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Rooting for the story: Institutional sports journalism in the digital age

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Abstract

This dissertation examines contemporary daily sports journalism through the lenses of media sociology and new institutional theory. In-depth interviews with 25 sports journalists (reporters and editors) identified the institutionalized norms, values, practices and routines of American sports journalism, demonstrated how that institutionalization affects story selection, and showed how the profession is changing due to digital and social media. The interviews show that although traditional sports journalism is highly institutionalized, digital sports journalism is far less so. Traditional sports journalism is still centered around a story, and digital sports journalism follows Robinson's (2011) journalism-as-process model. The journalists interviewed are expected to perform acts of both traditional and digital journalism during the same work day, which leads to tension in how they do their jobs.

Keywords: Sports journalism; media sociology; institutionalism; newspapers; digital news; social media

ROOTING FOR THE STORY:
INSTITUTIONAL SPORTS JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE

By

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Dissertation

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Institutional sports journalism in the digital age

“Do we really need 25 people crammed in baseball locker rooms fighting for the same mundane quotes? What's our game plan for the fact that—thanks to the Internet and 24-hour sports stations—a city like Boston suddenly has four times as many sports media members as it once had? Why are we covering teams the same way we covered them in 1981, just with more people and better equipment?”

—**Bill Simmons, Grantland.com (2012)**

In a series of online columns posted to Grantland.com in the summer of 2012, Bill Simmons (the site's editor-in-chief) and best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell discussed the changing sports media landscape in the digital age. Simmons, who rose to prominence in the early 2000s as a blogger on ESPN and became one of the America's most popular sports writers, made the point quoted above when discussing the media coverage of that year's NBA finals.

Like all media, sports journalism has seen seismic changes in the early 21st century. The digital media revolution, including the proliferation of social media, is changing the way sports news is produced and consumed. It's changing how sports journalists do their jobs, and how they are expected to do their jobs on a day-to-day basis.

Before the 2000s, the daily sports media landscape was easily defined—there were print and broadcast reporters representing newspapers, radio and TV stations and magazines. By the early 2010s, the sports media landscape included all of those reporters, but also included online-only publications, bloggers (both for corporate-owned companies and independent fan-driven sites), and fans using social networks like Twitter to voice their opinions and interact with reporters and athletes themselves. Popular accounts by sports journalists describe a profession that has been irrevocably changed by the advances in digital and social media (e.g. Dargis, 2012; Ballard, 2006).

Despite this expansion of the landscape, there are many ways in which sports journalism looks exactly like it did before the emergence of digital media. Reporters still watch games in

the press box, still crowd around podiums or in locker rooms for interviews with the coach and star players after the game. Game coverage consists of a game story that recaps the key plays and moments of each contest; sidebars, which are shorter stories focusing on a specific play or player; and columns in which the writer voices his or her opinion and attempts to put the game into a larger context (Siegel, 2013; Wilstine, 2002).

It's this seeming disconnect—between the changes that are evident in journalism and the continued reliance on existing routines and practices—that the Bill Simmons quote at the beginning of this chapter captures. It's a time when everything in media seems to be changing, and yet so much seems to stay the same. That idea expressed by Simmons forms one of the core questions facing media scholars: In the digital age, just how much has the social construction of news really changed? In his ethnography of Philadelphia's news ecosystem in the 2000s, Anderson (2013) found through interviewing reporters at the city's main daily newspapers that they did not feel the actual act of reporting had changed all that much. Despite the myriad changes both inside and outside of the industry, the reporters Anderson talked to said that the actual day-to-day acts of reporting were the same as they were before digital media.

This finding demonstrates the institutionalized nature of journalism practices. Drawn from organizational sociology, new institutional theory (or institutionalism) examines the practices or groups of actions that are taken for granted within an organizational field (Zucker, 1988). Institutionalism is “the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in social thought and action” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 431). In other words, any time phrases like “that's just the way we've always done things around here” or “that's how we do things” are used, that is an example of institutionalism at work.

At a time when technological innovations are changing how journalism is produced, institutionalism is an excellent theoretical lens through which to study the construction of news. However, new institutional theory has not been widely used in the study of news media. In addition, despite the popularity of sports and sports journalism, there has been little research into how sports news is specifically constructed. Going further, there has not been in-depth sociological research into the practices and routines of sports journalism. These are the gaps in the literature this dissertation hopes to address.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the institutionalized practices of sports journalism in the digital age. Through the use of in-depth interviews with sports journalists at newspapers across the United States and at varying circulation sizes, this study seeks to discover the norms, routines, and practices that are professionally sanctioned within sports journalism. Along with identifying the routines and practices—and their consequences—this study seeks to understand how, if at all, they are changing and evolving in the digital media age. Put plainly, this dissertation seeks to understand how sports journalism in the United States is practiced in the digital era—how it is changing, how it is staying the same, and the potential consequences. The use of institutional theory, which has not been widely used in the study of news construction, will allow this research to identify institutionalized patterns in sports journalism, adding to our understanding of both sports journalism. Identifying and understanding these patterns allows us to see how and the degree to which the production of sports journalism is changing due to the emergence of digital media.

For the purposes of this dissertation, “sports journalists” will refer to reporters and editors working for the sports department of a daily newspaper. Print newspapers are historically one of the dominant media forms of sports journalism, dating back to the 1880s and 1890s (McChesney,

1989). This historical context and roots mean that newspaper sports journalism has established routines, norms, values, and practices — which will be defined in later chapters — that have become institutionalized. Those practices have also been in place longer and are likely to be more entrenched than those of digital sports journalists and bloggers, whose media are much younger and are in many ways a reaction to traditional newspaper journalism. Also, the print newspaper industry is going through radical changes due to the changing economics in the media world. At a time of so much transformation in the industry as a whole, it is important to examine how the norms, values and routines of sports journalists are and are not changing

Summary of theoretical basis and proposed extensions

This study draws from three areas of previous research: media sociology and the social construction of news, new institutionalism, and sports journalism. The social construction of news is a core part of media sociology study. It examines how news is created, and the routines, norms, practices, values, and attitudes of reporters and editors. News is a social construct, and media sociologists have studied how this construct is created for more than 60 years. The landmark research in this field—Tuchman (1978), Fishman (1980), Gitlin (1980), Gans (1979)—showed that the routines reporters use, the practices they employ, and the attitudes they have, shape what becomes news. News is not something that is discovered in the field. News is a social construct.

Recent research has brought media sociology research into the digital age. Boczkowski (2010, 2005) studied how news organizations struggled with and are adapting to the transition from print to digital news, and this study will add to this line of research. In his ethnographic study of Philadelphia's news ecosystem during the 2000s, Anderson (2013) found that one of the biggest failings of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Philadelphia Daily News*—the city's legacy

media outlets —was that they continued to view themselves as the sole source for news and information in their communities, even as digital technology was expanding the possible marketplace of ideas.

In her study of “journalism-as-process,” Robinson (2011) found that people outside the newsroom are exerting influence over the decisions and the workflows of those within the newsroom. “Journalism-as-process,” as Robinson defined it, is a paradigm that looks at journalism as an on-going, two-way conversation between the media and the audience, rather than just the acts performed by reporters and editors. In this view, journalism is not a product (the story or the daily paper) but the process (the constant flow of information). However, Robinson also noted that many of the professional journalists working at traditional news organizations have actively resisted new initiatives, seeing them as extra, unpaid-for work that detracts from their ability to do what they perceive as their real job: reporting the news.

New institutional theory, which comes from the field of organizational sociology, is used in this study as well. Along with the study of individual organizations and organizational fields (DiMaggio, 1991), new institutional theory has been used to study professions — groups of workers doing the same jobs at different organizations. A key tenet of institutional theory is the pursuit of legitimacy that organizations or members of a profession seek within a societal framework (Weber, 1968). This quest for legitimacy, rather than cost-benefit analysis, becomes the basis for decision making within professional groups and organizations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). In journalistic terms, legitimacy means that decisions are based upon what makes news organizations appear to be legitimate above everything else (e.g. professional standards and what journalists consider to be the right way to do things will sometimes be considered rather than metrics like cost or audience needs). An example of this quest for legitimacy is the notion

of normalization and how journalists have taken digital media forms like blogs and Twitter and used them in ways consistent with traditional journalistic norms, values, and practices (Singer, 2005; Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012). This quest for legitimacy within organizations and professions leads to isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), which is when organizations within a given field closely resemble one another. Institutionalism also examines why norms, practices, and routines become established within an organizational field or a profession (Stinchcombe, 1965), and why organizations and professions may be resistant to change (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). These are all issues facing contemporary news organizations, which makes new institutional theory an ideal lens through which to study daily journalism. Institutionalism also helps explain why the routines, norms, and values detailed in previous research exist, why they remain the same, and why there has been a general lack of change in news production.

Relevance of this study

The social construction of news is a key concept in the study of news and journalism. If news is created by the routines, practices, and values of news workers, then to understand those is to understand news itself (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; 1996). The work of a generation of media sociology scholars has shown how news is constructed, as well as the consequences of that process.

The rich history of media sociology research has been bolstered in recent years by many excellent works by top scholars. The works of Boczkowski (2010; 2005); Anderson (2013); Robinson (2011); Lowery (2012), Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton (2011), and Hermida (2010), among others, have helped bring the classical media sociology scholarship conducted by Tuchman, Fishman, Gans, and Gitlin (1980) into the digital age. It has taken the classic works and situated

them within the ever-changing, ever-evolving digital news landscape of the 2010s. Growing scholarly attention also has been paid to sports journalism such as Schultz and Sheffer's survey research examining the effect of blogging (2007) and Twitter (2010) on sports journalists' attitudes and routines, along with Lowe's study of the routines of sports reporters at a Canadian newspaper (1999). However, the routines, norms and practices of sports journalists have not yet received the kind of in-depth scholarly analysis that their newsroom brethren have. This study attempts to fill that gap in the literature.

It's long been fashionable in media circles to be dismissive of sports journalism, to consider it at best an entertaining distraction from the real world (Anderson, Shirkey, & Bell, 2012) and to consider it at worst a home for uncritical, star-struck sports fans who root, root, root for the home team. It's no secret that sports departments have long been considered "the toy department" of the newspaper, a derogatory term that seeks to distance the so-called real journalism of the news desk from the fun and games of sports (Rowe, 2007). Despite this attitude, it would be misguided for scholars to ignore sports journalists as a focus of attention. For one, sports are popular in the United States—sports is an estimated \$32 billion industry in 2009 (Zygband & Collignon, 2011) and one that is often tax-payer subsidized. Sports media are also big business—ESPN receives more than \$6 billion in revenue for cable TV subscriptions alone (Sandomir, Miller, & Eder, 2013). The sports section is often the only part of a newspaper certain audience members read—particularly younger male readers, a demographic newspapers have traditionally struggled to reach (Rowe, 2007). Also, sports has proved to be a fertile ground for the use and study of digital and social media (i.e. Sanderson & Hambrick, 2012). Sports journalists and sports departments have been found to be among the early adopters in using digital and social media within news organizations, (Shultz & Sheffer, 2009), which provides

researchers with an opportune environment to study established and emerging practices, and how they interact. To understand the institutionalized practices of media and how they are changing, sports journalism presents an ideal field to study.

This study also uses institutional theory in the study of journalism, a lens that has not widely been used in previous research. Some scholars have used institutional theory, or parts of it, in their studies of news media and journalism practices. Sparrow (2006) proposed an institutionalized research agenda for studying the media from a political perspective, and Cook studied the news media as a political institution (2006). Beam (2009; 1990) has extensively studied the professionalism of journalism and journalists—and while he did not explicitly use institutional theory, the notion of professionalism is important within this theoretical framework (DiMaggio, 1991). Lowery (2012) has drawn from institutionalism in examining how new journalism organizations are formed and their relationships with established media outlets. But there has been little—if any—research into the practices of sports journalists through the lens of institutional theory. Media sociology scholarship has detailed how news is constructed, pointing out institutionalized practices and attitudes at the macro and micro levels such as the belief in objectivity as a guiding news value, the reliance on the beat structure and the emphasis on quoting official sources in news articles (e.g., Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). This dissertation examines the routine practices of sports reporters and editors and is situated within the organizational field of sports journalism. An organizational field consists of “sets of organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). That field is the setting for this research, which is a micro-level study of a sports journalists’ work routines.

In all, this study is relevant because it fills a gap in the existing media sociology scholarship. It combines three diverse elements that have not been studied together: media sociology (with an emphasis on journalism as process), sports journalism, and institutional theory.

Research questions/method overview

In order to extend the research, this study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the institutionalized practices of sports journalism?

By “institutionalized practices,” the researcher mean routines, norms, values, and practices that are professionally sanctioned. Again, these are the practices that are taken for granted as a part of the day-to-day work of sports journalists.

RQ2: How are those institutionalized practices influencing story selection in sports journalism?

With this question, the researcher examines the consequences of those institutionalized practices from the reporters’ perspectives. For example, what types of stories are reported (and not reported), or what kinds of sources are used (and not used)?

RQ3: What changes to institutionalized sports journalism are occurring because of the growth of digital and social journalism, and the “journalism as process” paradigm?

Drawing from both traditional media sociology research and newer research in the area, this question seeks to address the changes in sports journalism. For example, has the increased use of social media created a sort of new news net — how journalists find their daily stories — or new layers of typification—how journalists classify events into different kinds of stories (Tuchman, 1978)? Has it led to a new bureaucratic structure to beats (Fishman, 1980)? Have the traditional definitions of news changed? Are different types of stories being written or

emphasized? These questions will address the core question facing sports journalism, the one asked by Bill Simmons in 2012 that led off this chapter: “Why are we covering teams the same way we covered them in 1981, just with more people and better equipment?” (Grantland, 2012).

In order to study these questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with sports journalists across the United States. Kvale (2008) writes that the in-depth interview is an ideal method for understanding a person’s world through his or her own words and experiences. Interviewing sports journalists allowed this study to identify the institutionalized practices of the field (along with the causes and reasons those practices exist) and capture how the routines and practices are changing, as well as identify the impact all of these changes are having on the profession as a whole.

The next several chapters describe the relevant literature and previous studies in this area. Chapter 2 provides an examination of the history of sports journalism and contextualizes its place within the greater journalism field. Chapter 3 details previous scholarship in media sociology and the social construction of news. Following that is a chapter examining the field of new institutional theory, which will be followed by Chapter 5, describing the method used in this study. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 detail the results of the interviews, and Chapter 9 is a discussion of the results.

Chapter 2: Sports Journalism and the Newspaper Industry

*“We are the enemy; we are free publicity.
We are valuable commodities; we are expendable.
We have the greatest jobs in the world; we have no lives.
We are not real journalists; we are the best journalism has to offer.” (Walsh, 2006).*

In his memoir “No Time Outs,” Christopher Walsh described what it was like to work as a newspaper sports reporter in the United States in the 1990s and 2000s. Walsh, who has worked in Florida, Arizona, Wisconsin and Alabama (and, as of 2014, was a free-lance college football reporter in Alabama), wrote a chapter expressing the central dichotomies that define sports journalism and the lives of sports journalists. Their work is seen as both important and trivial. Fans see them as having dream jobs, but that job is in fact often a grind, filled with long hours and routine work. They are looked on with skepticism by their sources who nonetheless often need the coverage for commercial promotion.

Those dichotomies capture the essence of sports journalism’s place in the greater field of newspaper journalism. It is coverage of an often frivolous topic that is taken seriously by its practitioners, even if those in other areas of the newsroom or media world do not see it as serious journalism.

This chapter examines sports journalism in the United States and situates its place within the broader milieu of newspaper journalism. It shows the historical development of sports journalism, examines how sports journalism has been shaped by changes to the media landscape, and demonstrates how it is being affected by the economic struggles facing print journalism. It also shows that in spite of the changes to the media landscape, there is much about the practice of sports journalism that observers believe remains the same.

In order to understand the current state of institutional sports journalism, including the changes happening within the profession, it is important to understand the historical, economic and cultural context of sports journalism. The historical context of sports journalism helps explain how and why the institutionalized norms, values and routines developed. It is also helpful to examine how journalists working for digital news organizations, as well as writers and editors at popular blogs, do their jobs. Doing so will provide a means of comparison between traditional newspaper sports journalism and journalism conducted online, which will help contextualize the data found in this dissertation.

Although this dissertation is focused on sports journalism, it is important to situate the research within the greater context of the newspaper industry in the mid-2010s. The newspaper industry and sports journalism profession can be seen as the joint setting of this research (Miller & Dingwall, 1997), and a critical part of qualitative data analysis is understanding and using the setting to contextualize the data. Silverman (1997) points out that in qualitative research, the data can only tell researchers so much. In-depth interviews and their transcripts, like the ones in this dissertation, provide only limited value to the researcher unless they are considered and analyzed within a specific context. That contextual setting provides the framework through which newspaper sports journalism is practiced, and it will provide a framework through which the interview data are analyzed. In order to properly understand what is happening in institutional sports journalism, it makes sense to understand the history of the profession, what has happened to the newspaper industry, and what is happening in the digital journalism space.

Sports journalism historically

The history of newspaper sports journalism in the United States dates back to the nation's early days, and is intertwined with both the history of newspaper journalism and with the growth

of sport as an American cultural institution. As newspaper journalism grew from a highly partisan avocation into a commercialized profession, and as sports grew from a regional pastime to a national industry, so sports journalism developed into a profession with its own norms, values and routines (Bryant & Holt, 2006; Boyle, 2006; McChesney, 1989).

Sports journalism in the United States began in earnest in the 1820s and 1830s, with specialized sports magazines covering primarily horse racing and boxing. At the time, newspaper sports coverage was sporadic, and tended to focus on events with greater social context rather than just games themselves, like a race between horses from the North and the South, or a boxing match between American and British fighters. (Bryant & Holt, 2006). But by the end of the 19th century, newspapers would become the primary medium covering sport in America (McChesney, 1989).

The 19th century saw two major developments in the evolution of American newspaper journalism. The first was the emergence of the Penny Press in the 1830s and 1840s, when newspapers expanded their circulation by dropping the price of an issue in an attempt to appeal to a new demographic of middle-class, urban readers. This was also when newspapers began relying on advertising, rather than circulation, to pay for their costs (Bryant & Holt, 2006). The second was the Industrial Revolution in the mid-to-late 19th century, during which urbanization grew in large part to waves of European immigration. This was the era of yellow journalism and sensationalism (McChesney, 1989).

Both of these influenced the development of sports journalism as a profession. The growth of the Penny Press saw publishers looking for content that would be popular to the masses. Sports fit that bill perfectly. The *New York Herald*, published by James Gordon Bennett, was one of the first papers to begin showcasing sports coverage — though Bennett

apparently expressed regret that he had done so (Bryant & Holt, 2006). The profession continued to grow throughout the 19th century. Henry Chadwick, writing for *The Clipper* in New York City in the 1850s and 1860s, is widely considered to be the first full-fledged American sports writer.

The Industrial Revolution, with increased urbanization and technological innovations that reduced the cost of gathering and printing news, created conditions in which newspaper circulations soared. “Sport, with its proven capacity to attract readers, became a logical area of emphasis in this era of yellow journalism.” (McChesney, 1989, p. 53). Newspaper sports coverage expanded greatly in this era. The *New York World*, owned by Joseph Pulitzer, became the first American newspaper with its own sports department in 1883. In 1895, the *New York Journal*, owned by William Randolph Hearst, introduced the first distinct sports section, in which sports coverage had its own part of the paper.

Sports journalism continued to grow in prominence throughout the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Schlesinger (1933) reported that in 1880, American newspapers dedicated only .04 percent of their space to sports coverage. By 1920, that total ranged from 12-20 percent of a newspaper’s total news hole. By the mid-1920s, nearly every newspaper in the country had some kind of sports section. McChesney (1989) wrote that this is when sports journalism emerged as a distinct genre of journalism, and became an “indispensable section of the daily newspaper” (p. 55). This era has been called the Golden Age of Sports Journalism (Boyle, 2006; Bryant & Holt, 2006), with legendary writers such as Grantland Rice and Damon Runyon covering sports for newspapers. It was also the time when many sports journalism practices emerged — including the game story, a play-by-play recap of a game. Joe Vila, who

covered football for the *New York Sun*, is credited with inventing the play-by-play recap (Mott, 1950).

With the emergence of sports journalism as its own distinct genre, the way sports journalists do their job became established. Popular accounts of sports journalists' jobs show that they would attend games, take notes throughout, interview the coach (or manager) and star players after the game, either in a press conference or locker-room setting, and then write their stories before deadline (Walsh, 2006; Wilstein, 2002; Vecsey, 1986).

Throughout the 20th century, sports continued to be heavily mediated, through radio and television broadcasts of games and events, with newspaper sports journalists responding to technological evolutions by changing their work routines. Vecsey (1986) wrote that in the 1960s, reporters filed their stories from road games by sending them via Western Union telegram. By the mid-1980s, Vecsey and his colleagues were using portable word processors and computers to write their stories. Walsh (2006) described his daily work as a sports reporter at newspapers in Florida, Arizona and Wisconsin in the 1990s and early 2000s covering games, practices and breaking news. “At a typical night baseball game, the press box is full by 3 p.m. and doesn’t empty until midnight,” he wrote (p. 20).

One of the most obvious changes to the way sports journalists did their jobs came with the growth of game broadcasts — first radio, then television. Game broadcasts forced newspaper journalists to change their focus. “Sports writing has become an adjunct to television, its primary role now to find the story behind the story,” (Oriard, 1993). Instead of writing game stories that relied almost solely on play-by-play descriptions, sports journalists began using their stories for more analysis, more color, and interviewing players and coaches to get their views on the game. This began in the 1920s and 1930s as a response to radio broadcasts (Bryant & Holt, 2006) and

continued with the growth of television coverage in the 1950s and 1960s (McChesney, 1989). The quote became a critical part of sports journalists' work, a way to differentiate themselves from other media (Vecsey, 1986), and like other journalists, reporters were judged on the quality of their sources (Boyle, 2006).

McChesney (1989) wrote that TV coverage changed some of the ways newspaper sports journalists do their job. Stories became less likely to be recaps of the game and more reliant upon stats, analysis and background. By the mid-1980s, there was already a cable channel dedicated to 24-hour sports coverage, ESPN, and in *USA Today*, the one true national print newspaper, sports received 25 percent of the available space every day, compared with 12-20 percent in most local newspapers (McChesney, 1989). In spite of this growth, the ways in which newspapers covered sports remained very much the same. This has remained true even in the age of digital media. Siegel (2012) wrote that the *Boston Globe's* "core approach to sports coverage—which still relies on boilerplate game recaps, columns, and weekly "notebooks" offering bullet-point takes on the happenings from the various sports leagues—hasn't changed much over the years." (p. 23).

Digital sports journalism

Bryant and Holt (2006) defined the growth of the Penny Press and the Industrial Revolution as two of the key eras of evolution for newspaper journalism. They also defined a third era — the Information Age, which includes present time and is defined by the growth of the internet and digital and social media. One of the defining characteristics of this era is convergence — the combining of previously separate media formats. It's no longer possible to split sports journalism into just print and broadcast, because the growth of digital media has created a new format that combines elements of both. This section will define how digital sports

journalism is practiced as of 2014. In order to understand what is happening to newspaper sports journalism, it's important to see what is going on in the digital space, to see how the profession is practiced online. Digital sports journalism serves as both a compliment to and a competitor of newspaper sports journalism.

For the purposes of this dissertation, digital sports journalism will be defined as sports journalism produced for a publication or organization with a primary online focus. It is definition by exclusion, because it encompasses sports journalism not produced for traditional media formats, like a print newspaper, magazine, television or radio. The digital sports landscape can actually be broken up into at least two categories - digital news sites and blogs. Digital news sites are often connected with a larger media network, be it a cable TV network (ESPN.com, Foxsports.com, CBSSports.com) or an established internet company (Yahoo Sports). Reporters and writers at these sites often appear to work within a more traditional journalistic framework — covering games, interviewing sources, writing stories and columns. Many of these sites, including ESPN and Yahoo, also have applications for mobile phones, in which users can get news and score updates sent directly to them. Blogs can range from personal sites by fans to corporately owned sites like Deadspin (owned by Gawker) or Bleacher Report (owned by Turner Broadcasting). Blog types run the gamut from news aggregators, in which links to other team coverage are emphasized (MetsBlog.com is an example of this, with coverage of the New York Mets baseball; or Rivals.com with its coverage of college sports) to sites that focus on commentary, like Deadspin or Bleacher Report.

Digital sports journalism began in the mid-1990s, the same time that news journalism began publishing online (Boczkowski, 2004). ESPN started its first website in 1995, the then-named ESPNSportsZone. It became ESPN.com in 1998 (Bryant & Holt, 2006). Other TV networks, like

Fox and CBS, began sports-focused websites during the same time frame (Bryant & Holt, 2006). Yahoo, the internet search engine, began a sports-only site in 1997. In 2009, ESPN began a series of microsites dedicated to sports coverage in individual cities, including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami (Barnes, 2009). In 2013, ESPN hired writers to cover all 32 NFL teams. ESPN calls these writers “bloggers” (Beaujon, 2013), but they cover the team in many of the same ways that newspaper beat reporters do.

Many of the reporters and columnists for digital sports news sites have roots in newspaper journalism. A number of them worked as newspaper reporters and/or columnists at newspapers before taking digital jobs. When they describe their work routines in popular press interviews, they often discuss their online reporting processes in contrast to their newspaper practices. Buster Olney, a former *New York Times* reporter now covering baseball for ESPN, described his daily work routine as one that is focused not on night-time game coverage but on early-morning aggregation:

I usually get up at 4:00 or 4:30 depending on what other responsibilities I have during the course of the day. I go newspaper by newspaper across the country, collecting the links. Most of the time I write the lead of my column in the morning. Sometimes you sort of play off whatever the news story of the day is. If there’s some trade thing developing, you know, maybe something that’s been reported on the night before, you sort of just rip off a lot of things that happen in the morning paper, collect all that, and put it out by 7:30. Then I start my day. (Miller & Shales, 2011, p. 673).

Adrian Wojnarowski, the NBA columnist for Yahoo Sports and former newspaper columnist in California and New Jersey, is one of many former newspaper reporters who described the difference between writing online and writing for newspapers as one that revolves around the

post-game deadline (McIntyre, 2010). Newspaper reporters and columnists have to file stories by a strict deadline, one that does not exist for online journalists. In an interview with *The Big Lead*, Wojnarowski said, “There were so many nights that you leave an arena, or a stadium, feeling like you had little chance to really capture what happened” (McIntyre, 2009).

Digital sports journalism, as practiced at these news sites, tends to be aligned with traditional journalism norms and values like objectivity (Scott, 2012; Krueger, 2010). Blogs, on the other hand, identify themselves by their passions. Whereas traditional sports journalism has relied on access to players for quotes, insights and information, many blogs pride themselves on their lack of access. Deadspin’s motto, since its debut, has been “sports news *without access*, favor or discretion” (Deadspin.com, 2014), emphasis added). Bleacher Report has rules in place that forbid writers from seeking to break news and instead celebrates itself as being a site “written by fans for fans” (Eskenazi, 2012, p. 2). Rather than suffering from a lack of access to players, these sites celebrate their independence.

Deadspin writers have a great deal of autonomy about what to write about and when they write (Kamer, 2013). When he was editor, A.J. Daulerio reported receiving more than 200 emails every day featuring news tips that he would sort through and decide which to pursue (Sherman, 2011). Whereas newspaper sports journalists (and their digital colleagues) appear to have highly routinized story selections (e.g. coverage of games, game previews, stories about players doing better or worse than expected, focusing on local teams), bloggers can write about what they want, when they want and in what format they want (e.g. a story with interviews, an opinion-based essay, a collection of photographs or GIFs) In an interview for the online edition of *Sports Illustrated*, Leitch summed up his view of the site:

One of the exciting things about Deadspin ... is that kind of wall used to be there. Now we (fans) decide what we want to know. We don't always need that wall anymore ... people react to sports as entertainment because that's what it is. Whatever fans find entertaining is what counts. (Deitsch, 2008, p. 1).

Bleacher Report, which was founded in 2007 and purchased by Turner Broadcasting for \$700 million in 2012 (Eskenazi, 2012), relies on a network of 6,000 contributors. Approximately 2,000 contributors, most of whom are unpaid, post more than 800 articles a day to the site. The site prides itself on hyperbolic headlines and other strategies that improve search-engine optimization (SEO). One writer told Eskenazi (2012) that he was assigned to write a story that matched a pre-written headline, one created to generate traffic.

Mainstream journalists have been critical of sites such as Deadspin and Bleacher Report, saying that editors and contributors spread rumors without subjecting them to traditional journalistic fact checking (Cowlinsaw, 2010). Deadspin editors have been quoted as saying that they view what they do as being rooted in traditional journalism practices but that, as a blog, there is a different standard they should and do work by (Deitsch, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2009). "We're still a blog at the end of the day," current editor Daulerio said in 2009 (Perez-Pena, p. B-6). Bryan Goldberg, the founder of Bleacher Report, said he believes his site provides content that is more interesting to younger readers than traditional newspaper sports journalism does. "My generation just does not care about the 'insider game' of building relationships with GMs and team presidents in order to get a 'scoop' three hours before the guy at the other newspaper can get it" (Goldberg, 2013).

“The toy department”: Sports journalism within the newsroom

Sports journalism’s place within journalism as a whole has always been a complicated one. The quote from sports journalist Christopher Walsh at the beginning of this chapter highlights this relationship. Sports coverage is popular, and has been for more than 100 years. Since the days of the Penny Press, sports coverage has been a means to increase a newspaper’s circulation. People want to read about their hometown teams. McChesney (1989) wrote that sports coverage became important to newspapers in large part because sports is ideologically safe — it doesn’t offend people, boosts civic pride and contributes to the perceived well-being of a community. This ideological safety, however, runs counter to the self-perceived role of traditional news journalism. This leads news journalists to view sports journalism as mere entertainment, not “real journalism” (Anderson, Shirkey & Bell, 2013). Where news journalism has its roots in the idea of being the fourth-estate and the public watchdog on public officials, sports journalism’s roots are far more promotional. “One of the happiest relationships in American society is between sports and the media” (Michener, 1976, p. 355). In the 19th century, media played a critical role in making sport both an acceptable social institution and a popular commercial one. Through their coverage and promotional efforts, newspaper sports journalists helped to standardize and codify the rules of horse racing, baseball and college football (Bryant & Holt, 2006), and television coverage starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s led to the growth of the NFL as the country’s most popular sport (MacCambridge, 2004).

Scholars and observers have noted that sports and the media have long had a symbiotic relationship (Bryant & Holt, 2006; Boyle, 2006; McChesney, 1989). Media have relied on sports’ popularity to increase circulation and readership, and sports have relied on media coverage for free publicity. In the early days of the 20th century, teams routinely paid for

reporters' food at home games and travel to road games, with the expectation of positive, promotional coverage in return (Bryant & Holt, 2006; Vecsey, 1986). Arch Ward, the influential sports editor of the Chicago Tribune in the 1920s, openly curried the favor of leagues and teams, expecting preferential access in return (Bryant & Holt, 2006). Vecsey (1986) wrote in his memoir that he and his colleagues at New York City newspapers in the 1960s made a concerted effort to assert their editorial independence in part by paying for the own travel and traveling on their own, rather than on the team planes or trains. Those norms and practices of early sports journalists are a legacy still adopted by the current profession (Bryant & Holt, 2006).

The line between “real” journalism and “sports” journalism is one constantly debated within the profession. Choitner (2014) noted that there are two types of sports journalism — coverage of serious issues involving sports and society, and benign game coverage, which Choitner said exists for only one reason: “bringing joy to sports fans.” (p. 14). Recent examples of so-called real sports journalism include coverage of player safety in professional football (Marx, 2011), the use of performance-enhancing drugs (Fainaru-Wada & Williams, 2007), the rights of college athletes (Branch, 2012), and discussions about the place of openly gay athletes in men’s sports (Ziegler, 2012; Hardin, 2009).

But in many ways, coverage of such serious issues is seen as the exception, rather than the rule, for sports journalism. Most sports journalism is focused on the coverage of games and of issues strictly related to a team’s results on the field (Boyle, 2006). This gets at the heart of the dichotomy that sports journalism faces. It is popular among readers because it is safe; as a result, many sports journalists do not have the incentive to pursue stories that upset that idea. McChesney (1989) noted that “real” journalism contradicts the fundamentally symbiotic nature of sports and print journalism. Boyle (2006) noted the fundamental struggle of sports journalism

is that between traditional journalistic values and the promotion of players, teams and sports, and that that sports journalists have tended to lead a relatively protected, insular and comfortable existence. Wanta (2006) also found that sports journalists tend to see themselves as outsiders within their own newsrooms:

The sports departments at newspapers across the country suffer from identity crises.

Newspaper editors often consider sports a necessary evil: Sports sections are among the most read, but sports are not viewed with the same respect as other newspaper stables, such as crime news, politics, and business. (p. 105).

Newspapers/sports journalism in the 2000s

The remainder of this chapter documents the state of the newspaper industry in 2014. The rise of digital and social media platforms in the 2000s have brought about dramatic changes to all media industries, particularly the newspaper industry. To understand how newspaper sports journalism is practiced in the digital age, it is critical to understand the economic factors that are influencing daily journalism.

Since the age of the Penny Press (the 1830s and 1840s), newspapers in the United States have relied primarily on advertising to cover costs and make money (Bryant & Holt, 2006; McChesney, 1989; Schudson, 1981). This practice continued through the industrial age and throughout much of the 20th century. The reliance on advertising for revenues is one of the reasons sports journalism became such an important part of the newspaper — newspapers needed to capture and hold onto an audience, and that audience's attention could then be sold to advertisers.

However, the growth of digital technologies and the internet changed how media do business. Newspapers were unable to find a way to consistently charge readers to read news

online, and so for many years news organizations posted their content online for free (Ingram, 2013). The availability of free news online — both local and national news — led to a drop of print circulation for virtually all newspapers (Pew, 2013). The falling circulation led to consistent drops in advertising revenue — and the recession of 2008 exacerbated the situation. The numbers paint a stark picture of an industry in crisis. Industry wide, print ad revenue has fallen from \$47 billion in 2006 to \$17.3 billion in 2013 (ASNE, 2013). Digital advertising revenue continues to rise, but not nearly at a fast enough rate to make up for the lost print ad revenue. As of 2012, the exchange rate was one digital dollar gained for every 15 print dollars lost (Pew, 2013). These losses have been brutal to the newspaper industry, which in 2013 still received 69 percent of its revenue from advertising (Pew, 2014).

In addition to advertising dollars, circulation numbers have fallen, too. Daily newspaper circulation fell by 30 percent between 2000 and 2010, and although online readership is growing (Pew, 2013), print circulation remains a shell of what it was in the pre-digital age. Market research in 2014 showed that U.S. adults use print media for just 1.6 percent of their daily media usage. Online accounts for 18 percent and mobile accounts for 23.3 percent of their daily media usage (second only to TV). As a result, newspapers are trying to adopt more digital-first approaches, in which online and mobile publishing is emphasized over print (Buttry, 2013). In 2014, *The New York Times* published an internal innovation report that was leaked to the website BuzzFeed. One of the primary goals of the innovation report was for *The Times* to develop into a “truly digital first organization” (New York Times, p. 7). Despite all of this, the business model for newspapers still relies on print advertising for a majority of their revenues (NAA.org 2012).

The result of these economic problems has been job losses. The American Society of Newspaper Editors reported that the number of people working in newspaper newsrooms had

decreased from 54,600 in 2000 to 38,000 in 2012, the year of their most recent census. The number of journalists working at newspapers has dropped every year in the 2000s, and between 2011 and 2012, even as the economy as a whole stabilized, total newsroom employment still dropped 6.4 percent (ASNE, 2013). In all, four out of every 10 newsroom jobs disappeared in the 2000s. These job losses came in the form of layoffs, buyouts or attrition (when a person left a job, he or she was not replaced). Neither the Associated Press Sports Editors nor the National Sports Journalism Institute at Indiana University was able to report any specific number of sports journalists who had lost their jobs. However, no area of the newsroom was untouched.

One of the consequences of these job losses has been a reduction in coverage of some sports. Smaller sports departments have forced sports editors to cut coverage of some sports or teams that are less popular and/or successful than other teams in the market (Antonen, 2009. Hardin, 2010; Klein, 2009; Petchesky, 2013). This may be as drastic as cutting coverage altogether (where a team no longer has a beat reporter dedicated to it), or more measured steps, such as not traveling to all road games during a long professional season. One editor told Deadspin, “Like all news organizations, we try to get the biggest bang for our limited dollars” (Petchesky, 2013).

The mid-2010s have brought about a rise in what can be called branded journalism — journalism websites and organizations with the public face of a high-profile journalist. Examples of this include 538.com, a data-journalism project led by Nate Silver, a former blogger at *The New York Times* who gained fame for his election forecasts, and Vox.com, an explanatory-journalism site led by Ezra Kline, formerly of the Washington Post. In the sports world, Bill Simmons, the popular ESPN.com columnist, started his own site, Grantland, in 2011, which hosts his column and podcast and features commentary on sports and popular culture. 538.com

and Grantland.com are both owned by ESPN and operated by the same internal content unit, Exit 31 (Cingari, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the place of sports journalism within the broader context of journalism in the United States. It provided historical context, showing how sports journalism developed in the United States. It placed sports journalism within the context of the newspaper industry as a whole, including how both have been affected by the economic woes that have hit journalism in the 2000s. It also described digital sports journalism, looking at how sports journalism is produced at both online news sites and at popular sports blogs. This chapter helps to situate sports journalism in its current context — showing how the profession developed the way it did and establishing where the profession currently is.

A defining characteristic of sports journalism is its symbiotic nature with the teams and athletes it covers. Sports journalism is always torn between traditional journalism norms and promoting the sport that it covers. That, in part, has led to sports journalists being viewed skeptically by news journalists, which in turn has led to sports journalists working very much in their own bubble, so to speak.

The economic issues the newspaper industry has faced in the past decade have had an impact on sports journalism as well. Sports departments have not been immune from the job-losses that have plagued the industry due to losses in advertising and circulation revenue, which has led to changes in which sports get covered and how they are covered.

The next chapter examines the theoretical perspective of the social construction of news and media sociology.

Chapter 3: Media sociology

This chapter examines previous research in media sociology, with an emphasis on the social construction of news. It presents the first generation of research, which shaped and defined the field of media sociology and the theory of news construction, with an emphasis on journalists' routines. Then, it presents more recent scholarship that illustrates how the social construction of news fits into the modern digital landscape, with an emphasis on the "journalism as process" model described by Robinson (2011). The final section of the chapter will focus on the sociology of sports journalism.

The social construction of news

A core part of media sociology research is what can be called the social construction of news. This is a loosely coupled theoretical notion that examines how news is constructed. Schudson (1991) writes that the social construction of news has its roots in the social construction of reality. Berkowitz (1991) and Shoemaker and Reese (2014), among many other scholars, wrote that news can be considered a social construct. The literature in the social construction of news examines how news is made. To professional journalists, news is something that exists out there in the world, and it's a reporter's job to go out there and find it. News is something to be discovered. That is a core belief of the news paradigm. The sociological view holds that news is not something that exists in the world. Tuchman (1980) found that news is not a reflection of reality (as the traditional journalistic ethos holds) but instead a construction of reality, which is made by journalists through their routines. News is a social construct, something that is created through journalistic norms, attitudes, practices, and routines (Fishman, 1980). Gans (1979) wrote that news construction is a complex interplay of journalists' attitudes and practices, and organizational goals and constraints.

Research into how news is constructed dates back nearly 50 years, with the canonical works in media sociology in the 1960s and 1970s (Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980). These pieces shaped our understanding of how news is produced. Tuchman (1978) wrote about how reporters typify news into five categories to organize and understand their world. Sigal (1973) and Gans (1979) described a process in which reporters are reliant upon information subsidies, like press conferences, press releases, and briefings with government officials. Fishman (1980) demonstrated how news work is bureaucratically organized for reporters through the beat structure and reliance on official sources.

The social construction of news is not meant to suggest that reporters make up the news, like it's fiction. The concept of the social construction of news simply means that news is created daily by a socially agreed-upon collection of norms, values and practices that journalists call newsworthiness. Schudson (2011) defined several elements of news, including the fact that it is usually event-driven, negative, process-driven (rather than results driven), and reflects the world and points of view of official sources. Shoemaker (1991) defined news values as including deviance, timeliness, proximity and impact.

The social construction of news includes what Hoyer and Pottker (2005) defined as the journalism paradigm. Hoyer and Pottker (2005) defined five aspects of the western journalism paradigm—news value (rather than political bias), a 24-hour news cycle, the use of the news interview, the inverted-pyramid style of writing (in which the most important facts are put at the top of the story), and objectivity. These are the norms, values, and practices that journalists use in their daily jobs. In other words, they are the norms, values, and practices that define how news is socially constructed.

Understanding news as a social construct helps us better understand the nature of news and of journalism. How we define news shapes what is news. How journalists do their jobs—the people they decide to talk to, the events they decide to cover, the issues they decide to write about - defines what's news. News, in itself, isn't a thing in the world. News is what journalists say it is.

Routines

A central concept of news construction is news routines. News routines are “those patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 105). Reese (2001) defined journalists' routines as a natural structure within which the creative work of journalism is done. Fishman (1980) wrote that routines are “the crucial factor which determines how news workers construe the world of activities they confront” (p. 14). Routines can be the mundane, day-to-day decisions a journalist makes in the course of a work day such as who to talk to, when to check email, what documents to read, etc. Taken in aggregate, though, they help define what becomes news. Fishman (1980) found that routines are how news is created. The canonical media sociology studies found that news work is routinized to a great degree (Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). The traditional structure and production schedules of newsrooms in terms of daily deadlines, both for print and broadcast media, led Gans to conclude that the news construction process is routinized to the point that journalism organizations can begin to feel like assembly lines.

In a sense, journalism routines are what Becker and Vlad (2009) refer to as story ideation. Story ideation is the process by which reporters and editors come up with stories—what stories are covered, how they are covered, and how they are played within a publication. Becker and Vlad call this the most important part of the journalism process, because it is from these

decisions that all other acts of journalism flow. Generally speaking, stories come from journalists' sources. So much of media sociology research is indeed research into journalist-source relationships. Gans (1979) called it the central relationship of journalism.

Journalism is, in many ways, dependent upon sources. This practice is partly pragmatic. Reporters can't be everywhere. They can't be there when a car accident happens or when a murder takes place or when a decision on which football player to draft in the first round is made. Therefore, they are reliant upon sources for their information. While these sources can include documents (both public and private) and databases, sources are primarily people. Sigal (1973) noted that journalism can be defined as what a source says has happened or what will happen. Gans (1979) compared the journalist-source relationship to a dance and that the source is always leading. Without sources, journalists have little or no news to report.

Who these sources are is important to consider as well. Sigal (1973), Gans (1979), Fishman (1980), and Tuchman (1980), among many others, noted that journalists rely more on official sources - primarily official government sources—than anyone else for their news. This reliance on sources occurs for several reasons. For one, government sources are socially sanctioned, and they have power and access to information. If a police officer gives details about a crime, there's a certain social acceptance given to that description over an ordinary person's description (or especially the accused's version of events) (Fishman, 1980). Official sources also hold a place of privilege for reporters because they are regular, reliable sources of news. Government officials hold regular press conferences. Courts are open to the public and transcripts are available.

Average people don't typically have the time or ability to stage a press conference about an event that matters to them. Government officials do have that time and ability, which makes

them reliable sources of information that becomes news. Gans (1979) noted that reporters are interested in efficiency of news gathering—not out of nefarious, capitalist reasons but simply so they easily get their stories done by deadline. Official sources provide this regular source of news that's socially sanctioned.

Related to the notion of sources is the beat system. A beat is where a reporter is assigned to cover a certain office, body, or geographic area (e.g., the White House beat, the county legislature, or Onondaga County). Fishman (1980) wrote extensively about the beat system in his book, noting that beats are such an ingrained part of journalism that a newspaper not having beats is noteworthy. In his ethnography, Fishman found that the beat is bureaucratically structured to provide the journalist with access to the right sources of reliable, socially sanctioned information. A cops reporter, for example, has access to the daily blotter, press conferences, press releases, and to interviews with officers if need be. A city hall reporter has access to the mayor, the mayor's spokesperson, legislators, and other public employees (along with public records). Fishman described this as the beat round, in which a reporter will visit the key offices on his or her beat, chatting with people (both on and off the record, both officials and secretaries) and collecting information. What's important to note in the beat round is what's missing: the public. What's present in the beat round is the officially sanctioned side of the story, and that's what journalists are exposed to.

Fishman found that beat reporters are obliged to write a story every day, regardless of whether anything is happening. Calling back to the office and saying “nothing's going on, no story today” is simply not done. That puts the reporter under pressure to find something to write about every day, regardless of whether it is important to the public. This need for a daily story also ties into Tuchman's notions of the news net. Tuchman (1978) characterized news work

through the “news net,” which journalists cast out every day to find the news. Rather than a news blanket, which would cover everything, she calls it a net because it is focused on the big fish and lets little fish slip through. The news net, Tuchman found, is focused on official sources of news, and official happenings of public figures and business leaders, and ignores what happens to non-official, everyday folk.

Sources matter in the study of media sociology because they are where news comes from and they help frame the news. A journalist, even today, is judged professionally by the quality of his or her sources and the kind of access he or she has. A desire for sources on both sides of the political aisle is one of the core reasons that objectivity is considered the most important professional norm for journalists (Soloski, 1989).

News organizations also have to be built around handling a constant flux of incoming information in an unpredictable manner. Tuchman (1978) illustrated this with her notion of typification, in which reporters would categorize incoming events into either hard news, soft news, developing news, breaking news, or continuing news. This typification became a sort of schema for reporters and editors to make sense of their day and the events that happen.

Media sociology in a digital age

For years, the field of media sociology research—primarily the study of routines—languished (Becker & Vlad, 2009). One reason for this is that the job remained basically the same for many years. Despite slow gradual changes in technology (e.g., the introduction of color printing; the replacing of typewriters with word processors and then computers), little changed in how reporters actually did their jobs between the time the canonical media-sociology studies were conducted in the late 1960s and 1970s and the mid-1990s.

That changed with the emergence of the Internet and digital media. Digital media has radically changed all media fields, especially daily journalism. Circulation and advertising numbers for the majority of print newspapers have been falling for nearly a decade. While these news organizations have seen digital growth in both advertising and circulation, it has not balanced out the print losses. The economic hardships many newspapers find themselves in have taken their toll on the journalism work force—there were nearly 20,000 fewer journalists working for newspapers in 2012 than there were in 1989, a 29 percent reduction in the overall workforce (Pew, 2013). In addition, there is a growing trend among newspapers of reducing their print publication schedule from daily to three days a week, putting more of an emphasis on online, digital news (Pew, 2013).

There's a mindset among print journalists and some media observers that the rise in digital media and the Internet caught newspapers off guard—that the industry didn't understand the new technology, didn't recognize its revolutionary potential, or was caught off guard by the sudden change in the media environment (Brock, 2013; Ingram, 2013; Shirky, 2009). However, Boczkowski (2005) wrote that this was not the case. Newspapers neither ignored nor fully embraced the Web when the technology emerged in the early and mid-1990s. Instead, the culture of innovation within news organizations was marked by a combination of what Boczkowski called reactive, defensive, and pragmatic traits. Reactive traits, he wrote, were demonstrated by the fact that newspapers followed technology and social trends rather than leading them. They reacted to change, instead of being proactive in changing. Defensive traits were illustrated by how newspapers were focused on maintaining their print territory rather than offensively trying to expand into new areas. Pragmatic traits, Boczkowski defined, as newspapers focusing on protecting the short-term well being of their core business.

Indeed, the development of digital journalism in many ways can be seen as the combination of print traditions and online technologies. “Online newspapers have emerged by merging print’s unidirectional and text-based traditions with networked computing’s interactive and (more recently) multimedia potentials” (Boczkowski, 2005, p. 4).

One example of this process is normalization, which occurs when journalists adapt a new media format to the existing norms, values, and practices of news work. In her seminal study of journalism blogs during the 2004 U.S. presidential election, Singer (2005) found journalists were taking a media format that originated as personal, online diaries and normalizing them, infusing them with journalism’s professional norms and ideals. The journalists, Singer found, also were not using blogs to bring in outside voices but instead were creating a sort of news echo chamber in which they cited other media outlets (often fellow traditional media outlets) rather than elicit audience members’ reactions.

Using Singer’s notion of normalization as a framework, Lasorsa, Lewis, and Horton (2012) examined how journalists use Twitter. Like Singer seven years earlier, Lasorsa and his colleagues found that reporters were normalizing Twitter, adopting the rules of journalistic norms and practices into their use of the microblogging platform. They also found that reporters were adapting some of their norms and practices to the conventions of Twitter—most notably the use of opinion within Tweets. Taken together, the Singer and Lasorsa, Lewis, and Horton studies suggest that when a new communications platform emerges, journalists are predisposed to normalize it, to take the new media form and shape it to fit existing norms, practices, and routines rather than allow those practices to evolve to fit the new format.

While reporters are adapting Twitter to fit their professional needs, Twitter and other social media platforms are also changing the news environment. Hermida (2010) described

Twitter as creating what he called “ambient journalism.” By ambient journalism, Hermida means that news is always happening, there is a constant stream of news and information that comes across a Twitter stream. A journalist’s job should be to help readers understand that stream, to make sense of it and provide context to what is happening.

One of the most essential looks at newswork in the digital age was Anderson’s (2013) extended ethnographic study of Philadelphia’s news ecosystem in the 2000s. Anderson examined both the legacy print media outlets in the city (the broadsheet *Inquirer* and the tabloid *Daily News*) and the growing body of blogs and citizen journalism websites that grew within the city.

News reporting work, Anderson discovered, looks basically the same as it did a generation ago. The job of being a reporter was, to the journalists he observed and interviewed, almost unchanged by digital media. But those similarities are, in many ways, an illusion. Anderson found that there is a much-greater emphasis within newsrooms placed on speed. Instead of having a full day to report on a story—which the journalists Anderson observed view as a normative value, as allowing them to write better stories—there is an institutional push to get their stories filed quickly, so that they can be posted online. Reporting, Anderson found, is becoming more reactive (and reliant upon basic news values) and less proactive. News values that Anderson found to be most important include recency—a sort of hyped-up notion of timeliness where what is happening right now is most important—and the ability to draw traffic online. The Philadelphia newspapers were able to receive almost real-time analytics on what stories were drawing the most visitors and traffic on their sites, and Anderson reported that news judgments were being made based upon that metric above traditional values.

Anderson also described a bifurcation of journalism into print and online, meaning that reporters often do print and online work in the same day. Their days are often still structured

around the print deadline, as Tuchman wrote decades ago, but now there is an always-demanding online component. That bifurcation is leading to changes in how reporters do their jobs.

Anderson noted that the job of a journalist is being split into two distinct functions: news reporting and news aggregating. News reporting, Anderson found, hasn't changed all that much. However, news aggregation—in which journalists collect news or bits and pieces of information and present them to the public—is very different. Reporters are being asked to do both functions, leading to tension within newsrooms. He quoted one journalist as saying “my old medium is dying, and my new one doesn't pay” (p. 138).

The routines and practices that individual reporters, the profession of journalism, and news organizations have collectively used for more than a century are being challenged in the digital media landscape. The way reporters know how to do their jobs—in fact, the way their jobs still work for the print editions of their newspapers—is becoming more obsolete in the digital age. It's what Anderson called the paradox of news work: “The Internet, with its need for content, has run up against the increasing inability of media organizations to rationalize production of that content through traditional means” (p. 80).

In other words, the institutionalized practices of print journalists may no longer be the best (or only) practices to inform the public. The institutionalized nature of these practices is shown by how the journalists Anderson interviewed define their work. They defined journalism as reporting in the traditional sense: interviewing sources on both sides of the issue, gathering information, etc. Reporting, Anderson's subjects suggested, is the “jurisdictional core” of professional newswork (p. 99) and is the line of demarcation between what they consider to be true journalism and news aggregation (the collection of links and information online). Anderson's finding here is a clear demonstration of the journalism paradigm defined by Hoyer

and Pottker (2005) and by Shoemaker and Reese (2013). It's what separates real journalism from everything else.

Anderson (2013), however, argued that those distinctions are less important in the digital world of the 2010s than they may have been in the pre-digital age. He found that one of the newspaper's biggest failings was that they continued to view themselves as the sole source for news and information in their community, even as digital technology expanded the marketplace of ideas. In particular, local journalists' occupational self-images, their vision of themselves as an autonomous workforce conducting original reporting on behalf of a unitary public, blocked the kind of cross-institutional collaboration that might have helped journalism thrive in an era of fractured communication (p. 214). In other words, the traditional journalism paradigm no longer fits the world it seeks to describe.

Journalism as process

One major change in daily journalism is the publication schedule. In the classic media sociology studies, the production of news centered around the daily deadline—the point at the end of the work day when a reporter had to have a story done, when an editor had to have the page sent to print, when the presses start to run. In many ways, the deadline drives every aspect of newspaper journalism (Tuchman, 1972). Tuchman (1978) found that deadlines have historically been important for financial reasons—missed deadlines led to late delivery of papers, which led to fewer sales and increased costs.

The importance of deadlines did not disappear with the advent of the Internet. Manning (2001) found that the increased number of deadlines due to a 24/7 news cycle has led to an increase in media's reliance on official sources that have the means to sate the constant appetite for news. In fact, digital news created a state in which journalists are always on deadline. As

Anderson (2013) found, reporters feel pressured to constantly write and post updates rather than having the time to craft a story. “There is no deadline in Web journalism, so for breaking news, the deadline is now. This minute. And again in the next 10 minutes” (Stovall, 2004, p. 50). Stovall also notes another implication of deadline structure change for journalists. With no online deadline, a story is never completed. It can be updated, corrected, and rewritten as interest and events dictate.

This cycle of constant writing, reporting, updating and publishing news online has given rise to the notion of journalism as process. Robinson (2011) defines process journalism as:

When a reporter (or blogger or commenter) writes an article or blogs a news item, at which point the news story comprises not only the reporters work, but also all the comments, blogs, and follow-up content sparked as a result of that original tidbit. (p. 140)

Put another way: What we think of as traditional, institutional journalism was defined by a finished product—a story in a newspaper, for example. Everything a journalist did during the day, everything a news organization did, was built toward that end goal, that product. Journalism as process redefines journalism as the entire process. The gathering and sorting of information that has always been a part of journalists’ work is now the product of their work, as well. Instead of happening in private, it’s all a part of the larger story now. Instead of living only in a reporter’s spiral-bound notebook, it lives in public, in social media posts, and in incremental Web updates. Instead of incorporating feedback only at the very end (in the form of letters to the editor or Web comments), it can now bring that into the fold as a part of a real-time feedback loop. The “it” in these sentences is this new form of journalism. Journalism isn’t a goal anymore, it’s a process (Robinson, 2011).

In her ethnography of news organizations in Madison, WI., Robinson (2011) examined the organizational implications of process journalism. She found that reporters viewed process journalism less as a potential paradigm shift and more as labor consideration. Robinson's participants saw process journalism, above everything else, as extra work—work that they felt potentially weakened their own ability to abide by the institutionalized norms and practices. “Steeped in the institutional norms of newspapering, journalists resisted these mandates (of more interaction with the audience), for they not only lamented the added labor duties of such tasks but also the changed relationships with audiences” (p. 198). Robinson noted, however, that the interaction between journalists and audience members is changing how news is produced, and that process journalism is redefining what the news is. “The news is considered to be unfinished and—more importantly perhaps for journalists—owned by no one entity or individual” (Robinson, 2011, p. 200-201).

Understanding that news is a social construct allows us to see these changes through a new perspective, melding a long-standing view of media sociologists with the digital world of 2013. Rather than looking at news media normatively, like journalism is dying, it gives scholars a way to see journalism as something that is evolving and constantly changing. Social constructs can change. What we define as news today may be different than what we consider news in 20 years, due to technological and network changes. Understanding that news is not a thing in the world for journalists to find, but rather a construct, allows us to better understand how journalism is changing

Journalism-as-process provides one of the primary frameworks for this study. In examining how sports journalists do their job in the digital age, this theoretical construct provides a foundational understanding of how journalism can be conducted online. It gives

context and meaning to the potential evolution of sports journalism, providing the researcher with a framework through which to analyze the interview data. Journalism-as-process provides a name, definition and classification to a series of practices by reporters and editors, and this classification can help us understand digital journalism. Journalism-as-process can also only exist within the digital space (because it allows for continuous publication, as opposed to print's static production schedule). Focusing on the profession of sports journalism, this study seeks to further explore how the institutionalized norms and practices of the profession are evolving, changing, or remaining static as the field of journalism moves to a more process-based paradigm.

Sports journalism

There's a quote attributed to Earl Warren, the former chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States: "I always turn to the sports section first. The sports page records people's accomplishments; the front page has nothing but man's failures" (Sports Illustrated, 1968).

It's a quote that has long been used to celebrate the importance of sports journalism. It is carved into the wall at the Newseum, the Washington, D.C.-based museum dedicated to American journalism. It hangs on the wall near the sports desk in many college newsrooms. It serves as a reminder and a declaration that the sports page plays an important role in journalism.

But there's a subtext to the quote, as well. If the sports page is the home for people's accomplishments, then it can also be seen as the home for only positive news. The sports page is where people go to escape the problems of "the real world," to read good news instead of the bad news that is perceived to fill the front page. A reading of that quote suggests that sports journalism's role is that of a cheerleader, one that celebrates the good while ignoring the bad. It suggests that the proper attitude of sports journalists is to cheer for the home team, rather than being an objective look at a team's successes and failures. It suggests that larger sociological

issues like race, gender, sexuality, economic equality, and others—issues that often affect sports and athletes—have no place in the sports pages. Warren’s quote, while on the face is celebratory of sports journalism, can actually be read as a criticism of sports journalism in the face of traditional journalism norms and values.

The Warren quote is emblematic of the struggle to place sports journalism within the news landscape. Traditionally, sports journalism has been seen as the “toy department” of the newsroom (Rowe, 2007). It’s seen as an area of interest, a topic people want to read about and something that’s important to the business of selling newspapers, but it’s not real journalism when compared with news and political coverage (Anderson, Shirkey & Bell, 2013). One of the central tensions of sports journalism is that balance between it being real journalism (following norms, practices, and ethics of the profession) and it being just entertainment or a promotional tool for the local teams (Boyle, 2006). Rowe (2007) captured the balance of sports journalism:

The sports beat occupies a difficult position in the news media. It is economically important in drawing readers (especially male) to general news publications, and so has the authority of its own popularity. Yet its practice is governed by ingrained occupational assumptions about what “works” for this readership, drawing it away from the problems, issues, and topics that permeate the social world to which sport is intimately connected (p. 400).

The remainder of this chapter examines sports journalism in the context of media sociology research. It looks at how sports reporters have described their work routines and practices, and what media scholars have found in researching how sports news is constructed.

Truth be told, there has been little sociological research into sports journalism. Most research into the social construction of news has focused on political and hard news. Sports

communications research is a growing field, but there has not yet been widespread research into the construction of sports news. The field is primarily focused on racial and gender representation in sports media (Wanta, 2006). However, the ideas and concepts from the social construction of news literature are applicable to sports journalism. Fishman's (1980) study of the beat structure is applicable to sports departments, where reporters are assigned beats to cover specific teams or sports. Many of the news values that Shoemaker (1991) identified can be seen in the sports pages as well, whether it's proximity (local sports get more coverage); timeliness (games and events happening today are more newsworthy than next week's game) or deviance (a game that's expected to be close is, instead, a blowout). Sports journalism found a home on the web, with sports departments often being considered the early adopters of digital technologies (Morrison, 2014). The normalization of blogs (Singer, 2005) and Twitter (Lewis, Lasorsa and Holton, 2012) can also be related to sports journalists, who use both platforms in their jobs.

Although these concepts have not been specifically used in the study of sports media, there have been some studies into how sports news is constructed. Shultz and Sheffer (2007) have extensively studied how sports reporters and editors use blogs as a part of their coverage, finding that the act of blogging does not change how sports journalists conceptualize their roles. Rowe (2005) found that sports journalists tend to use star athletes, coaches and administrators as sources in stories, and Lowes (1999) wrote that sportswriters are reliant upon access to athletes, which leads to a culture that promotes more positive than critical coverage. These findings are consistent with literature on sources from political news, where journalists are reliant on official government sources (e.g., Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973). However, the emergence of digital media, and sports teams' ability to provide content directly to fans through their own websites is leading to tensions between teams and the media. For example, British journalists who cover the English

Premier League believe these limits they have to team members and makes their jobs more difficult (Boyle, 2006; Coombs & Osborne, 2012).

In his study of a Canadian newspaper's sports department, Lowes (1999) studied how the routines and practices of the reporters shaped what sports received coverage and what didn't. He found that the routines overwhelmingly favored coverage of major professional sports, leading to a distinct lack of coverage for amateur or other sports that didn't fit into the milieu of big-time sports:

The routine work practices and professional ideologies that constitute sports newsworld - while eminently successful in capturing the goings-on of the major-league commercial sports world with precision and admirable detail —are principally a “means not to know” about another, more expansive world: the world of non-commercial spectator sports (p. 96).

More recent studies have begun examining how digital and social media are affecting sports newsworld. Schultz and Sheffer (2010) found that sports reporters use Twitter primarily as a way to enhance, rather than to transform, their journalistic work—a finding that reflects similar findings among news reporters that journalists are normalizing Twitter (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2011). Benigni, Porter & Wood (2009) wrote that the online communities of college football fans are beginning to influence the kinds of stories journalists write and the kind of coverage fans expect, in terms of tone (how positive or negative it is toward the team) and content (more multimedia content). Because fans can get content from any number of online sources, they can be more discerning, which creates more pressure on news organizations to provide unique content for their readers. Sanderson and Hambrick studied how journalists used Twitter during the Penn State football scandal in 2012 and noted that reporters were likely to use

Twitter to step outside of professional norms and practices by engaging with fans with opinionated posts that deviated from the journalistic norm of objectivity. Sanderson and Hambrick also found that sports journalists used Twitter to promote their competitors by linking to stories in publications other than their own, and that the speed of Twitter creates a dialectic in breaking-news coverage of trying to be first with a story while also maintaining professional levels of accuracy.

Another element of sports journalism is its relationship to readers—in this case, sports fans. As hinted at by the quote from Justice Warren at the start of this section, readers come to the sports sections of newspapers and websites looking for an escape from day-to-day life. Research has illustrated that sports fandom is highly related to social-identity theory (Tajfel, 1981) and the concepts of basking in reflected glory (BIRGing) and cutting off reflected failure (CORFing). BIRGing occurs when people associate themselves with successful others. CORFing is the opposite, when people distance themselves from unsuccessful others. Wann & Branscomb (1990) found that highly invested sports fans (die-hard fans) have high levels of BIRGing—a classic example of this is a fan saying “we won!” after his or her favorite team wins. They also found that less-invested fans (fair-weather fans) have higher levels of CORFing when their team loses. Wann and Branscomb showed that die-hard sports fans highly identify with their team’s successes and failures. Understanding this relationship is important to understanding fans’ expectations of and relationship to sports journalism. A growing body of research (i.e. Browning & Sanderson, 2012; Clavio and Kian, 2010; Highfield, Harrington & Bruins, 2013) is looking at how fans are using Twitter to express their fandom.

Conclusion

This chapter has defined the social construction of news, and it has examined how previous research in media sociology has identified the routines, norms, and practices that journalists use in their jobs. News is not something that is found in the world, it is a social construct and it is created by journalists through their work routines and their established norms, values, and practices. This chapter has also illustrated how journalism is changing due to the emergence of digital media, and it has shown how media sociology scholarship is studying the changes. It defined the journalism-as-process model, in which journalism is less a product and more an ongoing process that includes interactions with readers and audience members. This chapter also defined sports journalism and looked at the brief but growing area of scholarship into the social construction of the sports pages.

The next chapter examines institutional theory. It defines and explicates the key concepts of new institutionalism, as well as how those concepts can and have been used in previous research into journalism.

Chapter 4: Institutionalism

This chapter explicates institutional theory, looking at its roots, its core concepts and its applications. It seeks to show how this theory can be applied to a contemporary study of sports journalism. The chapter concludes with an examination into the limited ways institutional theory has been applied to the study of journalism, including a section on the study of professionalism in journalism.

Institutionalism

Put simply and broadly, institutionalism is the study of the practices, attitudes, and beliefs that have become a part of an organization's culture. Scott (2008) defined institutions as being "comprised of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life" (p. 48).

Jepperson (1991) defined an institution as a social pattern that reveals a production process. Selznick (1996) wrote that organizations become institutionalized when they take on a sort of built-in capacity, and that institutional theory is the study of those forms and processes. Meyer and Rowan (1977) define institutionalism as "the process by which social processes, obligations or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in social thought and action" (p. 341). A group of actions or practices are institutionalized when they are taken for granted within an organizational field (Zucker, 1988). Institutionalized practices are similar to what Nelson and Winter (1982) described as tacit knowledge, where people within the system can't really describe how they know to do what they do.

Institutional theory has its roots in Max Weber's notion of bureaucracy. Weber (1946) defined bureaucracy as the most rational and efficient mode of organization, one that resulted from the emergence of capitalism and the growth of modern communications. The three

elements of bureaucracy are regular activities being distributed in a fixed way; authority is distributed in a stable, rule-directed manner; and only people who are deemed qualified can serve as a part of the bureaucracy. Weber wrote that bureaucratic organizations are among the hardest to destroy, because they are instruments for socializing relations of power. This is what Weber famously described as an “iron cage” (1905), because people become trapped in systems and organizations that are designed to maximize efficiency, rationality, and control above everything else.

Weber’s ideas have informed the study of organizations for most of the field’s history. Merton was one of the first scholars to begin defining the institutional behaviors of organizations and bureaucracies (1940). The work of several of Merton’s students helped further establish the field of organizational sociology and created the foundation for institutionalism (Scott, 2001). Notably, Selznick (1947) introduced the notion of cooptation, which is “the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence” (p. 13). Organizations are molded by forces tangential to their rationally ordered structures and stated goals—in other words, external factors can force an organization to change its goals and purposes. Parsons (1960) also examined the organization and its relationship to its environment, while March and Simon (1958) developed the theory of bounded rationality—in which people within organizations make the best decision they can with the time and information they have, and so organizations attempt to simplify this process as much as possible. Scott (2001) wrote that the works of Merton, Selznick, Parsons, and March and Simon were all critical to the foundation of institutionalism.

The study of institutions has yielded a split between so-called old and new institutionalism; old institutionalism is concerned with embedded social structures, and new

institutionalism is concerned with tensions between the actors and institutions (Meyer, 2010). Selznick (1996) described the need to reconcile the so-called old and new models, calling on new institutional scholars to avoid creating dichotomies where none need exist. Meyer (2010) defined two dominant streams of thought in new institutionalism—a realist model, which tends to stress the agency of individuals and the rule-making function of organizations, and the phenomenological model, which stresses the complex cultural relationship between actors and organizational environments. Meyer added that although this is a “red line” (p. 4) in the study of institutions, there is no necessary conflict between the two lines of thinking.

The goal of institutions, according to institutional theory, is stability. An organization’s goal is to be as stable as possible, in order to extend its own life. To be stable, an organization needs to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the public, hence the importance of legitimacy. Meyer and Rowan (1977), in a groundbreaking article that introduced many of these concepts into the scholarship of organizational studies, described formal myths that become a part of an organization’s structure. These myths carry a huge amount of power within an organization and within an organization field. Meyer and Rowan (1977) wrote that organizations accept and build these formal myths into their structure and their culture not necessarily because they are rational, efficient, or best help them reach their goals. Indeed, they are not adopted because of an internal point of view that makes these attitudes and myths best suited to that particular organization. They are adopted to satisfy external beliefs and expectations. Meyer and Rowan (1977) described the process of rationalized institutional elements:

These rules define new organizing situations, redefine existing ones, and specify the means for coping rationally with each. They enable, and often require, participants to organize along prescribed lines ... new and extant domains of activity are codified in

institutionalized programs, professions, or techniques, and organizations incorporate the packaged codes (p. 344).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) hypothesized that organizations that adopt the formal myths within a given industry—in other words, the ones that become more and more institutionalized—are seen as more legitimate externally and therefore grow bigger and are more likely to succeed.

This desire for external legitimacy and the resultant success lead to isomorphism, which is the similarities among organizations in a field, the tendency of organizations to become more homogenous. DiMaggio and Powell (1983), in their landmark paper on institutional isomorphism, identify three kinds of isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative. Coercive isomorphism occurs when an organization is forced, either externally by law or internally by a feeling that they must, to resemble other organizations. This often happens when there are legal reasons for doing so—hospitals all look and act alike for safety and legal reasons. Mimetic isomorphism occurs when an organization looks to an external organization within its field that is deemed successful (usually by external factors) and seeks to model itself after the successful one. This is the notion of modeling, of copying what the successful organization does with the hopes of being successful, too. Modeling comes from a position of uncertainty, and so an organization follows what another has done.

The third type of isomorphism is normative, which DiMaggio and Powell define as coming from professionalism. Professionalism is a series of shared norms, practices and values that cut across individual organizations and are a part of a profession. Doctors, accountants and teachers all have norms, practices, and values that cut across their organizations. In a later work, DiMaggio (1991) defined five key dimensions of professionalism: the presence of university-trained experts; the creation of a body of professional knowledge; the organization of

professional associations; the consolidation of the professional elite; and the rise of organizational salience of professional expertise.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) found two sources for professionalism. The first is university training or other formal education. It is at this level where the accepted norms, values, and practices are first introduced. The second is socialization of professionals. This can occur through many processes, be it the establishment of a professional elite, the creation and promulgation of professional associations, or by socialization within the profession.

Media, in many ways, can be defined at the organizational field level. As stated earlier, DiMaggio (1991) found that organization fields can be defined professionally, not geographically. This is the case with the news media and with sports journalism. A newspaper in New York is pretty much the same as a newspaper in Hawaii. Studying media as an organization field allows researchers to study and define the emergence and existence of these similarities. But what they cover may vary geographically

That similarity between newspapers is a demonstration of isomorphism, the similarity between organizations in a field, and the tendency of organizations to become more homogenous (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Journalism, in a lot of ways, is full of isomorphism. News organizations almost all have similar structures to each other—newspapers tend to look and act like each other; TV and radio stations act like each other. The front page is where the most important news goes, symbolized by big headlines and the presence of large photographs. The size of the headline correlates with the importance of the story. There are sections for classified ads, local news, sports news, etc. In that way, working for *The New York Times* really isn't that much different than working at *The Times Herald* in small-town Olean, NY (Barry, 2004). Even the stories are similar. Sports coverage in traditional outlets follows consistent patterns of game

story, sidebar, column, next-game preview, regardless of the outlet's size or location (Wilstine, 2003). The isomorphism of the news is not necessarily to suggest anything nefarious about journalism, it's merely to identify a characteristic of the field.

Scott (2008) defined three pillars of institutions: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive (p. 51). The regulative pillar defines how institutions normalize behavior, either through formal rules and laws or informal mechanisms like shaming and shunning. The normative pillar deals primarily with values and norms. Values are ideas about what is perceived to be ideal or acceptable. Norms are the actions that are seen being correct in a given context (Coleman, 1990, p. 37). Values are the attitudes that are desired; norms are the behaviors. Coleman (1990) wrote that norms are embedded within social systems and become internalized by the members.

Scott's cultural-cognitive pillar, which is the core of most institutional scholarship, focuses on the "shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made" (2008, p. 57). In this conception, it's not just the values and norms that matter, but how an individual interprets them.

Scott writes that the three pillars are not silos. Two or three pillars may be present within the same institution, which can increase that institution's strength and legitimacy. "In stable social systems, we observe practices that persist and are reinforced because they are taken for granted, normatively endorsed, and backed by authorized powers" (Scott, 2008, p. 62). Zucker (1991) wrote that institutionalized social knowledge becomes factual information for people within an organization or organizational field. Scott and Meyer (1991) defined an institutional environment as having established rules and requirements that organizations need to follow if they are to be seen as legitimate within the given society.

Imprinting

An organization is shaped not only by its goals, leadership, and employees, but also by its historical environment. This is the notion of imprinting, first put forth by Stinchcombe (1965) in his landmark chapter on the social structure of organizations. Imprinting is the notion that an organization is influenced by the environment at the time of its formation. Stinchcombe found that the specific historical context in which an organization was formed has a lasting impact on the structure and form of that organization.

Imprinting is one explanation for why organizations in similar industries or fields that were formed around the same time tend to look and act the same way. Stinchcombe points out several examples: The textile firms in New York City that were formed in the 1830s and 1840s look, feel, and are structured very differently than the automotive companies formed in the Midwest in the early 1900s. Stinchcombe also described the wave of private colleges that opened in the Northeast in the late 1800s and how they differed from the public universities that followed in the 20th century. The point is that to understand how an organization looks and acts, to understand why organizations are structured the way they are, it is important to look to the past. They are formed due to a specific set of environmental factors that made their formation possible, and their structure will reflect that even after that specific set of environmental factors is no longer in place.

Imprinting can be seen when taking a historical look at the development of newspapers and the print media. The professional print media as we know it now has its roots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Schudson, 1978). In his look at the development of the press in the United States, Schudson (1978) wrote that the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emergence of the professionalized press, one that valued objectivity and factual reporting over

partisan politics (early newspapers were often mere mouthpieces for the political opinion of the publisher). This was the time when the Associated Press became a worldwide leader in news writing and dissemination, when technology increased the possibility for worldwide communication, when cities were growing in population and newspapers were publishing multiple daily editions to keep the growing citizens informed of the news. Many of the structures and practices that are still a part of the news media date from this time period.

A primary example of these practices is the inverted pyramid style of writing, in which the reporter puts the most important, most timely, or most new information at the start of the story, instead of a more literary, chronological, or narrative style. The inverted pyramid was born from technological and production necessity. Using telegraphs to file their stories, reporters had to put the meat of the story near the front, in case the connection broke or there was a problem sending the story. From a production standpoint, it allowed editors to run as much or as little of the story as they had space for. An editor could run only three paragraphs of a story and not lose any of the important information. These practices remain a part of the print news media today. They are the practices that have been imprinted upon news media from the time of their formation. They are the practices that are still taught in journalism schools (Lloyd & Guzzo, 2009) and have become so ingrained in the way print media does business that nobody thinks about them, nobody questions them, nobody really notices them. They are the way things are done. They're standard operating procedure in what is considered mainstream, traditional journalism. In other words, they have become institutionalized.

Technology and institutions

One of the biggest challenges institutions face is the rise of new technology. New technology creates both internal and external change, which is a threat to the stability and

legitimacy institutions crave. Hannan and Freeman (1989) described this phenomenon as structural inertia. They found that organizations tend to respond slowly to external threats. It's almost a sociological version of Newton's first law—an object at motion tends to stay in motion. In this case, the object is an organization or an institution. Hannan and Freeman found that organizations with large amounts of structural inertia tend to be larger, and therefore more stable and therefore more successful.

New organizations (and especially new organizational forms) have rather weak claims on public and official support. Nothing legitimizes both individual organizations and forms more than longevity. Old organizations tend to develop dense webs of exchange, to affiliate with centers of power, and to acquire an aura of inevitability (Hannan & Freeman, 1989, p. 158).

Constantly trying to change, trying to keep up with technological changes, decreased an organization's stability and legitimacy. "The worst of all possible worlds is to change structure continually only to find each time upon reorganization that the environment has already shifted to some new configuration that demands yet a different structure" (Hannan & Freeman, 1989, p. 151).

Related to technological change is the theory of competence-enhancing and competence-destroying technologies (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). This theory looks at technological changes from the standpoint of the status quo and whether a change enhances or destroys the status quo. A competence-enhancing change is an incremental improvement in the way things are done. It enhances the current business structure and the companies that are the leaders in this industry. HDTV would be an example—it's an order-of-magnitude improvement, but it is not something completely new.

A competence-destroying technology is something that *is* completely new. It's not just a new product or an improvement, it's one that completely destroys the old way of doing business. It's a complete paradigm shift. It changes everything. A true competence-destroying technology is rare. There are usually a handful in the life of an industry. When a competence-destroying technology comes about, it leads to a time of great upheaval in an industry, and organizations regroup and change and try to adapt to this new technology. After that time of upheaval, things steady out. Organizational leaders emerge, whether it's a new company or an old one that somehow adapted. Competence-destroying technologies obviously favor the creation of new companies and new organizations, whereas competence-enhancing ones favor old, existing organizations. In a later study, Anderson and Tushman (1990) theorized that ,following a technological breakthrough, there is time of competition until a single new configuration of the new technology is selected as the new dominant form.

It's easy to point to the Internet as an example of the ultimate competence-destroying technology for print media. From both a business perspective and a journalism one, the emergence of digital media has changed so much about the industry that print media is a shell of its former self (Pew, 2013). However, a close read of current media sociology scholarship suggests tension in this idea. Certainly, in so many ways, the Internet has been the ultimate competence-destroying technology for print media. But how much is it changing journalism? That may seem like a semantic distinction, but it may not be. As stated in the previous chapter, Anderson (2013) found that the basic job of a reporter hasn't changed much since the classic media sociology studies of the 1960s and 1970s. In many ways, Anderson found that the actual job of being a journalist isn't that much different. It's being bifurcated, but not completely changed. That finding may contradict what Tushman and Anderson (1986) wrote about a

competence-destroying technology. For a technology to be truly competence-destroying, it must make the old way of doing business obsolete. In one of their examples, the skills needed to work on a diesel locomotive are completely different than the skills needed for a steam locomotive. But if the skills needed to be a print news reporter are not that much different than the skills needed to be a digital news reporter, has this really been an example of a competence-destroying technology? Perhaps it is important to make a distinction between journalism as a profession and media as an industry. It's clear that media as an industry has been upturned by digital media. However, the effect of digital media on journalism as a profession may be more nuanced. Understanding that effect is the aim of this dissertation.

Institutionalism's people problem

While institutional theory tends to focus on the underlying beliefs of institutions, some researchers have looked at the behaviors and actions—commonly at the routines level. Feldman and Pentland (2005; 2003) have extensively studied routines within organizations. They break routines down into the ostensive aspect, which examines the organizational and institutional structure, and the performance aspect—the routine's actual specific people, actions and times (2003). While routines are generally thought of as institutionalized means to promote stability and legitimacy, Feldman and Pentland argue that routines can also promote change within organizations.

The focus on beliefs rather than behaviors highlights another longstanding criticism of institutional theory—its extreme focus on the macro level at the expense of the micro level. “New institutional theories emphasize the existing rules and resources that are the constitutive building blocks of social life. I want to add that the ability of actors to skillfully use rules and resources is part of the picture as well” (Fligstein, 2001, p. 107). Hallet and Ventresca (2006)

call this institutionalism's "people problem" (p. 214) and seek to address it through Scully and Creed's (1997) idea of inhabited institutionalism—that is, the notion that institutions are inhabited by people, and it's by studying the people that we can best understand the institution. Using Gouldner's classic "Patterns of Bureaucracy" as a model, Hallet and Vetresca show how their approach can be used to understand an entire institution, from an individual member to the organization's place in the social structure. "The inhabited institutions approach focuses on *embeddedness*, not only in terms of the interaction rituals of the immediate situation (micro-level), but also formal organizational structures and the broader conditions of possibility (meso and macro level)" (2006, p. 231, emphasis original).

Institutionalism and journalism studies

Certainly, it is possible to see elements of institutionalism throughout journalism studies and media sociology. It's possible to draw a very clean line from Fishman's (1980) descriptions of the bureaucratic structure of newspaper beats (both within a newsroom and in the field) all the way back to Weber's description of bureaucracy (1946). The fieldwork of Tuchman (1980), Gans (1979), Gitlin (1980), and Sigal (1973) through to Anderson (2013) contains a plethora of examples of organizational myths and institutional isomorphism, even if those phrases aren't specifically used. However, as stated earlier in this dissertation, institutional theory has rarely been used in the study of journalism.

There are scholars, however, who have used institutional theory as a lens through which to study journalism and the news media. Lowery (2011) found that news organizations are institutionally oriented, and that this orientation explains why print media outlets have struggled with the emergence of digital journalism. In a later study, Lowery (2012) used institutional theory as the basis for his news ecology theory. He found that emerging media sought

legitimacy by forging connections with established outlets and building stable organizations. New media forms modeled themselves after traditional outlets. Blogs, which began as personal online diaries, began to take the form of traditional news items, with editors, work flows, schedules, headlines, bylines, etc.

Cook (1998) and Sparrow (1999) are two of the leading scholars to examine journalism through institutionalism, arguing that the routines, norms, values, and practices of the profession are institutions (Ryfe, 2006). In his book, Sparrow writes that the routines that are a part of journalism actually constrains journalists (1999). Cook (1998) likened journalists to a kind of interest group, rather than as a monolithic institution.

Sparrow (2006) wrote that the news industry institutionalized practices in response to areas of uncertainty within the field: how news organizations can make a profit; establishing legitimacy as a political actor; and the ability to find information. Sparrow also suggested a research agenda for studying media through the institutional lens, including studying the coverage of “extraordinary events,” like 9/11 or the Challenger disaster (p. 152), looking at institutional maintenance, and examining whether there is a single institutionalized media in the United States. He suggested three potential ways to research this question: investigating the relationship between media organizations and media-politics (relationships with the FCC and the judiciary as an example); how news organizations absorb and are absorbed by technological changes; and by studying media repair work in the wake of journalism scandals (see Liebler & Moritz, 2013, for a sports example).

One area from new institutionalism that has been examined in the study of journalism is professionalism. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) define professionalization as “the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to

control the production of the producers” (p. 148). DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) markers of professionalism are all visible in print media and journalism. There is a professional elite (reporters at national news outlets like *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, etc.). There are professional associations (e.g., the Society of Professional Journalists). And most important, there is socialization among reporters. One of the truisms often heard from old-timers in newsrooms (and even some journalism schools) is that you learn to be a reporter by being a reporter. That belief is how the isomorphic norms and practices are spread from generation to generation, and is reflected by Breed’s (1955) research, which found that reporters learned the job through on-the-job socialization.

In the United States, journalism started to become professionalized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (McNay, 2008). This era was the time when many of the technological and business practices that remain in place in journalism today were established, and it’s the historical antecedent of the five elements of the news paradigm (Hoyer & Pottker, 2005). One of the primary ways this move is visible is the fact that newspapers became less partisan tools of their owners and more objective in coverage of news events (Schudson, 1978). Since then, professionalism has become one of the primary means of self-identification for news organizations. Donsbach (1981) found that, among journalists, legitimacy was obtained not by effectiveness or by service to the public but rather through professionalism—how closely reporters followed the rules of the game. Digital journalism presents a challenge to the professional status of print journalists (Singer, 2003).

Beam (1990) found that organizational professionalism is among the most important for journalists. Organizational professionalism deals with the relationship between the organization and its members, which is a key part of institutional theory. An organization has a certain set of

rules, values, norms, expectations, and scripts members are expected to follow. These, Beam found, are an agent of social control. In later survey research, Beam (2006) further examined the connection between the organization and the individual journalist in terms of professionalism. Beam found that journalists' job satisfaction is correlated with their opinions of their organizations. Journalists who worked for media outlets that were perceived to care more about profits than journalism tended to be less satisfied. If the organization valued good journalism, journalists tended to have higher rates of job satisfaction.

Conclusion

This chapter has defined and described institutional theory. It has defined what an institution is and the important concepts of institutional theory. It has shown how organizations use formal myths and ceremony (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) to promote stability and legitimacy; how institutional isomorphism is created and perpetuated (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and the three pillars of institutions. It has shown how institutional theory can be applied to the study of journalism and how it has been applied in the field of journalism studies. This dissertation seeks to add to that body of literature. Institutional theory provides a theoretical foundation upon which data analysis will be conducted. The use of this theory will identify sports journalists' established norms, values, and routines as being institutionalized. This idea explains why those norms, values, and routines are in place as well as any tension that exists between institutional and digital sports journalism.

With the previous chapter on the social construction of news, these past two chapters have provided the theoretical lens through which this dissertation was conducted. The next chapter details the research method used in the study, including plans for sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter 5: Methods

This chapter describes the method used to conduct the dissertation research. It describes the study's method, detailing the approach that was used, as well as the reason it has been picked for this project. The chapter also describes the sampling strategy and detail how data will be collected and analyzed.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative project and relied on in-depth interviews with sports journalists to study the proposed research questions. Qualitative research “seeks descriptive data from the research participants” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 7) and is focused on finding meaning in social phenomena. Rather than finding generalizable results about a population or a behavior, as quantitative research does, qualitative research seeks to find deeper patterns of social meaning, to explore how people and groups define and understand their worlds (Creswell, 2009). Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) write that qualitative research seeks to uncover thematic meanings from a population's experiences. Qualitative research is an inductive approach (Cresswell, 2009; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), meaning it is open-ended. The research starts with a general question and opens itself up to the data that is collected. Themes and ideas emerge from the data as it is being collected. The research questions proposed for this dissertation lent themselves to a qualitative study. This dissertation sought to identify, explain and understand the institutionalized patterns of sports journalism in the digital age and how those patterns are (and are not) changing.

To understand those patterns, this dissertation employed in-depth interviews as a research method. The in-depth interview is a method used to gain information from participants on a specific topic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). According to Kvale and Brinkman (2008), in-depth

interviews allow researchers to understand and find meaning in the lives, experiences, and world views of a population. “The interviewer listens to their dreams, fears and hopes; hears their views and opinions in their own words; and learns about their school and work situation, their family and social life” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2008, p. 1). Rubin and Rubin (2012) wrote that in-depth interviewing allows researchers to examine a problem in its natural setting and to study not just surface-level behaviors and attitudes but also the subtle patterns of behavior—what’s missing along with what’s there. Seidman (2012) described interviews as a natural way of learning, because interviews deal with language and stories, which are two of the most fundamental ways humans interact with their social environments and make meaning from them.

Kvale (1996) described two different metaphors for the interview: the miner (in which the interviewer is looking for knowledge in answers) and the traveler (a more post-modern approach in which the interview is a kind of journey). A qualitative interview tends to follow the second metaphor, that of a traveler. The researcher is not looking for specific answers to specific questions but rather the participants’ lived-in experiences. This makes in-depth interviews an ideal method through which to study institutionalized sports journalism. Rubin and Rubin (2012) wrote that “qualitative interviews let us see that which is not ordinarily on view and examine that which is often looked at but seldom seen” (p. xv). Seidman (2012) described in-depth interviews as “the primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, *institution*, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the ‘others’ who make up the organization or carry out the process” (p. 9, emphasis added).

King and Horrocks (2010) defined three characteristics of an in-depth interview: It is flexible, featuring mostly open-ended questions; it focuses on a participant’s experiences (rather than general opinions), and the relationship between researcher and participant is crucial. Kvale

and Brinkman (2008) defined seven steps of interview research: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. Using that as a model, the previous three chapters of this dissertation have served as the thematizing step. The other six steps are being described in this chapter.

Much prior research into the social construction of news has been conducted ethnographically (i.e., Fishman, 1980; Gitlin, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1980; & Anderson, 2013). Indeed, much sociology research tends to privilege ethnography over other methods, including in-depth interviews (Dorsey, 1977). But in the study of a profession, ethnography is limited by its intense focus upon one specific group or organization. Ethnography can provide scholars with rich, in-depth data about the norms, values, and practices of a specific group or organization at a specific time, but it is limited to that specific place and time. To study the institutional patterns of a profession such as sports journalism, which is practiced at various-size organizations across the country, in-depth interviews provided a wider population from which to draw a sample. This method allowed for a broader examination of the profession than would an ethnography of a single sports department or of one event.

Sample

The sample for this study was drawn from the population of working sports journalists in the United States in 2013. Participants were sports journalists who work at daily newspapers—which for this study is defined as an outlet that primarily self-identifies itself as a newspaper. In some communities in 2014, like Syracuse, N.Y., or New Orleans, the daily newspaper is primarily an online publication and there is a limited print edition. However, these outlets are still very much entrenched in the ethos of daily print journalism, and are still rooted in institutionalized sports journalism. There are exciting and interesting things happening in online

sports journalism, whether it is at national sites like ESPN or Yahoo, on blogs like Deadspin, The Big Lead and Bleacher Report, or in user-generated sites like message boards, fan-run blogs and social media platforms. For the purpose of this study, however, the focus is on daily sports journalism, newspapers..

For the purposes of this study, sports journalists were defined as reporters and editors who work for the sports department and produce the content of the sports section of a daily newspaper (as defined above). Sports news sometimes appears on the front page of newspapers—whether it’s a game of national significance, such as the Boston Red Sox’ World Series championship appearing on the front page of the *Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald*, or a traditional, hard news story involving athletes, like the Jerry Sandusky scandal at Penn State University. Sometimes, those stories involve sports, athletes or coaches but are written by news journalists (for example, the Sandusky story was broken by a crime reporter, not any of the Penn State football reporters). But for this study, the population studied was the reporters and editors who are members of newspapers’ sports departments and work on the sports pages as their primary jobs. Both reporters and editors were interviewed. Reporters and editors work together on a daily basis to produce sports sections (Wilstine, 2003), and therefore help define the accepted norms, values, routines, and behaviors of the profession. Schudson (1997) noted that while the journalist-source relationship has gotten much scholarly attention over the years, the journalist-editor relationship has rarely been examined. For the purpose of this study, sports editor meant the man or woman who is in charge of the day-to-day operations of the newspaper’s sports section. Drawing editors into this study enriched the data and provided a more well-rounded view of institutionalized sports journalism in the digital age. Reporters are a valuable source of information into the social construction of news, but they are only one part of the

puzzle. Editors hire reporters, make coverage decisions, and are responsible for putting together the daily sports section (Wilstein, 2006; Lowes, 1999). Sports editors play a critical role in the creation and maintenance of professional norms, values, and practices (APSE, 2013), and they were important to the study of institutionalized sports journalism. In addition, there's the fact that editors are an under-studied population in media sociology, both in and out of sports.

“Studies rarely look at the social relations of news work from an editor's view. Most research focuses on the gathering of news rather than on its writing, rewriting and ‘play’ in the press” (Schudson, 1997, p. 14).

Participants were drawn from papers across the country and ranging in daily circulation size from barely under 10,000 daily circulation to more than one million. Rather than focusing on one newspaper or two newspapers as previous research did (i.e., Fishman, 1980; Hatcher, 2009; Sigal, 1973), this study included journalists from many newspapers. This strategy allowed the researcher to study the norms, values, practices and routines of the profession of sports journalism, rather than one sports department. Sampling was inductive, with the sample evolving as data analysis suggests potential new directions for the researcher to follow.

Sampling was a combination of theoretical, snowball, and purposive strategies. Purposive sampling occurs when the researcher picks a sample based upon a set of characteristics that each member must meet. This is done in order to better study a project's specific research questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2006). In this study, sports journalists are the target population, and participants were drawn from the sports departments of daily newspapers. Three of the criteria being used to select the sample of this study are the experience of the journalist, the size of the newspaper, and the journalist's job title.

The experience of the journalist referred to how many years he or she has worked as a professional sports journalist. This provided useful data in studying the influence of digital news on sports journalism. It seemed likely that more inexperienced reporters (less than 10 years in the business) will be more familiar with newer digital technologies and less indoctrinated into the professional norms, values and routines of sports journalism, whereas more experienced journalists (more than 20 years in the business) could be expected to be more institutionalized in their thinking and acting, and less familiar with digital technology. Previously, Singer (2004) found that online-oriented journalists tended to be almost 10 years younger than print-oriented journalists, which influenced not only how they did their work but also their perceptions about the profession (she studied news reporters). A variety of journalists with different levels of experience helped show what institutionalized norms, values, and practices exist within the profession and illustrate how the profession is adapting to a younger, presumably more online-savvy workforce.

Likewise, the size of the newspaper a journalist works for (as measured by daily circulation) was an important consideration in this sample. The size of a newspaper tends to correlate to the number of resources it has available, in terms of number of reporters, money and technology (Dibeau & Garrison, 2004; Garrison, 1999). *The New York Times* has resources at its disposal that *The Times Herald* in Olean, NY, does not. The variety of newspaper sizes was necessary to see what institutional norms, values, and practices exist within sports journalism and the degree to which they cross over among papers of various circulation sizes. In addition, the size of the newspaper could speak to the type of readership (e.g. is it a market where fans are constantly seeking news updates and interactions with reporters, or is it a smaller market with

fewer fan demands?). Therefore, the size of the newspaper a journalist works for—large, small or mid-sized—was an important consideration for this sample.

A third criterion for this sample was a journalist's job title. As stated earlier, both reporters and editors were interviewed. Among reporters, beat reporters (who have a specific team or sport they cover, at levels ranging from high school to professional sports) and sports columnists were interviewed. This was an important distinction in defining both not just differences between how the job is done by a major metro columnist and a small-town high school reporter, but also the similarities. Since this was a study of sports journalism as a profession, it was important to get reporters from across the professional spectrum. Certainly, this creates an enormous pool of potential participants. But for the study at hand, it was important to interview journalists at every level of the profession. To leave one segment out would be to potentially miss out on important concepts and experiences. Previous media sociology research has shown that beat reporters and general-assignment reporters have different routines due to the nature of their respective jobs (Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1980). Including all kinds of sports journalists in this sample allowed the researcher to study the institutionalized practices of the profession of sports journalism as a whole..

Sampling was also theoretical, in that it was constantly informed by the data and evolved as patterns emerged from each interview in an inductive manner (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the data was analyzed, the population from which participants are drawn evolved and changed. This practice is consistent with qualitative research methodologies. In addition, there were elements of convenience and snowball sampling. The researcher used his personal and professional contacts within sports journalism to find participants, which provided easy and quick access to a large pool of potential participants. Also, participants were

encouraged to suggest colleagues they believe would be willing to take part in the study, as a means of broadening the sample beyond the researcher's own network. In addition to the participants gathered through the researcher's personal and professional contacts, recruitment emails were sent to members of Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) and American Women in Sports Media (AWSM) through the organizations' respective mailing lists and social-media sites, soliciting potential participants who would be willing to volunteer to take part in the study. This provided a larger, wider population base from which to draw participants.

The researcher conducted 25 interviews with editors and reporters representing 20 different news organizations. The researcher strove for a diverse sample in terms of race and gender. Sports journalism is, frankly, quite lacking in gender and racial diversity. In looking at sports editors, assistant sports editors, reporters, columnists, and copy editors/page designers, The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (2012) found that at least 83 percent of the jobs in sports journalism are held by whites, and at least 80 percent of all jobs are held by men. While the researcher strove for a sample that has racial and gender diversity, the overall sample generally reflected the demographics of the profession as a whole.

The 25 interviews allowed the researcher to reach theoretical saturation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). As an incentive to take part in the interview, all participants received a \$20 Starbucks gift card.

Procedure

Interviews took place between December 2013 and March 2014. When possible, the interviews were conducted in person. In cases where time and cost made an in-person interview impossible, the interview was conducted online using either Skype or Google+ Hangouts software (depending on the technology used by the participant). The researcher recorded all

interviews—in-person interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. Online interviews were recorded using either Call Recorder for Skype software or Google+ Hangouts On Air software (again, depending on the technology used by the participant). The researcher transcribed all interviews. The text and audio of the interview are being kept on file by the researcher until the end of the project. Participants were assured of anonymity. They were not being identified by name, beat or affiliation in order to encourage candor among the participants.

Since this study involved human participants, approval was received from the Institutional Review Board of the Syracuse University Office of Research Integrity and Protections prior to data collection. This approval was required in order to protect the study's participants from any negative effects. Participants were asked to read and sign consent forms prior to the start of the interview. In-person interview participants were asked to sign a copy in the presence of the researcher before the interview began. Online interviews participants were sent a link to an online electronic consent form that allowed them to provide informed consent before the interview started.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature, which allowed for more flexibility and freedom to explore topics while relying on a set of predetermined questions (King & Horrocks, 2012; Kvale & Brinkman, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). An interview guide was developed and used for each interview. After answering demographic questions, participants were asked to describe their processes of story conceptualizing, identifying and contacting sources, game coverage and reporting and writing articles—both for their newspapers' websites and their print editions. They were also asked open-ended questions about how they perceive their jobs have changed because of the transition from print to digital media, with several questions focusing on how news is reported using social media and other interactive platforms.

Sample questions included: “When a game ends, walk me through your reporting and writing process?” (for reporters); “What are your day-to-day expectations for your reporters?” (for editors); “What kinds of stories do you find yourself doing (or assigning) now that maybe you weren’t doing earlier in your career?” and “How much time in your work day is dedicated to using social media and interacting with fans?” (See Appendix A). In interviews with reporters, the researcher presented each participant with copies of stories he or she has recently written and asked him or her to walk the researcher through the reporting process for each one—an example of grand-tour questions (Davis, 2012), in which a participant is asked to reconstruct an event that happened in the past and guides the interviewer through his or her feelings, emotions and experiences at each step of the process. The stories used were taken from the reporters’ newspaper’s websites for the sake of easy access and consistency. Social media posts were not presented, primarily due to their ephemeral nature and the difficulty in finding a reliable archive of the posts. In interviews with editors, the researcher presented each participant with copies of stories written from that paper’s section, and the story selection/budgeting/editing process was reviewed. The open-ended questions of the interview guide served as a jumping-off point for the researcher and the participant to discuss the profession and the participants’ experiences. This is what Rubin and Rubin (2012) call responsive interviewing, in which the participant is treated as a partner in the process rather than an object of research.

Participants

In all, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted between December 2013 and March 2014. The interviews ranged from 52 minutes to 88 minutes in length. Of the 25 interviews, nine were conducted in person and 16 were conducted online. Of the online interviews, 14 were conducted via Skype, one was conducted over a Google+ Hangout and one was conducted via Apple

FaceTime. The researcher noted no differences between the quality of the in-person and online interviews. Using online interviews allowed for a wider range of journalists, markets, and news organizations to be included in the study, and provides a more well-rounded view of the profession of sports journalism, adding to the validity of this qualitative study. The participants' experiences as professional journalists (which they were allowed to define as part of the interview) averaged 13.96 years and ranged from two years to 29 years. Six of the participants were women and 19 were men. This means that the sample was actually more diverse in terms of gender (24 percent) than the profession itself (estimated between 10 and 20 percent). Participants were overwhelming Caucasian (22 of 25), which again is reflective of the lack of diversity within sports journalism.

Participants also came from a wide-ranging size of news organizations. Using the traditional marker of newspaper circulation and the four circulation categories used by Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) in its annual writing and section contest, four of the journalists came from papers with circulation less than 30,000, six came from papers with a circulation between 30,000-75,000, nine came from papers with circulation between 75,000-175,000, and six came from papers with a circulation of more than 175,000. In terms of job title, the participants included 12 editors and 12 reporters. One journalist interviewed held the title of sports editor, but recent staffing cuts had left him as the only employee in his department, meaning he effectively served as both writer and editor—a one-man band, so to speak. (See Table 1).

As stated earlier in this chapter, all interviews were conducted confidentially. The participants' names, affiliations, beats, and any other identifying characteristics are left out of this and subsequent chapters. This was done to ensure candor in the interviews. To make this manuscript more readable, all participants have been assigned pseudonyms, which is how they

will be referred to in this and subsequent chapters. The pseudonyms were randomly chosen and assigned using the Random Name generator (<http://random-name-generator.info>). Anglo-Saxon sounding names were selected in order to avoid the suggestion of racial or ethnic diversity when none was present.

The reporters interviewed had a variety of jobs, from full-time general sports columnist to a more general-assignment reporter covering local sports, and worked for a variety of newspapers, from small-town rural papers to major metropolitan papers. Of the reporters interviewed, two were columnists, five covered primarily professional sports, three covered primarily college sports, and two covered primarily high school sports. Among the professional sports writers, the four major professional sports in North America (baseball, football, basketball and hockey) are all represented at least once in the sample, as are Division I football and men's basketball. It's important to note, as well, that of the 12 reporters, five had multiple beats. Roger, who has been a reporter for eight years, covers both professional baseball and college basketball. Simon, a veteran reporter with more than 25 years of experience, covers both professional baseball and professional hockey. Hannah, a young reporter at a mid-sized daily, covers both pro baseball and high school sports. Malcolm, a veteran sports reporter at a mid-sized metro, has three beats, covering college basketball, professional soccer, and high school sports. One participant, Anthony, served as both a reporter and editor at his small-town daily paper.

Data analysis

Since this is a qualitative study that is grounded in the previous research traditions of the social construction of news and new institutional theory, data were analyzed using a social constructionist point of view. Creswell (2009), in defining the four primary worldviews of social-science research, defined the social constructive world view as the search for

understanding of the world. Rubin and Rubin (2012) described what they call the natural constructionist perspective as being

concerned with the lenses through which people see events, the expectations and meanings that they bring to a situation. Constructionists believe that groups of people create and then share understandings with each other ... by living and working together or routinely interacting in a neighborhood or a profession, people come to share some meanings, common ways of judging things ... constructionists try to elicit the interviewee's views of their worlds, and the events they have experienced or observed (p. 19-20).

Previous research into the social construction of news and new institutional theory provided the foundation for the data analysis, which involved the study of interview transcripts. Interview transcripts were analyzed using a “grounded, a posteriori, inductive, context sensitive coding scheme” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 32). Through the use of field notes and reflexive memos throughout the interview process (Kvale & Brinkman, 2008), the researcher culled themes after each transcription. Using line-by-line coding through NVivo software, the themes culled from each transcript were compared to see which key concepts emerged from the interviews, a process Kvale and Brinkman (2008) call condensing meanings. Data analysis was an inductive process (Creswell, 2009; Schwandt, 2007), as the transcripts and the emergent themes continually informed each other throughout the project.

Potential limitations in this study are similar to any conducted by in-depth interviews. Kvale (1996) wrote that the study of tacit meanings and taken-for-granted practices may be best conducted by participant observation supplemented by informal interviews. As stated earlier, the researcher believes that in-depth interviews brought forth richer data about the profession than ethnography would have. As Creswell (2009) writes, limitations of in-depth interviews include

the fact that the researcher's presence might bias the information received; that not all people are equally as articulate; and the fact that the researcher is receiving indirect information from the participants, rather than observing them directly. The researcher believes, though, that the indirect information is a strength of this method, because it captures the reporters' routines and experiences in their own words. The use of open-ended questions and probes attempted to overcome those potential limitations.

Role of the researcher

Since I spent 10 years as a newspaper sports journalist before returning to graduate school, my role in this study is that of a knowledgeable outsider (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The bulk of my career was spent as a sports journalist. I still have personal knowledge of the traditions, practices, customs, and routines within a newsroom. I also maintain many professional relationships and personal friendships with a number of reporters. That allowed me to gain access to potential participants. However, the rapid changes within the newspaper industry in the time since I left the industry mean I can no longer consider myself to be an insider.

Chapter 6: Routine practices

This chapter begins to detail the results of the dissertation. It starts with an overview of the results, breaking down how the nearly 27 hours of interview data were analyzed. Then, individual areas of sports journalism are examined in greater detail to show the institutionalized patterns within the profession and how said patterns are and are not changing due to the emergence of digital and social media, as well as how sports journalism is adapting to the journalism-as-process model.

Results overview

The rest of this chapter and subsequent chapters will be devoted to the results of the 25 interviews conducted. Through the use of line-by-line coding on NVivo Software and weekly reflective memos, the researcher culled themes and trends from the interviews and synthesized those into the following results. Rather than specifically address the three research questions that are guiding this study, the results are presented thematically. Each theme addresses aspects of the research questions. The results are being presented in the following order: First, **the work routines of reporters and editors are detailed**. Along with simple descriptive information, this section defines the institutional aspects of sports journalism (RQ1), how those aspects are manifested in story selection (RQ2) and the influence of journalism-as-process on those institutional practices (RQ3). Differences in jobs are examined in this section, not just between writers and editors, but between beats (pro vs. college vs. high school), and the influence of newspaper size. The next chapter deals with **changes in sports journalism** due to the emergence of digital and social media. This chapter goes in depth about how the institutionalized work practices of journalists are evolving, as well as the participants'

perceptions as to the effect those changes are having on their profession. Some key themes in this chapter include the changing nature of access to sources (particularly players and coaches), the evolution of interaction with readers and fans, and how the notion of breaking news and scoops has changed. The subsequent chapter looks deeply at **social media's influence on sports journalism**. The interview data suggest that when sports journalists talk about and use social media, they are referring largely to Twitter and Facebook. That chapter includes detailed descriptive information about how sports journalists are using Facebook and Twitter, how they and their editors feel they should use social-media platforms in both reporting news and interacting with fans, and the influence it has on the job.

Routine practices

The rest of this chapter describes the routine work practices and normative values of sports journalists. The interview data suggest that reporters and editors primarily learn the routines, practices, norms, and values of the profession through on-the-job socialization and experience, and that their learning is ongoing. All 25 participants were asked where they learned to be a journalist, and all 25 answered either some educational setting (usually college) or on the job through internships or their first jobs at small papers. Stanley, now a sports columnist at a major metropolitan daily, fondly recalled his college internship at the small daily newspaper near the college he attended, where his sole job was to come up with a story idea every day and then report and write it by the end of that shift. "They gave me this incredible gift," he said. "It wasn't just the writing and reporting—it was trying to find these stories." Kristin, now a sports editor, credited her experience as a reporter at a small sports staff with teaching her the business. "You do *everything* there," she said of working at small papers. "I learned how to be an editor, I

learned how to be a reporter. You do so much ... I did everything at that paper. And you learn a lot, in every facet that you did, you learn about the business and what you have to do.”

Others gave more credit to their college experience, citing both the student newspaper and their journalism classes. This experience serves as both an educational and a socializing force into what's expected of a professional sports journalist. Roger credited his master's degree in journalism with preparing him for the profession. “(The) program was really more integrated, so they made you learn a little bit of print and broadcast and the Web stuff no matter what you were going to go in to.” Elena received both undergraduate and graduate degrees in journalism, and she learned about the profession from her experience at both programs. “I think the (undergraduate) fundamental education was very good in terms of crafting a lead, writing a lead, the basics, the who, what, when, where, why,” she said. “(My master's degree) certainly reinforced that.” In general, reporters who discussed their college experience gave more credit to their newspaper experience than their coursework. Tim said that he learned to be a journalist at his alma mater, where he both worked on the student paper and took journalism classes. “It's hard to learn to be a reporter in a class because it's just something you have to do,” he said.

However they learned to do the job, the sports journalists interviewed rely on that foundational experience during their day-to-day work. The remainder of this chapter will detail the routines of sports journalists, starting with reporters and followed by editors.

Feeding the beast: Reporters' work routines

Cameron, a sports reporter covering professional football at a major metropolitan newspaper, described the workweek leading up to his participation in this study. He detailed his work from Monday through Saturday, a week that saw him write six stories for the daily newspaper (and also ran on his paper's website), post several items to his paper's blog every day,

keep an active presence on Twitter, do a weekly video segment for the website, record and produce a podcast with one of his colleagues, and do four to five radio interviews per day with sports talk hosts both in his town and across the country. And this was all leading up to the actual game, during which he blogged and tweeted, and after which he posted three to four items to the blog, wrote a sidebar for the paper, and then ran a post-game chat for 90 minutes.

“I guess it’s all kind of a blur,” Cameron said with a laugh. Later, he said that although that particular week was a little more hyper than normal because it was a playoff game, “to be honest, like week to week that’s kind of the norm on the beat as far as content goes.”

Cameron’s experience reflects a lot of the realities of being a sports reporter in 2013-14, as suggested by the interviews with 12 full-time reporters at news organizations in the United States. All of the reporters interviewed in this study self-identified by the beat they covered, and for the most part, their beats were specifically designated. Elena, who worked at a small-town daily newspaper, said that her job was almost general assignment, but often with a focus on girls high-school sports and women’s college sports. The other reporters all had very delineated, structured beats.

The interview data suggest that the structure of a reporter's work day depends primarily on the schedule of the team and the level of sports he or she is covering. For reporters with multiple beats, the season dictates their work. Hannah, for example, focuses on high school sports during the fall and winter and pro baseball in the late spring and summer. Simon covers professional hockey in the fall and winter, and baseball in the spring and summer. Malcolm focuses on pro soccer in the spring and summer, high school sports in the fall and winter, and college basketball in the winter. Their daily schedules change from season to season.

Getting there early, staying late: Game coverage

In many ways, sports reporting revolves around game coverage. Beat reporters are expected to attend and cover games on their beat. When the reporters' beat is to cover a specific team, they are expected to cover all of that team's games. Home games are almost always covered. Road games are covered depending on the beat and the newspaper. When costs are too high to make travel realistic, especially for smaller papers, road games will often not be staffed. But at the professional level, beat writers follow the team on the road. Luke, who covers professional basketball for a major metropolitan paper, was interviewed on the final day of a multiple-day road trip and, when asked about covering a game in Denver, said that his day started in Portland with an early-morning flight from covering the previous game. Stanley, a columnist, also discussed a recent work day that began with him flying home from Denver, where he had been covering an NFL playoff game. When a reporter's beat is to cover a specific sport (which is often the case at the high school level, where, for example, Hannah is assigned to cover girls basketball), he or she will select the most meaningful games to cover each week. Reporters define meaningful games as ones between teams that are doing well in the standings or have some sort of compelling story line, be it a star player, a rivalry between teams, or some other interesting story they could write that carried more significance than just a game. Anthony, the reporter/editor at a small-town daily, said he picked a recent high-school hockey game to cover because it was between the two largest schools in his coverage area, the schools were rivals, and they had a history of playing important games between them. Along with news values like proximity (local teams get coverage), timeliness (games happening now get the most coverage) and impact (a game that could influence the standings or playoff position is more newsworthy than a game between two average or losing teams), the interview data suggest that sports journalists also use perceived fan interest as news value. Linda, a veteran columnist at a

metropolitan daily, said the definition of a meaningful game can be ephemeral but often revolves around what is going on with the city's home team. "The games that fans get fired about are the games we get fired up about," she said.

Game coverage involves reporting on the events of a game, which team wins and loses, the final score, the key players and plays, and the significance of the game. Game coverage varies from sport to sport and level to level. A high school soccer match is covered very differently than an NBA game. But on the whole, there are institutionalized aspects of game coverage. The reporters interviewed said that they prefer to get to pro and college games early—up to 90 minutes before a hockey or basketball game, or several hours for a pro football or baseball game (baseball also has pre-game access to players and managers, which will be covered in the next chapter). Getting to games early allows reporters to get themselves set up, establish themselves on social media, post the starting lineup and any pre-game notes online and do some pre-game reporting. "I like getting to games early," said Owen, a veteran college basketball reporter. "As a reporter I believe strongly that you need to be there, and it drives me nuts when I see some people that don't wanna be there early, cause you can pick up on things." These things, Owen said, include seeing a player give his parents a quick pre-game hug or chatting with an usher to get a sense of how big a crowd is expected, or connecting with a former player. "It's about the only time during the day, too, where I'm gonna be relaxed," he said. "I get to look around a little bit. I get to kibbutz with anybody." Roger, who's also a college basketball reporter, said getting to games early allows him to watch warmups, and on one occasion, see that a player was not on the floor. He subsequently learned that the player had been dismissed from the team, but the school hadn't announced it yet. "I'm literally out there watching warmups and I'm like 'Where is

this guy?” Roger said, adding that he was able to report the story online and on social media because he had been there early.

During the game, the reporters interviewed are active on social media, tweeting in-game updates. The nature of the updates varies from sport to sport. Reporters who cover hockey, football, and baseball Tweet out goals, other scoring plays, or big moments. Basketball, with its much faster pace and more frequent scoring, doesn't lend itself to score-by-score tweeting, so writers covering that sport tend to tweet out important updates. Reporters will also use Twitter in the game to share news and on-the-fly analysis and even engage in conversations with fans. (How reporters use social media is addressed in Chapter 8).

As soon as the game ends, reporters are filing a running game story—that is, a story without quotes that relies primarily on play-by-play. Often, reporters must file this as soon as the game ends—at the final horn or within a few minutes of doing so. This story is often posted directly to the newspaper's website—and, in the case of night games or ones that run up against a paper's print deadline, will be filed for the newspaper. “Right when the final second went off the clock, I'd have about five minutes after that to get everything in, so I was writing the entire time,” said Kayla, a college football reporter. Simon, a veteran baseball and hockey reporter, recalled numerous baseball games in which the home team rallied from an improbable deficit, leaving him scrambling to write his story. He recalled one story in particular, in which the team he covered was trailing 6-0 in the ninth inning and he was writing his story on deadline when the team started to rally. “I literally had to just delete the whole story and pray that they didn't win it in the bottom of the ninth. And they didn't, so it gave me enough time to collect myself.” The end-of-game crunch to get a running game story written, combined with social media use during the game, left several writers saying that they rarely watched the action on the field. “I often

leave a game having very little idea what happened in the fourth quarter, because you were writing the whole time,” said Kayla, the college football reporter. Owen, the veteran college basketball writer, said, “You take your eyes off the court a lot.” Malcolm, discussing his college-basketball coverage, said, “The last few minutes now, you know, it's gonna be tough to get a game winning shot if I'm trying to write on deadline and getting my story ready to go at the buzzer.” Sports journalists have always written on a tight post-game deadline, but the interviews suggest that deadline is even tighter now. “Back in the early 90s when I would just write my notes and watch the game and write my notes and watch the game,” Owen said. Linda, a columnist for a mid-sized daily, said: “I have to think having more time, more focused time would make for a better column, but at the same time, that’s sort of not the reality anymore.”

Getting the quotes: Interviewing sources

After filing the post-game story, reporters go to the locker room for the traditional post-game interviews. Reporters always interview the head coaches of the two teams, and always players for the team they are covering. The players they pick to interview tend to be the stars of that particular game and the stars of the team (and, often times, those are the same). At the pro level, locker rooms tend to be open (per league rules) and reporters are able to pick players who are in the room to interview. At the college level, reporters often request the players they want to interview from the school’s sports information staff—although sometimes, the SID picks players to bring to an interview room. “After games, usually, they’ll bring out 15 or so guys and they let us circle a list (of) ‘Oh who do you recommend?’ But it means nothing; they’re gonna bring out who they want anyway,” Audrey said of the college football team she covers. Linda, a veteran columnist, recalled a recent game in which she interviewed a role player for the winning team who had a surprisingly strong game. She did not specifically request to speak to the player, but

he was brought to the interview room. “Had they not brought (him) in, I’m sure I would have been able to go get him (in the locker room),” Linda said. At the high school level, reporters interview the coach and players outside of the locker room or on the field. These interviews are much more informal than the heavily structured, press-conference-style interviews that are prevalent at the college and high school level. Anthony, the reporter/editor at a small paper, recalled a recent high-school hockey game he covered and said that he interviewed both teams’ coaches as well as several players from the winning team — with an emphasis on the player who scored the game-winning goal. “I like to do multiple players from the winning team—like a star player or a captain or somebody’s gonna give me something,” he said. “Then I talk to the coach, obviously, of the winning team, cause he’ll be able to provide me with more information.”

Source relationships are generally friendly and congenial. The interviews suggest that confrontational interviews with sources are rare. Anthony, a reporter/editor at a small paper, said that a high-school athletic director he covered once told him after a controversial story that “I’ll never work with you again,” but that “he’s come around since,” suggesting an unspoken cooperative arrangement between sources and journalists. Malcolm, who covers pro soccer in his city, said of an Olympian and pro star whom he has covered since high school, “I’ve always joked to people and said I’ll always have a job here as long as (this player is) still playing.” Simon said he has gotten into high-profile arguments with coaches and team officials, but that they have not affected the nature of the source-journalist relationship. Recalling one argument with a coach, he went to the press conference the next day, and when the coach saw him, the coach said “‘Are we still friendly?’ (Simon) said, ‘We’re always friendly. Sometimes we just happen to disagree. ... We were joking about it the next day.’”

Decisions about story selection and source selection are made very quickly, without much in-depth thought or analysis. To use an overused expression, when it comes to what to write off a game story, leading into a game, or who to interview for a story, the reporters know it when they see it. “It’s almost like it’s an involuntary muscle in some regards,” Stanley said in describing his column-topic selection process. He added: “You kind have to think quickly as you’re watching, this is the aspect of the game I’m writing, boom. And there’s really no time for second-guessing that. Sometimes you’re right sometimes you’re wrong.” Malcolm, a veteran reporter at a mid-sized metro paper, said that in determining what’s a story, he will “use my editor as a sounding board, use my own judgment (from) over the years.” The interviews suggest that the story ideation process has been institutionalized, that the types of stories that are being written are being picked because they are the kinds of stories that have always been written. Roger, who covers college basketball and pro baseball for his medium-sized newspaper, described his story ideation process like this: “I don’t know if template’s the right word, but you have certain (stories) ... you know, the game stories the advances, things like that that are sort of standard.”

Post-game work: Filing stories, posting content

After the interviews are done, reporters return to their computers to write, file their stories, and update their blogs and Twitter feeds. Many reporters interviewed are also doing video work for their papers’ websites. The nature of their work depends on the size and structure of their news organization. At some papers, primarily larger ones, the actual videos are shot by a staff photographer or videographer, and the reporters do stand-ups in front of the camera. Some papers rely on Tout, an online video-hosting service that allows short videos to be posted directly to Twitter. At some smaller papers, the reporters themselves are shooting videos, shooting video of the game and press conferences, recording interviews, editing together video packages, and

posting them online, all from their iPhones. Using iPhones has become second nature to the reporters interviewed and essential to their work routines. Several reporters said that they had received on-the-job training in how to use the iPhone as a reporting tool — training that they said was provided by their paper's corporate ownership. "The iPhone has become more important to me than the notebook," said Malcolm, who covers three beats for his paper. Elena, a high school sports reporter at a small-town daily, said that she uses her iPhone constantly in her job.

Remembering a hockey playoff game she covered in 2013, she said:

I think I took some video on the iPhone, I think I might have even, I might have tweeted from the iPhone. But even if I'm at a sideline of a high school game, I might be tweeting from this phone, taking a photo (on) Instagram, whatever. So it's been invaluable. I use it to supplant the coverage with a little bit of a live perspective.

No "off days": Non-game-day coverage

Between games, reporters are covering their beats on a daily basis. The day before a game, they will write a story that previews the coming contest. This story will either be a feature about a player in the game, a trend story about the team or the sport, or a nuts-and-bolts breakdown of the game itself. Owen and Mona, who both work for news organizations that are more digitally focused than print focused, said that they are required to have at least three posts each work day—and that a post can be anything from a traditional story, to a story with just one source, to what would have been considered a short note in print. Kayla, who covers college football, and Cameron, who covers pro football, both said that throughout the week, they will write stories about players who did well the previous week — ones that are focused on their on-the-field play, rather than in-depth features — as well as stories previewing the coming week's game. Simon noted that when he attends the morning skate for the hockey team he covers, he is expected to

post something to his paper's website no matter what. "If I sit around and go to practice and there's nothing on the blog at 2 o'clock, I'll get a phone call. 'Why is there nothing on the blog about practice?'" he said.

Writing without a net: Posting news online

When there is breaking news on their beats—when something happens that is not scheduled and requires immediate coverage—the reporters interviewed said they are working quickly to post things online. The order, as Simon described it and many other reporters echoed, was to first tweet the news, then post it online, then write a story. That story is what could be considered the traditional news story, what would have once been considered the newspaper story for print. However, that story is posted online before it appears in print, and the reporters interviewed didn't seem to think of the story as a "print story." In fact, there was little differentiation among the reporters interviewed between what they write for print and what they write for online. "You think online first and foremost with anything newsworthy relevant that happens in real time—you have to give it to the reader in real time," said Cameron, the pro-football beat writer. Luke, a pro basketball writer for a major metropolitan daily, characterized his work as split about 50-50 online, but what's important to note is that he said he wrote stories for online only, but not print only. Everything Luke wrote for print appeared online, but he also wrote web-only stories that didn't appear in print. Even stories that are thought of "for print" don't live only in print, because they are posted online and have an online life. "The core function is to write a good story for the newspaper, because that's the one that still gets passed around social media most of the time," said Simon, the veteran hockey and baseball reporter. "The story we actually write will get passed around social media more." There was more differentiation between the raw information and small updates published on social media and

online, and the more traditional story. “I don’t think for print anymore,” said Kayla, a college football writer for a metropolitan daily.

Because there’s no point. Everything that you put up has to be accurate and fair and balanced, and so why does it matter if you’re thinking for print or online? When really, when you think about it, online is where you’re gonna get more eyes on your copy anyway.

The reporters said their reporting has not changed, and the stories that the researcher read before each interview bore this out. The importance of accuracy, of not being burned by false information, has not been diminished, the interview data suggest. Simon recalled a recent story in which the hockey team he covers made a surprising hire for its head coach. Remembering his paper’s initial report of that decision, he said: “If that was wrong? We’d hear about that for the rest of our lives. I wanna be second and more right and more in-depth than be first and wrong. If I’m first and wrong, I’m dead.” Roger, the college basketball and baseball beat writer, acknowledged the juggling act required to write fair, accurate stories while still providing online content. “People want to see Twitter, they want to see the video, ... but you also don’t want to have a game story where you have mistakes or you have things that’s left out or you’re not giving details.”, The omnipresence of online news causes reporters to feel almost chained to their smartphones and their Twitter feeds, a factor that is discussed in subsequent chapters.

The process for editing copy varies from paper to paper, but at many news organizations, reporters are posting their own copy live online at some point without an editor reading it. Twitter is unedited. Most blogs remain unedited, as any kind of prepublication editing would inhibit the immediacy of the medium. Simon said that when his paper first introduced blogs in 2007, blog entries had to be edited before being posted. He said that posts ended up sitting for

more than five hours before they were posted online, because editors hadn't come in for their shifts when he wrote an entry. "(My editor said), well, it has to go through the editing process," Simon said. "I said, you know what? It's a blog. It's not going through the editing process because (the editors are) gonna refuse and forget to do it." At some newspapers, editors will read stories before posting them online, but other times, reporters will post stories online, where they are then read by an editor while they are live. Writing without editors creates a tension for reporters, adding a greater degree of anxiety and self-editing to their workload. "It's like walking a trapeze without a net," Owen, the college basketball reporter, said of his post-game running story. "Because yes, I just put something on the Internet without an editor reading it. It scares me every time. I always make sure I spell (the head coach's name) right." Owen did say that one of his editors read the story almost immediately after it was posted, making any necessary changes. It's a practice that seems to be standard, especially with post-game stories and for breaking news. It's one that is a concern for many of the reporters interviewed, both veteran reporters (like Owen, who has more than 25 years of experience) and younger ones. Mona, who covers major college football, lamented, "I'm 24 years old, and I don't have a copy editor."

In all, the sports reporters interviewed here suggest that the job of a sports reporter is a busy one of constant demands and constant connectedness. "We call it feeding the beast," Owen said. "It has to be a 24/7 real-time process where you're constantly feeding the beast," said Cameron, the NFL reporter. Malcolm, the veteran reporter with three beats, noted that journalism has always been a 24/7 job, but reporters now have the technological capabilities and the expectations to produce content whenever news happens. "You have the vehicle to produce 24/7," he said. "In the past you didn't have the vehicle so now more, like I said, more the responsibility falls on you because (you have the) technology to produce stories." Reporters are

always a tweet away from having to chase a story and publish information. Kayla, the college football reporter, said:

It doesn't stop now. Like, I remember my first job out of school ... it wasn't as much of a 24-hour news cycle, you'd pretty much file and you're done for the day. Now you're never done. You're never off the job. It doesn't stop now.

Meetings and balancing acts: Editors' work routines

If the key notion for reporters is feeding the beast with constant information, then for sports editors in the digital age, it is balance. While sports reporters are busy filling their information streams with the latest news and notes from their beats, sports editors are trying to organize and manage all of that information for the entire organization, figuring out the most appropriate platform on which to publish stories and other content, managing both print and online editions, as well as schedules for an entire staff.

"My job is like spinning plates," said Jan, who's the sports manager for a news organization. "It's constantly spinning plates. It's how it feels."

In all, 12 editors were interviewed for this study. The data suggest that an editor's routine is highly dependent upon the organization he or she works for, particularly its size. Editors interviewed who worked at larger newspapers—with circulations of at least 75,000—tended to work more as section stewards and planners. Editors interviewed who worked at smaller papers were more likely to be involved in reporting, as well. At smaller newspapers—less than 30,000 circulation—editors also worked as reporters. Kevin, a sports editor for a middle-sized newspaper, also covers one high school sport for his paper—although most of his time is dedicated to his editor's duties. Jeremy, who works at a small-town daily, is the sports editor along with being the high school wrestling and hockey beat writer. Anthony, who works for a

small-town daily, is the only person in his department, a recent development due to staffing reductions at his paper. As a one-man band, he is both the editor and the writer on staff, and he said his duties are split about 50/50.

In addition to size of the paper, the interviews suggest that an organization's digital structure influences how editors are doing their jobs. Jan and Kenny, who both work for news organizations that are more digital and online focused, said that they have no day-to-day duties with the print edition, that the paper is put together by an aggregation desk that they communicate with but have no direct involvement with. "I am not in charge of our print product," Kenny said. "I am in charge of basically the content of the sports website. There's what we call our pub hub and there are, they're called curators, and there's one curator that's in charge of sports (for print)." On the other hand, Tim's middle-sized paper has a Web staff that handles much of the online work, leaving much of his daily focus on the print edition. "I guess my priority is still always on the print product because that's what lands in the driveway the next morning," he said. Regardless of the structure, the interviews suggest that the job of sports editor is an overall balancing act. Jan, the sports manager at a digital-first news organization, describes his job like this:

It's first just enacting a general philosophy for the department, and that comes from above (corporate ownership), but just getting people to the right places, getting in assignments, getting in photos, just coordinating everything to make sure it works, making the trains run. I mean there's so many moving parts,

Meetings and more meetings: Editors at larger papers

For editors at larger papers, their day day-to-day work is a series of meetings. Frederick, Kristin, Kevin, Julian, and Tim all described the traditional late-afternoon story budget

meetings—the front-page meeting—in which each section’s budgets are reviewed and the stories are selected for the front page of the paper’s print edition. Frederick, Kristin, and Tim also said that they have a late-morning meeting similar to the late-afternoon one, only the morning meeting involves online news. At this meeting, the story budget for the day will be reviewed to plan when stories will be posted online and how they will be displayed and promoted both on the website and on social media. In addition, editors often have digital strategy meetings.

Alexander, the editor at a mid-sized city’s paper, recently had a meeting about improving his paper’s Facebook engagement during the coming high school playoffs. Kristin, the sports editor of a major metro daily, described a recent meeting in which the paper’s new mobile app was discussed. “It’s a million meetings,” Kristin said. “Because we’re trying to shape our digital future, so developing apps and doing all this stuff and meeting about stuff I probably wouldn’t have dreamed about five years ago.”

In addition to the meetings with other departments, editors are in daily contact with their staff reporters. The editors interviewed described this process as very informal, with more than one characterizing it as a “check in.” These conversations—either by phone or over email—give the reporters a chance to see what is happening on a reporter’s beat, what stories the reporter is working on, what games are worth covering (for the high school reporters). Frederick, the mid-sized-city’s sports editor, said that these check-ins tend to happen in the middle of the afternoon. “I kind of talk to my reporters, see what’s happening in terms of anything news-wise, story-wise for that day.” These check-ins give the editors a chance to convey and reinforce the expectations they have for them. At some news organizations, like the digitally focused ones Jan and Kenny work for, reporters are expected to post multiple times a day to the paper’s website. At other news organizations, the expectations are less quantitatively strict (and sometimes vague) but

nonetheless qualitatively managed. “I need to know that the beat’s covered,” said Kevin, the sports editor at a smaller city’s newspaper. “I want it covered.” Similar to the story judgment shown by reporters, this is an “I know it when I see it” attitude from editors. What’s noteworthy is that the notion of assigning stories was rarely raised in the interviews. The editors give their beat writers a fair amount of autonomy in reporting and writing. “You’re gonna want them to be in touch with what’s going on on the beat and generate a good story for the next day,” said Kristin, the metropolitan sports editor. “Just kind of be in tune with what’s going on and making sure that information is getting out to the public.”

Local, local, local: Sport hierarchy and story selection

In deciding which stories will be featured online and showcased in the print edition, the editors interviewed indicated that they rely on traditional news values, such as proximity, timeliness, deviance, and so on. The interview data suggest that while the core values of what makes a good story have not changed, there is an increased weight put on proximity. Every editor has his or her own sports hierarchy, which sports are the most popular among fans and readers. The interviews suggest this hierarchy guides many of the decisions a sports editor makes, from what stories get prime placement and promotion to what games get staffed to how resources get allocated. This hierarchy tends to be fluid and changing with the seasons. There are some constants in some markets - generally, if the NFL or major college football is in town, the interviews suggest that that team always is the top sport in the food chain. Julian, who works as a smaller city’s sports editor, previously worked at a city with major college football. Although he currently works in a market with minor-league baseball, hockey, two Division-I colleges, and a thriving high school sports community, there is nothing in his current market that comes close to how his paper covered every major college football game. The sports covered by

journalists interviewed were virtually all men's sports. Women's sports were infrequently mentioned as subjects of game stories and beat coverage. The one exception to this norm appeared to be high-school sports, where girls sports is viewed almost on the same level as boys sports.

However, local is a potentially fluid term. Although it usually means geographic proximity, that is not the only way the editors defined local. Kevin's paper has a regional identity and covers major professional sports in cities up to two hours away, along with major college football that's also two hours away. He defines local as "what's interesting, what concepts are interesting." Alexander's paper covers professional sports teams that play an hour away and major college basketball an hour in the other direction. He said he's looking for his reporters to be in touch with the community and to provide "unique local content, and I know that probably sounds like a corporate buzzword, but I think it encapsulates everything I mean." For Morris, the sports editor of a small-town daily, the goal is covering community events as well as possible. "You just have to pick the stories you can tell and tell the heck out of 'em, that's pretty much the approach we have here," he said. "Yeah, there are things we're gonna miss. But the things that we do we want to do them really well."

Editors at larger papers tend to work day shifts, and along with meetings with staffers and reporters, they are often editing early copy. These are feature stories or game advances that are filed early in the sports day (mid-to-late afternoon or early evening, as compared with the post-game stories that are filed after 9:30 p.m.). Editors are often editing these stories and then posting them online, either directly themselves or sending them to their news organization's web team for posting. "I'm reading a lot of content when it comes in," said Howard, a sports editor at

a mid-sized newspaper. “During the games, I make sure that each reporter is updating the scores from the games they’re at.”

Editing, paginating, tweeting: Editors at smaller papers

At smaller daily newspapers, sports editing is a night job. Shifts tend to run from 4 p.m.-midnight or later. The early part of these shifts is used to check in with reporters, returning any phone calls, preparing a daily budget, and slotting the print section (deciding what stories go on what pages). By the time the sun goes down, games start being played and finished, phone calls from high school coaches start coming in, and stories are being written. Morris, Jeremy, Kevin, Julian and Howard all described spending their night shifts editing both local and wire stories, selecting photos, writing headlines, and posting stories online. Sometimes, these stories are full-length newspaper stories. Other times—often during the busy time of night when games are being called in—these are just brief score updates that are being posted to the website and to social media. “Honestly,” Jeremy said, “about 7-10 p.m. is a little bit of a blur.” At these papers, an editor’s work flow is built around the deadlines for the print edition. For participants in this study, page deadlines ranged from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Depending on the paper, some editors will be posting stories online throughout the night, but when page deadline is approaching, print takes precedence. Once the pages are done, then editors are able to put the finishing touches on the website. “(I) stay around to 12:15-12:30 to do what needs to be done and the Web’s usually updated for the last time by then and that’s that,” said Morris, a small-town sports editor.

Social media is becoming a larger part of editors’ jobs. Along with his work computer, which features the pages he is working on for the print edition, Jeremy also has a laptop sitting on his desk on which he is updating the sports section of his paper’s website and posting scores and news updates to his paper’s Twitter and Facebook feeds. Howard, an editor at a middle-

sized paper, said that during a night shift, he is logged into five different Twitter accounts affiliated with his paper that he updates and monitors throughout the night. “I shouldn’t admit this, but I’m logged into individuals’ accounts (from reporters who) maybe don’t tweet a lot, too,” he said with a laugh. (Though it should be noted that a reporters’ official twitter account is not personal and belongs to the paper.)

Four of the 13 editors interviewed—Anthony, Kevin, Julian and Frederick—said that their print editions were being paginated off-site, rather than in their newsroom, by their own copy editors or by a universal desk at the paper. At these newspapers, the newsroom staff sets up the nightly print section, selecting stories, editing them, writing headlines, and assigning stories to pages, but the actual pagination is done off-site at a design hub, where numerous papers owned by the same company are designed each night. While ostensibly a cost-cutting move by the ownership group, it has created unique headaches and challenges for editors of these sections. Kevin, the editor at the mid-sized paper, said that to communicate with the designer doing his pages, he must quit what he is doing, open up an instant-message system on his computer and type out a message. The process takes about 30 seconds and there are about 80 of these exchanges a night. “That’s 40 minutes lost that we never lost before because all you had to do was holler over to somebody,” he said. Julian serves as the regional sports editor for three regional newspapers and is in charge of all three papers’ sections each night. These sections are paginated at a design hub, which impacts story selection. “Whenever we possibly can, we standardize the centerpieces,” he said. “Then we’ll standardize the front so that even the setup for all three fronts was the same, we just subbed out the stories in the same spots.” The result is a standardized looking product across three communities.

Conclusion

This chapter started to define institutionalized sports journalism. It defined the routines of both sports reporters and sports editors in 2013-2014, as suggested by the interviews. It showed how reporters do their jobs on a daily basis, how they cover games, select stories and story angles, conduct interviews and produce content across multiple technological platforms. It demonstrated editors' day-to-day work, how they organize their section, how they oversee the production of both print and online sections every day, what they expect from their reporters, and the demands on their time and attention. It showed no real differences in how reporters do their job by their gender or by their experience.

For sports reporters, one of the most central points to emerge from the interviews is the constant demand for online news in a digital and social-media environment. This is what Cameron and Owen referred to as "feeding the beast." The nature of reporters' work is heavily dependent on their beat. High school soccer is covered very differently than the NFL, with very different needs and expectations. High school sports are more community based and driven, whereas major college and professional beats are highly competitive. But for all reporters, the data suggest that speed and versatility matter most. From being the first reporter to update the high-school playoff scoreboard or post video of a last-second shot to being up to date on the personnel moves of the pro hockey team, reporters are being called upon to publish news and information in almost real time. They are also being asked to write across multiple platforms multiple times in the same work day, as well as do multimedia story packages that involve taking photos, as well as shooting and editing video.

For sports editors, the notion of balance is one of the most important points to emerge from the interviews. If reporters are producing stories, tweets, and other bits of information to feed the beast, then editors are in charge of managing all of the information produced by their staff and

that their audience may want. The nature of their work is heavily influenced by their organization. Editors who work for a digitally focused news organization are more likely to have little to do with the daily print product and instead focus their energy on digital and social media. Editors for larger papers may have a balance of print and online responsibilities but are largely involved in planning coverage. Editors for smaller papers are more Jacks and Jills-of-all-trades, often serving as beat writers as well as editors, and are involved with paginating print and posting stories online.

Game coverage is central to sports journalism. A reporter's work schedule, story selection, and sourcing decisions are almost always centered around the games of the team(s) he or she covers. An editor's planning of his or her section—both in print and online—almost universally centers around game coverage. Sports themselves revolve around games—from the NFL to high school football—so it's natural that sports journalism has its roots in games. In fact, it can be argued that no area of journalism is so intrinsically tied to a part of their coverage as sports journalism is to games.

The interviews suggest that sports journalism is the product of the routines, norms and values of sports reporters and editors. The idea of game coverage being central to sports journalism, the routine of relying on interviews with coaches and star players, the norm of having reporters assigned beats, and many other factors combine to define what we see as sports journalism. The practices described by the reporters and editors reflect the routines, values and practices demonstrated by news reporters, echoing previous research into the social construction of news (Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1979; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Shudson, 2003). The way sports journalists are using digital and social media also reflects previous research into how reporters are normalizing new media platforms to fit previous norms and values (Singer 2005; Lasorsa,

Lewis & Holton, 2012) and how reporters are often doing similar types of stories that they were before in the pre-digital era (Anderson, 2013). The interviews suggest that the many of the norms and values of sports journalists — ones that appear to have carried over from the print era — are institutionalized and have resulted in isomorphism within the profession (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

The next chapter looks more specifically at how the routines, norms, values, and practices of sports journalism are changing due to digital and social media, and the implications of those changes.

Chapter 7: Changes to sports journalism

Simon, a veteran reporter who covers professional hockey and baseball, often gives talks to journalism classes at colleges and universities in his city. He said that, in every class, he is asked about and discusses how digital media, the Internet, and social media have changed sports journalism and his day-to-day work.

“I always tell people, my job was unchanged until 2006,” Simon said. “My job was the same the first 20 years I worked. Then, in 2007, we started blogs, and then in 2009, I got on Twitter, and now it’s just erupted into a 24/7 morass of things.”

This chapter describes those changes to the profession of sports journalism that have been brought about due to the emergence of digital and social media, the “24/7 morass of things” that Simon described and other reporters and editors echoed. The previous chapter defined the current work routines of sports journalists. This chapter describes how those routine practices are and aren’t changing, due to the evolution of the media landscape in the early 21st century.

A majority of the reporters and editors interviewed believe that the profession looks nothing like it did on their first day in the business. “It’s just infinitely different,” said Tim, a sports editor at a mid-sized city’s paper. Tim pointed out that he graduated from college just 10 years ago, but that Facebook and Twitter either didn’t exist or weren’t widely used when he was in school. “The word blog, I wouldn’t have known what that meant (at the time), and again, this is only 10 years ago.” Alexander, an editor at a mid-sized city’s paper with 25 years of professional experience, said, “It’s just a totally different world. It’s definitely changed more in the last 10 years than it did in the first 15.” Howard, an editor at a smaller suburban paper, said, “It’s completely different as far as what I’m doing online and what we do online.” Frederick, a longtime editor at a major metropolitan newspaper, said of the job:

It's changed to the point where the only part of it that's still recognizable is talking to people and getting information and being where the event is or where the story is, talking to people who have information, using what you see and what you hear and what you know.

But a closer look at that quote, along with rest of the interview data, suggests that the Internet and digital and social media have not been as fundamentally transformative as practitioners might assume. Reporters say that they are primarily using digital technologies and social media platforms in ways that are consistent with traditional journalist practices. "I still think the foundation is still good storytelling," said Malcolm, a veteran reporter. "The basics are still in good journalism." When the participants were specifically asked how the job had changed since their first day, nearly all of them described significant changes brought about by the Internet, social media and their iPhones. But when they described their day-to-day work, they were doing a lot of new kinds of work but many of the traditional norms and values of journalism had not changed — or had not changed as quickly as the routines are. They are still doing game previews, game stories, updates on injured players and player transactions. They are still interviewing players and coaches after games and relying on them as sources for information. This suggests less revolutionary change than the participants perceive and more of an evolutionary change. Kevin, an editor at a smaller city's newspaper, echoed those sentiments:

You're still writing stories, you're still compiling statistics, you're still having photos taken, you're still laying out pages in some way, shape, or form. Yeah, Lynette's not in the back cutting stuff out and gluing it and yelling at you for coming along and getting the blue marker out, but that's really not change, that's just evolution.

Stories vs. information: Changes to reporting

One of the initial questions asked of each reporter during the interviews was how many stories each writes during a week. It was part ice-breaker, part a way to gauge how much content reporters produced during the week.

Kayla, a college football reporter for a major metropolitan newspaper who's been a professional journalist for six years, had trouble answering the question.

"Define story, though," she said. "Because at this point now, we write all these little blog posts so that's kinda hard to quantify, ... Like, what do you mean by story?" She defined a story as something that was more than 300 words long and featured primarily original writing and reporting. By contrast, she defined a blog post as a shorter piece and one where, for example, she would just link to other content on the Web.

Kayla's dilemma captures one of the biggest changes to the work sports journalists are doing in the digital and social media age. It's easy to think of sports journalism as being split between print and online, but the interviews suggest a different dichotomy in the work of reporters and editors. That dichotomy is between what could be called traditional sports journalism with a story-centric focus, and digital and social journalism, which is more focused on sharing bits of information as they become available and on the conversation between readers and reporters. The reporters and editors describe this difference not in print-vs.-online terms but rather in terms of focusing on a story vs. focusing on the stream of information in digital and social media. Cameron, the pro football beat writer for a major metropolitan paper, described it like this:

The best analogy I heard is (that in) sports media today, everybody wants fast food. You feed the reader fast food all the time, but it's OK to have a juicy steak once in a while. And I

try to keep that in mind, we want to have this good longer story daily too that people are going to invest time into in addition to the nuggets and the french fries and all of that.

The line between the two types of journalism is blurred, in part because reporters are doing both kinds in the same work day. Cameron said that he was writing between 10 and 12 traditional stories per week, writing about five blog posts per day and keeping a constant, active presence on Twitter. Audrey, a young college football reporter for a regional newspaper, said that she was posting between three and seven posts per day during football and recruiting seasons. Owen said he wrote between 12 and 15 stories in the week prior to his interview, but that the definition of a story had changed:

Sometimes, those are bona fide stories, what we would have considered a story in 1990 and 2000, and we still consider a story today, you know, like a feature on somebody. But it would also include a video, (a) mailbox (where he answers reader questions), which are quick and easy, relatively, once I do a lot of research. It also includes game stories, but then it also includes the three things to look for in today's game, quick little things.

Whether it's a story, blog post, tweet or video clip, the reporters interviewed are being asked to produce much more content than they were even a decade ago. Kenny, a sports manager at a mid-sized metro paper, recalled that, in the pre-digital age, game coverage of the most popular team in his city consisted of a game-story, sidebar, notebook, and a column. In 2014, Kenny said that game coverage for the same beat included in-game updates, a running-game story posted immediately after the final buzzer, a rapid recap, a short post on key players, statistics, an interactive report card in which fans are asked to grade the team's play, a story using advanced statistics to break down the game, shot carts, a write-through on the game story, a sidebar, a column, an updated rapid recap, notes that would have appeared in a notebook but are now their

own individual posts, a post-game video featuring the reporters, and social media updates during and after the game.

The scope of content produced varies from team to team—an NFL game will be covered much more in depth than a high school soccer match. But Kenny said that while the amount of content varies, the idea is the same and operates at scale for the so-deemed lesser sports. “We give you the result, a short game story, as soon as the game is over,” Kenny said. “That’s our work ethic. You expect to see it immediately. It scales down, absolutely. In terms of what I think readers’ expectations are, that does not change.”

It’s impossible to overstate what a fundamental shift this is to the profession of sports journalism, and specifically to reporters. Both during games and between games, reporters are constantly being asked to create content, filing stories not on a set daily deadline but throughout the day. Malcolm, who covers college basketball, pro soccer, and high school sports, describes it like this:

Fifteen years ago, I wrote a game, one game story, that was it. Now, I’ve gotta write, I’ve gotta tweet during the game, I’ve gotta write an instant game story, I’ve gotta follow up with that and do a game story with quotes, comments from the players, more analysis, and I’ve gotta do a video.

Tim, who is now the editor of his paper’s section, began his career as a beat reporter at the same paper less than a decade ago.

I think back to when I first started and was just covering a beat and worried about what was going to get in the paper the next day. And it sure seemed like a full time job at the time and now, in retrospect, I can’t possibly imagine how I filled my days just worried about that.

Gather, report, sort: A new reporting model?

While the topics have not changed all that much, what has changed are the publishing mechanisms. Before digital and social media, the reporting process was gather-sort-report. In the digital and social-media age, the data suggest that the model is more gather, report, sort—reporters get the information, publish it online and then sort it later in terms of what becomes part of the story. Simon recalled a story he had just written about the goalie for the hockey team he covered. The goalie made comments about his future with the team that Simon deemed newsworthy. After making that initial decision, Simon posted two of the quotes to Twitter, doing so while walking from the locker room to the media work room. “I don’t want to give (readers) too much, I want you to go to my site at some point,” he said. After returning to his computer, he posted a short entry on his newspaper’s blog with the quotes, some background information and the audio files from the interview. He said it was about 30 minutes between his tweeting the goalie’s quotes to the time the blog was posted. It was only then, after the blog was posted, more than 30 minutes after finishing the interview with his main source, that he began writing the story that would appear in both print and online.

Owen said, that every Monday on his college basketball beat, he has standing posts to his paper’s website. “The AP poll comes out around noon, (I’m) gonna do the poll, and (conference) Player and Rookie of the week awards get announced every Monday at 2-3 and I do that. Ready made, every Monday I am golden.” In the past, those may or may not have been full stories or smaller parts of larger stories. Now, these items are always posted online—whether or not they involve the team he covers. The reporters interviewed didn’t seem to take this as a license to be more creative in their reporting. Instead, they seem to be reporting the same information they

always have, just in piecemeal form rather than all at once. Tim, the beat-writer-turned-editor, said:

Probably more stuff just kind of died on the vine ... I'd come across something interesting but it didn't really fit with the story I was writing the next day, so it was interesting to me and it ended when I tossed out that notebook at the end of the day. Whereas now, even if its not a story, it's a tweet or a blog post or something.

However, while the amount and the timing of a reporter's work has dramatically changed, in some ways, the nature of it has not. The type of information reporters gather, the sources they use, the general story archetypes they write, do not appear to have changed. Reporters are gathering a lot of the same information they always have—who's injured, who's going to start, where are teams in what respective polls, etc. Veteran sports journalists—reporters Owen, Simon and Stanley; editors like Kristin and Frederick—said that much of the basic, raw materials of sports journalism (games, player news, etc.) remain the same. There are some new types of stories done—Simon recalled writing a story about a player who got into a Twitter argument with a famous actor, and Kristin talked about a story that ran on her paper's website based on a fan's YouTube video. But for the most part, the kind of information being reported is the same in the digital and social age as it was in the print age.

Technology and video reporting

One of the driving forces behind the new gather-report-sort model is, of course, technology. From the Internet as a publication platform to the technology reporters use, digital technologies continue to change how reporters do their jobs. Malcolm, a veteran reporter, said that journalism has always been a 24/7 job. "Now, you're actually expected to produce, at times, 24/7. You have

the vehicle to produce 24/7,” he said. He recalled a time when he reported, wrote, and filed a story from the backseat of a car on the way to an airport while on vacation with his family.

The growth of smartphones—in the interviews, the iPhone was the only phone mentioned—has changed how reporters do their jobs. A decade after the first references to backpack and mobile journalists, the iPhone is almost a pocket newsroom. Participants said that it has made reporting from the field and putting together packages featuring audio, video, photos and text easier — especially for veterans. Instead of having to learn how to use several new kinds of devices (video camera, still camera, digital recorder, laptop computer, power and connection cords for all devices) and carry them to stories, reporters now just have to bring their phone — and their phone is something many of them already are already comfortable using. Services like Tout and Vine integrate directly with the iPhone and allow for easy sharing on social media.

Darren, a digital editor with extensive experience as a high school sports editor, said:

It’s something that’s super easy; you open your phone, you press a button, and you record. And then it’s so super easy to upload it. And so that’s kind of been one of my things (in talking to older reporters) is, look, I am more than willing to sit down with you and explain to you as much as you want about how to do this and how it works and all that, but really it’s just super easy and just try it. And what we’ve found is that the people who try it are like “Oh yeah, this is pretty easy, this isn’t bad,” and they’ve kinda bought into it a little bit.

Video is an area in which every news organization is a little different. Linda, the columnist, and Owen, the college basketball reporter, each said that at their papers, they will appear in post-game videos that they write but that are videoed, edited, and published by the paper’s photography department. The papers Darren and Morris work for rely on Tout, a mobile application that allows reporters to post up to 45 seconds of video to Twitter from their iPhones.

Mona, a college football reporter, is the only journalist interviewed who has her own YouTube channel, which was self-branded (rather than branded as a company-owned channel). She has a paper-issued high-definition video camera that she uses mainly to record player interviews, which she typically publishes as raw interviews online. “They just want it up as fast as they can,” she said. Although Mona posts primarily raw videos, Malcolm and Roger shoot, edit, and post more sophisticated video packages - similar to those seen on TV broadcasts. At many points in his interview, Malcolm sounded as much like a broadcast journalist as a print one, discussing getting good b-roll, and quality soundbites and editing the video into a good story:

A team (from corporate) came in to help people with video training. How to frame shots, how to work in iMovie, how to get close up shots, and if you have a good close-up shot of a basketball, you should also have a good shot of a nickname on a jersey or something, so your video should be able to stack back to back. So they did really technical training on how to teach us how to do that stuff—how not to use a long sound bite, (how) you shouldn’t have a soundbite that’s more than 15 seconds, stuff like that.

Still, some reporters and editors had no video as part of their daily work. Elena, a reporter at a small-town daily, said video is only occasionally part of her routine. Anthony, the one-man sports department at a small daily, does no video. Howard said his paper has a dedicated online video staff that handles most of that work for his department. Overall, the way sports journalists use video varies greatly from staff to staff, from paper to paper. The way video is used appears to be based on the size of the organization and whether ownership has invested in video (in terms of equipment and training). Malcolm, Roger, Julian, Alexander, Frederick, Jeremy, and Darren all work for news organizations owned by companies that have put an emphasis on video. Their video work seems much more detailed and routinized than that of reporters who work for other

news organizations. The decisions are driven by editors whom, the interview data suggest, are driven by organizational expectations. If a newspaper or news organization places a particular emphasis on multimedia content, including online videos, then reporters will be expected to produce them. “My reporters are expected to do videos — and, you know, good videos, not just slapped together talking-head things,” said Frederick, the veteran editor at a mid-sized city’s paper.

The state of the game story

There has long been a debate in sports journalism circles about the value of a game story. This change is happening at all levels, from high school to the pros. For professional and high-level college sports, there is a push for more analytical game stories, rather than straight recaps. Cameron, the pro-football writer, said, “It can’t be all who, what, when, where, how, rigid; there has to be a sharp angle.” Kenny, a sports manager, defined analysis this way:

It means writing an interpretation of what happened. The game story is ‘this is what happened, this person scored here, this person scored here, this is what (the coach) said.’

Analysis is, ‘this is why this happened, this is why I think this happened supported by X, Y, and Z.’

There’s a push for analytical game stories at the pro and college levels primarily due to the belief by the journalists interviewed that most people who are interested in the game already know the game’s final score. “People aren’t as interested in game coverage,” said Jan, a sports manager at an online-focused news organization. “They get it on their TV. They’re seeing it.” The kind of game coverage Jan referred to was the kind of game coverage that focuses on play-by-play recaps. Games are still the focal point of coverage, but Jan said that his paper’s coverage of games is moving away from coverage of what happened in a game and moving

toward coverage of how and why it happened. Hannah, a young reporter who covers major-league baseball as one of her beats, said:

I'd say that more of my game stories are analysis-based now because everything's out there.

If (fans are) not watching the game, (they) know what happened pretty quickly. So it's more like, why does (a pitcher) have a quality start in 17 of his last 18 starts ... what is he doing.

Despite the traditional emphasis on game coverage, the interviews suggest that at the high school level, editors are having fewer and fewer reporters cover individual games. This runs contrary to the established norm of sports journalism, which is focused on game coverage. The results of high school games are still reported, both in print and online, but some of the interviews suggest that this is being done through the use of stringers, part-time reporters or simply relying on coaches to call in the results of their games. The interviews suggest these practices are being driven by economic factors. "As far as I'm concerned, when you go to a high school game, you're immediately shrinking your audience to two teams," Jan said. Darren, the digital editor with years of experience running high-school sports coverage, said that he relied on part-time stringers to provide game coverage. "Then I would use my two staff guys to do the stuff that stringers couldn't do—the really in-depth, hard-core stuff, the features, the enterprise stuff." Malcolm said that coverage of individual high-school games was less valuable to his paper. "They would rather I take a week to do one really good in-depth story than cover three games. What's my audience for a high-school basketball game? ... Two districts, who cares?" he said. This attitude is related to the idea of analytical game coverage described earlier. Games are still important. But the editors and reporters said that the best use of the newspaper's resources are best used not in rote game coverage but in providing analysis, features or

enterprises pieces. The game, in this case, becomes the setting for the coverage rather than the focus of it.

Despite the evolving nature of game stories, covering games remains the core of sports journalism. Games are still the focal point of sports and of sports journalism. “We’re not ready to stop covering games,” Jan said. In fact, reporters are still often doing running game stories (stories without quotes that rely primarily on play by play). These stories are mainly for immediate online posting, but also for print when deadline is an issue. Part of this is muscle memory—it’s what journalists know how to do, both experienced journalists and new ones as well, who learned these norms, values and routines through internships and their college educations. But also, a running game story posted online immediately after the game serves as an online gathering place for readers to celebrate or complain about the game, the coaches, the players, the refs, etc. Cameron, a pro football writer, said that the running game story he posts online will attract almost 300 comments within a half hour of the game ending. Kenny, the sports editor, said:

I don’t believe as much as people say that the game story is dead. I still think there’s a place for a game story. I think, particularly if done immediately after the game, I think that still has tremendous value to post the story right after the game and say ‘this is what happened.’ I think once you get 2-3 hours out, I think the focus should shift to an interesting sidebar, an interesting note from the game.

One of the challenges facing the future of the game story is the difference between print and online publication schedules. With online news being instantaneous, the model described by Kenny makes sense — several hours after the game ends, the discussion will move from what happened to what’s next. But the game story that appears in print, six to eight hours after the

game ends, is focused on what happened in the game, even as the online conversation has moved on.

Although the value of the game story as the core unit of sports journalism is debated, notebooks—stories in which reporters gather tidbits, facts, stats, and figures about a game, team, conference or league—are much closer to extinction. This is due to the abundance of information available online. Before the digital age, notebooks were a way to read about out-of-town teams or as a kind of catch-all repository for nuggets of information about local teams. Darren, a digital editor, said that his paper used to run a notebook about one of the Division I colleges in his state. But those notebooks are less important or valuable to readers now, he said. “The information is so readily available that was filling those notebooks that it’s just, it’s kind of outlived its usefulness,” Darren said. Malcolm said he viewed both his blog and the videos he produced as the digital-media equivalent of a notebook. “The video, in our world, has taken the place of the notebook. The notebook was a hodgepodge of different items (that) kind of supplemented your game story. Now, I think a blog has become your notebook.” The emergence of digital and social media and journalism-as-process appears to be rendering the notebook obsolete. If sports news is being reported piecemeal as it happens, and if news is available online through team and school websites, it seems like notebooks may not fill an audience need anymore. Jan, a sports manager, sees notebooks as a relic of the print era. “(Notebooks) are perfect in print, but they suck online,” he said.

Time crunch: The effect of accelerated reporting

Digital and social media have accelerated sports journalism. Simon said that when he covers hockey practice, he’s expected to post an item online after practice even if nothing particularly interesting happened. “Today’s news now, tomorrow’s news if I can get it now, yesterday’s

news never,” he said. Alexander said of his paper’s pro football desk, “(They) are very much attuned to the idea that they need to get breaking news or when something comes out they need to confirm it.”

This accelerated journalism has led to a time crunch that reporters acutely feel. Time is a normative value for reporters—the notion that you need time to do a really good and important story—and time is the one thing reporters don’t have anymore. “To be totally honest, I am producing more copy, more posts, but probably less quality posts,” Owen said. “You need time. And time’s the one thing we really don’t have a lot of right now.” Time is a normative value, not just in terms of actual writing, but also in terms of crafting good story ideas, or writing features that go beyond the scores and stats readers may already know. Cameron, Simon, and Linda all talked about the need for newspaper sports journalists to differentiate themselves from the online masses. By differentiate, they mean provide something — news, information, analysis or opinion — that readers are not going to be able to find anywhere else. Cameron said an example of this would be a feature on a running back on team he covers that tells that player’s story rather than just regurgitates his statistics. For Simon, differentiation meant reporting and analysis and providing information his readers will be interested in. “I’m trying to produce stuff that stands out for my readers,” he said. “Yes I’m writing the story the (team) won the game like everyone else, but I’m trying to give you other things. So I have to stand out.” Time to write and report is one way to do that, and it’s one thing the reporters don’t have. Linda, a veteran columnist at a metropolitan sports section, described it like this:

Now, there’s this video to shoot, or this blog to do, or this live chat to do, and so, you know, you’ve got two hours to do this and then you’re gonna do this other thing, then it’s back to

writing, and then it's off to do this. So I think the mental focus that you have on writing is a little bit more divided and that's been a challenge.

Mona, who covers college football, said:

You don't really get to kind of sink your teeth into the one defining story that kind of wraps up the game or that sidebar that you really wanna pursue cause you're like, oh I'm not gonna have time to get to that.

Owen, the veteran college basketball reporter, said that he is often assured by his bosses that if he needs to take time to work on a longer story, he can take it—but since he is evaluated in part on how often he posts stories online, he's hesitant to do that.

Editors, for their part, seem sympathetic to their reporters. They understand how much the day-to-day work of reporters is changing or evolving, the stresses this creates on reporters. Rather than adopting a suck-it-up-soldier attitude toward digital and social media, editors empathized with the increased demands reporters face in the digital and social world. “It's just understanding and not being heartless as you assign the tasks,” said Kenny, the sports manager at a mid-sized news organization. “It's incredibly difficult what they're doing out there.” Jan described the culture change like this:

You know, a traditional sports office is a night thing, it always has been. But when you shift to a digital product. the digital product is a day thing, that's when people are online, so as far as workday schedules and journalist schedules, I mean, that's been not terrible, but that's a challenge to try to get people to think differently to schedule things when the deadlines have all shifted. I mean, we've essentially asked all these writers to turn their lives on end.

Changing access

Along with changing work patterns, changes to access to sources is another one of the fundamental shifts happening in sports journalism. Reporters are still relying on coaches, players, and administrators as their primary sources. This is true at all levels, from high school to college to professional sports. Access to high school athletes and coaches does not appear to be changing that much. Reporters and editors involved in high school sports said that there are few institutional problems with interviewing high school athletes—they may get a prickly coach here, a shy kid there, but on the whole, there are few problems. “A lot of coaches don’t wanna talk after a loss, but most of them understand (and) know me well enough that they understand I’m not being an asshole, that I’m doing my job,” said Anthony, who works at a small-town daily.

Things are very different at the college and pro levels, where the interviews suggest that access to sources is shrinking.

Access varies from sport to sport and depends on the rules, norms, and practices of each sport and its beat writers. In pro baseball, both major and minor leagues, teams’ clubhouses are open for several hours before each regular-season game, and players are available for interviews. “The players are there, the clubhouse is open from a certain period until a certain period before the game; if you need somebody you go find them,” is how Roger describes pre-game access for the baseball team he covers. At the major-league level, reporters are in the clubhouse for several hours before a game, away from their laptops, unable to use their iPhones to write or report, standing around waiting for players to come into the common area or for news to potentially break. “You have nothing to do, but you have to be there,” said Simon, who’s covered pro

baseball. “It would drive me insane, you know?” Hannah, a baseball beat writer, explains it like this:

You’re just standing there, especially if there’s a big story or you’re waiting for one guy, you’re just kind of standing their, waiting. Yeah, there’s a lot of waiting. You have that fear that one person will get that one quote or one statement or one story that everyone wants to get and so no one wants to leave and miss out on something. So we all collectively will have to wait here even though we’re not looking for anything specific but we’re just gonna wait here.

For pro hockey and basketball, there is post-practice access on non-game days. Luke, who covers pro basketball, said that he and other reporters on his beat are able to talk to players either on the court or in the locker room after practices, and that the coach always speaks to all the media in an informal press conference. Simon said that pro hockey has a similar setup, with a daily scrum with the coach and an open locker room. Pro football is highly structured. Stanley, a major metropolitan columnist, and Cameron, an NFL beat writer, said that coaches speak every day of the week leading up to a game, and that while the locker rooms are open, more and more players are speaking only on certain days or at a press conference.

Reporters and editors lamented the lack of access compared with earlier eras. Frederick, a veteran journalist with experience as a major metropolitan sports editor, said that access has changed to the point where reporters aren’t able to bullshit with sources. Leagues, teams, and conferences keep players and coaches at arm’s length, and sources are less likely to speak with reporters, even off the record. “There’s no off the record anymore with anybody, because they’re afraid it’s gonna end up on Twitter,” Simon said. “It’s a joke! I mean, you can’t go off the record with anybody anymore on anything.” Players are also less likely to make themselves available to

reporters, instead relying on their own social media platforms or paid media appearances. These platforms allow players to communicate directly to fans and to control their comments and message. Rather than relying on the media (and potentially facing probing questions), the players are able to say what they want to say in a way that casts them in a positive light. It's not just star players, either. "I don't know how these guys on the NFL beat do it anymore when, you know, the left offensive tackle has his day when he talks," said Stanley, a veteran columnist. "It's absurd."

The problem this creates is that it prevents the reporters from building one-on-one relationships with the sources that they cover—which for the journalists, is a fundamental aspect of the job. "That's how you used to get good relationships going and people would tell you what's going on and they just won't (anymore)," Simon said. Frederick, the longtime editor, explained:

In a world where everything comes off the podium, you know the quarterback speaks behind podium after the game, the head coach speaks behind the podium after the game, in a world where there's a podium, you need to have, like, real actual human interaction with people to get them to trust you.

Pro sports present a challenge for reporters in terms of access, but generally, athletes will speak to the media. There are league rules, negotiated with each sports writers' association, that require pro athletes to speak to the media or face fines. College sports, however, are a different story. College athletic programs—particularly college football teams—have extremely strict access rules for players. Mona said that, in the days leading up to a football game on her beat, the school she covers made only four or five players available to reporters via conference call. After games, the school took suggestions from Mona and other reporters but brought in the

players they wanted to showcase. For several years on his college basketball beat, Roger was not allowed to speak with freshman or new players until each season's conference tournament.

Kayla, another college football reporter, had a similar experience on her beat. With the team she covers, reporters were not allowed to interview freshmen or redshirt freshmen. "Which is ridiculous, cause when these kids were seniors in high school, they were talking to the media," she said. "So the frustrating part about that is that automatically rules out like 40 percent of their team." Stories like this were common among reporters and editors who cover college sports. Players are also instructed not to speak with reporters outside of official media availability, and reporters are threatened with sanctions if they do try to contact players outside of the team structure (although it's not clear how serious those repercussions would be).

These restrictions present challenges to reporters and editors, because access to and relationships with sources drive so much of sports journalism. Sports reporters rely on talking to coaches and players to describe the success and failings of a team the same way a city hall reporter relies on talking to the mayor and council members. Kayla said, "If I wanted to write a feature on (a) freshman running back who was having an outstanding year, like, I can't, so then I have to pick somebody else." Darren, the digital editor and former high-school sports editor, said:

You're gonna write about who you have the access to. If you aren't around the players and you're relying on what you're hearing from sources, that may not be the most reliable, it hurts the reporting, it hurts the stories you can tell, it hurts the reporting, and really I think it's a detriment to everybody.

Access influences story selection at the pro level, too. "There are a lot of times you go in there and the player you want doesn't show up, so you go to Plan B, you write about something

else,” Cameron said of his NFL experience. The lack of access is frustrating to reporters, because they believe it prevents them from doing their jobs. “I’m not saying make it easy, but make it accessible, you know?” Mona said.

In response to this lack of access, news organizations with a digital focus are looking at new ways to cover games—sports without access is what Kenny, the sports editor, calls it. This includes finding new ways to cover a game that doesn’t rely on the traditional notion of access, of being at a game or being able to interview the coach or players. The growth of digital and social media has allowed national sports networks, pro teams and colleges to give fans access to content that, in the pre-digital age, was not available. Live coverage of the game, in-depth statistics, and streaming audio and video of post-game press conferences are available to fans online. The availability of content from teams themselves means fans are less reliant upon newspapers, and teams have less incentive to provide local newspapers with exclusive access. Teams and schools no longer need journalists to provide the players and coaches access to the fans, but reporters’ norms and values still require access to the players and coaches to do their jobs. Coverage without access includes using statistics and analytics to tell the game story, or by covering the TV broadcast itself. “If you think of it as useful to the reader, then you’re open to doing all of that stuff,” Kenny said. But he admitted that his efforts to do this have been hampered because reporters feel they have to cover games in the traditional sense. Jan had similar roadblocks at his paper. “I need to go to these games,” he said reporters tell him. “Why do you need to go to these games? Because that’s how we’ve always done it.”

Fan interaction

Along with the speed of news, the importance of fan interaction has risen in this age of digital and social media. The growth of social media, particularly Twitter, has revolutionized how reporters are expected to interact with fans and how they do interact with fans and readers.

“You never had to interact with the public,” said Simon, a longtime pro sports writer. “The public called, you had the choice of taking the call or not. Or say, ‘You got a problem? Write a letter to the editor.’ I spent 15 years never talking to people. That’s a huge change.”

The notion of interacting with fans on social media will be examined in greater depth in the next section of this dissertation. But as an overview, reporters and editors have more contact with fans now than ever before. Along with Twitter, reporters are interacting with fans via email and sometimes in the comments sections of news stories. Although widely unpopular among reporters—Stanley, without a trace of humor called comments sections “one of the worst thing that’s ever happened in the history of communications”—several editors interviewed said that reporters were expected to monitor the comments sections of their stories and answer questions posed to them. “They’re the ones that have to go into the comments section,” Jan, the digital sports manager of his news organization, said of his reporters. Mona said that, once a day, “I’ll try to go into the story comments and answer some questions.” Kenny, a sports manager, added, “We want them to be engaged with readers in our comment section, so if a reader asks them a question, we want them to answer it.”

One interesting note is that the sports journalists interviewed seemed to view “fans” as a monolithic entity. There was no distinction between die-hard fans who live and die with a team and casual fans just interested in the final score. There was no distinction of fans along gender, race or other demographic lines. “The fans” were conceived of as a singular collective.

The editors interviewed said they mainly interacted with fans through emails and phone calls. Editors talked to the public about coverage decisions, answered questions about area sports or sometimes provided seemingly trivial information. Many editors discussed what can be called the “What time is the Yankees’ game?” phenomenon, where readers call the local newspaper with questions about sports minutiae. “This morning, I had someone call me to ask what happened to Robinson Cano (the Seattle Mariners’ second baseman and former New York Yankees star),” said Tim, a sports editor in a city without a major-league team. “If we don’t run NHL for two or three days, somebody will call me about that,” Julian, a regional sports editor, said. However, for the editors interviewed, those kinds of questions, although somewhat annoying, do show them something about their audience. “The feedback does sort of remind you that there are people that depend on the newspaper for those things,” Tim said. “It can’t always be what’d I prefer, you know, you have to ultimately give the readers what they want.”

That represents one of the growing shifts in sports journalism brought about by digital and social media. Editors and reporters interviewed said they believe that readers feel empowered to share opinions and get instant information through social media, and that part of sports journalism’s digital evolution is greater knowledge and understanding of what fans and readers want. That reader-first mentality is defined by Kenny and by Jan as thinking of the utility of their section above everything else. Jan described the layout of his newspaper’s website, and said that that the most-clicked-on story every day was that night’s schedule for the Winter Olympics (the 2014 games in Sochi, Russia). This is no journalist’s idea of a great story—or even a story at all, more like agate—but it does provide a utility to readers that a story might not. Kenny said:

I think journalists sometimes get caught up in serving, you know, let me do something cool that other reporters will think is cool or let me do something that you know the person that I cover thinks is OK. And to me, that's less interesting to me than, well, what do the readers think? That's kind of my first evaluation of the story—what did readers have to say?

Metrics

One of the ways to judge which stories and content readers like is through the use of metrics. The emergence of digital and social media to sports journalism has brought with it a flood of metrics that put numbers to journalism. These metrics run the gamut from basic, like the number of times a tweet is retweeted or a post on Facebook is liked or shared—to ones that are far more advanced and nuanced. Derrick and Alexander discussed their paper's use of Adobe Omniture software, which provides information about a newspaper's online users—not just how many people are visiting the site or even individual stories, but to the specific platform and operating software a visitor is using (mobile, desktop, tablet) and the screen size a reader is seeing the site on. Mona, Owen, Kenny, and Jan said their news organizations use Parsley to provide nearly real-time metrics. This software provides detailed metrics, down to the most popular stories in the last 10 minutes. “In our newsroom, Owen said, “ They have big TV screens and ... some of them have the (Parsley) glimpse up there.”

The availability of these metrics represents a profound change for news organizations. In the pre-digital era, the only metric that newspapers kept of any consequence was their daily circulation. And, of course, that number was for the entire newspaper. There was no way to know how many people read an individual story. The availability of metrics changes that. Editors and reporters are able to see exactly what stories are being read, when they are being

read, and by whom. “The depth of information that you can get from Omniture is just ridiculous,” Jeremy said.

Metrics from digital and social media appear to be used to determine, at a more granular level, what stories are popular, and when they are popular. That is, to varying degrees (depending on organizational influences, timing, etc.), driving editorial decisions. These include what stories are covered, how they are covered, and when and how they are published. “In an online world, quantity matters so much. Quality matters too, don’t get me wrong, but quantity more so. Two 15-inch posts rather than one 30-inch post, that’s going to be far more valuable,” Jan said.

The interview data suggest that the availability of metrics is influencing editorial decisions. Darren and Kristin both said that their paper’s daily Web traffic peaks between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. “We really try to get as much as we can of the news stuff up at that time,” he said. Kenny said that once 5 p.m. hits for his paper, desktop traffic plummets and mobile traffic rises (a trend echoed by Darren and Kristin). “We think about timing for stories,” he said. “We know that mobile traffic goes up at night, so one of the things that we talk about is we’re not gonna post long stories at night because the majority of people are looking on (an iPhone) or looking on their tablet and are not gonna read as long of a story.”

Along with when things are posted, what stories are covered is affected by metrics, as well. Instead of relying just on reader feedback or a sport’s assumed popularity to make coverage decisions, editors have data on which to base these decisions. At some papers, the data from metrics is leading to changes in coverage priorities. The metrics appear to be a kind of new news value — the sports journalists are beginning to focus their time and attention on the kinds of stories and coverage that fans are clicking on, rather than relying on traditional ideas of what

sports deserve coverage. “I think that the online (metrics) has made us realize what the audience was looking for,” said Jan, a digital sports manager. He said that his organization’s metrics have shown him, for example, that college-football fans are more interested in recruiting news than in game recaps. Kristin, a metro sports editor, said that her paper’s metrics showed that high school sports were far more popular than local college sports, and knowing that led to a change in the paper’s coverage hierarchy. “We call high schools the third franchise,” she said, behind only the city’s two pro sports teams. Darren said that at his paper, the metrics for high-school sports coverage showed that an in-depth feature done by one of the paper’s high school reporters has more readers than individual game stories:

I was willing to trade the Web hits that we would get off of a game story for three days, I was willing to trade those three days for something much more in-depth where the Web numbers and the interest and the just quality would be so much greater.

But the metrics data creates pressure on reporters. The pressure comes not from the numbers themselves, but from their editors. They know they are being judged on how many hits their stories get—that judgment may be explicit, or it may be implicit, but they feel it. “You’re walking around our newsroom, and you’re seeing in the last 10 minutes, who’s up there,” said Owen, a veteran reporter. “Now, it’s great if one of your stories is there. But if I walk by there and my story’s not one of the top 10, I get the shakes.” Owen said this laughing, but underscored that it fueled uncertainty about his own professional future. Mona said she is more likely to post a one-source story online than she otherwise might have been, in part because of the expectations and demands her bosses place on constantly updating online news. The reporters interviewed already feel the pressure to keep up with the constant stream of news and information online. Knowing that they are being evaluated on their output leads to concerns among some reporters

interviewed that they are expected to focus their energy more on stories that generate clicks than on writing “real stories”—again, showing the dichotomy between traditional news and digital news. “I feel if that’s what consumes you and you’re just thinking about clicks, I think there’s a tendency to kind of lose sight of the story,” Cameron said.

But there is, once again, a balancing act for editors. Metrics and page views are important. But Alexander, the longtime editor, said:

Now is that the be-all, end-all? No. Sometimes there are good story lines, and I’m still always looking for good stories. I mean, people want to read good stories, people want to see cool videos, and you can measure that in some ways. But in some ways, you just have to trust your instincts.

Even those who work for primarily digitally focused news organizations—ones which, stereotypically, we might think of as obsessed with page views—acknowledge the balance and that news judgment still matters. “There has to be that human news judgment,” Jan said. “I’m not tied to (metrics). If I believe that something matters, we need to do it. I mean, we do a lot of it, numbers be damned. We’ll get numbers elsewhere.” An example Jan gave of this was covering minor-league baseball in his city. The day-to-day coverage, Jan said, does not draw a lot of readers. But the day-to-day coverage also allows the beat reporter to find and develop feature stories on players that do get good numbers. Those stories wouldn’t be possible without the day-to-day coverage that sets the foundation for those features.

Breaking news and the Scoop Scoreboard

Breaking news is one of the few constants in online sports journalism. No matter the size of the market, the size of the news organization, from high school sports to the pros, there is an understanding that, when news breaks in sports, it goes online.

“Breaking news gets huge hits,” said Linda, the veteran columnist. “It’ll get better hits than something really in depth.” Cameron, the pro-football writer, said, “If I do have something newsy, I’ll get it up (online). Alexander, the veteran sports editor, said:

Sports, too, tends to react better than other departments sometimes to breaking news, because we’re used to games ending at 10:30 and having to get a story up at 10:35—the deadline thing. I think that that has benefited sports department in the digital age.

It’s understood among the reporters and editors interviewed that breaking news goes online. The mechanisms for doing this vary from paper to paper and now almost always involve social media. Those mechanisms will be described in detail in the next chapter.

For the sports journalists, breaking news can be anything from an update on a player’s injury to the coach of the team getting fired, to the team’s owner dying. Kayla, the college football reporter, defined breaking news as “anything that happens in real time that you need to get out. “Like a player gets a DUI and gets suspended for two weeks, things like that. Or, you know, a coach quits.” Kenny, a sports manager, defined breaking news as “anything that a reader might be interested in.”

The speed at which sports news is disseminated online raises concerns among reporters and editors about accuracy. “It’s one of those things it isn’t about being first—I know for some folks, it is—it’s about being right, and in the Web world, that’s a dangerous line,” said Kevin, a longtime editor. Many of the reporters said they are posting breaking news stories online before they are edited. While the reporters said they haven’t changed how they get confirmation of these stories, and the editors said they trust their reporters and are in touch with them, it’s still a concern. “We’re not as careful,” said Howard, a sports editors at a suburban paper. “It’s not as vetted before we put it out there, I guess you could say.”

The speed of online news, combined with the growth of sports-only websites by cable networks (ESPN), Internet companies (Yahoo) and blog networks (Deadspin), has increased competition in sports journalism. “The stress of our job compared to other reporters are our paper (is higher), because our news reporters don’t compete with CNN or some other news 24/7 website,” said Owen, a college-basketball reporter. The teams and schools reporters cover are also competition. Many pro teams have in-house “journalists” who are ostensibly editorially independent but are nonetheless paid team employees. Simon noted that while reporters are not allowed to use their iPhones in the locker room to share player interviews on social media, the team’s social-media director is standing in on every interview and tweeting out quotes on the team’s official feed before the media is able to. “That pisses you off, it’s bullshit, but really there’s nothing in the rules to stop you from doing that, so the one thing you fight for is, if you’re going to make (a player) available to your guys, you need to make him available to our guys,” said Kristin, an editor.

This national competition has led to a change in what can be called the Scoop Scoreboard. Traditionally, sports journalists have judged themselves and been judged based on the stories they’ve broken. The more stories you broke, big and small, the better reporter you were considered and the quicker you were promoted. This is changing in the digital and social media age, especially for reporters at local and regional papers and involving transactional scoops—a player signing a new contract, a coach getting fired, a recruit committing to a school. There are simply too many specialized media outlets that focus on individual sports and have business relationships with leagues and conferences. For NFL writers, they are always competing with journalists like Adam Schefter, the ESPN NFL reporter who has access to agents and players and coaches because he has the largest audience among NFL fans. For college football writers, there

are recruiting websites like Rivals and 247 Sports, which have bloggers and writers who do nothing but track recruits. “Realistically, we know we’re not gonna compete with recruiting sites like Rivals, Scout, 247 Sports, so we try and pick and choose our spots with that,” Mona said. “We will break things every now and then, but we know we’re going up against, like, a network of people, and we have to tailor that.” Reporters who cover professional sports are always competing with national writers. Cameron, the NFL writer, said, “If you’re an agent or a coach, a player, whoever, you’re kind of thinking a (national reporter) is your one-stop shop. You can just go to this person say what you have to say and and you’re done.”

Luke, a pro-basketball writer, said:

I try to break as much as I can, but I also don’t lose my mind if (a national writer) breaks a story or seven—that’s what he does. I try to break as many as I can, and I try to make the best observations off of stuff that’s broken by other people.

That’s a change for reporters and editors. They are competitive people who still want to break every story. “If I get beat on local soccer news, that’s surprising, and I take offense to that, cause I’m not doing my job right if that happens,” said Malcolm. However, the reporters and editors understand that circumstances have changed and have re-calibrated their expectations. “We don’t care about the Scoop Scoreboard anymore,” Simon said. “You know why? Cause there’s too many people with too many ins with rights holders.” Simon pointed out that reporters for the online sites of networks that carry sports have an advantage over newspaper reporters because teams, players, coaches and agents often have relationships with those networks. “It’s almost impossible to get a scoop on, like, an NHL signing or trade because TSN (in Canada) gets it all from the league registry,” Simon said. “So it’s virtually impossible for a local entity to get

those anymore because the league and the GMs all talk to those guys (at TSN), cause they're all buddy buddy.”

Kristin, a sports editor in a market with two pro sports teams, said:

Fifteen years ago you didn't have to worry about Adam Schefter breaking everything, but now you do. So you kind of expect that. We're not gonna get every contact agreement that comes out first, but you don't want to get burned on the really big stories. You're gonna want (your reporters) to be in touch with what's going on on the beat and generate a good story for the next day.

Also, the accelerated nature of reporting has devalued the scoop in a way. Since breaking news is posted online, once one newspaper has a story, other outlets can merely link to it on their own sites and Twitter feeds. The lifespan of a scoop is now minutes, maybe seconds. Cameron, the pro football reporter, said that he posted a breaking news item this past season about a player being injured. “You put it out there, and bang—like 10 national people have confirmed it within 5-10 seconds,” he said. “It kinda blew my mind.” Owen, who covers college basketball, said that news of a high-school recruit committing to a school spreads quickly. “If I got called third (after a recruiting website and the player's hometown paper), I don't think the guy that got the first call necessarily scooped me.”

Luke, the pro basketball writer, described it like this:

As much as I want to break every story, five seconds after you break the story, it really doesn't matter anymore. The most important thing is to understand the why of why it happened, and if you can explain and articulate why something happened and what it means. That means as much, if not more, than the actual breaking of news that you're two minutes

behind somebody—what’s the real difference outside of just the kind of in-business scorekeeping that people do?

And as the interview data show, even the in-business scorekeeping aspect of this area is evolving. Because of the national reporters, and the constant fear of being burned by wrong information, reporters and editors seem to value analytical reporting more than speedy news breaking. “Schefter and those guys are wide, we need to be deep,” said Alexander, a veteran editor.

Cultural changes

Jan, Kenny, Owen, and Mona all work for news organizations that, up until 2013, were daily newspapers. Now, they work for what can be called news organizations, because they do not have a widely circulated daily print edition and instead are focused online. Their situation is indicative of the wider changes brought to daily sports journalism by digital and social media. Along with changes to work routines, the interviews show that the culture of sports journalism is changing. It’s moving away from the traditional, print-centric culture and toward a more digitally focused culture. Instead of trying to find balance between print and online, several of the journalists said their organizations are adopting a more digital-first mentality. “We’re kind of moving to the digital-first way of doing things, which is a lot different from what we’ve been doing,” said Kristin, a sports editor. That mindset can be defined as thinking of online news as the primary focus of a journalist’s work day, rather than something that’s done after the print work is finished. This is a significant change for journalists who have worked in the business for many years. “There are a lot of people in this newsroom, who have really strong ties to the print product, and understandably,” said Darren, an editor. “And you hate to see that go. But, unfortunately, the times have changed in a way that you’ve got to think digitally first now.”

Perhaps the largest changes are happening to the industry of sports journalism, not the profession. It's a subtle but real difference. The industry is the business side of sports journalism. The essential acts of journalism may be more evolving, but the business of journalism has changed due to digital and social media. Staffs are smaller. Newspapers are smaller or changing their publication schedules to fit a new media economy. Darren said that in the past year, 20 percent of his paper's newsroom employees had been laid off. Anthony, the small-town editor/reporter, is now a one-man department because of recent staffing cuts. Every journalist interviewed mentioned the economic problems the industry is facing and said it affected how they did their jobs. Kevin explained:

Now, you're in here taking the phone calls because there's fewer people taking the phone calls. You're here helping with production cause there's fewer people helping with production. You're spending more time on the Internet now doing stuff because you didn't do that before—somebody else did it for you.

In addition to the numbers, the interviews suggest an evolution and a change in the culture of sports journalism. Jan, the sports manager at a digitally focused news organization, described it like this:

Sports always existed in a newsroom on its island, and the island was forced by the hours, it was forced by the 6 (p.m.)-2 (a.m.) hours, and so there was always a sense of 'we are in this just us, and everybody in news thinks what we do in sports is worthless, but so what, everybody buys the paper for us anyway.' So there's always been that defiance. Maybe that's projection, I don't know. But that has to change, because we have to become part of the newsroom now. That's just not our circumstance, that's everywhere. The news cycle for

sports is becoming a day cycle—well, it's a 24-hour cycle, but it's becoming much more of a day cycle than it ever was, so we need to work during the day.

Conclusion

This section has described the changes to sports journalism that have been brought about due to digital and social media. It has looked at the norms, practices, values, and routines of sports journalists that are changing and evolving, and the perceived impact of that change and evolution. The interview data suggest that routines are changing in the digital environment. The traditional reporting model of gather-sort-report appears to be evolving into a gather-report-sort model that reflects Robinson's (2011) idea of journalism-as-process. Sports journalists are fighting a constant time crunch, where their daily work has accelerated to the point where they no longer have the ability to do the longer, more in-depth stories that they feel are important to their work. They are also fighting for access to sources, as pro and college teams are able to use digital and social media to communicate directly with fans, without the intermediary of the newspaper. Sports journalists also have access to online metrics, which show in granular detail what stories readers are interested in. This is beginning to drive editorial judgments for some of the editors interviewed, but it is creating more pressure on reporters to produce content that's popular.

The interviews suggest an interesting duality in sports journalism, not between print and online, but between what can be called traditional journalism, which revolves around the story, and what can be called online journalism, which revolves around a stream of news, conversation with sources and readers, and evolving news. Traditional journalism can be summed up in the job description offered by Simon: "Your job is to write the frickin' story." Online journalism

centers on reporting news and information as it happens, generating a steady stream of information for readers and fans. This is a subtle but distinct difference.

With traditional journalism, there is, for better and for worse, an industry standard for what sports journalism is supposed to look like. With online journalism, there is still a sense that everyone's still learning as they go. "I think a lot of this (digital planning), we're kind of drawing up in the dirt as we go along, 'cause it's new ground. It's constantly changing, a lot of trial and error," said Kristin, a veteran editor at a metro daily newspaper. Discussing a recent change to his paper's website, Morris said, "Like everybody else, it's going to be trial and error. What they're doing now may not be what they're doing in six months."

The data suggest that digital and social media have accelerated sports journalism, reflecting similar research into news journalism (Schmitz-Weiss & Higgins Joyce, 2009). Using metrics as a new news value is another way that fans' online behavior is changing how journalists do their job (Bennigni, Porter & Wood, 2009). The interviews show that reporters have far less access to official sources, with coaches and players making themselves less available for interviews (both on and off the record). The lack of access is seen by the reporters and editors as extremely troubling and something that makes doing the job much harder, if not impossible, reflecting the importance of sources to sports journalism. It also reflects the findings of Lowes (1999) and Boyle (2006), as well as what studies of news journalism (Gans, 1979; Schudson, 2013) have shown. The shrinking access is created by digital and social media. Teams no longer need journalists for promotion, publicity or coverage, because they can provide this on their own websites and social media platforms. Such practices are upsetting the traditionally symbiotic relationship between the press and teams (McChesney, 1989) and are reflective of previous

studies into the relationship between sports and the media (Boyle, 2006; Coombs & Osborne, 2009).

The idea of sports coverage without access suggests a potential new role and new value for sports journalists. With the basic game information available in so many places online, sports journalism's primary value to readers may not be in reporting facts that are available elsewhere. The data suggest two potentially distinct kinds of sports journalism — aggregation and reporting, which are the types of news work Anderson (2013) discovered in his newsroom ethnography. Aggregation is the collection of information that's already published and sharing links to that information — an example of this would be the Winter Olympic schedule that Jan's paper published daily and was the most clicked-on story. Reporting is traditional news work. The data suggest that with teams publishing so much online, sports journalists could take new approaches to their coverage — be it more analytical, investigative, or fan-centered -- rather than simply reporting information that could be conveniently aggregated.

The next chapter looks more in depth at how sports journalists are using social media in their jobs and the effect those platforms have had on the profession.

Chapter 8: Social media in sports journalism

For sports journalists in 2014, there is a new element to the start to their work routine, a relatively new place they go to start their day.

“Twitter is honestly, that’s the first thing I do in the morning,” said Kristin, the sports editor of a metro daily. “I check Twitter to see what’s going on.”

Roger, a college basketball beat writer, said, “Lately, I’ve sort of gotten in the habit of wake up and check (Twitter) to see what things happened overnight.”

After landing on a cross-country flight, Stanley said, “the first thing you do in 2014 is what? You don’t check your email, you check your Twitter account to see what you were missing in the time you were in the air and there’s no WiFi on the plane.”

Social media platforms have become a nearly ubiquitous part of journalism in the early 21st century, and sports journalism is no different. This chapter describes how sports journalists are using social media in their jobs. This chapter begins by describing how reporters use social media in their reporting and publishing processes, and how editors both use the platforms themselves and expect their reporters to use them. After that, journalists’ interactions with fans and readers via social media are examined. The chapter concludes with a look at the challenges that social media is bringing to sports journalism.

For the purposes of this chapter, social media will refer to Facebook and Twitter. Those are the platforms that the sports journalists interviewed used most often. Twitter was the overwhelming social-media platform of choice for the sports journalists interviewed. All 25 discussed their use professional uses, beliefs, expectations, and attitudes toward Twitter. Facebook came up in 19 of the 25 interviews, but in far less detail. The interviews indicate that

Facebook is typically used at the organizational level or to share stories automatically. “We have those pages set up that sort of curate what we write and people can post on there and that sort of thing,” said Linda, a veteran columnist, adding that she spends most of her time on Facebook on her own personal page, not her official one. Owen, the college basketball reporter, said his bosses are telling him to get a professional Facebook page. “I’ve gotta get my own Facebook page and start doing that. I know I need to,” he said. However, reporters and editors are still using Facebook in their work. Other social media platforms, like Pinterest and Instagram, were not mentioned at all in the interviews (or mentioned only in passing).

One thing that’s important to remember in any discussion of social media is how relatively new it is in the world. Facebook started in 2004 and didn’t become broadly available until 2006. Twitter started in 2006 and didn’t become widely used for several years. Much like the online journalism described in the previous section, there are few standard practices for how reporters are expected to use social media in their jobs. There are some evolving norms—reporters post breaking news items on Twitter and they interact directly with fans on the platform—but it is not standardized to the degree that traditional journalism is.

The lack of standardization, the interview data suggest, has led to more reporter autonomy in the use of Twitter than in other aspects of the job. It has also led to a knowledge vacuum that reporters fill with their own beliefs, views, and experiences. The result is that the rules and guidelines are always evolving and never as widely accepted as the guidelines for more traditional media.

Learning social media

Virtually all of the reporters interviewed had been working professionally long before social media began, and even the younger journalists admitted that social media was not something

they learned about in their college journalism classes. Only Hannah, who has been out of school for three years, said that social media was a part of her college coursework. Few of the reporters and editors interviewed had hard-and-fast rules or guidance provided about social media. Elena said that she is required to tweet twice a work day, which is a directive from her small-town paper's corporate ownership, and Malcolm said that reporters at his newspaper spent two days at a social-media training session. But no other reporters or editors said they had any formal training.

Simon said that he first started using Twitter in 2009, when the service was three years old but just beginning to become more mainstream and widely used:

I paid attention to it for about a month, and just watched. And I watched what fans did, but I watched more what other writers did. It was in the spring, so I was watching basically the Yankees and Red Sox beat reporters. How are these guys using Twitter? What's the point of being on Twitter, because it's not their own website, so why would they be on this thing? And I saw they were using it basically as a way to plug their own websites and their own stories, and exchange some information with fans, so I decided to do it. At the time I was completely on my own.

Jeremy said that a friend of his introduced him to Twitter several years ago, and he started using it personally. "And then I just watched how some people expanded it; I watched how other media professionals at other papers expanded it and figured (it) out," he said.

Reporting

In many ways, sports journalism starts on Twitter.

When news breaks on her college football beat, Kayla described her reporting process like this: "First of all, you go on Twitter, because that's generally where news breaks nowadays."

Recalling a recent story in which a player on the team he covers made newsworthy comments, Simon (the pro hockey beat writer) said that he posted two quotes from the interview to Twitter while walking from the locker room to the media room. Those quotes later became part of a blog post and then a news story.

Stanley, a veteran sports columnist, said, “I’ve absolutely based columns on emails. I’ve absolutely based columns on Twitters that I’ve seen and Twitter conversations I’ve observed, I think everything is fair game.”

Howard, the sports editor at a suburban newspaper, said that he had recently seen a tweet from a former high-school athlete from his region implicating some friends of his in an act of criminal mischief. “So our news department will be looking into that, trying to get those records based off some offhand comment I saw from a high school kid on Twitter.”

Whether it’s used for finding ideas for stories or reporting the news, Twitter has become tightly integrated into how sports journalists do their job. Reporters either learn about news on their beat from Twitter (through other media outlets or the team and players themselves) or break stories on Twitter after doing their own offline reporting. The interviews suggest that this holds true across beats, across news organizations, and across differences in a reporter’s gender and experience.

The interviews suggest that reporters are using Twitter to conduct surveillance on their beats, break news on their beats, and disseminate information. Using Twitter as a surveillance tool is the digital and social-media equivalent of walking a beat. “I use Twitter as a news feed,” said Luke, a pro basketball writer. “I just follow people, a couple friends, but they’re mostly friends in the business and I follow basketball people, the news off of it.” Social media is often where news breaks, whether it is another media outlet reporting a story or a source announcing news

itself via social media—an example from 2014 occurred when New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter announced his impending retirement on his Facebook page. Social media allows reporters to keep up with their beats. “I might see (news) on Twitter, and I call (my sports editor, who) figures out who’s gonna jump on it. Or one of our real-time editors sees something at work and says ‘Hey, did you guys see this on Twitter?’” Malcolm said. At Malcolm’s paper, real-time editors are in charge of posting stories directly to the website, freeing up the rest of the staff to concentrate on reporting.

Roger recalled two stories from his college basketball beat that came directly from social media. One involved a recruit who decided to attend the school Roger covers.

One of the recruiting websites had tweeted out—there wasn’t a story or anything—just tweeted out per a source so and so had committed to (the school). I didn’t have his number, (but) he was following me on Twitter, and I actually direct messaged him said ‘Hey, just heard ya-da-ya-da-ya-da, can I give you a call?’ And I didn’t have his number, but he gave it to me through Twitter, and so by noon that day, I had talked to him because of Twitter.

Roger remembered another story that started when he saw a cryptic post to a player’s Facebook page. In the comments thread, the player’s mother mentioned that the player would need a second surgery. “So, next day, alright, get the coach on the phone,” Roger said. “I said ‘So I heard you have some bad news?’ (And) he said he yeah (the player’s) gonna have to have season-ending surgery.”

Breaking news, the interviews suggest, is one of the established ways sports journalists use social media. As said in the previous two chapters, when news happens, reporters are reporting it first via Twitter. Reporters expect to do it, and editors expect their reporters to do it.

Alexander, a veteran editor, said that when news breaks, this is how he wants his reporters to act:

“First thing you do, probably tweet it and call me and say I just tweeted that.” Simon said that the standard procedure at his paper is to tweet news, then post a story online, and then move on to the story. Kristin, a sports editor at a metro daily, said, “Twitter is much quicker, and I think it’s that whole thing—you can do it in 140 characters or you can just put a sentence and it’s out there.”

Just prior to being interviewed, Luke had covered a story about a high-profile player signing with the pro basketball team he covered. His description of the process shows how much he relies on Twitter for writing and reporting. After seeing reports from competitors that a signing was possible, Luke began making phone calls, sending emails and scanning Twitter. In a sign of how technology helps reporting, Luke reported this story while sitting in an airport. He used Twitter to find out what was going on, in his actual reporting, and to publish the news—all while waiting for his connecting flight to arrive:

I saw some of the news on Twitter first, and then when I found out that (the player) was signing, I got a direct message from a couple sources on there. When I found out he had signed, I tweeted it out. I tweeted out that I confirmed he was going to sign. I tweeted first. I called my bosses before I got on the plane. I had written the story, too.

There is a growing acceptance among reporters and editors that breaking news on Twitter is the digital, social equivalent of breaking a story. Where news is broken — whether it's Twitter, the website or the print newspaper — gets into branding and how news organizations and reporters are able to brand themselves as an authoritative source for news. In the early years of social media, there was a notion among sports journalists that putting breaking news on Twitter was giving a scoop to the competition. “If they’re posting stuff on Twitter, it’s not stuff that’s on our site,” said Jan, the editor at a digitally oriented news organization. “So, you know, we try to

do creative ways to get that content on our site.” Frederick, the long-time metro sports editor, said:

The thing I used to dislike the most was when guys would tweet breaking news and then we wouldn’t have anything associated with it, it wouldn’t take you to our website or something along those lines, because what benefit is the organization getting from that?

Jeremy, a veteran editor at a small-town paper who said he’s been using social media for years, articulated a newer, more digital-centric point of news that goes against the traditionally accepted norms of breaking news:

(My paper’s ownership) said (to) think of breaking news on Twitter as beating people. And I always did. I don’t know why there had to be posts or directives kind of saying that. I always thought if I get it on Twitter first, well, I’ve won.

In terms of dissemination, reporters are sharing all kinds of information on Twitter. They are sharing links to their papers’ stories, both their own and ones written by colleagues, in an attempt to use Twitter to drive readers to the papers’ websites. Roger said that, in addition to links to his own stories, he shares stories from other media outlets on his college basketball and pro baseball beats. “Other stuff that’s going on in the conference, or (with) schools in the conference that people who pay attention to this school or this conference would be familiar with ... I’ll retweet those things out.” For some reporters, Twitter is a kind of running notebook, in which news nuggets and tidbits are shared throughout the day. “I like trying to share stuff you wouldn’t be able to see unless you had this access, which I feel is a good tool for this because that’s what people want to know,” said Hannah, a pro baseball and college sports reporter. Notably, the reporters have almost complete autonomy over what they post to Twitter — far more than in writing stories or posting news to a website. Stories, whether they are for print or

online, almost always involve some semblance of coordination between reporter and editor. Even with blogs, reporters will often let editors know what they are posting. But with Twitter, reporters are on their own, and the interviews suggest that editors trust their reporters to handle themselves professionally. Aside from some general guidelines that may have been provided from management, reporters decide to use Twitter. Part of this is due to the nature of the platform — tweets are instantly public. There's simply no chance for an editor to see a tweet before the public does. Sometimes, what reporters post on Twitter gets folded into a story later in the day, and other times, it stands as its own single tweet. As detailed in the previous chapter, reporters are also sharing photos and videos on social media.

It is an emerging norm for sports reporters to live-tweet games, to provide real-time updates on what is happening. These vary from sport to sport, market-to-market, reporter to reporter. Owen, who covers his basketball team with another reporter, said he and his fellow reporter tweet almost every possession of a basketball game.

We actually started before Twitter. We were doing, like, mini-posts to our online blog, and we would do it at every four-minute timeout and it would be a little bit longer a little bit more of a chunk, you know one or two grafs real quick during that media timeout. We started that and then when we got Twitter we were like oh, 140 characters, this is great! You know, boom quick boom quick.

Reporters tend to tweet updates at natural breaks in the game—at the end of periods, quarters, or half innings, at goals in hockey, scoring plays in football or baseball—or when events warrant in the game. Along with game-related updates, reporters said they try to pass along bits of information that aren't directly game-related but that fans may be interested in. This may be a player reaction not caught by TV, something happening in the stands, the emotion

of the arena. “I try to go on Twitter not really (for) play-by-play, cause most of the people that follow you on Twitter, they’re watching the game,” said Cameron, the pro football reporter. Along with filing a post-game story, reporters tweet the final score of a game right at the end. This is the social-media equivalent of posting a running game story to the website, and it’s as important and understood as posting a piece of breaking news to the Web. “The most important thing you’re gonna do tonight,” Howard, a suburban sports editor, said he tells reporters, “is tweet out the final score.

While the interview data suggest that reporters have varied uses for social media, editors mainly use Twitter for surveillance and sharing stories. Kristin, the metro editor, said, “I’m on Twitter, I don’t tweet as much as I should. I tweet on occasion. But I’m on there to monitor—my gosh you have to monitor, cause everybody can get themselves in big trouble on Twitter.” Kristin was referring to the fact that by interacting with the public in real time, reporters can sometimes respond to negative comments in ways that reflect poorly on the newspaper.

Editors at smaller papers tend to use Twitter more often, as they are reporting as well as editing. Howard and Luke, who are sports editors at smaller daily papers, are active on Twitter throughout their work shifts, posting links to stories on their papers’ websites, sharing scores and information. “I’m using it all the time,” Howard said. “Scores, links, responding to questions, asking questions—just both information going out and information coming in.”

But at larger daily papers, editors are mostly on Twitter but are not active on it. There’s a sense, the interviews suggest, that Twitter is more of a reporter’s medium. “I think if somebody has a question or a problem with something related (to our college coverage), I think they’re much more likely to go write to our (college) writer as opposed to trying to find me on Twitter,” said Tim, a sports editor at a mid-sized daily newspaper. But editors do have expectations of

their reporters for using Twitter. Alexander, a sports editor for a mid-sized paper, said he expects his reporters to “break news, but (also) to become a trusted source and a go-to destination for people who want information, analysis, and to be a part of the conversation, too.”

Fan interaction

That conversation, between reporters and fans, is one of the primary changes that social media has brought to sports journalism. As stated in previous chapters, in many ways, social media has revolutionized interaction between fans and journalists. Simon, Stanley, Frederick, and Owen — all of whom have been in the business for more than 20 years — remembered how early in their careers they never had to interact with readers unless they wanted to. “Now you damn well better interact with the public,” said Simon, a veteran beat reporter. This increased reader interaction reflects a new routine and an evolving professional norm for sports journalists. It also again ties back to reporters branding themselves as a go-to spot for news, interaction and information online.

That increased interaction comes primarily on Twitter and is, in some ways, a byproduct of the platform’s design. Twitter feeds are more public than Facebook pages. Unlike other earlier social media networks (most notably Facebook), there is no reciprocal friendship necessary. Readers can follow a sports reporter, see his or her updates, and tweet him or her their thoughts without the reporter having to follow them back.

The nature of fan interaction depends heavily on the beat a reporter is covering, the interviews suggest. Reporters who cover professional and college sports describe their interaction with fans as being more along the lines of sports-talk radio—discussing the reasons for a team’s successes or failures, or the future of a particular player with a franchise. Luke, the pro basketball writer, said that his fan interaction on Twitter involves “crazy fans asking me

questions and I'm answering them.” Asked if he meant crazy as in devoted, die-hard fans, or crazy as in nuts, he said, “Both.”

At the high school level, fan interaction tends to be a lot more mellow, with more sharing of photos and names than arguments and discussions. “People don't usually comment too much on sports (stories),” Anthony said of his paper’s Facebook page. “People are like ‘Yay, go (team)’ or something like that, but no one’s, like, getting into controversy like, ‘Oh, that was a horrible game.’”

For the most part, fan interaction with reporters appears to be generally positive. Every reporter had the experience of getting angry messages from fans, but for the most part, the fan interaction on Twitter is something the reporters seemed to be able to manage. “I can get back to people if I want on Twitter,” said Malcolm, who covers pro soccer, college basketball, and high school sports. “If I think they’re yahoos or I think it’s gonna end up being a conversation I don’t like, I don’t have to.” Said Hannah, the pro baseball/high school reporter, “I’d say through Twitter there’s always good fan interaction ... I haven’t ever gotten anyone that’s been super hostile that I had to block or anything. It’s always been good.” Simon, on the other hand, said he’s blocked several hundred fans—though he admits it’s sometimes his own doing. “Sometimes, I am a prick and I am arrogant,” he said. “I don’t think it’s on purpose. I just think sometimes if I think you’re full of crap, I’ll say you’re full of crap.”

Sometimes, the fans’ passion comes through a little too strongly. The reporters and editors talked about dealing with “trolls”—Internet slang for readers who constantly attempt to provoke a journalist into an online argument. Trolls are the negative side of fan interaction for sports journalists. “There are knuckleheads that you just have to ignore,” said Kenny, a sports manager at a digitally oriented news organization. “They’re there to be nasty and to be trolls.” Kristin,

the sports editor for a major metropolitan daily, added, “These trolls are gonna try to bait you into things, and you just try not to take the bait. They can say you’re an ass, but we can’t respond that way,”

For the most part, the reporters interviewed can recognize when they are being trolled. When it happens, they try to let discretion be the better part of valor. The general sense from reporters is that no good can come from getting in a social-media fight with readers. “I don’t get into Twitter wars,” said Stanley, the columnist. “I think those are self-defeating.” The challenge for reporters and editors is recognizing who’s a n provoke an angry reactio, and who’s an angry reader with a legitimate question. Jeremy, a long-time sports editor at a small daily newspaper, said that if someone tweets something negative about his sports department, he will respond to the person in a professional manner.

I’m in a small newspaper ... if there’s an angry tweeter out there, I’m gonna see it. If somebody has typed “Oh, the paper totally screwed up that sports story,” I will seek out that person, tweet them, and say “What’s the issue? What do you think we screwed up? Let me know. Hi, I’m the sports editor. Talk to me.”

At the high school level, there is less trolling and more sharing. Readers and fans tend to be more involved in sharing content by liking and sharing game photos on Facebook or retweeting tweets that had players from the local team mentioned. At this level, the most active users are the high-school athletes themselves, who will share photos of themselves on Facebook or retweet any time they or one of their teammates is mentioned. “You can pretty much tell when the coaches let the players pick up their phones again after a game,” said Anthony, a reporter/editor at a small-town daily, because that’s when game tweets start being retweeted and favorited. Julian, a regional sports editor, said that that kind of interaction helped convince older reporters

on his staff—ones who were previously more anti-technology—of the value of social media. “Seeing the interaction and how fast, especially the kids—that was one thing that kind of got them. We had kids who, after a game, they were retweeting literally an entire game’s worth.”

For reporters at the high school level, fan interaction revolves mostly around the team itself—players and coaches—and parents who have children on the teams. The interviews suggest that the people a high-school reporter interacts with on social media are much more likely to be direct sources for stories—either current or future ones—than the people pro and college reporters interact with. “We wouldn’t say the same thing, obviously, about a high-school girls basketball player that we would about a (pro football) player,” said Howard, a sports editor at a suburban newspaper. The high school reporters interviewed seemed to have this color their Twitter use. Elena, who covers high schools at a small, rural newspaper, said she is always aware of the power of Twitter and is mindful of being respectful in using social media.

Another way some reporters interact with fans is by crowdsourcing — turning to fans to find stories and sources by asking followers for their take on an issue. “If you’re crowdsourcing something, Facebook’s probably a more fruitful area because there’s just more people there and it’s a more diverse audience,” Linda said. Kayla said she’s used social media to find fan-sourced stories on her college football beat. “I’ve done the crowdsourcing thing where you’re like ‘Who is going to the bowl game?’ I’m trying to talk to some fans who are going to the bowl game.” But it’s a new use for newer media that has not widely caught on—and the nature of sports journalism may have something to do with that. Unlike news stories, which often have a direct effect on readers’ lives, sports journalism is (as stated earlier) game-centric. A reader likely won’t have an explanation for why the Denver Broncos played so poorly in the Super Bowl or be directly affected (aside from being disappointed if they cheer for Denver). “It’s certainly

something that wasn't available to Jimmy Cannon, put it that way," said Stanley, the veteran columnist.

One of the larger questions facing sports journalism is what is the value of this fan interaction? When these interactions are happening on third-party websites and platforms, and not on the newspaper's sites around the newspaper's advertisers, what's the value? For many of the journalists interviewed, it is in building an audience. At a time when print circulation is down and when the newspaper industry is struggling with its identity in the digital age, the ability to build an audience through social media is critical for sports journalists. One of the ways an audience is built in the digital age is by engaging with fans and readers in social media.

Several editors said they wanted their reporters to use social media to brand themselves as experts on their beat. That, in turn, helps the paper - the notion of a rising tide helping all boats. "More of the value of this stuff is building and engaging conversation with an audience," said Morris, a longtime editor at a small-town paper. "Most of the people who cover football don't restrict their tweets to a six-hour window on a Saturday afternoon. They're doing it all week, and they're keeping people engaged." The hope is that this generation's engaged readers will become tomorrow's subscribers. "There's something to be said for, if you're the beat writer for a team and you're a fan, and that beat reporter replies to you or responds to you on Twitter, there's a sense of 'Hey, that was pretty cool,'" said Darren, a digital sports editor. "And that (fan) is going to stay with you." Jeremy, a small-town sports editor, said:

The majority of our Twitter followers are actually the young kids, the high school kids, because that drives Web traffic. And I'm not the kind who's gonna dismiss them because, in 10 years, when they get out of high school and college, they might be subscribers. They might be paying 99 cents a month or whatever we're charging for our Web access after the

certain page limit, or they might even subscribe to the print edition, who knows? They might run businesses and advertise with us. So you have to engage the younger generation and sometimes that means, you know, using a hashtag they use or using a social media fad they use.

Challenges

But for everything social media has brought to sports journalism—an increased intimacy with both news publication and with readers—it has raised a corresponding concern. The newness of social media, the speed it brings to journalism, the openness to the public, are all changing the way sports journalists are doing their jobs.

Part of this, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is the newness of the medium. There has been little professional or institutional guidance of how best to use the platform in journalism. Reporters have learned almost entirely on the fly, by watching other reporters. Because it is still relatively new, sports journalists are still learning how to use it. Without a profession-wide understanding of social media's best practices, there is a knowledge vacuum in sports journalism, and in this vacuum, reporters and editors fill in their own attitudes toward using these platforms.

There are the general concerns about reporting false or misleading information on social media, because news travels so fast on Twitter. Kevin, an editor at a mid-sized paper, remembered when news was breaking on one of his paper's beats on Twitter, and waiting to update his website until his beat writer could confirm the information himself (the story ended up being wrong, so Kevin's paper had it right because they waited):

The story literally sat on my screen and I got up to get a glass of water. I'm like, 'Nobody goes near my computer,' cause I didn't want anybody to bump it and just hit enter, you know what I mean? It's that kind of pressure cause you want to be on it but you wanna be right.

Mona, a college beat writer, said, "My theory with Twitter is, I treat it like I would a story. I'm not gonna go treat it like a message board and just post whatever I want, but some people do because there's no standard for it."

For reporters, one of the biggest concerns about social media is the time it takes. At the most basic level, it's another job reporters have to do during their shift. Along with their normal reporting and writing, they are reporting and writing for social media, as well as talking with fans, and the expectations from fans and editors is that they should always be accessible.

Inherent in this is the idea that time reporters are using to be on Twitter is time that should be used doing other work. "You're not there to run a Twitter chat," Simon said, a quote that shows the privilege reporters put on writing their story over everything else they do during their days.

Kayla, the college football reporter, said:

I just think that that is one of the things that has turned our media cycle into this 24-hour barrage. I know there are a lot of journalists who ... think you need to have, like, this constant media presence on Twitter whether you're working or not, but I don't see it that way.

Then there's the more general notion of time. It's the 24/7, always on, always attached nature of online news, especially Twitter. There's no life balance, you're always on— and you are always expected to be publishing. Mona said the 24/7 demands that have been exacerbated by Twitter mean she always feels tied to checking in on social media, even during time off, for fear of being left behind. Kristin, the sports editor at a metro daily, said that in this regard, beat writers are like doctors because the phone (or Twitter feed) might go off at any time. Kayla, a

college beat writer, said, “It used to be that you could turn off the off switch and not turn it on until the next morning. You can’t really do that anymore.”

Social media doesn’t just take up reporters’ time, but also their attention. It’s also a challenge during games, when reporters are tied to their laptops and their Twitter feeds to keep their followers up to date. “If I’m worried about tweeting what’s just happened, I might not see (the coach) pat some kid on the back or ream some kid out,” Malcolm said. “So I think some of the color and some of your observatory skills get lost because you’re worried about tweeting.” Roger said that he changed how often he tweeted during the games because the process was distracting. “It just got to the point where it was making the process of actually writing a story so much longer, because you’re not paying attention to what were the turning points, things like that.” Elena, the high-school sports reporter at a small-town daily, said, “If I’m tweeting, I’m not always watching the game, because I’m really multitasking. So I think it’s demanding on your time.”

That balance is tough, because the acceleration of news due to social media has left reporters in a constant fear of being left behind. They may not be expected to be first reporting every story, but they are expected to react quickly once news breaks, whenever news breaks. Simon said his biggest professional fear is a big story happening on his beat when he’s on a plane with no WiFi, leaving him several hours behind the news and forcing him to play catch-up. Stanley, the columnist who said that his post-flight routine begins with Twitter, echoed those thoughts. “I used to like being able to have a respite from the world, but now I feel I’m three-to-four hours behind when I’m flying home from Denver,” he said.

Conclusion

This chapter has described how sports journalists are using social media platforms as part of their professional lives. It has shown how reporters and editors are using Twitter and Facebook to report, publish stories, and interact with fans.

With the relative newness of social media—Facebook is just 10 years old and Twitter is only eight—it's no surprise that there are not established norms for its use in sports journalism. Sports journalism is a profession that's more than 100 years old and has deeply established norms, values, practices and routines. Like previous research into news journalism (Lewis, Lasorsa & Holton, 2011), the data here suggest that sports journalists normalize Twitter to fit the profession's existing norms, values and practices.

But as social media becomes more and more a part of the daily sports journalism landscape, it is important to understand how sports journalists use it in their jobs. The interview data suggest that sports journalists are generally using it within the established practices and routines of the profession. Sports journalism begins on Twitter before moving on to more traditional platforms, be it a newspaper's website or the print edition. Sports journalists are using Twitter to keep up with their beats, to break news and to disseminate information, as well as to interact with fans. Sports editors, the interview data suggest, are using social media mostly to disseminate information and for surveillance of their sports world. Twitter, the interviews suggest, is mostly a reporter's medium.

Fan interaction appears to depend heavily on the beat. Reporters for pro and college teams deal mainly with fans who are removed from the action but nonetheless intensely passionate about their favorite teams, and appear more likely to engage with debates and discussions.

Reporters covering high school sports deal mainly with the athletes themselves, and are using social media interactions more to share information.

Reporters are expected to be on Twitter, but those expectations vary from paper to paper. Although there appears to be an emerging standard around the use of social media, it seems that practices still vary from paper to paper, from reporter to reporter. As such, there is a knowledge vacuum about this kind of journalism, which may be one reason news organizations are struggling to adapt the profession to the digital and social media age.

In the next chapter, the results of the study are discussed, conclusions are offered and directions of future research are presented.

Chapter 9: Discussion

Sports journalists have a saying they often refer to when discussing their jobs: Rooting for the story. The phrase came up several times over the course of the interviews conducted for this research. It's used as a central description of the job and also often as a defense when readers accuse reporters of rooting for — or more frequently against — a given team. In many ways, it's a central, normative belief that encapsulates the sports journalists' job. It distinguishes journalists as a professional field from sports fans. Fans live and die with their teams' successes and failures, their wins and losses. Sports journalists don't care who wins and loses. They have a job to do either way. They root for the best story — the most interesting, compelling account to them and to their readers.

The notion of “rooting for the story” can also be viewed as a sort of metaphor for the profession. The data suggest that the fundamental dichotomy in sports journalism in the digital age is the difference between the river of information found online and “the story” — what we think of as the traditionally structured, reported, and presented story that runs both in print and online. The sports journalists interviewed find themselves torn between the two, between keeping their audience informed of the latest news in a world in which news is always breaking online and providing their readers with a story that meets the traditional standards of daily journalism. The reporters and editors spend their days juggling their work between the stream and the story. The reporters and editors interviewed tended to value the story more than the stream. That is the normative value for sports journalists. That is their purpose. That is what digital and social media sometimes prevents them from doing — the story.

This chapter synthesizes the data presented in the previous three chapters, linking it to previous research in media sociology, institutional theory, and sports journalism. It addresses the

three research questions that guided this study, linking the data presented in the 25 in-depth interviews to the theoretical foundation as well as to the greater context of sports journalism and the newspaper industry as a whole. It also acknowledges some of this study's potential limitations and present avenues for future research.

The story vs. the stream: Discussion overview

In a very real sense, the idea of juggling the story and a stream is a perfect way to understand institutional sports journalism in the digital age. It shows the challenges that reporters and editors face, demonstrates their long-held values, their new work routines and illustrates what is and is not changing in sports journalism in the digital age.

Conceptually speaking, sports journalists' day-to-day work routines are where the most change appears to be happening. Their professional norms and values appear to be relatively unchanged—at least the change is not as acute as that found with the routines. In terms of the research questions, these routines, norms and values are the institutionalized practices of sports journalism (RQ 1). The data suggest that there has not been as much change in how those practices are reflected in the story selection of institutionalized sports journalists (RQ 2). But the transformations that have been brought about by the influence of digital and social media, including the journalism-as-process paradigm (RQ 3), appear to be mostly seen in the sports journalists' day-to-day work routines.

The interviews suggest that sports journalism is a social construct, a finding consistent with those in studies of news journalism (Berkowitz, 1997; Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 2011; & Tuchman, 1980). Sports news is not something that reporters find in gyms and stadiums. It is something that sports journalists create through their norms, practices, and routines. The play of LeBron James, a game between the Red Sox and Yankees, a decision by Robinson Cano to sign

a free-agent contract with the Seattle Mariners — these are not inherently newsworthy in and of themselves. They are newsworthy because they have been made newsworthy in part by sports journalists' routines, norms, practices, and values — meaning sports journalism is as much a social construction as news journalism (Fishman, 1980, Gans 1979, Tuchman, 1980, Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

Conceptually speaking, the data suggest that in general, the most dramatic changes to sports journalism are happening at the routine level. The changes are seen in how reporters structure their work day, the kinds of work they are being asked to do, and the pressures and expectations placed upon them. The new routines are illustrated in their day-to-day practices, the changes to their routines described in Chapter 7 and the influence of social media detailed in Chapter 8. These changes include covering multiple beats, using digital and social media to post short news updates online, being active on Twitter, etc. Many of these changes are the result of both the emergence of digital, online journalism and the economic problems facing the newspaper industry, as detailed in Chapter 2. This is the stream — a constant flow of information, including interaction with readers, in which news is reported as it happens. This is the sports version of Robinson's (2011) paradigm of journalism-as-process.

But for all the changes happening to the routines of sports journalism, there is much about a sports journalists' job that remains the same. As described in Chapter 6, many core aspects of sports journalism remain very much the same as they were in the pre-digital age. Sports journalism revolves around covering professional, college and popular high-school sports, reporting game results and news about local teams, providing analysis of a team's successes and failures, and giving commentary on the news of the day. It still revolves around going someplace where a reader isn't and providing information that the reader didn't know before.

Conceptually, the data suggest that the many of the norms and values of sports journalists — what is a story, what sources should be interviewed for a story, what the purpose of daily sports journalism is — either remain the same or are not changing as rapidly as routines. This is the story. That is what the data suggest that sports journalists value more than anything — a good story.

Routines and norms and values are interconnected and possess a kind of symbiotic relationship. Routines reflect journalism norms and values, and those norms and values in turn inform the routines. Objectivity — which Soloski (1989) called the most important journalist norm — shapes the journalism routine of getting quotes from sources that represent all sides of an issue. The routine of seeking quotes from both sides, in turn, perpetuates the norm and value that is objectivity, or balance. The routine of interviewing official sources is rooted in the value of providing accurate and authoritative information. That value, in turn, leads to journalists wanting to interview official sources for their stories. The routines (what journalists do) reflect their norms and values (what they think they should do) and vice versa. What the interview data in this dissertation suggest is happening in sports journalism is that some of the routines are changing faster than the norms and values. What sports journalists are doing in their day-to-day jobs may not always reflect what they think they should do. This balance, between changing routines and generally stable norms, is the underlying tension facing sports journalism in the digital age. Sports journalists are required to juggle the story and the stream, and that idea of juggling is as important a notion as the story or the stream itself. Reporters and editors are very much doing jobs for two different media — print and digital — within the same workday. The data suggest that the norms and values aren't changing at the same rate as the routines.

It's important to note that identifying what is and isn't changing in institutional sports journalism is, at times, a tricky proposition. At both the conceptual and the day-to-day level, some areas are changing faster than others. Some are not. Some routines have drastically changed, others are changing more gradually or haven't changed at all. Some professional norms remain in place, while others are evolving more rapidly. To say that all routines are changing while all the norms and values are remaining the same misses much of the nuance that the interview data suggest. That nuance, those distinctions, will be examined in this chapter. The next sections of this chapter will look at those areas in greater detail, starting with an examination of what has changed in sports journalism.

What's changing in sports journalism

Digital media have accelerated sports journalism the same way they have news-side journalism (Schmitz Weiss & Higgins Joyce, 2009). Reporters are doing more work than before, and they are being required to work faster. Digital media have made it possible for sports journalists to publish news updates around the clock, and are changing the basic model for reporting news. In the print era, that model could be described as “gather-sort-report.” Publishing a story came at the end of the cycle. The day's work built to a story that was reported. The interviews suggest that in the digital media age, that model is changing to “gather-report-sort.” Publication is now a part of the process, not the result of it. The presence of digital journalism outlets like ESPN.com and Yahoo! Sports has increased this pressure exponentially, primarily (it appears) among reporters covering professional and major college sports. The competition from digital outlets is incredibly strong, and many of the reporters said they struggled to keep up with the national digital reporters. Several reporters indicated that, as a result of digital and social media, their routine in breaking news was “tweet-blog-story” —

where news is first posted to their own Twitter feeds, then posted to the newspaper's website (either on a blog or on the website itself, something that varies from newspaper to newspaper) and then a story is written that runs both in print and online. This new routine has brought sports journalism, at least in part, out of its night-shift cocoon and has integrated sports journalists into the rest of the newsroom. Their daily work, the things they are actually expected to do, is beginning to revolve more around the stream than the story. The story is something they are expected to do, but it is now only one thing they are expected to do. It is no longer the focal point of their day.

This evolution from story to stream marks a drastic change from the work of sports journalists that Lowe (1999), Boyle (2006) and others have found in their research, and a drastic change from the work patterns described by Vecsey (1986), Walsh (2006), Wilstien (2002) and others in their popular accounts of how they do their job as sports journalists. It also marks a change in how Fishman (1980), Gans (1981), Tuchman (1980) and others described the work of newspaper journalists. The interviews paint the picture of journalists who are constantly working, constantly reporting and publishing information. "On deadline" used to refer to the hour after the game ended and before a reporter's story was due to the copy desk. Now, reporters are always on deadline, always filing information (Stovall, 2004). If, as an example, a player is missing a game due to injury, that used to become part of a reporter's game story or notebook. Now, it is tweeted out immediately, and a brief story is posted online before the game even starts. This is the journalism-as-process model in action (Robinson, 2011), in which sports journalism is centered on the ongoing exchange of information throughout the day rather than the story that will appear in the next morning's paper. The extent to which these changes affect reporters or editors appears to be influenced by the organization they work for. The sports

journalists who work for news organizations that have decreased the frequency of their print publications and are more digitally focused appear to have the journalism-as-process model playing a bigger part of their job than reporters at other newspapers. Without a daily paper, or with the daily paper being de-emphasized, it makes sense that journalists at digitally focused news organizations accept to the journalism-as-process model more than other journalists.

The interviews also suggest that sports journalists are simply doing more in this digital age than they were previously. Reporters are producing different kinds of content — stories, blog posts, tweets, videos, podcasts, photos — and editors are editing copy, designing print pages, posting stories online, monitoring and updating social media. Reporters are also asked to cover more beats. Of the 12 full-time reporters interviewed, 10 of them considered themselves beat reporters (two were full-time columnists). Of the 10 beat reporters, five of them officially had more than one beat. Three of the 12 full-time editors also covered beats as reporters, and one person, Anthony, was the editor and lone full-time reporter for his department. These workloads are due to the constriction of sports departments, brought about by the economic collapse of the newspaper industry in the first decade of the 2000s (Pew, 2013). These factors — more work to do and smaller departments with which to do them — lead to and exacerbate the time crunch sports journalists feel they are facing. They feel they're producing more content faster, but they wonder if the quality of that content is better, or even comparable, to what was produced in the pre-digital age. They're also doing so in an environment in which they have less access to the official sources (coaches, players, team officials), all of whom are able to take to digital and social media and act as their own publishers. The shrinking access is considered a huge problem for sports journalists, reflecting the importance of official sources for sports journalism that

Lowes (1999) and Boyle (2006) found, as well as the historically symbiotic relationship between the media and sports (Bryant & Holt, 2006; McChesney, 1989).

Digital and social media have not just changed the day-to-day routines for sports journalists. They have raised the expectations the journalists are facing as well. The interviews suggest a profession in which journalists feel they are always on the clock, always glued to technology in some capacity so that they don't miss news—reflecting Hermida's (2010) notion of ambient journalism, in which news is always happening, always being updated, and always a part of the online environment.

These pressures, the data suggest, are coming from within the news organization. Reporters spoke about the expectations their editors have for them for publishing news online, being active on social media. At times, it was explicit. Reporters Owen and Mona know they are being evaluated in part on their digital output, and Simon said that he knew if he didn't post something online after his team's practice, he'd get a phone call from editors. At times, it was implicit. This general understanding is that this is how the job is supposed to be done now. The interview data suggest that the editors' expectations come from higher up within the news organization (publishers, executive editors, etc.), and that those expectations are coming as a reaction to the greater media world. The changes, then, are what Boczkowski (2008) would call reactive traits. Sports journalists are following the technological and social trends rather than leading them. The data also suggest that sports journalists are copying what they see as successful practices from within the profession, an example of mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

In addition, digital and social media add a new layer to reporters' work. Reporters have more autonomy in their work online, particularly on Twitter, than they do in their work for print. The autonomy means they are making decisions about what news to publish, when to publish it, and

to what platform. These decisions suggest a new layer of the typification that Tuchman (1980) described a generation ago. In addition to the five levels of typification Tuchman found—hard news, soft news, breaking news, spot news, developing news—the interviews suggest that publication platform becomes a second kind of typification. What is the best combination of platform and content? Is the content best delivered in a 140-character tweet, is it more suited for a full-fledged feature story, or does it fall somewhere in between? Reporters and editors are asking themselves questions like this throughout their days. An example of this tendency, as described earlier, was Owen's story he had recently written about the goaltender on the pro hockey team he covered. After interviewing the goalie in the locker room, he decided that what the goalie had said was newsworthy enough to post to Twitter. He posted two quotes from the interview to his Twitter feed. He then posted a blog entry based on his interview (with the audio of the interview embedded into the post), and then wrote a traditional story. This process is typical of the sports journalists interviewed. This new typification is part of journalism-as-process (Robinson, 2011), in that journalism is not a story or a one-time act in the digital age. It is an ongoing process.

The interviews show that social media — Twitter in particular — are being used as a vehicle for brand building. As described in Chapter 8, reporters are interacting directly with readers and posting news to Twitter in part to help build their own brands as an authority, as a place to get consistently updated news that readers care about. Several of the editors interviewed said they encouraged this thinking because a reporter who is branded as an expert on a beat will draw followers and readers to the news organization. One of the core conflicts described in Chapter 8 lies in reporters breaking news on Twitter rather than on their newspaper's website, which gets at the issue of branding, of who owns and gets credit for breaking news — the news organization,

the reporter, or Twitter? Along with being a change to routines, this practice also suggests a new emerging value for sports journalists: the reporter as a branded expert.

Fan interaction

It's worth noting that the reporters interviewed seemed to view "the fans" as sort of a monolith. There was little to no differentiation to levels of fandom, whether or not a reader was a die-hard or casual fan. In fact, the interviews seemed to indicate that the journalists assumed fans were die-hard, that they were all watching the game or already knew the final score of the game. That attitude seems to shape sports journalists' beliefs in how the job should evolve. The evolution of game stories toward the more analytical has its roots in the belief that fans can get the basic information about a game elsewhere, that the best service a newspaper can provide is analysis, opinion, and information not available anywhere else. Granted, the way sports journalists interact with fans could perhaps be a result of the reporters and editors catering to the loudest and most devoted fans. The fans who care the most will demand a level of coverage that goes beyond the final score. But it's worth noting that the sports journalists' default attitude assumes a fan has watched the game. An analysis piece about the Yankees' hitting woes is of little value to someone who doesn't know if the team won or lost.

On the whole, the journalists interviewed — particularly reporters — seemed to view fan interaction in a bit of a negative light. At best, it was seen as a necessary evil, the price of doing business in this digital age. At least two reporters viewed fans with an attitude that fell just short of contempt. Others viewed fan interaction as more of a nuisance, or just another task they had to do. Digital and social media platforms have empowered fans. They are now able to connect directly with reporters, express their own opinions, and question reporters' assertions and

decisions. There was a sense in at least some of the interviews that journalists felt their professional expertise was threatened by the level of reader interaction they had to tolerate.

There are two potential reasons for this attitude toward fans. One is that sports journalists and fans are coming at sports from different perspectives. Fans—especially die-hard fans, the ones who are willing to follow and engage sports journalists on Twitter—can heavily identify with their favorite teams. Their teams' successes are their successes (Wann & Branscombe, 1990). Their teams' failures are their failures. They are highly invested in the teams' successes. Sports journalists come at this from a different perspective, one of professional objectivity and neutrality (Soloski, 1989). The journalists interviewed pointed out that they didn't care who won or lost the games they covered. They were rooting for the story, for something compelling to happen that would make for a good story (or, at the very least, they were rooting for a fast game and talkative players, to make their jobs easier). Several reporters expressed frustration with fans, because they (the reporters) felt that fans expected them to be cheerleaders for the team, or to not write negative stories.

The second reason is a simpler one: time. As stated earlier in this chapter, and throughout the results chapters, sports journalists are simply busier now than they ever have been before. Between writing stories, posting to blogs, breaking news online, using Twitter and Facebook, interviewing sources, coming up with story ideas, covering games, going to practices, meeting with colleagues, laying out pages, budgeting stories, assigning photos, and all the other tasks reporters and editors have to do in their work day, communicating with the public is simply one more task in an already packed work day. And because fan interaction is not institutionalized to the degree that other aspects of their job are — because sports journalists rarely had to do it

before the digital age—it's sometimes seen as extra work or work they are doing instead of doing their "real jobs."

Using metrics

Another change involving fan interaction is how journalists are using online metrics. The interviews show that editors are aware of what kinds of stories are popular online, when during the day they are popular, and on what platforms the stories are being read (desktop, tablet, mobile). This information is influencing story selection, in that editors are shifting coverage to reflect the audience's online behavior and desires. The changes in coverage were seen in how Mona, the college football reporter, and Jan, her editor, said they covered recruiting more because the online metrics show that those stories are extremely popular. This was seen in how Kristin, the metropolitan sports editor, changed her paper's coverage philosophy to one that put more emphasis on high school sports than local college sports (the opposite of the previous routine) after the metrics showed that high school sports coverage received far more hits. Along with changing the routines (what sports are covered and how they are covered), this also reflects one of the norms and values in sports journalism that does appear to be changing. Coverage appears to be becoming more and more focused on specific areas that metrics show to be popular among readers. This is an example of the symbiotic relationship between norms and values and routines. The routines of the individual journalists are changing, reflecting a change in the norms and values of the organization.

The use of metrics in story coverage and selection decisions suggests a new news value for sports journalism—audience popularity—that may sit alongside deviance, proximity, impact, and timeliness (Schudson, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The audience has been considered a news value (see Lloyd & Guzzo, 2008), but metrics give this

news value a degree of certainty and granularity it lacked before. The idea of what people are talking about moves from a vague journalistic sixth sense into something tangible and analytic. It's not to say that sports journalists didn't consider the readers in the pre-digital age. Sports journalism began in large part because it was content that was popular among readers and drove up circulation numbers (Bryant & Holt, 2006; McChesney, 1989). It's just that now, they have concrete data showing what stories are popular and what readers are actually looking at online. The use of metrics in story selection is also part of the journalism-as-process model (Robinson, 2011), with audience discussion fueling news judgment as much as news judgment fueling audience discussion. Also, as indicated in interviews with reporters Owen and Mona, and editors Kenny and Jan, metrics are also being used as a means to evaluate a reporter's performance. This evaluation-by-metric reflects trends at blog networks, most notably Gawker (publisher of Deadspin), where writers are rewarded for posts that receive more traffic.

What's not changing in sports journalism

Although the interview data suggest a number of significant changes to how sports journalists do their jobs, it would be incorrect to say that the entire profession is changing. In fact, the interviews suggest that there are aspects of the job that are not changing despite the emergence of digital and social media.

Whereas the previous section noted the changes to sports journalists' day-to-day work routines, one routine that hasn't changed is the daily deadline. The data suggest that the daily deadline remains the defining difference between newspaper journalism and online journalism. The sports journalists interviewed said that no matter how digitally oriented their organization is, there was still a daily deadline they had to meet – usually between 10:30 p.m. and midnight. That is a constraint they operate under that online sports journalists and bloggers do not have,

because they are not bound by a print production. The lack of a deadline means online journalists can spend more time reporting and writing after a game to file a story that can be posted overnight, rather than hitting a midnight deadline, or they can post a story the next afternoon. Writers for blogs like Deadspin and Bleacher Report have a similar work structure. Bloggers for these sites can post whenever they want, be it immediately after a game or long after it ends. But newspaper sports journalists still must produce a story by deadline. No matter how digitally oriented their work is, they still must have their stories done on time, and they still must produce pages and send them to the presses on time.

As stated earlier, the data suggest that many of the professional norms and values of sports journalists have not yet changed at the rate of their day-to-day routines.

All 12 reporters interviewed self-identified by the beats they covered (including the columnists, who identify as such). The beat is how a reporter defines his or her professional identity. It shapes how they see themselves, and how they see their professional world. All 25 journalists, both reporters and editors, said that their paper had some sort of beat structure. The interviews show that the beat system is an ingrained part of the profession, echoing Fishman's (1980) finding about news journalism and suggesting an institutionalized aspect of the profession. Reporters are responsible for covering their beat the same way a news reporter is responsible for covering city hall or the police beat. As Fishman (1980) found decades ago with news reporters, sports journalists are expected to provide daily coverage of their beat regardless of how much or how little is going on. A reporter can't attend a game and not file a story because he or she found the game uninteresting, or because the home team lost. The norm of sports journalism is to provide daily coverage, win or lose. That is a norm that remains a part of the profession.

Sports journalists learned how to do the job by doing the job. All 25 participants were asked where they learned to be a journalist, and all of them answered either at college, through internships, or on the job. This tendency reflects longstanding findings about journalism, that the profession is primarily learned through on-the-job socialization (Breed, 1955). It also reflects the notion of professional isomorphism, one of the three types defined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). However, it's important to note that the education and formational experience for many of this study's participants came from the pre-digital era, when there was no digital or social media (or very little of them). Only one participant, Hannah, said she received any kind of education about social media in college. In a sense, the journalists in this study were trained in a professional environment that has been widely transformed in the past decade.

In general, news values in the digital and social age appear to be very similar to those of the print era. Sports journalism is often defined through game coverage. A sports department's schedule still mirrors the local sports teams' game schedules. Much in the way a crime reporter's day revolves around the court schedule (Fishman, 1980) or a political writer's work day revolves around the many meetings of government agencies (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; & Sigal, 1973), a sports journalist's schedule revolves around the games on his or her beat. If there are no games going on in the area, it's considered a slow night, no matter what else might be happening in the sports world.

Game coverage tends to revolve around the so-called major sports—football, basketball, baseball, and hockey. Pro and college football tend to be the most popular sports, as defined by sports journalists and editors. Within high school sports, football was the most popular sport at every newspaper interviewed. Story selection echoes what Lowes (1999) found in his ethnography of a Canadian newspaper's sports section. Sports coverage tends to focus on

mainstream team sports, nearly all of which are male. Coverage of women's sports has increased, but it is still not at the level of men's sports and it was one of the first casualties of the industry's economic struggles (Hardin, 2009). With the exception of high-school girl's sports, women's sports coverage exists on a lower tier of importance than coverage of men's sports. Editors held niche and individual sports like running, hunting and fishing in low esteem. They were seen as section filler, not as legitimate sports worthy of sustained coverage.

The sports journalists interviewed indicated that they are generally writing the same types of stories, interviewing the same kinds of sources, gathering the same kinds of information, as they were in the pre-digital world. This finding echoes Anderson (2013), who found that many of the essential acts of journalism have not changed in the digital era. Story judgment reflected the news values traditionally found in news stories—deviance, proximity, timeliness, and impact (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013; Shoemaker, 1991). Of these, the interviews make it seem that proximity matters most. Reporters and editors focus their energy on covering local sports, whether local is defined by geographic proximity or by the interest of fans in the area. The interview data suggest that decisions about story selection are almost second nature and automatic to reporters and editors. The decisions are product of training and experience, and an example of normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), the notion of a shared set of norms, values, and practices that cut across individual organizations and a part of a profession. Those norms and values do not appear to be widely changing in the digital age. Story judgment and source selection is an example of institutionalism (Meyer & Rowan 1977) and reflects the idea of tacit knowledge (Nelson & Winter, 1982). Reporters may not be able to say why they do something (Stanley likened it to muscle memory), but they just know it's the way they do things.

Stories and columns tend to focus on games and feature primarily the voices of star players and coaches. A coach's voice will almost always appear in a story, as will a star player. For game coverage, reporters will interview the coach and any players who had a key role in the game, and often that is the star player. Again, this echoes Lowes (1999) and Rowe (2005) and their findings that sports journalism is star-focused. These source-journalist relationships are generally positive, and like Gans (1979), Sigal (1973), Schudson (2011), Shoemaker & Reese (2013) and others have found, the source-journalist relationship is central to journalism. The data in this study show that the centrality of the sports-journalist relationship is also central to sports journalism. Access to coaches, players, team officials and other sources is seen as crucial, which is why the reporters and editors interviewed were so upset about the shrinking access teams were providing to the media. The routine is changing, in the form of less access, but the norm and value remains the same, in that access is considered a critical part of a sports journalist's job. Teams are able to act as publishers through their own official websites, and players and coaches can communicate directly with fans via social media, which reduces the incentive for players to cooperate with media (beyond league-mandated regulations) and leads to reduced access for reporters. The issue of access appears to be one of the central conflicts facing sports journalists in the digital age. Their professional norms and values still require access to sources, but the routine is changing in the form of limited access. Rather than the routine reflecting the norm or value, the evolving routine is now in conflict with the norm/value.

The interviews also reinforce the notion of normalization, first suggested by Singer (2005) in her work studying political blogs and then adapted by Lewis, Lasorsa, and Holton (2012) in their research on Twitter. When confronted with new publishing technologies like blogs and social media, journalists tend to adapt the technology to existing norms, routines,

values, and practices rather than changing their work practices to best fit the new media platform. This is happening in sports journalism. Sports journalists are using digital media as an extension of their traditional professional work rather than creating new kinds of journalism. They're using established journalism values and ethics in their use of digital media. Normalization reflects how the sports journalists' routines are changing but the underlying norms and practices remain the same. Sports journalists using Twitter as a part of their job reflects a changing routine, but normalizing it — as the name suggests — reflects the relatively stable norms and values.

The idea of norms and values not changing at the same rate as routines is important because it may explain why sports journalism (and, by extension, all journalism) has struggled so much with the transition to the digital and social worlds. When it comes to traditional journalism, sports reporters and editors know what they're supposed to do. They know what traditional journalism is supposed to look like. They've learned by doing throughout the years, from established principals and from established practitioners—schools, older reporters, an internship system. But in online journalism, there are no established, institutionalized norms for how to conduct online journalism. There are no norms and values that have been passed on through generations of reporters on busy Friday nights. The interview data suggest this lack of institutionalized norms in online journalism (compared to print journalism) is creating a sort of knowledge vacuum in sports journalism, where reporters and editors fill in the blanks with their own opinions of what should be done based on existing norms, rather than examining what would be the best use of new platforms and technologies. In a sense, the established norms and values of sports journalism potentially constrain the profession from moving forward, reflecting

Sparrow's (1998) findings that institutionalized aspects of journalism stymie the profession's progress.

It's potentially easy to view the Internet's impact on sports journalism as a competence-destroying technology (Anderson & Tushman, 1989; Tushman & Anderson, 1986), one that has totally rendered the previous order as obsolete and completely changed the paradigm in which sports reporters and editors operate. But the interviews paint a more nuanced picture. Reflecting previous findings (Anderson, 2013), the interviews suggest the basic acts of journalism are not changing. Reporters are still reporting. Editors are still assigning, budgeting and editing stories. Much of the content, many of the decisions, are the same or similar to previous generations. There is evolution — reporters and editors both said they are looking for game stories to be more analysis than recap, but game coverage itself remains an essential act of sports journalism. As such, looking at the Internet as either strictly a competence-enhancing or competence-destroying technology to sports journalism does not provide a full understanding. Here, it is important to make a distinction between sports journalism as a profession and sports journalism as an industry. It appears that digital media has been a competence-destroying technology for the journalism industry as a whole. The number of jobs that have been lost, the losses of advertising and circulation revenue, are all indicative of an industry that is in the middle of an upheaval (Pew, 2013). The interviews with sports journalists reflect this, as a number reporters and editors had had their jobs affected by layoffs at their paper. Digital media is fundamentally changing how news is published and consumed. It's making everything that came before it obsolete—one of the hallmarks of a competence-destroying technology. But as the interview data show, it has not had the same effect on the profession of sports journalism. Although the jobs of sports editor and sports reporter are evolving due to digital media, the interviews do not show drastic changes

in the profession. Sports journalists are still covering many of the same stories and using many of the same sources as they were in the pre-digital era. This is not the sign of a competence-destroying technology, in which the previous order is rendered obsolete by the new technology. It's also not the sign of a competence-enhancing technology, because digital and social journalism is not an obvious, order-of-magnitude improvement on print. The existence of an ongoing conversation and debate about the effectiveness of digital journalism demonstrates that it is not a competence-enhancing technology (in which the improvement would be so clear, there'd be no debate). Digital media's effect on sports journalism as a profession is a little more nebulous than its effect on the industry of sports media. That distinction is important to consider. Digital media may be competence-destroying for the sports media industry, but not for sports journalism itself.

What's next? Pragmatic implications

The interviews with sports journalists paint the picture of a profession at a crossroads. Digital and social media and the journalism-as-process model are becoming more prevalent in the profession. Sports journalism is online now, starting on Twitter and ending with a story on a news organization's website. Print, if not incidental, is just one part of the job now, rather than the focus. Sports journalists' work routines appear to reflect this. However, their norms and values remain rooted in print. Their loyalty to the idea of "the story" and their frustration at having to feed "the stream" of online information, is indicative of this split.

That split gets at the heart of the future of sports journalism, and it raises a number of issues. The stream could potentially best serve the readers by presenting them with real-time information — or it could be a disservice because it assumes that readers are as connected to the Internet as journalists, or that the information may not be properly fact-checked. Journalists

could live in the stream and provide real-time news updates, but if that information already exists in the stream from other sources, it's possible journalists could be more valuable focusing on stories, rather than being one more voice in the stream. Everyone knows who won the game, they don't need sports journalists to tell them that. Perhaps the future of sports journalism lies in differentiating between information that can be aggregated from other sources (scores, stats, etc.) and news that can be reported by the paper's staffers (Anderson, 2013). The real value in sports journalists could be in their ability to contextualize and analyze results, either through traditional reporting (interviewing sources) or new methods (statistical analysis). The job of a journalist could evolve from being an observer and reporter into more of an interpreter and analyzer (the Nate Silver model for *The New York Times* and 538.com).

It is, of course, far too early to tell where sports journalism will end up, what the new norms, values and routines will be in the future. However, the data do suggest some possibilities about the future of sports journalism.

It's unlikely print will stage a complete renaissance. The trends over the past two decades clearly show that print is in decline, and digital is on the rise. It's hard to imagine a future, say, 30 years from now, when newspapers have any significant print presence. That would simply go against all the trends in circulation. The work routines of sports journalists are already beginning to reflect this. In time, the norms and values should begin to reflect this as well. This includes moving away from the idea that a newspaper is the one and only source of news and information in a community but is instead part of a larger network that includes other media outlets as well as fans using social media. The assertion from Howard, the mid-sized paper's sports editor, to his reporters that tweeting a game's final score is the most important thing they'll do tonight, reflects this old value. The final score of a game is important, but fans can get that from the school or

team itself. Sports journalists should focus on what editor Alexander called “unique local content,” whether this is analysis, feature stories or in-depth coverage of local sports.

Also, the reliance on access to official sources of information is a norm that could evolve in the digital age. If fans can get press releases emailed to them from their favorite teams and follow their favorite players on Twitter and Instagram, then access to those sources is no longer “unique local content.” The practices of Bleacher Report and Deadspin are potentially instructive here. They do not rely on access. In fact, they thrive by producing content that doesn’t rely at all on having to interview sources or even be at games. They are analyzing games statistically or producing screen captures and GIFs of memorable plays in real time. In the short term, these practices may be instructive to sports journalists. Finding new ways to tell the story of a game or to cover an athlete — using digital sports journalism as a template — are potentially more worthwhile uses of sports journalists' time and energy in the digital age than writing a sidebar or a notebook.

Perhaps the future of sports journalism lies more in mobile technology, with smartphones that continue to become an important way readers get news. Perhaps, looking forward, sports journalism will live on mobile devices. There could be different levels of mobile subscriptions — a fan watching a game on TV has different information needs than someone who is at the game, and both have different needs than somebody who’s not able to watch at all. News organizations could have context-specific mobile notifications. Fans not watching the game get score updates, fans who are watching the game could get more news-driven updates, or invitations to join in fan chats on Twitter or online. Perhaps this future also includes the use of geolocation news, in which mobile phone users are able to receive relevant news and information updates based on their physical location, as detected by their smartphone (Jeanfaivre, 2014). This could be

accomplished through the news organizations themselves or a third-party, like BreakingNews.com. There are apps that already provide services like this, but newspapers could begin expanding them and using them more on their own coverage areas. Again, the specific technology or use is less important long-term than the value of thinking outside of the traditional norms and values of newspaper sports journalism.

Regardless of how it happens, the numbers indicate that the trend in digital news is mobile. More than half of Americans own either a smartphone or a tablet, and two-thirds of those users get news on their mobile device (Pew, 2012). To remain relevant in this digital age, newspaper sports journalism as a profession will have to find ways to take advantage of mobile journalism beyond simple breaking news alerts.

Although this study has focused on sports journalism, its implications can help researchers understand and study news journalism, as well. The interview data show that sports journalism is becoming more and more integrated within the rest of the newsroom. Jan and Kenny, sports managers at digitally oriented news organizations, both pointed out this culture change and how deeply it affects sports journalism. Digital and social media have brought sports journalism out of the night shift and more into the daytime. This means that the practices of sports journalists and news journalists are becoming more intertwined. Also, as stated previously, the work sports journalists do is not very different than the work news reporters do. Sports journalists are covering events, cultivating sources, and using social media to interact with readers and keep up with the news the same way that their colleagues on the news desk are. The specifics of their jobs may be different, but the underlying challenges to institutionalized journalism appear to be the same whether looking at the sports department or the news department.

Limitations of this research

As with any research study, there are limitations to this dissertation. Using in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to capture the participants' experiences in their own voices. However, the study does lack the first-person observational detail that ethnographic research would bring. The researcher is dependent upon the trustworthiness and honesty of the participants to accurately describe their work practices and attitudes. The researcher has no reason to believe the participants were not honest in their descriptions, but there's no way to guarantee this. In addition, the anonymity that was provided to participants limited the amount that this research could quote from their work (quoting too liberally would reveal identifying information about the reporter or editor), limiting the detail that could be provided about how the norms, values and routines are demonstrated.

The participants came from a wide range of news organizations, had a wide variety of job titles and beats, and represented a wide range of experience. The study cast a wide net for participants, leading to a broad pool of participants. Only one or two beat reporters from each major sport were interviewed. This was done mindfully, to get that broad perspective of the profession as a whole. But it is a potential limitation that the participant pool was too broadly defined. In addition, there were no copy editors interviewed—only section editors and reporters—which means a perspective of the profession was not included. Also, this study focuses only on journalists at news organizations in the United States and says nothing about sports journalism worldwide.

Future research

Looking forward, this dissertation provides a basis for several areas of future research. This research can be focused on sports journalism (that is the agenda that will be described), but it can easily be extrapolated to other areas of journalism, as well.

As a qualitative study, this dissertation provides potential theoretical linkages needed to conduct a survey of sports journalists. This survey could potentially look at, among other areas, the institutionalized aspects of sports journalism—specifically the presence of both normative and mimetic isomorphism in how the profession’s norms, values, practices, and routines are established and maintained; the place of digital media on a competence-enhancing/destroying technology continuum; and how media routines define sports journalism. This fits with one of the established patterns of research: using a qualitative study to provide the basis for a follow-up quantitative study on the same topic. It would take the data suggested by the interviews and put the weight of statistical backing behind them.

This study was focused on daily journalism and newspaper sports journalism. This research could be expanded by studying the routines, practices, norms, and values of national sports websites (like ESPN.com) or of national sports blogs (like Deadspin).

Several of the findings in this study warrant future research. The problems sports journalists are having in getting access to sources is an area that is ripe for future work. Such study could examine the notion of access as a badge of legitimacy and a means of differentiation for sports journalists compared to blogs and fan usage of social media. In addition, the evolution of the Scoop Scoreboard is a fertile area for future research, particularly in looking at how young reporters are promoted and celebrated — whether it is through breaking news, or mastery of digital and social media.

New institutional theory provided the theoretical basis for this research. In the future, it would be interesting to incorporate network theory into the study of sports journalism. If the canonical media sociology research into the social construction of news can be seen as having some unspoken basis in new institutional theory, then looking at news in the digital and social-media age could have its roots in network theory. The relationships between journalists, sources, bloggers and readers could all be mapped under network theory, and how news is produced could be studied from the perspective of networks, of strong and weak ties. This is a potentially fertile area in which to study the changing journalism landscape, both in sports and in news.

The de-emphasis on the print edition raises a potentially noteworthy issue for sports journalists. It would be interesting to examine print newspapers as a kind of symbolic structure or a totem. A totem is an item in a civilization that carries supreme significance within that society (Durkheim, 1912). A symbolic structure is similar, in that it is a structure that carries more symbolic than practical importance. An example would be a college library. In this digital age, a physical library building with books may not be the most efficient use of resources, due to the presence of digital search engines, the cost of maintenance and collections, etc. But virtually no college would get rid of its physical library because of its symbolic importance to the college experience. The same thing could potentially be said about print newspapers. Part of the problem digital-first publications face—like the ones Mona, Kenny, Owen and Jan work at—is that they have drastically reduced their print schedules. Losing that daily newspaper has led to questions about their identity: Are they a newspaper? A website? A news organization? Although this point was not directly addressed in the interviews, the notion of seeing print newspapers as a symbolic structure could potentially affect how reporters identify themselves and see themselves

and the work they do. Again, professional identities that have been institutionalized and understood for generations may potentially no longer be as relevant in this digital age.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined institutional sports journalism in the digital age. Using institutional theory and media sociology, it defined the social construction of American sports journalism, showing how it is produced in the 21st century through the routines, norms and practices of sports journalists. It showed that many of the routines, norms and practices of sports journalism are the result of mimetic and professional isomorphism. It demonstrated that although the practice of traditional newspaper sports journalism is institutionalized, online journalism is not yet institutionalized, which appears to be creating much of the tension within the profession. A new reporting routine — “gather-report-sort” (as opposed to “gather-sort-report”) — emerged from the interview data, which further defines the acceleration of journalism in the digital age. The dissertation also suggests that much of the change in sports journalism appears to be happening at the routines level, and that norms and values do not appear to be changing as rapidly. This is the fundamental struggle sports journalists face — juggling the story and the stream. Moving forward, how sports journalists’ define and deal with that struggle will define the future of sports journalism.

Table 1

Participants' information

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Experience</u>	<u>Current job</u>	<u>Size of newspaper</u>
Simon	25 years	Pro hockey/baseball	75K-175K
Anthony	5 years	Editor/HS/pro football	Under-30K
Malcolm	20 years	HS/soccer/College	75K-175K
Linda	17 years	Columnist	75K-175K
Cameron	3 years	Pro football	175K-up
Kevin	20 years	Editor	30K-75K
Julian	15 years	Editor	30K-75K
Roger	8 years	Baseball/College	30K-75K
Stanley	25 years	Columnist	175K-up
Mona	2 years	College football	75K-175K
Owen	29 years	College basketball	75K-175K
Kayla	6 years	College football	175K-up
Elena	13 1/2 years	HS/Local colleges	Under-30K
Tim	9 1/2 years	Editor	30K-75K
Hannah	3 years	HS/pro baseball	30K-75K
Jan	6 years	Sports manager	75K-175K
Kenny	10 1/2 years	Sports manager	75K-175K
Howard	10 years	Editor	30K-75K
Morris	17 years	Editor	Under-30K
Kristin	22 years	Editor	75K-175K
Luke	6 1/2 years	Pro basketball	175K-up
Jeremy	11 years	Editor	Under-30K
Darren	7 1/2 years	Digital editor	175K-up
Alexander	25 years	Editor	75K-175K
Frederick	20 years	Editor	175K-up

Appendix A: Interview Guide

General outline:

Demographic questions (followed by)

Descriptive questions about news values, norms, and routine processes(followed by/mixed with)

Open-ended questions about how job has changed.

Sample questions: (Note: The questions will not necessarily be asked in this order. These are sample questions that will help guide the conversation and the interview).

Are you in a place where you can talk freely if you choose to do so?How long have you been a journalist?

How long have you been at your current job/on your current beat?

For reporters

How many stories do you write per week?

How often do you blog/Tweet?

How do you determine if something is a story?How do you decide who to interview for a story?

(The writer will be shown a copy of a recent story he or she wrote). Walk me through the process of writing this story - from the start of your work day, until you shut it down for the day.

How much of your reporting/writing has to do with issues that are not directly related to sports (games, on-the-field stuff).

What do you value most as a reporter?

How does access to sources influence your story selection?

Where and from whom did you learn to be a reporter?

How do you define the notion of professionalism?

What is the most important aspect of your job?

Do you try to differentiate yourself professionally from other sources of information (bloggers, Twitter users, online writers, etc.)?

Who do you view as your competition?

Define a scoop.

For editors

Describe for me your work. How large a staff do you oversee? What goes into that?

What are your daily expectations for your reporters?

What kind of work do you do daily?

(The editor will be shown a story written by a staff member). Walk me through the process that got this story into the paper. Start with when you scheduled it on the budget and go until it was published.

(The editor will be shown his or her section's stories from a recent day) Walk me through the process of publishing these stories. How and why were these stories picked, and what wasn't picked?

What is your section's deadline for print? How has online changed that?

How often are you publishing news online?

What makes a story worth publishing online?

The last reporter you hired - why did you pick that person?

The last reporter you hired, what kind of online/social media/digital presence does he or she have?

When at your paper is sports news covered in other sections? Describe that process for me

How do you want your reporters to act?

How large is your average daily news hole?

When putting together your daily/weekly/monthly budget, how do you plan for online news?

What types of stories do you look for to be posted online?

What are your expectations for your reporters in terms of professionalism?

What does the phrase “professionalism” mean to you?

Where and from whom did you learn to be an editor?

What kind of work do you do for your paper’s online edition?

What is the most important aspect of your job? Of your reporters’ jobs.

For both reporters and editors

How has your job changed since your first day as a new journalist?

How is your job the same as it was your first day as a new journalist?

Let’s talk social media ... how much time in your work day is dedicated to using social media?

How do you use social media/expect your reporters to use social media?

Give me an example of a story in which you relied heavily on using social media as a reporting tool (for editors, where you and your reporters used it). Walk me through the process. What was the first thing you heard about that story. When did you decide to go to social media ...

What is the bar for publishing something on social media? Is that different than print? If so, why?

Why did you first start using social media?

Describe any evolution you’ve had in your uses/attitudes toward social media.

How have social media demands affected your work?

When news breaks, walk me through the process.

Categorize, for me, the different types of stories you do/assign.

How, if at all, does your reporting/editing change for each of the different story categories.

What kinds of stories do you find yourself doing (or assigning) now that maybe you weren't doing earlier in your career?

Do you differentiate between working for print and working online when you're on the job?

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