to-lift-debt-ceiling-refocuses-on-budget/>

Hurricane Sandy Bill Gets Approval From Congress

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/hurricane-sandy-bill-gets-approval-from-congress/>

Indie Hit 'Thrift Shop' Makes Billboard History

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/indie-hit-thrift-shop-makes-billboard-history/>

Is A Star Wars Theme Park In The Works?

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/is-a-star-wars-theme-park-in-the-works/>

J.J. Abrams To Direct Star Wars Episode VII

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/j-j-abrams-to-direct-star-wars-episode-vii/>

Jackson Jr. Pleads Guilty To Misusing Campaign Funds

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/jackson-jr-pleads-guilty-to-misusing-campaign-funds/>

Lil Wayne Hospitalized For Seizures But Reportedly Stable

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/lil-wayne-hospitalized-for-seizures-but-reportedly-stable/>

Maker's Mark Rescinds Decision To Dilute Whisky

<http://www.newsyp.com/videos/maker-s-mark-rescinds-decision-to-dilute-whisky/>

Malala Yousafzai Signs Multi-Million Dollar Book Deal

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/malala-yousafzai-signs-multi-million-dollar-book-deal/>

Megachurch Pastor Rick Warren's Son Commits Suicide

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/megachurch-pastor-rick-warren-s-son-commits-suicide/>

Military Considers Physical Strength Of Women In Combat

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/military-considers-physical-strength-of-women-in-combat/>

Morsi Declares State Of Emergency In Three Egyptian Cities

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/morsi-declares-state-of-emergency-in-three-egyptian-cities/>

Mozilla Debuts Firefox OS For Mobile Phones

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/mozilla-debuts-firefox-os-for-mobile-phones/>

NASA Ad to Play Before New Star Trek Movie

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/nasa-ad-to-play-before-new-star-trek-movie/>

NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four Roundup

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/ncaa-men-s-basketball-final-four-roundup/>

Nestle Ensnared In Horse Meat Scandal

<http://www.newsny.com/>

News Corp. Threatens To Move Fox To Cable Over Aereo

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/news-corp-threatens-to-move-fox-to-cable-over-aereo/>

NJ Sen. Menendez Under Review By Ethics Committee

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/nj-sen-menendez-under-review-by-ethics-committee/>

NRA Joins Gun Rights Groups In NY Lawsuit

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/nra-joins-gun-rights-groups-in-ny-lawsuit/>

Obama Calls For Gay Rights In History-Making Speech

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/obama-calls-for-gay-rights-in-history-making-speech/>

Obama Pushes For Overturn Of Prop 8

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/obama-administration-pushes-for-overturn-of-prop-8/>

Pandora CEO Kennedy To Step Down

<http://www.newsny.com/videos/pandora-ceo-kennedy-to-step-down/>

Penn. Gunman Kills Himself In Sporting Goods Store  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/penn-gunman-kills-himself-in-sporting-goods-store/>

Pope Breaks Tradition, Washes Woman's Feet During Ritual  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/pope-breaks-tradition-washes-women-s-feet-during-ritual/>

Rastafarians Threaten To Sue Snoop Lion For Rasta Fraud  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/rastafarians-threaten-to-sue-snoop-lion-for-rasta-fraud/>

Reebok Drops Rick Ross Over Controversial Lyrics  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/reebok-drops-rick-ross-over-controversial-lyrics/>

Sarah Palin Parts Ways With Fox News  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/sarah-palin-parts-ways-with-fox-news/>

Senate 'OKs' Gay Marriage In Illinois  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/senate-oks-gay-marriage-in-illinois/>

Skype Announces Video Messaging Feature  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/skype-announces-video-messaging-feature/>

Student Shot By Classmate At Atlanta Middle School  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/student-shot-by-classmate-at-atlanta-middle-school/>

Super Bowl Ads: Best And Worst  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/super-bowl-ads-best-and-worst/>

Suspect Identified in Long Beach 7-Eleven Firebombing  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/suspect-identified-in-long-beach-7-eleven-firebombing/>

Suspect In Texas Car Chase Shootout Identified  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/suspect-in-texas-car-chase-shootout-identified/>

Syrian Opposition Leader Announces Resignation  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/syrian-opposition-leader-announces-resignation/>

Tiger Woods Tops World Golf Rankings Again  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/tiger-woods-tops-world-golf-rankings-again/>

U.S. Marine General Picked As NATO Forces Commander  
<http://www.newsny.com/videos/u-s-marine-general-picked-as-nato-forces-commander/>



## Obama Calls For Gay Rights In History-Making Speech

(Image Source: [USA Today](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

[President Barack Obama](#) officially began his second term Monday and, in doing so, delivered a history-making inaugural speech.

After citing part of The Declaration of Independence, President Obama called gay rights an essential piece of equality for all Americans.

“Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law.”

[Sources](#) note this as the first time any president has even uttered the word “gay,” much less “gay rights” in an inauguration speech.

The POTUS gave a nod to the LGBTQ community in a stanza of civil rights struggles, including the first women’s rights convention in 1848; the march in Selma, Alabama in 1965; and maybe the most timely, the 1969 police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York.

The inaugural address, which was shorter than the president’s speech from 2009, will be dissected for things to come over the next four years. But a [Washington Post](#) writer points out the immediate significance of the president’s gay rights stance.

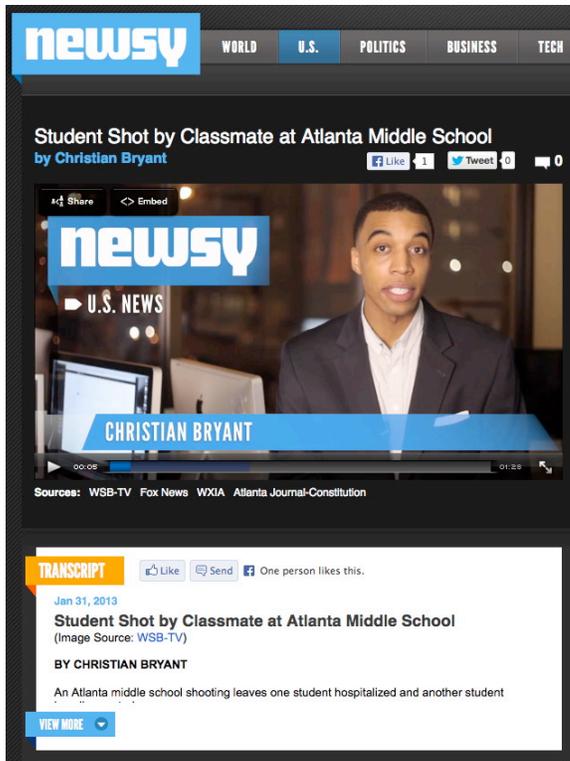
“Obama’s latest remarks come at a point gay rights advocates see as a pivotal moment. Maine, Maryland and Washington state all passed new gay marriage laws last November, and Minnesota voters defeated a ban. Polling shows the public is mostly in favor of legalizing gay marriage.”

Sources say Obama’s definitive statement preps the battleground ahead of a number of cases regarding the same-sex marriage. The Department of Justice will ask [The Supreme Court](#) to declare the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional when it takes up the case in March.

In addition, a writer for [The New Yorker](#) says, “opponents of California’s Proposition 8

are asking the Court to declare a federal constitutional right to same-sex marriage. That could conceivably spell the end of anti-gay-marriage state-constitutional amendments across the country.”

Currently, nine states -- Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Washington -- and the District of Columbia have legalized same-sex marriage.



## Student Shot by Classmate at Atlanta Middle School

(Image Source: [WSB-TV](#))

**BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT**

An Atlanta middle school shooting leaves one student hospitalized and another student in police custody.

The victim, [eighth grader Telvis Douglas](#), was reportedly shot in the back of the neck outside Price Middle School early Thursday afternoon. Sources say the shooter then began firing randomly at other students who tried to get away.

Atlanta police told reporters a student resource officer, who is an off-duty

Atlanta police officer, disarmed the suspect and the school went into a [“hard lockdown,”](#) as a SWAT team secured the campus.

According to [WSB-TV](#), Douglas was “alert” and “conscious” shortly after the shooting.

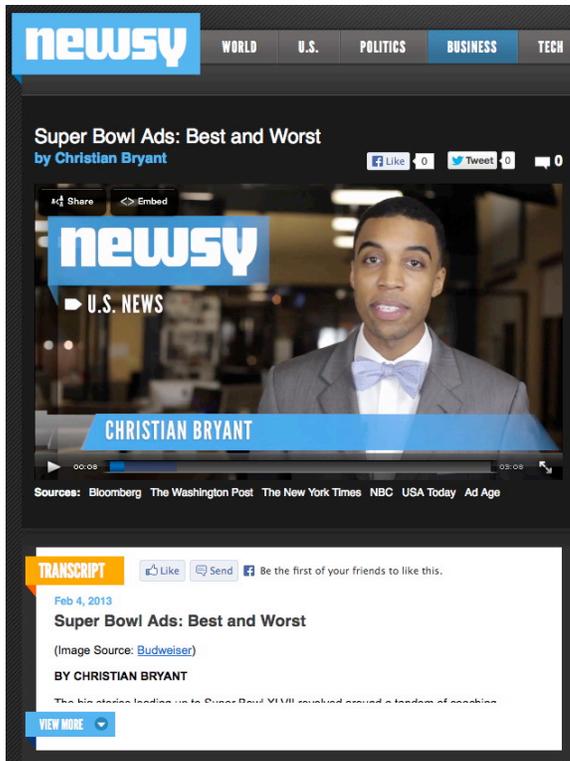
The victim gave his mother an account of how it all starting, saying “he was in between classes when another student he recognized approached him, started ‘talking smack’ and pulled out a gun. [Douglas’ mother] said he turned to run when he was shot from behind.

Douglas’ family claims their son wasn’t involved in a gang, but a tutor from Price Middle School told [WXIA](#), there is a gang problem that needs to be addressed.

“I actually... am really surprised that Price and the school system hasn’t gotten a grip on the gang violence here... It’s an ongoing problem that’s never really gotten resolved.”

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed released a [statement](#) earlier, saying, “Gun violence in and around our schools is simply unconscionable and must end. Too many young people are being harmed, and too many families are suffering from unimaginable and unnecessary grief.”

Douglas is expected to be released from Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta Thursday night. No other students were injured in the shooting.



## Super Bowl Ads: Best and Worst

(Image Source: [Budweiser](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

The big stories leading up to Super Bowl XLVII revolved around a tandem of coaching brothers, Ray Lewis' exit on the biggest stage in professional football, a Beyonce performance... and a football game at a Beyonce performance.

But everyone knows the Super Bowl is just as much about crafty advertising than which team takes home the championship trophy and who entertains us at the intermission. According to [Bloomberg Businessweek](#), advertisers paid as much as \$133,333 per second for a half-minute of

airtime.

So, from kickoff to the final whistle, what did we see from super-expensive and pre-released Super Bowl Ads? Well, for starters...

...plenty of ads made use of star power and celebrity cameos. There was an inquisitive Amy Poehler in this spot for [Best Buy](#)...

...and [PSY Gangnam-styled for pistachios](#).

Let's not forget Paul Rudd, Seth Rogan, and Bob Odenkirk teaming up with LeBron James for this comedic, ad-mocking Samsung spot. Sources estimate this two minute ad, which appeared in the fourth quarter, cost [Samsung](#) a whopping \$15 million.

It's no secret the prices for running an ad during the game are stiffer than a Heisman forearm. According to [The Washington Post](#), that's why advertisers don't necessarily wait for gameday to debut their goods.

"For this year's Super Bowl XLVII, more advertisers put out some, or all, of their ads ahead of time — on movie screens, online and across social media... Launching the ad before the game lets the company have 'a much longer conversation' with consumers..."

A writer for [the New York Times](#) insisted that this year's ad creators traveled back in time for inspiration:

“There was a mother-in-law joke in a commercial for Century 21; a commercial for Audi that was set at a prom; ... Alas, the so-called creative minds of Madison Avenue chose once again to fall back on familiar strategies and themes that would have appealed more to viewers during the Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan or Clinton administrations.”

One advertisement in particular went for a shock factor that left Twitter in need of some medical attention.

Supermodel Bar Refaeli gave actor Jesse Heiman a closeup in this spot for [GoDaddy.com](http://GoDaddy.com). If you thought this was a one-take operation for the two, think again.

“How many takes did it take?”

“It was a great experience! It was, like, over 45 or something...” [via [NBC](http://NBC)]

A writer for [USA Today](http://USA Today) summed up the Twitter reaction saying, “Moments after Sports Illustrated swimsuit model Bar Refaeli engaged in a wet lip lock with a bespectacled tech nerd in a first-quarter commercial for Internet address registration service Go Daddy, Twitter exploded with disgust. #GoDaddy and #thekiss were trending on the social media site for a while.”

Still, one of the most beloved advertisements pulled at the heartstrings with what some have dubbed the best of this year’s lot.

This ad called “[Brotherhood](#)” features a baby Clydesdale and a trainer reunited after the horse grows up and joins the big leagues with the Budweiser Clydesdales.

A writer for [Ad Age](http://Ad Age) expresses his sentiment for the love story: “Weepy, sentimental, nostalgic. I don't care. This is everything I want from a Budweiser Super Bowl spot.”

According to Reuters, this year’s total in ad sales was anywhere between \$250 and \$300 million.



## Guests at SOTU: Faces of America's Big Issues

(Image Source: [The New York Times](#))

**BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT**

An invitation to the annual State of the Union Address is the hottest ticket in Washington. Guests to the event serve as the faces of some of the nation's biggest issues.

Apple CEO Tim Cook is one silicon-valley guest that will join First Lady Michelle Obama in her seating box. [\[via NBC News\]](#)

[The Mercury News](#) reports Apple is a company “that underscores America's

innovation economy... Increasing manufacturing jobs in America is one of President Barack Obama's economic goals.”

Other guests of the first lady include Bobak Ferdowsi, member of the Mars Curiosity rover team and NASA's mohawked rockstar...

[\[via Wikimedia Commons\]](#)

...and the parents of the late Hadiya Pendleton. The 15-year-old Pendleton, a performer during President Obama's second inauguration, was a victim of Chicago's ongoing gun-violence.

[\[via NPR\]](#)

Pendleton will join many other guests of House Democrats as people affected by gun-violence. Sources report this is one undeniably pertinent and contentious issue that President Obama will raise in his speech, and one that will move policy-makers to action.

Also on the guest list: musician and gun advocate [Ted Nugent](#) will accompany Republican House member Steve Stockman, and a mother and child from Newtown, Connecticut, who will join House minority leader [Nancy Pelosi](#).

[ABC News](#) reports the practice of guests of honor dates back to the days of former President Ronald Reagan. Oftentimes former State of the Union attendees have a “momentary flash of fame.”

But one of the first guests provided President Reagan and his successors with a “Skutnik-moment,” not to be confused with the Russian space satellite.

[Lenny Skutnik](#) was celebrated for his heroism following the crash of Air Florida Flight 90 in January of 1982. Brian Resnick for [the National Journal](#) notes the term “Lenny Skutnik” refers to “the people who get invited to the State of the Union to sit next to the first lady and are mentioned in the speech. To the cynical, Skutnicks are stagecraft. To presidents, they’re the State of the Union Incarnate.”

This year’s “Skutnik”: Medal of Honor recipient retired Army Staff Sergeant Clinton Romesha, a person that serves, as Resnick puts it, as “a reminder that there is something fundamentally good in the every day of American life.”  
[\[via The New York Times\]](#)

Michelle Obama has invited 22 guests to the State of the Union address Tuesday.



## Canadian Parliament Discusses Preparations for Zombie Attack

(Image Source: [amctv.com](http://amctv.com))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

An unusual — yet spirited — exchange in Canada’s House of Commons this week proved that America’s Northern neighbor is ready for anything. Even threats from the undead.

Member of Parliament Pat Martin led a verbal volley with this question to Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird:

Martin: “...Is he working with his American counterparts to develop an international Zombie strategy?...”

Baird: “...Canada will never become a safe

haven for Zombies, ever!”

[[via Macleans Magazine/YouTube](#)]

As it turns out, the two Canadian hams were only poking fun at the disaster preparedness strategies of Quebec and the United States. Both implemented hypothetical zombie attacks as a means to engage citizens.

Sources say the tongue-and-cheek remarks stemmed from a civil security symposium in Quebec, in which zombie exercises will be administered. Although using fictional characters might seem silly, [City News](#) reports on the logic behind the exercises: “if you’re ready for zombies, then you’re probably ready for any other disaster that may strike.”

The [U.S. Center for Disease Control](#) offered the same refrain in 2011 when they started issuing promotional materials for zombie invasion survival, more simply known as disaster preparedness.

So, why Zombies in the first place? Could the advent of wildly popular zombie-themed TV shows be to blame? Maybe. But one CDC spokesperson told the [Washington Post](#) the idea was put in place to make a drab subject a bit more lively.

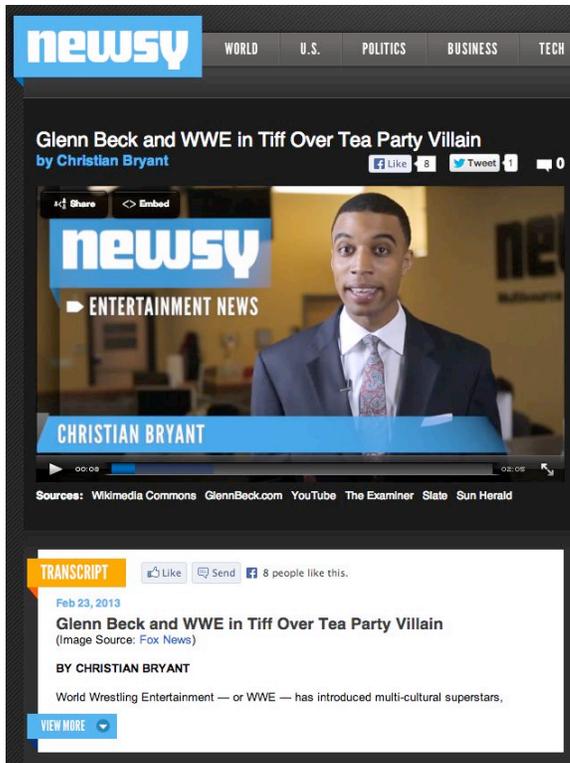
“Dave Daigle, associate director for communications, [told the paper,] ‘Preparedness and public health are not the sexiest subjects.’”

Daigle went on to say the point of it all was to get people to make a plan for emergencies.

But the CDC's creative prowess and pop-culture appeal was no match for mass hysteria. Following reports of a face-eating cannibal in Miami, Daigle told the [Huffington Post](#), "CDC does not know of a virus or condition that would reanimate the dead (or one that would present zombie-like symptoms)."

...A big bummer to those who believed.

As for Quebec's preparedness training, CBC reports the zombie-themed exercises have been canceled for next week. The security minister said in a statement the theme had overshadowed the goal of the training session.



## Glenn Beck and WWE in Tiff Over Tea Party Villain

(Image Source: [Fox News](#))

### BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

World Wrestling Entertainment — or WWE — has introduced multi-cultural superstars, used more patent leather and spandex than imaginable, and even made [THIS](#) popular. But the WWE's latest jab has turned a popular conservative commentator into their newest opponent.

Shock jock [Glenn Beck](#) went after WWE on The Blaze after the entertainment organization debuted Tea Party-inspired wrestler Jack Swagger and his bigoted manager Zeb Coulter. [Beck](#) was none too

impressed with portrayal:

“I can take it from a lot of people... I can. But I can't take it from the stupid wrestling people... When the WWE starts coming against the Tea Party, that's like NASCAR coming against the tea party.”

According to the storyline, [Coulter](#) is a Vietnam Veteran, a conservative, and manager to Jack Swagger. Coulter exercised his First Amendment rights by ranting about immigrants and calling out Swagger's next opponent — Latino superstar Alberto del Rio.

But, the [subjects of derision](#) broke character to respond to the commentator themselves, telling Beck that WWE is fiction with a wide global audience... then challenged him to the mat.

“We cordially invite you to Monday Night Raw in Dallas at the American Airlines Center this Monday where you can deliver a five-minute unedited rebuttal to our global TV audience...”

This kind of character-controversy isn't new for WWE. A writer for [The Examiner](#) notes the Swagger/Del Rio, all-American/all-Mexican matchup is just a reflection of the current political climate.

“Controversial characters based on the current, political circumstances of the day have been a part of wrestling's storyline fabric for years... this latest storyline... is just par for

the course of today's current, political atmosphere.”

And a writer for [Slate](#) says that Beck just took the bait as he was lured in by the WWE’s latest stunt.

But while conservative critics cry foul, Jack Swagger is caught up in a bit of real-life drama. South Mississippi’s [The Sun Herald](#) reported that Swagger, who’s real name is Donald Jacob, will have to appear before a judge for speeding and possession of marijuana.

No word yet if Beck will make an appearance on Monday Night Raw.



## Mozilla Debuts Firefox OS For Mobile Phones

(Image Source: [Mozilla](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

An Apple, an Android, and now a fox — heavy hitters Google and Apple will soon be making way for yet another mobile phone operating system.

Non-profit software community [Mozilla](#) launched its new Firefox OS for mobile devices Sunday, essentially playing its hand against the two companies with the largest global market share in terms of smartphones.

Mozilla is offering the Firefox OS for free.

The company is partnering with 18 wireless carriers and four handset manufacturers to start shipping phones as early as this summer.

The design is one smartphone users have seen before, but the new [Firefox OS](#) features will be sure to shake things up in the marketplace.

[CNN](#) reports “The new software is built on open Web standards and is capable of operating on much less sophisticated devices than many existing smartphones...”

Think cheap phones in emerging markets. Not only that, but development language HTML5 is a large part of the software. According to the [Wall Street Journal](#)...

“The theory is that there are many more people familiar with the relatively simple chore of making Web pages than the developers who know how to write programs for specific mobile operating systems. In other words, Mozilla doesn’t have to convince programmers to learn yet another entirely new development scheme...”

[Forbes](#) cites Mozilla Foundation estimates which puts the number of HTML developers in the millions compared to hundreds of thousands of Android and iOS developers.

Initial appeal for the phone ranged from “unspectacular”, to...

[\[via CNET\]](#)

...just “meh.”

A writer for [PCMag](#) questions the open-for-all operating system, saying carriers might end up being the bullies when it comes to pricing.

“This is an OS that carriers can completely own and customize... freedom without rules, can easily devolve into the rule of the strong over the weak through whichever levers of power they have at their disposal: in the case of carriers, they own the infrastructure, so they'll make us pay every way they can.”

CNN reports the first wave of Firefox OS devices will go on sale in Brazil, Colombia, Hungary, Mexico, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Spain and Venezuela this Summer. U.S. consumers can expect Firefox OS devices by 2014.



## Female Kicker Comes Up Short At NFL Combine

(Image Source: [USA Today](#))

**BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT**

The first female to participate in a regional NFL combine came up short Sunday after being hampered by an injury.

Twenty-eight year old Lauren Silberman took to the New York Jets' practice field in New Jersey with a goal in mind: two perfect kicks splitting the uprights from 60 yards out. [\[Via USA Today\]](#)

Sources say Silberman hurt her leg on the first kick that travelled 19 yards. Her second attempt was only 13 yards. She then consulted a trainer and decided to call

it a day.

[\[Video via NFL.com\]](#)

The female kicker stayed positive after her outing, saying, "The distance wasn't there, but hopefully the scouts will notice my technique. It's not always length." [\[Via ESPN\]](#)

But enter the naysayers. Not everyone was impressed with Silberman's history-making attempt. [USA Today's Mark Garafolo](#) tweeted how he really felt, calling the whole ordeal a "sham."

[Other sources were pretty skeptical](#) of the fact that Silberman didn't take any warm-up kicks, instead opting for pushups and crunches.

Regardless of how the day played out, it's Silberman's backstory and the fact she was the first woman in one of the most "macho" of sports that's got people talking.

Silberman is a University of Wisconsin and MIT grad with experience as a former college club-level soccer player. She's never kicked a ball in an organized football game, but previously told reporters her virtual experience might give her an edge.

[\[Via NFL.com\]](#)

"I'm hoping through all this virtual play that I've done it will extend to performing well physically on the field."

[\[Video via ABC News\]](#)

Silberman actually wrote her master's thesis on how video games can improve real world athletic performance. [[Via MIT](#)]

A [CBS News](#) writer took Silberman's presence at the combine as a harbinger of what could be, saying if females were to play in the NFL, it would be at the kicker position.

One [Yahoo! Sports](#) writer offered some parting words of encouragement for the history-making kicker saying...

“The good news for Lauren Silberman is that she probably got more time on a New Jersey football field than Tim Tebow did in the last year.”



## Claims Resurface Tying New Pope To Argentina's 'Dirty War'

(Image Source: [The Guardian](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

As the world focuses its lens on the new leader of the Catholic Church — Pope Francis — many questions arise about the Pontiff and his relation to the so-called Argentine “dirty war.”

Sources have painted the picture of a humble man just recently known as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, since the beginning of his papacy on Wednesday. (Via [The Telegraph](#))

But as people learn more about Bergoglio, allegations resurface about the new Pontiff’s action — or inaction — to stop

Argentina’s military junta from committing crimes against left-wing dissidents in the 70s and 80s. Some allege “[Bergoglio] and other church leaders at the time supported a murderous dictatorship that hunted down those it considered ‘leftist’... imprisoning them... interrogating, torturing and finally murdering them.” (Via [The Independent](#))

As [TIME](#) reports, since his anointing by Pope John Paul II in 2000, “Bergoglio has had to contend with repeated allegations... that he did not speak out publicly about the thousands of... the disappeared who vanished without a trace...”

The Catholic Church of Argentina made a public apology in 2000 for not taking a stand against the military generals. But sources say a more specific charge against Francis threatens to cast a shadow over his papacy and his reputation.

A writer for [The Washington Post](#) points to noted Argentine journalist Horacio Verbitsky who says in his 2010 book, “Bergoglio, then a Jesuit leader, lifted church protection from two leftist priests of his order, effectively allowing them to be jailed for refusing to end their politically charged ministry in the Buenos Aires slums.”

Bergoglio’s supporters, and the Pope himself, have said, the exact opposite...

Jimmy Burns: “He claims, in his own defense, indeed, and his friends and independent journalists I know in Argentina sustain he did what he could to defend Jesuit priests...” (Via [Sky News](#))

[The Globe and Mail](#) reports the accusations resulted in a lawsuit against Bergoglio in 2005. The lawsuit was later dismissed and then-Cardinal Bergoglio called the lawsuit “old slander.”

The Guardian reports the issue won't be going away anytime soon, considering high-profile trials are still taking place. Nearly 30,000 dissidents reportedly disappeared in Argentina between 1976 and 1983.



## Penn. Gunman Kills Himself in Sporting Goods Store

(Image Source: [WPVI](#))

**BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT**

Authorities in a Pennsylvania community are investigating an apparent suicide after a gunman barricaded himself inside the bathroom of a sporting goods store on Saturday night, then took his own life.

Falls Township police outside Philadelphia said 58-year-old Mark McCarpy of Levittown entered a Dick's Sporting Goods store around 7:30 p.m. and headed for the firearms section. [\[via WPVI\]](#)

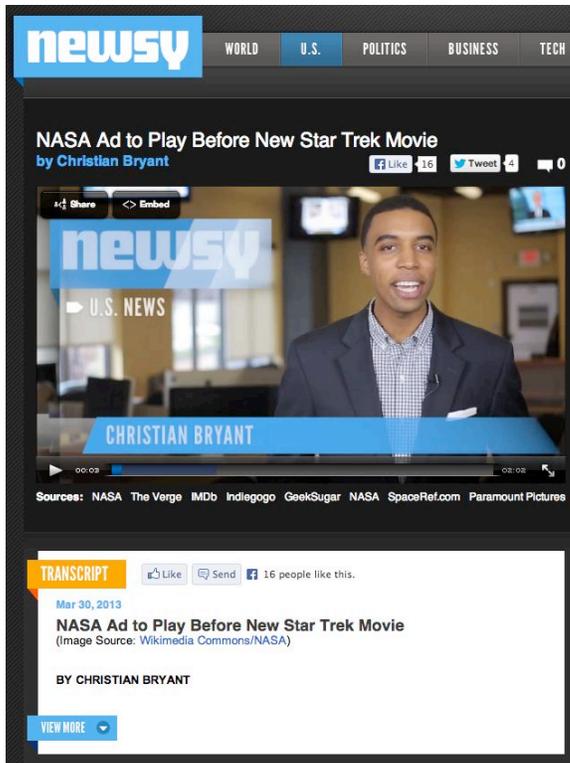
“We’re told he also had a revolver on him at the time, asked the clerk about a gun, and forced the clerk to give him the shotgun...” [\[via WTFX\]](#)

“...then wandered through the store. Employees emptied the store out. First patrol officers on the scene confronted the subject. He then retreated into the male bathroom.” [\[via KYW\]](#)

SWAT teams on the scene used a robot with a camera to locate the man and K-9 to make sure it was safe to enter. That’s when they found McCarpy with a fatal self-inflicted gunshot wound to the chest.

Police say they’re unsure how McCarpy was able to get his hands on ammunition, speculating that he might have reached around the counter when he confronted the store clerk. [\[via WCAU\]](#)

According to WPVI, “Police say [McCarpy] had a history with law enforcement including a 2002 standoff in Middletown. In 2010, he was committed into a mental institution.”



## NASA Ad to Play Before New Star Trek Movie

(Image Source: [Wikimedia Commons/NASA](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

Fictional intergalactic technology in the far reaches of space always helps save humans from an apocalyptic threat... or just brings us our next summer blockbuster. But one non-profit hopes to increase interest in space exploration in our solar system with a 30-second PSA.

The Aeronautics Industries Association, or AIA, surpassed its crowdfunding campaign goal of \$33,000 to show this ad, entitled “[We Are The Explorers](#),” before the upcoming Star Trek: Into Darkness film this summer. It shows a timeline of

NASA’s history and touts developments in space technology.

[The Verge](#) reports “federal law prohibits [NASA] from purchasing advertising time to air it.” That’s where the AIA came in, being that it is a non-profit and not directly affiliated with NASA.

What’s more, the video features the voice of Optimus Prime from The Transformers movies also known as voice actor Peter Cullen. (Via [Paramount Pictures](#), [IMDB](#))

NASA released the original three-minute-long film last year, but AIA raised the money, via [Indiegogo](#), to condense it to 30-second PSA and show it in major movie markets. AIA sums up the purpose saying...

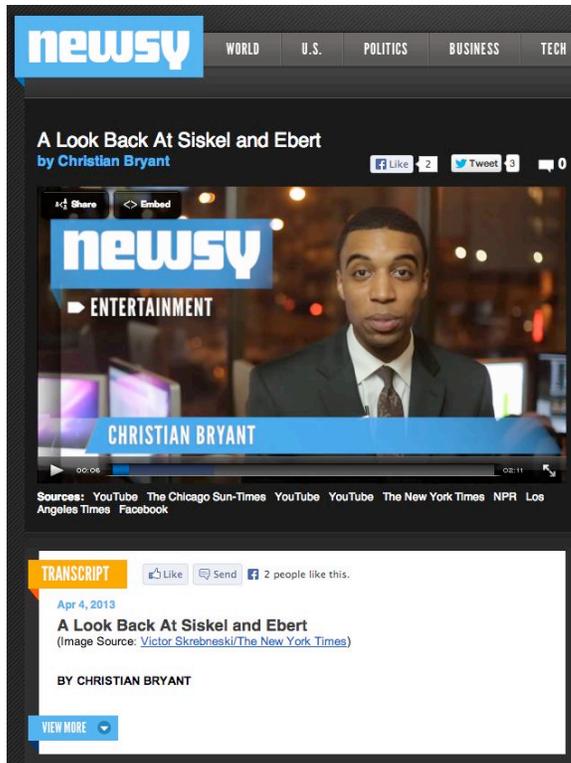
“By backing this 30 second trailer in the top movie theater markets around the United States, you can show our students and young people that we’re in an exciting new era of space exploration. Now is the time to reach them — to remind them that an inspiring space program awaits, one that is worthy of their ambition.”

While the PSA might serve as just a space exploration pep talk for students and young people, a writer for [Geeksugar](#) says the video seeks to keep the space program alive.

That writer points to the highly-publicized 2011 shutdown of [NASA](#)’s shuttle program, which was ended because of high costs, and also this recently released memo, which outlines the suspension of NASA’s education and public outreach activities because of

the sequester. (Via [SpaceRef](#))

The AIA says on their Indiegogo page as the funding for the PSA increases, they'll push to show the film in more theaters across the nation. Some will get a first look at the condensed NASA film when Star Trek: Into Darkness opens May 17.



## A Look Back at Siskel and Ebert

(Image Source: [Victor Skrebneski/The New York Times](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

For nearly half a century, Roger Ebert was the movies. The Pulitzer Prize-winning critic succumbed to cancer Thursday, but not before leaving his mark on American film history... with a little help from his co-host.

Though a renowned critic in his own right, Ebert is best known for his pairing with late film critic and Chicago Tribune writer Gene Siskel. (Via [YouTube/TjMulyadi](#))

[Chicago Sun-Times](#) writer Neil Steinberg said of the two, “The combination worked.

The trim, balding Siskel, perfectly balanced the bespectacled, portly Ebert. In 1978, the show, retitled ‘Sneak Previews,’ moved to PBS for national distribution, and the duo was on their way to becoming a fixture in American culture.”

Sneak Previews, At the Movies with Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, Siskel & Ebert & The Movies — all movie review shows where the pair discussed films they loved and films they hated, while also expressing the same amount of appreciation and animosity toward each other. (Via [YouTube/gradepoint](#))

Siskel: “It’s thriller week on Siskel and Ebert: At the Movies...”

Ebert: “It’s ‘And the Movies’ not ‘At the Movies’...” (Via [YouTube/DrewGrant](#))

Siskel and Ebert’s trademark bickering was just as much a hit as their thumbs-up, thumbs-down approach to movie reviewing.

A writer for [The New York Times](#) said, “Their disagreements were more entertaining than their agreements, complete with knitted brows, are-you-serious head-shaking and gentle (or not) barbs.”

Ebert reflected on his often-contentious relationship with Siskel in 2011 while speaking to [NPR](#):

"We were often angry with one another. At other times we were very warm. I think we shared a strong sense of morality about films that offended us, either by their content or

their general stupidity. What we taught each other was how to defend our choices."

And their influence on each other might have been overshadowed by the significance of their reviews.

A writer for the [Los Angeles Times](#) said, "Approval from Ebert and his sidekick not only could influence mainstream box office fare but also deliver ticket buyers to more daring, artistic works that relied upon critical word-of-mouth."

Siskel and Ebert would go on to work until 1999, when Siskel died of complications caused by a brain tumor. Before we go, we'll leave you with this — one artist's depiction of the two critics reuniting once again. (Via [Facebook / Art Shirley](#))



## U.S. Struck Deal With Pakistan To Carry Out Drone Killings

(Image Source: [Wikimedia Commons/US Air Force](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

Details emerged Sunday about a so-called back-door deal, signed in blood, between the U.S. and Pakistan. The deal, brokered back in 2004, allowed the U.S. to use Pakistani airspace for drone attacks in exchange for the targeted killing of a known Taliban associate.

An [excerpt](#) from Mark Mazetti's book *The Way of the Knife: The C.I.A., a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth* details the killing of this man — Nek Muhammad. Though the Pakistani military

initially claimed responsibility, Mazetti writes, Muhammad's death was "the first time [the CIA] had deployed a Predator drone in Pakistan to carry out a 'targeted killing.'"

Mazetti writes the 2004 deal and the killing of Muhammad laid the groundwork for the controversial drone program that has since killed thousands. The deal has not been publicly confirmed.

(via [Wikimedia Commons/U.S. Air Force](#))

Muhammad had staged attacks on Pakistani military bases and eluded the Pakistani government. A writer for [The Telegraph](#) references [The New York Times](#) article, saying then-CIA director [George Tenet](#) gave the go-ahead for CIA officials in Islamabad to negotiate with Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI.

According to [News Pakistan](#), the Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson denied the legitimacy of the [New York Times](#) article.

Sources haven't speculated why this information is now coming to light, but the newly published account describes the origin of counterterrorism efforts that began with President George W. Bush and continues into President Obama's second term.

President Obama pledged to make counterterrorism more transparent to the world, but [The Washington Post](#) notes the use of drone strikes have been cloaked in secrecy.

The calls for transparency increased after the September 2011 killing of American-born

Muslim cleric [Anwar al-Awlaki](#).

And the [confirmation of CIA director John Brennan](#) was nearly jeopardized because of his part in orchestrating drone strikes. At the center of the debate was the amount of civilian casualties in targeted killings.

[Bloomberg](#) reports now “The Obama administration is considering whether to transfer more overseas counterterrorism operations to the Defense Department...” A move that could potentially bring more transparency to the drone program.

According to the [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#), drone strikes killed between 474 and 881 civilians – including 176 children – in Pakistan between 2004 and last year.



## Boston Bombing Threatens Immigration Reform

(Image Source: [Richard A. Bloom / National Journal](#))

BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT

The nationality and legal status of the Tsarnaev brothers — one dead and the other in custody — have raised questions about immigration reform, with some saying the Boston Marathon bombings will be the biggest test for the overhaul legislation.

We discovered this week the alleged suspects are of Chechen descent. One was a legal permanent resident, and the other a naturalized U.S. citizen. (Via [FBI](#))

But despite months of writing comprehensive immigration reform, the chaos in Boston threatens to derail progress. One [TIME](#) writer describes this moment as one “that may determine whether the bombings are a speed bump or a spike strip for the landmark legislation.”

Republican Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley connected the bombing suspects to immigration at a Judiciary Committee hearing Friday: “Given the events of this week, it's important for us to understand the gaps and loopholes in our immigration system... How can individuals evade authorities and plan such attacks on our soil?” (Via [C-SPAN](#))

Other conservative commenters agreed that reform should be halted and the U.S. legislature should proceed cautiously. According to the [Los Angeles Times](#), radio host Hugh Hewitt wrote the law’s “sponsors should delay debate on the bill until there is a full and complete account of how the children who became terrorists came into the country.”

As some immigration reform opponents attempt to apply the brakes, others are saying there isn't a better time to move forward.

A spokesman for Republican Florida Senator Marco Rubio told the Christian Science Monitor:

"There are legitimate policy questions to ask and answer about what role our immigration system played, if any, in what happened. Regardless of the circumstances in Boston, immigration reform that strengthens our borders and gives us a better accounting of who

is in our country and why will improve our national security.” (Via [The Christian Science Monitor](#))

If history gives any indication as to how this will play out, immigration reform opponents may have the edge.

President George W. Bush and Mexican President Vincente Fox met at the White House on Sept. 5, 2001 to discuss a border agreement that would've provided resident status to millions of illegal immigrants. Six days later, America was attacked and the plan was tabled... indefinitely. (Via [WhiteHouse.gov](#))

Sources say this immigration overhaul is the largest since 1986. Friday's hearing was the first on the proposed legislation with a vote expected as early as this summer.

## ANALYSIS

# “PLAYING” WITH YOUR NEWS: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY ON “NEWS YOUR OWN ADVENTURE”

Christian P. Bryant

## INTRODUCTION

I graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in the Spring of 2010 with a bachelor’s degree in English. Morehouse is a prestigious historically black college, or HBCU, situated as a beacon of academic excellence within Atlanta’s black community. Following in the footsteps of notable alumni — Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., politician Julian Bond and filmmaker Spike Lee, to name a few — I became a man with a social conscience, knowing my obligation to serve my respective communities. What I failed to obtain was formal training in what was to become a passion: journalism. I was an aspirant without the tools to fully succeed in a profession about which I knew very little.

I came to Columbia, Missouri after, what I consider to be, a life-changing experience in my hometown — Greensboro, North Carolina. In the Spring of 2011, a small, alternative weekly newspaper took a chance on me, a college graduate who had rarely flipped through the pages of an Associated Press Stylebook, and gave me an internship as an editorial assistant. Within nine months, I had written countless feature stories on real people in my community; there was the woman who wrote uplifting poems for terminally ill cancer patients, the unassuming hot dog vendor with a culinary degree and years of history as a curbside counselor to troubled souls, and I would be remiss not

to mention the owner of a Jewish restaurant who sold cultural artifacts while preparing delectable dishes for his loyal clientele. My reporting put their lives and accomplishments into print for tens of thousands to read.

In that time, I also wrote two cover stories while under the tutelage of master journalists. The most rewarding part of my experience was the fact that my work was read by citizens in the Piedmont Triad, an area within and surrounding Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem. They knew my name without knowing what I looked like, but responded to my work via e-mails, phone calls, and word-of-mouth, letting me know my articles were invaluable additions to their everyday lives. As a journalism neophyte, I felt like I was making a difference and upholding a tenet of democracy by informing the people around me.

Since beginning my graduate studies as a journalism student, I have reported and co-anchored local television news at KOMU-TV 8 (NBC affiliate). I have turned complex issues and breaking news into digestible stories within a day's time. I have also spent weeks thoroughly preparing longer-form stories to highlight seldom covered community issues that fall outside of the daily news cycle. My experiences at KOMU have helped me lay a firm foundation for video storytelling, news writing, research, news judgment, presentation, objective storytelling and taking the pulse of Mid-Missouri to see what issues matter most to our viewership.

In addition, I've written, anchored and produced video news stories for mobile devices at Newsy, an outlet specializing in multi-source, analytical video news. When a gunman went on a killing spree at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, I responded in real-time by contributing content as the story developed. I have been a part of presenting

new touchscreen, multimedia video news stories to better engage our growing mobile audience; I have worked with Newsy's clients to ensure we deliver a news product unattainable anywhere else in the world; and above all else, I have contributed to the body of online and mobile content that is “multisource video news... the only news source that helps users compare news sources from around the world to see how a story unfolds” (Newsy, 2012). My work at Newsy has helped me hone my news writing skills for national and international stories and my video editing skills for mobile platforms.

Holistically, these experiences have afforded me a wealth of knowledge regarding broadcast-style news writing and video storytelling. As we look ahead to the direction of video news on mobile platforms — somewhat of an overarching goal at Newsy — I seek to understand how people interact with the news they consume, particularly, on mobile devices. Little research has been contributed to the whole of journalistic study regarding this topic. It is a goal of mine to look into the phenomena of mobile video news interaction and self-directed content. I hope to move the conversation forward in a way that will inform and enlighten media producers on how this fits within the future of journalism. To accomplish that goal, I plan to use new video news technology developed by Newsy to give consumers more control over video news content.

“News Your Own Adventure,” affectionately known as NYOA, is Newsy’s foray into self-directed video news content on mobile devices. The application, which will be available on smartphones and tablets with touchscreen surfaces, builds on Newsy’s style of multi-source news analysis and places the user in control. Instead of passively watching a linear news video from start to finish, NYOA allows viewers to dictate their news-watching experience.

A presenter or anchor sets up the introductory information, then tabs, or video boxes appear on screen. Each tab or box links to a section of video on a specific topic. At the end of that video, the user can continue to move through the NYOA story options.

For the first installment — “News Your Own Adventure: The Romney Tapes” — the NYOA format was used to guide viewers through a recording of then-presidential candidate Mitt Romney speaking to wealthy donors at a fundraiser. The candid nature of Romney’s comments sparked a media frenzy, but the speech couldn’t be shown in its entirety — it was more than an hour long and research informs video news producers that very few viewers would want to watch an hour’s worth of video. The NYOA team picked out what might’ve been the four most criticized parts of Romney’s speech and linked those to four video boxes hovering above the anchor. By tapping a box, viewers are taken directly to that portion of the video.

My research topic delves into how news consumers interact with NYOA. The “what’s next?” for video storytelling lies within the hands of mobile device users, literally and figuratively. Upon the completion of this research, I plan to apply for reporting/anchoring jobs at local TV news stations. As eyes shift from newspapers and television sets to mobile devices, traditional print and broadcast outlets will look for ways to better reach readers and viewers, respectively. Hopefully, the results of my research and the knowledge gained throughout the process will help expand my brand as a multimedia journalist and aid my future employers in putting video news right where the consumer wants it

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The proliferation of converged news allows news consumers to access and explore stories via several forms of media. For starters, Internet access has become increasingly more commonplace to even the most underdeveloped countries (Orchard & Fullwood, 2010); thus, making online journalism a “universal phenomenon.”

Much like how the Internet has changed the news consumption landscape, mobile devices have reshaped and reformed how people experience news stories. For example, Oscar Westlund (2008), a journalism professor at the University of Gothenberg, wrote, “the mobile phone is no longer only a telephone; it has become a personal mobile device that both integrates communication and multimedia functionality... The mobile device, as a multimedia tool, has four main characteristics: it is portable, constantly connected, personal and has a small screen” (p. 444).

Observers of the media industry believe converged journalism has a significant impact on how news is consumed (American Press Institute, 2006; Nguyen, 2003, 2008). To be a part of the informed electorate — a tenet of journalism is, after all, to inform respective communities — citizens no longer need to subscribe to daily publications or wait for evening newscasts. Mobile news puts the consumer in control by giving them the news they want when they want it, a la carte restaurant-style.

For reference, the practice of convergence journalism involves telling stories by combining text, audio and video in “progressively interactive ways” (Wise et al., 2009). Some researchers argue that the Internet is a highly interactive medium ripe for progressive interactivity and personalization (Chang-Hoan Cho, 1999). For that reason, and countless others, researchers and scholars believe news organizations have joined in

the practice of producing convergence journalism to better engage viewers. The Internet serves as the stage for that interactivity and personalization, unlike print or traditional broadcast, which often has a one-way flow.

Several communications researchers and journalists remarked on how the development of online news resembles the onset and development of online communication in general, which falls in line with mobile news delivery:

This growth in the nature of online journalism mirrors the short history of the development of Web technology, whose chronology is punctuated by dramatic introductions of new modalities into online communication.

While initially the web was text only, it has rapidly advanced to incorporate other modalities such as audio and visuals. (p. 480; Allbritton, 1999; Heller, 1998; Kurtz, 1999)

Part of why we consume news is what William Stephenson described as *subjective play* (1967). In his seminal work produced more than 40 years ago, Stephenson described what he considered a motivating factor for news consumption:

...At its best, mass communication allows people to become absorbed in *subjective play*. People read newspapers, magazines, and paperbacks in vast numbers, and there are ever increasing audiences for movies, radio, records, and television. All of this, it seems obvious, is enjoyable. (p. 1)

Although definitions of “play” vary and, for the sake of this research, spans more than 100 years, Herbert Spencer wrote people participate in play activities “partly for the accompanying satisfaction of certain egotistic feelings which find for the moment no other sphere” (Spencer, 1898). Spencer posits we consume the news because we can become immersed in it as a fun activity.

Exploration into how people interact with convergence journalism is nothing new. The uses and gratifications approach used to examine motivations for using traditional media have also been applied to patterns of Internet usage (LaRose, Mastro, Eastin, 2001). That approach has been used to identify an Internet users needs and how specific media is sought out to fulfill those needs.

Researchers have argued that “redundancy” is a measurement by which the effectiveness of converged journalism or multimedia presentations can be gauged (Hsia, 1971). The thinking is that information delivered via multiple modalities has a better chance of getting through to receivers than single modality messages, e.g. video news. Broadcast news research supports the claim that the combination of moving pictures and audio enhance memory for news content (Reese, 1984). In terms of the most effective modality, video — over text, audio, images or any combination of the three — is believed to be relatively easy to etch into one's working memory (Lang, Potter, & Bolls, 1999).

There are, however, some who are unsure of the effectiveness of multimedia presentations of convergence journalism, citing an overload of stimuli through the combined modalities of text, audio and visuals. Sundar elaborates on that uncertainty saying, “...It is not clear if multimedia helps or hinders cognitive processing of news and

information on websites. Nor is it known if, and to what extent [...] users appreciate the addition of multimedia functionality” (p. 481). Still, it is the thinking of Wise et al. that helps propel the need for study within this area of journalism; research in this field “can advance theory related to information processing of online news content” (Wise et al., 2009).

I seek to better understand how people interact with and consume video news from mobile devices. In order to fully address this, I propose to investigate the effects of self-directed news content on the processing of mobile video news delivery.

This research will review the available literature pertaining to the topic of mobile video news consumption and interactivity and help explore an essential question: Do mobile device users want more control over their news? I will explore the application of the play theory (which describes the desire to consume news for entertainment as well as information) and propose a set of research questions. I will then describe the methods and results of a research study conducted using willing participants who will interact with a mobile news application before responding to questions about their experience in a focus group setting. Finally, I will report my findings and point out their implications for theory as well as practice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### On Stephenson's Play Theory and Applications for News Consumers

When William Stephenson published *The Play Theory of Mass Communication* 40 years ago, research in mass communication was scant because it was a relatively new field of study — Stephenson says mass communication theory did not begin until “1924 or so” (p. 1) — and it failed to dig deeper into how mass media affected beliefs of consumers. Citing behavioral scientists and mass communication researcher Bernard Berelson in his introduction, Stephenson wrote: “For a time it seemed that research in mass communication would 'wither away,' to quote one of its earliest advocates.”

In describing *subjective play*, a term he coined to explain a reason for media consumption, Stephenson wrote that playing itself is an encompassing activity that absorbs the player; it is “pretending, stepping outside the world of duty and responsibility” (Stephenson, p. 46). He said it can be seen as an “interlude in the day” and something that is, on a basic level, fun.

Stephenson's thoughts on play derived from work done by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga. Before Huizinga, scholars saw no value in play itself. Huizinga, however, linked play with cultural identity in that “it teaches loyalty, competitiveness, and patience (the Chinese *wan*): “To the degree that he is influenced by play, man can check the monotony, determinism, and brutality of nature. He learns to construct order, conceive economy, and establish equity” (Caillois, 1961).

French sociologist Roger Caillois distinguished between four classes of play: *anon* (play involving two opposing sides), *alea* (games of chance), *mimicry* (acting or pretending), and *ilinx* (a form of dizzying play that one might liken to swinging on a

swing or going on a merry-go-round). From there, Caillois expressed that play usually consists of a combination of the aforementioned categories (Stephenson, 1967).

Caillois went even further to describe ways of playing: *Paideia* (primitive, uncontrolled play), *ludus* (a more formal style of playing with set rules that require much more discipline) and *wan* (a “sensual Chinese way of playing”) — described in Stephenson’s book as when jade is polished by caressing it (p. 47). Caillois’ *wan* is similar to Huizinga’s in that it is an activity that teaches patience.

In explaining the origin of the play theory and how it relates to news consumption, Stephenson brings attention to Wilbur Schramm’s “The Nature of News” (1949), a journal article detailing Schramm’s explanation as to why people choose some news stories over others. His theory of news reading sought to explain the enjoyment of mass communication and the selection process. It was Schramm’s thinking that pleasure in news reading derived from one of two principles (and he called on Austrian neurologist and researcher Sigmund Freud for assistance): “One is related to what Freud calls the Pleasure Principle, the other to what he calls the Reality Principle. For want of better names, we shall call these two classes *immediate reward* and *delayed reward*” (p. 260).

Immediate rewards include stories crime, disasters, accidents, sporting events, etc. Delayed rewards include stories about public affairs, education, economics, etc.

Schramm devised a hypothesis to test his theory of news reading, with the assumption that more educated or socialized individuals would be more likely to opt for delayed rewards, whereas less educated individuals would be more attracted to immediately rewarding news. Out of 746 participants, he not only found that there was an increase in delayed reward reading with education, but there was also a decrease in

immediate reward reading with higher levels of education.

Schramm performed other experiments he deemed “primitive,” but concluded that self-identification with news and subjective satisfaction played a large role in one news story being selected over another.

But according to Stephenson, Schramm’s theory — much like many others — did not include the play aspect of news reading: “The communication situation is not one in which information is passed from a communication source to a receiver; it is one in which the individual plays with communication” (Stephenson, p. 151).

Stephenson’s thinking differed from Schramm’s; he thought that news reading could be undertaken without any expectation of a reward: “Thus we come a long way from Schramm’s early formation to this: *newsreading is a communication-pleasure, sans reward*” (p. 58-59).

For reference, “communication-pleasure” is a term introduced by Thomas Szasz (1957). Stephenson describes communication-pleasure as something similar to a conversation between two people. The two meet, they converse, and afterward they say how much they enjoyed it. The conversation serves no real purpose. They were not trying to please each other and they did not expect anything from each other. But the activity is fulfilling in a subjective way to each individual.

To add credibility to the play theory and its application to news consumption, Stephenson used his very own Q-methodology to develop a Q-factor model for the theory. A full understanding of Q-methodology is not essential to my research, but I feel it is important to at least note the very basics of this approach to further exemplify the work accomplished by Stephenson with regard to the play theory.

To test the theory from a subjective standpoint, Stephenson collected “self-referent” or subjective statements on news reading from other researchers in this field. Those statements include “Newspapers have fine appreciation, good judgment,” “Newspapers are enjoyable to read,” and “It’s a bit of a chore to read a newspaper” (p. 152). These statements are “central concepts held by authorities who have studied or written about journalism” (p. 153). Stephenson collected 38 of those statements and compiled them in what is called a Q-sample.

He then uses a population sample of college students to perform a Q-sort with those statements. Q-sorting is a way for participants to place values on the statements using a range of numbers. Participants place those statements on a range of numbers to identify which ones are most like and least like their thinking on a topic, which in this case is news reading.

The self is centric to this approach. Stephenson concludes that communication-pleasure is essential to the value of news reading or news consumption.

According to David Myers, author of *An Argument for the Study of Play* (1988), Stephenson’s book received mixed reviews. Myers inserts a criticism from Melvin DeFleur’s *A Review of The Play Theory of Mass Communication* (1968) in which DeFleur says: “In short, play theory, taking a purely subjective and individualistic approach to the study of media, would ignore... socially significant issues and concentrate on what is essentially a trivial matter, the 'self-enhancement' of the communication receiver” (p. 483).

DeFleur goes on to say that Stephenson's book was "irritable, ...pompous, ...irresponsible, ...poorly organized, ...and superficial" (p. 482).

But an argument can be made now, just as it was in 1967, about the revival of interest in the play theory; then, Stephenson wrote this was partly "because of the urgent communication problems facing the newly developing nations of the world" (Stephenson, p. 1). In overlaying Stephenson's statement onto the current status of mass communication, I interpret this to mean that the play theory can be used to explain new media technology and news consumption phenomena. After all, Stephenson believed people consume various forms of media because it is fun to do so.

The satisfaction of consuming the day's news has been likened to playing games as researchers have expounded on the play theory. Marshall McLuhan, a philosopher of communication theory wrote in his book *Understanding the Media: The Extensions of Man* (1967):

"Games, like institutions, are extensions of social man and of the body politic, as technologies are the extensions of the animal organism [...] As extensions of the popular response to the workday stress, games become faithful models of our culture. They incorporate both the action and the reaction of whole populations in a single dynamic image" (p. 235).

In a sense, the constant consumption of news is an ongoing game which citizens play daily, not only for necessity, but also for enjoyment. Theodore Glasser (2000) wrote, "Stephenson attempted to explain news consumption habits in terms of a combination of

usefulness and pleasurableness.” Just as Stephenson believed, Glasser wrote that play described the ability for individuals to engage a very public world in a very private and personally satisfying way (p. 24).

As media technology develops, the reasons for news consumption have gone relatively unchanged, with exception to the fact that people have new and interactive ways to “play” with their news.

### **Mobile Devices And Interactive News Opportunities**

The changing news landscape is one that can be marked by the use of buzzwords like “convergence” and “new media technology.” Newsrooms now use multiple platforms to reach their audiences as the emergence of new technology allows news consumers to take their information “to-go” instead of looking for the nearest newspaper stand or parking in front of a television.

Research from various sources report online and digital news consumption continues to increase as the venerable contractors of “brick-and-mortar” traditional print and TV news scramble to make sense of the changes to — as Wayne Gretzky famously said and Steve Jobs famously repurposed — “skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it's been.” With more information showing a shift in news consumption to online and digital platforms, *where* is the metaphorical puck going to be?

In a 2010 article, CNET News writer Dong Ngo stated, “If you are like the overwhelming majority of Americans, you are likely to read or hear about this story again on TV, the radio, newspapers, and other Internet sites.” The way consumers access news from a multitude of devices today is something that William Stephenson and other

ambassadors of mass communication could not have foreseen; however, the research and theoretical positions taken by scholars of yesteryear are as applicable as ever when pondering the various “why’s?” of continual news consumption.

On journalism and new media technology, Theodore Glasser writes:

What is paramount for purposes of play is not, therefore, the content of news but its form — and the fact that it appears in that form, again and again, each and every day... And one of the most dramatic and usually celebrated changes in news and its form, particularly but probably not entirely an artifact of mainstream American journalism, bears directly on the aesthetics of news and thus the prosperity of news for play and pleasure. (p. 27)

New forms of storytelling have brought consumers and producers into a digital realm. Now, news organizations worldwide practice what has been deemed convergence journalism in an effort to engage potential audience members. Convergence does not supplant traditional forms of delivering news, but complements it by “combining text, audio, and video in progressively interactive ways to tell stories” (Wise et al., 2009).

The combination of modalities that constitutes convergence journalism also takes the name multimedia, which Hans Marmolin (1991) describes as “the use of multiple senses in processing stimuli or multiple modalities used in sending a message.”

Similar to Marmolin’s thoughts, Martijn Hoogeveen (1997) describes multimedia as a part of a larger system or object where “multiple perpetual perceptual representation

media, such as speech, music, text, graphic, still, animation and video, are used in an integrated manner.”

The Internet makes converged media possible as a platform ripe for interactivity and personalization, unlike traditional broadcast media. Chang-Hoan Cho (1999) argues that the Internet is a highly interactive medium, which brings into focus a new way to “play” with news consumption.

Much like how the Internet changed news consumption landscape, mobile devices have further transformed how people explore news stories. Mobile phones and tablets allow us to search the web and experience news in the same manner one would with a desktop or laptop computer — only now, news consumption can happen anywhere.

Mobile video storytelling has emerged as one of the newest forms of media technology and more news outlets have taken to mobile devices so consumers can read or watch the news wherever is most convenient. The impetus for such technology could arguably be the thought of giving mobile device users more control over their news consumption, but little research has been conducted to examine how people interact with mobile news applications that have interactive capabilities.

Mobiles Republic, a mobile apps publisher, found in a survey that 42 percent of Americans now use the Internet to find national and international news. Another survey of more than 3,000 U.S. adults by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism found that more than three-quarters of U.S. adults now own laptop or desktop computers, a percentage that has been stable for some years. Internet access seemingly opened the metaphorical floodgates for device capability. Forty-four percent of adults own a smartphone, and a little less than half of that number own tablet computers (18%).

Tablet ownership grew 50% from the summer of 2011 when it was at 11% to January of 2012 when this survey was taken.

The evidence increasingly hints that the level of news consumption on mobile devices is especially heavy. For instance, the 56% of tablet owners who say they get news on those devices is on par with the percentage who in Pew's 2011 survey said they get news on their tablet every day (53%).

Inger Lindstedt et al. (2009) puts it succinctly but poses a very pertinent question: "Through interactivity, people should be able to use available material in more meaningful ways, question top-down models of news production and take part in the news production process on a more equal basis... But does it work?"

The question posed by Lindstedt et al. is basic but helps form the basis of my research questions in asking whether or not new media technology is effective in communicating messages or engaging consumers?

On one hand, there are some researchers who feel that overstimulation can cause "interference, distraction... cognitive overload and fatigue" (Sundar, p. 482-83). The novelty of interactive elements within a video news presentation could lead to users developing positive attitudes without offering substantive value (Hoogeveen, 1997; Street and Manning, 1997).

James Coyle and Esther Thorson (2001) sought to examine effects of interactivity in web marketing sites with the assumption that more unique web features would increase positive attitudes about websites. Coyle and Thorson experimented by allowing 68 total participants to explore four originally designed websites. They concluded unique web features (like telepresence, a simulated perception of a direct experience) yielded high

levels of interactivity and positive attitudes toward the websites. While my research deals primarily with mobile video news stories, I believe the concepts and definitions within Coyle and Thorson's research are applicable.

One definition of interactivity referenced describes three primary functions including the speed with which one can manipulate content, the range of ways content can be manipulated, and realness of manipulation. (Coyle & Thorson, 67; Steuer, 1992).

Interactivity has also been defined as a system where organizations and individuals can communicate directly with one another regardless of distance or time (Robert Blattberg and John Deighton, 1991). Louisa Ha and Lincoln James (1998) wrote that there were five dimensions of interactivity: playfulness, choice, connectedness, information collected and reciprocal communication.

Considering Ha and James' dimensions of interactivity, it can be argued that heightened areas of interactivity can increase positive attitudes about a website (a conclusion found in Coyle and Thorson's research), but how do those findings translate to mobile devices and the functionality of interactive, touchscreen video news stories? My research questions are as follows:

R1: How does visual design and touchscreen capability enhance the audience fascination with media content and its information value or instrumental uses?

R2: When it comes to mobile consumption of video news, (a) how does interactivity and personalization (i.e. a user's ability to manipulate or

navigate through touchscreen news videos on mobile devices) impact how people interact with news? (b) Do news consumers like having more choices in terms of what part of a story they want to see at any given moment when viewing non-linear video news stories?

## METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, I employed the use of qualitative phenomenological research methodology to examine the usage of interactive video news on mobile devices.

As Clifford Christians and James Carey (1984) put it, “qualitative research is an attempt to offer an alternative to a natural science model of the social sciences, communications in particular” (p. 355). Christians and Carey note this type of research does not shy away from arithmetic, but seeks to juxtapose past events with more contemporary phenomena.

Christians and Carey point out, “New events flow from past events, but even though similar themes emerge, they often acquire new meanings” (p. 368), so qualitative research can look at the new “events” in mobile news delivery through the theme of play theory to see if the translation results in new meanings.

When thinking about mobile news consumption and where and when one might “play,” there are limitations regarding how researchers could observe mobile users. Ideally, a researcher could follow a subject around for hours a day noting how the subject experiences a video news story on their phone or tablet device, but in the interest of time, that option was not feasible.

William Stephenson wrote that playing itself is an encompassing activity that absorbs the player; it is “pretending, stepping outside the world of duty and responsibility” (p. 46). He states that it can be seen as an “interlude in the day” and something that is, on a basic level, fun. Judging by this definition, one of the characteristics of *subjective play* is that it can happen anywhere.

Considering the aforementioned limitation, a phenomenological method of qualitative research yielded the best results while collecting data on the experience of mobile device users when accessing interactive video news stories.

German philosopher Edmund Husserl is credited with starting the phenomenology movement in 1913. Phenomenology is defined as “a philosophical perspective that helps researchers to explore and understand everyday experience without pre-supposing knowledge of those experiences” (Converse, 2012). This qualitative methodology emphasizes rigorous observation of the phenomenon to discover its true essence and come to a new understanding (Flood, 2010).

Phenomenology is most useful when “the task at hand is to understand an experience as it is understood by those who are having it” (Cohen, 2000). That entails “researchers stripping away of preconceptions of a phenomenon to experience its pure essence” (Converse, 2012). To accomplish this, I conducted focus groups to find out how the participants experienced the phenomenon — interactive mobile news videos that allow users to choose their own experience.

Agar and MacDonald (1995) put focus groups “somewhere between a meeting and a conversation” (p. 80). An informal level of discourse allowed participants to speak freely and answer questions directed by me, as I was the moderator.

Instead of interviewing each participant in a closed setting, focus groups facilitated synergy through group interaction and loosely-structured dialogue. Kidd and Parshall (2000) explain why informal discussions found within focus groups are effective:

...Focus group participants relate their experiences and reactions among presumed peers with whom they likely share some common frame of reference. Focus group members comment on each other's point of view, often challenging each other's motives or actions in a pointed fashion. (p. 294)

Focus groups are valued more than individual interviews because the interaction between participants offers useful information on the level of consensus and diversity.

The amount of participants in a focus group and the number of focus groups vary depending on research topics and objectives, but four to six groups seem to be the most commonly cited numbers between researchers. Four to six groups are suggested to keep research results from becoming "saturated," which occurs when very little new information emerges and responses from participants can be easily predicted (Zeller, 1993).

The number of participants within a group is usually determined by manageability. Smaller groups make it easier for moderators to conduct or facilitate the kind of active discussions that yield high involvement (Morgan, 1992). Morgan strays away from giving an exact number of participants, but does mention focus groups of four to eight participants being optimal. He does caution though the ideas produced by participants don't necessarily increase with participation; a group of four can be just as effective as a group of eight.

I conducted six focus groups — three groups of six, two groups of five and one group of seven. Beyond 36 participants, I felt I would reach the point of saturation Zeller

mentions. All focus groups were administered a standard set of questions (p. 87) but were also subject to follow-up questions dependent on responses from participants.

Converse goes on to say that “the goal of phenomenology is not to create results that can be generalized, but to understand the meaning of an experience of a phenomenon” and “writing a record of the interpretation of data” is a strong suit when aiming to do just that (p. 32). She posits that while writing thick descriptions and interpreting what takes place, identifying themes or patterns is key. I performed this task by re-listening to the audio tapes of the focus groups and re-interpreting data collected from the subjects.

To help me answer my research questions, I recruited undergraduates at the University of Missouri-Columbia. College students are a key demographic when studying new media audiences. In Howard Vogl’s (2010) research on future high value media audiences, he says “people with above average education levels are heavier consumers of news media than the general population” (p. 3). Vogl mentions that in most cases, “those with above average education have more discretionary income than the population at large.”

Vogl’s statements on what he considers to be high-valued media audiences are congruent with a 2008 Pew Research Center study that found “highly educated and high-income workers are far more likely than those with less education and lower incomes to say that it is important for their job to keep up with the news,” (p. 63). The study also found that “44% of college graduates say they get news online every day, compared with just 11% of those with a high school education or less,” (p. 4). Since there is little research on college graduates and news consumption via mobile devices, i.e. smartphones

or tablets, I moved on the assumption that the aforementioned statistics also reflect the percentage of college graduates that use mobile devices to obtain news compared with those with a high school education or less.

I shall also mention this project took place on a college campus. Research supports the value of college students in a project regarding news consumption, but students were also an abundant and convenient resource at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

I reached out to current students at the University of Missouri-Columbia through a professor at the Missouri School of Journalism and included broad details of the study so not to deter anyone while also piquing the interest of participants. The professor offered students extra credit to participate in the research project.

This study employed the use of NYOA, putting users in control of their news consumption experience. Ironically enough, choices must be made for the participants before the actual focus group study.

The NYOA app was only created in the past few months; thus, there are a limited number of stories available. NYOA has mainly been used to delve deeper into complex or exceptionally broad political topics, including the Vice Presidential debate between Vice President Joe Biden and former Republican Rep. Paul Ryan, Congressional firsts with the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, and, our very first video, a breakdown of former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney's secret fundraising comments.

Because our first NYOA video was a test-run, the Newsy staff decided not to include it in the NYOA app. I scripted and designed an additional political story for

NYOA titled to give participants a larger variety of stories to play with during the study. All three are political stories, but differ in content and design.

The study was conducted in a testing room located on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus, with Apple iPad tablets for each participant to use. Participant groups contained no less than five and no more than seven participants. Converse relates her thoughts on group sizes, saying “although the sample size of the phenomenological research may be small and the results not generalizable, this experiential way of coming to know and understand phenomena and the experience of these phenomena” (p. 32) can help to understand what news consumers want out of their new media technology.

Each video programmed into the NYOA app is approximately 11 minutes in length. Participants could’ve taken nearly 33 minutes to view all three stories. The first portion of the study was 40 minutes in length to give participants ample time to play with the devices. After that, I gathered the participants and interviewed them collectively in focus group settings. The questions were open-ended to allow participants to respond freely on their subjective experiences with the aforementioned media technology. The questions are as follows, but were not limited to:

- Do you use mobile apps to read/watch the news?
- Does the news outlet make a difference?
- How do you perceive mobile video news?
- How does visual design and touchscreen capability affect the content?

Describe your experience using the mobile news application.

- How did you perceive the options offered for viewing non-linear video news stories? How many options are too many? Do too many choices affect willingness to explore non-linear video news stories?
- Does cost play a role in mobile news app usage?
- After using this application, would you continue using it for news consumption?

The responses were documented by a Marantz audio recorder and handwritten notes then analyzed for recurring themes or patterns within the subjective experiences of the phenomena.

## RESULTS

The overall objective of my study was to explore a new direction for video news on mobile platforms. I sought to understand how people interact with news consumed on mobile devices with an emphasis on touchscreen surfaces and self-directed news content.

I wanted to find out how a user's ability to manipulate and navigate through video news content impacted the experience. I believe you will find as you read my conclusions that I have successfully achieved my goals.

As I mentioned earlier in my research report, it would've been ideal to follow a subject around for hours a day noting how the subject experienced NYOA on the iPad. In the interest of time and organized structure, that option was not feasible.

Participants were given headphones to subjectively experience NYOA. In retrospect, I realize the headphones placed participants in a bubble possibly making them less-likely to share or interact with others during the first portion of the focus groups. Still, I do not feel the closed-off experience of NYOA was a detriment to my research or a hindrance to my findings.

I observed most participants sitting quietly while playing with NYOA. The only times participants removed their headphones and emerged from their personal bubbles were to ask me questions about a function of the app or raise an issue. I recall participants asking how to get back to the main selection screen or noting that the app crashed. The first 40 minutes of each focus group session wasn't recorded, mainly because there was no discourse.

Also previously mentioned in my research report, all participants were engaging and contributed greatly to each discussion with the exception of one focus group. That

group finished in less time than other focus groups and contributed fewer points to the discussion for any number of reasons; they might've been bored, preoccupied with thoughts of other assignments or maybe even just less outspoken than other participants. At any rate, none of those assumptions were brought up in their discussion and their contributions were generally no different than the contributions of previous groups.

The raw data from participant responses can be found in Appendix E.

### **News Consumption**

*Where do you consume the news? What is it you like best about those sources? How big a role does cost play in news consumption?*

The majority of participants in each focus group mentioned frequenting the websites and smartphone/tablet apps of news outlets as their primary sources of information. Those outlets included (but were not limited to) CNN, The Chicago Tribune, The New York Times, Yahoo! and ESPN, though very few get the majority of their news from TV and even fewer mentioned newspaper or radio. The appointment viewing schedule of TV news was not a preferred medium, but it was supplementary to news they could get on their own terms. "Control" was a word used over and over to describe the relationship between consumer and news outlet; according to one participant, "with TV, you're forced to watch whatever they want to show you."

Getting to preferred news sources on different devices yielded similar responses throughout focus groups. I found the majority of participants use Twitter on their phones and computers and the Twitter app Tweetdeck exclusively on their computers to consume accounts of a day's events. Twitter was regarded as a "fast" and "convenient" way to get

news from trusted sources. Some said attractive or enticing headlines led them to delve deeper into a story by clicking links on tweets posted to their timelines.

Those with smartphones and tablets said news outlet apps were much easier to navigate and personalize than websites. One participant didn't open the app unless an interesting notification was sent about a particular story: "...like, CNN. I feel like I get stuff from them all the time, but I might not be interested in everything." By altering the settings within the apps, participants can receive push notifications of specific news topics directly to their home screen. Breaking and updated news stories were preferred with app usage and notifications.

Participants said cost played a large role in whether or not they would use an app; if it's not free, they probably won't use it. One participant summed up the overwhelming consensus on this question, saying, "you can *always* get it somewhere else for free."

One or two participants from each focus group said they would pay for what they called "high-quality" content, which included feature or long-form news and sports stories. One participant gave justification for and against paying for certain content:

The Chicago Tribune is \$13 for every four weeks and for me, I'm on a pretty strict budget. I can't do that. ESPN is \$2 a month to get their insider stuff, so, of course I'm going to do that because you get a lot more content that I think is high-quality. I'm willing to pay for quality if it's in reasonable economic range.

***What did you like about the app? What did you dislike about the app?***

Participants used words like “interactive,” “innovative,” “complex,” and “confusing” to describe NYOA (Figure 6). They liked the way political topics in the NYOA videos were chunked down into smaller portions. One participant said, “It just gets to the meat of the issue.”

The ability to navigate their own way through a news topic seemed to be a similar refrain heard within all of the focus groups, with one participant saying, “I felt more engaged because I was making a decision.”

Many of them were familiar with Newsy’s main video products that use multi-source news analysis to give a range of perspectives on a news topic. They felt NYOA had some of the same qualities



**Figure 6: News Your Own Adventure title screen**

but in a more interactive format. Participants described NYOA as a “one-stop-shop” for in-depth information on complex political issues.

There were also a plethora of negative critiques about the app, most of which came from technical glitches. Editing issues, non-working tabs or buttons and unclear navigation directions were the most prominent problems.

In terms of editing, participants noticed the presenter’s words were cut off when

moving from one video feature to another. For instance, participants would press a tab to view more information on a topic, and the on-camera presenter’s introductory sentence would be incomplete as if the first or second word in the sentence was missing.

Participants were frustrated with malfunctioning tabs that did not redirect them to a portion of a video when pressed. One participant observed clicking either the “47%” or the “Religion” options (Figure 7) would direct users to a screen other than where they wanted to go. Another mentioned a similar issue in “Meet the Firsts of the 113<sup>th</sup>



Figure 7: Menu Screen for “Vice Presidential Debate Recap”

Congress”: “I was trying to hit one [option], but after I watched one segment of it, it kicked me back to the beginning.”

Judging by their comments, the success of a self-directed video news product would hinge upon a number of factors including

the ability of a news outlet to identify technical problems before publishing a story.

There was a consensus among participants in all six focus groups that pause, fast forward, rewind, and skip features would enhance the viewing experience. Admittedly, there was no way for anyone to stop or replay the videos without restarting the video from the very beginning. Participants would've liked to see a YouTube-like progress bar at the bottom of each video within an NYOA story.

***How did the presentation play a part in understanding the subject matter?***

The visual displays and graphics were a plus for participants. Most of them liked the look of the tabs and the animation (ex: highlighted states for options in “Meet the Firsts of the 113th Congress” (Figure 8) or video box options in “Vice President



**Figure 8: Menu Screen for "Meet The Firsts..."**

Debate Recap” (Figure 7)). Although participants said the format and layout of NYOA was visually appealing, the inability to go back and review information without starting from the beginning was an outstanding problem in terms of getting the information they wanted when they wanted it.

Opinions varied on the actual presenters themselves. Some felt the presenter was on screen too long during some of the videos. One participant said, “Sometimes I lost

interest in them... I would've liked to see a VO (voiceover) mixed in at some parts.”

Other participants agreed they would've liked to see more graphics or visual elements instead of the actual presenters.

***What were your thoughts on the amount of options displayed?***

The amount of initial onscreen options ranged from four (“Vice President Debate Recap” and “News Your Own State of the Union”) to nine (“Meet the Firsts of the 113th Congress”). Participants enjoyed the number of displayed options for the stories, but agreed more or fewer options would not dissuade them from exploring NYOA stories.

Nearly all participants said they liked having options to delve deeper into a story. Each NYOA feature displayed more options after tapping one of the initial tabs. In “News Your Own State of the Union,” participants could tap one of four topics President Obama covered in his annual address. After being directed to a part of Obama’s speech, users had the immediate option of viewing responses from either Republican Senator Marco Rubio or Republican Senator Rand Paul (who represented the Tea Party in his address).

Participants said they enjoyed the options that led to more options, which allowed for self-discovery of the topics.

***What types of stories would you like to discover using this app?***

The majority of participants agreed more dense topics would be best for NYOA. They would like to see complex and complicated topics, namely politics, broken down into a more easily digestible format like the stories within NYOA.

More broadly, any story with a conflict or long-term consequences would be a draw to the app. Investigative stories, in-depth sports features, and trending news were brought up in discussion.

Participants felt breaking news and daily stories wouldn't work for the app because of how it is constructed. Participants said they would rather get a quick view of breaking news and daily stories on news outlet websites or Twitter.

### ***Side Notes and Suggestions***

During the six focus group sessions exploring the NYOA app, participants outlined a laundry list of things they would like to see, most of which centered around more control and personalization of the news experience.

Only three political news stories were programmed into NYOA. If more stories were available, participants would've liked to see them categorized by topic. Story tags and a search bar were also mentioned so that users would be able to find stories based on keywords.

What participants liked about the news sources they frequented is their ability to personalize their experience with those sources. Twitter users can follow news outlets they trust and can categorize them to fit specific purposes. Likewise, people with smartphones and tablets can alter settings within mobile apps to receive specific notifications. That kind of personalization was something the majority of participants would've liked to see with NYOA. Beyond that, I feel personalization is something participants like in most of their preferred methods of news consumption.

Overall, nearly all participants agreed they would like the ability to have even more control over their news consumption experience.

## CONCLUSION

This was the first time anyone outside of the Newsy staff got a chance to actually use the app, with the exception of a handful of representatives from tech companies. I knew the first few minutes in discussing the app would yield first reactions, and then more expanded feedback on the product. While everyone wanted to know when it was coming out and when they'd have a chance to download it, but I feel that NYOA and similar news apps would benefit from changes I'll outline here.

My findings show that personalized settings are preferred when it comes to news consumption. Control was a word mentioned over and over again to describe the relationship between consumer and news outlet. People wanted to have the ability to manipulate the product even more than NYOA provided.

The most prominent issue was the absence of stop, skip, pause, and rewind options, something akin to a scrubber on a YouTube video. Regardless of where participants said they get video news content, the ability to control the progress of the video is always present. At times, participants wanted to skip intros and sections of the three NYOA stories to get to the next video.

How participants responded to options available within NYOA videos was an essential part of my research. My findings show that the nine initial options in "Meet the Firsts..." and the four initial options in "Vice Presidential Debate Recap" were neither too many nor too few. Depending on the type of story, participants would like to see even more options.

Two examples: If the same design from "Meet the Firsts..." was used for a nationwide look at gun legislation, I don't believe users would be averse to 50 options,

one for each state. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a story with less depth could begin with two initial options and allow users to explore from there.

Despite Newsy's attempt to place the user in full control, one participant outlined a problem in the content presented: "For the State of the Union, it picked things for us to choose from, but I think you need to be careful when you're telling people what to listen to or what to think..."

I've heard that all news is subjective because at some point, someone has to make a decision as to what sort of content will be presented to news consumers. However, I think it's important to consider what options news producers are placing in NYOA features to keep users from feeling short-changed by their experience.

Participants definitely wanted a full gamut of stories. I explained that NYOA is essentially in its Beta stage and very few stories have been plugged into the app. Part of my research was to observe how they responded to the product as it is, but participants agreed that utilizing the black space on the side when first opening the app would enhance the user experience. They suggested the empty space be used for categories and adding a search bar somewhere in the layout. I imagine if NYOA had 100 videos, categories and a search bar would help users find the video topics that most interested them.

It would behoove news outlets to provide user accounts for notifications and key words to bring up stories pertaining to those topics. Those notifications could be pushed to the home screen of whatever device they're using to immediately grab their attention when a new video is posted.

To expound on that idea, I feel that a network allowing users to manipulate the settings and categories would be a useful way to incorporate many of the things participants suggested.

Another suggestion was a bookmarking feature. I use The Atlantic's app for iPhone and there is a folder where users can place stories if they want to read them later. Participants felt that a bookmarking feature would allow them to do the same thing — select videos they couldn't get to in a single sitting and watch them when time permits. Participants said more interesting headlines would draw them into stories. Those that used Twitter and Tweetdeck said engaging headlines and teases would move them to click on links to certain stories.

I would liken NYOA to a TV newsmagazine or an alternative weekly newspaper in terms of content: those two forms of storytelling don't relate breaking news but allow for news consumers to experience more in-depth or feature pieces. Overall, those are the stories that have the most value in terms of what NYOA has to offer.

My findings are specific to the future success of NYOA, but as I mentioned earlier, I believe the results can be generalized to better enhance news apps for mobile devices.

## LIMITATIONS

The sample size of my research project was satisfying; I was able to gather 35 student participants, which was just shy of my goal. But 35 participants isn't a very large sample size. I feel more participants would've surpassed the point of saturation, though it's very hard to argue that more participants would've also yielded even more opinions on NYOA and what works best in digital news content delivery.

There were very few male participants in my research — nine of 35 — mainly because I was recruiting strictly from one class within the journalism school. The female students greatly outnumber the male students in the class. So much so, that if I were to get every male student in the class to participate, I believe the female students would've still outnumbered the males. A larger diversity of opinions would've greatly benefitted my research, and I feel more male participants would've helped me accomplish that.

In terms of the product, NYOA has a total of five videos. The three politics videos in the small inventory were downloaded to the iPads used for the focus groups. I chose the three politics videos for the sake of homogeneity, but also because I didn't have much else to present to the focus groups. Although the politics videos were designed with different formats in terms of options and content, I feel three videos with different topics would've given participants a better look at what NYOA has to offer and what sort of videos work best.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Very little research exists on self-directed video news content. Collecting information for my literature review was a daunting task because there is no precedent for this kind of research endeavor. However, I feel my project is the very tip of the iceberg for studies on control and personalization with a product like NYOA or others like it. Here I'll outline a few suggestions for further research.

Firstly, my research project was qualitative in design, and a good first look at getting peoples reactions to NYOA. But, looking ahead, I think this particular sub-field of journalism research would benefit from some sort of experiment that uses a system of measurement to gauge data and extract empirical results. It would be interesting to see whether or not the control and sense of play will encourage people to spend more time with a story than they would with a traditional video. Other studies could compare information retention rates between self-directed videos and more traditional linear storytelling and multi-media. Additional questions might include, does this technology help in understanding complex subjects? Does it help in digesting news events?

Another research undertaking could examine how the interactivity directly relates to attitudes toward the site as opposed to sites of moderate or low interactivity.

I think NYOA is a piece of technology ripe for experimentation and research. It is a news product that could greatly benefit from some form of quantitative research to help supplement my findings, or even move in a different direction from the one I have laid out.

## APPENDIX A — GRADUATE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

### “Playing” With Your News: A Qualitative Study on Interactivity and Mobile Video Storytelling

A Project Proposal

**BY CHRISTIAN BRYANT**

Prof. George Kennedy  
Journalism 8098: Project Seminar  
Submitted: December 2012

### INTRODUCTION

I graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in the Spring of 2010 with a bachelor’s degree in English. Morehouse is a prestigious historically black college, or HBCU, situated as a beacon of academic excellence within Atlanta’s black community. Following in the footsteps of notable alumni — Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., politician Julian Bond and filmmaker Spike Lee, to name a few — I became a man with a social conscience, knowing his obligation to serve my respective communities. What I failed to obtain was formal training in what was to become a passion: journalism. I was an aspirant without the tools to fully succeed in a profession about which I knew very little at the time.

I came to Columbia, Missouri after, what I consider to be, a life-changing experience in my hometown, Greensboro, North Carolina. In the Spring of 2011, a small, alternative weekly newspaper took a chance on me, a college graduate who had rarely flipped through the pages of an Associated Press Stylebook, and gave me an internship as an editorial assistant. Within nine months, I had written countless feature stories on real people in my community; there was the woman who wrote uplifting poems for terminally

ill cancer patients, the unassuming hot dog vendor with a culinary degree and years of history as a curbside counselor to troubled souls, and I would be remiss not to mention the shopkeeper of a Jewish restaurant that also sold cultural artifacts while preparing delectable dishes for his loyal clientele. My reporting put their lives and accomplishments in print for tens of thousands to read.

In that time, I also wrote two cover stories while under the tutelage of master journalists. The most rewarding part of my experience was the fact that my work was read by citizens in the Piedmont Triad, an area within and surrounding Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem. They knew my name without knowing what I looked like, but responded to my work via e-mails, phone calls, and word-of-mouth, letting me know my articles were invaluable pieces to their everyday lives. As a journalism neophyte, I felt like I was making a difference and upholding a tenet of democracy by informing the people around me.

Since beginning my graduate studies as a journalism student, I have reported and anchored local television news at KOMU-TV 8 (NBC affiliate). I have turned complex issues and breaking news into digestible stories within a day's time. I have also spent weeks thoroughly preparing longer-form stories to highlight seldom covered community issues that fall outside of the daily news cycle. My experiences at KOMU-TV 8 have helped me lay a firm foundation for video storytelling, news writing, research, news judgement, objective storytelling and taking the pulse of Mid-Missouri to see what issues matter most to our viewership.

In addition, I've written, anchored and produced video news stories for mobile devices at Newsy.com, a multi-source video news outlet. When a gunman went on a

killing spree at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, I responded in real-time by contributing content as the story developed; I have been a part of presenting new touchscreen, multimedia video news stories to better engage our growing mobile audience; I have worked with Newsy's clients to ensure we deliver a news product unattainable anywhere else in the world; and above all else, I have contributed to the body of online content that is “multisource video news... the only news source that helps users compare news sources from around the world to see how a story unfolds.” My work at Newsy has helped me hone my news writing skills for national and national news and my video editing for mobile platforms.

Holistically, these experiences have afforded me a wealth of knowledge regarding broadcast- style news writing and video storytelling. As we look ahead to the direction of video news on mobile platforms, somewhat of an overarching goal at Newsy, I seek to understand how people interact with the news they consume, particularly, on mobile devices. Little research has been contributed to the whole of journalistic study regarding this topic. It is a goal of mine to highlight the phenomena of mobile video news interaction and move the conversation forward in a way that will inform and enlighten media producers on how this fits within the future of journalism.

My proposed research topic has yet to be examined fully because of the newness of this branch of media technology and will undoubtedly set me apart from other multimedia journalists. The “what’s next?” for video storytelling lies within the hands of mobile device users, literally and figuratively. Upon the completion of this research, I plan to apply for reporting/anchoring jobs at local TV news stations.

As eyes shift from newspapers and television sets to mobile devices, there’s no

doubt that traditional print and broadcast outlets are looking for ways to better reach readers and viewers, respectively. Hopefully, the results of my research and the knowledge gained throughout the process will help expand my brand as a multimedia journalist and aid my future employers in putting video news right where the consumer wants it.

## PROFESSIONAL SKILLS COMPONENT

My journalistic experience only spans the course of two years, but within that time, I have written for an alternatively weekly newspaper, reported and anchored at an NBC-affiliate TV news station and written and produced video at a the multisource video news outlet Newsy.com. My proposed research topic falls directly in line with the work in which I have shown great proficiency at Newsy.

Newsy is unlike any other news service for mobile devices in that the company specializes in highlighting key differences in reporting so news consumers can understand all the angles of a story. This is done by writing broadcast-style script and placing news sources back to back to give consumers a fuller picture of a news story.

I consider this outlet to be on the cutting-edge of “what’s next” for convergence journalism and mobile video storytelling. For this reason, I have chosen to carry-out my graduate project at Newsy while working at least 30 hours a week from January 14 through May 17.

During that time, I will conduct my research while assisting with managing the workflow of students in the Newsy course (Global News Convergence, J4810/J7810). As a part of the course curriculum, I will be responsible for, but not limited to, helping students:

- Understand the elements needed to produce an effective multi-perspective video news report,
- Quickly research, analyze and prepare a multi-perspective report of 1:30-2:30 minutes length,

- Produce well-written scripts in broadcast style that are ready for transcript posting, with proper grammar, punctuation and style, and
- Learn and execute basic production skills, which include using Final Cut Pro X software to produce a final version of the story for air.

My final report will include detailed weekly observations of lessons taught and lessons learned through assisting with the Newsy course and working with developers on new mobile video storytelling technology. Jim Flink, committee member and vice president of news operations at Newsy, will supervise my work to ensure it is satisfactory with the aforementioned goals at the completion of my 14-week responsibility.

At the completion of my professional project, I hope my research can help inform news producers — namely Newsy, then others who are sure to follow. Ideally, the information collection through focus groups and weekly observations will aid news producers in developing multimedia touchscreen interactive news videos applications for mobile devices that will better engage news consumers.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The proliferation of converged news has allowed news consumers to access and explore stories via several forms of media. For starters, Internet access has become increasingly more commonplace to even the most underdeveloped countries (Orchard & Fullwood, 2010); thus, making online journalism a “universal phenomenon.”

Much like how the Internet has changed the news consumption landscape, mobile devices have reshaped and reformed how people experience news stories. For example, Oscar Westlund (2008), journalism professor at the University of Gothenberg, wrote, “the mobile phone is no longer only a telephone; it has become a personal mobile device that both integrates communication and multimedia functionality... The mobile device, as a multimedia tool, has four main characteristics: it is portable, constantly connected, personal and has a small screen” (444).

Observers of the media industry believe converged journalism has a significant impact on how news is consumed (American Press Institute, 2006; Nguyen, 2003, 2008). To be a part of the informed electorate — a tenet of journalism is, after all, to inform respective communities — citizens no longer need to subscribe to daily publications or sit and wait for evening newscasts. Mobile news puts the consumer in control by giving them the news they want when they want it, a la carte restaurant-style.

For reference, the practice of convergence journalism involves telling stories by combining the use text, audio and video in “progressively interactive ways” (Wise et al., 2009). Some researchers argue that the Internet is a highly interactive medium ripe for progressive interactivity and personalization (Chang-Hoan Cho, 1999). For that reason, and countless others, researchers and scholars believe international news organizations

have joined in the practice of producing convergence journalism to better engage viewers. The Internet serves as the stage for that interactivity and personalization, unlike print or traditional broadcast, which is often one-sided.

Several communications researchers and journalists remarked on how the development of online news resembles the development and onset of online communication in general, which falls in line with mobile news delivery:

This growth in the nature of online journalism mirrors the short history of the development of Web technology, whose chronology is punctuated by dramatic introductions of new modalities into online communication.

While initially the web was text only, it has rapidly advanced to incorporate other modalities such as audio and visuals. (p. 480; Allbritton, 1999; Heller, 1998; Kurtz, 1999)

Part of why we consume news is what William Stephenson described as the subjective play (1967). In his seminal work produced more than 40 years ago, Stephenson described what he considered a motivating factor for news consumption:

...At its best, mass communication allows people to become absorbed in subjective play. People read newspapers, magazines, and paperbacks in vast numbers, and there are ever increasing audiences for movies, radio, records, and television. All of this, it seems obvious, is enjoyable. (1)

Although definitions of “play” vary and, for the sake of this research, spans more than 100 years, Herbert Spencer wrote people participate in play activities “partly for the accompanying satisfaction of certain egotistic feelings which find for the moment no other sphere” (Spencer, 1898). In other words, we consume the news because we can become immersed in it as a fun activity.

Exploration into how people interact with convergence journalism is nothing new. The uses and gratifications approach used to examine motivations for using traditional media have also been applied to patterns of Internet consumption in the same manner (LaRose, Mastro, Eastin, 2001). That approach has been used to identify an Internet users needs and how specific media is sought out to fulfill those needs.

Researchers have argued that “redundancy” is a measurement by which the effectiveness of converged journalism or multimedia presentations can be gauged (Hsia, 1971). The thinking is that information delivered via multiple modalities has a better chance of getting through to receivers than single modality messages, e.g. video news. Broadcast news research supports the claim that the combination of moving pictures and audio enhance memory for news content (Reese, 1984). In terms of the most effective modality, video — over text, audio, images or any combination of the three — is believed to be relatively easy to etch into one's working memory (Lang, Potter, & Bolls, 1999).

There are, however, some who are unsure of the effectiveness of multimedia presentations of convergence journalism, citing an overload of stimuli through the combined modalities of text, audio and visuals. Sundar elaborates on that uncertainty saying, “...It is not clear if multimedia helps or hinders cognitive processing of news and information on websites. Nor is it known if, and to what extent [...] users appreciate the

addition of multimedia functionality” (481). Still, it is the thinking of Wise et al. that help propel the need for study within this area of journalism; research in this field “can advance theory related to information processing of online news content” (Wise et al., 2009).

I seek to better understand how people interact with and consume video news from mobile devices. In order to fully address this, I drafted a research proposal to investigate the effects of multimedia on the processing of mobile video news delivery.

This research will review the available literature pertaining to the topic of mobile video news consumption and interactivity and help answer an essential question: Do mobile device users want more control over their news? I will explore the application of the play theory (which describes the desire to consume news for entertainment as well as information) and propose a set of research questions. I will then describe the methods and results of a research study conducted using willing participants who will interact a mobile news application before responding to questions about their experience in a focus group setting. Finally, I will report my findings and point out their implications for theory as well as practice.

### **On Stephenson’s Play Theory and applications for news consumers:**

When William Stephenson published *The Play Theory of Mass Communication* 40 years ago, research in mass communication was scant because it was a relatively new field of study — Stephenson says that mass communication theory did not begin until “1924 or so” (1) — and it failed to dig deeper into how mass media affected beliefs of consumers. Citing behavioral scientists and mass communication researcher Bernard

Berelson in his introduction, Stephenson wrote: “For a time it seemed that research in mass communication would 'wither away,' to quote one of its earliest advocates.”

In describing subjective play, a term Stephenson coined to explain a reason for media consumption, he wrote that playing itself is an encompassing activity that absorbs the player; it is “pretending, stepping outside the world of duty and responsibility” (Stephenson, 46). He said it can be seen as an “interlude in the day” and something that is, on a basic level, fun.

Stephenson’s play theory derived from work done by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga. Before Huizinga, scholars saw no value in play itself. Huizinga, however, linked play with cultural identity in that “it teaches loyalty, competitiveness, and patience (the Chinese wan)”: “To the degree that he is influenced by play, man can check the monotony, determinism, and brutality of nature. He learns to construct order, conceive economy, and establish equity” (Caillois, 1961).

French sociologist Roger Caillois distinguished between four classes of play: anon (play involving two opposing sides), alea (games of chance), mimicry (acting or pretending), and ilinx (a form of dizzying play that one might liken to swinging on a swing or going on a merry-go-round). From there, Caillois expressed that play usually consists of a combination of the aforementioned categories (Stephenson, 1967).

Caillois went even further to describe ways of playing: Paideia (primitive, uncontrolled play), ludus (a more formal style of playing with set rules that require much more discipline) and a reinterpreted definition of wan (a “sensual Chinese way of playing”) that differs from Huizinga’s (47).

According to David Myers, author of *An Argument for the Study of Play* (1988), Stephenson's book received mixed reviews. Myers inserts a criticism from Melvin DeFleur's *A Review of The Play Theory of Mass Communication* (1968) in which DeFleur says: "In short, play theory, taking a purely subjective and individualistic approach to the study of media, would ignore... socially significant issues and concentrate on what is essentially a trivial matter, the 'self-enhancement' of the communication receiver" (483).

DeFleur goes on to say that Stephenson's book was "irritable, ...pompous, ...irresponsible, ...poorly organized, ...and superficial" (482).

But an argument can be made now, just as it was in 1967, about the revival of interest in the play theory; then, Stephenson wrote this was partly "because of the urgent communication problems facing the newly developing nations of the world" (Stephenson, 1). In overlaying Stephenson's statement onto the current status of mass communication, I interpret this to mean that the play theory can be used to explain new media technology and news consumption phenomena. After all, Stephenson believed people consume various forms of media because it is fun to do so.

The satisfaction of consuming the day's news has been likened to playing games as researchers have expounded on the play theory. Marshall McLuhan, a philosopher of communication theory wrote in his book *Understanding the Media: The Extensions of Man* (1967), "Games, like institutions, are extensions of social man and of the body politic, as technologies are the extensions of the animal organism [...] As extensions of the popular response to the workday stress, games become faithful models of our culture. They incorporate both the action and the reaction of whole populations in a single dynamic image" (235).

In a sense, the constant consumption of news is an ongoing game which citizens play daily, not only for necessity, but for enjoyment. Theodore Glasser (2000) wrote that "Stephenson attempted to explain news consumption habits in terms of a combination of usefulness and pleasurable." Just as Stephenson believed, Glasser wrote that play described the ability for individuals to engage a very public world in a very private and personally satisfying way (24).

As media technology develops, the reasons for news consumption have relatively gone unchanged, with exception to the fact that people have new and interactive ways to "play" with their news.

### **Mobile devices and interactive news opportunities:**

The onset of Internet technology boldly changed the landscape of news consumption. In a 2010 article, CNET News writer Dong Ngo stated, "If you are like the overwhelming majority of Americans, you are likely to read or hear about this story again on TV, the radio, newspapers, and other Internet sites." The form of news now is

something that William Stephenson and other ambassadors of mass communication could not have foreseen; however, the research and theoretical positions taken by scholars of yesteryear are as applicable as ever when pondering the various “why’s?” of continual news consumption.

On journalism and new media technology, Theodore Glasser writes:

What is paramount for purposes of play is not, therefore, the content of news but its form — and the fact that it appears in that form, again and again, each and every day... And one of the most dramatic and usually celebrated changes in news and its form, particularly but probably not entirely an artifact of mainstream American journalism, bears directly on the aesthetics of news and thus the prosperity of news for play and pleasure. (27)

New forms of storytelling have entered consumers and producers into a digital realm. Now, news organizations worldwide practice what has been deemed convergence journalism in an effort to engage potential audience members. Convergence does not supplant traditional forms of delivering news, but complements it by “combining text, audio, and video in progressively interactive ways to tell stories” (Wise et al., 2009).

The combination of modalities that constitutes convergence journalism also takes the name multimedia, which Hans Marmolin (1991) describes as “the use of multiple senses in processing stimuli or multiple modalities used in sending a message.”

Similar to Marmolin's thoughts, Martijn Hoogeveen (1997) describes multimedia as a part of a larger system or object where "multiple perpetual perceptual representation media, such as speech, music, text, graphic, still, animation and video, are used in an integrated manner."

The Internet makes converged media possible as a platform ripe for interactivity and personalization, unlike traditional broadcast media. Chang-Hoan Cho (1999) argues that the Internet is a highly interactive medium, which brings into focus a new way to "play" with news consumption.

Much like how the Internet changed news consumption landscape, mobile devices have further transformed how people explore news stories. Mobile phones and tablets allow us to search the web and experience news in the same manner one would with a desktop or laptop computer — only now, news consumption can happen anywhere.

From a statistical standpoint, a Mobiles Republic survey found that 42 percent of Americans now use the Internet to find national and international news. Another survey of more than 3,000 U.S. adults by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism found that more than three-quarters of U.S. adults now own laptop or desktop computers, a number that has been stable for some years. Internet access seemingly opened the metaphorical floodgates for device capability. Forty-four percent of adults own a smartphone, and a little less than half of that number own tablet computers (18%). That tablet ownership grew 50% from the summer of 2011 when it was at 11% to January of 2012 when this survey was taken.

The evidence also increasingly hints that the level of news consumption on mobile devices is especially heavy. For instance, the 56% of tablet owners who say they

get news on those devices is on par with the percentage who in Pew's 2011 survey said they get news on their tablet every day (53%).

Inger Lindstedt et al. (2009) puts it succinctly but poses a very pertinent question: "Through interactivity, people should be able to use available material in more meaningful ways, question top- down models of news production and take part in the news production process on a more equal basis... But does it work?"

The question posed by Lindstedt et al. is basic but helps form the basis of my research questions in asking whether or not new media technology is effective in communicating messages.

James Coyle and Esther Thorson (2001) sought to examine effects of interactivity in web marketing sites with the assumption that more of the two aforementioned features would increase positive attitudes about websites. Coyle and Thorson note that an understanding of unique web features that incorporate a higher level of interactivity will better engage consumers and communicate more information. While my research deals primarily with mobile video news stories, I believe the concepts and definitions within Coyle and Thorson's research are applicable.

One definition of interactivity referenced describes three primary functions including the speed with which one can manipulate content, the range of ways content can be manipulated, and realness of manipulation.(Coyle & Thorson, 67; Steuer, 1992).

Interactivity has also been defined as a system where organizations and individuals can communicate directly with one another regardless of distance or time (Robert Blattberg and John Deighton, 1991). Louisa Ha and Lincoln James (1998) wrote that there were five dimensions of interactivity: playfulness, choice, connectedness,

information collected and reciprocal communication.

Considering Ha and James' dimensions of interactivity, it can be argued that heightened areas of interactivity can increase positive attitudes of a website (a conclusion found in Coyle and Thorson's research), but how do those finding translate to mobile devices and the functionality of interactive, touchscreen video news stories? My research questions are as follows:

R1: How does visuality and touchscreen capability enhance the audience fascination with media content and its information value or instrumental uses?

R2: When it comes interactivity and personalization of news consumption (ex: a user's option to manipulate or navigate through touchscreen news videos on mobile devices), how do people want to control their news? Do news consumers like having more choices in terms of what part of a story they want to see at any given moment when viewing non-linear video news stories

## METHODS AND TOPIC LITERATURE REVIEW

The changing news landscape is one that can be marked by the use of buzzwords like “convergence” and “new media technology.” Newsrooms now use multiple platforms to reach their audiences as the emergence of new technology allows news consumers to take their information “to- go” instead of looking for the nearest newspaper stand or parking in front of a television.

Research from various sources report online and digital news consumption continues to increase as the venerable contractors of “brick-and-mortar” traditional print and TV news scramble to make sense of the changes so to — as Wayne Gretzky famously said and Steve Jobs famously repurposed — “skate to where the puck is going, not where it's been.” With more information showing a shift in news consumption to online and digital platforms, where is the metaphorical puck going?

Mobile video storytelling has emerged as one of the newest forms of media technology and more news outlets have taken to mobile devices so consumers can read or watch the news wherever is most convenient. The impetus for such technology could arguably be the thought of giving mobile device users more control over their news consumption, but little research has been conducted to examine how people interact with mobile news applications that have interactive capabilities.

To conduct this study, I will employ the use of qualitative phenomenological research methodology to examine the usage of interactive video news on mobile devices.

As Clifford Christians and James Carey (1984) put it, “qualitative research is an attempt to offer an alternative to a natural science model of the social sciences, communications in particular” (355).

Christians and Carey note that it is not a type of research that shy away from arithmetic, but seeks to juxtapose past events with more contemporary phenomena.

As a nod to William Stephenson and his research on the play theory of mass communication, I look to Christians and Carey who also stated: “New events flow from past events, but even though similar themes emerge, they often acquire new meanings” (368).

In explaining what qualitative research is, and how it differs from quantitative research, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2003) define it as such:

The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meaning that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the research and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. (13)

In the same way an eyewitness testimony in a criminal case can be seen as only acceptable at “face value,” per se, the way we experience phenomena is purely subjective and should be examined closely.

Denzin and Lincoln wrote, “Subjects, or individuals, are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why” (31). With that in mind, I go into this research knowing that “there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of — and between — the observer and the observed.”

Qualitative research can take several different forms to maximize the efficiency of observation. When thinking about mobile news consumption and where and when one might “play,” there are limitations regarding how researchers could observe mobile users. Ideally, a researcher could follow a subject around for hours a day noting how they experience a video news story on their phone or tablet device, but in the interest of time, that option is not feasible.

William Stephenson wrote that playing itself is an encompassing activity that absorbs the player; it is “pretending, stepping outside the world of duty and responsibility” (46). He states that it can be seen as an “interlude in the day” and something that is, on a basic level, fun. Judging by this definition, one of the characteristics of subjective play is that it can happen anywhere.

Considering the aforementioned limitation, a phenomenological method to qualitative research would yield the best results while collecting data on the experience of mobile device users when accessing interactive video news stories.

German philosopher Edmund Husserl is credited with starting the phenomenology movement in 1913. Phenomenology is defined as “a philosophical perspective that helps researchers to explore and understand everyday experience without pre-supposing knowledge of those experiences” (Converse, 2012). This qualitative methodology

emphasizes rigorous observation of the phenomenon to discover its true the essence and come to a new understanding (Flood 2010).

Phenomenology is most useful when “the task at hand is to understand an experience as it is understood by those who are having it” (Cohen, 2000). That entails “researchers stripping away of preconceptions of a phenomenon to experience its pure essence” (Converse 2012). To accomplish this I plan to conduct in-depth interviews to focus on how the participant experienced the phenomenon — interactive mobile news videos that allow users to choose their own experience.

Converse goes on to say that “the goal of phenomenology is not to create results that can be generalized, but to understand the meaning of an experience of a phenomenon” and “writing a record of the interpretation of data” is a strong suit when aiming to do just that (32). She posits that while writing thick descriptions and interpreting what takes place, identifying themes or patterns is key. I will perform this task by re-reading and re-interpreting data collected from the subjects.

To help me answer my research questions, I will recruit undergraduates at the University of Missouri-Columbia. College students are a key demographic when studying new media audiences. In Howard Vogl’s (2010) research on future high value media audiences, he says that “people with above average education levels are heavier consumers of news media than the general population” (3). Vogl mentions that in most cases, “those with above average education have more discretionary income than the population at large.”

Vogl’s statements on what he considers to be high-valued media audiences are congruent with a 2008 Pew Research Center study that found “highly educated and high-

income workers are far more likely than those with less education and lower incomes to say that it is important for their job to keep up with the news,” (63). The study also found that “44% of college graduates say they get news online every day, compared with just 11% of those with a high school education or less,” (4). Since there is little research on college graduates and news consumption via mobile devices, i.e. smartphones or tablets, I will move on the assumption that the aforementioned statistics also reflect the percentage of college graduates that use mobile devices to obtain news compared with those with a high school education or less.

I plan to reach out to current students at the University of Missouri-Columbia via the school’s listserv. In the mass correspondence, I will include broad details of the study so not to deter anyone while also piquing the interest of participants. Participants between the ages of 18-24 who own either a smartphone or tablet device and use that device to obtain the day’s news are ideal.

Inquiries on the questionnaire might include, but are not limited to:

- Do you own a smartphone or tablet?
- Do you use that smartphone or tablet to find news?
- How often do you use that smartphone or tablet to find news?
- Where are you most likely to use mobile applications to obtain news?

This study will employ the use of mobile video technology that puts users in control of their news consumption experience. I will use a mobile news application that allows participants to choose which part of a non-linear news video they want to watch at their

discretion. The design will feature a news presenter, or anchor, who will introduce the content of a news video.

Following the introduction, multiple options will be displayed on screen to help navigate the user through different portions of the video. The user will have the option of selecting which parts of the story they want to watch by tapping a designated area on the screen of the mobile device.

The study will be conducted in a multimedia training facility, with mobile devices (either smartphone or tablets) for each participant to use. Participant groups will contain no less than four and no more than six participants. Converse relates her thoughts on group sizes, saying “although the sample size of the phenomenological research may be small and the results not generalizable, this experiential way of coming to know and understand phenomena and the experience of these phenomena” (32) can help to understand what news consumers want out of their new media technology.

After an allotted period of time, I will gather the participants and interview them collectively in a focus group setting. The questions will be open-ended to allow the participants to respond freely on their experiences interacting with the aforementioned media technology:

- Do you use mobile apps to read/watch the news?
- Does the news outlet make a difference?
- How do you perceive mobile video news?
- How does visual design and touchscreen capability affect the content?

Describe your experience using the mobile news application.

- How did you perceive the options viewing non-linear video news stories?  
How many options are too many? Do too many choices affect willingness to explore non-linear video news stories?
- Does cost play a role in mobile news app usage?
- After using this application, would you continue using it for news consumption?

The responses will be documented by video and/or handwritten notes and then analyzed for recurring themes or patterns within the subjective experiences of the phenomena.

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## APPENDIX B – E-MAIL INVITATION

IRB #1206162

### **“Playing” With Your News: A Focus Group Study on “New Your Own Adventure”**

My name is Christian Bryant and I’m looking for participants in a focus study on how college students consume the news. More specifically, I’m looking at how students interact with self-directed news content on touchscreen mobile devices.

For this study, you will have the opportunity to explore a not-yet-released video news app. from Newsy.com. The application builds on Newsy’s style of multi-source video news analysis and places you, the user, in control. Instead of passively watching a linear news video from start to finish, the app. allows users to dictate their video news experience.

The focus group will be recorded for transcription and reference purposes. Your participation should take no longer than 90 minutes. There are no risks associated with this study. There are also no foreseeable benefits to you as the participant in regards to the outcomes of this research.

Students will receive extra credit for participating in this research. To receive that credit, you must provide your PawPrint and professor’s full name.

For the students who choose not to participate in the research project, your professor has offered the opportunity to visit the state legislature with Phill Brooks, associate professor and director of the State Government Reporting Program. Your professor will give an equal amount of extra credit points for touring the state legislature and submitted a one-page paper on your experience.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this research project, please contact Christian Bryant at [cpbvz6@mail.missouri.edu](mailto:cpbvz6@mail.missouri.edu).

Thank you for your participation.

Christian P. Bryant  
Master’s Student  
Missouri School of Journalism

## APPENDIX C – IRB APPROVAL LETTER



**Campus Institutional Review Board**  
University of Missouri-Columbia

485 McReynolds Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211-1150  
PHONE: (573) 882-9585  
FAX: (573) 884-0663

April 12, 2013

Principal Investigator: Bryant, Christian Phillip  
Department: TV Station

Your Application to project entitled "*Playing*" With Your News: A Qualitative Study on Interactivity and Mobile Video Storytelling was reviewed and approved by the MU Campus Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	1206162
Initial Application Approval Date	April 12, 2013
IRB Expiration Date	April 12, 2014
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Regulation	45 CFR 46.101b(2)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated problems, serious adverse events, and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
3. All modifications must be IRB approved by submitting the Exempt Amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk.
4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
5. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date.
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize the IRB stamped document informing subjects of the research and other approved research documents located within the document storage section of eIRB.

If you have any questions, please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585 or [umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu).

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Borduin".

Charles Borduin, PhD  
Campus IRB Chair

## APPENDIX D – COPYRIGHT RELEASE



904 Elm Street, Suite #208  
Columbia, Missouri 65201  
573.442.4557

May 10, 2013

Media Convergence Group, Inc. hereby grants permission to Christian Bryant to use Media Convergence Group, Inc. ( Newsy's) intellectual property materials for academic/research purposes as inclusions for supporting analysis in his thesis/dissertation with the University of Missouri School of Journalism's Master's Program guidelines.

Approved,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. Kim March".

N. Kim March  
VP Finance & Business Operations

**APPENDIX E — RAW DATA FROM PARTICIPANT RESPONSES**

**FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

**News Consumption**

<b><i>Q1. Where do you consume the news?</i></b>	<b>Frequency:</b>
Computer	4
Phone	4
CNN	3
TV news	2
Chicago Tribune	1
ESPN	1
Yahoo!	1
ABC	1
NBC	1
Associated Press	1
iPad apps	1
Twitter	1
One participant felt that using a phone to find news was a bit cumbersome: “I don’t like having to move, to zoom in, zoom out... videos won’t buffer... I just lose patience and [new sources] lose me because I just don’t care anymore.”	1
News apps with notifications	1
YouTube Channels	1
Tweetdeck	1

<b><i>Q2. What is it you like best about those sources?</i></b>	<b>Frequency:</b>
Fast	3
Breaking news and notifications	3
Twitter headlines are quick	2
Control, ability to choose what news to consume	2
Convenience, “We all have our phones on us 24/7. It’s our lifeline. If you need to know something and you need to know about it fast, you can just pull out your phone.”	1
Personalizing what sort of information is received	1
Categories within the app	1
User friendliness/easy to navigate	1

<b><i>Q3. How big a role does cost play in news consumption?</i></b>	<b>Frequency:</b>
“You can always get it somewhere else for free.”	3
Willing to pay for feature or high quality content (MediaStorm, ESPN Insider, NYT)	2
Twitter is free	1
“I’m willing to pay for quality if it’s within a reasonable economic range.” ESPN Insider content...	1

### **News Your Own Adventure**

<b><i>Q4. What did you like about NYOA?</i></b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Chunks the hard news down in small portions	3
Options and options WITHIN options (but not every story needs a million options)	3
Ability to pick and choose what you want	2
One-stop-shop for differing views and opinions; self-contained; “I felt more engaged because I was making a decision”	2
Wrap-up at the end	2
Pulls out important parts of topics	1
Gets to the meat of the issue	1
Graphics	1
Teasing information	1

<b><i>Q5. What did you dislike about NYOA?</i></b>	<b>Frequency</b>
No pause, ff, rewind — makes it difficult to go back and hear something; or if a user is distracted, no way to stop and start	6
Directions within the app weren't always clear (end button)	5
Congress: didn't immediately recognize states, no labels	4
Technical glitches: getting "kicked back" to the beginning, edits were cut close	3
Editing issues	3
SOTU: tabs were distracting (tapping the screen to make them disappear)	3
No full video	2
No way to track progress on what portion of a video has been viewed	2
Only allows for in-depth content; will a story still be "news" once a video is fully published	1
No anchor supers	1
Some points could be more dumbed down	1
Not always visual	1
"There always needs to be a way back to the homepage" — referring to the main selection screen	1

<b><i>Q6. How did the presentation play a part in understanding the subject matter?</i></b>	<b>Frequency:</b>
Graphics were a plus	2
Visual displays were a plus	1
At some points, anchors/presenters were on camera too much	1
Navigation: no way to get back to a previous option	1
Push notifications	1

<b><i>Q7. What were your thoughts on the amount of options displayed?</i></b>	<b>Frequency:</b>
Good amount, but could use more	2
Extra information options	2
Congress: the ability to categorize states in terms of topic; "...I'm controlling this and if I'm that Interested in religion, then that's what I want to see, I can get into it a little easier."	1
Enjoyed learning about new topics; self-discovery	1

<b><i>Q8. What types of stories would you like to discover using this app?</i></b>	<b>Frequency:</b>
Dense, complicated in nature, something where you can break down terms so everyday person can understand complex issues	2
Stories with a conflict	2
Sports: going in-depth with teams and players; highlights; stats	2

Politics	2
Investigative	1
Guns for example: state-by-state information	1
No dailies	1
Trending stories	1
World news	1
Entertainment	1
Stories with long-term consequences/big events	1

<i>Side Notes/Suggestions</i>	<b>Frequency:</b>
Control being a keyword, more control	4
Tags to pick your own stories... on homescreen	2
Utilizing the black space on the homescreen	2
Date/time/battery power left	2
Personal settings (notifications for a new story, especially a new story within a particular)	2
Search bar	2
Can be narrowly tailored/must be careful in telling people what they can see	1
Grouping stories by topics	1
Descriptions of what all is contained within a story; more extensive description of what's inside to grab people	1
Needs killer headlines	1
Marketing the app by saying it's a one-stop-shop for info	1
Skipping through intro	1
"I can do what I want with this issue that's important to me;" a list to set up what kind stories the USER wants to watch	1
Suggestions like on YouTube/related videos	1
Bookmarking	1
Menu	1
Newsy stories within app	1
Infographics	1
Topics/categories	1

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