

Influence and Newsroom Routines: How News Workers Navigate an Evolving Business Model

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Abstract

The digital paradigm in newsrooms created a culture of resistance in news workers as corporate mandates and structural changes pressured journalists to privilege emerging revenue streams over professional norms. This study looks at the culture of news rooms to explore if routines, directed from management down to rank-and-file news workers, have been normalized, embraced, or modified by journalists in a post-digital paradigm atmosphere. The answers lie in how directly these new routines serve the audience.

Keywords: News work • Newsroom • Social constructionism • Routines • Influence • Audience

Introduction

A community newsroom run entirely from coffee shop, a venerable newsroom operated from a flex space for start-ups, a multicultural newspaper run from an unassuming house in a residual neighborhood with chickens vocalizing next door, all using Zoom and other communication platforms to for planning and editing. These are some of the unexpected ways newsrooms have changed following the digital paradigm and disruptions from COVID 19. This study looks at ways the culture and practice journalism has evolved at several newspapers in light of these dynamics. Change is invariably a requirement for any industry to survive. Media products are no different. A modern film has different pacing, blocking, and technology from the same works done in the early and even late 20th century. Sure, they still tell a story and share most of the structural function and business model as the medium always has you can certainly watch "Rear Window" on the same screen as "Wakanda Forever" but, at some point, audiences demanded evolution, not as a testament to quality, but as a need to see the times they live in reflected in their media. But what happens when that change occurs slowly, there is resistance in the industry, or the business model fails?

That's the problem the newspaper industry faced as audiences demanded they confront the digital age. This was a rocky road. According to Rochmann W and Koch J [1] the problem was systemic, fundamental, and existential as organizations and publishers tried to transfer a failing pattern from the print business to the digital business in an "attempt to reanimate a dead advertising and circulation model." They can hardly be blamed, as this model paid high returns in the Golden Age of Journalism from 1940-1980. Fine journalists were caught in the middle of this crisis. Like a rudder guiding a ship toward shore, rendered futile by a gaping hole in the boat, news workers were given directives by their outlets' ownership and administrators time and again to make content desirable to a dwindling audience even as they took resources needed to make that content. According to Schulte W [2], layoffs and restructuring were the common result of failed strategies and news workers were asked to do more

with less as they watched their colleagues cut loose. Schulte observed this from 2013-2014 in an ethnography of newsroom culture. At that time, in the newsrooms observed, news workers still looked at the print product as sacred, in spite of efforts to be online first. Further, there was an irreconcilable friction between the civic service of journalism and that service being encroached upon by a desperate need for profits. Schulte W [2] asserts a sustained pressure by corporate and administrative entities sought to change the core values of journalism, itself. Informing the public and creating a rich marketplace of ideas became subverted by corporate directives that pandered to the public in a myriad of different ways. News veterans may know some of the terms; News 2000, Key Zip Codes, Real Life, Real News, but these directives also included readership surveys, design surveys, and focus groups designed by the corporate office to reaffirm that print was dying and to cut drastically.

The industry has yet to fully stabilize but there are signs of an emerging new normal. This study explores how news organizations, even in large markets, have become more agile, shedding offices and overhead in favor of a lean workforce and informal meeting locations. Using ethnographic technique, this study documents these changes in the fundamental culture through the eyes of news workers, as well as how they experience current operational and business models. Further, this study explores how new workers at smaller operations navigated these difficult financial moments.

This study explores the modern mission of journalistic practice within the context of historical-or what has come before-practices. It privileges testimony from rank-and-file news workers from a number of different beats and functions that have evolved from the turbulent recent past. Participant observation and interviews with 35 news workers from four different newsrooms and with varying sizes, challenges, and goals inform this work. The goals of this study are to understand how news workers engage with their mission, reconcile turbulent changes, and understand how the new business model operationalizes function, community, and leadership. But most importantly, this study sought to document how news workers see the culture in which they find themselves. Social construction, as a theoretical framework, is used as a lens through which to observe these dynamics. Social constructionist theory, as put forward by Berger PL and Luckman T [3], allows themes and observations to illustrate ways news workers adjust to social influence and expectations. Social space and behavior play a key role in newsroom dynamics. According to Bourdieu P [4] social space in terms of peer networks and social capital is the non-financial social value of an individual. As individuals engage and interact in various aspects of life, they develop certain dispositions toward their identities and the ways they are expected to behave. Bourdieu further explains that through these dispositions, combined with other complex social behaviors and expectations, will start to inform individuals of their place in the social order and they will begin to embody this expectation in their habitus. Thus, constructing their reality. Thirty-five news worker voices are used in this ethnography to find themes and create a better understanding of the media world. This researcher

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gathered data through participant observation, interviews, and job shadowing.

The literature shows three important themes that arise from looking at social control and the media; influence, routines, and identity. Much of the literature focuses on influence. This is important as it explores the news workers experience and how they exert control in their communities and, in turn, experience controls in their own environments. News room routines are equally as important as a controlling factor that surrounds the way journalists prioritize and go about their discipline. Finally, the literature explores identity and social construction to explore how individuals may be changed by outside pressure and changing social dynamics. This is the constructed world being shaped by a perceived reality.

How communities are influenced by media

According to Bogues A [5] journalists exert a great deal of control over public discourse. This can be a powerful tool. Bogues explores the role of black journalists in modern-day political discourse. The article looks into the nature of black journalistic authorship in the midst of political-divisive discourse in the United States. Bogues elaborates on the influence that journalists have on society and, in turn, what the discourse has had on them as a black journalist in America. The position of both black journalists and all others is "bridging the divides in our national discourse, finding the bonds that unite" [5]. This bridging influence appears to extend beyond political discourse into coverage choices as well. Andrews KT and Caren N [6] make an argument that the media shapes the minds of the public, specifically when discussions regarding social organizations or social efforts arise. The authors combine detailed organizational survey data from a sample of 187 local environmental organizations in North Carolina along with the news coverage of those organizations in 11 major daily newspapers in the two years following the survey (2,095 articles). They found large, formal efforts by environmental organizations are favorable with readers and in turn are given more media attention. This contrast is in comparison to the more aggressive, informal, volunteer lead, polarizing or confrontational efforts that the authors found result in less media attention. The article also explains how things such as organizational influence, a reporter's personal preference, media conduct, and media attention theories all play into a bigger picture of influence. Cohen J, et al. [7] explore media influence in politics and the presumption that political action is done with the mindset that political mediatization is a reality in the 21st century. The authors explore a collection of differently postured arguments to assert that the majority of political presence via politicians is done with a mediatization focus. Mediatization is defined as the increase of intrusion of media into the political process. These principles were applied to parliamentary politics and Israeli journalism for further study. The authors utilized data from a survey of Israeli parliamentary reporters, ranking politicians' media motivations. Researchers recorded political activity regarding the frequency of the politicians' media appearances. The results of the study indicated that politicians believe the power of media increases their motivation to appear in media coverage, which in turn is related both to greater media prominence and to more parliamentary activity. The authors argue that mediatization, being the prime politically influential motivation, in coverage and political appearance can come full circle.

Newsroom routines

Domingo D [8] explores daily routines in newsrooms in terms of interactivity in the journalistic activity. The author highlights the reality that "interactivity" is a recent development in the reality of the modern-day journalist and how those manifests into a co-influential relationship between the audiences and the publications themselves. Domingo asserts that interactivity is a necessary goal for the journalistic world to navigate in a healthy way. Interactivity can be defined as the "presence of citizen publishing platforms that coincides with the platforms of traditional media outlets" [8]. Domingo assesses debates around whether or not interactivity is destructive to the professionalism that is carried within more traditional journalistic routines. The author also highlights how journalists can capitalize on online journalism while also not divorcing itself from the traditional newsroom. Domingo chooses to pair methods from other professional fields with the current influence that journalists have to innovate routine and workflow.

Innovation of routines is not just explored in the literature as innovation, but as moral authority. Mateus S [9] asserts that the main aim of the journalist is more than just the logistics, facts, and tragedies, but is actually the discourse that contains a vital level of moral authority and social credibility. The author uses ideologies that draw on social constructivist theory to show how these traditional values are important in light of philosophical constructs like "meaning". Mateus S [9] asserts:

If newspapers work as social maps we need to deepen our understanding of how they construct meaning and articulate social worlds. By focusing on the emergence and development of journalistic conventions and professional routines and also by studying journalism history-we may start to deal with that endeavor.

Mateus further emphasizes that the current life of the media professional and the history of working professionally in the media exhibit how vital the role of the journalist is socially and morally.

Social construction and the individual

Social construction theory as explored by Berger PL and Luckmann T [3] assert reality is greatly constructed by individuals through their influences, experiences, cultural, and social norms. This constructed reality generally sets parameters on notions of correct behavior and expectations. Simply put, social constructs do not have inherent meaning. This theory has some utility for this study as we are looking at how long held norms of news work may or may not be changed at a fundamental level.

As Mateus S [9] finds social construction informing to exploring moral authority, the theory may also enable a better understanding of news worker motivation and changing priorities. The reality is that one of the prime factors that journalists are shaped by is the experiences that they endure on the job. Meaning that the daily grind of reporting ultimately influences and shapes the mind of the journalist. Pearson explore the harsh realities of trauma and turmoil that the journalist witnesses while on the job and in turn how that influences their storytelling. In response to this, the authors present a few solutions to better equip the everyday media worker for the trauma that comes with the job. The concern regarding the backflow of difficult coverage returning to influence the news workers themselves is also found in the literature in terms of conglomeration and its influence on news workers. Reese SD [10] explores the controversy that arises around global journalism and globalization of news as many publications expand their media reach worldwide. With this process comes a variety of different influential factors. Reese proposes that in light of globalization and media conglomeration the journalistic world should rethink its stipulations around a variety of different influential factors for the global journalist such a culture, workflow, and motivation.

Reese SD and Shoemaker PJ [11] operationalize these influences in a model with profound utility. The authors explore the varying influences of media and how the audience as well as the delivering party (media professionals) are affected in light of these influences. They define five levels of influence on media content from macro to micro levels, including social systems, social institutions, media organizations, routine practices, and individuals. The authors apply this model of influence in application to the "Networked Public Sphere." With the assurgency of social media and online journalism this study attempts to show how their model of media influences can be implemented in light of new developments. Shoemaker and Reese note that as times change so do research needs. Additionally, they assert that this media model is applicable in light of many modern and emerging journalistic innovations. Schulte W [2] asserts that news workers are resistant to influences that are not consistent with journalistic norms and the civic function of the discipline. They will actively, if at time subtly, subvert corporate mandates that are designed to pander to audiences or are of little news or social value. Nelson JL [12] argues mandates do little to entice an audience. Rather, non-profit news publishers often attempt to build strong ties with their audiences. Many assume this approach differs from that of legacy newsrooms which have historically kept the audience at arm's length. Nelson argues that large and small organizations are pursuing collaborative relationships with their audiences, though this pursuit is ill-suited for the traditional mass audience approach to news production. Nelson further

asserts that journalists aspiring to work closely with the audience will find greater success when that audience is narrow.

Research questions

The literature shows that news work is clearly influenced in several ways and reveals three key areas of influence where news workers have a dynamic role; communities influencing media workers as these workers act in service to their communities, changing routines due to new platforms, economic considerations, or encouraging new norms, and influences from ideology and social systems. Those ideas lead to the following research questions.

RQ1: How do news worker see business models and their roles therein?

RQ2: What influences affect news workers in the current work environment?

RQ3: Are influences internalized and/or rationalized by news workers?

RQ4: Has resistance to influences continued to be part of a journalist's norm?

Methods

The literature review revealed influences on news workers are historically plentiful, but the review did not reveal consistent ways influence manifests in news workers themselves. This study seeks to understand whether news workers internalized and acted upon the social dynamics in the modern newsroom by observing their dynamics and talking with them in their work environments. This study explores the questions as a qualitative ethnography, using participant observation and interviews. Because this research is conducted in the 'natural world' and the work relationships, attitudes, and job routines are germane to understanding the influences; a qualitative approach was chosen allowing the work to respond to the environment of newsroom culture. Data is cultivated from two years of periodic observations, thirty-five interactions with news workers, and access to internal documents such as news budgets and external documents such as news products.

Four newsrooms were selected as field sites. They differ in size and mission, but are similar in geographic location. This is to generalize and isolate the dynamics noted in the research questions without attributing the observations to one size of organization. The observations started in June 2019 and ran until December 2023. COVID 19 is responsible for the large gap between start and finish. The circulation at the newspapers varied from more than 108,000, to just over 22,000. The same large media corporation owned two of the newspapers observed, one was small and independent, and the last was an independently owned African American publication. All of these newspapers were within 50 miles of each other in the South. Proximity allowed all of the newspapers to be observed in the same time period. The publications are not being mentioned by name, as that anonymity was suitable to protect the journalists. It also promoted candor and was in keeping with ethnographic tradition. This researcher shadowed news workers, conducted interviews outside the workplace, and occasionally assisted them in small ways as participant observer.

While in the field, notebooks were kept consisting of extensive 'jottings.' Jottings are the listings of topics or events used in preparation to write formal [13]. These jottings became a narrative as the notes were transcribed into dated and categorized formal fieldnotes. These fieldnotes generate chronological observations, which are then sorted by themes germane to the research questions.

Findings

Budget meetings, production, and story chasing are still very much a part of newsroom work, as are organizational directives, but now the latter appears to take a back seat to story "performance". Performance itself is now a more clearly defined metric, using clicks, visits, viewers, shares, and time, however that metric takes on different meaning depending on the organization. Management is no longer in a state of "rebranding" as an information center or a converged experience. Rather they have settled in to specific identities

that allow them to perform and find specific audiences. Schulte W [2] observed that administrators have many tools at their disposal to bring news workers in line with goals. But observations in this study reveal the managers of these newsrooms appear less heavy handed.

Emerging journalistic routines

In large part, news workers have not abandoned their vocations as creative, civic-minded journalists. They understand the issues their organizations face in terms of financial model, but the model appears to have stabilized as newsrooms that have become smaller are more agile. As newsrooms have become leaner, news workers have much more autonomy. The news workers observed in this study were a far more autonomous group than Schulte W [2] found. Whereas management was once desperate to find a new financial model that worked, the new dynamic is an audience-controlled rubric based on online contact that can be specifically converted to dollars. News workers at all levels engage in this rubric and it is "top of mind," as it was explained several times by editors and reporters. Editors review reports that show traffic and performance, then create specific goals for reporters in these areas. Reporters can only see their goals and analytics numbers. There appears to not be a punitive scope to this supervision, only collaborative planning for the future. Consider the following passage from field notes:

Annie is a high-level editor at a large centuriation metro newspaper, with a small news staff. She explains that direct conversions are the new bread and butter of the news world: direct conversions are explained as new audience members who pay into stories. Five conversions are considered a good number for a day. Five conversions are equal to 50,000 impressions (content that reaches a user's screen). Through an algorithmic process workers can literally see these conversions and impression as \$3,000 in revenue. This does not include advertising. Annie implied and news workers demonstrated staff process conversions as approval and success, wishing to follow that success the next day. Daily performance is noted in comparison to the same day over the past several weeks. This can also be viewed in different ways (past years). Conversions can come from any story, but in this market high school sports, investigative journalism, and political endorsements are popular. These elements are important and Annie says she is often accused of assigning stories based on those metrics. She feels otherwise. Noting journalistic mission, especially investigative work is a traditional and important area of news work that happens to coincide with these metrics.

In terms of mission, Annie sees stories as valuable even when they may not clearly perform. But they must stand on one of three legs; experimental, developmental for the journalist, or clearly important. Having a clear mission and goal appears to be a favorable factor in terms of news worker acceptance. The conversions dynamic is an organizational directive, but is normalized in the news room as a standard part of the process. Further, "redefining print," another organizational directive, is finding traction at this field site. The goal of this idea is to make the paper into a "best of the week" product. This appears to give news worker the pride of still seeing their work in print and having something physical to carry and show.

Small publications continue to embrace the printed product as the final manifestation of their work; however, technology has improved their revenue and, in several ways, enhanced their mission. Monetary performance is seen in the light of a pluralistic revenue model. In the case of the Black publication observed for this study, they identify as a hybrid, advancing their work in as many ways as possible. As above, this organization describes their print product as a "best of", whereas online was considered "day of", but this organization sees the relationship with their audience to be multifaceted. COVID and the digital paradigm were a catalyst for agility in coverage, but they had fewer revenue problems during these times because they were used to working on a slim budget. Their editor notes, "A relationship when established can move without being face to face." He considers these relationships "table stakes", referring to the minimum offering on any aspect of a product before it is considered for purchase by a customer. The more they can touch a potential audience member, the more likely they are to reach that minimum stake, the brand and mission being the thing of value to the audience. Workers spend equal time, writing newsletters, and sponsoring town hall meetings and events

for the community as they do traditional news work. Consider this passage from field notes:

Walt is a longstanding editor and writer for a small Black newspaper. He confided that the downturn in market created opportunities for (or perhaps forced) their small organization to be creative. He says his audience “will always reach a certain demographic segment” and that segment values their mission. Walt was able to leverage their niche to not only solicit ads, but ask for donations, like a nonprofit through web portals and events, even though they are a for profit organization. His publication also seeks grants and other partnerships. Walt was uncomfortable at first with these ideas, but said to himself, “do you want to stay in business? If so, you need to make them ask.” He was surprised how many people were willing to donate to the mission.

The organization is also able to increase their workforce further and faster than other organizations utilizing Report for America, a non-profit service that matches reporters with organizations and supplements salaries. Experimenting with different platforms solves many problems for this organization, as no revenue source (traditional or emerging) is considered closed to them. This is the agility of a small operation.

Influence and mission

As the dynamics of news work are more directly audience focused, the tasks and beat of traditional reporting have evolved. The organizations observed for this study are restructured in such a way that not only cut overhead, but brings specific audience sensibilities directly into the ways the organization wants the work addressed. Education, cops and courts, and government are all still addressed and considered the responsibility of specific staff, but to address additional needs the roles assume a broader coverage scope. For example, the beat of “cops and courts reporter” is now redefined as “the public safety reporter.” And the sensibilities are changed. Here is an example from field notes:

Blake is a 22-year-old recent graduate from a large journalism school, they are covering breaking news and the general areas of “public safety.” On this day they are struggling to get access to a camp run by the local police department for firearm training, specifically with a focus on active shooter neutralization. Blake registered for the camp in conjunction with a story they are writing with a “Women getting guns” angle. For transparency and to protect the relationship Anna, her editor wants her status as reporter clearly understood by the officials before they participate (Blake did not think this was necessary but complied). The organization has an ongoing issue getting documents from police but were in this case given active shooter statistics for the area. Blake met with the data reporter to crunch the numbers and present a more complete picture to the public.

Blake spends only a fraction of work time checking police blotters and fire calls. All these items are online and easy to access. The efficiency of these tasks, as created by technology, allows this small news room to maximize their time chasing stories that will perform well. It is notable that only one of the field sites observed in this study was in a traditional newsroom space (actually a converted house). One operated out of a coffee shop and another was in a converted industrial space created for startups. The distance-needs COVID created are not abandoned, as they appear to help the bottom line, and remote work functions just as well as a traditional space. Further, news workers find this favorable. Blake’s beat was created as a response to audience sensitivity to social issues and the performance generated by in-depth stories. Along with this was a newly created service journalism desk which cultivated stories specifically to “help” rather than just inform. They are observed working on stories such as how to get/lower a mortgage, areas where rent is most reasonable in the city, the most fuel-efficient cars, cheap and free meals in the area (with maps). Analytics shows these are very popular with the audience and the desk workers process this positively, as it is being civic minded and consistent with journalism norms. Moreover, all work is done in collaboration with the audience growth producer. They are in charged with push alerts, and choose what and how often to “push” (to subscribers’ phones). They also promote the brand through social media platforms. The audience growth producer is given broad latitude to pick how they channel work. Poor

performance of stories, large or small, or other works considered “audience focused” are considered missteps by the audience growth producer, rather than the primary author or others involved with the story. Data journalism and data journalists are not considered a burgeoning area of news work, but are normalized in the profession. Editors confide that if they had to lay people off, the data journalist would be the last to go.

Operations with a niche market tend to lean into novelty as a point of pride, even when those stories are not consistent with their organizational mission. These stories not consistent with mission tend to influence decisions if the story was likely to be unique to organization. From field notes:

Gwen is a full-time staff writer at an African American newspaper. She is not black, but eagerly embraces the mission of the publication by covering events important to the community. This includes stories about the fate of a historic building that was once home to a Black social club, a story about the increasing number of Black farmers in the region, and a story about a female African American computer scientist, with a focus on why there are so few women of color in the field. Gwen is also an avid runner and soccer fan. Gwen noted that she went to one event at a local college that featured several Olympians and their publication was the only ones there. This led to a conversation about niche and being where others are not. She gets support to cover track and field at local colleges, soccer events, and she did a preview of an exhibit of a renowned (white) illustrator at a local museum. The justification for this coverage is that it is overlooked by other media.

To continue

A later conversation with Walt indicated the publications readership is very connected with the mission of the paper. Readers will often call and address coverage choices outside what they consider the mission. Stories, which on the surface appear secular rather than related to the mission, such as soccer, and a story about yawning (being pursued by an intern) are justified because they are overlooked by other media and the audience is impacted by all of it. Walt indicates that he does spend some time explaining the interconnected nature of their mission to what happens in the community in general and he explains the need for Black newspapers in terms what of other publications do or do not do. “One does not seek news about sports in Good Housekeeping. Likewise, one should seek news that impacts, serves, and observes African Americans from an African American publication, regardless of an overt single-story connection to our mission.” Often the conversation was about “niche” rather than that the specific “niche” that is their mission.

Larger organizations have been influenced by social dynamics as well. One such organization created a Race, Culture, and Community Engagement Editor to explore and develop an audience similar to the niche noted above. Smaller newsrooms with non-permanent locations are more accessible for the audience in many ways. Work is often done out in the community among those being covered, the work spaces themselves are informal and news workers will often see each other only sporadically, on a Zoom call, or not at all.

Results and Discussion

News workers react and address elements of the “Networked Public Sphere” as proposed by Reese SD and Shoemaker PJ [11]. Most prominently, “routine practices” from the hierarchy influence model were observed in action in the following ways.

RQ1: How do news worker see business models and their roles therein?

The business model, as it is evolving in news rooms, creates a digital identity that news workers often find favorable. As audience needs and preferences coincide with journalistic values and missions more opportunities for revenue are embraced without resistance. This mode of operation is related to performance, so a complete adherence to the traditional norms of news judgment, like the unusual nature of events, proximity, impact, usefulness, controversy, etc., will not always be the rubric for success; however, as audiences show preferences in these areas, news workers respond with

gusto. Interestingly, operations that always worked on a shoestring, were able to embrace a number of creative revenue opportunities following the digital paradigm and downturns due to COVID, and deploy them quickly, without as much damage to their employees and reputation. Larger organizations struggled.

RQ2: What influences affect news workers in the current work environment?

At these model field sites; struggles have not ceased but have normalized without layoffs in several years. In these cases, there are quantitative measurements for performance that returned to news workers quickly, and positions are created such as “audience growth producers” or “race, culture, and community engagement editors”; workers see clearly that their process is being modified by organizational controls. This is dynamic is influenced by literal time spent among peers in a newsroom. Many younger news workers have not experienced layoffs, or a different business model, so they are neither fearful of their organizations nor jaded by the changed dynamics. Rather, they embrace the emerging model, news tasks, and traditional roles, all as a single reality of the workplace. Older workers will talk at length about the way things used to be, but younger news workers give them very little heed.

RQ3: Are influences internalized and/or rationalized by news workers?

Mateus S [9] asserted that the chief office of the journalist is to project a moral authority and social credibility. News workers, as tasks are redefined, take this function seriously. They are shaped by experiences, as Pearson, et al. asserts, but are not jaded by the rigors or starkness of the job. This appears to refute Andrews KT and Carren N [6], at least in terms of traditional newspaper outlets, as current models are shaped by the audience, rather than from internal conflict or social pressure. However, there are a few caveats to this understanding. Line editors and administrators are encouraged by the audiences response to traditional journalistic mission, but continue to assign other areas of the journalistic “mission” that do not create the same levels of performance as others. Education as a beat is a good example. Further, they will assign work that is related to previously high performing stories, even when they are of lesser value to recreate that performance. This does not always send a clear signal to news workers about values, and at times they feel set up to fail if their beat is not one that performs well for the audience.

RQ4: Has resistance to influences continued to be part of a journalist’s norm?

Adherence to journalistic mission clearly must be a priority for news works to embrace other levels of administrative influence. A formal resistance is no longer as over as it was observed by Schulte W [2]. Activities that have little to do with traditional journalistic tasks like sponsoring events or soliciting donations are embraced when they are framed as a service to the audience. Nelson JL [12] observations concerning a collaborative relationship with audiences being favorable to small publications, but not large, was not apparent in this study, although the collaborations look quite different as larger organizations attempt to be responsive to analytics and smaller operations have more direct interaction. Resistance, in a liberal use of the word, can be found subtly in two areas of this study: news judgment and autonomy. News workers find stories that are not necessarily going to perform well when they value or prefer the topic. Editors allow this to occur when it encourages the journalist in some way or it will produce a high-quality work. The editors are also influenced by new and accessible avenues to promote work. When viewed through the lens of Berger PL and Luckmann T [3] social constructionist theory identity and core values can be adjusted if they are consistent with previously accepted and practiced ideology, such as framing news dynamics as service. This constructed reality sets a new parameter on notions of correct behavior and expectations [14].

Conclusion

News worker routines have changed in a way that allows them to address journalistic values more directly while observing and adjusting to a modern

business model. New positions and a younger work force focus on audience growth, but have created opportunities for traditional norms to flourish again. Though story performance is the top priority, observed performance has allowed journalist to meet the audience where they are and often direct them toward substantive work of civic value.

Berger and Luckman explain social construction is the result of choices and dynamics that are pointed and specific, but they are not permanent and fixed for all time. News workers choices are of profound influence regardless of policy because the ability to select is not fixed but fluid amidst professional and social discourse. News workers are finding new norms acceptable as those norms embrace routines consistent with their journalistic and social missions. News workers are also influenced by social conditioning and resources, but big-picture decisions that take into account the public they serve are not overtly resisted. This fundamental change in relationship to administration allows staff the latitude to cultivate stories they wish to write and understand their audience’s needs. This is true whether they are digital or traditional tasks. Organizational directives are met with less animosity than Schulte found.

This study adds to the body of literature exploring news room culture and social constructionism in media. With regard to limitations, this ethnography only observes a limited number of field sites that are in a single geographic area in an effort explore its central questions of influence and routine. A broader exploration, with a national scale and more voices may yield different results. Further, this work’s interruption by COVID-19 restrictions may have influenced regular behaviors.

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