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Media Discourse about Entrepreneurial Journalism: Implications for Journalistic Capital

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Abstract:
Drawing on insights from field theory, this study examines journalists' textual and discursive construction of entrepreneurial journalism from 2000 to 2014. The goal is to understand how such discursive practices contribute to the articulation and legitimation of entrepreneurial journalism as a form of cultural capital as the field's economic imperatives change. The findings suggest that "entrepreneurial journalism" is a condensational term: It is defined broadly and loosely but generally in a positive way. Despite the potential for disruption to long-standing journalistic doxa, particularly normative stances related to the separation of editorial and commercial interests, many of the examined articles seem to reflect a belief that entrepreneurialism is not only acceptable but even vital for survival in a digital age.

Key words:
cultural capital, entrepreneurial journalism, field theory, norms, textual-discourse analysis

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In the wake of technological and economic upheaval that has cost thousands of journalists their jobs and shuttered some media enterprises altogether (King 2010; McChesney and Nichols 2010), growing numbers of observers have advocated entrepreneurialism as an alternative to legacy media work (Briggs 2012). Journalists now envision careers outside traditional newsrooms, either as working for an entrepreneurial news company or starting one themselves (Picard 2015). While it is not always clear what *entrepreneurial journalism* means, it has nonetheless become an industry buzz term and a source of hope.

This exploratory study culls references from a broad range of U.S. industry publications and general news sites in order to examine the textual and discursive construction of entrepreneurial journalism by writers within the journalism field. Of special conceptual interest is discourse related to the tension between the field's economic and cultural capital, the latter particularly encapsulated by normative principles, which have consistently been important in journalists' consideration of industry innovation (Singer 2015).

On its face, the terminology of entrepreneurialism raises important issues. *Entrepreneur* magazine defines an entrepreneur as someone who "organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise." Although twentieth century journalism was a fairly stable social institution, the emergence and promotion of something labeled "entrepreneurial journalism" thus implies the need for risk and revitalization, inherently signaling instability. Moreover, the idea that journalists would strike out on their own to organize an innovative enterprise and assume the accompanying financial risks potentially collapses long-standing normative notions of a strict separation – indeed, a "wall" – between journalism and business functions (Coddington 2015). In the past, publishers were the ones who took on an entrepreneurial role, while the journalists' role involved editorial judgment. Entrepreneurial journalism potentially conflates those roles. In doing so, it raises issues distinct from the notion of entrepreneurial companies, media or otherwise, and focuses on concerns at the level of the individual practitioner.

The conflation raises many questions about the complex and controversial relationship between journalistic practices and norms during periods of upheaval. Some have argued that digitization has left the principles of journalism unchanged (Craft and Davis 2013), but others propose that technological and economic transformation has occasioned a revisiting of the ethical frameworks that constitute journalism's cultural capital (Elliott 2008; Hanitzsch 2007; Singer 2010). In general, the ways in which changing practices do or do not affect normative principles are open to debate. As Schudson (2001, 150) has cautioned, an assumption that the former explains the latter "skips over a necessary step," since normative prescriptions can be, and often are, offered in contradiction to prevailing practices.

This study uses the framework of field theory to analyze professionals' discourse about entrepreneurial journalism in a way that raises the normative dimensions of the discourse to a plane of explicit consideration, potentially opening the concept to more systematic ethical theorizing. In addition, it provides insight into how changing institutional practices are related to that discourse.

The Journalistic Field

Bourdieu has argued that despite inevitably heterodox ideas and practices among members of a social field, such as journalism, those members "accept a certain number of presuppositions that are constitutive of the very functioning of the field" (2005, 36). He and others call these presuppositions "doxa." A kind of ideational and practical orthodoxy thus defines the broad contours of a field, so that a discussion of journalistic doxa encompasses a set of implicit concepts tacitly held by news workers (Schultz 2007). Yet although fields are

characterized by this broad agreement on their own unique practices and outlooks, they also are arenas of struggle, with both individuals and organizations competing to valorize specific forms of capital that they possess (Benson 2006).

Bourdieu also outlines the tension between economic capital – within the journalism field, typically expressed in terms of advertising revenues, circulation, or audience ratings – and cultural capital, articulated in terms of skills, expertise, knowledge, and similar characteristics (Benson and Neveu 2005). However, Hanitzsch (2007) narrows the focus to three key types of institutional knowledge – institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical orientations – as cultural capital constitutive of the journalistic field. This knowledge finds expression in normative discourse, which constructs certain practices, arrangements, and beliefs as proper and moral. For example, as indicated above, journalistic cultural capital has included the ethical admonition for news organizations to maintain a wall of separation between what practitioners refer to as "church and state," their news and business functions.

Bourdieu reminds us that cultural capital is subject to change (Benson and Neveu 2005). While the received doxa of the past is an important source of inertia in the present, the field of journalism is continually subject to disruption by both exogenous and endogenous forces. Political and economic forces, for example, can and do challenge practices and beliefs (Baker 2002; Herman and Chomsky 2002); indeed, journalism has been described as "a contested practice embedded in larger political, economic, and cultural struggles" (Carlson 2009, 273). In particular, Bourdieu's field theory underscores the pull of economic capital, a pull that potentially affects the structure of journalism's cultural capital. Meanwhile, new entrants to the journalistic field can inject new beliefs as well as new practices (Elliott 2008; Singer 2007). Such forces – including the rise of entrepreneurialism as an acceptable type of journalistic practice – therefore have the potential to reshape the field's cultural capital.

A number of scholars, particularly in the United States and Britain, have actively explored connections between field theory and journalism. Benson, for example, has highlighted the emphasis of field theory on media change, including the impact created by new actors attempting to enter and make their mark in the field, as is the case here. "A rapid influx of new agents into the field can serve both as a force for transformation and for conservation," he writes. Nonetheless, "entry into the journalistic field requires acceptance of the basic rules of the game, which themselves are a powerful force of inertia" (Benson 1999, 468). Similarly, Couldry points out that digitally enabled decentralization in the means of media production and distribution create a need to understand "how, in what ways, and to what extent the rules, categories, and capital" are changing for actors in journalistic and related fields (Couldry 2003, 673).

Unlike doxa, cultural capital includes normative directives and thus must be explicitly, discursively expressed (Vos, Craft, and Ashley 2012). If changes in journalistic practice are to lead to a shift in cultural capital, that shift should be evident in the normative discourse of the journalistic field, which will cast some new practices and ideas as legitimate and some as illegitimate (Craft, Vos, and Wolfgang 2015). Moreover, whether emergent practices and ideas are defined as heterodox or as orthodox, relative to established cultural capital, is important in positioning the newcomers within the field (Waisbord 2013). For example, Hartley (2013) examined the struggle of online journalists to achieve legitimacy within a field whose doxa tend to position top-quality journalism as deep, investigative, informative, polished, and time-consuming to create.

Entrepreneurial Journalism

Entrepreneurialism has been a hot topic in business schools for decades, since Drucker posited systematic innovation as integral to the management process (Maciariello, 2015). Today, a range of academic journals, mostly within the management field, are devoted

to the topic, as are innumerable books and extensive media coverage (Kuratko, 2005).

The connection of entrepreneurialism to journalism, however, is relatively new and not extensively explored or theorized in the journalism studies literature. As Compaine and Hoag (2012: 30) drily note, "Entrepreneurship of any sort is not a concept that has been closely identified with the media industry" – despite evidence that particularly in the United States, the industry as a whole actually has been more entrepreneurial in recent years than other service or manufacturing enterprises (Hoag 2008). This section summarizes some of what has been learned to date about entrepreneurial journalism, as a practice and as an area of curricular attention.

Entrepreneurial Journalists Today

In a wide-ranging literature review conducted in the mid-2000s, Hang and van Weezel (2005) identified two strands in a thin body of work, most of it published in the 2000s: entrepreneurship in the media and the media impact on entrepreneurship. Much of the research in the first category focused on film and music industries rather than journalistic enterprises. The second, consisting of fewer than a dozen relevant studies, included profiles of media entrepreneurs such as Rupert Murdoch, as well as challenges facing women entrepreneurs in particular. In contrast, our work here focuses on discourse about the journalists engaged in work that can be considered entrepreneurial.

But over the past decade, as traditional media models have come under increasing pressure, attention to new journalistic approaches has accelerated. The voices urging journalists to understand news as a business have grown louder, with much of the rhetoric positioning such an understanding as necessary to survival (Coddington 2015). Although the tone of much of the published work has been relatively uncritical, two broad areas of concern can be identified, one economic and the other normative – much in line with Bourdieu's conceptualization of the tensions within the journalistic field itself.

Media economist Robert Picard has long been attuned to the financial side of entrepreneurial journalism, including business models, opportunities, challenges, and implications. In an early consideration of online business models, Picard (2000) stressed that the success of technological innovations hinged on the extent of overlap among the needs of competing interests: customers, content producers, and financiers. When those interests "converge or can be accommodated, the likelihood of success of a new application or technology increases," he wrote. Innovations "will succeed only if the market believes that they create value that is currently absent" and cannot be fulfilled by cheaper or simpler alternatives (p. 61).

In a 2011 report for Open Society Foundations, Picard delved more deeply into the challenges facing media enterprises and those behind them. The fundamental problem, he said, is that traditional media content was created in "technical, economic, political and information environments that no longer exist." The industry challenge today is to ensure that it is providing a core value that consumers want and doing so in unique or distinctive ways appropriate to a digital network (Picard 2011: 8). Existing business models are losing their effectiveness in this environment, but new ones have yet to prove sustainable over the long term, he cautioned.

A number of recent attempts to examine and categorize the efforts of entrepreneurial journalists have highlighted the challenges. While traditional journalism relies heavily on just two revenue sources – advertisers and media consumers – start-ups also must scramble to generate income from consulting, design work, syndication, event hosting, and whatever other opportunities present themselves (Sirkkunen and Cook 2012). Moreover, entrepreneurial enterprises inherently operate in highly uncertain circumstances, dependent on fickle users and investor whims; indeed, the elusiveness of sustainability suggests that "survival in itself must be recognised as a form of success" (Bruno and Nielsen 2012, 102).

The preconceptions of journalists-turned-entrepreneurs also can be a problem. In case studies of three U.S. news start-ups that sought to replace community coverage lost because of newspaper shutdowns or cutbacks, Naldi and Picard (2012) found all three were characterized by what they called "formational myopia": unrealistic expectations about demand for their services and the economic value of their work. Each start-up tried to shift professional newspaper practices and norms to the new medium – a cost-intensive, hierarchical endeavor poorly suited to the online environment. All three sites failed to reach their goals of "providing broad coverage and community impact using significant numbers of professional journalists" (p. 91).

The other general area of concern reflected in the literature has been normative. In particular, a growing emphasis on the perceived need for journalists to embrace economic imperatives can be seen as necessarily compromising the vaunted "wall" separating editorial and commercial considerations. More concretely and again in line with field theory, the widespread gutting of newsrooms in the late 2000s has served as "a concrete indicator of the power of the profession's business side and the degree to which it must be sated" (Coddington 2015, 78).

Media ethicist Stephen Ward has been among those alarmed by the prospect of journalists doubling as fund-raisers. Issues of journalistic independence and conflicts of interest "will soon become the dominant theme in journalism ethics," he predicted in the late 2000s (Ward, 2009, par. 3). "Guidelines for protecting independence, responding to public skepticism, and managing conflicts of interest will have to be constructed" (par. 8). Ward urged a combination of rigorous editorial oversight and disclosure of any potential conflicts in addressing "the looming ethical problems of an entrepreneurial age" (par. 19). Poynter Institute ethicist Kelly McBride agrees that conflicts between editorial mission and revenue are the biggest source of ethical concern for journalistic start-ups: "Money itself isn't tainted, but it comes with stipulations always" (Briggs 2010). A premium on transparency is commonly cited as a safeguard: "As important as having ethics is letting people know that you do," advises Briggs (2012, 54). "A startup has no track record to establish its credibility. As a journalism entrepreneur, it's crucial to be open about the goals and standards of your site."

Another normative concern relates to the extent to which entrepreneurial journalism diverges from the classic conception of journalism as a public service that enables an informed electorate to make sound civic choices – what Gans (2003) and others have called the journalist's view of democracy. Hanitzsch, for example, distinguishes a market orientation, associated with giving audiences what they want to know "at the expense of what they should know" (2007, 375), from other cultural conceptualizations of journalism, including the independent watchdog that serves as a normative benchmark in much of Western society. Market-driven journalism (McManus 1994) addresses audiences not as engaged citizens but as clients and consumers, and the digital environment – home to most contemporary entrepreneurial journalism efforts – has long been recognized as an arena where journalistic practices are particularly vulnerable to market influence (Cohen 2002). Whether the pressures are exerted by foundations and donors, as in many non-profit start-ups, or by commercial entities such as advertisers or sponsors, the rise of the content producer who doubles as revenue generator clearly suggests potential pitfalls.

Other research, however, has foregrounded the potential of entrepreneurial journalism to open up new opportunities for beleaguered professionals. For example, in their exploratory interviews with 30 U.S. media entrepreneurs – defined as founders of an independent content business with a clear revenue model – Compaine and Hoag (2012, 43) identified three key findings: few barriers to entry, the critical role of technological innovation, and a somewhat surprising role of "big media" as a source of opportunity. In general, they noted an

environment hospitable to media start-ups, as "technology and economics have conspired to undercut many of the barriers that had existed to would-be media entrepreneurs."

Entrepreneurial Journalists Tomorrow

Because new entrants to the field are potential disruptors of journalistic cultural capital and doxa, it is important to consider the role of journalism education in conceptualizing and legitimizing entrepreneurial journalism. A growing number of journalism schools and programs around the Western world are expanding their emphasis on entrepreneurialism (Breiner 2013; Schaich and Klein 2013) as a valuable, even necessary, skill for graduates entering a news ecosystem still enmeshed in a "culture of resistance" (Briggs 2012, 21). City University of New York was a pioneer in advocating curricular reconfiguration if not wholesale reinvention; CUNY launched its entrepreneurial journalism program in early 2011, emphasizing business opportunities, collaboration, technology, and creative practice (Claussen 2011). Since then, dozens of other j-schools also have incorporated entrepreneurialism in the curriculum, and several academics have published scholarly articles recounting the results. Virtually all of this work has positioned an entrepreneurial skills set – and mind set – as vital to the future of the journalistic field and thus a necessary curricular addition for entry-level practitioners.

Baines and Kennedy (2010), for example, point out that the careers of future graduates are "increasingly likely to feature consecutive and concurrent periods of long-term employment, short-term contracts, self-employment, [and] working in temporary clusters on specific projects"; they urge educators to give journalism students "the opportunity to become entrepreneurial self-employed agents, who might compete with, as well as service, other media organisations." Their recommended strategies for empowering students to become "reliable analysts and brokers of information" include embedding enterprise in existing journalism programs; offering specialist support, such as incubator services to provide guidance on starting a business; and setting up knowledge exchanges, such as entrepreneurship workshops with business leaders (p. 97).

A small-scale study by Ferrier (2013) of faculty members developing media entrepreneurship courses found that key objectives included introducing journalism students to business concepts and helping them identify opportunities for innovation. Classes typically involved the creation of products such as hyperlocal online news sites or regional niche hubs; students also commonly were taught to undertake market research, analyze potential competitors, and construct and deliver a pitch. Faculty members, including recent industry professionals, cited changes in the nature of media industry work – again, short-term contracts, self-employment, temporary group work on specific projects – among their prime motivation for creating such classes. "It's really important to empower students with the knowledge and skill sets to create their own jobs," one respondent explained (p. 229).

Journalism think tanks such as the Poynter Institute also have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial skills for students considering journalism careers, in addition to offering training and networking opportunities for more experienced journalists-turned-entrepreneurs (Wallace 2012). In its 2013 report on the state of journalism education, Poynter called unequivocally for innovation in the journalism curriculum, so that educators can "empower students to be open to the disruptions they'll inevitably face in their own careers" (Finberg 2013: 18) – essentially, to "train students for jobs that do not yet exist" (Culver 2013).

Similarly, UK university students taking part of a series of workshops were encouraged to "consider themselves not only within a framework of business and entrepreneurship but also as creative, imaginative individuals with a unique contribution to make to a sector that is in need of rejuvenation" (Hunter and Nel 2011, 15), as well as to recognize synergies between the seemingly disparate fields of business and creative

industries. The authors conclude that students are, at least potentially, enterprising and adaptable, making them "ideally placed" to capitalize on industry shifts (p. 22). More broadly, they advocate a pedagogical transition away from training students for employment in a specific industry and toward more general employability as creative communicators. In Australia, Quinn (2010) also has urged that journalism students be taught to be entrepreneurial: to learn how to run a small business, to understand audiences and audience research, and to be able to market themselves, among other attributes.

That said, although entrepreneurial journalism curricula is gaining traction in some places, the evidence suggests many have a long way to go. A recent survey of journalism program directors in the United States underscores the challenge of finding room in the curriculum to foster entrepreneurial skills. Blom and Davenport (2012) report that only 11 percent of j-school administrators include entrepreneurial journalism courses in their list of "seven most important core courses," behind 20 other topics that range from media law/ethics to feature writing. Similarly, the European Journalism Training Association commissioned a study to understand what qualifications were seen as important to prepare European students for a changing industry; it found that entrepreneurial journalism skills received low rankings from both practitioners and students, suggesting a preference for doing journalistic work "without interference from market forces or the public" (Drok 2013, 156). A smaller-scale study found that media education in Flanders was aimed primarily at preparing aspiring journalists "for a serial monomedia career" (Opgenhaffen, d'Haenens, and Corten 2013, 141).

Drawing on this body of theoretical and descriptive work, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How is "entrepreneurial journalism" being defined by journalists through discourse published in the trade and popular press?

RQ2: What is the tone of this discourse?

RQ3: What are the implications of this journalistic discourse for journalistic doxa and for the discursive construction of cultural capital within a changing journalistic field?

Study Design

This study has modest empirical goals, seeking simply to explore how various actors in the journalistic field are discursively constructing entrepreneurial journalism. What do they mean by the term, and what are the implications of those meanings? For this exploratory study, a traditional textual-discourse analysis (van Dijk 1980) is used to attend to the ways that practitioners talk about entrepreneurial journalism through their writing for both general and professional audiences.

Textual analysis of trade publications, reviews, and institutes fulfilled the goal of capturing and analyzing the discourse within the journalistic field. The point of textual analysis is to find out what interpretations will most plausibly be produced in a particular context. "By seeing the variety of ways in which it is possible to interpret reality, we also understand our own cultures better because we start to see the limitations and advantages of our own sense-making practices" (McKee 2003, 1). Hence, the goal is to gain a broad understanding, suitable as a basis for additional empirical study, of how journalists are making sense of entrepreneurial journalism and how they are negotiating its implications for the long-standing doxa of the field.

To address our interest in the field's discourse about entrepreneurial journalism, broadly defined, we searched for articles referencing the concept that were produced by journalists either for the general public or for fellow practitioners. The former included articles in newspapers and other general news outlets, while the latter included material from journalism trade journals, journalism reviews, and journalism institutes. For logistical reasons, we limited our sample to U.S. publications and to those with accessible archives.

Each of these outlets had to be referenced by another outlet in the sample to ensure that its output constituted discourse of the journalism field.

We scraped or searched for articles from each trade publication that referred to one or more of the keywords "entrepreneurial journalism," "entrepreneurial," and "entrepreneur," and to various iterations of these keywords. We limited the sample of trade press articles to those published between 2000 and 2014, a total of 175 articles. We also searched for news articles that mentioned "entrepreneurial journalism," using the Factiva database, which indexes articles from newspapers and selected other news sites. This yielded an additional 108 articles. However, a great many of the items indexed by Factiva either were press releases or were published in niche outlets whose journalists would be unlikely to accurately reflect a general practitioner perspective on entrepreneurial journalism. Ultimately, only 28 of the Factiva database articles fit our goals related to general industry discourse. Our total sample therefore was a total of 203 trade press and general news articles that substantively referenced entrepreneurial journalism.

Our unit of analysis, however, is the discourse about entrepreneurial journalism. We ultimately analyzed the texts as discourse of the field; the speakers, writers, articles, and publications provide context for our analysis, but are not the focus. To underscore this focus, our findings do not always identify the speaker, writer, or publication by name. We are analyzing the *discourse of a field*.

The articles were analyzed for the ways in which "entrepreneurial journalism" was defined, the tone of the depictions – for example, is entrepreneurialism a welcome arrival within the journalistic culture? – and the patterns and trends in those depictions, particularly those related to normative principles and practice. The discourse analysis thus pays special attention to the ways in which the legitimacy of entrepreneurial journalism is textually constructed and relevant themes emerge: What range of meanings is reflected in the industry discourse from which implications for the journalistic field might be derived? How might issues related to journalistic cultural practice be understood from this discourse?

Findings

Defining Entrepreneurial Journalism

While the term "entrepreneurial journalism" has clearly entered the industry discourse, there have been few attempts to explicitly describe or define what the term means. In the everyday journalistic discourse we examined, entrepreneurial journalism was presented as a familiar concept – which may or may not be the case for audiences either inside or outside the media industry – with a meaning malleable enough to describe a wide variety of practices and attitudes. Indeed, entrepreneurial journalism was as likely to be described in terms of an "entrepreneurial spirit" as it was a specific practice or set of practices.

In some respects, entrepreneurial journalism functions as a condensational term or symbol, described by Herbst as a term that enables reference "to abstract, intricate ideas, and also to the profound emotions associated with those ideas" (1993, 32). She says condensational terms or symbols are frequent in popular debate because speakers can tap a variety of meanings and thus appeal to a broader audience, as was true in our sampled articles. In other words, the broad and loose definition of entrepreneurial journalism is itself a discursive strategy that can elicit vaguely positive connotations while deflecting examination of the intricacies of the concept.

While the emotions may not be profound, some of the discourse does speak of entrepreneurial journalism in messianic or apocalyptic terms, with its evangelists using the term to reference a new and better kind of journalism that they see as desperately needed. These writers see entrepreneurialism as representing a fervent hope for the future in the midst of an uncertain present. For example, one media executive called it "the future of information

dissemination," and a journalist turned educator said, "We're all very concerned about sustaining quality journalism, and we think the future of journalism is going to be entrepreneurial."

A few, however, saw it as a profound threat to "Fourth Estate values" or even to traditional journalism's existence, such as the writer of an *Editor & Publisher* article who warned that the role of entrepreneurial non-profits "should be to help increase the quality of journalism, but not at the expense of for-profit organizations."

Whether entrepreneurial journalism is supportive or disruptive of received journalistic capital is ultimately obscured by the vagueness of the concept in our sampled articles. Nonetheless, what emerges from this discourse about entrepreneurial journalism is a rough picture of what journalists seem to mean when they use the term. They describe it as an emerging field, a set of skills, a spirit, a drive, and a serious act. The entrepreneurial journalist is depicted as a founder, an innovator, a trailblazer, a business creator, and a freelancer; one 2014 article used the term "journopreneur." Entrepreneurial journalism start-ups and other enterprises are labeled as experimental, independent, young, and nimble.

All of these are primarily lexical or nominal definitions, which seek to stipulate the essential features of a thing – although the contours of what really is essential about "entrepreneurial journalism" appear blurred in journalistic discourse. Descriptions offered in our sample say little about what entrepreneurial journalists do that makes them entrepreneurial – or, for that matter, that makes them journalists. The articles sometimes offered their own definitions or descriptions. For example, a *New York Times* piece stated: "Entrepreneurial journalism, broadly speaking, simply refers to pulling journalism, business and technology closer together." A *Broadcasting & Cable* profile of an entrepreneurial journalist described him as "drawing on both his reportorial instincts and his business acumen." Yet such statements describing various characteristics of entrepreneurial journalism or journalists stop short of showing how the final amalgam – of journalism, business, and technology, or of reportorial instincts and business acumen – is produced.

Features of entrepreneurial journalism also were presented in the form of comparisons with and references to the financial difficulties and diminishing economic capital of the traditional media industry. The prevalence of City University of New York professor and long-time media change advocate Jeff Jarvis – known for his pointed critiques of failed business models and mind sets in traditional news organizations – as a source could account in part for this positioning. But a comparative framework was implicit or explicit in other articles, as well. In a 2012 item about j-school curriculum changes, for example, Poynter analyst Rick Edmonds tells *Crain's New York Business* that "the traditional progression of working your way up from a small newspaper to a bigger one isn't what it once was."

Another kind of definition is a stipulative definition, typically offered for a relatively new phenomenon, which tends to be explained in terms of things already known. Entrepreneurial journalism is indeed relatively new, and this stipulative approach was apparent in a number of articles. In particular, articles about journalism education were apt to provide a definition connected to known terms, as faculty sources were given space to outline what their classes covered. In addition to what Jarvis termed in a 2008 interview with the *Washington Post* "the eternal verities of journalism," definitions typically included multimedia capabilities and some sense of the workings of business, though these were outlined vaguely if at all. In general, it would appear to be quite difficult for readers, listeners, or viewers to grasp what "entrepreneurial journalism" entailed if they didn't already believe they knew.

A third kind of definition is illustrative: It defines through the use of concrete or abstract examples. Some articles in our sample relied on concrete examples of such disparate news start-ups as the San Francisco Bay Citizen, an investigative journalism site; Sahara

Reporters, a watchdog enterprise started up by a Nigerian living in New York; and Faster Times, a general-interest publication built on the output of freelancers. *Entertainment Newsweekly* profiled Sportspress Northwest, which was described as "featuring veterans from traditional journalism as well as citizen journalism" with "the right business model, intellectual capital, advertisers, sponsors and fans to sustain entrepreneurial journalism in the digital arena." *Folio* ran numerous stories profiling entrepreneurs who started new magazines and offered advice to others wishing to create their own enterprises. Other examples offered more abstract definitions, for instance defining entrepreneurial journalism as non-profits and "hyperlocal journalism," generally online but sometimes including print publications or digital production studios.

What the diverse definitions have in common is an emphasis on innovation and crafting new business strategies, including targeting niche audiences. Journalistic or reportorial work – the traditional bedrock of the journalism field's cultural capital, as suggested above – is not ignored but is seldom given extensive attention, especially in trade publication discourse. The emphasis of trade publications on business applications and strategies is perhaps understandable, given their audience of industry insiders. However, the portrayals in the popular press are much the same. For example, entrepreneurial journalists are described in one account as journalists who master the "tools of the business side to achieve professional independence." An exception to the general lack of emphasis on journalistic practice is the widespread reference to multimedia skills, though again, such skills have commonly been positioned as heterodox (Hartley 2013). References are also sometimes made to project reporting. For example, one self-described entrepreneurial journalist explained a multi-faceted project to retrace John Steinbeck's travels in *Travels with Charley* and to write about the trip for his local newspaper.

The lack of an explicit, lexical definition is obviously not a strategic choice by any single entity. However, the lack of an agreed-upon definition can be used strategically by practitioners, with normative implications. For example, a new enterprise that transgresses accepted normative standards can simply be excluded from an illustrative definition of entrepreneurial journalism – or more explicitly held up as a counter-example of something that is "not journalism," as was true of a trade press article about a start-up involved in short-selling stocks, described further below. This strategy allows advocates of entrepreneurial journalism to cast the practice in consistently positive terms.

Tone of Discourse

Almost all of the articles in our sample, particularly in the popular press, were broadly supportive of entrepreneurial journalism, typically highlighting its potential to offset economic damage to the troubled media industry and quoting sources who advocated its benefits. Among the articles overtly supportive of entrepreneurial journalism, several focused primarily or exclusively on journalism education and curricular innovation, and others also referenced university programs. Curricular changes typically were given a positive frame by sources and/or the writer as benefiting both students and the industry, providing the skills and knowledge "desperately needed" in the digital age.

Indeed, the discourse in much of our sample seemed to thrust journalism educators into a leadership role in shaping how entrepreneurial journalism is conceived. For example, in a 2012 article in the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, the writer lauds entrepreneurial professors for "taking the lead in their institutions of learning" to "better equip our students to have the tools, resources and know-how to participate in a job market that currently is quite harsh, and actually looks completely different today for those graduating than when they entered school." A 2010 *Boston Globe* article titled "Me, Inc.," by a University of Massachusetts journalism professor, quotes another professor who says that students with entrepreneurial skills "gain a sense of mastery, self-control, that when a problem occurs,

instead of being a victim, you say, how can I turn that problem into a solution?" Similarly, a columnist writing in the *Christian Science Monitor* in 2009 says: "Answers for the future will not necessarily come from those whose ideas were molded in the past. Young journalism students who have grown up with new media are not afraid to imagine something different and find ways to make it work."

Some articles were neutral, such as a *New York Times* report on the potential merger of two California news websites and a transcribed National Public Radio "Talk of the Nation" program in which participants debated the value of objectivity, the future of news, and aspects of entrepreneurial journalism, with opposing views offered in rough equilibrium. Other articles were presented in neutral journalistic style but leaned toward support in their use of sources, quotes, and examples.

Articles taking a critical tone were scarce. A 2014 article in *Columbia Journalism Review* raised criticisms, but only to dispute them. Among the sampled articles from the popular press, only one offered substantial criticism of entrepreneurial journalism. In a 2010 *New York Times Magazine* piece titled "Putting a Price on Words," Andrew Rice focused on the economics of news start-ups, particularly the difficulty of placing a value on content in the information-rich online environment. In doing so, he touched on a normative issue, the potential for editorial independence to be compromised by commercial pressures: "One thing many of these new strategies have in common is a willingness to transgress time-honored barriers – for instance, by blurring the division between reporting and advertising." However, he then went on to quote a source who expressed the hope that attitudes are shifting and "we're breaking down the silliness of how church and state was historically implemented."

Implications for the Ethics and Practice of Journalism

With a few exceptions, then, we found that entrepreneurial journalism is not framed by practitioners as a particularly controversial subject. This may be in part because entrepreneurial journalism is construed as something of a necessity. "I believe most entrepreneurial journalists when they say they're sincerely interested in both preserving the traditional values of this profession and acknowledging the new ways people find and consume news," wrote Ann Friedman in a 2014 *Columbia Journalism Review* piece. "I have to, because there's no going back." And as an *Advertising Age* writer put it, "changes in the media landscape forced some variation of 'entrepreneur' or 'business development' onto the modern journalist's job description." Such naturalizing discourse discourages considering new developments as problematic. Hence, the implications of entrepreneurial journalism, ethical or otherwise, are seldom a matter of open debate in the published discourse.

That said, a handful of articles in our sample did raise ethical concerns. These centered on implications of the funding structure for entrepreneurial journalism. A 2010 *American Journalism Review* article was a notable example. It described an investigative business magazine start-up whose proprietors were allegedly engaged in short-selling stocks and otherwise profiting from the information the magazine provided. Yet the issue was framed as a problem created by a set of ethically challenged individuals in a small subset of the field, and thus not truly reflective of flaws or potential flaws in entrepreneurial journalism overall. Although the behavior was egregious, it also was presented as isolated.

A few other articles raised more general concerns about the ability of journalists engaged in starting a business to adequately separate their commercial and editorial roles. For example, journalism ethics professor, administrator, and sometime media critic Ed Wasserman pointed out that news start-ups may be "hasty, reckless, slaves to mob sentiment and their funders' wishes. They're too impatient to verify and have only the vaguest commitment to public service." And given the experimental nature of many entrepreneurial journalism efforts, entrepreneurial journalists will sometimes be put in unfamiliar situations – situations that raise ethical issues. Wasserman, in a 2011 column about conflicts of interest

published in the *Charleston Gazette*, noted that "The solutions that these mainly shoestring operations have devised aren't always optimal," adding, "but then neither are the ways that rich monopoly news outfits have done business." He ultimately lauded local entrepreneurial news outlets for taking ethics seriously.

The world of freelance entrepreneurial journalism comes with its own set of ethical issues. At an entrepreneurial start-up spearheaded by *Forbes*, for example, writers were described as "paid based on what kind of traffic and web interaction they attract," suggesting issues related to autonomous news judgment. Rice's *New York Times Magazine* article, cited above, also highlighted the way that contributors are paid (or not) for their efforts: not infrequently based on the popularity of their work based on online usage data. "There is, of course, nothing wrong with giving readers what they secretly want every once in a while," he wrote. "The problem arises when you start producing articles solely for the id of the search engines." Yet none of the discourse about entrepreneurial journalism directly addressed a fundamental definitional issue: conflation of two roles and functions that have normatively been distinct, those of publisher and of editor. We explore this gap further in the final section.

Conclusions

In this study, we sought to address three research questions. The first dealt with the ways in which the journalistic field is defining a new term, "entrepreneurial journalism," through discourse in the trade and popular press. We found that definitions are elusive; many can aptly be categorized as what Herbst (1993) calls "condensational," vague enough to result in a variety of constructed meanings. Indeed, the term was rarely defined explicitly, as journalists relied extensively on a listing of characteristics or comparisons to traditional journalistic practice or forms. An unexpected number of articles in our sample focused on or drew on journalism educators, who were accorded the role of establishing a definition of "entrepreneurial journalism" through their references to material covered in their classes on the subject, an emphasis also reflected in the academic literature. In a few limited cases, our sample revealed attempts to define specific start-ups as "not journalism," typically on ethical grounds drawing on traditional concepts of journalistic cultural capital.

Our second research question considered the tone of the journalistic discourse. Given well-documented cultural resistance to fundamental change, we expected much of the discourse to be critical. Indeed, Bourdieu (2005) has posited that journalistic doxa is a form of inertia in the field (Benson and Neveu 2005). Most of the discourse we analyzed came from established actors in the journalistic field, such as writers at industry trade journals, people we would have predicted to be skeptical of heterodoxy. Yet we found the overall tone to be broadly supportive of entrepreneurial journalism, however it was defined. Most of the sampled articles in both the trade and popular press highlighted successful start-ups and, more broadly, the need for innovative approaches to the journalistic enterprise. Whether this approach to coverage is mere rhetoric driven by widely used sources who champion entrepreneurialism, or reflects practitioners' own response to a field rocked by economic crisis and newsroom cutbacks, is a matter that should be addressed by additional research incorporating journalists' own views and voices.

Our third research question turned to implications for the industry of the attitudes represented in these reports about entrepreneurial journalism, particularly in relation to normative conceptions of journalistic practice, culture, and field. We did find some questions raised about the ability of entrepreneurial journalists to adequately safeguard their editorial independence, given the necessity of finding and obtaining financial support for news start-ups. Yet such articles were rare, and the few we found focused on specific examples, such as the business sites described above. In general, despite the potential for significant disruption to long-standing journalistic doxa, our sample suggests a field somewhat surprisingly open to

embracing what is undeniably a quite different form of the journalistic enterprise. Indeed, many of the sampled articles seemed to reflect the belief that entrepreneurialism was not only acceptable but even vital for "survival" in a digital age. Although the relatively narrow normative issue of editorial independence was raised in a few articles in our sample, broader issues related to the journalist's role in democratic society were virtually ignored.

Moreover, we failed to find any recognition of what we see as a clear implication of such a change: that the impetus for entrepreneurialism is shifting from the publisher to the editor. Most entrepreneurial journalists have newsroom backgrounds or journalistic training at the university level; few spent any time sitting in the publisher's leather chair before venturing out on their own. Indeed, the definitional approaches highlighted above commonly emphasize a need to gain at least basic business acumen that journalists do not typically possess. Yet the broader implications of this conflating of roles – journalist with business leader, publisher with content producer – do not seem to be reflected in the discourse to date. Those implications affect not only journalistic culture but also the wider society, given the declining role of many traditional media outlets as the Internet continues to fragment their audiences and sap their revenues. Journalistic norms are vital to journalism's cultural capital, providing a source of stability in the face of economic and political forces (Benson and Neveu 2005). Conflating the poles of cultural and economic capital would collapse a long-standing polarization generally seen as constitutive of the journalism field (Bourdieu 2005; Hanitzsch 2007).

This is not to argue that entrepreneurial journalism represents the collapse of the journalistic field; rather, it is to say that this conflating of two heretofore distinct roles would represent a reconstitution of a norm of the field. Norms are subject to change. It is because they can change that they must regularly be discursively maintained if they are to retain their moral authority (Schudson 2001). Likewise, it stands to reason that if norms are to change, they must be discursively reconstructed. However, field theory has little to say about changing norms, other than to point to how new entrants to a field can be a disruptive force. This study identifies at least one way that a field's norms might be reconstructed – it suggests that if a heterodox practice is expressed with a condensational term, it diffuses the ethical or normative considerations that might otherwise be discursively highlighted. This conclusion is speculative, but it merits further examination.

This exploratory study, of course, has a number of limitations that suggest opportunities for future empirical work. It sought to gather wide-ranging data, and the sample was therefore designed to be as inclusive as possible; a closer examination of particular outlets, for example those seen as agenda-setters for others in the industry, could yield a more focused picture of the discourse surrounding entrepreneurial journalism. Our study also was limited to discourse in U.S. outlets, but entrepreneurialism is a hot topic in other nations as well; Britain in particular is emerging as a key location for emerging entrepreneurial journalism education and practice. In addition, our study dilutes the voices of journalists themselves, limited as it is to analysis of the artefacts they produce. Understanding the "why" of this coverage, and of practitioners' conceptions about entrepreneurial journalism in general, is crucial as this form of journalistic enterprise becomes increasingly prevalent, as we predict it will.

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