

REFRESH: EXAMINING THE PRODUCTION OF CELEBRITY NEWS
IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

University of Missouri-Columbia

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

ELIZABETH MEYERS HENDRICKSON

Dr. Stephanie Craft, Dissertation Supervisor

MAY 2008

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

REFRESH: EXAMINING THE PRODUCTION OF CELEBRITY NEWS
IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

presented by Elizabeth Meyers Hendrickson

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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

Dr. Stephanie Craft

Dr. Michael Diamond

Dr. Earnest Perry

Dr. Lee Wilkins

Dr. Margaret Duffy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must first thank the women of Futé for their time and trust. It is not easy to open one's door to a stranger with a notepad, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have had access to this field site. I can only wish them the best with their future health and happiness.

Secondly, I wish to express my gratitude to my chair, Dr. Stephanie Craft, and my outside committee member, Dr. Michael Diamond. Together, they helped steer me toward a logical analysis of this enigmatic organization, which was indeed a puzzle at times. Both Stephanie and Michael met with me countless times during the writing process to ensure that my examination was articulate and sound. Their feedback provided me the confidence to pursue scholarly avenues I might have otherwise shied away from. Their support will be remembered. In addition, my other committee members, Dr. Earnest Perry, Dr. Lee Wilkins and Dr. Margaret Duffy, contributed shrewd and insightful thoughts that have helped me grow as a scholar and researcher.

I would also like to recognize the hard work of the administrative staff of the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Amy Lenk, Ginny Cowell and Martha Pickens never ceased to both give me directions and make me laugh. Similarly, Journalism Library goddess Sue Schuermann helped me uncover scholarly treasures that greatly enriched my research.

Lastly, I need to thank my friends and family for their unwavering support and love. I could always count on my closest academic ally and friend, Carrie Brown, to both vigorously discuss with me my project and talk me out of the tree. I will truly miss our endless hours at the library together. In addition, I am grateful for my brother, Ben Meyers, who proofread my research, chapter by chapter. His brain never ceases to amaze me. Finally, my husband Matt and son Alexander deserve perhaps the greatest recognition, as they are constant reminders that balance in one's life is not only important, but also essential.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
a. Purpose of the study	1
b. Significance of the study	2
c. Organization of the dissertation	4
II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	6
a. Organization theory	6
b. Newsroom sociology and routines	10
III. LITERATURE REVIEW	16
a. New media organizations	16
i. Instant messaging	17
ii. Virtual teams	18
iii. New media interpersonal communication	20
b. Newsroom sociology	22
c. Celebrity media	25
IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES	28
a. Case study	28
b. Research question	30
c. Data sources	32

V. WORKPLACE CULTURE

a. Introduction	36
b. Organizational culture, mission and virtual workplace	42
i. Our mission is true	42
1. Everyday content	43
2. Editors' description of site	52
ii. Working from home is the best way to go	57
1. Work environments	57
2. The editors	61
3. Physical environments	66
4. The work pace	69
5. The happiness factor	72
6. Burnout	74
iii. Instant messaging as effective tool	77
1. Examples of IM-in-Use	78
2. IM explained	91
a. IM as organizational device	91
b. IM emotional work	94
iv. The new page view bonus system doesn't really affect us	97
1. The page view bonus system	98
2. Editors and the new system	100

VI. NATURE OF THIS ORGANIZATION	105
---------------------------------	-----

a. Relationships between editors	106
i. Informal structures: Friendship and trust	106
ii. Formal structures: Editing	110
iii. When formal and informal merge: Insubordination	112
b. Relationships between editors and company	114
c. Relationships between editors and audience	118
VII. TECHNOLOGY AND PLACE	122
a. Technology and authority in organizations	122
b. Technology and adaptability	124
c. Place and business economics	126
d. Place as personal economy	128
VIII. CONCLUSIONS	131
a. Application to mass communication theory	132
i. Importance of fit and its application to other organizations	135
b. Implications for future mass communication research	137
APPENDIX	
A. Case study protocol	140
B. Case study questions	143
C. Research diary	145
REFERENCES	160
VITA	167

REFRESH: EXAMINING THE PRODUCTION OF CELEBRITY NEWS IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Elizabeth Meyers Hendrickson

Dr. Stephanie Craft, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This case study examines the newsgathering processes and production of an entertainment website, Futé.com, and asks how newsroom routines, organizational structure and culture of a virtual newsroom shape editorial content. Futé operates via a virtual newsroom, where communication is not conducted face-to-face, but primarily through instant messaging. This computer-mediated communication (CMC) reconfigures the standard place-based newsroom arrangements and significantly influences the group's organizational dynamics and culture. Because of the unique content and unconventional organizational structure of the site, no single theoretical perspective offers a way of understanding its organizational context and content. Therefore, this study employed a combination of organization theory, specifically Schein (2004) and newsroom sociology frameworks. This research found that four basic assumptions drive the organizational culture of Futé: 1) Our mission is true; 2) Working from home is the best way to go; 3) IM is the most effective way for us to communicate; and 4) The new page view bonus system doesn't really affect us. These assumptions are rarely debated or directly confronted by the group and are used at group and individual levels as defense mechanisms that allow the group to maintain functionality. This study's examination of the relationships between editors, between editors and the organization and between the editors and the audience illustrates the group's complex interplay between formal and

informal associations and linear and non-linear organizational structures. The dualities allow for the group's personality to emulate certain conventional newsroom dynamics while creating its own distinctive characteristics. In addition, this study determines a connection between technology and virtual workplace, and workplace culture and nature of an organization. The overall organization's attempt to meld authority, adaptability, business economics and personal economics with its adoption of CMC and the virtual workplace demonstrates a generally mutually beneficial arrangement for both management and workers. The site's operations exemplify the importance of leadership in effectively managing the fit between employee and organizational culture, which in turn allows a group to successfully adapt to its environment. As such, the most imperative skill of any member of an organization is the ability to adapt and adjust to the organization and its needs. These obligations might be outwardly expressed or implicitly stated. Regardless, it is the employee's task to interpret this information from the organization's leader in order to contribute to group work and ultimately, successful and healthy group maturity. This study exemplifies the potential for new media researchers to adopt a cross-disciplinary approach to their research. As old models for understanding media cease to support the complex structures of new organizations, scholars must look to additional frameworks for supplementary guidance.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

This dissertation examines the newsgathering processes and production of an entertainment website, Futé.com, and asks how newsroom routines, organizational structure and culture of a virtual newsroom shape editorial content. Futé represents a new hybrid of online media that combines original reporting with the re-posting of current news stories. The site can be considered part blog, part magazine, and part aggregate, combining the personal expression and political debate of the blog format with links to conventional media sites, such as *The New York Times* or CNN. Futé's resulting content is a meta-analysis of conventionally reported stories that span the cultural collective conscious, ranging from political to fashion to celebrity.

New media vehicles such as Futé are challenging our notions of news. Not only are their editors creating a postmodern media product that combines characteristics of popular media with that of alternative media, but they are also attracting both a loyal following of readers *and* advertisers who are increasingly abandoning the traditional print product (Grigoriadis, 10/15/2007). As celebrity weekly magazines continue to do well in the marketplace and conventional print publications continue to lose readers, sites such as Futé are tapping in to the zeitgeist by appealing to many appetites. Futé users can read about celebrity scandal as well as political scandal and refresh their screens every 10 or 15 minutes for new stories. The near-constant stream of information crosses topical boundaries with a consistent editorial tone inherent to any tenured publication.

However, the masterminds behind some of the most popular sites often perceive their media alter ego as that of maverick, taking the conventional media product and deconstructing it for the world to see. Nick Denton, founder and owner of new media empire Gawker Media, recently wrote on his personal blog, “Internet media can indeed seem, particularly to the gentlemanly and leisurely American magazine business, a Hobbesian environment. The new journalism is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (Denton, 2007). Indeed, from a traditional media standpoint, many new media products operate outside of conventional standards and principles, where competition and self-preservation outweigh the fundamental role of press as cooperative watchdog of society.

Even glossy magazines, not always considered a bellwether of journalistic ethics, have voiced skepticism of the new media explosion piloted by people like Denton. *New York Magazine* recently ran a cover story on Denton and his crown jewel site, Gawker, and the article’s writer mused, “Of all the ways in which Gawker is antithetical to journalistic ethics – it’s self-referential, judgmental, ad hominem and resolutely against effecting change in the world – it pushes its writers to be honest in a way that’s not always found in print publications” (Grigoriadis, 2007).

Significance of the Study

Considering these professional sentiments, scholars are faced with a conundrum. As our media landscape continues to shift and reshape according to both technological advances and user acceptance, researchers should feel encouraged to step outside traditional research foci and examine unconventional innovations within the industry.

Instead of perceiving transformation such as the popular entertainment website as something inherently detrimental to the profession, researchers can trade cultural critiques of the product with an analysis of the news making process.

Accordingly, it is vital to remember that the media landscape has never been stagnant, but always fluid. Whether through technological advancements such as the photographic reproduction or content trends like yellow journalism, media has always been in motion. The current proliferation of websites and blogs into the marketplace adds to this media narrative.

In addition to the media product, this research considers the organizational structure of Futé, which utilizes non-place-based news communication. Futé operates via a virtual newsroom, where communication is not conducted face-to-face, but primarily through instant messaging. This computer-mediated communication (CMC) reconfigures the standard place-based newsroom arrangements and has significant implications for organizational dynamics and culture. While current research frequently examines how websites operate within the media sphere, few have looked at the structure of their newsgathering processes or have considered the medium's utilization of a virtual newsroom.

One assumption of this research is that despite employing new technology, many conventional elements of media production routines, such as accountability and deadlines, remain intact. A second assumption is that a virtual newsroom will utilize a more lateral power configuration, rather than a hierarchical organizational structure. Lastly, it is assumed that because instant messaging is a more informal mode of

communication than face-to-face, email or telephone interaction, the culture will promote a sense of creativity and community.

By employing a case study of Futé, this proposed study will utilize in-depth interviews and observations to examine both how the work is organized and how organizational culture is shaped. In addition, this research will contemplate the role of celebrity media in content considerations.

The proposed research questions are as follows: What news values, sources of routines and routine channels are utilized within the organization? What affect do personal values and professional roles and ethical norms play at the individual level? How does instant messaging affect communication and organizational dynamics? What is the organizational culture of Futé.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter two is designed to address the combination of theoretical approaches that guide this new media subject. Because of the unique content and unconventional organizational structure of the site, no single theoretical perspective offers a way of understanding its organizational context and content. Therefore, this study employed a combination of organizational theory, specifically Schein (2004) and newsroom sociology frameworks. Chapter three examines the previous literature that addresses the elements of new media organizations, newsroom sociology and celebrity media.

Chapter four explains the research design, which is a case study, and the accompanying methodology. The chapter further defines the research questions and

provides a description of the fieldwork site. Chapter five analyzes the site's workplace culture, beginning with a description of the managing editor's typical day. The research examines in detail the four basic assumptions that drive the culture of this organization, utilizing supporting artifacts and interviews culled from fieldwork. Chapter six elucidates the nature of the organization by evaluating the complex relationships between the editors, between the editors and company, and between the editors and the audience. Chapter seven acknowledges an intersection of technology and place and considers how these two intertwined elements influence issues of authority, adaptability, business economics and personal economy. Chapter eight derives conclusions from the analysis and contemplates the applicability of this research to other organizations, mass communication theory and future mass communication research.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Organization theory

This research refers to two established dimensions of organization theory, the clinical and interpretive paradigm, to examine the organizational culture and leadership roles in an organization (Denison, 1996). This model, examined by Schein (2004), contextualizes occupational cultures from the individual and social levels that shape an organization and its decision-making processes. The framework places importance on both subjective and objective data so that observers can understand how a culture performs in its environment. The validity can be located within the narrative data.

Culture, as defined by Schein (2004) is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon that is continually created by our communications with other people. In the case of this research, we can comprehend an organization as network, composed of many parts unified under a governing culture. Our behavior is limited by a set of rules, norms, routines and structure. Leadership plays an integral role in both organizational culture formation and maintenance (Schein, 2004). The culture of any group is difficult to change because people prefer stability to instability, and a stable culture offers predictability and coherence (Schein, 2004). This consistency offers group members self-esteem and connectedness with others, thus helping to satisfy their ego ideal, or feeling of self at their future best (Stapley, 2004; Diamond and Allcorn, 2003).

In addition, culture is omnipresent in that every facet of an organization is influenced by how the group/individual behaves towards the organization's internal

operations, different environments and primary tasks (Schein, 2004). Individuals cultivate internalized knowledge that is then contrasted with data in their environment.

Consequently, we employ beneath-the-surface processes such as conflict, boundaries, defense mechanisms, and creativity to help us cope with our feelings and thoughts (Stapley, 2006). Similarly, when we come into relationships with other individuals, we may experience inner dynamics involving power and authority, relatedness and trust (Stapley, 2006). When considering the group or organization, we might not perceive it as separate entities, but as an organism utilizing a group mind, where the group-as-a-whole exhibits defenses against anxiety as well as basic assumption behavior (Stapley, 2006).

An organization's culture is disseminated through a process of socialization, whereby a new member interprets the operating norms and assumptions of the group (Schein, 2004). While an organization's stated mission or operating espoused values might be the initial method in which a new employee can gauge how to act, the group's operating basic assumptions, or tacit behavior, drives the culture. Therefore, one learns the organizational culture's assumptions when old members of the group provide feedback to new members as the new members experiment with various types of behavior (Schein, 2004).

This study also examines the evolution of culture within a new organization and utilizes the idea of a group as a microcosm of an organizational system. Significant to this research is Schein's (2004) description of the four stages of shared underlying assumptions that exist within group evolution: group formation, group building, group work and group maturity. These stages are dynamic, in that groups can move from one to another as appropriate. Each stage is divided into a set of dominant assumptions and

socioemotional focus. The socioemotional focus, or group purpose, is shaped by the predominant assumptions. With group formation, the dominant assumption is that of dependence on the leader and the socioemotional focus is one of self-orientation, or issues of power and influence, inclusion, identity and role, and acceptance and intimacy (Schein, 2004). Considering group building, the dominant assumption emphasizes fusion between group member and the socioemotional focus is that of the group as idealized object, such as conformity and harmony. Group work's dominant assumption is that of their job, where individuals feel acceptance toward one another, and the socioemotional focus on the group mission and tasks, such as teamwork and accomplishment. With group maturity, the dominant assumption is experience, where the group feels employees are correct if they have been successful. The socioemotional focus is thus one of group survival and comfort, where the culture and group are defended and individual difference are perceived as dangerous (Schein, 2004).

The role of the leader is one of the most significant aspects of workplace culture. Schein (2004) writes that leaders differ from administrators and managers in that leaders exhibit a concern for the organization's culture. Furthermore, a leader's impact on the formation of an organization's culture in a new group is considerable in the beginning, in that they impress their values, beliefs and assumptions on the group in the beginning (Schein, 2004). If the leader of a new organization is also the founder, they might also decide the fundamental mission and context of the group, in addition to hiring the group members (Schein, 2004). While the leaders certainly have an impact on the initial group culture, their experience dealing with internal integration issues and external adaptation also affects the evolving ethos.

Kets de Vries' (2001) research into leadership suggests that the most successful leaders are able to reconceptualize complex situations. As such, by adjusting what they see, an effective leader can alter how they perceive a situation (Kets de Vries, 2001). Much of this depends on the "emotional intelligence" (Kets de Vries, 2001: p. 5) of leaders, or their ability to comprehend their own motivational drive as well as those of others. This intelligence might be learned by understanding the clinical paradigm, which holds that: 1) What you see isn't always what you get, 2) No matter how irrational human behavior seems, it has a rationale, and 3) We're all results of our past (Kets de Vries, 2001). Persons possessing emotional intelligence (which is learned through experience), will usually be more effective leaders (Kets de Vries, 2001).

In addition to leaders, Kets de Vries (2001) examines the "clusters" (p. 144) of behavior patterns within key organization members. While these clusters may or may not mirror those of the organization's leader, they have a profound effect on the organizational culture. These behavioral patterns may be referred to as a "neurotic style" (p. 143), and include the suspicious (or paranoid), dramatic (want for grandiosity), detached (noninvolvement), compulsive (desire for control) and depressive (hopelessness and helplessness) styles. While some organizations display only elements of these styles, others may excessively adopt elements of particular behaviors, thus creating an organizational pathology (Kets de Vries, 2001).

The clinical and interpretive paradigm utilizes a psychological approach to understanding the individual and group notions of culture. However, it is also essential to employ multiple lenses to assure a holistic understanding of this new media. Accordingly, a sociological perspective adds to this analysis.

Newsroom Sociology and Routines

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) describe the interplay of routines and organizational structure with their model of the influences of hierarchical news work, including five components, ranging from micro- to macro-level: individual, routines, organizational, extramedia and ideology. These compartments unify to form a complete whole, interrelated media system. Much of the supporting mass communication literature is embedded within this illustration, and thus, it is thus imperative to recognize the different levels of the hierarchy from a theoretical perspective.

Individual level: The key components of this level include the newsroom socialization process, personal values, a journalist's personal background and their professional roles and ethics. Breed (1955) wrote about the socialization process, which includes both technical and ethical socialization. In interviewing legions of journalists about this process, he found that many of them ascribed socialization to "learning by osmosis," (p. 182) or something that is not specifically stated within the organization text, but acquired through watching and learning.

Personal values have an indirect affect on the news process, and many scholars claim that their impact is greatly diminished by routines and organization constraints (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978). Regardless, Gans (1978) found that the prevalence of "motherhood values" (ie: family, love, friendship, economic prosperity) that are often found within society are also held by journalists. Journalistic values, which will be discussed within the routine level, have a more direct affect on the news process.

Similar to personal values are background considerations. But like personal values, most researchers claim the background factors indirectly affect the individual level.

What factors play a more significant role are professional roles and codes of ethics. These elements are inherent to most conventional media professions and are often acquired via the socialization process. Specifically the code of ethics, which is usually a written set of regulations (many journalists utilize the Society of Professional Journalists' code), gives journalists guidelines for their actions both inside and outside the newsroom.

Routines: Routines are an established and defined set of procedures that one follows within an organization that together, make up the mechanics of news work. Some of the key components found within this body of literature are gatekeeping, objectivity, sources of routines and routine channels. David Manning White (1950) initially defined gatekeeping as a person's in and out decisions in terms of what is news. However, his study must be recognized as an individual operating within a formal structure, in that he ("Mr. Gates") made decisions based on the stories that had already passed through numerous gates before arriving at his desk (White, 1950). As such, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) cite that a gatekeeper's decisions are quite limited within an organizational structure.

Objectivity, a safeguard against the criticism of bias, is another inherent factor to the routine system (Tuchman, 1978). By utilizing quotes, attempting to have "balance" between sides and fact checking, a journalist can claim that the story is verified. However, a journalist does make choices when deciding what quotes to use, what sources to talk with and how to angle the story. Thus, it can be argued that any piece of

journalism inevitably contains bias, although the information is ideally created utilizing objective methods (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001).

Oftentimes, what guides these decisions are the news values inherent to the information. Paletz and Entman (1981) broadly cite these as individualism, free enterprise, competition and materialism. Gans (1979) further specifies components of the information to include proximity, prominence, timeliness, conflict/controversy, human interest and the unusual.

In addition to the content itself and the angle of information gathering, the sources of routines must also be considered (Gans, 1979). This process can be thought of as suppliers (sources) who provide raw product (information) to journalists who (through processing the raw product) produce news, which is then delivered to consumers (audience). Lastly, one must consider the routine channels (Sigelman, 1973), which include news channels (such as official sources and news briefings), informal channels (such as leaks and other journalists' information), and enterprise channels (stories a journalist finds on his or her own).

Organizational: Some of the key components inherent to the organizational level are the hiring and firing of individuals, the tensions between levels of the organization and the established roles of journalists within the media system. The hiring and firing system allows an organization to exercise a sense of control within newsroom dynamics. By hiring persons who fit in with the already-established culture of the workplace environment, they are able to perpetuate a stable culture (Breed, 1955). Similarly, by firing those who do not assimilate to the culture, they can keep a cohesive environment.

Within this layer, one must also consider the inevitable tensions between different levels of the organization. A significant example is the relationship between economic goals and editorial goals of a news organization, which can both positively and negatively influence the workplace environment (Steinem, 1994). When a media organization depends on advertisers to pay its bills, the editorial staff may feel its news values become threatened, which can create conflict between departments (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Progressive organizational leaders might utilize such tensions as an opportunity to foster editorial creativity, by opening the organization to potential learning and change. For example, the editorial group might find ways to better understand and provide for their audience's wants and needs. However, less insightful leaders could defensively react to such organizational tensions by disregarding possible changes and further distancing staff members from new organizational possibilities.

Lastly, one must consider the different roles of the news workers themselves. Gans (1979) found three levels of roles: front-line, middle-level and top-level. The front-line roles are usually those occupied by writers, reporters and editors. Middle-level employees are usually the top editors (such as the managing and executive editors), while the top-level workers are the executives, such as the publisher and CEO. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996), contemporary research has concentrated on the front-line roles, while the top level has not been scrutinized as extensively. In addition, as news organizations are increasingly operated utilizing a more business-model sensibility, the distance between these hierarchies often expands, thus increasing tensions between levels as communication tends to falter.

Extramedia: Extramedia pertains to those dynamics that occur between the news workers and outside factors. Some of the most important extramedia interactions include those between the news worker and their sources, their advertisers and their competition. Sources can refer to anyone providing the journalist with valuable information. Oftentimes, sources include public relations workers, or what Shudson (2003) refers to as "para-journalists." These are individuals versed in the news process who offer information to journalists that will benefit that agent's client. Gandy (1982) refers to the interaction between journalist and source as an "information subsidy," whereas one party (often the journalist) wishes to gain the information from the source, but must pay a price (referred to as the subsidy) for that information. That price might pertain to how and where that information is used. For example, in the realm of celebrity journalism, Gamson (1994) describes this exchange as the "consciousness industry," whereby the system of cultural controls is give-and-take between suppliers (para-journalists) and journalists.

Another extramedia factor considers advertisers and their target media audience. Tensions can arise at this level when the media product fails to deliver a demographic audience promised to advertisers. When this happens, organizational stress about editorial content can again occur between the advertising and editorial departments. From an editorial standpoint, journalists often do not want their audience dictated to them, but from an advertising perspective, the advertiser wants to feel their money will deliver their target market.

Competition among organizations also plays an important role. It is imperative that journalists keep a keen eye on what their competitors are doing, so as not to miss a

significant story (Gans, 1979). The goal of a journalist is often to get "the scoop," or the exclusive first shot at important information. When another outlet gets the scoop and the resulting story garners a large audience, a competing journalist often feels compelled to follow suit. In many cases, this practice results in pack journalism, or when many journalists pursue the same story despite the information's actual news value. An example might be the 1994 O.J. Simpson murder case, when the sports hero's murder trial dominated the media for months. While many news managers questioned the enduring importance of the story, few were willing to cease its coverage for fear of a decline in audience.

Ideological: Journalists possess the power to define a situation. Gans (1979) writes that journalists share the ideological values of responsible journalism, private ownership and liberal democracy. Accordingly, these values are filtered down through symbolic content to society. Cultural studies of hegemony and Marxian theories of economy often criticize the ideological implications of mass media, saying it in effect perpetuates the status quo. Similarly, scholars (Marshall, 1997; Giles, 2002) studying celebrity media claim that another ideological function of celebrity journalism is to perpetuate a belief in the democracy of fame, or that anyone can be famous. These notions herald back to the individualism embedded within our society as well as to our capitalistic ambitions, and thus support a Marxian criticism.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

Although literature that considers the theoretical intersection of this proposed research is scarce, studies relating to the separate conceptual spheres are available. Literature pertaining to new media organizations, the levels of newsroom sociology and celebrity journalism is examined accordingly.

New Media Organizations

Media work might be considered one of society's most adaptable industries in that media producers have the ability to immediately respond to consumer demands (Deuze, 2007). This flexibility theoretically allows media organizations to adopt new ways of media production and content formats to increase audience size. While some of the more conventional media systems still find themselves mired in bureaucratic constraints, other more contemporary organizations are discovering virtually endless production options. Many of these alternatives involve a less formal structuring and a reconfiguration of the conventional hierarchical system, which often results in a complex, seemingly disconnected system.

As a result, the most significant consideration for these innovative organizations becomes how to unite all the parts into a cohesive, adaptable whole. Many businesses decide to adopt unconventional communication methods in an effort to connect these

components. When paired with alternative workplace structures, this technology creates unique new media interpersonal communications.

This research considers elements of a new workplace structure that employs instant messaging and virtual teamwork and examines what happens to communication when the two components are linked.

Instant messaging

Presence and instant messaging applications (PIM) can be described as text-based near-synchronous communication that is computer-mediated (Ter Hofte, Multer, Verwijs, 2006). This technology is utilized in over 70 percent of all companies today (Computer Bulletin, 2005). The various PIM vehicles, which include AOL instant messenger (AIM), Yahoo! Messenger and MSN Messenger, operate to link groups of individual Internet users to virtual chat rooms, so that they may have a computer-mediated conversation in real time (Hofte, Multer, Verwijs, 2006). Because instant messaging (IM) communication is computer-mediated, no verbal-cues are present, although emoticons are often utilized (Hofte, Multer, Verwijs, 2006). In addition, the technology is transparent in that presence information of IM group members is shared.

Kim, Kim, Park and Rice (2005) examined the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in a Korean high-tech organization and established that CMC serves a different communication goal than that of telephone or face-to-face contact. Their study illustrates that IM is used to monitor the accessibility of others, discuss issues, schedule a face-to-face meeting and “check in” without the obligation of urgent

response (Kim, Kim, Park and Rice, 2005). The researchers (Kim, Kim, Park and Rice, 2005) also found that IM users do not use the technology to foster relationships (unlike mobile phones or face-to-face contact), but as a group-talking tool (Kim, Kim, Park and Rice, 2005). In addition, they claim that younger people tend to adopt IM more readily than adults, who often chose to communicate instead via email (Kim, Kim, Park and Rice, 2005).

Correspondingly, Zack and Doherty (1992) cite that electronic communication aids in organizing tasks, while face-to-face allows for more problem-solving needs. Other research (Strom, 2006) maintains that more companies are choosing to implement IM as a way of improving response times between employees and some, such as IBM, have virtually phased out voice mails entirely. As such, many companies are choosing to implement the messaging software to enhance collaboration through faster communication.

Virtual teams

The concept of virtual teamwork considers a group of individuals who collaborate with each other despite being separated by time, space and organizational obstacles (Johnson, Heimann, O'Neill, 2001). This research considers the telecommuters who become part of a virtual team, working with others on a collaborative project outside a shared office environment. The US Census Bureau calculates the number of individuals with this arrangement to be 4.5 million in 2003 (Blanton, 2005). The most suitable jobs for telecommuting are those in the white-collar sector that can be accomplished outside

of the traditional office environment, such as consulting, research analysis and writing (Ahmadi, Helms and Ross, 2000). Telecommunicating benefits include those at the employee level (they can spend more time with their family), the organizational level (the company can cut costs and also retain employees who might otherwise leave the organization) and the community level (telecommuting reduces traffic congestion and pollution) (Ahmadi, Helms and Ross, 2000).

Research into the employee level is the most common. Studies (Vos, van der Voordt, 2001) illustrate that despite the espoused benefits of a virtual arrangement, one of the most frequent risks is an overlapping of work and private life, which often results in a telecommuter working more hours than their coworkers. In order to be productive, the telecommuter must receive pointed feedback, guidance and instruction in the form of supervision (Ahmadi, Helms and Ross, 2000). Research (Johnson, Heimann, O'Neill, 2001) shows that for those involved in a virtual team, it is essential that the individual exercise self-discipline, is accountable, be flexible and is able to trust other virtual team members. When virtual team members are able to demonstrate these four qualities, their alliance increases a sense of organizational achievement and thus workplace fulfillment.

A study (Akkirman and Harris, 2005) of virtual workplace employees in Germany found that these workers exhibit a higher level of work satisfaction than those of their traditional workplace counterparts. The authors (Akkirman and Harris, 2005) conclude that this satisfaction runs parallel to a well-organized virtual office plan, where organizational climate and integration is sufficiently communicated. By offering culture training, technical training and social support to employees, a company employing virtual

team members might better equip itself to take on this new workplace configuration (Akkirman and Harris, 2005).

New Media Interpersonal Communication

As previously stated, virtual teamwork, while often heralded as a logical step for corporations, is not without its drawbacks. Most of these criticisms involve the issue of collaborative communication. Some of the most prevalent grievances include difficulties getting in touch with team members, a lack of mutual project visibility, and the constraints of CMC (much of it due to an inability to accurately determine the meaning of text-based messages) (Johnson, Heimann, O'Neill, 2001).

Because virtual teams often employ persons living in divergent time zones, individual accessibility can certainly pose problems. Time lapses between CMC can negatively affect collaborative endeavors and thus perpetuate inter-organizational stress. In addition, the element of ineffectual project visibility can pose great detriments to joint efforts, as previously examined.

But perhaps the most fundamental challenge involves the potential constraints of CMC, considering all other inter-organizational dynamics are derived from this interaction. The challenges to the virtual workplace often involve building trust among employees, which is difficult without effective communication. Because interpersonal communications in virtual teams lack conventional communication methods such as head nodding, informal openings and closings to conversations and turn taking, mediated communication may at times be problematic (Nardi, 2005).

Accordingly, instant messaging utilizes what Clark (1992) describes as the theory of common ground. This concept refers to the established shared knowledge that group members communicate through each other's discourse, which conceivably improves through time as members increase their communication (Clark, 1992). Instant messaging implies a shared space and the sensation of affinity that accompanies it (Nardi, 2005). As such, virtual team members using IM may improve their social bonding by embedding informal conversations within formal discourse (Nardi, 2005).

Quan-Haase, Cothrel and Wellman (2005) established the term "local virtualities" to explain physically restricted places where computer-mediated communication allows for the formation of intense collaborative networks. The researchers (Quan-Haase, Cothrel and Wellman, 2005) found that for organizations that perform work primarily online, IM is often carried out while multitasking other jobs. This, in addition to other factors, contributes to the formation of higher connectivity as well as to an increased sense of community within the organization (Quan-Haase, Cothrel and Wellman, 2005)

But once more, trust remains a significant factor within this mediated communication. While Nardi (2005) concludes that such trust takes time and frequent contact between members, research demonstrates that online interpersonal trust between communication members increases when the partners establish both a supportive relationship and empathic accuracy with one another (Fen, Lazar and Preece, 2004). With empathetic accuracy, communication partners are able to correctly infer the particular content of each other's feelings and thoughts (Fen, Lazar and Preece, 2004).

The last component of new media interpersonal communication to be addressed concerns that of leadership. Farmer (2005) refers to situational leadership to describe

telecommuting, or in this case, virtual leadership. Leadership and management might be explained differently; as leadership refers to the influence a person has on employees to inspire or motivate them to accomplish organizational goals (Gibson et al. 2002), while management deals with leadership and routine events (Farmer, 2005). Situational leadership forms when a leader pairs the developmental stage of the employee with a particular leadership style (Farmer, 2005). Consequently, the situational leader does not apply one leadership style to all employees, but different leadership approaches according to the competence, performance and dedication of the employee. For example, an employee exhibiting high supporting behavior and high directive might only need coaching from the leader, while an employee showing low supporting behavior and high directive might warrant more direction from the leader (Farmer, 2005). In the case of online organizations, a leader can monitor these levels by both interpersonal communication within the group and individual output.

Newsroom sociology

Studies in newsroom sociology often follow the research of Breed (1955), Gans (1979) and Tuchman (1978). In addition, much of this literature examines one or more of the different levels of hierarchical news work (individual, routines, organization, extramedia and ideology) as established by Shoemaker and Reese (1996).

Research considering the individual level encompasses studies of both magazine and newspaper organizations. Dellinger's (2004) comparative case study of the organizational cultures of a pornographic magazine's and a feminist magazine's

accounting departments examined how male employees combine personal values and professional roles when negotiating masculinity. The researcher concluded these individual level components are in tension depending on the how “safe” or “embattled” a workplace is (2004, 545). It thus follows that a successfully socialized employee will adjust their behavior according to the workplace environment, regardless of personal values.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) wrote about background considerations of journalists in newsrooms and found that the majority of these journalists were white men with a college education, either in journalism or liberal arts. In addition, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) cite that burnout rates are high among journalists because of low salaries, poor benefits and high stress. The researchers (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) found that many journalists opt out of the news work by their mid-30s, with a majority of these numbers being women. In addition, the numbers of journalists who claim job satisfaction have been decreasing steadily since the mid-1970s. A more recent study, the 2002 American Journalist survey, found these statistics to have changed minimally, with 41 now being the median age of a journalist and the level of job satisfaction slightly higher (Poynteronline, 2003).

Sigelman (1973) looked at the organizational processes of a newspaper to examine how an individual character’s may affect bias in news. Similar to Breed (1950), Sigelman (1973) cites the socialization process and recruitment of employees who complement the professional roles and values of the organization as the backbone of any media organization’s perception of objectivity. In other words, news management will often choose people who possess similar values (personal and professional) to those of

the current employees so the newly-hired journalists can better mesh with their new organization culture.

Most research examining routines comes from studying newspaper and television organizations. Reisner (1992) analyzed conferences between newspaper editors who were deciding story newsworthiness and concluded that ongoing stories usually merit newspaper prominence. However, the researcher noted that oftentimes the editors also utilized this traditional news value rationalization as a means to mask their own ideologies. Similarly, Sumpter (2000) conducted a case study of a large daily newspaper to examine the utilization of budget meetings as a vehicle for constructing newsworthiness. He (Sumpter, 2000) found that editors often use these meetings to construct audience reactions to various story selections. Berkowitz (1992) observed a network television station and concluded that well-established routines such as story typification allow newswriters to handle non-routine events, also dubbed a “what-a-story.”

Gaziano and Coulson (1988) considered organizational components such as newsroom management styles, to determine whether a democratic or authoritarian style influences a news employee’s opinion of their jobs, newspapers, supervisors and readers. After surveying two newspapers, each operating under a different style, the researchers (Gaziano and Coulson, 1988) determined a democratic style improved the work environment because journalists’ prefer participating in decision-making. However, regardless of leadership style, journalists reported a deficiency in communication between editors and reporters to be a larger organizational detriment (Gaziano and Coulson, 1988).

Ryan (2005) studied the extramedia level issue of editorial content and advertising by conducting a case study of MAMM magazine, a publication covering women's cancers. MAMM struggled to obtain advertising from companies without bowing to the advertisers' editorial demands, and ultimately the magazine folded. While many magazines participate in such negotiations with advertisers, other media vehicles resist. While Ryan's research primarily involves extramedia level decisions, ideological factors are certainly applicable as well.

Perhaps a more overt example of the ideological level is Martinez's (2004) case study of *Latina* magazine, which examined the role of marketing of ethnicity and popular culture. In her analysis, Martinez (2004) interviewed the editorial staff of *Latina* and conducting a textual analysis of six years of *Latina* articles. The researcher concluded the magazine provides the Latina consumer "more ethnically relevant material than does the mainstream media" (Martinez, 2004). The publication thus functions to define a situation that might normally exist outside the realm of conventional media vehicles.

Celebrity Media

This research also considers celebrity media literature and its function within society. If one conforms to Tuchman's (1973) understanding of "hard" and "soft" news, we might regard this research as an examination of soft news production. But "soft news" certainly has its place within our cultural milieu. Accordingly, it is relevant to acknowledge that within celebrity media texts, certain threads of important cultural themes exist. For instance, the concept of the "moral community" is prevalent within

today's celebrity media content (Hermes, 1995). Other themes such as the importance of family, health and love also run through the stories and photographs found in tabloid magazines.

Studies (Grindstaff, 2002) indicate that media consumers use these moral communities to feel connected to society, to share in what is "right" and what is "wrong." Two of the most common textual readings of this material are the "family repertoire" and the "repertoire of the melodrama" (Grindstaff, 2002). When utilizing the family repertoire, media consumers feel connected to the celebrities, as if they were indirect members of their family. When applying the repertoire of the melodrama, consumers tend to blame the celebrities for whatever negative event transpires, feeling that because the celebrities have achieved such fame, they deserve any resulting fate.

Culture studies scholar Stuart Hall describes such active readings as encoding and decoding (O'Connor and Klaus, 2000). Similar to Grindstaff's understanding, the audience reads the text in either dominant, negotiated or oppositional ways. Cultural studies scholar John Fiske writes that encoding and decoding functions so that the audience can create their own texts and meaning making (O'Connor and Klaus, 2000). Much of the most recent relatable research has been culled from sociology, and primarily from British academics.

This school of research is significant because it takes on a decidedly post-modern approach to the content. Instead of conceiving the product as something that can be deconstructed like any other traditional media content, the researchers (O'Connor and Klaus, 2000) conceptualize it from the standpoint of *negotiated* authenticity. In other words, celebrity media is not a traditional form of news media (juggling the identical

values), but (again) a complex interplay of public relations, journalism, celebrity and consumer (Palmer, 2005). By Western standards of journalistic principles, this type of media is not a watchdog of society, but rather, a machine that allows for massive capitalistic gain (Mendelson, 2007). As previously noted, the commodification of the individual is at the heart of this and it is what drives this breed of cultural capital.

What makes this media seemingly modern is the paradox between the ordinary and the extraordinary. Today's celebrity media asks that we, as consumers, accept *both* the ordinary and extraordinary within the mediated individual. Through 24-hour news cycles, we can expect to see our celebrities in both candid and staged photos. So, in essence, media consumers can view all sides of these cultural commodities.

In order to feed our celebrity appetite, we rely on the aesthetic of the stolen image, otherwise known as paparazzi (Mendelson, 2005). Paparazzi help to perpetuate this ordinary/extraordinary paradox, in that they allow us to see the authentic (or ordinary) side of the celebrity (Mendelson, 2005). This type of exchange lessens the image control that the mediated personality has experienced in the past. Instead of portraying a unified image, the celebrity displays many images, which has the power to decrease their cultural commodity, or value as a product. When a celebrity cannot obtain a unified image, it often becomes more difficult to transfer their image to other goods (Gamson, 1994). Hence, often the issue of "privacy" is only touted when a person's unified image is threatened (Mendelson, 2005).

This literature illustrates the breadth of this proposed research. To examine the entire entity, we must contemplate its interlocking parts. This discussion prepares us to consider the primary question of this research: How can we describe the organizational culture of a website that creates a product that crosses many classifications?

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES

Case Study

This proposed study examines one entertainment website, Futé.com, to consider how organizational structure and routines shape the media product. Futé has been chosen for several reasons. The first is the site's unique blend of social commentary, which mixes both celebrity and non-celebrity content. On the surface, one might posit that the site could be considered celebrity content-driven, given the frequent references (through photos and editorial) to celebrities. However, upon further reflection, the content illuminates more of a meta-industry perspective. Much of Futé's content actually refers to celebrity content already published, and as such, the site takes an entirely different editorial tone to the information. The second reason, as previously mentioned, is that Futé does not engage in a traditional place-based organizational structure, but rather conducts its communication via instant messaging. Their primary mode of communication appears unique to both organizational and mass communication literature. As such, these two rationales form the groundwork for rich exploratory research.

In terms of content, the site, written by five editors and helmed by a managing editor (also called a site lead), consists of original content that links to stories culled from the online versions of conventional news sources, such as *The New York Times*, *The New York Post*, and *Glamour* magazine. Futé is described on its website as “an unvarnished excoriation of traditional female media, slicing through the superficiality to give you the

straight scoop on trends in celebrity, fashion and sex.” Content posted on the site ranges from standard critiques of celebrity media stories, such as Britney Spears losing custody of her children, to more traditional political commentary, such Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s visit to the United States.

Considering audience, according to the website, 96 percent of Futé’s readers are female, with 82 percent of readers between the ages of 18-34. Monthly unique traffic totals 1,510,000 million people.

Given these factors, Futé.com seems to be an ideal case study subject. Case studies utilize numerous data sources in order to thoroughly examine groups, individuals, organizations or events (Wimmer and DomiPaul, 2003). The four characteristics of this methodology are: particularistic (examines specific phenomenon or situation); descriptive (detailed explanation of topic); heuristic (allows people to comprehend innovative interpretations and perspectives); and, inductive (generalizations and principles appear from new data) (Wimmer and DomiPaul, 2003). Because case studies provide the researcher with a vast array of information about the topic being studied, case studies are valuable for supplying rich detail (Wimmer and DomiPaul, 2003).

One advantage of conducting a case study is the ability to help answer the *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2003). In addition, the method allows the researcher to study the phenomenon in its naturally occurring context, rather than in a controlled setting (such as an experiment). Like Tuchman (1973), I will employ ethnomethodology, which is the method employed by researchers when agents engage in everyday activity in order to interpret the social reality.

The procedures I will follow to gather and interpret my data will include a clearly stated research design that will help ensure design quality as well as an established protocol that aids in regulating data gathering and interpretation. Each of these elements will be further elaborated in order to explain how they work in tandem to maintain the necessary balance.

The research design consists of questions, propositions, unit of analysis, linkage of data to propositions and criteria for interpretation. In this case, the main question is: How do organizational routines, organizational structure and organizational culture affect online content? The proposition is that despite a very different newsroom environment, an online site with a virtual newsroom employs routines and structures that are similar to a conventional newsroom. The unit of analysis of this study will be one site, Futé. By utilizing a single case study I will be able to deeply examine the organizational phenomenon in-depth, using thick description (Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, studying Futé will be significant because it represents a unique case, in that it is one of the few online sites with a completely virtual organizational setting. It thus follows that little research has been done with this setting, and as such, this would also be an exploratory case study. The criteria for this research's interpretation will employ a linear-analytical model, starting with the topic and questions, and then proceeding to the subtopic, review of literature, method, analysis, findings and conclusion.

The quality of this design will depend on four factors: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. The construct validity, or the operational definitions measuring the constructs, pertains to organizational routines, organizational structure and organizational culture (Yin, 2003). Both organizational routines and

organizational structure relates to concepts defined within the ethnographic work of Gans (1979) and Tuchman (1973), who studied newsroom structure (mostly of newspapers). When contemplating routines, one might think about how different hierarchical levels of newsroom positions perceive the news product. Tuchman (1973) wrote that editors care about what the audience thinks, while writers care about what their source thinks. In terms of newsroom structure, Gans (1979) studied the levels of media workers; front-line, middle-line and top-line, and how they respond to each other.

Researching the levels of organizational culture can be accomplished by gathering information at three levels: 1) visible artifacts, 2) espoused values, rules, beliefs and behavioral norms, and 3) unspoken, basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004). Artifacts include an organization's language, published record of values, ceremonies and rituals, physical environment and technology (Schein, 2004). Espoused values, rules, beliefs and behavioral norms refer to the information received from an organization's member when asked about the culture's artifacts. However, the unspoken, basic underlying assumptions exist on a deeper level and they are considered the "essence" of the group's culture (Schein, 2004, p. 36). Basic assumptions are taken-for-granted ways of responding to a situation which are neither espoused nor debatable. A researcher must attempt to reach this third level or run the risk of prematurely interpreting only the material garnered from the artifacts and espoused rules.

Internal validity will not be a factor in this research, because it is primarily utilized to address explanatory or causal studies.

External validity pertains to generalizability, or as with case studies, analytical generalizations. Instead of being able to generalize to other types of studies, we attempt

to locate our concepts within a theoretical framework. In this case, I will attempt to show how organizational routines, structure and culture theory support the research. To increase this study's external validity, I will provide a draft of the case study to a key subject in the study. If this individual can corroborate with the analytical interpretations of the study, it demonstrates that my interpretation successfully reflects a social reality. In addition, I will give my supervisor a draft of the study in order to obtain critical feedback before presenting the research to other scholars.

The proposed Futé case study will consist of several sources of data: observation/participation, in-depth interviews both in person and utilizing IM, and a collection of documents. Observation/participation will allow me to offer readers a personal view of the research setting. I will be able to see firsthand the creation of the product and thus provide extensive description about the organization, its workers and their routines (Wimmer and DomiPaul, 2003). I will also keep a research diary where I give a day-by-day narrative of my thoughts and feelings during the fieldwork. In addition to providing the reader with additional contextual information, the diary will also aid in my recollection of seemingly-minute-yet-telling things that may have elapsed during the analysis.

Utilizing these three data sources will permit the triangulation of methods, as well as increase the study's validity and reliability (Wimmer and DomiPaul, 2003). This triangulation should aid my perspective of any alternative points of view, which may serve to confirm, run contrary (but neither confirm nor contradict) or contradict my findings (Mathison, 1988). Consequently, each data source will provide unique and insightful research.

Researchers Zigler and Muenchow, who organized a case study of the educational program Head Start in a similar manner, illustrate how this methodology can be beneficial (Yin, 2003). The investigators directly interacted with individuals in the organization, conducted in-depth interviews and reviewed many of the organization's written documents (Yin, 2003). The authors concluded this methodology allowed them significant insights into the program, as well as the ability to portray an "intimate portrait" of certain individuals involved with the organization (Yin, 2003).

It should be noted that one practical motivation for conducting a case study with this media vehicle is my background in entertainment journalism. While these practical experiences certainly drive my academic desire to learn more about the evolving entertainment industry, it is also my hope that my past credentials might aid this research. Although some may assert that my years of non-academic observation/participation in celebrity journalism might prompt a scholarly assertion of transference, or "unconscious motivation" (Kets de Vries, 2001, 13), I hope to instead utilize counter-transference to acknowledge any mirroring (Kets de Vries, 2001).

Accordingly, it is my expectation that my earlier industry experiences will benefit this research in several ways. First, I come to the workplace setting bearing practical knowledge with which to compare the information gleaned. I bring an understanding of the celebrity industrial complex and will therefore ideally need minimal explanation during times of workplace deadline stress. While any questions will be noted and posed at a later time, the momentary confusion might be avoided. I will also refer to my work history in an effort to increase the trust of the editors, in the hopes that they will be less disrupted by my presence and will view me as a former journalist who is now interested

in the workings of a new genre. Lastly, I have been a regular reader of Futé since the site's launch in May 2007, and am therefore familiar with the work of each of the editors.

However, to further support my role as observer, my protocol provides a clear guide to help maintain a balance between participant and observer. By closely following the protocol, I am committed to adhering to the underlying principles of the case study, which means attending to all evidence, accounting for rival interpretations, demonstrating significant aspects and utilizing prior expert knowledge. In this research, it will be imperative to consider all data, which may include information that runs counter to some of my own biases. It is therefore truly necessary that I actively listen to what the editor is saying, rather than presuming I know what they are saying or even, what I unconsciously want them to say. Such a situation might include analyzing information that negates my own propositions or assumptions. In this event, I must be flexible enough to change where my study is going and willingly adapt.

Similarly, I must account for rival interpretations and acknowledge the fact that in the case study, the tool of measurement is the interpreting scholar (Jankowski and Wester, 1991). Therefore, other scholars may exhibit differing interpretations. Acknowledging these interpretations and providing reasoning as to why my study is different and why my analysis works in this particular case will serve to strengthen this study. By demonstrating significant aspects of my study, I will be able to differentiate my case from others. For example, what did I find that makes this exemplary? How does my study stand out from others, and why? The answers to such questions will demonstrate significance.

Accordingly, Yin (2003) cites five qualities that facilitate an exemplary study: Significance, completeness, alternative perspective, sufficient evidence and engagement. In this case, I will want to show that Futé is a noteworthy and distinctive case worth studying. Because there is not a current body of research that looks into the organizational routines, structure and culture of the virtual newsrooms of online sites, this study might be useful to the academy. It is my belief that we can better understand this growing sector of the media by looking at the organizational context of the editors' decisions and essentially, how this site works.

Before commencing this study's analysis, it is important to note its narrative structure. Because it is imperative that this research is written in an engaging manner, several of the proceeding chapters will employ a framework that uses copious quotations from the site's editors. This "Realist tale" structure, as described by Van Maanen (1988), almost entirely removes the author from the text. In addition, it adopts a documentary style that concentrates primarily on the mundane and sometimes minute details of those being studied (Van Maanen, 1988). This narrative format allows us to see the individuals as illustrative of the culture being studied.

Kunda (2006) employed such a structure in his ethnography of a high-tech corporation. By utilizing company documents, participant observations and interviews with all levels of corporate employees as data, the researcher (Kunda, 2006) employed a realist narrative to describe how the organization obscures boundaries between the individual and the organization. Consequently, Kunda's (2006) seminal work might act as an ideal blueprint for decoding organizational culture in progress.

CHAPTER V: WORKPLACE CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

It is still dark in the apartment when Dana's alarm goes off at 6:45 am. Her two cats hardly move on her bed as she pushes off the covers and takes the three steps toward her desk. She sits down at her monitor and jiggles the mouse pad to wake up her computer from its sleep. Her monitor flickers on and she rubs her eyes, then looks at the RSS icon on the bottom tool bar of her computer. 1500 new headlines have arrived during the six hours she was sleeping. Dana lights a cigarette and picks up the phone to order her morning coffee and breakfast from the neighborhood deli. She then begins scrolling through the RSS feed for story ideas and URL links to send her editors. It's another day of work at Futé.

For most media workers, or indeed, workers of any kind, morning rituals consist of waking up, having breakfast, bathing, getting dressed, maybe helping children get ready for school, then leaving the house and joining other commuters on their journey to their respective workplaces. Not so for Dana and her five editors: Sasha, Becca, Holly, Suzanne and Laura. They, along with the staffs of the other 12 Telescope sites, can forgo the last often time-consuming task in favor of walking to their desk or couch. The time commuting is replaced with time online, signing in to IM and becoming active in the virtual workplace.

Dana takes a sip of her coffee at 7:15 and looks to see which staff members are online. Sasha's IM status says she's in the shower. Suzanne is already up, as is Laura. Becca and Holly, two of the editors who often post last at night, have yet to sign in. Dana IMs Suzanne and Laura to say good morning. "Good morning!" replies Suzanne, almost immediately. "Hey!" writes Laura, after ten seconds. A minute later, Sasha sends Dana an IM, "Hi!" Dana decides to skip much small talk, since it is Monday and there's lots of material to be assigned, written and edited.

Dana stayed up until 11 pm last night perusing the weekend RSS feed, compiling a list of URLs that link to stories she believes might make good content for the site today. While going through this morning's RSS feeds, she continues to paste more links into the ever-growing Word document that holds the story list.

After Dana exchanges an IM pleasantry with her editors, she begins sending each editor various links. She often writes, "Here are some options," and asks that the editors choose from among the links sent. If Dana believes a particular story must be included on the site, she IMs the editor, "Please do this." From 9 am until 7 or 8 pm, a new post goes live on Futé every ten minutes or fifteen minutes, depending on the amount of material Dana deems site-worthy.

By 8:30 am, Dana has distributed various links to her editors, who are now at work on their first posts of the day. While Dana waits for Sasha to turn in Morning Crap, the first post of the day that goes live at 9 am, she begins looking through celebrity photographs posted on the five photo agency websites to which Telescope subscribes. For the next 25 minutes, Dana scans the photos, many of which are paparazzi shots of celebrities out in public, and saves ones that she might be able to post throughout the day.

She chooses a photo and resizes it according to Movable Type (MT) specifications, which is the software all the Telescope sites utilize for web formatting. She then writes the HTML codes which makes it possible for both the photograph and the text box and headlines to be properly placed.

Dana's 23-inch computer monitor is a study in controlled chaos. She organizes the active IM boxes on the left side of her screen, sandwiched between her daily rundown "sticky" and the Movable Type screen. She also either has the homepage up or minimized to an icon on her bottom toolbar. Oftentimes she has numerous IM conversations occurring while she is looking for photos, editing copy or scanning the RSS feed. *The Today Show* provides the only audible conversation in the room, other than the regular "bleep" of a new line of IM appearing on her screen. Dana's eyes hover 18 inches from her monitor and her shoulders hunch forward while she looks from five IM bubbles to an open MT document.

At 8:55, Sasha IMs Dana that Morning Crap is in MT. Instead of going into the active MT file, Dana previews the bundle of stories in MT, which allows her to see what it will look like when it goes live in five minutes. She scans the stories and IMs Sasha that it looks fine, then clicks out of MT. The story will automatically go live at 9:00.

Until 10:30, Dana continues to check the RSS feed and photo agency sites and IM story ideas to the editors. Every twenty minutes, she checks the site to see how it looks and if she sees text she wants to change, she goes into MT and makes the edit. Headlines become bigger, phrases that looked funny in MT are cut.

But in addition to checking the aesthetics of the site, she is also monitoring the page views (PVs) each story is getting. Although she checks the PVs for each story

shortly after they have been posted, Dana waits until 3 pm to check the overall PV numbers for the site. Page views are tallied by counting how many times a viewer clicks through a link to either the original source or to continued story text. These numbers indicate that the viewer is actively pursuing additional story information, and they are also the company's most important measurement of viewership for advertisers.

Before January 1, the editors' contracts stipulated only that they post a certain number of stories per day. Since then, the company has instituted a new PV bonus system, whereby each editor is guaranteed a particular base salary, but they can earn monthly bonuses according to increased page views on their stories. While Dana is exempt from acquiring an individual PV bonus, she can receive a bonus from an overall site PV increase quarterly.

Dana nibbles on her egg-whites-on-toast sandwich and sips on her coffee throughout the morning. She also lights an occasional cigarette, which burns in a nearby ashtray while she edits copy. Her eyes flash from IM, to MT, to RSS and to email. She looks up at the television only after *The Today Show* ends, so that she can switch channels to *The View*. She and several of the other editors keep these morning television shows on in case something unusual happens and they want to post the video online. Telescope Media has a video technology employee who Tivos a list of television shows throughout the day in the event one of the sites wishes to post video from a show. If Dana or another editor IMs about a particular television exchange and they decide to run a video excerpt on the site, Dana immediately IMs the technical employee to get him to "rip" the video for them. That video is then put into the online Telescope Media video library and labeled according to site.

At 12:30, Dana's computer freezes and the five IMs, the MT screen and the RSS feed stand eerily still. Dana yells at her computer and briefly attempts to figure out if there is a way to save what is on her screen. After a sigh, she reboots her computer and lights a cigarette. Two seconds later her phone rings and it is Sasha wondering what has happened. Dana tells her about her computer woes and waits twenty seconds for her computer to get back online. She finds IMs from her other editors, also wondering where Dana went. Dana explains to them briefly, and then asks them how their stories are progressing and if they're ready for more links.

At 2:30, Dana's stomach begins rumbling and she walks to her small refrigerator to grab a yogurt and a Diet Coke. As she eats her yogurt, she scrolls through the afternoon pictures from the photo agencies, saving some of the photos on her desktop for later use. She then scans her RSS feed before checking story status in MT. She notices that one of Suzanne's features has been inputted, so she opens the file and begins editing. While she edits, she IMs Suzanne with certain questions and comments she has about the story. Suzanne responds with additional information and fifteen minutes later the story is saved in MT again ready to go live in 30 minutes.

As the afternoon wears on, Dana continues to add links from the RSS feed to her master story idea list. However, she notices that the availability of possible story slots has become lean. Dana decides to increase the number of posts from every fifteen minutes to every ten minutes, thereby opening the number of stories from 4 – 7:30 pm, from 15 to 21. She compiles a list of the story links within an email and sends the email to her editors, IMing the editors that she is emailing them. The editors respond via IM to Dana within a few minutes with requests that they be assigned certain stories.

Dana now has the rundown complete for the rest of the afternoon. She breathes an audible sigh and stretches. She has a pinched nerve in her neck, carpal tunnel and swollen feet, yet she has barely moved to either rub her neck or shake out her arms or legs. She gets up to feed and pet her cats and use the restroom. She returns to her chair with another Diet Coke and lights a cigarette before checking the site PVs. It's 4 pm and they've had over 450,000 PVs. "Not bad," Dana murmurs quietly. She then turns her attention back to MT to see what stories have come in and are ready for her revisions.

As the clock ticks toward 6 pm, Dana IMs Sasha and Suzanne that they are done for the day. "And then there were three," she says. Holly, Becca and Suzanne IM Dana that they are working on their last few posts, so Dana continues to scan the RSS feed and photo sites. As the stories come in, Dana edits each in turn, all the while IMing with the respective editors. By 7 pm, the last of the posts is ready to go live at 7:30 pm, and Dana stretches again. Today has been relatively smooth for a Monday, she admits. There were no IM squabbles with editors, only one small technical difficulty and a decent PV count.

Tonight is going to be a quiet one for Dana, who has planned an evening of going through catalogues and writing a feature on one of the more extravagant ones. In addition to providing commentary, she must scan certain pages and format them within MT. The preparation for such a feature is often too time-consuming to do during the regular workday, yet she is looking forward to the creative writing she has before her tonight.

But first, Dana will order out food for dinner and check the PVs a few more times. After spending a couple hours writing her feature, she will scan the feeds and make her story idea lists for tomorrow. She will then set her alarm for 6:30 am and finally pull back

her tidy bedspread. As for what tomorrow will hold, Dana will have to wait seven hours to find out.

Organizational culture, mission and virtual workplace

Four basic assumptions operate within the organizational culture of Futé: 1) Our mission is true; 2) Working from home is the best way to go; 3) IM is the most effective way for us to communicate, and; 4) The new PV system doesn't really affect us. These assumptions represent the group's taken-for-granted beliefs and values that are rarely debated or confronted. Accordingly, they are the driving force of the site in that they are used at both the group and individual level as defense mechanisms that allow the group to maintain functionality.

To discern these mutually reinforced assumptions, information was gathered at two levels: 1) visible artifacts, and 2) espoused values, rules, beliefs and behavioral norms (Schein, 2004). The visible artifacts included things I could physically see, such as an editor's personal workspace, the site content, and hard copies of the editor's IM communication. The espoused values, rules, beliefs and behavioral norms represent what the editor says when asked about the site or about their experiences, all of which were communicated to me through interviews.

Assumption 1: Our mission is true

The editors are sincere in their endeavor to produce a unique media product that stimulates societal discourse. Their espoused values about the site's content are

consistent with both the “Futé manifesto” and their typical daily rundown. The editors utilize their platform to demystify and even discredit messages found in mainstream media, particularly communication pertaining to women.

The editors operate as a whole with this communal purpose; tacitly following established tone and style. Editors define content as whatever interests them, but acknowledge that these topics must also pass muster with Dana, the main gatekeeper. Editors define the site’s content using different lenses, from humor to feminist, and acknowledge that celebrity is another significant ingredient. The editors espouse the use of celebrity material to stimulate audience growth, while fashioning content to inspire thought-provoking dialogue.

Everyday content

Dana implements a basic formula for daily content balance: 15% fashion, 30% celebrity, 20% magazine, 30% relationships and the rest a hybrid. Depending on whether Dana chooses to post a new item every ten minutes or fifteen minutes, the site usually runs 40 – 55 posts per day.

A typical day consists of the regular features Morning Crap (a roundup of celebrity gossip stories), Naked Truth (a morning wrap-up of hard news stories), Cloak and Dagger (a roundup of fashion news stories), Celebritease (another roundup of the day’s celebrity stories), Hey ya (one comment each), Daily Snow (an evening wrap-up of hard news stories) and supplemental feature material. Sandwiched between these are Clips (videos), Quick Links, Snap Judgment (photo), Ad Libs (advertisement videos),

Mag Hag (magazine commentary) and whatever else Dana and the editors deem newsworthy that day.

A usual day's headlines might look like this:

- 9:00 Morning Crap: Britney May Not Be Pregnant
- 9:15 Snap Judgment: Sarah Laura Parker Is Not A Starbucks Girl
- 9:30 Missing White Women: Missing Teenager Is Also Internet Porn Phenom
- 9:45 Nifestyles
- 10:00 Naked Truth
- 10:15 Snap Judgment: Daniel Craig Wears Less Makeup: Funnier Face
- 10:30 Big Spenders: Shocker: Not All Luxuries Are Created Equal
- 10:45 Vintage Ads
- 11:00 You Wanna Be On Top: *ANTM*: Jenah Has A Personality, It's Just Not As Fun As Asperger's
- 11:15 Snap Judgment: Cute, One-Eyed Pooch Upstages Selma Blair At Crosswalk
- 11:30 Job Rage: Ever Had A Job So Bad You Couldn't Stay A Week? We Have! And We Didn't Find It Exactly "Liberating"
- 11:45 Celebritease
- 12:00 Cloak and Dagger
- 12:15 Snap Judgment: Monica Lewinsky: She's Got A Fancy Degree Now! She Doesn't *Have* To Look Cute!
- 12:30 Photoshop of Horrors! Teen Girls Shocked To Learn That Perfect Women Aren't So Perfect
- 12:45 Hello Kitty
- 1:00 Magazine Mashups
- 1:15 Snap Judgment: Ashley Olsen's Tucked-In Hair, Tight Skirt, Big Smile
- 1:30 Suffering: Don't Take Tylenol! The Only Thing Worse Is Advil! Aspirin's Just As Bad! (I GIVE UP!)
- 1:45 Bee Schaffer

- 2:00 Clips: *The Real World*: Trisha Gets Booted For Random Acts of Violence
- 2:10 Snap Judgment: Josh Hartnett Takes Direction
- 2:20 Fashion Victims: Uggs: They'll Break Your Back And Make You Stink
- 2:30 Vintage Ads
- 2:40 Law And Order: Is The "Duke Effect" Letting College Dudes Get Away With Rape?
- 2:50 Snap Judgment: Gwyneth Paltrow Wears Uggs, Hangs Head In Shame
- 3:10 Women And Math
- 3:20 Snap Judgment: Kristin Davis & Some Bitches From The *Sex And The City* Movie
- 3:30 Today In Catalogs: Design Within Reach: Sleek, Modern & Not Actually Within Reach
- 3:45 Rachel Ray Virtual Doll
- 4:00 Rumor Patrol: Are Reese And Jake For Real?
- 4:10 Snap Judgment: Thandie Newton: Fairly Flawless, Frankly
- 4:20 Pot Psychology: "Do Some Men Just Prefer The Long, Hard Gymnastic Bang?"
- 4:30 The Seinfelds
- 4:40 Men Are From Mars: The Problem With Men's Health Is Men
- 4:50 Hey ya
- 5:00 You W Dana Be On Top: ANTM's Saleisha Has A Long History With Tyra
- 5:10 Stats Feed
- 5:20 Snap Judgment: Katie Holmes' New Dominatrix 'Do
- 5:40 No Thanks: How Many Louboutins Would Get You To Enlist In The Army?
- 5:50 Celebritease
- 6:00 Clips: How Do You Make It To *Project Runway* If You Can't Make Pants?
- 6:15 Snap Judgment: Julianne Moore's Feet: Somewhere Under The Rainbow

- 6:30 Memory Lane: Jay-Z's Old BFF: "We Had Sex With The Same Women...We Had The Drip."
- 6:45 Hooker With A Heart Of Gold
- 7:00 Clip: Vintage *Real World*: Miami's Dan & Melissa Throwdown

In addition, it is useful to consider examples of the daily features (note: these are devoid of the accompanying photos):

Morning Crap: Ali Lohan Can't Wait To Be Like Big Sis Linds

- Ali Lohan tells *Teen Vogue*: "I grew up watching Lindsay. It made me want to do what she does. Just the whole vibe. Being there, being on camera, or onstage, with everybody listening to you... It's so cool when people look up to you. I've already been asked for my autograph and it's just a really good feeling to have." Oh, no! Isn't there a difference between a creative artist who craves expression and a fame whore? [[People](#)]
- Where were Brad and Angelina on Oscar night? At home, relaxing. Basking in their collective hotness, probably. [[People](#)]
- Angelina will have her baby in France and it's a girl, if you believe this UK paper. [[The Sun](#)]
- John Krasinski and Rashida Jones: It's so on. [[ONTD](#)]
- Mile high club! Rhys Ifans and Sienna Miller got frisky on a flight from L.A. to London: Rhys took off his top and jumped half-naked into Sienna's fold-out bed. [[Mirror](#)]
- Madonna to other prospective jurors at jury duty: "I'm gonna tell [the court] I'm an unemployed mom." [[Page Six](#)]
- Madonna's new album (and her final CD with Warner Bros.) is titled *Hard Candy* and drops April 29. Can't wait to taste it! [[Yahoo News](#)]
- More>>

Naked Truth: Barry Coasts Through Another Debate Victory

Today *US Weekly* began circulating this and other sensitive photos in a bid to have American supermarket tabloid readers believe Barry Hussein is **just like US**. And it appears to be working! Even (former) Ku Klux Klansman David Duke is not bothered by Barack Hussein, except, you know, the whole fact that he is a **Jew puppet**. Which may be why Hillary Clinton's attempts to have the American public believe that he hates Jews last night fell flat. (Or, actually, maybe it's because of that lame *SNL* reference.) That, the rape story and an in-depth discussion of whether North Korea is, in fact, the worst place in the world, with me and **Glamocracy's** Megan Carpentier after the jump. [more »](#)

Cloak and Dagger: Dana Wintour And Carine Roitfeld: It Is So On

- Dana Wintour on being called a "puppet" by French *Vogue* editor-in-chief Carine Roitfeld in *New York Magazine*: "Maybe you should ask Carine. I have no comment." [[Frillr](#)]
- But you should ask her about it if you happen to be at Oxford University today, where La Wintour will be speaking about her "media career and extensive charity work." If you are there *please* email us with details from her chat! [[Vogue UK](#)]
- "Ashley was surprised. The women were really chic. A lot of them had such great style. And we didn't expect there to be so many women like that." That's Rae Miles, commercial director of Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's clothing line, The Row, about her and Ashley's visit to Dallas to promote the line. Because clearly no one outside L.A. or New York knows how to dress themselves! [[WWD](#), sub req'd]
- [more »](#)

Hey Ya:

Best Comment of the Day, in response to **Five Reasons To Love Viagra**: "I am PRO-Boner! Viva Viagra!" We say: we always vote for the candidate with a pro-boner platform. • Worst, in response to **Bitch Is The New Black**: "she actually looks almost decent in that picture. but um, does she have fangs?" We say: yes. So do we. The

better to rip you apart, my dear.

Celebritease:

Eva Mendes is **out of rehab**. She was spotted at L.A. club Madeo last night. Stay well, pretty lady! • The Jonas Brothers say they'll stay virgins until they get married. *Us* takes this opportunity to present a slide show of **famous former virgins** like Britney, Laura Simpson, and H. Duff. Oh how the mighty hymens have fallen! • *Grey's Anatomy* star T.R. Knight has a **new boyfriend**, AIDS activist and college student Mark Cornelsen. Cute couple alert! [TMZ, Us, Page Six]

News Round-up: Don't You Wish The Government Could Be More Like A Buddy Movie?

- "I wish they could run together...they'd be like one of those old 1970s cop shows. The crusty old seen-it-all guy who goes by his gut, partnered with the brilliant rookie who's got courage to match his brains." That's an undecided voter, in a piece on the "dude vote." [Salon]
- Didn't think there was a blog post dedicated to likening potential Obama running mates to the white halves of cherished buddy movies? Think again! [Delicious Ghost]
- The massive power outage in Florida today was not, somehow, the work of radical Islamic terrormongers! [Miami Herald]
- Hillary Clinton, who is **still running**, defended a man accused of raping a 12-year-old girl in the seventies and may have made some shit up about how the girl was prone to fantasize and seek out older men that turned out not to be true. [Andrew Sullivan]
- The Pakistani election: bad for Uncle Pervy, but good for transgendered dancers. No, truly! [WSJ]
- **more »**

On the Futé site, one can click “About” at the bottom of the page and be directed to the “Futé Manifesto.” The “manifesto” reads like a newspaper or magazine mission statement, only with significantly more spirit:

To put it simply, Futé is a blog for women that will attempt to take all the essentially meaningless but sweet stuff directed our way and give it a little more meaning, while taking more the serious stuff [sic] and making it more fun, or more personal, or at the very least the subject of our highly sophisticated brand of sex joke. Basically, we wanted to make the sort of women's magazine we'd want to read, a magazine that would never actually see glossy paper because big-name advertisers and the publishers who kowtow to them don't much like it when you point out the vulgarity of a \$2000 handbag. Women deserve some of the blame here: if men ever *bought* \$2000 handbags, *Esquire* and *GQ* might be as bad -- and profitable -- as *Glamour* and *Vogue*.

But in order to reverse the cycle it's important to recognize that there are a few big lies -- we're going with five -- perpetuated by the women's media.

Like most truly damaging lies, they're not earth-shatterers. You've heard of them; like tales of intelligence-manipulation by the Bush administration or insider trading on Wall Street they aren't going shock you. You've learned to live with them; we all have. We just finally got sick of it.

- THE COVER LIE You can, it turns out, judge a book by its cover, if it has the name *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *Harper's Bazaar*, or any number of other print-media brands slapped across its face. In addition to their virtually all-white casts (editors tend to quarantine the minorities on their low-selling January issues) women's magazine covers display what are essentially female forgeries, smothered in makeup, lit and fanned and shot with equipment that could be eBayed to finance an Ivy League education, and computer-aided-artistry involving heavy airbrushing,

contouring and rearranging to make hips look leaner and eyes that extra-special, inhuman hue of aquamarine. And then there is the text! So many editors, writers and publishing-side execs weigh in on these tasty tidbits - "The 6- Step Bikini Makeover", "Sex: The New Trend That Everyone's Trying" -- that what's promised often bears little resemblance to what's actually inside. Not that what's inside is any meatier or less predictable. But it's all about getting you to leap before you look. Sort of like shopping!

- THE CELEBRITY-PROFILE LIE In the olden days, you could read a piece about a successful actress or public figure without a sidebar on her favorite grooming products, yoga practice, or "wholly original" sense of style. If she was a bitch, or pathetically ditzy and/or nine hours late, you might hear about that, too. As pretty much every other medium of journalism becomes more transparent and less beholden to its subjects, and as stars use MySpace and Blogger to expose the dotting public to their innermost thoughts and crap spelling, the celebrity profiles found in women's magazines have actually managed to get flatter, more nakedly consumerist and less imaginative than the movies and TV shows they're shilling for, and we include *Georgia Rule* in that group. But don't blame the writers for this sad reality: They're just doing their jobs, which, according to the mandate put forth by editors and publicists, is to ask lots of questions about things like, you know, clothes, décor, and relaxation techniques. It has gotten so that women's magazines are actually doing you a disservice when they try to profile of women [sic] outside the celebrity-sartorial complex, because their worldviews are simply no longer equipped to account for people with priorities other than the achievement of that ineffable quality Kimora Lee Simmons calls "fabulosity." Take their bestowal of "It Girl" status on such wildly inappropriate subjects as Lara Logan (see June *Vogue*, page 204), or their focus on only the most photogenic cancer survivors/assault

victims/environmental activists. It almost makes us wish for the return of the supermodel. At least in the 80s and 90s, beauty was a job left to the beautiful people.

- THE MUST-HAVE LIE When a magazine editor highlights a must-have new creme eyeshadow, pore clarifying serum or sporty little capelet, she not only probably got it for free, she also probably got a meal out of it, and a celeb-studded party, and possibly a trip to Miami to learn of its merits from a carefully cultivated crop of experts, and oh yeah maybe a video iPod from the grateful publicist (with whom she is BFF!) Magazine editors are so buried in free shit that they don't even realize how much they get, that when the time comes for them to exhort you to invest in the new important color that isn't black *they actually believe their own hype*. The truth: black goes with everything, and you probably don't need any more assistance going broke.
- THE AFFIRMATION CRAP LIE If women's magazines have done their job, if they have kept your attention and your subscriptions and you have devoted precious hours to consuming it, you are probably unlovable. You wonder whether Mischa Barton is skinny-fat, and whether you, too, might be skinny-fat (or simply fat!) You are insecure about things you probably didn't know it was possible to be insecure about. (Are you an effective *cuddler*? Find out in June's *Cosmo*, page 132!) (No, actually really! It's a real story!) You fret that your lipstick is bleeding and your fine lines are deepening and that during oral sex you might not be handling his balls correctly, and most of all, that you aren't projecting enough *confidence*, probably because your posture is bad. Is it any wonder that you now need *affirmation* that you are worth loving at all? Incessant reminders of what a goddess you really are? And that he is never going to love you if you don't love yourself. But wait, why *should* you love yourself? These magazines have made you boring as fuck!

- AND FINALLY, THE BIG META LIE is that this is one big postmodern joke on which we are all in. The big lie is that we even know what the fuck postmodern *means*, and we've all read all the Beckett plays and seen Zizek speak, that we know how to pronounce Zizek, not to mention Nicholas Ghesquiere, that **Everything Bad Is Good For You** (and that you actually read that book, too). And that all the surreality and celebphemera and retail therapy is harmless escapism, that it has *always* been this way, that it is not symptomatic of some sort of larger societal cancer. The big lie is that we haven't let the norms of the celebrity-sartorial complex seep into the way we see everything in the world, perpetuating the notion that all of life is high school, and the pretty people are the only ones worth your attention, and that alpha girls are entitled to act cruel and inhuman towards their subordinates, and that all the world would be that way *anyway*. Because it wouldn't. And though we've found women's magazines to be a fairly trusty engine of hilarious tidbits, it is *not* all one big joke.

Editors' description of site

While the “manifesto” proclaims that Futé essentially debunks messages conveyed within mainstream media and takes “all the essentially meaningless but sweet stuff directed our way and give it a little more meaning, while taking more the serious stuff and making it more fun, or more personal, or at the very least the subject of our highly sophisticated brand of sex joke,” the declaration doesn’t articulate what the site really *is*.

This type of conundrum might be discarded as an issue of semantics, but in our era of ever-splintering new media, it is indeed interesting to contemplate how the editors themselves classify the content. One might consider who their competition is in order to

help define their own site, however Dana claims not to know about their rivals because Futé is such a distinctive mixture of topics:

It depends on what subject matter. If it's who puts up celebrity pictures it could be any of the gossip blogs. If it's about women, it could be a feminist site. There isn't just one site that we're competitive with. We have so many different variables, so many different subject matters.

Other editors, such as Holly, who worked at a self-professed feminist magazine before coming to Futé, is wont to describe the site using a political lens:

We don't say we're a feminist site, but I think that just inherently, because of the things we talk about and the stances that we take on a lot of things, we are...that it doesn't need to be said. But I think it's hard to say we're not a feminist site, just by the fact that it's run by intelligent, educated women who hold these certain beliefs that line up with feminism.

Holly asserts that despite the celebrity content on Futé, the site is not, in fact, a celebrity site per se. In fact, she claims the celebrity material works to spotlight larger societal issues:

The thing is, I think we talk about all those things in the context of being women, rather than just talking about it in the context of it because it's about celebrities. I mean, not everything has to have a meaning behind it, but for us, it often does. If we're talking about Amy Winehouse and her issues then I think it's a little bit different than TMZ being like, 'there she is, being fucked up again.' I feel like they don't do that much analyzing, but we do.

Similarly, Laura sees the site as a hybrid of feminist beliefs, massaged with humor, and sometimes filtered through the guise of celebrity:

I would actually say that it's a feminist site, and I'm a little loath to say that because that word is so loaded. But I think in some ways we're reflective of a progressive woman and what a progressive woman is thinking. But I think we don't take ourselves too seriously, which I think

is something that is severely lacking in the feminist movement. We're in a society where celebrity is sort of a lens that a lot of people look through – not necessarily the world, but a lot of issues.

Becca, the editor who writes a majority of the political and hard news posts, identifies Futé differently than both Holly and Laura, by expressing the importance of wit to its character. Becca's sentiments, similar to that of the manifesto – which she and Dana wrote – emphasizes the use of comedy and even absurdity:

Above and beyond, it's humor. And it's a place for, even when we're not feeling that humorous, the commenters to step in and fill that niche. And if it wasn't first and foremost a humor site, I feel like the earnest stuff that we do wouldn't work. But it's kind of a struggle against the mindlessness of the culture, especially as it pertains to women, while not denying the humor. I mean, basically we are all making fun of mindlessness and stupidity and the vapidness of what's out there on the Internet and on our pop culture radar screen right now.

All the editors have work experience at either a major newspaper or magazine, which conventionally fall under the grouping of “journalism.” However the tasks Futé editors perform and the product produced cause them to become introspective before offering an opinion on whether what they do should be considered journalism.

Dana, who because of her management duties writes the least amount of copy for the site, asserts:

Uh-oh, no. There are times when someone has done reporting for a post, but that's very rare. I mean, it's an oft-used way of describing bloggers is that they're parasites, because they're making something out of someone else's work. So some of the people that we get inspiration from or blog about are journalists. I would not say what we're doing is journalism at all. There are people on this staff who have worked in journalism, but I would never say that because I would just feel...it would be insulting to a real journalist. Because they are the ones making the phone calls and doing the hard work and it's really easy just to comment on something.

Becca, whose resume includes economic reporting for the *Wall Street Journal*, echoes Dana's sentiments concerning the lack of gumshoe reporting done for the site. Although she has posted some original reporting, such as a continued investigation into the suicide of teenager Megan Meier, she typically writes in reaction to news reports.

No. When I do actual reporting, which is very rare, that I consider journalism. I feel more like a columnist, but not a columnist who goes out and does a lot of things. I feel more like a newspaper columnist, I've kind of taken that role.

Both Laura and Suzanne were less grounded in conviction with their respective answers. While Laura appeared to be certain with her first response, she later recants:

Yes, for sure. I suppose I don't really have a working definition of journalism, so maybe it's wrong for me to be like, 'Oh yeah, we're totally journalism.' But you know, we talk about newsy things. But we're not doing much original reporting, and that's what I think is one of the problems of blog journalism right now is that no company that is just doing blogs has the resources to do reporting because you're posting so much that there's no time.

Perhaps, as these excerpts illustrate, it is the articulation of a working definition of journalism that produces ambiguity. Suzanne's response provides an additional example of such consideration:

Yeah, I think what we do is journalism. I mean, when people ask me what I do I say that I'm a writer, which I guess is a different answer than I'm a journalist or an editor. So I guess whatever the differentiation is, I lean more toward someone who writes things as opposed to someone who conducts journalism. But yeah, I would say that this site is an act of journalism in some capacity.

One element that might differentiate the site from many mainstream media vehicles is its utilization of commenters. According to Dana, the site has a stable of several hundred commenters, who must “try out” to post comments at the end of a story. Each of the Telescope Media sites operate with a similar commenter system and a Telescope Media employee manages the requests from viewers who wish to be a commenter at a particular site. To “try out,” the viewer must provide a sample post. If the Telescope employee deems the viewer a legitimate contributor, rather than one who will just post to initiate hostility, they are given access to the posting boards.

The Futé editors all consider the commenters to be valuable content providers, in that the commenters provide additional dialogue and commentary to the original content. Suzanne believes that the commenters contribute an entirely new dimension to the product, one both unique and vital to this medium:

I think our commenters are 2/3 of what our site is. The fact that we write stuff and then people comment on it and the commenters comment on what someone else commented on, they have their own world, too. So I think there's a sense that people want to be part of a community. When you're reading a magazine, or a newspaper, or any print medium, you don't have that. There's none of that, you're not immediately with other people, even though you're not with other people. These people who are sitting all over and are reading the site and going back and forth about what they think about, you know, like Britney's vagina or is Ahmadinejad hot or not. I think there's a sense of connectiveness.

Similarly, Holly claims the content itself is merely a conversation starter, a conduit that provides discussion that transcends subject boundaries:

I think, more than anything, that Futé opens up this big conversation about being a woman, in all different aspects. We cover it as far as fashion or pop culture or politics, it's just always looking within different contexts. I think the commenters are a really good example of how that is working,

because they all talk. We could just post, ‘Hey, put a comment here,’ and they’d just talk to each other. Now, sometimes within the posts they’ll talk about the thing, but they’ll talk about it with each other rather than just commenting what the post is. They’ll go back and forth.

Assumption 2: Working from home is the best way to go

The virtual newsroom gives editors the freedom *not* to report to a workplace and experience face-to-face interactions with people both inside and outside of the organization. Most editors espouse pleasure with this novelty, and in many cases, the artifacts support their assertions. The environments the editors create for themselves also illustrate a level of devotion to their jobs. They establish a habitat in which they can best function, whether it’s one of clutter or one of simplicity. Whatever the setting, the editor espouses it to be superior to Telescope Media headquarters, for reasons of stimulus control.

Although this assumption may indeed be correct for the organizational gain, it might not be as accurate for the individual good. The physical detriments derived from this sedentary and stressful lifestyle are manifold, from weight gain or loss to carpal tunnel to anxiety disorders. While one editor claims to have benefited physically from this organizational setup, the others do not appear to reap any health advantages. So while the group may operate under the assumption that working from home is the best way to go, the ultimate impact on the individual might be otherwise.

Workplace environments

In order to produce the amount of content necessary to fulfill their daily responsibility, editors have cultivated their individual environments to suit their aesthetic requirements. While some editors, like Dana, are barely attentive to the chaos of her surroundings, others, like Laura, foster minimized disorder within their workspaces.

On a typical day, Dana, dressed in a tee-shirt and sweatpants, has on her desk a bag of cat treats, two cigarette packs, an ashtray, a baseball, a scanner, vitamins, saline drops, honey, a desk lamp, remote control, phone, dictionary, thesaurus, AP Style Guide, Chicago Style Guide, pens, pencils and scissors, and staffer phone numbers taped to her computer. Magazines are stacked to shin-height at various locations around her studio apartment. Clean laundry sits unfolded on her couch. Dirty cups sit in the sink. However, her bed is always made, with the comforter crease-free and pulled tight. She drinks coffee and Diet Cokes and eats breakfast and lunch, all the while sitting at her computer, eyes 18 inches from the screen. Occasionally she takes or makes a phone call, but the only sound other than the television is her fingers typing on her keyboard.

In contrast, Laura, wearing jeans and a long-sleeved shirt, sits on her couch with her laptop perched on her knees. The television is off and the apartment is quiet. The kitchen is clean and there are no stacks of any media lining the floor. Her bed is unmade. She makes coffee in the morning but only grazes on food. She says she usually waits until dinner to eat substantially.

Sasha's workplace environment is certainly the most claustrophobic, a detail she readily acknowledges. The studio is less than half the space of Dana's. The

shower is in the kitchen and the stovetop has been converted into a shelf by a board. Her two grated windows face the courtyard. Artwork, music, magazines and knickknacks line almost every possible inch of space. In her refrigerator is water, dog food and beer. Her bed is immaculately made and her tiny Chihuahua sleeps on its corner, a foot from Sasha's knee when she is sitting in her desk chair. Wearing black jeans, a black sweater and a hot-pink pashmina scarf, she looks ready for any New York City desk job. She makes tea for breakfast and at lunchtime usually walks a block to Subway for a take-out sandwich.

The traffic noise at the busy intersection below her fourth-floor apartment doesn't seem to rattle Becca much. Nor does it bother her when her roommate also works from home. Although she's lived in the two-bedroom apartment almost seven months, Becca, wearing jeans and a tee-shirt, has yet to hang her artwork in her bedroom. She sits during the day on a small couch next to her made bed with a small table in front of her. On the table is a laptop on the left and a computer monitor and keyboard on the right. She uses both, keeping the main monitor clean of desktop files, while cluttering up the laptop monitor with PDFs, documents and photos. She writes only from the big monitor. Her bottle of Adderall sits next to the big monitor. Becca is a coffee drinker who, like Laura, eats lightly during the day in favor of a more solid dinner.

Suzanne, like Becca, lives in two-bedroom apartment with a roommate. In fact, the two editors live within a short walk from each other. Her apartment also sits on a busy thoroughfare but rarely seems interrupted by the exterior noise. Unlike Becca, Suzanne's roommate works in an office, thus leaving her alone during the day.

The apartment has a few pieces of artwork hung, but by and large appears in a state of transition. Suzanne, wearing a trendy black sweater over black leggings, rests on a long couch facing a television turned on most of the day, first to *The Today Show*, then *The View* and later, *The Tyra Banks Show*. Her laptop sits on her knees and her Blackberry on the couch within view. In the last two years, Suzanne experienced severe digestive problems and she now eats small amounts of food throughout the day.

Compared to the other editors, Holly, sporting jeans and a long-sleeved tee shirt, seems to live in the lap of luxury. Her triplex apartment is lined with windows that face a quiet street. Framed vintage movie posters grace the walls and unlike her coworkers, her apartment boasts an actual dining area, complete with table and matching chairs. Her living room shelves are lined with books ranging from *Valley of the Dolls* to *Julius Caesar*. Sitting prominently on the shelf is a framed embroidery she sewed that reads, "Go Fuck Yourself." Her terrier poodle mix Andy, wearing a black tee shirt with a skull and cross bones and a studded collar, alternates between sleeping and barking frenzy. When Holly's not at her DVD player burning clips of television shows to discs for the site to use, she sits on her black leather couch with her laptop on her knees. Cardboard boxes are stacked underneath the stairwell, a reminder that her boyfriend recently moved out. Her bed is unmade. Holly is a recovering cocaine user who stopped using the drug in May. After she quit using, she gained 30 pounds and went on Weight Watchers to lose the pounds. Now she tends to keep her energy up during the day with nutrition bars and Red Bull.

The editors

While observations of editors' workspaces enrich our understanding of the site's workplace culture, a closer examination of the editors is also important. As Kets de Vries (2001) clinical paradigm suggests, we are products of our pasts. Thus, to understand how these editors have arrived at Futé, a new product even by new-media standards, we need to examine the career trajectory of its key players, the editors.

Dana

For most of her 35 years, Dana has worked. In middle school and high school, her jobs were a newspaper route, administrative assistant and ice cream scooper. While in college at New York University, where she majored in journalism, she was a work-study student in a computer lab, worked as a clothing store associate and was a paid intern at three publications. After college, she had full-time jobs at *Entertainment Weekly*, HBO, *Fashion Wire Daily*, *Glamour*, *Star*, *Celebrity Living*, and *InStyle*. During this time, she took off three years to write a book, while also working as a freelance magazine writer.

While Dana was working at *Star* in fall 2006, another editor at the magazine, who was also a friend of Dana's, began conceiving the idea for a new female-centric site for Telescope Media. The editor, Katherine, encouraged Dana to join her in creating the site, and within several months, both editors had left their jobs at *Star* to work full-time on the yet-untitled site. During the next month of creating test-posts, Katherine became increasingly absent from both her site duties and all communication. By February 1, despite her worries about Katherine's whereabouts,

Dana was put in charge of the site. She almost immediately hired Becca, then six weeks later hired Suzanne. She says the creation of the site was a mutual vision:

I don't want to say it was all me, because as I was deciding what the site was going to be I was talking to Becca, too. It's wasn't just like, 'okay, you're the writer and you should do what I say.' It was more like, 'What should I do? What should we do?'

In addition to brainstorming the content, the blog had to be named. Dana, however, was not part of this process. Paul Stevenson, the founder and owner of Telescope Media, along with the company's lawyer, Rachel Wright, who is also Paul's best friend, came up with the name, Futé, which means "clever girl" in French. Dana's reaction to the name was less than supportive:

Becca and I were so mad about it, we just hated it. And even now I don't love it, but I do not hate it. But at first I just hated it, I was so mad about it, I was embarrassed. I would just call it 'the site' for the first two months, I wouldn't even say the name. We did a post the first day about how we didn't like the first name...or, our impressions about what the first name meant. We immediately just said, 'eh.'

Sasha

As Dana's deputy editor, Sasha's past work experiences reflect an affection – or at least, tolerance – for mainstream magazines. Sasha also attended New York University, but graduated from the Tisch School of the Arts and majored in screenwriting. Her first job was at a company that represented photographers and directors. Following that, she helped launch *This Old House* magazine, interned for *Entertainment Weekly*, freelanced at *Modern Bride*, *Travel and Leisure* and *The New*

Yorker. Sasha then spent seven years at *J-14*, a monthly magazine for teenagers, and eventually became the executive editor. She said it wasn't long after she realized she had reached as high as she could go at the magazine when she came across an enticing employment opportunity:

I saw a posting on Telescope and it was like, 'If you're magazine obsessed, especially women's magazines, write a paragraph about it and send it to this email address.' And I wrote about how *Vogue* makes me hate myself. And then the person who responded was Dana, and I had worked with her at *Entertainment Weekly*.

Although Dana and Sasha met in February to discuss the job, Sasha, who was the third person hired full-time, didn't begin until July when the additional salary funding became available.

Becca

Becca has perhaps the most unconventional work history. She attended the University of Pennsylvania for two years, where she spent most of her time working the crime beat for the student newspaper, the *Daily Pennsylvanian*. After her sophomore year, she dropped out of school to take an internship at the Philadelphia *Daily News* before moving home to Washington, DC to work at the *Washington Times*. She then moved to Hong Kong and interned at *Asia Week* magazine, before working at *Time Asia* and launching a financial website called *Asiawise*. When she says she "got really homesick," Becca took an internship with a promise of a job at the LA bureau of the *Wall Street Journal*, where she was eventually hired full-time. When that ended nearly three years later, she took a writing gig with *Philadelphia*

Magazine again, and decided to write a book about the American economy and its creation and demand for goods. At age 27, Becca moved to New York City and got a book agent, a relationship that ended disastrously and without a book. Becca claims that living in New York City without much stable income motivated her to go in a different direction:

It was the farthest thing that I could imagine from something I wanted to do, but I had heard that the money was decent and I was really desperate for a job. So I was like, what the hell, let's try it out. So I wrote some sample posts, and Dana really got me excited because we just had like a great conversation. And I remember her being like, 'Well, do you want to do this?' And me being like, 'Sure,' but thinking, 'No.' But then it became really exciting and people responded to it right away.

While Becca had early reservations about writing for a market so much different than her previous experience, she has rationalized her role within the site:

The coolest part for me has been making things that are not automatically things that you would read about, readable to people of a wide audience. And when there is a debate, or something about like, Hugo Chavez, I know that we had like a hundred commenters who really care about Hugo Chavez. And they all have political leanings, you know? They're smart girls, they just aren't necessarily reading all the things that they should be or that they feel that they should be. So it's kind of nice to be able to do that then have a place for the fun.

Holly

Like Dana and Sasha, Holly attended New York University, majoring in journalism and graphic design. While at NYU, Holly interned at *Bust*, a feminist magazine. By the time she graduated, the magazine had been bought by a dotcom, which then went out of business after 9/11. While the original editors re-acquired the

magazine, it had no funding, so Holly worked for free, doing various odd jobs to subsidize her living expenses. Eventually, the magazine was able to pay her, and Holly spent six years there working as a designer and editor. In February 2007, Holly interviewed for an editorial position at Futé, but in lieu of a full-time position, she freelanced from April until the end of July, when she became a staff member.

What is unique to Holly is her moniker, “Free Love.” This name, like the names of any staffer who authors a post, appears next to her stories. She says she acquired the name when she started her own still-operating anonymous sex blog and had to pick a name:

I wrote really, really dirty things and I didn't want my family knowing or anything. But if I had known that that nickname was going to stick with me I would have put more thought into it. But I was just joking around and I was a little drunk when I was first starting my blog and I had to pick a name and so I just typed in Free Love off the top of my head.

Suzanne

Although she is the self-professed “baby of the site,” Suzanne is also one of the three founding editors. She graduated from Columbia University in 2005 with an English major and was immediately hired at Elle magazine as the assistant to the Editor-in-Chief. Suzanne, who turned down a promotion to Associate Beauty Editor to take the Futé position, claims her decision to move to the site was not difficult:

My boss at Elle actually said to me, ‘There are so few times in life where you get to be part of a start-up and create something from the ground up, and how could I not understand you wanting that opportunity? And also, Futé was offering me double the money as I was making at my current job.

Laura

Only one year older than Suzanne is Laura, who was hired by Dana in the fall of 2007 and has a sizable work history, considering her time on the job market. After graduating from Brown in 2004, she worked at *Spin* magazine, first as an intern at the website and then as the site's new media assistant. After leaving *Spin*, she took a job with Zagat Survey, but she claims it was only because "I needed a job and it had health insurance." While working for Zagat she was also freelancing for Salon, *The New York Times*, *Radar* and various women's magazines. Laura then took a feature editor job at a magazine that was still to be launched, but which folded before it even hit the newsstands. She says the magazine's early implosion was unsettling, but ultimately advantageous:

I was so excited, had a new job, whatever, and then I was there for a week. And then I didn't know what the fuck I was going to do. But it was sort of the best thing that ever happened to me, because right after that I really scrambled hard to get freelance work. So I got enough to pretty much support me and I did a stint back researching at *Radar* to make sure I met rent and I got this job at the beginning of October.

Physical environments

Dana and Sasha were the two editors who apologized for the condition of their work environments. Dana justified her apartment's disorder as being a product of both the daily pace and her short-term future in the space. Instead of spending energy, time and money to fix up her studio, Dana says she'd rather wait until she moves into a new apartment with her soon-to-be-husband.

While Sasha's apartment illustrates more organized chaos, the issue of its tiny size remains and she says she hopes to look for a larger apartment soon. However, perhaps the more urgent issue is her physically damaging desk setup:

Physically, I'm uncomfortable. My desk is not at the right height, I can feel it. I totally have carpal tunnel, my wrists hurt, my feet are not at the right height – everything is wrong. My chair is not really comfortable, it's like a cheap chair.

Sasha says her apartment's size has inspired her to construct informal work time boundaries for herself:

When I get out of bed, I cannot get on the bed again. Like, I'm working. I'm not saying that I would fall asleep, but to me, this is my office and that's my home. And if I sit on the bed I won't be in work mode.

Other editors, such as Laura, say they also employ household restrictions that enable to them stay focused:

Sometimes I'll try to watch TV and if it's too distracting I'll turn it off. I know some people need to get up and stretch, but that's almost like a distraction for me. I'll go to the bathroom, but going out and getting food is for some reason horrendously distracting for me, so I just make everything here.

In addition to negotiating their physical surroundings, the editors are also confronted with the physical isolation that may accompany working from home. While several editors claim they actually enjoy the seclusion of the job, others say they have established ways to cope with this virtual characteristic.

Dana illustrates the perspective of solitary satisfaction:

Do I miss being around people? I think I do, but I don't really feel it. Which kind of worries me (laughs). But it's the same thing that happened

when I did that book. I got into being by myself and working and it was really hard for me to get out of that. It was really hard to go back to being around people. I was sometimes much happier just being by myself, in my own company (laughs).

Becca's sentiments embrace a more elemental stance and one that hearkens back to the issue of pace and productivity:

I don't really have a problem with working from home because I don't miss working with other people. I would say I miss socializing with other people at work, but I also know that that doesn't get any work done. People are distracting in general and that's one thing I don't miss.

Perhaps the issue of isolation depends on how one defines being alone.

Laura's perspective seems to primarily consider the communicative aspects, rather than the physical environs:

Sometimes at the end of the day I feel a little bit like a crazy shut-in. But usually my friends are IMing me all the time. If I weren't chatting with some of my friends during the day I think that I would probably freak out. So I definitely get interaction, it's just not face-to-face. And it's weird to get to the end of the day where it's like, 'Wow, I don't think I spoke aloud for the past nine hours.'

In comparison, Suzanne's perception gives the impression of contemplating both:

I'm in communication with the other people I work with for twelve hours a day. You feel lonely when you're sitting in a desk in an office building. I did, at least. I kind of like the ability to be in my environment and especially for me, when I have food in the house then I'm eating when I want to. I can graze all day, which is easier for me to digest than eating a meal, and I like staying in my pajamas.

In addition to communicating with one another via IM during the day, some of the editors, such as Sasha and Becca, choose to get together after work, sometimes, as Sasha alludes, just for the sake of experiencing some physical contact.

I do kind of feel like – especially if I walk the dog around the block and go to Subway and then come back home – that my life is in like one square block of New York, which is a little weird. But I actually do make the effort, like I meet Becca for dinner a lot since she lives so close to me. I'll be off at five and go run my errands, like pick up my laundry, walk the dog, make some phone calls, watch the news, whatever. And when she's done at eight or 8:30, we'll meet for dinner. It's good because yeah, she's my coworker, but also it's like, I didn't spend all day and not talk to a human being in the flesh.

The work pace

Working for a website or blog has been described as a 24/7 job. In other words, a news worker is never off the clock. Because blogs such as Futé are updated so often, the influx of story ideas must be consistent and sizeable. Often accompanying this pace is an exceptional level of stress. This non-stop juggling is perhaps the defining characteristic of this particular medium. As managing editor of the site, Dana acknowledges that her constant multi-tasking takes a toll on her emotional, and even physical, wellbeing:

I never felt anxiety the way I feel at this job at times. Like I've never almost had a panic attack because I've been like, 'Oh my fucking God.' We don't stop. I mean, right now you can see I'm having little email chats with them because the day is pretty much over, but for a good ten hours straight, all I'm doing is working. I don't have time to sit around and look at a magazine, I don't have time to talk on the phone with my friends, I don't really have time to surf the web in any kind of relaxed way – I'm surfing it for a reason, I'm surfing it for work, so it doesn't count anymore. Looking at websites doesn't count as distraction anymore.

Although most of the other editors do not have such management responsibilities, they all cope with similar time-management stresses. Holly, the editor who posts the video clips for the site, cites our culture's nearly uninterrupted media barrage as the source of her current work stress. Although her background in magazine journalism prepared her for handling some of this news flow, she says it also allowed her a method of turning off the information:

I definitely had really grueling hours at the magazine. But when I was done, I was done. And I feel like this is all consuming. Like when I'm done, I'm not really done. I think part of that is because I work from home and so there's not delineation from when work begins and work ends, really.

Sasha, who writes primarily celebrity gossip stories, claims these constantly looming deadlines also supplant much of the non-work communication found within the traditional newsroom environment. This lack of sometimes-superfluous banter keeps the editors focused on their deadlines and also on the site's content:

And it's really interesting to be at a place where it's very efficient. It's not like, 'Yadda, yadda, yadda, yadda.' It's like, work. And you're like, 'I'm done with this,' and they're like, 'Thanks, can you work on this?' And it's not like we don't have our little chat time when we're like, 'Wasn't this so funny, da, da, da, da.' But I find myself really, really focused, because it's not like there are a lot of distractions and office politics.

As Dana's second-in-command, Sasha must also fill in when Dana is gone. For two weeks in the fall, Dana went to Europe and left Sasha in charge of managing the site. Sasha says the event was a challenging test of her management skills:

I couldn't believe the way you have to divide your attention and monitor like six windows at the same time. It's a little crazy. I was really nervous at first, like really, really stressed. I felt like I was going to be resting my

retinas on the screen looking for everything. And then you sort of get into the swing of it and it was okay. And the thing is, I wasn't writing at the same time. I was just posting pictures and editing the other stuff.

The youngest editor, Suzanne, who writes primarily fashion stories, also covers parties for the site. So while she is usually done posting stories around 5 pm, she then goes out at night to attend events to write about the next day. She says that this work pace can indeed be grueling, not only mentally, but also physically:

This is probably the hardest I've ever worked, because you're always working when you have this kind of job. There's no walking away from it. And if you're not even technically working, you're still thinking, like, 'What is a story idea and how am I going to do it?' Or 'Why haven't I thought of another story? What am I going to do tomorrow?' The interesting thing about what we do is you wake up every morning and you're not really sure what you'll be doing. You get up and you pray and say, 'Okay, let there be something for me to write about today,' and you hold your breath and you go. And again, we put in pretty big hours. There are days when I've worked from seven until seven and then I go out at night to cover something for work and then I get home at midnight and then I go to bed and then start it all over again. That's like a big day.

Indeed, the speed and rapid turnaround obligations negate the possibility of "a break" a news worker might experience in a conventional workplace. A walk outside for a breath of air, a jump in the car to do some errands, lunch with a friend to catch up: they are all virtually impossible within the Futé system. As Laura, the newest member of the Futé staff acknowledges, both the body and mind must be turned on and sharp at every moment, or you risk a wasted post or possible page view:

It is intense, and I'm tired a lot. And not just because we wake up early, which is not good for me – I'm not a morning person. But you have to sort of be on and always thinking, which is – I think – not true, at least of most jobs that I've had, where you can sort of take a mental break for a little while. Because everything goes so quickly, we don't really have the time to do that.

But certainly, every news worker and even every news organization has days when it is “off,” not operating to its full capacity. A small organization might be especially susceptible to this, given the delicate balance of teamwork. Dana describes a day one month after the site launched, when Dana and her two staff members at that time, Becca and Suzanne, were all hung-over on a Friday morning after a Telescope Media cocktail party held the night before:

The next day, I mean the same day, since I went to bed at four in the morning, and I was like, I can't work. And Becca woke up and I was like, 'I can't work,' and she was like, 'I can't either.' I said, 'all we can do today is post pictures because I can't think, I can't write, I can't multi-task, I can't juggle. We're going to put picture after picture after picture. We're going to put a post in the morning saying that we're hung over and we're sorry, then we're just going to post pictures from 9 am to 6 pm. And instead of calling them Snap Judgments, we called them Impaired Judgments. So we tried to say something about the photos as if we were looking through them with drunk eyes, but I guess we were still pretty drunk. But we got amazing traffic that day because people really just wanted to look at pictures. And it was really kind of depressing.

The happiness factor

Editors all describe the pace, the hours and the workload at Futé as being tremendously more demanding than what they experienced in previous work situations. Taken together, these three factors seem to contribute to a sort of chronic low-grade fatigue among staff members, as illustrated most acutely by Dana:

I don't feel unhappy, but there are definitely some times that I'm so tired that I'll cry, usually in response to something. Like Becca pisses me off and I'm like, I can't deal, and I'll just sit here and cry. It's very rare that it happens. Or like, Greg (her boyfriend) will say something about how hard I'm working and I'll be like, 'I know,' and then I'll cry. But it isn't like

it's even on a weekly basis. It's just...I feel like if I sit and think about it too much then I would let it control me, and I can't let that happen.

However, despite the mental and sometimes physical challenges of the job, all the editors communicated a sense of belonging to something inimitably creative.

Sasha's, who stopped regularly updating her personal blog when she started working at Futé, response exemplifies this sentiment:

I love it, I love it, I love it. I can't even tell you. It's a lot of work and I feel like it's taking over my life. But the fact that I get paid to do some of the things that I do blows me away. Like LOL Vogue? It's something I'd be doing for myself for fun, like on my own blog or something. And I would be the biggest Futé fan even if I didn't work there. Because when I read other people's stuff — and you don't see what they're working on until it gets posted — so when I read what Becca or Holly or Suzanne or Laura have been doing, it's amazing. I'm like, 'These girls are great!' I'm going to get all cheesy, but I feel lucky to be part of it. I do.

In addition to having creative freedom, some editors say they experience a feeling of fulfillment due to the instantaneous quality of their product. This sentiment is especially strong for editors, such as Suzanne, who previously worked for a monthly magazine with a three-month-lead time:

It's a good feeling at the end of the day where it's like, 'yes, I made this,' and you can see exactly what you accomplished. And I'm proud of the site and it's just nice to be proud of your work, when you feel like you made something and built something from the ground up.

Several of the editors, such as Becca, also say the immediacy of their deadlines combined with the constant reader feedback provide a certain satisfaction often absent from conventional media:

It's like constant payoff, it's like being in the service industry in a lot of ways. You're constantly getting your shit up, you're constantly talking

about things you want to talk about, you're having your opinions known, and then the commenters are like, 'Awesome!' or 'I disagree with you!' and then some other commenter sticks up for you.

Another factor that influences the happiness quotient is Futé's success, given that it was the most successful launch in Telescope Media history. While Dana says she had initial doubts as to viewer acceptance of the site, its record-breaking growth in viewership and PVs has rejuvenated her faith in perseverance:

If the site were unsuccessful then I'd probably be miserable. If the site were really, really bad, traffic-wise, I probably would have quit by now. If I were working at this level and it wasn't paying off. But then I think, how could that happen, how could that be possible? How could six of us work this hard on something and have it not pay off? I mean, these girls are online all night, too. I see them sitting there. But I think they realize that if they work really, really, really hard and make something really, really, really good, that no one can ever take that away from them. If the site continues to have a lifespan for however long from now, like ten years, they can always say that they were some of the first people to ever work on the site. They can say they helped create something.

In addition, Dana's perception of her role within the site corresponds to the freedom she also experiences within the larger organization:

I'll never have another job like this, where we basically get to do what we want. Ever. Where your bosses are like, 'As long as people are paying attention to you and reading you.' I have the trust of both of my bosses and they really leave me along and we get to do whatever we want...I mean, to a limit. But we'll never have that much freedom ever again, it'll never happen.

Burnout

Despite editors' sentiments of relative contentedness, there exists the very real possibility of what is known within the industry as "burnout." Several Futé editors

claim that the prevailing wisdom at Telescope Media is that an editor can work for a site for about one year before becoming overwhelmed and quitting. In addition, Dana claims the people who usually end up staying with a site for a longer amount of time are those in managerial positions:

The guy who does *Musik*, he's been doing it for years, and he's like obsessed. I guess to do the job you have to be obsessed with the site, you have to. And so it works out really well for the company, for Ben and Paul. The people who are slackers are not the ones running the sites. You can be a slacker writer, but you can't be a slacker site lead.

While certainly not a "slacker site lead," Dana could be an exception to this managerial rule of thumb. She says she plans to get married soon and move in to an apartment with her soon-to-be husband, and while burnout is a definite concern, the infringement of her work responsibilities on her personal life is even more likely:

I think it'll be different if we both wake up at 6:30 and I go running into the other bedroom – assuming we have a second bedroom – into the office, and he comes in to talk to me and I'm like, 'uh-huh, yeah...' He's never really witnessed me working. If it starts to impact my relationship with him after I get married to him, that's probably a reason I would quit the job. I would, because it's not worth it. But I wouldn't feel bad leaving after I had seen it live for a year. That would feel fair to me.

Other editors, such as Holly, were only marginally worried about getting burned out, and were more concerned for the wellbeing of other editors. Holly claims that although the site's content keeps her motivated to continue working, this might not be the case for her coworkers:

Yes, I do worry about it, but I'm hoping it just won't happen. I think that if I were writing for any of the other sites, especially Telescope, I think that it would probably happen to me a lot faster. But because the subject matter of Futé is something that I'm really interested in, because I worked

at a feminist magazine before and this is like my beat, I think that it won't be as much of a problem for me. I know Becca discusses burnout issues because she's been going at this pace for a little longer than I have, and the girl stuff is kind of new to her because she's written about politics and the economy and stuff like that before.

While Becca did not outwardly admit to suffering complete exhaustion, she did allude to changes she saw within herself due to work stresses:

I'm just like, 'aaaargh, I have no new ideas.' And I feel my mind getting lazier, more full of useless stuff. I mean, at a newspaper you talk on the phone all day to people and go out for lunch and go to conferences and shit. I don't know, I'm trying to think of ways to regenerate. I keep thinking, 'more Adderall!'

However, other editors claim that burnout is not a looming issue maintaining that the site's subject matter keeps them both stimulated and motivated to continue working, despite stressful factors. Suzanne says that despite hearing reports about the exhaustion, she tries to keep her situation in perspective:

I've heard that people do get burned out working this kind of job and I've had friends say, 'Oh, I'm worried that you're working so much, you're going to get burned out, you're going to get burned out.' But right now you just gotta take it one day at a time. And I'm really happy with my job and I'm really lucky to have a job that I like because a lot of people have a job that they don't like, and work is called work for a reason, you know, it's not always fun and games.

Laura's sentiments echo Suzanne's, except that she admits the idea of quitting still lurks in the back of her mind. She says her more prevalent concern is the burnout of her manager, and what might happen to the site should she leave:

I'm not worried about burnout. If it's my job, it's my job and I'll suck it up and I'll do it. And the industry being what it is, I'm like, 'Wow, I have a job that I like that pays me something that I'm not embarrassed by or that doesn't humiliate me. But yeah, I mean, I thought about it a little and

I'd say a year or two, tops. It also depends entirely on who else is working on the site. If Dana left, that would make me seriously consider what I was doing with the site and I would have to totally reevaluate, for sure. And I think that's a big component.

Because Dana is manager of the site and exercises robust authority within the organization, her absence from Futé would greatly shift the chemistry of the site.

However, the primary issue confronting Dana is not so much, "when?" as "what next?":

I don't know what I would do next. I think ideally what I would do is someone would pay me a lot of money to do another book. And before I started on that book, whatever that would be, I would take a three-month vacation and sleep. I would have to detox from this job, I think.

Assumption 3: IM is the most effective way for us to operate

The organization operates under the assumption that IM is the best possible method of communication, which may or may not be true. What is evident is that Dana believes IM to be the most effective way to control the flow of information. As a manager, Dana decided to limit the communal contact her editors have in favor of a more channeled method. While the editors can and do communicate with each via IM during the day, the dialogue is often informal and non-work-related.

Nearly all the editors extol the virtues of IM as an efficient communication tool. However, most of them fail to mention the lack of communal conversation that tends to benefit both the creative process and the feeling of organizational unity. Dana is the only person every editor is in constant contact with during the workday, and thus she also controls the organizational flow of content. Dana approves the story

selection, top edits nearly every piece and chooses the stories to run each day and she communicates most of this information over IM. Thus, her espoused beliefs and values essentially drive the site.

However, one might question how aware the other editors are of this presumed “shared” knowledge. The perpetual pace and infrequency of face-to-face interaction about big-picture thoughts may well reduce the amount of cohesive espoused values. As such, some of the values, as exemplified by Becca’s consistent defiance of protocol, exist on the individual level, rather than at the group level.

But can there be social validation within a virtual group that infrequently collectively communicates? In this situation, the answer could be yes, in that the validation can be accessed through the content editors create. By reading each other’s posts, filtered through Dana, editors can confirm their values, which then become a shared group social experience.

Examples of IM-in-use

Taken as a whole, the IMs exchanged between Dana and the different editors are inconspicuously nuanced, not because of their exceptional prose or complex writing style, but because they contain so many dialogues. Informal chitchats folded into editing directions, gossip about other sites coupled with story assignments: all of it together, exchanged rapidly and without florid elaboration. The IMs are a crucial part of the culture, in that they are the main dialogue of the workers. The exchanges are processed in syncope with editors while they cultivate information, write and edit.

The following excerpts from their IM conversations, categorized utilizing seven thematic concepts: friendly banter, editing copy, assigning stories, when a story breaks, complaints about other editors, commenting on commenters, and talking about other Telescope sites, illustrate this multi-faceted dialogue:

Friendly banter (A)

Laura: pencil sharpener ql [Quick Link] is done

Dana: ok

Laura: btw, if you know anyone who wants a kitten

Dana: aw

Laura: mike's brother's gf has four free kitties

Laura: looking for a home!

Dana: what do they look like?

Laura: she sent a pic of the mom, hold on

Laura: kitty pic is sent!

Dana: ok!

Dana: hey btw

Dana: go look for a post we did on an axe "mousepad"

Dana: we could mention in the pencil QL

Laura: oh cool

Dana: i just tweaked the item

Dana: if you can't find the axe thing let me know

Dana: i'll look too

Dana: i found it

<http://Futé.com/gossip/gizmo/speechless-27616.php>

9:20 AM

Laura: ok, ql is fixed

Dana: ok

Dana: dude

Dana: those kittens!

Laura: i know

Dana: so cute!

Laura: and also poignant -- her parents are the keepers of a flight 800 memorial

Dana: aw

Laura: and the kittens were left there!

Dana: where?

Laura: or the mama cat was left there

Laura: and the kittens were born there

Laura: it's on long island

Laura: i want to say huntington?

Laura: smith point

Friendly banter (B)

Sasha: this is a serious question: do you think some of those cheerleaders were like, fuck it, i came all this way, i might as well have sex with one of these dudes.

Dana: jesus Sasha!

Dana: (probably?)

Sasha: haha i was thinking poor guys, stuck in the desert, the chix are shaking those pom poms and like, what the hell, right?

Sasha: i mean if she had no boyfriend and the soldier was hot or like, NICE

Sasha: hahaha

Dana: where would they do it though?

Dana: dont' they all sleep on cots in big halls?

Sasha: omg the sarge would TOTES clear out a tank or something for them

Dana: also: 6 min till anthropologie

Sasha: if he thought one of his boys was getting lucky

Sasha: a tent!!

Sasha: the bathroom

Sasha: i dunno

Sasha: i am thinking about this too much

Dana: yes. YOU ARE

Sasha: i can't believe the hairball QL has so many hits

Dana: i DON'T GET IT!

Dana: many total?

Sasha: 14,649

Dana: haha

Sasha: it's bizarre

Sasha: people like gross shit!

Sasha: after thanksgiving!

Dana: someone must have linked it

Dana: there's no way people went back after weekend to read thta

Sasha: yeah

Sasha: oh actually

Sasha: it has 17,408

Sasha: 14,000 this week

Editing copy (A)

Holly: how the hell do you spell qualude?

Dana: Quaalude

Holly: ok

Dana: I think?

Dana: quaalude

Dana: shit

Dana: it has either two as or two us

Holly: yeah, I couldn't figure it out

Holly: I think that first one is right

Dana: I think it's two a's

Dana: yes

Editing copy (B)

Dana: lets say we'll do best/worst comments at 4:45

Laura: cool

Dana: is your Celebritease done?

Laura: yep

Dana: ok thanks

Laura: ok

Dana: i want you to look at what i did to celebritease

quick preview it

Laura: sure

Dana: where do you get the little dot from?

Laura: just a bullet

Dana: option 8

Laura: word

Dana: and then just put all links at end in one big bracket

Laura: ok cool

Assigning stories (A)

Dana: whatchoo doing

Holly: hey, that amy ql is in there

Dana: ok

Holly: i'm gonna do this spencer sister thing and then either the judge judy clip or yo gabba gabba.

Dana: did u rip those rape vids?

Holly: i'm gonna rip both of them and put them both up today. oh crap

Holly: yeah, i'll go look now. i totally fogot

Dana: ok

Dana: also before you do spencer sister talk to grose who is doing something on some hills replacement (not spencer's sister)

Dana: just make sure you don't overlap at all

Holly: k

Dana: her item is about some new teen vogue intern

Dana: just fyi

Holly: ok

Assigning stories (B)

Suzanne: hey there --

Dana: hi

Suzanne: i don't know if you would want something like this in Morning Crap? if not, as a ql?

marie osmond is doing a line of dolls for her collection based on herself and her

costumes from dancing with the stars. there are images. they scare me.

Dana: yeah lets do that as a QL later

Suzanne: 'ok great

Dana: i think suri cruise should be lead CD item maybe, followed by WWD memo pad
quotes from marc jacobs

Suzanne: yes yes!!!

Suzanne: i cannot believe that child has louboutins

Suzanne: that is so unacceptable

When a story breaks

Becca: ACK that american apparel ad

Becca: oh my god

Becca: <http://copyranter.blogspot.com/2007/11/american-apparel-inserts-mindlessly.html>

Dana: WHAT???

Becca: no it's a spoof

Dana: oh jesus

Becca: it says "safe to say she loves her socks"

Dana: good lord

Dana: ok that is all yours

Becca: that's an old tagline i don't think they'd use it again?

Dana: i think that has got to be a joke

Becca: yeah

Becca: and not a good one.

Dana: i'd be surprised it that's not taken down by now

Dana: that's ridiculous

Dana: maybe we shoudl send jenny out there

Dana: to look

Dana: wow i am speechless

Dana: i also think you should call them at some point if u are going to do that as a post
(which you should)

Becca: haha you know we have a superfan who works there.
at headquarters

Dana: is she still a superfan? i thought she was mad?

Becca: no no she's the one who wrote she was "working in a hipster cathy cartoon"

Dana: hahahahaa

Dana: ok

Dana: ok just let me know when u want to do this; it has precedence

Dana: so u can do 1030 or 11

Becca: ok great

Dana: do u want me to ask jen to go see if it's still there and if it's been graffitied yet?

Becca: sure! we could try to get a better shot

Dana: ok will do now

Dana: ok she's going

Dana: ok we'll get Telescope to let us xpost since he dind't send to Telescope

Dana: ok goldberg is willing to do a video about this after you do a text post if you want
- u want? i'm not sure if it's necessary, am still ruminating over it (a video)

Becca: hmmm

Becca: lemme think

Dana: ok

Dana: how u doing

Becca: fine one sec

Becca: Yesterday Oprah said she'd campaign for Obama, and guess what? Both women
& black people said they'd be more likely to vote for her, because she is
both black, and a woman. Will other influential black people, and/or women, follow her
lead? Like maybe Michael Jordan? Or Charlie Murphy? Is Oprah more powerful than
the Clintons? It's an all Opra-bama-rama Naked Truth, after the jump.

Dana: ok

Dana: ok just fyi

Dana: am apparel ad is gone

Dana: replaced joe's jeans ad

Becca: cool

Becca: it's a fake

Dana: replaced by

Dana: ok u want 1030 or 11 for am. apparel? if 11 i'm going to move the hills clip to
1130

Dana: jen is also taking a pic of the billboard as it looks now

Dana: and will be back in 15 min

Becca: i can do 10

Becca: 30

Dana: ok

Dana: Telescope sez ok to xpost

Dana: let me ask ken ropken

Dana: u still want 1030? jen is not back yet i can give u 11 if u need more time

Becca: nah i think it's ok not bad

Dana: ok

Dana: ropken not online

Becca: O, American Apparel! Whenever will the "culture jammers" solve the dilemma as

to whether it is okay to shop there? Anyway, the above billboard, spotted in Soho, purports to be an American Apparel ad depicting the backside of a naked woman leaning over to display her ass while rubbing her clitoris from behind. Tasteful! Well, it was a spoof, as evidenced by the fact that it was replaced as of ten minutes ago this morning with a Joe's Jean's ad, but in its short lifespan it managed to convince the advertising blogger Copyranter and my friend Don, which just goes to show you what we've come to expect from American Apparel. And to the culture jammers' credit, this spoof looks like it could have been an "inside" job: the tag line: "Safe to say she loves her socks," is the exact same tag line they used on an ad featuring the porn star Lauren Phoenix. And, if the email from inside-AA sources we got last time we wrote about American Apparel is anything to go by, morale at the company is not all coked-up exuberance and bandeau-bedecked orgies!

Dana: Joe's Jeans

Dana: no apostrophe on second word

Becca: ok

Becca: <blockquote>One of the merchandisers from NYC just requested a sign for an underwear display that reads "Booty City". I'm stuck in a hipster Cathy cartoon.</blockquote>

Dana: hahah

Dana: ok

Becca: i might take out the first sentence
Becca: to shield identity
Dana: yeah or just take out "nyc"?
Dana: what's yr hed
Becca: so he's gone sitll
Dana: ben?
Dana: yes
Dana: i think is ok to xpost IF you don't do antything too sexual in the hed
Dana: or we can wait until he gets back
Becca: ok
Becca: i used "lewd american apparel ad is probably fake. Not that anyone can tell!"
Dana: ok

Complaints about other editors

Suzanne: Becca is bitching to me about faran
Suzanne: faran is INSANE
Dana: what do u mean "bitching"
Suzanne: and i don't think any of us need to hear it from her
Suzanne: like, that faran emails Becca all the time with "notes" on CD
Suzanne: and says that whenever i leak to sassybella faran emails Becca telling her
Suzanne: its a bad source
Suzanne: and so Becca was like, when you link to them, i hear about it from faran...
Suzanne: and i was like, faran ain't our boss
Dana: just ignore her
Dana: ill have a talk with her later about it
Suzanne: and i just don't think faran's whims should be dictacting how we run our site

Commenting on Commenters (A)

Holly: t's so insane how like every post gets over 100 comments now
Holly: it's like average
Dana: hahaha
Dana: u think?
Dana: maybe they just like HEARING THEIR OWN VOICES

Holly: i remember when my first few lady bunches got like 6 or 8 comments

Dana: you know web wise

Holly: yeah, but so what. it reflects well on us

Dana: i hope so!

Dana: i am always freaked to read comments

Ana: i don't know why

Holly: they're just talking to eachother really

Dana: yeah they don't give a shit what we post

Dana: we could just post something that reads

Dana: INSERT COMMENTS HERE

Holly: hahaha

Dana: and they'd probably go crazy

Holly: that would be a funny post

Holly: post

Dana: hahaha

Dana: maybe tomorrow

Dana: as a joke

Commenting on Commenters (B)

Suzanne: god, did you see our commenters hating on faran yesterday?

Suzanne: almost all the Cloak and Dagger comments were on why people hate her and fashionista

Dana: what did they say?

Suzanne: i will send you stuff!!!

Suzanne: they were saying how they hate faran and she is an ass-kisser and there's no one's ass she won't kiss and all she does is talk about how thin she is on the site and they hate fashionista because it's commenters are petty and stupid and starving

Suzanne: and then faran started commenting to "defend" herself

Dana: wow really?

Suzanne: and obviously our commenters ate her alive

Suzanne: YES!!!!

Suzanne: it was insane

Suzanne: you have to read it...

Talking about other Telescope sites

Dana: think u should also mention in your end of week post that stephen and emma quit

Laura: yeah

Laura: i was considering it

Laura: what is the deal with that???

Dana: they're over it

Dana: burnout!

Dana: also i don't know if Telescope knows what it is anymore

Laura: yeah. that's obvious

Laura: it's sort of been all over the place

Dana: maybe Telescope is kind of over

Dana: i dunno

Laura: since balk and doree left

Laura: maybe it is over!

Laura: who knows!

Laura: weird!

Dana: it is weird

Dana: the end of an era?

Laura: i guess?

Laura: a virtual post modern era?

Dana: haha

Dana: i hope that doesn't mean Futé is going to tank

Dana: (probs not)

Dana: but it's just weird

Laura: well Futé is its own thing

Laura: i was thinking the other way around

Dana: i know but i feel in a way that we OWE them

Laura: that we would get more of Telescope expats

Laura: if they drove it into the ground

Laura: they would be like, this sucks, we need something good

Dana: it's very odd that Telescope is struggling

Laura: oh, dana

Laura: are they struggling pv wise, or just editorially?

Dana: both

Dana: we get more pvs than they do now

Dana: per day

Laura: i mean, i think they still haven't rebounded from the loss of balk

Dana: which is shocking

Laura: he was a big part of their voice

Laura: and also hiring missy was apparently a mistake

Dana: uh yeah

Laura: right

Laura: so if they just got good editors back

Laura: it would be good again

Laura: i think

Dana: one would hope

Dana: but maybe the focus on ny media is just over

Laura: hmmm, possibly

Laura: though new york media people will always care about navel gazing

Dana: but there are so many other sites now that do the same thing

Dana: media mob, radar, ny mag jossip etc

Laura: true, true

Laura: oh also, a lot of people have said that Futé is like what Telescope USED to be

Laura: so also maybes we could benefit from Telescopes suckage by the fact that the brass

will put more resources into promoting us.

Laura: but i think it's not clear how this will all pan out

Dana: yeah well

Dana: i am meeting with "the boss" tomorrow (shh) and i'm not sure what that's about

Laura: ooooooh

Laura: i could also see them trying to poach Becca for Telescope, to be honest

Dana: oh i've talked about that

Laura: heh

Dana: honestly i would care but i wouldnt' care? i dunno. i think it would not be the best move for her but...

Dana: who knows?
Laura: it will be interesting to see how it all shakes out
Laura: i don't know if she could take that kind of pressure?
Dana: she loves josh bronelle though
Dana: i would support her in whatever she does
Laura: she wouldn't take choires job, would she?
Dana: no way
Dana: they would never give it to her
Laura: i feel like that would be a recipe for a trainwreck
Laura: totally
Dana: not enough experience
Laura: rr is done and scheduled for 450
Dana: thanks
Dana: thanks
Dana: haha i said "thanks" twice
Laura: yeah, you did
Laura: but that's ok!
Dana: i'm having a BIT of an insane day
Dana: it was calm but then all this Telescope shit kinda threw a wrench into things
Laura: um, understandably
Laura: does it affect you directly?
Laura: other than the fact that they might steal an editor from you?
Dana: i don't nknow
Dana: they may ask ME TO do it
Laura: oh WOW
Dana: it's just someone's "theory"
Laura: but then what would weeeee doooooO
Laura: hahah
Dana: uh i wouldn't do it????
Dana: no fucking way
Laura: oh sweet. well, i wouldn't blame you for doing it if they offered you a lot more scratch
Dana: haha NO WAY

Dana: i wouldn't do it for \$40K more

Laura: ha word

Dana: this is much more fun and interesting

Dana: if i'm going to work my ASS OFF i had better like it

Laura: DAMN SKIPPY!

IM explained

Two dominant themes emerged during interviews with editors about IM usage: IM as efficient organizational tool and IM as emotional stimulus. The duality of these themes is thus examined.

IM as organizational device

Before delving in to the espoused values of the editors, it is essential to provide background to the site's use of IM. Futé is not the first Telescope Media site to exist within the virtual sphere: in fact, they *all* do. Given that they are united in cyberspace, a method of quick, real-time communication was necessary to connect individual sites with the central organization. According to Dana, her boss at Telescope Media indoctrinated her to the IM system before she could even ask questions:

When I got hired my then-boss Kevin was like, 'well, here's my IM and here's everyone else's IM in the company. And it became very clear to me without Kevin having to say it that that's how people communicated, via IM.

While IM continues to be the primary method of communication within the

company, individual sites can choose how they want to communicate within. Several of the larger Telescope Media sites use a web-based group chat tool called Campfire as their main method of communication. According to the Campfire homepage, the system is “Different, better than IM: Instant messaging is great for one-on-one chats, but it's not ideal for groups of three or more. Further, instant messaging is network dependent — if you are on AIM, and your co-worker is on MSN or Skype, you can't instant message. Campfire is network-agnostic, optimized for groups, and only requires a web browser.”

Given these choices, the main question for the site managers becomes how to do the virtual news work most efficiently. Dana chose to utilize IM with her staff for the first six months, but then decided to test Campfire with her staff. She says the short-lived trial proved to be most problematic when it came to story assignments:

I wouldn't want to be on Campfire and be like, 'Hey, I just found this story,' and have five of them go, 'wait, wait, wait, I want that.' So it's kind of like I decide who gets it and that person rejects it then I'll be like, 'okay, we won't do it,' or I'll ask someone else if they want to do it. But I don't want them all to see the same thing. Sometimes there are little turf wars where they say, 'wait, I wanna do that,' 'No, I wanna do that.' It usually doesn't get beyond that point and usually one of them backs down, but I just don't want that.

In addition to editors swarming for a story was another issue beyond Dana's control, but often inherent to face-to-face news organizations; informal group chit-chat:

The other thing that happens when we've gone on Campfire is they start yapping and they won't stop. At least with IM, when I'm done saying what I have to say I just stop IMing them and that's it. But especially with Laura and Suzanne, they'd be talking about something and then it's like, 'Oh, my grandmother used to do that,' and then, 'oh, really?' and then it becomes a five minute discussion about that kind of stuff. And I just don't like it. I didn't like Campfire and so I said we're going back to IM.

But operating via IM is still no guarantee that communication will be 100% work-related. Dana says that while “there’s no time for small talk, usually, there just isn’t,” some nonetheless trickles into IMs. However, she emphasizes that her management role within these non-work-related conversations aids in its control:

Although you’ll see that I’ll have banter with them, like I’ll talk about food or whatever, but it doesn’t really go on for long. And if it does it’s because they have the time to do it and I do. Because I know what they’re doing and how much time they have because I know how long it takes them to finish a post, at this point I know. So if I start shooting the shit about something it’s usually because I know that that person is done, usually for the day or that we have enough stuff so that they can sit back for the day.

While she acknowledges that other editors may still chit-chat during the day, she doubts the frequency:

They don’t really even talk to each other during the day. I don’t think that Holly and Sasha are having any sort of conversation right now. I think they’re all doing their own thing. I think that if there’s any conversation it’s between Becca and Sasha, maybe. But I’m not privy to it. They just don’t talk to each other, unless it’s either at the end of the day or via email when there’s like a mass email that goes out to everyone and they’re responding back and forth.

However, both Suzanne and Laura say they do indeed talk with other editors via IM during the day. Suzanne claims it part and parcel of the organizational dialogue:

We’re talking bullshit with each other over IM all day long. I mean, yes we’re working, but we’re also like, ‘Dude, you’re not going to believe what happened to me last night.’ And that goes on all day, so there’s that level of intimacy that’s not normally there.

But regardless of the banter quantity, Dana’s communication strategy undoubtedly promotes a high level of productivity. One criticism of this rigidity is that it

reduces the editor's probability of creative feedback. Sasha compares the editorial processes of a conventional newsroom to that of Futé in terms of resourceful banter and says the nature of the site's organizational structure inhibits creative partnership to a certain degree:

If we were sitting in the same bullpen or bunch of cubes, like where I used to work we could sometimes talk out loud a bit like, 'What do you think of this?' And I feel like because I know that she has other windows open, I feel like I have to be sure that I really want to be asking this question before I ask it. Sometimes I'll think, 'Maybe I should ask her if it needs a better headline.' And I feel like maybe if she were there it'd be so easy to ask. So I think I rein back a little because we're trying to be efficient and I'm trying to IM only if it's serious.

IM and emotional work

Communication literature often refers to computer-mediated communication (CMC) as being a double-edged sword. While methods such as IM boast benefits such as efficiency and directedness, they also possess more challenging characteristics, such as the misinterpretation of information. Dana articulates this dichotomy:

The pros are that it's instantaneous and it's in writing. The cons are they misinterpret what I say. So on the one hand, they can misconstrue tone and intent, but they're not going to misconstrue the content of what you're saying. So if you say, 'I want you to do this,' they can't say 'I didn't understand what you meant,' because you said, 'I want you to...' They might think that I said it in a bitchy way when I just said it in a busy way. But it just really depends on how busy I am, because if I have something difficult to say, like, 'I'm not going to put this post up,' or like, 'I have a problem with it and will you please redo it,' if I have the time I might massage it by saying, 'You know, I love this idea,' and I'll qualify it and I'll be nice and then I'll get into the good news/bad news. If I'm too busy I'll just be the bad news though.

But in situations where time does not allow for massaging the message, abrupt IMs are de rigueur. Although she says she tries to employ devices to deter misunderstandings, Dana accepts that in many situations, specific editors are going to be reactionary to the communication:

They may interpret the way I am with them as being terse, I don't know. But I hope that they are aware of the fact that that's not what it is. I think there's a problem with IM of people misinterpreting tone. I think Becca misinterprets my tone a lot, or bristles at things she has no reason to bristle at. But that's why so often I use emoticons with them. As much as I don't want to be the girl who's using emoticons, it does help to make things more clear.

Sometimes it's evident to Dana that an editor is upset by an IM exchange, but she says much of the time, the base computer mediated communication linguistics make the decoding nearly impossible:

Becca responds to a degree that at times is annoying. Laura you can kind of read into what she's saying because you'll say something that she doesn't want to hear and she'll respond with, like, 'oh,' so you can sense that she's kind of deflated. At least that's how I read into it. For all I know she could be writing, 'oh,' and it's just 'oh,' I mean, I don't know. So what she means and how I interpret it could be two different things. Same with Suzanne, although it's very, very very rare. Usually the stock is 'okay,' from them to me.

While most editors claim that they try not to take terse IMs personally, all admit this can be difficult to do. Sasha provides a scenario that illustrates the situation from the editor's perspective:

If I mess something up and she was like, 'You have to fix that,' or something, and then none of us said anything and it was just like silence, so I was under the impression that she was pissed at me. It may or may not have been true, but because you don't see their face and there's no emotion in the thing, just like, 'You have to fix that.' So then I try to fix it.

And I'm like, 'I wonder if she's mad.' And then I'm like, 'she's probably moved on to something else.' I try to convince myself. But yeah, I don't know...it's hard to tell.

However, Sasha believes that Dana is often aware of this discrepancy, and as such, frequently follows up abrupt exchanges with a cyber postscript apology of sorts:

There have been times when Dana's has written something and then wrote, 'that came out wrong.' Because I think she's conscious of it, too. Because when you're seeing it there's no emotion and sometimes you can say something sarcastically, and in the tone of your voice it would make sense, but when you see it written, maybe it doesn't.

But complex IM dynamics extend beyond Dana's interactions with other editors. Numerous editors declared Becca to be the most generally disgruntled during IM conversations. Becca acknowledges such interactions but maintains her behavior is not only justified, but when put into proper perspective, overblown by others:

You know, some days I might be pissy because I'm tired or I've had too much caffeine or I'm on the drugs and pissy about something and then we'll have a fight. These things escalate and they die down a lot easier than they would in real life. I'm not a confrontational in person at all, but I am on IM. I think a lot of it is the nature of the job and the fact that everything is so urgent. Also, a lot of it is a joke, you know? When you're on IM, most of it is said, even if you're angry at someone they know that you're not *angry*, angry, you know? It's like you're annoyed or you're irritated or you're just dealing with the grind of the job.

Suzanne is one of the editors who clashes with Becca the most often. While she confesses that the arguments take an emotional toll on her, Suzanne asserts that the disagreements are always rectified in time, with little negative consequence:

Becca and I have had IM fights about pieces or the way that something got edited or something. Then it turns into a phone fight and then it turns into an, 'I'm not talking to you, call Dana.' But then it's fine by the end of the day. I'm always upset and I take things super-personally, anything anyone

ever says. I'm one of those kinds of people, I'm just the sensitive girl. But I also adore Becca and totally love her in all sorts of ways, and can totally talk to her about anything in the world. And I really respect her, I think she's a smart, smart girl. So we have no bad blood. But we have the sibling dynamic.

Assumption 4: The new page view bonus system doesn't really affect us

The espoused sentiments from most of the editors regarding page views (PVs) might seem business-as-usual, but their actions and conduct seem to say otherwise. As a result, Telescope Media's recent PV bonus system is tacitly acknowledged by everyone, but rarely openly discussed - the proverbial elephant in the room. A PV is implicit to organizational culture because it looms over all editorial decisions. Because the PV is rewarded and prioritized by management, the site's success might be questioned if it lacks PV growth. While the bonus money is certainly one facet of the new system, the site's legitimacy as a business is another and one that cannot be ignored by any employee.

Becca's insistence to be granted immunity from the PV system indicates that both Dana and the organization's management value Becca's contribution to the site. Instead of being punished for her opposition, she is rewarded. However, it is also pertinent to note that Becca appears to be the only editor either willing or prepared to take on the organization. Regardless, her actions illustrate that perhaps the organization's policies are somewhat fluid.

Hence, with the exception of Becca, all the editors say they are trying to come up with new and creative ideas for the site. While they assert that they enjoy

generating these ideas, it is undeniable that this takes up time outside their normal work schedules. Thus the editors' acts of additional content creation reveals the significance they place on PV growth.

The page view bonus system

Page views, tallied by counting how many times a viewer clicks through a link to either the original source or to continued story text, indicate that the viewer is actively pursuing additional story information. PVs are also the company's most vital measurement of viewership for advertisers. According to Telescope Media's sitemeter, a statistical tracking system accessible to the public on any Telescope Media site, Futé's PVs have increased steadily since the site launched:

May 2007	828,309
June 2007	2,179,354
July 2007	6,415,201
August 2007	6,612,234
September 2007	7,506,910
October 2007	8,893,341
November 2007	9,246,654
December 2007	10,332,695
January 2008	12,946,539

The new PV bonus system was instituted eight months after Futé's launch, but extends to all Telescope Media's websites. Under the new guidelines the editors get a base salary, but receive a bonus if their PVs go beyond a certain number. According to Dana, that proprietary number is different for each editor because it depends on their past PV history. The PV numbers are calculated at the end of every quarter and

appropriate bonuses are subsequently distributed into the editors’ paychecks. As PVs increase each quarter, so does the PV base required to get a bonus.

Prior to this system, each Futé editor received a stable salary with a contract specifying how many posts they must write each day. Although PVs have always been a crucial part of any for-profit website, until the bonus system was established, the editors were relatively immune to its significance.

A month after the bonus system began, the head of Telescope Media editorial sent a list of tips to all site editors describing ways editors can boost their traffic. Among the words of advice were: “Sell the story with the headline, and the jump. I’m still seeing far too many headlines that bury the news,” and “Add bonus material, such as related videos, after the jump. The bonus material can be old, as long as it supports the story.”

The editors’ can monitor their own monthly PV statistics as well as the site’s daily PVs statistics through a private Telescope Media portal. Table 1 represents a sample statistic listings from a mid-morning tally, table 2 illustrates a monthly PV total for individual editors, table 3 shows the stories with highest PVs during one day:

Table 1: Overall views today

URL	Views
Futé	185327

Table 2: Individual views

Name	Views
Suzanne	49045
Holly	38667
Sasha	27135
Dana	22628
Becca	22195
Laura	14057

Table 3: Post views

Post title	Issued	Views
The <i>Project Runway</i> Fashion Show By Suzanne, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	22104 11.93%
Jesus Christ By Holly, from Futé	Jan 28 2008	7068 3.81%
<i>Tyra</i> Takes on Sexual Squashing Fetish By Holly, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	6696 3.61%
It's Getting Serious: My First Week With Brendan, My "Boyfriend Pillow" By Holly, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	5906 3.19%
Eliza Dushku's Brother Nate Is Easy On The Eyes By Holly, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	5809 3.13%
Katherine Heigl Reads Racial Drama While Being Beautified By Dana, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	5399 2.91%
How Do You Deal With Assholes At The Office? By Laura, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	4890 2.64%
Adieu, Mitt Hottie! Think You Were Just Too Wholesome? By Becca, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	4786 2.58%
<i>Project Runway</i> Season Finale – Chris Marchionni, Doreen Marie (UMC-Student)	Feb 8 2008	4180 2.26%
<i>Project Runway</i> Finale – Jillian Lewis By Suzanne, from Futé	Feb 8 2008	4011 2.16%

Editors and the new system

Surely one intentional or unintentional outcome of the new PV bonus system might be competition among editors. Because each editor has access to their monthly PV tallies as well as those of the other editor's, Dana acknowledges the possibility of organizational tensions:

Holly will go on this thing and look at it. Yeah, she got more than Sasha did for the month. But they shouldn't be going on here and competing with each other. You know, Sasha is much more sober in her posts and in

the way she writes and in her headlines and is she going to get people to click through as much because she's not being as provocative? No, she's not. But she shouldn't be provocative just to get attention.

Dana claims that since the system change she has encouraged editors with previously low PV numbers, such as Suzanne, to try new ideas. Such creative efforts have paid off for some of the editors, who like Suzanne, experienced a large bonus after the first quarter. Dana says her support is related to two factors:

I think I've really thought about people, and I hate to say it, but I want them to feel motivated to do good work, and I also want them to feel fairly compensated. It's not like they weren't being fairly compensated before, but I do know that money is a motivator.

Personal gain might be the Achilles heel of an ostensibly socially progressive organization, but Dana negates the possibility of this occurring under her watch:

We could do very whorish things, really whorish things if we wanted to get a lot of traffic. We could put up pictures of Paris Hilton. We could do stuff...and I'm not saying that everything we put up is great. But if they start wanting to put up stuff that's really kind of whorish I'll probably put a stop to it, because I also control what they put up to a large degree since I send them stuff. I send them the stories and that really hasn't changed.

While the editors did not uniformly articulate the bonus system's impact on the site's content creation, most editors, like Sasha, claim it has had minimal influence:

I feel like I am writing the same as I always did for the most part. Sometimes I might skip an idea or suggestion that is not interesting, which I always did, but also because I feel like no one will care. I'm also getting the hang of the job now so it's not fair to say it's all about the PVs. The more I write the more I figure out what works and what doesn't, so I'll *not* do something that doesn't move me, even more so if I think it won't get

PVs, and vice versa. I sometimes don't love an idea but suspect it will be popular and get lots of page views. Posh, Kardashian, even Britney.

Other editors, such as Laura, seem to agree with Dana that the bonus system stimulates them to think outside their normal material to other dimensions of content:

I think in a way it might have changed a little for the better because we're more inspired to make our own content, like our own videos and stuff. There's just more room for creativity. Because if you're not breaking news – which we can rarely do because we're strapped to our computers all day – the only 'new' content we can make is this kind of stuff. And if it's not breaking news then it's gotta have another gimmick.

The "kind of stuff" Laura refers to might be exemplified by a video made of her and Suzanne modeling tight, unflattering clothing at a hipster clothing store. Laura narrated the 51-second video, which is set to a catchy hip-hop song. Within six weeks, the video had more than 150,000 PVs. In comparison, most posts from that same day had about 4,000 PVs six weeks later. Laura says she had the idea for the post in December before the PV system was in place, so while money "could have been a motivator, I wanted to do it anyway."

As someone who has also been rewarded a bonus, Suzanne claims her increased PVs have thus far had nothing to do with a gimmick, but rather, re-imagining already-established content:

Since going to the new system, I begged Dana to let me try the Project Runway posts a different way. Previously it had just been a video clip from the show and like three sentences. But I asked Dana if I could do bigger posts, elaborating on each of the designers and what went on with them last week, posting pics of the garments. They are insane and obsessive posts. Whereas the video clips would maybe get 3000 – 4000 PVs, the new ways starting getting 7000 – 9000 page views. She was totally resistant, but the numbers speak for themselves.

However, both Laura and Suzanne say they have been actively brainstorming new ideas that could grow into big posts. Laura reveals that she's been trying to get into a millionaire matchmaker club for women who date millionaires, but she has yet to hear back about her application. Suzanne wants to start a new feature called "perverse service journalism," where she picks a person who has dominated the news cycle each week and give them a makeover and then tell a viewer how they can get their look. Suzanne maintains her goal is only to increase PVs by utilizing imaginative ideas, rather than shock tactics:

I think people are a little more prone to say something shocking, trying to get a rise out of readers and subsequently garner some crazy page views for themselves. Becca's Hillary stuff, I think.

Indeed, Becca has written biting commentary about Hillary Clinton during the politician's bid for the Democratic nomination for President, and those postings tend to get better-than-average PVs and significantly more comments than other posts. But there is something neither Suzanne nor most of the rest of the staff know about

Becca: She says she is exempt from the bonus system:

I didn't want to have to think about it so I negotiated another deal. I hated it so much in principle. I mean, I haven't been checking my page views, haven't really been concerned about them, haven't cared. I ranted about it so much that they just offered me an exception. I ranted to Ben then Ben told Dana that I could just get out of it.

Becca's revised contract included a raise and new duties such as editing features. She claims her strident objection to the bonus system stems from what she sees an intrinsic imbalance in content creation:

I mean, I still want to get a lot of page views. But the thing that I disliked was the fact that a snap judgment is work a shitload of page views and it takes literally two seconds to do. So that in itself was ridiculous to me.

Then there was the fact that Dana controls our post count so insanely that you're not really the master of your own destiny like at the other blogs.

In addition to operational factors that disturbed Becca was the bonus system's contradiction with her ideological standpoint:

Everything that ails our culture and our economy stems from an addiction and total overemphasis on short term goals – short term stock market gains, short term fame, short term page count, short term earnings increases, short term *results* – to the total neglect of the long term. This is a philosophy I adopted at the WSJ. And I guess the thing about PVs is that it just sets you up to care exclusively about the hyper short-term. And in terms of long-term growth...you know, the Internet is a trendy place. People could get over us.

Conclusion

This analysis suggests that the group's assumptions exist within the fluid space of individual and group dynamics. The combination of physical evidence and statements from the editors create an image of a workplace culture that encourages both individual knowledge and a group mind. The frequent inner dynamics signified by conflicts should be recognized as coping mechanisms that allow the individual and group to manage anxiety.

In addition, the commitment the editors demonstrate toward their primary tasks illustrates that they take the site's mission seriously. Their ability to modify their work environments to maximize their productivity shows a level of organizational responsibility. The individuals and group-as-a-whole display flexibility and a willingness to adapt by readily and successfully adopting new modes of organizational communication, and with few exceptions, the editors willingly accept organizational changes if they feel either they or the organization-as-a-whole can benefit.

CHAPTER VI: NATURE OF THIS ORGANIZATION

Futé editors engage in a complex interplay between formal and informal associations and linear and non-linear organizational structures. These dualities allow for the group's personality to emulate certain conventional dynamics while creating its own distinctive characteristics. The nature of this organization is best analyzed by examining the relationships between editors, between editors and the organization, and between the editors and the audience.

The dynamics between the editors illustrate this multifaceted interaction, which leap from informal to formal and linear to non-linear dynamics; their informal communication facilitates the formal group work, which while mimicking a non-linear structure implicitly employs a linear framework. Dana's role as leader lends another dimension to the group relationship, as she must navigate a tacit hierarchy both within the group and the organization-as-a-whole.

Although this pseudo-linear arrangement emulates certain structural features of conventional media organizations, the site's editors have a decidedly different relationship with its audience than what is customary for the frequently detached mainstream media. Consequently, the site's communal editorial composition produces an often-temperamental relationship between editors and the site's audience, a dynamic that is often found within convergent media.

Relationships between editors

Schein's (2004) notion of new group evolution is applicable to understanding the relationships between editors. This framework holds that four phases of shared underlying assumptions combine within group evolution: group formation, group building, group work and group maturity. Group formation was intrinsically examined within Chapter 5, group building, group work and group maturity are considered within this chapter.

Informal structures: Friendship and trust

The dominant assumption of group building emphasizes the merging of group members and the socioemotional focus considers the group as idealized object, with qualities such as harmony and conformity. Additionally, group memberships inherent to group building allow group members self-esteem and connectedness with others, helping to fulfill their ego ideal (Stapley, 2004; Diamond and Allcorn, 2003).

In this case, some of the editors, such as Holly, assert that the group's virtual operations in tandem with face-to-face gatherings help foster a sense of harmony that many place-based conventional newsrooms may lack:

I feel like I have such a better working relationship with the girls I work with because we're not around each other all the time. So when we see each other it's like we're really glad to see each other and we'll really enjoy each other's company and we'll go out and have fun. Because sometimes you just get sick of seeing people all the time in an office.

Especially, if you had to work in an office and have the hours that we have. That would be really hard.

The editors' outside-of-work get-togethers allow interaction time that promotes bonding between group members, without many of the stresses of conventional place-based news meetings. In addition, Sasha suggests that the personalized editorial product stimulates group building, which contributes to a unique feeling of unity:

It is different, because I know them in a different way. Which is like, we don't see each other every day, we have meetings like once a month where we'll meet up and just have drinks. And so it's kind of cool because we're talking about work, but it's not like a meeting you have at work, where you're like, 'So this is what we need to do,' and people will have like dumb ideas. It's like friendly, it's like social, you know? And I feel like I know them because of that, because our meetings are just where we meet up and talk. And I also feel like I know them because there's so much of them in their writing. Putting those two things together, like seeing Becca in person and then reading Becca's posts, I feel like I know her really well. I don't know if I do, but I feel like I do. And the same for everybody else.

In contrast to Holly and Sasha's sentiments, Dana claims that the editors' face-to-face interactions make her uneasy. Schein (2004) writes that each component of an organization is influenced by how the group or individual behaves towards the organization's internal operations, various environments and primary tasks. In this case, Dana's inability to be comfortable during different social situations illustrates a culture of managerial restraint. Her reaction can be ingrained within issues of leadership and boundaries:

When I'm around Becca there's this kind of discomfort, at least on my part. Probably on her part, too. It seems kind of weird, kind of stilted. I feel uncomfortable. Not because she makes me uncomfortable, I just feel uncomfortable. And actually I feel that way with Sasha, too. I feel that way with all of them to some degree, I do.

I don't want to say that I want them to be my friends or I don't want them to be my friends, but I feel like we work in such close quarters and we talk about such personal stuff both on this blog and in general that it's hard for me to be the boss, you know? It's easier for me to be the boss over IM than it is for me to be the boss in person. But if I see them in person and we're not working, I can be like, you guys did a great job this month, let's go out for dinner, I'll pay. I'll do that stuff. And then we'll joke around. But there's always that question in my mind, how much do you socially engage with the people who are essentially your inferiors? And I don't know what the answer is.

While Dana struggles with interpersonal boundaries, the issue of trust is also innate to the site's dynamics. As previous literature suggests, trust is a considerable factor within mediated communication, especially when relating to virtual teamwork (Fen, Lara and Preece, 2004). Dana associates the editors' friendship with trust and maintains that the combination promotes an environment of healthy rivalry:

I think that they're all really friendly with each other, and to me that means they like and they trust one another. I think they're a bit competitive at times, which isn't necessarily bad. But they would never fuck over another one of their coworkers.

This type of allegiance to the group indicates an increase in online interpersonal trust, maintained by Fen, Lazar and Preece's research (2004), which is illustrated by supportive relationships and empathic accuracy. Suzanne exemplifies this understanding by inferring other editors' feelings and thoughts:

I think we all have to trust each other absolutely. If we didn't, we couldn't do this. In the same vein, I think if we didn't all like each other you'd see it on the site. If you didn't believe that everyone was in this for each other and for the right reasons you couldn't do this because it's a weird industry and there's always that element hanging over that it's easy to whore when you're doing this, and I guess you have to trust that nobody here wants to be a whore. I wish I had a better way to phrase that, but... Yeah, if we all hated each other it wouldn't work.

While editors may declare this collective trust to be a binding aspect of their teamwork, Dana approaches the dynamic from a more managerial perspective. Her selective trust stems from her experiences with task-related duties rather than empathic accuracy:

I trust some more than others. I mean, the ones I don't trust tend to be the younger ones and I'm more likely to look through very carefully the things that they do. Like Suzanne, I like her but I don't trust her – it's not that she's untrustworthy – I don't trust that she's going to, like say, pick up the part of the story that needs to be called out. I don't necessarily trust that she's going to get a date right. She's never been in a work environment like a magazine or newspaper where you have to have people's names spelled correctly and you have the right things capitalized. I mean, hopefully she would know that anyway, but I've just noticed with her that she doesn't always do that. So that leads me to not trusting her in a certain way.

But perhaps Dana's confidence in Suzanne and the other young editors will improve as they become socialized to the news work and Dana's expectations. Nardi (2005) suggests that trust requires time and regular contact between members, qualities surely present within the Futé structure. As such, it is not unusual for the group's leader to be especially dubious about the editors' collective abilities early in an organization's existence, as demonstrated by Dana's sentiments:

When I went away for two weeks. Did I trust them? No. Part of me was like, 'What are they going to do? Something's going to fucking happen while I'm gone that I wouldn't have let gone through.' I was concerned about it, but there was also nothing I could do. I did look at the blog a bit on my blackberry, but I wasn't reading their posting... And if they were minor mistakes, that's fine. There were no big mistakes that I know of, or at least, I haven't heard anything (laughs).

Formal structures: Editing

This element considers an aspect of group work, where the dominant assumption considers that of the job and workers feel acceptance toward each other. The socioemotional focus is thereby the group mission and tasks, such as teamwork and accomplishment.

The editing process at Futé, as examined in chapter 5, consists primarily of Dana opening the Moveable Type file of an editor's story, editing the copy while sometimes IMing questions to the editor, then resubmitting the edited story to go live at the appropriate time. Dana usually does not share the final edits with the editors, however the editors can go into the file before it goes live to see the changes before the story is posted. Editors say that most of the time they do not look at the changes, but rather, read the story when it becomes publicly available on the site.

Dana claims that the amount of editing she performs depends on the editor:

They have to be edited in different ways. Suzanne has to be edited because she goes on too much. But usually I can just cut it down and rework it and it's okay. It's usually very quick. Becca needs to be edited, but she's better than she used to be, to make sense. She is a good writer and she has a sophisticated way of looking at things because she's very smart, but she also says kind of unexpected things where I don't quite see what she's trying to get at, so that's different. Sasha really doesn't have to be edited that much, maybe I'll just change a phrase. Holly has to be edited. Well, Holly is hot and cold. Sometimes she just nails it, boom, I don't touch it. Sometimes there are grammar issues. And Laura, I just think, I can tell when she's not into it and when she is. I can tell sometimes when it feels half-assed, and then the times when it doesn't.

Dana's sentiments illustrate situational leadership, in that she applies different leadership styles to each editor. Farmer (2005) writes that a manager transposes their leadership styles according to the developmental stage of the worker. Competence,

performance and experience are all central factors involved in how she manages each person.

The editors' predominant attitude toward Dana's edits is one of acceptance. However both Suzanne and Laura say they might improve the group tasks and subsequent teamwork if they knew more about Dana's editing choices. Suzanne, in particular, articulates this desire:

I always want more information from Dana about how she edited a piece or why she made certain edits, just because I think it helps me in the long run, but it also helps her. Because if I know that, 'Oh, you went in and edited X, Y, Z,' then oh cool, maybe next time you save three minutes of editing a piece that I write because of that process. Whereas Dana makes edits and then saves it and then it goes up and then I'm like, 'Oh look, she made those changes.' But I totally know that over the course of the day she doesn't have time to be like, 'here...'

In contrast, Dana makes the case that she often does take the time to give the editors feedback, in the form of semi-regular pre-writing editorial direction. She says that her situational effort is occasionally successful:

I don't edit them that heavily. Suzanne at times I do, but I realize that she's 23. I would be curious if she feel like she learns anything. A lot of times I feel like I have to remind her. Like there are times when I have to be like, 'Okay, this is what I want you to do and I want you to be really quick – I want you to be really short in the intro. I want you to be straight to the point. And sometimes she does that. If I don't tell her, sometimes she isn't that way. The only time I get stressed about editing Suzanne is if I don't have the time to cut it down. She's not that difficult to edit, but there are just times when I'm not in the mood.

Although Dana does not expand on why she must be "in the mood" to read Suzanne's copy, it could possibly correlate with her multi-tasking responsibilities and

looming deadlines. However, Dana's accountability to these duties does not preclude the group work she successfully manages in order to be editorially consistent as a team.

Laura claims this leadership is what keeps the group on task:

She keeps us from being too self-indulgent. And I think on a blog it's really easy to devolve into endless reams of naval-gazing. And I think that that's something for the integrity of the blog that's really important. Because I think especially since it's a women's blog, you know, we want to be taken seriously and if it's too much effusive, personal musings I think that can be a little stereotypically female.

What many of the editors likely do not realize is that despite the socioemotional focus on group mission and teamwork, Dana claims that her editing feedback is not exactly warranted. These sentiments illustrate that for the leader, accomplishment may be the ultimate goal:

I hope that they think that I'm making their text better, but I'd have to ask them. But here's the thing; part of me doesn't care. In no other industry is an editor going to go, 'Does it bother you when I edit you?' So it's like, I don't want to ask them because I don't really care if it bothers them, because I'm going to do it anyway (laughs). I don't want to open the door in giving them a choice in the matter, or the ability to think they can express their opinion.

Where formal and informal merge: Insubordination

Considering Dana's viewpoint on editing feedback, one might anticipate some level of insubordination within the group. For instance, an editor could challenge the formal systems of the editing process or story assignment hierarchy at any time. In addition, the informal systems of nonlinear communication cultivated through IM might

help kindle this defiance. Regardless, the site's small staff allows for both formal systems and informal systems to exist together, oftentimes with excessive areas of overlap.

Dana acknowledges these potential conflicts but says ultimately, some individual candor about the organization's internal organization can be beneficial:

I think the younger people are more likely to speak up if they disagree about something than they would in an office with a lot of people. I feel like, Suzanne at times, but Laura is like, I'm not saying she's talking back to anybody, but she's more likely to say, 'well, actually no, I disagree with that and here's why.' They're more likely to speak their minds, but maybe ultimately that's a good thing, right?

While workers can choose to tread on these areas lightly and with little fanfare, others may decide to trumpet their discontent with impudence. As illustrated in chapter 5, Becca regularly demonstrates her displeasure with the organization's internal operations. While Dana acknowledges the unconventional non-linear structure and recognizes the basis of Becca's displeasure, she claims she is unlikely to give in to Becca's behavior:

There's kind of less of a hierarchy in a way, you know? It's like we have to help each other out, we have to. If we don't help each other out, shit isn't going to work. And Becca would probably say the same thing, she's always like, 'well this is different, there's not the same hierarchy.' She uses it as an excuse for her behavior sometimes and I'm like, 'You cannot talk to me that way,' or 'You cannot pull that shit,' and she's like, 'well, this isn't a regular workplace.' And I'm like, 'I realize that this isn't a regular workplace, but that doesn't mean you can be a pain in the ass the way that you are.'

Dana says this behavior involves dramatic IM disagreements laced with profanities as well as the occasional screaming match over the telephone. She claims these episodes often leave her angry and tearful. In contrast, Becca declines to mention vocal animosities and instead rationalizes their conversations:

We have conflicts over whether I'm being insubordinate sometimes, but it's not even that bad, I don't think. It's just sort of like, 'No, Dana, I'm not going to act like whatever you want. I'm not going to do this like you want me to necessarily, but I'm giving you what you want, and my interests are totally in the blog, but my process is different than yours and my process is different from Sasha's.

Such inner dynamics of power and authority are not uncommon to individuals within groups. Stapley (2006) writes that conflict, boundaries and other beneath-the-surface processes are often employed to help individuals cope with an organization's culture. In this case, Becca displays elements of neurotic behavioral patterns to offset Dana as leader. Her compulsive need for control coupled with a dramatic desire for grandiosity may not override the organizational culture as a whole, but it undoubtedly impacts it to some extent. As a key organization member, Becca represents a "cluster" of behavior patterns, which Dana tolerates, though finds frustrating. In addition, all the other editors professed a respect for Becca as both writer and friend.

Relationships between editors and company

This examines elements of group maturity, where the dominant assumption is experience, and the group feels it is accurate if it is successful. Socioeconomic foci include group comfort and survival, where the group and culture is protected. In the case of Futé's experience, the site's increasing PVs indicate a level of success at the organizational level. While most news organizations struggle with an economic goal and editorial goal disparity, in this situation, the two share a communal objective. The site's

viewership growth seems to allow the group to feel somewhat protected in that they are relatively immune to top-level management.

In addition, Dana maintains that Telescope Media heads Paul and Ben allow her nearly complete editorial freedom. Although she claims that they infrequently compliment the site, their hands-off approach helps to diffuse potential tensions between Futé and Telescope Media:

They don't give me any direction, really. They don't say, 'why don't you try something like this?' They don't. Yeah. I mean, they don't do it [compliment the site] all the time, but I wouldn't want them to do it all the time. But they can't complain because it was the biggest launch they ever had. If Paul ever said to me, 'I don't like the way you're...' I'd be like, 'Are you kidding me?'

Several of the front-line employees, such as Holly and Becca, claim to have frequent contact with top-level Paul and Ben, but Dana, as middle-level manager, communicates with the men most regularly. Although Paul is the head of the company, Ben is the person Dana discusses organizational matters with most. She muses that this arrangement could be advantageous to her, given Paul's reputation:

I don't know because he doesn't manage me. He owns the company and I deal with him once in a while. I think Ben is a good manager, I don't know about Paul, though. Paul expects a lot of people, or that's at least the impression. Paul has never said, 'I expect you to do this, this and this.' But the culture that's been communicated through other people's yapping is that he's a hard ass. I have never been exposed to those opinions so I would never say he's a hard-ass. I wouldn't say he's a softie, but I wouldn't say he's an asshole.

Throughout her interactions with Paul and Ben, Dana exemplifies what Kets de Vries' (2001) describes as emotional intelligence, or the ability to understand the motivational drive of others as well as her own. In this case, her past experiences

undoubtedly give her the insight to reconceptualize complex situations in order to perceive a situation to her benefit. While the Telescope managers withhold feedback as to the success of the new PV system, Dana chooses to recognize this action as one of their own self-preservation:

I'm sure they are because it was their idea, but I've never asked them what they think of it. Also, they wouldn't tell me if I asked them anyway. If they saw something problematic about it they wouldn't say anything because they wouldn't want it to get around, they would just keep it to themselves.

Another element significant to more macro organizational dynamics is the issue of cross posting. In the case of Telescope Media, cross posting refers to posting a story to one of the company's sites that was originally posted to another company site. This practice increases traffic to the post by expanding the audience. By cross posting an item, the site hosting the original posting obtains the valuable PVs. Telescope Media managing editors will frequently IM the managing editors of other Telescope sites to request a cross posting of one of their stories. The stories cross-posted usually have some relation to the content conventionally found on the requested site. Dana claims that the managing editors of sites control which cross posts to place, and that the success of Futé has caused many less-successful sites to want to cross post to their site. She maintains that she is particular about the items she chooses to cross post, categorizing them as "very small items" and rarely more than four a day.

Hence, while the sites all exist under the Telescope Media umbrella, they undoubtedly function within their own separate spheres.

Eight months after Futé launched, Telescope Media's namesake site Telescope experienced a mass exodus of top editors. Instead of hiring someone to helm the site, Paul decided to become the managing editor. Dana was then confronted with Paul's requests to cross post to Futé. Despite the inherent workplace hierarchy, Dana says she cautiously treated his requests as if he were any other editor:

Well, I feel weird about that, but sometimes I'm just, like, no. I guess I feel that, yeah, I'm saying no to the ultimate boss. But it's been about four weeks now and it doesn't bother me as much. I probably say no to him about half the time. Maybe that's a lot, I don't know. And maybe it makes him angry, but...Like the post the other day, when it was just too New York-y, I don't think he disagreed.

Another potentially tense situation emerges when Telescope Media sites appear to imitate popular Futé post styles. Dana reports that her editors regularly alert her to new features on other company sites that share remarkable similarities to those on Futé. In addition, she has received IMs from different Telescope Media site leads asking for coding information for particular Futé features. Dana says instead of challenging the other site leads, she internalizes the tension in an attempt to use it to her advantage:

I get annoyed when Telescope or Infamy does something like us, because they're copying us by using subject matter that's not innately them or by copying a style that's ours. But I'm like, 'Go ahead and copy us because I'm going to do it better.' I immediately get pissed, but then I get competitive.

Dana's response illustrates emotional intelligence to the situation, in that she chooses to perceive the situation as one of increased competition rather than unfair imitation. Although these events increase tensions between Dana and other editors at the

organizational level, she manages it by shifting her attention to things she can readily control.

Relationships between editors and audience

Much of the relationship between editors and audience inherently considers the idea of ideological bonding, located in the most macro-level of news work. The Futé editors communicate specific values through symbolic content to society and a portion of the audience – the commenters – then choose to converse about the content. While Chapter 5 introduced the commenter role, the relationship between the editors and the commenters deserves further discussion.

First, one must distinguish between audience and commenters. While audience demographics are tracked by the Telescope Media sitemeter, their personalities and opinions remain unidentified. In contrast, commenters voluntarily voice their views and engage regularly in a virtual conversation with other site commenters. Consequently, for Futé editors such as Laura, a clear picture of the site's complete audience is someone ambiguous:

All of my opinion of the readers is based on the ones who comment and I have no idea how they're reflective of the rest of the readership. So the people actually reading the site might be entirely different than my perception of them, because my perception of them is entirely based on the commenters. So some of the commenters are totally fun and funny and smart and they get it and I really enjoy reading their comments. Some of them are really strident feminists to the extent that they have no sense of humor. And you know we don't take ourselves too seriously. So reading their comments is usually infuriating and it's just like, Jesus, come on. And I think there are some people who just don't get it.

Others, like Holly, envision the more active audience members as individuals loyal to their group, in that the commenters' consistent participation and engagement provide for an identifiable virtual community:

I imagine that you would have to have a desk job to be reading Futé – because they read it *all day* – well, the commenters anyway. But they seem to be really loyal because they are on there all fucking day commenting, the same fucking girls. So like I know they're avatars and names by heart. Like I'll look at the one girl's who's avatar is Charlize Theron smoking pot out of an apple and I'm like, 'Oh, there's sinisterrouge.'

While this connectedness might provide editors with a sense of association, the commenters function as content evaluator. When critiquing not only the posting's subject but also the manner in which it was framed, commenters operate freely from outside of the organization, leaving those inside the organization as recipients. Editors such as Sasha maintain that commenters serve an important purpose, regardless of the emotional cost to editors:

Sometimes I feel kind of upset, but in general, I feel like that's part of the fun of it – that everyone has their own opinion, and it's almost even better when people disagree because maybe they bring up some point that you hadn't thought of. Besides, that's what it's all about, continuing the dialogue and thinking about stuff. I mean it's great when everyone's like, 'I love this, it's great, it's funny,' but it is interesting when people are like, 'This is so stupid because...' (laughs) You know, you can get upset, but if they have a good point to make...

Other editors maintain they become irritated when it seems the commenters neglect to recognize the site's organizational culture. When confronted with such commenter grievances, editors like Dana may employ common defense mechanisms to cope with their feelings:

I don't think that they always realize how hard we work. There are times when people will comment or say something mean and then Sasha will say something to me like, 'What the fuck?' We're giving them free entertainment, they don't have to pay for this, we're working our butts off, shut the fuck up and stop complaining about it. It isn't like you had to pay ten dollars to go see a movie that wasn't good. It requires nothing of you other than having an Internet connection.

Another method of dealing with potential criticism is avoidance. By not reading comments or even reading them at a later time, editors, such as Dana, can delay the initial sting of potential insult:

I'll read them like five days later because there's something about waiting a couple days, especially if I wrote it or if it was my idea. And if there's bitching and moaning about whatever the post was it doesn't really bother me as much as it would had if it were ten minutes after it went up. So that's weird, it's like I need distance from it. For example, I never read the comments after I wrote about having abortions. I have not read them, and I probably will, but I'm probably going to wait another month because that was very personal.

But the relationship between the editors and commenters has the potential for being more than just virtual. Commenters in some of the larger cities like New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles have organized social gatherings for fans of the site. Editors all say that while they initially considered meeting up with these mostly-female admirers, they have declined most invitations. Holly's sentiments demonstrate the boundary work editors employ to avoid both interpersonal anxiety and editorial influence:

Sasha and Becca went and they said it was weird to meet them in person. I feel if I meet people it might affect the way I write or something. You know, like the Tourette's thing, how they were talking about their retarded brothers and stuff like that. If I knew that about people then I would probably take that kind of shit into consideration when I wrote and I wouldn't be as real or something. I'm not opposed to running into someone...But also, just in terms of what I used to write for Telescope, for

my column and other things, I think people expect me to be this cartoonish character who's going to go into a bathroom and snort coke off some guys dick. So I feel weird about that.

Conclusion:

Relationships of any kind are never static and these three notable associations illustrate a constantly evolving organizational culture. The complex nature of this group's personality exemplifies a system attempting to balance its own emerging identity with irrefutable extramedia forces.

Accordingly, it is useful to further conceptualize these dimensions by considering the dynamics of the non-place-based organization. By gaining a deeper understanding of how Futé negotiates the intersection of technology and place, we can broaden our knowledge of how other organizations might similarly operate.

CHAPTER VII: TECHNOLOGY AND PLACE

This research illustrates an implicit connection between Futé's technology and the virtual workplace, and we can deduce that the workplace culture and nature of the organization are a direct result of this interaction. Accordingly, it is useful to analyze numerous concepts found within this research that relate to technology and place and locate these notions from both a macro and micro perspective.

Technology and authority in organizations

Though technology presents businesses with seemingly limitless organizational possibilities, this research indicates that to ensure levels of accountability and productivity, some conventional constraints tend to remain. While a non-linear, non-hierarchical organizational structure may be an ideal for some collectively run organizations, most companies desiring profitability will require authority at some level.

First and foremost, organizations employing new technology requiring computer mediated communication (CMC) may experience an increase in informal communication structures, encouraging leaders to impose formal restraints in managing group work. Instituting and adhering to a workflow protocol is one standard supervisory system that operates to limit informal organizational structures. A second method is the regulation of collective communication, which both restricts interaction between employees and increases situational leadership. Last, a universal increase in productivity standards as

measured by a tech-based metric may preclude an employee's ability to engage in supplementary informal communications.

However, it would be shortsighted to presume that all informal systems within the virtual organization should be discouraged. Indeed, many of these informal systems are integral to the health of formal systems themselves. Informal systems cultivate the emotional livelihood of a virtual group by aiding in group building and group work. Informal structures such as friendship and trust, developed primarily through casual CMC, are the muscles that enable the organization as a whole to function. Therefore, the most successful leaders will not only tolerate these structures, but also encourage them.

Whether by careful planning or good fortune, Telescope Media executives have designed an organizational system that balances surface flexibility with beneath-the-surface restraint. The company's strategic hiring of site leads and implementation of technology provide each site with an authority figure who can both manage employees and process the group's creative output.

Accordingly, one of Futé's most durable characteristics is the tacit nature of Dana's authority. Her "velvet hammer" management qualities combine informal and formal communications, which typically operate to minimize feelings of creative restraint while maximizing group teamwork. In addition, she employs a high level of emotional intelligence when navigating her relationships with her superiors. Dana's aptitude at balancing these dynamics while utilizing CMC creates the core adhesion of this group, and without these acquired abilities group work would be much more challenging.

Technology and adaptability

Clearly, new technology expands the overall marketplace of ideas and commerce immensely. A business' successful implementation of technological innovations indicates to consumers and competitors the organization's ability to adapt to ever-shifting conditions. While consumers may be primarily interested in how new technology affects their use of the organization, competitors may above all focus on the internal machinations of this business.

Early adopters of these innovations are generally comfortable operating at the edge of chaos and creativity (Stacey, 1996). By learning to manage chaos and develop long-term business plans rather than merely achieving short-term goals, such organizations are willing to take the time, whether quarterly or annually, to evaluate the technology's implementation. While certainly a lag time exists between an organization's technological adoption and its adaptation to new tools, the enduring organizational climate will be enhanced in comparison to organizations more resistant to technological transformation. Workers gain both personal assurance and group confidence when they acquire a new skill set, such as learning to communicate via innovative systems.

This research's technological implications primarily include organizational mission, work pace, burnout, instant messaging and page view bonus system. The site's unconventional and groundbreaking new media formulas, and hybrid and unconventional content might be dubbed "liquid," in that they are neither stable nor completely volatile (Deuze, 2007). As such, Futé's rapid work schedule illustrates the ever-shifting conditions of the new media industry. Every editor claims the pace is the fastest they've experienced, and each had to learn new technology to perform their job. Together the

editors are attempting to manage chaos through group knowledge and experience. This system not only lends significance to the work, but also promotes a unique professional identity (Deuze, 2007). Similarly, the organization's tolerance for defiant employees such as Becca illustrates the leaders are willing to give up control in order to retain key workers.

Futé's system also demonstrates how the new media creative industry can employ innovative technology to develop its own logic of media work. In examining the new media evolution, Deuze (2007) describes three logic systems that today's practitioners most often apply to their work: Editorial logic, market logic and convergence culture logic. Editorial logic encourages industry acknowledgement and status over audience needs and wants; market logic holds that a mass audience (commercial) approach trumps peer review, and; convergence culture supposes a consumer-generated and controlled product keeps costs nominal and promotes audience loyalty (Deuze, 2007).

Futé breaks from these templates and applies certain elements of the models to reap benefits while rejecting other components to avoid pratfalls. For example, while Futé won "Best Group Weblog" and "Best New Weblog" at the SXSW Bloggie awards in 2008 (editorial logic), most editors remain aware of the audience's needs and wants via PV numbers and comments. Similarly, although the site's PVs continue to escalate (market logic), the editors reject a firm commercial audience approach. Lastly, while the commenters are indeed a chief component to content (convergence culture), they do not produce the content. Accordingly, it seems Futé has implemented a technologically dependent system that allows the group to thrive at the edge of chaos and creativity, while remaining both relevant and portent to the media landscape.

Place and business economics

As previous literature suggests, companies can save vast amounts of money by primarily utilizing a virtual workplace. By centralizing only specific (usually non-creative) departments, such as technicians and high-level executives to work within a common workspace, the organization can keep overhead greatly reduced.

In addition, when an organization includes departments that are minimally collaborative and at times competitive, a departmental place-based separation helps to perpetuate a sort of simulated sibling rivalry. While this division allows the departments to share a common parent and the accompanying securities, it can also inspire groups to vie for parental attention by surpassing each other's successes. When these departments do not share substantial informal or formal face-to-face time together and instead communicate primarily via CMC, their relationship can take on an element of detachment that can heighten this competitive dynamic. As such, this virtual arrangement may operate to proactively challenge an organization's departments, and thus benefit their production and achievement.

Furthermore, by allowing an employee to work from home, the organization may place additional productivity expectations on the employee. While the adage "Out of sight, out of mind" might not be a completely accurate depiction, it nevertheless holds some significance. An organization that allows employees to work from home must trust that the employee can manage their personal circumstances. While issues such as workspace and personal health might be important to the employee, the primary concern of executives is that the work is accomplished. When an employee suffers a personal

setback and their work is affected, the accountability falls to the group leader, who must resolve the dilemmas.

The non-place-based organizational structure of Telescope Media sites is undoubtedly a financial advantage to the company. By renting or buying a smaller workspace, the organization can save thousands, or even millions, of dollars. At the individual level, the employees may save money usually spent on things like commuting costs and even professional attire.

In addition, considering several Futé editors' claims about the main office's audio and visual distractions and their inability to work in that environment, Telescope Media's increased productivity expectations might only be accomplished via the virtual structure. And while the editors' private domains might be at times seem uncomfortable to an outsider, each editor has created a functional environment and has learned to discipline herself enough to accomplish her daily tasks.

From another business perspective, Telescope Media's virtual system encourages each site to operate as both a separate entity and to participate in selective inter-organizational partnerships. By encouraging PV increases under the auspice of individual financial gain, the organization's executives both implicitly and explicitly advocate cross-site collaborations. These collaborations in turn fiscally benefit the company by increasing overall traffic and thus increasing potential advertising prospects.

However, site leaders and editors may see this situation differently. In Futé's case, Dana wants her editors to increase their PVs and also desires to limit cross posting in order to preserve the site's personality. Organizational tensions could occur if Dana increasingly declines post requests from other site leads, since this could cause them to

reject Futé cross posts. While such interorganizational conflicts might be negotiated face-to-face in a conventional organizational setting, the structure of Telescope Media prevents the site leads from such interactions.

Place as personal economy

Within the context of this research, personal “economy” refers to interacting elements, specifically when perceived as harmonious. While business economics consider place through a fiscal lens, personal economics examine location by means of individual fit.

Previous research indicates that employees with more traditional workplace experiences are most compatible with a virtual workplace structure, primarily for reasons such as a reduced need for workplace socialization and an increased need for time with their family. However, few of these studies have considered the implications of new media industries, which often employ younger people with limited work experience, choosing to implement non-place-based organizational structures. In these situations, employees are not experiencing the face-to-face interactions of a conventional group, yet they are in constant communication with other organizational members. Many of these new media workers utilize the same CMC technology for professional duties as they do for personal communication, and as such, the need for face-to-face interaction might be lessened due to their CMC comfort.

In addition, the issue of family may not be as consequential to new media organizations as it is to more traditional work structures. Given the new media workforce demographic (younger and mostly living in large metropolitan areas), one might presume

that the editors often do not have responsibilities such as children. By the same token, their personal freedom might encourage group members to lead active lives outside the normal workday hours, thus increasing their socialization and face-to-face interactions.

A final and key ingredient to personal economy considers this demographics' immediate living environment. Given their age and locale, many of the new media workers experience transitional living situations. It could be that their apartment is too small, too expensive, or a roommate is too loud, but an ideal living condition is usually atypical. While these surroundings may cause the employee daily stress, she may tolerate the situation rather than undergo the complexities of relocation.

The Futé editors range in age from 22 – 35 and their individual work histories reflect this span. Whether they worked in media for one year or 15 years, all the editors claim a level of work place satisfaction because they now control their daily interactions. In addition to their daily informal and formal work communications, each editor also communicates with people (friends and family) outside the work sphere via IM. The editors are adept at traversing between professional and personal spheres and make the constant transitions expeditiously. While several of the editors claim the profusion of CMC occasionally makes them less inclined to seek out physical interaction, most say they crave face-to-face interaction once they are done posting for the day.

None of the editors have children, although four editors have pets. Two of those editors must walk their dogs several times a day, which thus compels them to leave their apartments. The other four editors rarely leave their apartments until after sundown. While not impossible, it seems unlikely a person with children could enduringly work within this organizational culture. The site's long workday hours and inflexible schedule

would likely conflict with the unpredictable nature of caretaking. When one or two employees at a small organization such as Futé are sick and cannot work, the group process is greatly disturbed; productivity declines and stress increases.

Finally, each Futé editor illustrated a different personal economy within her living environment. Half the editors were satisfied with their surroundings, but wished for some improvements, such as a new roommate or more furniture. The other half wished to move elsewhere, due to space or money issues. Although nearly all the editors acknowledged the transitory nature of their current existence, none claimed they were ready to do anything about it.

Conclusion

The successful melding of authority, adaptability, business and personal economy can be an onerous task for many, if not most organizations. While the majority of today's businesses still mandate that employees are physically present at work, organizations are increasingly experimenting with more flexible work arrangements. Futé's adoption of CMCs and the virtual workplace demonstrates a generally mutually beneficial arrangement. However, other resourceful organizations will undoubtedly need to formulate their own unique structure that will assure a healthy and robust dynamic at both the individual and organizational levels.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Scholars such as Breed, Tuchman and Shoemaker have undoubtedly influenced the way we understand media. However many of their constructs, conceptualized decades ago, are less applicable to the changing environment of today's media. While some of the more traditional news structures continue to employ a linear, hierarchical organizational system with a well-preserved culture, those situations are becoming atypical as newsrooms adapt to the shifting marketplace by adopting convergent platforms. Accordingly, this research illustrates an organization that is successfully evolving from a hierarchical to a networked organization.

New media scholars such as Deuze (2007) recognizes such an incompatibility of mass communication theory and convergence culture when noting, "Even though Tuchman's research has been repeated in other media institutions with similar results, it seems to fit rather awkwardly with the current dogma of flexible production, increasing precariousness of employment arrangements, a globally emerging convergence culture, and an all-consuming shift of responsibility toward the individual," (p. 86). Accordingly, the media's existing transformation requires certain scholarly innovation.

This research reflects such a theoretical shift. While the first four chapters assert that organization theory and mass communications might hold equal explanatory power, the fieldwork and first phase of analysis indicate that an organization theory application more effectively examines the media system as a whole. By utilizing this approach, this study examines essential elements of culture production, such as content, connectivity,

creativity and commerce (Deuze, 2007). Indeed, the last three chapters illustrate how these elements are embedded within the organizational dynamics and structure.

However, there is still some value in locating components of this research within newsroom sociology despite the awkwardness of fit. By comparing aspects of this study to those found in previous mass communication research, we might gain insights that help us further distinguish this medium from its predecessors.

This research initially posed three central questions: What effect do personal values and professional roles and ethical norms play at the individual level; What news values, sources of routines and routine channels are utilized within the organization, and; How does instant messaging affect communication and organization dynamics?

Conventional newsroom sociology research (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978) holds that personal values indirectly affect the news process, but the influence is greatly reduced by routines and organizational constraints. In contrast, this research indicates that personal values are significant factors for media organizations such as Futé, which intentionally employs people who fit in with the already-established culture of the workplace environment and thus promote a stable culture. Additionally, while mass communication literature supports mostly structured professional roles and clear ethical norms within conventional media industries, this research illustrates an organization that employs flexible professional roles and assumed ethical norms that are carried over from previous media experience.

This study also locates the site's news values within standard representational media values, such as individualism, free enterprise, competition and materialism. While the website indeed emphasizes these values, the context often employs an ironic

manifestation. Instead of perpetuating the status quo, the content frequently utilizes subjects such as celebrity or consumerism to question cultural assumptions perpetuated by other media outlets. In this way, the ideological function of the site presumably differs from most other mainstream media outlets.

Another twist to conventional theory is the site's utilization of sources of routines and routine channels. While mass communication research holds that news workers usually gather raw news via human channels, this is rarely the case with media such as Futé. Although the site occasionally employs a "tip" from a source, the main means of information gathering is RSS feeds, which provide a significant increase of incoming information when compared to conventional media using human sources and standard wire feeds. Indeed, this research represents a different notion of what might connote "sources" to begin with.

Chapters five through seven examined the last initial question: how does instant messaging affect communication and organizational dynamics. While journalism literature has often studied face-to-face and even telephone interactions in the newsroom, little has been done on the organization effects of CMC such as IM.

In addition to the initial questions asked, the introduction to this research also presented three assumptions: Despite employing new technology, many conventional elements of media production routines, such as accountability and deadlines, remain intact; a virtual newsroom will utilize a more lateral power configuration, rather than a hierarchical organizational structure, and; because instant messaging is a more informal mode of communication than face-to-face, email or telephone interaction, the culture will promote a sense of creativity and community.

All these assumptions proved to be accurate to some degree. The issue of leadership is the ultimate force driving the site, although it is somewhat veiled by informal communication structures. In such a flexible organizational structure, the leader is ultimately accountable for the site's operations. She chooses the employees according to fit and thus wagers that the worker will both adapt to the more flexible organizational structure and thrive creatively.

But how might this organization measure success? Many would posit that because Futé has maintained its original employees, is increasing its PV (a success by business standards) and is winning awards, the site meets certain subjective criteria. Undoubtedly, taken together, these factors represent an anomaly for most new media organizations and illustrate that sustaining a staff in this demanding environment takes more than just money. Although funding is certainly essential, effective leadership and healthy group dynamics are what ultimately encourage employees to reach their optimal potential.

Deuze (2007) writes that managers hiring new media workers should consider three elements, all previously examined within this research: prior trust of the manager (often done through networked association), the likely trust amongst employees (attuning chemistry), and the employee's reputation for minimal group conflict. In this case, Dana carefully hired editors who appeared to fit within the organizational culture. Comparable to Deuze's (2007) suggestions, this fit considered writing ability, personal dynamics and attitude. Her choices have proven to be judicious.

In addition, within the elements of Futé's mission, organizational culture and virtual workplace, certain core characteristics remain unwavering under Dana's direction. The component of mission is represented by the site's dominant assumption that editors

are sincere with their work and duties. The overlapping elements of culture and virtual workplace are exemplified by the assumptions that editors can efficiently work from home using IM, and that they (with one exception) abide by company policy.

Consequently, the editors demonstrate an ability to negotiate the informal and formal systems to their advantage, which in turn perpetuates a feeling of both individual and group satisfaction.

It is also a particular fit between employee and organizational culture that allows the site to successfully adapt to its environment. Futé's cohesion as a group encourages the editors to collectively adjust to factors such as the evolving market, shifting audience and the site's strategic alliance with other organizational groups. Their unity allows them a sense of comfort within sometimes-unstable situations. For example, the editors can minimize their uncertainty with a shifting audience demographic by cultivating social capital with their commenters, which may promote a sense of confidence within group members.

This workplace design could make sense for other media organizations, even beyond making money. So long as the organization's leader is clear in the group's mission, she can build a staff that both respects and is loyal to that goal. For instance, if an organization's mission is to turn out vast quantities of media product in a short term, there is a particular "type" that might be an ideal fit for this job. This "type" must be willing to put in physically demanding hours that will likely blur lines between private time and work time. If the mission is to do long-term, in-depth collaborative research/teamwork/etc., there might exist another "type" of fit, one who would glean fewer physical and even psychological obstacles.

Moreover, this structure could also benefit creative organizations that depend upon individual productivity as well as some collaborative work. To reach a high level of productivity that is consistent, the organization must institute a leader who exercises emotional intelligence. This leader must be able to navigate the relationships with people both “above” her and “below” her in whatever kind of hierarchy exists. In other words, she must be able to efficiently and effectively confer with all members of the organization, while utilizing all different forms of communication (FtF, phone, email, IM). While the main communicative tool may be CMC, she must be accomplished with all communication measures.

This delicate balance also reveals the potential failure of this sort of enterprise. The three levels of the organization - front line, middle level and top-level employees – must all fit together. A breakdown within or between any of these levels could cause a collapse of the system. For instance, Deuze (2007) writes that most creative industry employees do not perceive management, business and commerce as entirely opposite to quality, culture or creativity. But if a front line employee, such as a writer, outwardly resists a manager’s implementation of creative direction that might benefit the company’s bottom line, the system becomes at risk. It therefore depends primarily on the middle level to resolve such a conflict. This could mean negotiating with the employee for a reconstructed fit or replacing that employee with someone who is better suited altogether. But even these negotiations must be articulated to the top-level employees to ensure cohesiveness.

Thus, the ultimate success of this enterprise depends on the group’s leader. While the group’s fluid dynamics stem from informal and formal structures, it is again the

leader's responsibility to manage the balance of personalities, in addition to her normal task-related responsibilities. So while organizational structure or content ideas are important, perhaps the most critical decision top-level executives make is, who will be the most effective leader?

Implications for future research

First and foremost, this study exemplifies the potential for new media researchers to adopt a cross-disciplinary approach to their analysis. As old models for understanding media cease to support the complex structures of new organizations, we must look to other frameworks for additional guidance. Accordingly, this study illustrates how being receptive to other means of data interpretation can lead to rich explanatory power.

Secondly, future research should examine the economic implications of new media organizations exploring innovative ways of conducting media work. While some may believe news workers such as those employed by Telescope Media are in control of their work situations, others may conclude that the organization is taking unfair advantage of its employees by prioritizing output over personal health and wellbeing. How might these new organizational models have an effect on incoming generations of media workers and what could this mean for the industry as a whole?

Similarly, from a practical perspective, while the old media model is falling apart, it would be useful to understand what types of skills are necessary for young journalists entering this new world of media work. As frequently implied, this research indicates that a new employee must be willing to forgo a nine-to-five schedule in lieu of often-grueling work hours. Media reports (Richtel, 2008) of bloggers acquiring sometimes-deadly health

problems due to time stress underscore the fact that this new world of media work is challenging to both the body and the mind. In addition to accepting such time commitments, a new journalist should have a functioning knowledge of progressive technology, although extensive technological experience is not a requirement. For example, many of the media workers in this research entered the workplace with only rudimentary knowledge of the technology and then became socialized to the mechanics of the job.

What is mandatory is a willingness to adapt to unconventional media making processes. While some may shrug at this seemingly obvious statement, we need only to look at the static state of the conventional news industry for evidence of its significance. As many conventional news vehicles struggle to implement new technology, reorganize work structures, re-evaluate their place in the marketplace and essentially re-examine their purpose, other more innovative media organizations are flourishing. While young bodies might primarily staff these inventive organizations, the truly essential component to group success is a flexible mind. The ability to adapt to changing informal and formal communication structures and navigate the accompanying complexities is a core requirement for the employees of these pioneering industries. Because most of these companies are working without an organizational template and are thus discovering what works by trial and error, they operate on the cusp of chaos. Yet these organizations are able to manage their uncertainties enough to foster creativity and growth. As such, older more established organizations might find this type of management to run counter to their business model mentalities that ultimately stress bottom-line.

Hence, the most imperative skill one might employ is the ability to adapt and adjust to the organization and its needs. These obligations might be outwardly expressed or implicitly stated. But regardless, it is the employee's task to interpret this information from the organization's leader in order to contribute to group work and ultimately, successful and healthy group maturity.

APPENDIX A

Protocol

A. Case study of Futé

A1 This exploratory study asks three broad questions: How is suitable news content defined? How does the routinization of news work operate within the existing editorial framework? What types of organizational dynamics are present within the website's staff? My belief is the structure and dynamics are similar to conventional news organizations, but that unconventional content and organizational environment leads to more flexibility than conventional organizational exhibit. Propositions include individual and organizational conception of online content and organizational processes.

A2 Theoretical frameworks for this study include organization analysis, virtual workplace literature, newsroom sociology and celebrity media research.

A3 I will utilize the protocol as the primary line of inquiry. Because the protocol is a standardized agenda, it will aid in the collection and organization of the appropriate literature.

B. Data collection procedures

B1 Futé contact is Managing Editor Dana Holmes.

B2 The data collection plan will encompass three weekly visits to the New York City area, where the site's five editors live. I will spend the first week in the home of Dana Holmes. The second week I will spend each day in the home of the other editors. I will then spend six weeks analyzing the data before returning to

the New York City area for one more week of fieldwork. I will then spend two more days in the home of Holmes and three days in the homes of three other editors. I will arrive at the editor's home at 8 am and stay until the last posting is added to the site, which is normally around 7 pm. This will allow me to witness all phases of editorial production and from varying hierarchical levels. During this time, I will utilize non-participant observations and open-ended interviews with staff members.

B3 Expected preparation prior to site visits includes the gathering of organizational information such as previous instant message communications and other informational memos, in addition to previously posted stories. These can be accessed via Holmes and the website.

B4 I will utilize a small tape recorder when appropriate but otherwise will record information by hand. I will also bring my laptop with me in the event that seems an appropriate data collection tool. In addition, I will keep a daily diary to record my daily reactions to the fieldwork.

C. Outline of case study report

C1 Workplace culture

a. Everyday life of editors

b. Organizational culture in relation to mission and virtual workplace

1. Artifacts

2. Espoused values

3. Underlying assumptions

C2 Nature of this business

a. Description of site dynamics

D. Case study questions (see Appendix B)

E. Evaluation for conclusion

How does the organizational structure affect production?

a. Organizational routines: How do the organizational *routines* of Futé compare to those established within mass communication research?

b. Organization structure: How does the organizational *structure* of Futé compare to those established within mass communication research?

c. Future implications for mass communication industries

APPENDIX B

Interview questions

A. Content and viewer perception

1. How would you describe the stories on your site?
2. Do you consider what you do to be journalism? (Elaborate)
3. What would you say is the general tone of your site?
4. How would you describe your readers?
5. Why do you think people read your site?
6. What do you think they get out of your site?
7. Do you feel you serve your readers well? Why or why not?
8. What do you enjoy most about your site's content?
9. What, if anything, do you enjoy the least about the content?
10. Are you proud of the final product?

B. Duties

1. Explain to me a little about what you do.
2. Do you feel you do more or less than what is expected of your position?
3. Walk me through your workday.
4. What kinds of dilemmas do you face in making editorial choices?
5. Do you feel you have much say in how things work?
6. How much of your work involves teamwork? With whom?
7. Where do you feel the concept of trust fall into this?
8. Do you feel the site is run effectively?

9. How might you improve the way the site is organized?
10. What do you think are the biggest strengths of Futé.com?
11. What do you think are the biggest weaknesses of Futé.com?

C. Overall workplace environment feelings

1. Do you enjoy working on the website?
2. Do you feel others enjoy working on it?
3. What are some of the other rewards you feel you get from working on it?
4. Do you feel you are creatively encouraged at work?
5. How might you feel happier at work?
6. Is the site a place you'd encourage others to work for?

APPENDIX C

Research diary

Nov. 26: Get up at 6 am...rainy and cold outside. I'm nervous about the commute since I don't know how long it'll actually take. I figure if I'm scheduled to be there at 8 am I should leave the apartment at 7 am just in case. It's so strange to be running around the city at that early hour. I never even did it when I worked here. People slog around in rote motions, while I actually look at faces since this feel new again. The commute turns out to be a piece of cake and I arrive in Long Island City at 7:35. Dana lives a half block off the main drag there, which is lined with delis and miscellaneous other shops. I walk around in the rain for 20 minutes, picking up a coffee and a NYPost, then head to her place. Her apartment is a few doors down from a police station so there are cop cars all over the place. I buzz her door and she lets me in. She looks like I remembered her from five years before: tall, medium build with brown wavy hair. Friendly and casual. We walk down a hallway and enter a concrete courtyard, before entering a second building that looks to be another smaller apartment building that may have been a garage years ago. She lives on the first floor and her younger sister (in grad school at Columbia) lives in the basement apartment. Dana's apartment is a decent-sized studio, with a kitchenette area just inside the door and a small couch facing her desk and a TV. Her bed rounds out the square. There is a cat climber in the corner with two cats sleeping on it. Dana has pulled up a chair next to her office chair at the computer and invites me to sit down next to her. She has already started working and continues, while explaining the basics of what

she's doing. She is articulate with her explanations and it's relatively easy for me to pick up what's going on. It initially reminds me of the pace of a television news producer, juggling time slots and pacing...one eye always on about ten other things at once. She has five IM screens open and has regular communication with her editors, while editing and writing copy and HTML code and also scanning the 300+ RSS feeds she's getting. I am amazed by her multi-tasking as I haven't seen anything this fast-paced in a while. She makes virtually instantaneous choices with the RSS stories and is constantly tinkering with her rundown. She gets a handful of phone calls with various editors when she believes it will be a more effective communication tool than IM. She smokes nearly a pack of cigarettes during the day and apologizes many times for it, although I tell her that it is okay. Her cats come up and nuzzle me, since I am new to their territory. I leave and get more coffee and a little food at 11 am, I am tired already. She leaves at 12:15 for what she tells her staff is a doctor's appointment, but she confides in me that she is actually going to an appointment at US Weekly. Janice Minn, the editor in chief, wants to meet with her about something. Dana changes from her sweat pants and tee shirt and puts on a black dress and boots. She tells me I can stay in her apartment while she's gone, so I read the paper on the couch and fall asleep for 45 minutes. She comes back and tells me off-the-record that Janice wanted to talk with her about editing the US Weekly website. Dana says she's not interested, but I can tell she was flattered by Janice's interest, since US Weekly is still a very big player in publishing right now. She keeps her dress on but puts her sweats back on underneath and sits back down at her computer. We seem to be getting along well, but I sense a little bit of awkwardness at times. I wonder how she feels about being alone all the time and all of a sudden having a virtual stranger a foot away for

eleven hours. I get another cup of coffee at 4 pm and then watch her juggle for the next three hours. At seven pm she is done and decides to walk me out and go get something to eat. As I leave her she touches my elbow and tells me she's enjoyed my being there. I am flattered that she is being so kind to me, since I know it's got to be somewhat strange for her to have me sitting right there, scribbling in my notebook all the time.

Nov. 27: I feel more confident going to Dana's house and even look forward to sitting there all day. There was something exciting about being an insider to the project. Dana greets me with coffee she's just ordered from a diner and seems happy to see me. Today seems to go much faster than yesterday and I don't feel as tired. It could be because it's not rainy, and there's actually some sun in her apartment. I have a better understanding of what's going on and don't feel as overwhelmed. She suggests we order in food from a place she likes and we enjoy doing that. I don't even leave to get coffee, since she ordered in diet Cokes for me (without my even asking). She gets the postings done early (they automatically go up at the right time) at 5 pm so I can interview her for an hour. First, we walk to a nice coffee shop and she buys us both lattes, which we then take back to the apartment. The interview is really enlightening and she tells me about the ideology behind the site and how it got started. We will continue the interview tomorrow or Thursday so I can hear about the communication processes, etc. She is meeting Becca and a Futé intern for dinner near my brother's apartment, so we take the subway into Manhattan together. Our conversation during this time is not about Futé at all, but about our personal lives...how we met our partners, where we've worked, who we've worked with, our research. This time felt very comfortable and I know it will even further our

communication compatibility during the next few days. I almost didn't want us to have to get off the train, I enjoyed our conversation so much. I look forward to tomorrow.

Nov. 28: I was looking forward to going to Dana's apartment this morning. The commute, while not overly difficult, makes me almost envious that she can just roll out of bed and start working. Her apartment is like a little lair, where she needn't worry about distractions other than her computer and telephone. It occurs to me that this might be an ideal work situation, since other time consuming tasks in a traditional work environment (even walking down a hall to the bathroom or participating in small talk with co-workers) are absent. Her personal interactions with her editors are limited to a couple lines in an IM, but never anything more. I was comfortable with the pace of the work today and rarely confused as to what was going on. She was able to work for long periods without my asking questions. She talked numerous times on her phone, both personal and work-related, and my presence never seemed to inhibit her conversations. I feel she is comfortable with me around and has been very generous with her trust of me and my intentions. I notice that while she knows what kinds of posts will generate the most click-throughs, she is more concerned with getting in posts that have some social significance, too. She is thoughtful with her choices and careful with the text. She knows what Futé is from head to toe and how to keep it that way. It is impressive to watch her for many reasons: her ability to juggle many things at one time and at a quick pace, as well as her ability to create coherent and consistent editorial tone. We took the subway to Manhattan together after work and I walked with her to the Telescope Media offices in Soho. I

wasn't allowed to attend the meeting she was going to with the site's lawyer, but I was introduced to the two main editors at Telescope (Emily and Josh), as well as to the editorial director of Telescope Media, Ben Robinshom. Ben is the person who approved my research and I was happy to shake his hand. I quietly thanked him and he quietly acknowledged my thanks. I felt like a researcher, standing there, not able to participate in the work happening, yet chronicling it all in my head. I cannot believe the content of so many sites is generated from such a messy, somewhat-generic looking office. One big, long room with long tables and laptops on it. Not much on the walls, not the greatest lighting. So un-glamorous that anyone could walk by and not have an inkling what was happening there. Everyone working was young. Ben informed me that a trade magazine (something like N-1) is going to be doing a big piece on Telescope Media. I will need to look that up. Tomorrow it's more Dana.

Nov. 29: Seems like old hat now, riding the subway at 7:30 and getting to Dana's at 8 am. She orders in coffee and eggwhites on rye toast most mornings and has a cup of coffee waiting for me every day. She is being very kind to me. This morning she was a little groggy and hungover. She and Ben ended up going out for dinner and drinks last night to talk about work and the site and Telescope Media in general. I get the feeling the two of them have a pretty great camaraderie, even though he is technically her boss. They chat on the phone a couple times a day (always for a particular work-related reason) and seem energized by each other. She says she's not a fan of Thursdays because she's pretty burned out by the week already. She says Fridays are always much more fun and she tends to get done a little earlier. She says many times during the day that she's bored and

also that the drinks from the night before have made her a little hazy. Late in the afternoon we discussed the technicalities of page views, etc. She had to get Ben on an IM to help explain it to me. I still don't get it totally, but I know the URL that will help explain it. I get to interview her for about an hour before I go home which is great. We sit in front of her computer so she can answer IM's, email, phone if she needs to (and she does, as I have to stop by tape recorder five times during the interview). Although she says she feel inarticulate when answering my questions, I find her to have very astute and thoughtful answers. She looks off in the distance while answering my questions and even says that she's never really thought about some of my questions. I think I'm asking things that she takes for granted and doesn't often unpack. She says it's helping HER realize how she feels about some things. I'm only too happy to help!

Nov. 30: I can't believe this is my last day with Dana. I'm actually kind of sad about it, as I've enjoyed spending time with her in her little nest of Futé. I can see where one could become anti-social working from home – it's so EASY to stay inside and have only minimal in-person contact. It's addicting. Plus, Dana is fun to be around. She's patient and has a sharp sense of humor. And she seems very honest with me, which I have been grateful for. Sometimes I felt like she even forgot I was sitting there, although I did get up a lot to stretch and/or use the bathroom. I think she actually enjoyed having some company, given her seeming comfort with my presence. She also told me that when I was leaving. Her respect for both me and my work has made it an enjoyable to spend time with her and I hope that I can write an accurate portrayal of what she does and how the organization works. Obviously, I need time to transcribe the interviews with her and

analyze her feedback before I make any real statements, but I can say from my gut that I am impressed with her leadership and management style. Today was a bit crazier than she expected, since three of the five editors of Telescope.com quit. The morning was going smoothly and she was even a little bit bored when all hell broke loose a little after noon. This will all be in my log, but suffice to say that she (we) were glued to her IM for the afternoon, trying to both produce the Futé content and figure out what was going on over at Telescope. In the middle of everything, Paul sent her an IM asking her to go to coffee tomorrow (on her day off!) to talk about things. I think he's going to offer her the head position at Telescope, although she claims she would never take it. This could get interesting, as I am betting he will offer her a lot of money. She has really struck gold with Futé and I have a feeling he thinks she can do the same with Telescope and turn it around. Telescope used to be such a much-read, but the readership has declined in the last year. I bet Paul is paPauling and trying to figure out how to save his mother ship. We shall see...Next week I spend time with the other five editors. It will be really interesting to see what their pace is and how they feel about working for the site. Hmm. I'm meeting with Sasha tomorrow for lunch and to do an interview.

12/3: Today I was with Holly, aka: Free Love. She lives in Brooklyn in a modern triplex apartment building she shared with her boyfriend until they broke up a month ago and he moved out. I get there at 8:15 am and ring the buzzer – she says she just got out of the shower and will be down in a minute. Five minutes later she comes down and gets me. She has a small dog named Edie who spent much of the day trying to get our attention.

Thus, I found myself brushing and holding Edie in an effort to calm her. Normally I would just let the pet alone, but I felt my presence was making her a little crazy. I spent almost the entire day watching Holly splice together video for her weekly “Lady Bunch” post, which is a compilation of bit of talk shows, like “The View” or “Tyra.” It wasn’t that easy to watch exactly what was going on, since she only has a small laptop. But she did try to occasionally explain things without my asking questions. She seemed open to my being there, but I can’t say she has the warmest personality. I think she’s probably wounded from the breakup and somewhat suspicious of strangers. By the end of the afternoon she seemed to be more comfortable and I was able to ask her some questions on tape before I left. I also was able to ask her some questions while we walked Edie at lunch. All in all, it was a good day, since I was able to see the operations through the eyes of an editor and not just a manager.

12/4: Today I was with Becca. She lives not far from where I’m staying, so I was happy to walk there at 7:30 am, instead of riding on the subway. Becca is the editor I have been the most intrigued by, since she does the political posts and seems most angry. Plus, I knew that she and Dana feud over IM. But the day was surprisingly calm, with no CMC fights whatsoever. She made coffee for me and was quite polite, although I couldn’t tell for sure if I was bugging her by being in her space. I brought her an egg sandwich, which she ate. I did make a lot of observations about Becca’s work environment; for instance, she has nothing on her bedroom walls, where she works, and she dislikes working with any noise in the apartment. She and her roommate have a cat, but he remains silent for the afternoon. She talked with me about her ADD and working for a blog, which have

gone hand-in-hand for her. After talking with her, I got the feeling that she has little idea that her IM tone irritates Dana, or anyone else for that matter. She seems to have been a fighter/underdog/renegade for most of her adult life and her job at Futé is an extension of that. Her apartment, while newly renovated, is in a building that is old and tenement, and most of the other apartments are in pretty crummy condition. I found this interesting.

12/5/07: Today was my day with Sasha, since she writes the “Midweek Madness” posting on Wednesdays, with the help of an intern. Sasha also lives near where I’m staying, so again, I’m happy to walk there. I pick up Dunkin’ Donuts for us. I get there a little after 8 am, and she explains that she’s already running late to post the regular 9 am “Morning Crap” feature. Sasha’s apartment is a small studio, with stuff EVERYWHERE. She has lived there for nine years and has collected a vast array of pop culture paraphernalia. She is also dog-sitting her sister’s pet Chihuahua (question: Do all editors have a pet??), who remains asleep on the bed for most of the day. The things I noticed most about Sasha is that: a) She laughs a lot, b) She doesn’t stress about her deadlines, although she always makes them, c) She likes chaos. Her iTunes were playing the entire time at a decent volume. Dana had to leave for a lunch so Sasha was in charge for a few hours (this happened last week as well), but she managed the other editors well and nothing terrible happened. I knew Sasha from a past job, so perhaps she was just very comfortable with me. But she did seem quite happy with what she was doing.

12/6: I spent today with Suzanne, who at 23 years old is the youngest Futé editor. She lives near where I’m staying so again, I was happy to walk there. She lives in a two-

bedroom apartment with a small living room containing a couch, comfy chair, television and two lamps. There are also two large windows that allow both sunshine and traffic noise into the space. She has the television the entire day, although volume is kept at a minimum. She talked with me the most of any of the editors, stopping only to post something or read IMs. It seemed either she was nervous about having me there or genuinely enjoyed having someone to talk with, because she rarely stopped with the conversation. She talked with her mother on the phone many times during the day and fielded IMs with lots of friends and family, although she didn't always "talk" long. I got the feeling that she is very close with her family and they enjoy checking up on her. She was very focused and quick with her work, and when she was told by Dana to do something it was done within a matter of fifteen or twenty minutes. She rarely got up from the couch, only a few times to use the bathroom. We left her apartment to go and get a sandwich for lunch from a restaurant down the block. She sat next to me on the couch with her small laptop computer on her lap. She impressed me as a highly intelligent young woman who loves her work and is grateful for the opportunity to write things that interest her. She also regularly brought up her past health problems (endometriosis, digestive problems). After her last posting I was able to interview her for 45 minutes. Then she suggested we go shoe shopping in her neighborhood (Little Italy) because she wanted to buy some boots. We walked around and went into some stores for about ½ hour and she seemed really happy to be out and about.

12/7: Today I'm with Laura, who lives in Brooklyn. I get to her place at around 8:30 am, her boyfriend is getting ready to go to work. Their apartment is in the garden level and

they have a decorated and lit Christmas tree standing right outside the sliding glass door. Laura is slightly older than Suzanne, but seems to have a more stable sort of situation. She and her boyfriend have been together for three years and moved into this apartment last spring. She has been working for Futé for two months now and says she is very happy with her current situation. We sat together on her couch, which faces a television that is turned off. She says she doesn't like to have any music or television while she works as it is a distraction and she needs to be fully attentive to what's going on with work. She seems slightly nervous to have me there, but relaxes during my time with her. At 10:30 she has to go move her car to another parking space so I'm able to interview her while we walk to her car and then park it a few blocks away. She seems in control during the course of her morning and early afternoon postings and doesn't seem too rattled by deadlines. It seems her previous online experiences have made her comfortable in this environment. A little after lunch she says she has an afternoon lull where she just kind of takes a breather. I realize that I have observed her for five hours and gotten a good deal of interview time with her and decide that I will leave early and go home to start transcribing my notes. She is the only person that I leave early, but it doesn't seem pressing that I am with her for the entire day since her postings slow and I seem to have the information I need.

Summary from first two weeks: All in all I feel like my time with the editors has been truly enlightening. They do seem to work well as a team, with limited infighting. They all seem excited to be working for this site, especially since it seems to be doing so well. Becca seems the most (in general) potentially problematic as an editor, with the others

generally content to be doing what they're doing. The drama with Telescope during the first week certainly added a dimension to this research, as it shook up the foundation of the media empire and rippled throughout the sister sites. The next few months are going to be very interesting for Futé, since beginning in January the editors will receive a bonus for high page views. While they claim it will not influence their work, I will be eager to see if this is the case during my follow up observations. I wonder if turmoil might not be around the corner.

2/4/08: It was definitely a good idea to come back here for another week. Dana seems relatively comfortable around me, I have a working understanding of their system and I get to see the site during an unusual cycle. This week is Fashion Week in NYC, so several of the Futé staffers are going to the fashion shows during the day, then sending Dana information via their Blackberry's, which she then puts up on the site. It seems Dana is frazzled by this somewhat chaotic system and lack of stationary editors, and that anxiety is reflected in the general atmosphere of her workplace environment. This dynamic, coupled with the fact that her computer was very slow today, made for occasional tension within the apartment. I know that Mondays tend to be the most hectic day of the week, so this perfect storm of chaos should not be surprising. Regardless, it does make for some interesting observations. For instance, I do not see her use the bathroom once. The only time she gets up from her chair is to feed the cats. I was planning to be with Becca tomorrow, but she is having some medical issues, so I will be back with Dana.

2/5/08: Today was not the most pleasant day to be observing Dana. Three of her editors (Becca, Laura and for half the day, Holly) were not working and there was not a lot of other news than the fashion shows and the primary election. Dana was pretty edgy all day and I was feeling a little uneasy at times being there, only because I felt like maybe she was trying to subdue some of her frustrations in my presence. We did take a break at 11 am so she could go vote, and it was interesting to walk with her the four blocks to her polling place and see her in the context of her neighborhood. There were only a handful of people in the polling place and they were mostly older. She seemed to feel reinvigorated after voting, but then got frustrated again in the afternoon when she was struggling to not only get story ideas but also get text up. The day improved substantially when she invited me to accompany her to a New York Women In Communication roundtable where she was one of five panelists. The event was called, “5 Great Gigs and the Women Who Have Them.” Dana was a little nervous before the event but was a natural on stage. She seemed very honest about what she does and the industry as a whole and I was glad I tape recorded the event (discreetly) because I feel the discussion is something I will be able to refer to again in future research and/or teaching. Afterwards, Dana seemed full of energy and enthusiasm and I was glad I was able to see her in the presence of other journalists, articulating and locating her job within the larger media sphere.

2/6/08: Dana and I were both bleary-eyed today, having both stayed up late to watch the election. However, Dana’s mood was much improved over yesterday, due primarily to the fact that all her editors were back to work. The machine seemed to run much more

smoothly than in the previous few days, with IMs moving constantly and Dana steadily editing, scanning and communicating with others (via primarily IM). It seems she feels so much more comfortable when everyone is participating and, in essence, being communicative. There were few hitches during the day and Dana even had some personal IMs with both staff members and friends. I didn't notice any level of frustration, such as the previous days. If anything, it seemed she was back in her element: order from chaos. Tomorrow I go to Becca's apartment and I hope to be able to interview her. Hard to tell what kind of mood she will be in, since she was out Monday and Tuesday and seems a little "cool" to begin with. It should be an interesting day.

2/7/08: When I turned on my computer this morning, Dana IMed me and asked that I call her. I call her and she says that Becca is very sick today, so I cannot observe her. I had a feeling that this was going to happen, since Becca has been on-and-off again sick all week. Instead, I stay in the apartment and transcribe notes, all the while checking the Futé site and traffic. I IM with Dana a bit during the day, but she types minimal sentences, leading me to believe that things are chaotic. When anyone is out, it throws the entire pace of the site off. I am glad to have a day to catch up on fieldwork and I imagine Dana might be somewhat relieved not to have me looking over her shoulder.

2/8/08: Today was absolutely the smoothest day with Dana. While she was very busy, live-blogging fashion shows with Suzanne, everyone was working and thus, it seems Dana felt more in control again. She delegated with ease and multi-tasked like a pro. At one point, she was entering Jen's live-blogging text into Moveable Type, while

communicating via IM with four editors, while cutting down on the RSS feed. This day, of any, reminded me the most of my time with the site in December, because everyone was working and Dana was “on.” I think some of her rather chipper mood was also due to it being a Friday, which is (according to Dana), her favorite day of the week. It makes sense, given that she actually sleeps in during the weekend and work consists primarily of reading magazines and occasionally looking at the RSS feed. It was bittersweet to say goodbye to her. I appreciated her openness to me so much and was so grateful for her seeming transparency. I am able to interview her before I leave, too, which is great. She cleared up most of the questions that remained. I interview the other editors via IM next week.

REFERENCES

- Ahmadi, M., Helms, M. & Ross, T. (2000). Technological developments: Shaping the telecommuting work environment of the future. *Facilities* 18 (1/2).
- Beeson, Patrick (2005). blogging: What is it? And how has it affected the media? *Communication & Mass Media Complete*: 93(2).
- Berkowitz, D. (1992). Non-routine news and newswork: Exploring a what-a-story, *Journal of Communication*, 42(1): 82-93.
- Blanton, K. (10/16/2005). Home Work. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved 10/8/07 from www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2005/10/16/home_work/
- Breed, W. (1955). Social Control in the Newsroom. *Social Forces* 33: 326-335.
- Bryant, J. & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and Research in Mass Communication. *Journal of Communication* 54(4): 662-704.
- Clark, H. (1992). *Arenas of Language Use*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dellinger, K. (2004). Masculinities in “safe” and “embattled” organizations: Accounting for pornographic and feminist magazines. *Gender and Society* 18(5): 545-566.
- Denison, D.R. (1996). What is the difference between organizational culture and organizational climate? A native’s point of view on a decade of paradigm wars. *Academy of Management Review* 21(3): 619-654.
- Denton, N. (2007). Retrieved from www.Pauldenton.org October 14, 2007.
- Deuze, M. (2007). *Media Work*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Diamond, M. & Allcorn, S. (2003). The cornerstone of psychoanalytic organizational analysis: Psychological reality, transference and counter-transference in the workplace. *Human Relations* 56(4): 491-514.
- Farmer, L.A. (2005). Situational leadership: A model for leading telecommuters. *Journal of Nursing Management* 13: 483-189.
- Fen, J., Lazar, J. & Preece, J. (2004). Empathy and online interpersonal trust: A fragile relationship. *Behaviour & Information Technology* 23(2): 97-106.
- Gandy, O.H. (1982). *Beyond Agenda Setting: Information Subsidies and Public Policy*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company.
- Gans, H.J. (1979). *Deciding What's News* (25th Anniversary Edition ed.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Gazanio, C., and Couson, D.C. (1988). Effect of Newsroom Management Styles on Journalists: A Case Study, *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (Winter): 869-880.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures; selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gibson, J., Blackwell, C., Dominicus, P. & Demerath, N. (2002). Telecommuting in the 21st century: benefits, issues and a leadership model that will work. *The Journal of Leadership Studies* 8(4): 75-86.
- Giles, D. (2002). Parasocial Interaction: A Review of the Literature and a Model for Future Research. *Media Psychology* 4: 279-305.
- Glaser, Mark. "Traditional Journalism Job Cuts Countered by Digital Additions" in Mediashift (August 23, 2007), retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2007/08/digging_deepertraditional_jour.html.

- Grindstaff, L. (2002). *The Money Shot: Trash, Class and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hall, J.R., Neitz, M.J. & Battani, M. (2003). *Sociology on Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Hermes, J. (1995). *Reading Women's Magazines*. London: Polity Press.
- Instant messaging. *Computer Bulletin* (2005), 47(3).
- Jankowski, N.W. & Wester, F. (1991). "The qualitative tradition in social science inquiry: Contributions to mass communication research," in K.B. Jensen & N.W. Jankowski (eds.), *A handbook of qualitative methodologies for mass communication research*, (pp. 44-74). London and New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, P., Heimann, V. & O'Neill, K. (2001). The "wonderland" of virtual teams. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 13(1).
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. Blumler and E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communication: Current perspectives on gratification research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Kets de Vries, M. (2001). *The Leadership Mystique: A User's Manual for the Human Enterprise*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Kim, H., Kim, G.J., Park, H.W., & Rice, R.E. (2007). Configurations of Relationships in Different Media: FtF, Email, Instant Messenger, Mobile Phone, and SMS. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12(4).
- Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2001). *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*. New York: Three Rivers Press.
- Kunda, G. (2006). *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Marshall, P.D. (1997). *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Martinez, K.Z. (2004). Latina Magazine and the Invocation of a Panethnic Family: Latino Identity as It is Informed by Celebrities and Papis Chulos. *Communication Review* 7(2): 155-174.
- McKenney, J.L., Zack, M.H., & Doherty, V.S. (1992). "Complementary communication media: A comparison of electronic mail and face-to-face communication in a programming team," in *Networks and Organizations*. Eds. Nitin Nohria and Robert G. Eccles. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- McQuail, D. (1983). *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mendelson, A. (2005). Image is Everything: Celebrities, the Paparazzi and the Practice of Journalism. *Proceedings of the International Communication Annual Meeting, New York, NY*.
- Mendelson, A.L. (2007). On the function of the United States paparazzi: mosquito swarm or watchdogs of celebrity image control and power. *Visual Studies* 22(2): 169–183.
- Nardi, B.A. (2005). Beyond Bandwidth: Dimensions of Connection in Interpersonal Communication 14: 91-130.
- Paletz, D.L., & Entman, R.M. (1981). *Media, power, politics*. New York: Free Press.
- Palmer, G. (2005). The Undead: Life on the D-List. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 2(2), 37-53.
- Perlmutter, D.D. & McDaniel M. (2005). The ascent of blogging: old media report on new media but they haven't figured out how to adapt. *Nieman Reports*, 59(3), 60-6.

- Poynteronline (4/10/2003). The Face and Mind of the American Journalist. Retrieved from: http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=28235, on November 14, 2007.
- O'Connor, B. & Klaus, E. (2000). Pleasure and meaningful discourse: An overview of research issues. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3(3): 369-387.
- Quan-Haase, A., Cothrel, J., & Wellman, B. (2005). Instant Messaging for Collaboration: A Case Study of a High-Tech Firm, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(4).
- Reisner, A.E. (1992). The news conference: How daily newspaper editors construct the front page. *Journalism Quarterly*, 69(4): 971-986.
- Richtel, M. (4/9/2008). In Web World of 24/7 Stress, Writers Blog Till They Drop. *The New York Times*.
- Ryan, C. (2005). Struggling to survive: A study of editorial decision-making strategies at MAMM magazine. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 19(3): 353-376.
- Schein, E.H. (2004). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schudson, M. (2003). *The Sociology of News*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Samuels, A. (10/9/2007). Newspapers, bloggers now on same page. *Los Angeles Times*.
- Shoemaker, P.J. & Reese, S.D. (1996). *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content* (Second ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Shoemaker, P.J., Tankard, J.W. & Lasorsa, D.L. (2004). *How to Build Social Science Theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Sigelman, L. (1973). Reporting the news: An organizational analysis. *American Journal of Sociology* 77: 660-670.
- Stapley, R. (1996). *Complexity and Creativity in Organizations*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Steinem, G. (1994). "Sex, Lies and Advertising." In G. Steinem, *Moving Beyond Words*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Strom, D. (4/5/2006). I.M. Generation Is Changing the Way Business Talks. *The New York Times*.
- Sumpter, R.S. (2000). Daily Newspaper Editors' Audience Construction Routines: A Case Study, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 17(3): 334-346.
- Ter Hofte, G.H., Mulder, I. & Verwijs, C. (2006). Close encounters of the virtual kind: A study on placed-based presence. *AI & Sociology* 20: 151-168.
- Towers, W.M., & Hartung, B.W. (1983, August). *Explaining Magazine Readership with Uses-and-Gratifications Research*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Corvallis, OR.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: The Free Press.
- VanMaanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Vos, P. & van der Voordt (2001). Tomorrow's offices through today's eyes: Effects of innovation in the working environment. *Journal of Corporate Real Estate* 4(1): 48-65.
- White, D.M. (1950). "The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study In the Selection of News. *Journalism Quarterly* 27: 383-390.

Wimmer, Roger D., & Joseph R. DomiPaul (2003). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Belmont, CA, Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

VITA

Elizabeth Meyers Hendrickson grew up in Northern Ohio and moved to New York City after graduating from the University of Missouri in 1994. She worked as an entertainment editor at magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Glamour* and *First*, before returning to Mizzou to pursue her graduate work. Her research includes the production of celebrity media content, specifically that found within magazines, and the celebrification of American politicians. She and her husband, Matt, and son, Alexander, now live in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she is an assistant professor at the University of Tennessee's School of Journalism and Electronic Media.