

The background of the cover is a complex, abstract geometric line art design. It consists of numerous thin black lines that intersect to form a variety of shapes, including rectangles, triangles, and larger, more complex polygons. Some areas are filled with a grid of smaller squares, while others are left empty. The overall effect is a sense of depth and fragmentation, with lines receding into the distance or intersecting at sharp angles. The design is rendered in black lines on a light gray background.

# **REIMAGINING JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL ORDER IN A FRAGMENTED MEDIA WORLD**

*Edited by*

Robert E. Gutsche, Jr. and Kristy Hess



# Reimagining Journalism and Social Order in a Fragmented Media World

This book examines journalism's ability to promote and foster cohesive and collective action while critically examining its place in the intensifying battle to maintain a society's social order.

From chapters discussing the challenges journalists face in covering populism and Donald Trump, to chapters about issues of race in the news, intersections of journalism and nationalism, and increased mobilities of audiences and communicators in a digital age, *Reimagining Journalism and Social Order in a Fragmented Media World* focuses on the pitfalls and promises of journalism in moments of social contestation. Rich with perspectives from across the globe, this book connects journalism studies to critical scholarship on social order and social control, nationalism, social media, geography and the function of news as a social sphere.

In a fragmented media world and in times of social contestation, *Reimagining Journalism and Social Order in a Fragmented Media World* provides readers with insights as to how journalism operates in order to highlight—and enhance—elements and actions that bring about order. This book was originally published as a special issue of *Journalism Studies* and a special issue of *Journalism Practice*.

**Robert E. Gutsche, Jr.** is Senior Lecturer in Critical Digital Media Practice at Lancaster University, UK. His research focuses on issues of intersections of journalism, geography and power, and appears in *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism Practice*, and *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. He is editor of *The Trump Presidency, Journalism, and Democracy* (Routledge, 2018).

**Kristy Hess** is Associate Professor in Communication at Deakin University, Australia. She studies journalism and its relationship to social connection and place-making, often through a lens of media power. Her work appears in leading international journalism and media journals, she is the author of two monographs and she is the Associate Editor of *Digital Journalism*.



# Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# **Reimagining Journalism and Social Order in a Fragmented Media World**

***Edited by***

**Robert E. Gutsche, Jr. and Kristy Hess**

First published 2020  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2020 Taylor & Francis

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN13: 978-0-367-36605-6

Typeset in Myriad Pro  
by Newgen Publishing UK

#### **Publisher's Note**

The publisher accepts responsibility for any inconsistencies that may have arisen during the conversion of this book from journal articles to book chapters, namely the inclusion of journal terminology.

#### **Disclaimer**

Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders for their permission to reprint material in this book. The publishers would be grateful to hear from any copyright holder who is not here acknowledged and will undertake to rectify any errors or omissions in future editions of this book.

# Contents

<i>Citation Information</i>	vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	x
 Introduction—Contesting Communities: The problem of journalism and social order <i>Robert E. Gutsche Jr. and Kristy Hess</i>	 1
1 Journalism and the “Social Sphere”: Reclaiming a foundational concept for beyond politics and the public sphere <i>Kristy Hess and Robert E. Gutsche Jr.</i>	11
2 From Control to Chaos, and Back Again: Journalism and the politics of populist authoritarianism <i>Brian McNair</i>	27
3 Populism, Journalism, and the Limits of Reflexivity: The case of Donald J. Trump <i>Michael McDevitt and Patrick Ferrucci</i>	40
4 Migration Maps with the News: Guidelines for ethical visualization of mobile populations <i>Paul C. Adams</i>	55
5 Veritable Flak Mill: A case study of Project Veritas and a call for truth <i>Brian Michael Goss</i>	76
6 Re-Thinking Trust in the News: A material approach through “Objects of Journalism” <i>Nikki Usher</i>	92
7 Community Repair through Truce and Contestation: Danish legacy print media and the Copenhagen shootings <i>Henrik Bødker and Teke Ngomba</i>	107
8 Diverging Projections of Reality: Amplified frame competition via distinct modes of journalistic production <i>Curd Benjamin Knüpfer</i>	122

9	Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model to Explain to Whom “#Black Lives Matter” ... and to Whom it Does not <i>Lanier Frush Holt</i>	140
10	Coverage of the Surgical Strike on Television News in India: Nationalism, journalistic discourse and India–Pakistan conflict <i>Sushmita Pandit and Saayan Chattopadhyay</i>	156
11	Please Follow Us: Media roles in Twitter discussions in the United States, Germany, France, and Russia <i>Svetlana S. Bodrunova, Anna A. Litvinenko, and Ivan S. Blekanov</i>	171
12	And Deliver Us to Segmentation: The growing appeal of the niche news audience <i>Jacob L. Nelson</i>	198
13	Nurturing Authority: Reassessing the social role of local television news <i>Tanya Muscat</i>	214
14	“Tightening the Knots” of the International Drugs Trade in Brazil: Possibilities and challenges for news media to acquire social capital through in-depth reporting <i>Alice Baroni and Andrea Mayr</i>	230
	<i>Index</i>	245

# Citation Information

The following chapters were originally published in *Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018). When citing this material, please use the original page numbering for each article, as follows:

## Introduction

*Contesting Communities: The problem of journalism and social order*

Robert E. Gutsche Jr. and Kristy Hess

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 473–482

## Chapter 1

*Journalism and the “Social Sphere”: Reclaiming a foundational concept for beyond politics and the public sphere*

Kristy Hess and Robert E. Gutsche Jr.

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 483–498

## Chapter 2

*From Control to Chaos, and Back Again: Journalism and the politics of populist authoritarianism*

Brian McNair

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 499–511

## Chapter 3

*Populism, Journalism, and the Limits of Reflexivity: The case of Donald J. Trump*

Michael McDevitt and Patrick Ferrucci

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 512–526

## Chapter 4

*Migration Maps with the News: Guidelines for ethical visualization of mobile populations*

Paul C. Adams

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 527–547

## Chapter 5

*Veritable Flak Mill: A case study of Project Veritas and a call for truth*

Brian Michael Goss

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 548–563



**Chapter 6**

*Re-Thinking Trust in the News: A material approach through "Objects of Journalism"*

Nikki Usher

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 564–578

**Chapter 7**

*Community Repair through Truce and Contestation: Danish legacy print media and the Copenhagen shootings*

Henrik Bødker and Teke Ngomba

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 579–593

**Chapter 8**

*Diverging Projections of Reality: Amplified frame competition via distinct modes of journalistic production*

Curd Benjamin Knüpfer

*Journalism Studies*, volume 19, issue 4 (2018), pp. 594–611

The following chapters were originally published in *Journalism Practice*, volume 12, issue 2 (2018). When citing this material, please use the original page numbering for each article, as follows:

**Chapter 9**

*Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model to Explain to Whom "#Black Lives Matter" ... and to Whom it Does not*

Lanier Frush Holt

*Journalism Practice*, volume 12, issue 2 (2018), pp. 146–161

**Chapter 10**

*Coverage of the Surgical Strike on Television News in India: Nationalism, journalistic discourse and India–Pakistan conflict*

Sushmita Pandit and Saayan Chattopadhyay

*Journalism Practice*, volume 12, issue 2 (2018), pp. 162–176

**Chapter 11**

*Please Follow Us: Media roles in Twitter discussions in the United States, Germany, France, and Russia*

Svetlana S. Bodrunova, Anna A. Litvinenko, and Ivan S. Blekanov

*Journalism Practice*, volume 12, issue 2 (2018), pp. 177–203

**Chapter 12**

*And Deliver Us to Segmentation: The growing appeal of the niche news audience*

Jacob L. Nelson

*Journalism Practice*, volume 12, issue 2 (2018), pp. 204–219

**Chapter 13**

*Nurturing Authority: Reassessing the social role of local television news*

Tanya Muscat

*Journalism Practice*, volume 12, issue 2 (2018), pp. 220–235

**Chapter 14**

*“Tightening the Knots” of the International Drugs Trade in Brazil: Possibilities and challenges for news media to acquire social capital through in-depth reporting*

Alice Baroni and Andrea Mayr

*Journalism Practice*, volume 12, issue 2 (2018), pp. 236–250

For any permission-related enquiries please visit:

[www.tandfonline.com/page/help/permissions](http://www.tandfonline.com/page/help/permissions)

# Notes on Contributors

**Paul C. Adams** is Professor of Geography at the University of Texas at Austin, USA, and also holds a four-year Associate Professor II appointment at the University of Bergen, Norway.

**Alice Baroni** is an MSCA Seal of Excellence @UNIPD research fellow in the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padova, Italy.

**Ivan S. Blekanov** is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Applied Mathematics and Control Processes, St. Petersburg State University, Russia.

**Henrik Bødker** is Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Journalism Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark.

**Svetlana S. Bodrunova** is Professor and Doctor of Political Science at the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, St. Petersburg State University, Russia.

**Saayan Chattopadhyay** is Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Baruiapur College, India.

**Patrick Ferrucci** is Assistant Professor of Journalism and the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies at the College of Media, Communication and Information, University of Colorado Boulder, USA.

**Brian Michael Goss** teaches and conducts research in the Department of Communication, Saint Louis University–Madrid, Spain.

**Robert E. Gutsche, Jr.** is Senior Lecturer in Critical Digital Media Practice at Lancaster University, UK.

**Kristy Hess** is Associate Professor in Communication at Deakin University, Australia.

**Lanier Frush Holt** is Assistant Professor at the School of Communication, The Ohio State University, USA.

**Curd Benjamin Knüpfer** is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the John F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

**Anna A. Litvinenko** is a researcher at the Institute for Media and Communications Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

**Andrea Mayr** is Lecturer in the College of Media and Communication Science, Zayed University, UAE.

**Michael McDevitt** is Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at the College of Media, Communication and Information, University of Colorado Boulder, USA.

**Brian McNair** is Professor of Journalism, Media, and Communication at the Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

**Tanya Muscat** teaches in the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies, Macquarie University, Australia.

**Jacob L. Nelson** is Assistant Professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University, USA.

**Teke Ngomba** is Associate Professor of Media Studies in the Department of Media and Journalism Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark.

**Sushmita Pandit** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Media Studies, Future Media School, India.

**Nikki Usher** is Associate Professor at the College of Media, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA.



# Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# INTRODUCTION—CONTESTING COMMUNITIES

## The problem of journalism and social order

**Robert E. Gutsche Jr. and Kristy Hess**

*This introductory chapter provides an overview of some of the key contemporary approaches to studying journalism and social order discussed throughout this book. It argues the need to step beyond a functionalist framework when considering the news media's central role in shaping social connections, community and cohesion. To advance our understandings of social order, our paper suggests a greater emphasis of the significance of journalism's relationship to the wider social sphere along with three other key considerations, including (1) a critical focus on the relationship between media, politics and social order, especially in defining and/or negotiating "anti-social" practices and social disintegration; (2) a more refined focus on the "imagined" and geographic boundaries of news audiences in digital spaces; and (3) the changing relationship to norms and conventions of journalism practice from trust and legitimacy to the role of journalists as arbiters and connectors across social spaces.*

### Introduction

When it comes to social order, media scholars and sociologists have celebrated the humble ant as a triumph of collective action and sociability (see e.g. Hechter and Horne 2009; Marshall 2016). Ants learn to coordinate activities in remarkable unison, forming organized highways and bridges with their living bodies to carry food and build shelter. Using refined communication techniques, they can organize the building of underground passageways and towering hills all with amazing efficiency and order.

These skills are attractive to social and political scholars in discussing human social organization, yet what theorists often omit is the dark side of the ant world. Ants recognize and react to those within their "colony" by odour—if one smells "wrong" it will be forced out. Ant queens—the highest of the social order—are also under constant threat from their subjects; a swarm will attack those that do not produce large broods for the colony, biting and spraying acid in a contest of ultimate natural selection (Keller and Ross 1998). Amazon slave ants, meanwhile, are indoctrinated into a life of inequality, learning to follow in the footsteps of their sisters who do the drudge work for their masters, from nest-building to foraging for prey (Moffett 2010).

Functionalist accounts of news media can view journalists in much the same way social theorists position the ant. Reporters are socialized by peers within an organizational structure and draw on the interpretive community's norms and values. Using their own set of advanced communication practices, they are expected to gather and share information that should not be seen to benefit themselves as individuals but contribute to the success of a broader collective whole. Yet journalism, too, is not immune from issues of power and

inequality, especially in a digital world where competing media practices and platforms have become integral to our social lives (Couldry and Hepp 2016). Journalists, for example, have marched quickly to exclude or contest practices of those who either do not belong or who challenge traditional norms and values that may (re)shape the field. In some instances, metaphorically speaking, they have begun to spit acid at the new queens of the media world such as Google and Facebook to re-assert their centrality to “truth” seeking and the shaping of core societal values (Hess and Gutsche 2017). Outside the journalistic field, boundary work also looms large as nations on both sides of the globe threaten to erect their own “walls” highlighted by movements such as Brexit and the contentious rise of Donald Trump. In these contexts, boundary work functions as a practice of power and coercion.

The focus on who and what makes a journalist in these changing times, therefore, cannot be fully addressed until we consider the more complex role journalism plays, or is expected to play in the wider social spaces they serve. Scholars must balance considerations of context, power and control alongside cohesion, collective identity, connections and sociability. This volume calls for a re-assessment of the relationship between journalism and social order as it relates to theory and practice. Scholars draw on a kaleidoscope of complementary lenses from cultural studies to political communication, critical cartography and philosophy, to consider the problem of social order. Such an approach is vital for examining changing legacy and established new media in an increasingly fragmented world of journalism.

To advance our understandings of social order and control, this essay recommends alterations to dominant perspectives on the role of journalism in the maintenance of social order. We begin by emphasizing the significance of journalism’s relationship to the wider social sphere along with three other key considerations, including (1) a critical focus on the relationship between media, politics and social order, especially in defining and/or negotiating “anti-social” practices and social disintegration; (2) a more refined focus on the “imagined” and geographic boundaries of news audiences in digital spaces; and (3) the changing relationship to norms and conventions of journalism practice from trust and legitimacy to the role of journalists as arbiters and connectors across social spaces. Articles in this volume address, to varying degrees, elements of this realignment and surround how journalists identify—or imagine—their audiences, their needs, and the ability (and legitimacy) of journalism to satisfy those standards.

## **Journalism and Social Order**

Social order is widely understood as the necessity of people to maintain collective stability or a status quo. Early social theorists, from Durkheim (1889), de Tocqueville (1945) and Weber (1947) have examined how individuals and societies come together in the interests of something bigger than themselves and leads to extensive literature simply too large in scope to canvas here. Work on media and its relationship to community and social integration certainly evolved through the Chicago School via, among others, scholars such as George Mead (1934), Charles Cooley (1909) and Robert Park (1922). More contemporary scholarship has examined the ritualistic function of news (see especially Carey 1989; Sumiala 2013) and the role of media events (and media power) in uniting people in time and/or place (Turner 1974; Anderson 1983; Dayan and Katz 1992; Rothenbuhler 1998; Couldry 2003). There, too, has been extensive studies on the

relationship between news media and concepts such as social capital, civic and public journalism (see e.g. Glasser and Craft 1998; Putnam 2000; Merritt 2009; Haas 2012; Leupold, Kilnger, and Jarren 2016).

Importantly some media theorists who examine what we say and do around media and its relationship to the social distance themselves from the functionalist dimensions of social order and/or the very idea that the concept is “contained” to nations or societies in the digital era (see especially Couldry and Hepp 2016). It is our contention that journalism studies cannot completely disentangle itself from either of these dimensions given its deep symbiotic relationship with the societ(ies) and/or the communities of interest that news media is seen to “serve”. There is a need, nonetheless, to position journalism studies against a backdrop of power to identify issues of coercion and control, to embrace the everyday use of news media in shaping our everyday social lives and community integration, and to challenge key concepts, norms and understandings of journalism that may inhibit more comprehensive research in this space.

In this volume, Michael McDevitt and Patrick Ferrucci (2017) draw on James Carey to highlight that “the public” is much like a “god term”, which without, the enterprise of how and why journalism operates “fails to make sense” (Carey 1989, 5). That journalism, then, is viewed as a public service seemingly negates its elements of abuses of power or its potential to negatively influence our social lives. Some news media practices—or even social media practices that attract journalistic attention—can indeed foster sociability and connections between individuals, but others exert influence and control. News media can play an active role in community maintenance and repair, connecting people during times of crisis and enhancing people’s sense of place. In everyday spaces, meanwhile, citizens armed with cell phone cameras and YouTube accounts patrol social and cultural boundaries, catching out those who engage in anti-social or immoral behaviour and reinforced via coverage in news media.

Contestation is captured too within the news media beyond overt forms of surveillance and ideological control through journalistic norms and practices. They can be evident in the more banal aspects of everyday life—from obituaries to wedding announcements in news media—all of which reinforce ritualistic practices and behaviours but which can also impose a form of symbolic violence on those who do not conform to certain societal expectations and values.

Another important dimension of social order that is often overlooked in journalism studies is the very significance of the “social realm”. We set a tone in this volume to re-position the social sphere as a key foundational concept for journalism scholars. In turn, we argue that too often the significance of the social is subsumed by a focus on news media’s relationship to the public sphere, or more recently, on the role of social media. While the Latin word “com” has been embedded in many words that express deep ties of togetherness (communicate, commune, commiserate) (see Goss 2017), the increasing focus on the tools and technology afforded in the digital era that provide real-time communication and complex, data-driven visualizations, suggest the social is now more readily equated with “.com”. A critical approach to social media and journalism is needed in the context of social order.

In this volume, Svetlana S. Bodrunova, Anna A. Litivnenko, Anna S. Smolyarova, Ivan S. Blekanov, and Alexey I. Maksimov (2017) critically engage with the (journalistic) role of Twitter, posing questions about journalism’s processes of performance via the social networking platform in the United States, Germany, France and Russia. Here, the authors



combine network and content analysis of news coverage during times of crisis to evaluate the social forces at play in creating both journalistic community and a sense of ideological and physical collectivity via performance. From strictly providing information via Twitter to enticing (or inviting) audiences to “follow” the news outlet across social and traditional platforms, the authors argue that Twitter has become a normalized news tool and platform in a cross-continent fashion during times of contestation. The authors also found, however, that despite technological advancement in networking, tabloid and mainstream media in each of these countries remained committed to media traditions of geographic markets in building and maintaining legitimacy among audiences.

### **Critically Engaging with Media, Politics and the Challenge to Social Order**

While we attempt to set the social sphere as something distinct but complementary to the public sphere, the importance of the political realm to social order is of central concern to scholars in this volume. The rise of digital spaces and its relationship to the public sphere is discussed by Brian McNair (2017) in his thoughtful essay on social order in a time of “cultural chaos”. McNair reassesses his theory to highlight that while “cultural chaos” can empower minorities, digital platforms are also utilized with great effect by opponents of liberal democracy, whether they be extreme factions within faith groups, reactionaries and populists within the democratic countries, or in authoritarian polities. It is necessary to consider, according to McNair, if “cultural chaos” has emerged as a driver of ideological conflict in addition or in opposition to cultural democratization.

The very acknowledgement of “anti-social” practices suggests that who we turn to in order to help to identify and negotiate socially acceptable or unacceptable media practices in a given context speaks to issues of media legitimacy in digital spaces. This resonates with the work of Brian Michael Goss (2017) who explores the manipulation of “flak” in the changing news environment. At a time when there is indeed an abundance of news and information across a range of platforms, Goss refers to “flak” as a type of deliberate political harassment that erodes community sensibilities and trust. In an era of fake news, he contends outdated journalistic norms of objectivity and fact-checking limit what the profession might become in the interests of serving community and building cohesion.

The traditional role of “fact-checking”, Goss suggests, does more harm than good. Scrupulous organizations are more vulnerable to flak stunts because they will perform due diligence and investigate even dubious claims of wrongdoing that ultimately breed heightened cynicism and mistrust among audiences. Examining bad faith political discourses simply by fact-checking, he argues, is “akin to pursuing financial fraudsters for parking tickets even as the fraudsters hold the economy hostage”. The key for Goss is a more ambitious pursuit of truth within the field of journalism.

The clear relationship between politics and media in the shaping of the social is also evident in the work of Sushmita Pandit and Saayan Chattopadhyay (2017) who analyse journalism in India in regards to that nation’s 2016 “surgical strike” against Pakistan. They show that news media largely presented the attack through patriotic, militaristic and nationalistic language aimed at normalizing tensions. Focusing on television coverage in an age of digital real-time demands, the authors argue that journalists employed a “Foxification” of news stories, relying on emotional and aggressive language of othering that enhanced Indian nationalism. Their work aligns journalism (as practice)—in this case the role of journalists in using sometimes personalized language to describe military action and conflict—with

“patriotism”. This work suggests that sometimes it is not the “story” that is reported but how it is presented through vocal tone, personification, personal narratives, and collective identification that requires more attention from journalism scholars.

Henrik Bødker and Teke Ngomba’s (2017) work in this issue offers a different yet complementary approach to journalists’ response to national crisis in their study of news discourse in the aftermath of a gunman’s deadly rampage in Copenhagen in 2016. They demonstrate how the attacks promoted a range of discourses at the intersection of social control with religious freedom, immigration and ideas of national community. Here, the challenge for mainstream journalism was to reassert national relevance while acknowledging the diversity of its audience. Indeed, Bødker and Ngomba highlight the broader process and stages of community repair from stories of condemnation, demonstrations of unity, resilience and resolve, along with instances of contestation. The case also highlights the fractious and symbiotic relationship between media and politics during such media moments. They cite a clear truce period in discourse around blame and conflict between elite groups to allow time for community repair before coverage shifted to avenues of action and responsibility that brought about ideological and cultural tensions.

### **The “Imagined” Audience and Shifting Boundaries in Changing Digital Spaces**

Journalism’s relationship to social order requires not only a rethinking of Anderson’s (1983) “imagined communities”, but signals a need for greater journalistic reflexivity in terms of the how their perceived idea of the “imagined audience” matches reality. In this issue, McDevitt and Ferrucci (2017), for instance, draw on the recent US election to argue that the way journalists imagine their audiences led to an acceptance of punitive populism as a strain of anti-intellectualism. They argue that journalists, commentators and academics failed to understand the public on its own terms and that journalism’s anti-intellectualism is often not subject to reflexivity in professional awareness.

McDevitt and Ferrucci also contend the role of journalism, moving forward, is not to engage the public mood but to engage the best ideas of candidates towards policy coherence. Journalism and journalism studies advocate misguided reform when they perceive the election as a failure of the press to affirm populist frustration, they write. To McDevitt and Ferrucci, a journalism of expertise—an “elite” journalism without apology—would have better captured the substantive concerns of rural America. They highlight that the entrenched journalistic norm of objectivity is most evidently challenged during periods of war and situations rich in cultural resonance, when journalists show allegiance to binding beliefs.

From scholarship that appears in these issues, it is clear that greater emphasis is also needed on how social and cultural factors influence audience understandings of credible news sources during media events that seek to enact social change. Lanier Holt (2017) asks how audience perceptions of race and the #BlackLivesMatter influence their response to news coverage of police shootings of African Americans in the United States based on the expertise (or experience) of the sources used to explain, in this case, resistance to racialized police action. From his work, Holt identifies issues of ideological control that likely may reduce interest or understanding of both audiences and journalists of race-related injustice

as journalists turn to select sources of expertise in matters of race that hold varying levels of credibility among both diverse (read, non-white) audiences.

Journalism's relationship to the patrolling of social and geographic boundaries means acknowledging the importance of physical territory and borders in shaping people's connection to place via journalism. Paul Adams (2017), for instance, calls for journalism scholars to consider the richness of critical cartography to examine the visual representation of the communities and nation states we imagine and the people who make up these ideals. News articles on refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants entering Europe, Adams writes, are often illustrated with eye-catching maps featuring brightly coloured arrows converging on Europe from various directions, scaled to represent aggregated human flows—a thousand people coming by one route, several tens of thousands via another route. Adams, therefore, highlights how news maps reflect choices on what to include and exclude and promote biases that influence dangerous social policies and acts against populations and individuals (see also Gutsche 2014).

This issue also incorporates discussions of tensions between digital and legacy news outlets, production, and audience interactions and understandings of the changes occurring within a fragmented, and evolving, news ecosystem. Jacob L. Nelson (2017), for instance, conducts an analysis of the journalistic interpretive community of mainstream legacy journalism in the United States and nonprofit news. Using Chicago as his case, Nelson turns to interviewing journalists at the *Chicago Tribune* and the nonprofit City Bureau to examine the processes of identifying news audiences and the needs of both audience members and the journalistic outlet. Specifically, Nelson examines how journalists address perceptions of audiences that news outlets remain “objective” or “balanced” while nonprofit news outlets are seen to approach journalism through a sense of “public service”. Moreover, Nelson examines how *Chicago Tribune* journalists engage with audiences in ways that maintain journalistic autonomy, but bring in audience perceptions of the news, to shape local journalism.

### **The Changing Relationship to Norms and Conventions of Journalism Practice**

Some researchers in this special issue have called for a reconsideration of traditional norms and conventions that guide journalism practice, from a renewed emphasis on “truth” over objectivity to the importance of journalistic reflexivity. In being reflexive of our own practices, for example, we acknowledge that a shortcoming of this particular collection is the emphasis on advanced liberal democracies. Studies of social order should promote a shift from western-centric models to consider the interdependency of a range of political, religious and media systems that either possess power to influence (or attempt to exert) the maintenance of norms and values within a given “community”. It is our hope that this collection can guide scholars in this manner.

Relevant across the globe, however, is the role of trust in journalism, a core concept that has preoccupied journalism scholars in a digital era—especially given the rise of fake news. Here, Nikki Usher (2017) sets out a convincing argument that trust in journalism is a critical mechanism in social cohesion, yet journalism's conceptual understanding of trust is broken. She highlights scholarship that demonstrates trust in the news across many western democracies is at an all-time low, but that trust is too often measured in terms of news consumption rather than it being a relational construct involving journalists,

audiences, sources and other social actors, including the “objects of journalism”. Usher invokes the material turn in journalism as a way to move beyond this dichotomy. Hard and soft objects of journalism, such as the influence of physical news buildings or digital news products like software, inspire new ways of thinking about trust.

There are also growing expectations that journalists play a much greater connector role in the communities they serve, especially in the local context, due to the rise in journalistic adoptions of social media. Tanya Muscat (2017), in her study of local news audiences in Australia, for example, analyses perceptions of authority of local news production in Sydney. Her work is based on interviews with local television news audiences that not only recognizes how journalists present stories of the everyday to audiences, but also suggests that journalists perform surveillance over social conditions and actors. Audience members reported that journalists’ self-branding as “local” arbiters of the everyday served as both a community-building effort, but also one that then advances published notions of “bad neighborhoods” or “good citizens” based on the self-authority that journalists ascribe to themselves in the news they cover. In other words, Muscat argues, journalists hold the authority with audiences that they say they have, despite audience interpretations that they operate at a distance from citizens’ everyday experiences that provide alternative meanings and interpretations to social conditions.

Alice Baroni and Andrea Mayr (2017), meanwhile, adopt the same theory of mediated social capital as deployed by Muscat to encourage a greater emphasis and appreciation of journalists’ own social capital and networks during investigative reporting of Brazil’s drug trade. They examine the power of habitus as a form of cultural capital both inside and outside the journalistic field. Importantly, this research also provides insight into the way journalists engage elites in discussions that ultimately inform policy on the drugs trade.

Of course, in a desire to rethink normative ideals of journalism, there must also be scope to provide improved analytical frameworks for understanding journalism in the digital era. This leads to an enriching article by Curd Benjamin Knüpfer (2017), who argues that the rising use of concepts such as echo chambers or filter bubbles does not account for a coherent analytical framework or provide scope to consider the overlap or feedback between competing projections of reality. He proposes a model through which frame competition via different modes of journalistic production might be systematically observed. Knüpfer contends that political communication scholars, for example, are increasing likely to encounter stark differences in public perception and knowledge stocks and argues that his model provides a baseline measure to gauge the degrees of overlap and difference of mediated output. Only by acknowledging similarities between various types of news production, he writes, is it possible to highlight the actual degree to which they may differ in their output.

## Conclusion

The relationship between news media and social order can be viewed and examined through a variety of theoretical lens and contexts, but our aim here—above all—is to reposition the value of and journalism’s ordering role within the social realm. In a fragmented media world, it is also imperative that we gather the fragmented dimensions of social order as it relates to journalism studies and piece together a more nuanced approach to this area of inquiry—one which acknowledges journalism’s ability to promote and foster

cohesive and collective action, but which also considers its place in the intensifying battle to control the social. The ways in which journalism subtly and overtly shapes the expectations we have of others and patrols and shapes social, geographic and cultural boundaries deserves attention, particularly in times when scholarship—and social networks—lead to a view of utopian society and ignore institutional desires for control.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank other journalism scholars from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and throughout Latin America who have collaborated with us as individuals on key conceptual ideas and approaches to journalism extended here. They include Associate Professor Lisa Waller, Dr Julie Rowlands, Dr Kathryn Bowd and Professor Ian Richards.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, Paul. 2017. "Migration Maps with the News Guidelines for Ethical Visualization of Mobile Populations." *Journalism Studies* 16: 1–21. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1375387.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Baroni, Alice, and Andrea Mayr. 2017. "Tightening the Knots' of the International Drugs Trade in Brazil: Possibilities and Challenges for News Media to Acquire Social Capital through In-Depth Reporting." *Journalism Practice*. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1397528.
- Bodrunova, Svetlana S., Anna A. Litivnenko, Anna S. Smolyarova, Ivan S. Blekanov, and Alexey I. Maksimov. 2017. "Please Follow Us: Media Roles in Twitter Discussions in the USA, Germany, France and Russia." *Journalism Practice*. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1394208.
- Bødker, Henrik, and Teke Ngomba. 2017. "Community Repair Through Truce and Contestation: Danish Legacy Print Media and the Copenhagen Shootings." *Journalism Studies* 5: 1–15. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1386584.
- Carey, James. 1989. *Communication as Culture*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Cooley, Charles. 1909. *Social Organisation: A Study of the Larger Mind*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Couldry, Nick. 2003. *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Couldry, Nick, and Andreas Hepp. 2016. *The Mediated Construction of Reality*. London: Polity.
- Dayan, Daniel, and Elihu Katz. 1992. *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- de Tocqueville, A. 1945. *Democracy in America*. New York: Knopf.
- Durkheim, Émile. 1889. "Tönnies, F., Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft." *Revue philosophique* 27: 416–433.
- Glasser, Theodore, and Stephanie Craft. 1998. "Public Journalism and the Search for Democratic Ideals." In *Media Ritual and Identity*, edited by Tamar Liebes, and James Curran, 203–218. London: Routledge.

- Goss, Brian. 2017. "Veritable Flak Mill: A Case Study of Project Veritas and a Call for Truth." *Journalism Studies*: 1–16. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1375388.
- Gutsche Jr., Robert E. 2014. "News Place-Making: Applying "Mental Mapping" to Explore the Journalistic Interpretive Community." *Visual Communication* 13 (4): 487–510.
- Haas, Tanni. 2012. *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice Criticism*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Hechter, Michael, and Christine Horne. 2009. *Theories of Social Order*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hess, Kristy, and Robert E. Gutsche Jr. 2017. "Journalism and the "Social Sphere": Reclaiming a Foundational Concept for Beyond Politics and the Public Sphere." *Journalism Studies* 5: 1–16. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1389296.
- Holt, Lanier. 2017. "Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model to Explain to Whom "#Black Lives Matter" ... And to Whom it Does Not." *Journalism Practice*: 1–16. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1370974.
- Keller, Larent, and Kenneth Ross. 1998. "Selfish Genes: A Green Beard in the Red Fire Ant." *Nature* 394: 573–575.
- Knüpfer, Curd Benjamin. 2017. "Diverging Projections of Reality: Amplified Frame Competition via Distinct Modes of Journalistic Production." *Journalism Studies*. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1387072.
- Leupold, Anna, Ulrike Kilnger, and Otfried Jarren. 2016. "Imagining the City: How Local Journalism Depicts Social Cohesion." *Journalism Studies* 6: 1–23. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2016.1245111.
- Marshall, David. 2016. "Introduction." In *Contemporary Publics: Shifting in New Media, Technology and Culture*, edited by D. Marshall, Glen D'Cruz, Sharyn McDonald, and Katya Lee, 1–15. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- McDevitt, Michael, and Patrick Ferrucci. 2017. "Populism, Journalism, and the Limits of Reflexivity: The Case of Donald J. Trump." *Journalism Studies* 11: 1–15. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1386586.
- Mead, George. 1934. *Mind Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Merritt, Davis. 2009. *Public Journalism and Public Life: Why Telling the News is not Enough*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Moffett, Mark. 2010. *Adventures Among Ants: A Global Safari with a Cast of Trillions*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Muscat, Tanya. 2017. "Nurturing Authority: Reassessing the Social Role of Local Television News." *Journalism Practice* 32: 1–16. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1377630.
- McNair, Brian. 2017. "From Control to Chaos and Back Again: Journalism and the Politics of Populist Authoritarianism." *Journalism Studies*. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1389297.
- Nelson, Jacob. 2017. "And Deliver us to Segmentation: The Growing Appeal of the Niche News Audience." *Journalism Practice*. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1378588.
- Pandit, Sushmita, and Saayan Chattopadhyay. 2017. "Coverage of the Surgical Strike on Television News in India: Nationalism, Journalistic Discourse and India-Pakistan Conflict." *Journalism Practice*. doi:10.1080/17512786.2017.1397529.
- Park, Robert. 1922. *The Immigrant Press and its Control*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rothenbuhler, Eric. 1998. *Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- Sumiala, Johanna. 2013. *Media and Ritual: Death, Community and Everyday Life*. London: Routledge.
- Turner, Victor. 1974. *The Ritual Process*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Usher, Nikki. 2017. "Re-thinking Trust in the News: A Material Approach through "Objects of Journalism"." *Journalism Studies*. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2017.1375391.
- Weber, Max. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*. New York: Free Press.

# JOURNALISM AND THE “SOCIAL SPHERE”

## Reclaiming a foundational concept for beyond politics and the public sphere

**Kristy Hess** and **Robert E. Gutsche Jr.**

*This article realigns the field of journalism studies to acknowledge within itself the multiple dimensions of social life and, as well, to provide greater clarity on the social and cultural forms and functions of journalism. It reclaims the importance of the “social sphere” as a key foundational concept for journalism studies with its links to collective identity, sociability, social honour, and soft coercion. We argue the relevance of the social sphere has been subsumed over time by the dominance of the “public sphere” and, most recently, has been considered synonymous with the rise of social networking platforms and tools. Here, we recommend that scholarship shifts from the dominant influence of political theory in explanations of journalism’s societal function to the value of critical cultural sociology, which reconciles power with the basic human desire for social order within individual–institutional–cultural interactions informed by and through journalism.*

### Introduction

When homeowners plan extensive renovations in Australia, there is a term surveyors refer to as “re-stumping.” It is where the structural footings of a building are assessed and work is needed to remove or strengthen supports that have rotted or weathered. The rationale for re-stumping is clear: there is no point in advancing the structure’s integrity without a solid foundation. When it comes to understanding journalism’s relationship to social life—or, indeed, social order, as this special issue seeks to address—we argue that foundational work is required to provide a stronger foothold for scholars in this space. Specifically, we excavate an integral key concept for journalism studies: that of social sphere(s).

Our call for evaluating—or re-evaluating—the role of social spheres in journalism studies might seem superfluous given the increased attention to “the social” that scholars have applied to advancements in journalistic uses and influences of social media (Garcia de Torres and Hermida 2017; Goode 2009; Hill and Lashmar 2014; Phillips 2012; Singer 2015). It is our contention, however, that the real potential of social spheres as a foundational concept has not been fully illuminated by those well placed to light the scholarly runway for journalism studies. In fact, we argue, the flurry of scholarship that emerges in massive progressions of media technologies and alterations to business models sustaining news all leads to diffused understandings of just what is occurring in practical and theoretical developments of journalism. In this movement, ironically, the richness of what the “social sphere” offers journalism studies has become slighted.



Social sphere(s) are not new. As we highlight, the concept is as old as social theory itself (Arendt 1958; Bourdieu 1989, 1990; Durkheim 1958; Sennett 1977, 2012; Weber 1947, 1968). Yet, theoretically speaking, our full appreciation of the “social” has largely been subsumed by a term that has become almost synonymous with journalism: the *public* sphere. A key argument in this paper is that the dominance of the public sphere in journalism studies—with its emphasis on political action and participation, democracy, deliberation, and public opinion—overshadows the importance of the wider social sphere. Habermas (1974, 49) himself, for example, reminds us that the public sphere is just *one dimension* of the social—“a realm of social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed.”<sup>1</sup>

Misunderstanding or equating the political and social realms, we know, is not restricted to the journalistic field alone. Across disciplines, confusion relating to the delineation between social and public worlds “is as old as the translation of Greek terms into Latin and their adaption to Roman and Christian thought” (Arendt 1958, 28). This article, therefore, is designed to realign the field to acknowledge within itself the multiple dimensions of social life and, as well, to reaffirm the social and cultural forms and functions of journalism. In turn, we define social spheres as the realm of our everyday within which our social lives help us make sense of who we are as individuals and ultimately as collectives. It is within these spheres where we construct connections to others beyond our intimate lives and where appropriate, meaningful behaviour and practices are negotiated.

Certainly, these actions appear in an array of social environments and situations, including those that are mediated through journalism. News media plays a distinct role in establishing social norms which function as forms of social control and order, maintaining approved standards of daily life, institutional structures and practices, and dominant explanations of the world around us. Indeed, as Goffman (1959) argues, journalism serves as a “front stage” in which social norms are presented through setting and performance and addressed by audiences through the reflectivity of internalized norms and expectations for behaviour. Therefore, to explore the multifaceted context of social spheres further, we suggest scholarship shift from the influence of political theory in explanations of journalism’s societal function to the value of critical cultural sociology and theory (Lichterhan 2016; Turner 2009), which reconciles power with the basic human desire for social order within individual–institutional–cultural interactions and to complicate issues of social class, honour and disadvantage.

Underpinned by the battle to uphold a common good rather than a “public good” (see Hess 2017), the social sphere becomes a permeable shell through which journalism scholars can better probe ideas of collectivity, virtue and vice, ritual, myth, sociability, social honour, and control. Such existing scholarship in journalism studies appears scattered within rank-and-file debates about methodology, empirical inquiry, and town-and-gown divides between scholars, practitioners, and citizens—divides that will continue to occur until addressed through integration with critical and cultural theory. As a result, the public sphere as a foundational concept is not entirely equipped to build understanding around such dimensions of journalism and journalistic influence. A complementary construct that rotates on a broader philosophical axis is needed.

To position our arguments, this paper is divided into two main sections. We begin by highlighting the importance of salvaging “the social” from the tsunami of scholarship on digital tools, connectivity, and social media. We argue that in an era when social networking and social media are now part of the everyday lexicon of both journalism practice and

studies, there has never been a more important time to reassess the notion and value of the “social.”

Our next challenge is to separate clearly and distinguish understandings of the public sphere from social spheres. It is not our intention to discount the importance of matters political and participatory from journalism studies, rather we wish to ensure there is an accessible complementary framework for scholars exploring the social dimensions of news. We tease out the significance of the social sphere through four key dimensions: the common good, collective identity through performance of ritual and mythical practice, sociability, and social coercion and control.

### **Subsuming the Importance of the Social in Journalism Studies**

In journalism studies, dominant understandings of the social is shifting into dangerous territory. Increasingly, the idea of the social is considered synonymous with social media and social networking, in which the public writ large is engaged (or is invited to engage) in a mediated sphere of public meaning (Dutton and Dubois 2015). Terms such as social journalism (Hermida 2012), social news (Goode 2009), and the sociability of news (Phillips 2012) have been coined to explore how social networking is shaping journalism, from its celebrated fifth estate function (Jerico 2012) to audience and journalistic engagement and participation, and perceptions of digital platforms (Holton, Lewis, and Coddington 2016). Phillips (2012, 669), for example, positions “sociability” in journalism as news produced in a form that is capable of spreading virally. Others, such as Correia (2012, 99), seek to clarify the conditions for an effective public sphere in relation to online journalism, emphasizing the desire for “reason without coercion” and “reciprocity between participants in collective debate.”

It is our contention, however, that the significance of structure/agency over rational action, the role of subtle and/or blatant coercion in digital journalism practice, and its relationship to power deserve attention. What is often overlooked in studies that examine the relationship between journalism practice and social media tools is the very significance of the social and cultural life worlds that drive demand for these new platforms.

We acknowledge that inroads have been made in exploring the relationship between social media and journalism in mobilizing collective action and challenging established political institutions that reinforce social order. Events such as the “Arab Spring”—dubbed the Twitter revolution—demonstrate the way in which media systems and communication networks have complexly conditioned and facilitated such uprisings (Cottle 2011; Issawi and Cammaerts 2015). Yet still, a focus on historical revolts and their relationship to journalism inadvertently sidesteps the significance of our everyday social practices around news media that reinforce moral norms and shapes social order (see Goffman 1963).

The importance of balancing journalism’s power to shape social order both in moments of political and apolitical crisis and in negotiating the banality of the everyday is what renders the social sphere necessary to journalism studies. Too often scholarship addressing news platforms and processes of participation in digital spaces emphasizes the desire for a utopian “public sphere” of involvement and open and free communication guided by a media-centric and politically literate engaged and empowered citizenry. The public sphere—which “comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble [freely] to form a public body” (Habermas 1974, 49), is one of the most widely

accepted, discussed, and critiqued concepts in journalism studies (i.e. Allan 2005; Lunt and Livingston 2013; McNair, Flew, and Harrington 2017; Simpson 2014).

A review of scholarship in two leading journalism journals (*Journalism Studies* and *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*) highlights that the “public sphere” along with “politics” have been among the 10 most-frequently adopted keywords in discussions about journalism between 2007 and 2013 (see Steensen and Ahva 2015). Since the appearance of Habermas’ major texts from the 1960s (for full discussion, see Hansen 2014), the public sphere has been both adopted and challenged as a framework to discuss the relationship between media and democracy. That the social sphere in journalism studies has been overshadowed by the more politically oriented idea of the public sphere is of no surprise. Propagated by Western ideals and socio-political globalization, journalism is celebrated for its democratic, Fourth Estate function, for lubricating wheels of democracy, keeping the powerful accountable, and serving as a conduit of information that helps people connect and deliberate about public affairs.

While it is not our intention to provide an extensive review or critique (see especially Fraser 1990) of the public sphere, we recognize that its dominance—coupled with the emergence of social media—increasingly obscures the conceptual significance of the social and its relationship to journalism studies. Inherent in these realms are challenges to sovereignty of collectives and individuals to operate freely in society without mandated compliance with dominant social norms and expectations of behaviour.

### **(Un)masking the Social: Excavating Foundations of Social Spheres**

Our emphasis on social spheres complements and extends scholarship that reinforces the importance of the social and apolitical dimensions of the news media (Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham 2007; Couldry 2012; Dahlgren 2009; Ettema 2005; Hanitzsch and Vos 2016). While scholars tease out the mediated role of everyday thoughts, conversations, and activities, they are not always explored specifically through a journalism studies lens and the objective is often to examine the preconditions for effective democratic politics. Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham (2007), for instance, lay solid foundations for journalism and social spheres in their research on the “mediated public connection,” which highlights the importance of theoretical models beyond deliberative democracy to detail the mediating role of everyday thoughts, conversation, and activities that may, under certain conditions, bridge the private and public spheres (Livingstone 2005).

At the root of much work on social life, Bourdieu’s (1989, 1990) work on *social spaces* or *fields* can explicate how journalism both shapes and is shaped by society and embodied practices associated with news (i.e. Benson and Neveu 2005; Hess and Waller 2017; Robinson 2017). Journalism studies scholars—even Bourdieu himself (see Bourdieu 1998)—often focus on the relationship between journalists and other elite actors or the internal logics of the journalistic field (Benson and Neveu 2005; Schultz 2007; Willig 2012). While Bourdieu’s reference to capital, habitus, and practice serves as a complementary set of tools to examine social spheres (beyond that of sites of competition), there remains limitations within his articulations when it comes to analysing intersections and relationships between news and everyday audiences.<sup>2</sup>

In advocating for social spheres, we also move beyond the “grand dichotomy” between public and private spheres explored in wider scholarship where the focus is on the blurring of boundaries between the world of family, intimacy, and personal life