

SOCIAL MEDIA AND U.S. JOURNALISTS

Uses and perceived effects on perceived norms and values

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This study, based on a representative online survey of 1080 US journalists conducted in 2013, analyses the demographic and organizational predictors of how journalists use social media and how they evaluate the impact of these media on their professional norms and values. The findings indicate that 9 of 10 US journalists regularly use social media in their work—but mainly to check on what other news organizations are doing and to look for breaking news events. The most frequent users of social media are younger journalists with higher incomes who work for television, radio, or online news organizations. The findings also indicate that journalists who hold more positive attitudes toward the use of social media in journalism, and those who think that social media are more important in their jobs, tend to be more supportive of the populist-mobilizer and the disseminator roles of journalism.

KEYWORDS journalism; professional roles; social media; survey

Introduction

More and more Americans are consuming their news through social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter. According to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center (Shearer and Gottfried 2017), the majority of American adults (67 percent) get at least some of their news on social media. In fact, the percentage of Americans who frequently get their news from online sources has grown steadily during the past years, and younger audiences already get most of their news from websites, apps and social media (Mitchell et al. 2016). Because of these changes in audience behavior, most US news organizations today disseminate their content through social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

While journalists use a variety of social media in their professional work, Twitter and Facebook are the most frequently used platforms (Cision 2016; Santana and Hopp 2016). Since its launch in 2006, Twitter has become an important news platform for journalists and other media professionals. Previous studies have found that most journalists use Twitter for monitoring breaking news, tweeting links to their own stories, and communicating with their audiences (e.g., Artwick 2013; Barnard 2014; Broersma

and Graham 2013; Canter 2015; Canter and Brookes 2016; Hedman 2015; Hermida 2010, 2012, 2013; Kim et al. 2015; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012; Molyneux 2014).

While the relevance of social media to journalism is undisputed, there is very little research on how social media have influenced the perceived norms and values of journalists. Have journalists' ideas about which roles are more important been influenced by their use of, and attitudes toward, social media? If so, this may signal a more profound effect of social media on journalism that goes beyond the more obvious impact on daily practices and routines. To the extent that journalists' perceptions of their roles are correlated with what they report (see Mellado, Hellmueller, and Donsbach 2017), the uses of, and attitudes toward, social media might affect news production in ways that go far beyond the replacement of other methods of news gathering and reporting.

There is evidence from a 2013 study of US journalists (Willnat, Weaver, and Wilhoit 2017a) that while 70 percentage of US journalists perceived an overall positive impact of social media on the journalistic profession, about three-quarters (76 percent) thought that "online journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed," and almost half also thought that "user-generated content threatens the integrity of journalism" (47 percent). Thus, US journalists are concerned about the impact of social media on journalism more broadly, but so far there is almost no systematic evidence on whether the use of social media might be linked to journalists' views about which roles are more or less important.

A good example of journalists' concern about the impact of social media on reporting norms might be the conflict that some perceive in reporting US President Trump's tweets, even if they are not particularly newsworthy or verifiable, consequently amplifying the reach of these tweets well beyond the relatively small number of people who actually use Twitter regularly as a news source (Grynbaum and Ember 2016). Others have argued that the speed with which fake news can spread through social media might undermine journalists' efforts to present carefully vetted facts and information to an audience that is more receptive to the lure of false news, which is often sensational and emotionally engaging (Chadwick 2018).

This study seeks to shed light on US journalists' use of, and attitudes toward, social media in their professional work. It also aims to explore whether there is a correlation between these uses and attitudes and the perceptions of traditional norms and values among journalists working for a wide variety of US news media.

Journalists' Use of Social Media

Despite the growing importance of online news, research on those who produce such news has only emerged in recent years. Most of the existing research has focused on how news organizations have adopted social media (e.g., Ahmad 2010; Armstrong and Gao 2010; Boyle and Zuegner 2012; Hermida 2010, 2012, 2013; Newman, Dutton, and Blank 2012; Poell and van Dijck 2014) or analyzed the content of journalists' social media output (e.g., Artwick 2013, 2014; Barnard 2014; Broersma and Graham 2013; Canter 2015; Canter and Brookes 2016; Coddington, Molyneux, and Lawrence 2014; Greer and Ferguson 2011; Ju, Jeong, and Chyi 2014; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012; Moon and Hadley 2014; Paulussen and Harder 2014). A third group of studies

investigated how news consumers have reacted to social media in the news production process (e.g., Gil de Zúñiga, Diehl, and Ardèvol-Abreu 2018; Kruike-meier and Lecheler 2018; Lee 2015; Willnat, Weaver, and Wilhoit 2017b).

The majority of these studies found that journalists value social media as a tool for publishing and promoting their stories and for interacting with their audiences. Journalists generally see social media as a tool that can enhance “the job of traditional newsmaking” by offering faster reporting speeds, better access to sources, and more efficiency in research (Spyridou et al. 2013). In addition, most journalists agree they are more engaged with their audiences because of social media (Cision 2016). At the same time, our own findings indicate that many journalists recognize that social media have undermined traditional journalistic norms by creating pressures to publish faster, to rely on unverified information that has been posted by questionable sources, or to react to trending stories that might not have much relevance beyond a small group of online users.

A number of studies also found that patterns of social media use and related attitudes vary across nations. For example, an online survey conducted in 2011 with journalists from Finland, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom found that British journalists are not only the most prolific users of social media, but also hold the most positive attitudes towards these tools (Gulyas 2013). A similar survey conducted 2 years later among journalists from Canada, Finland, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States found that social media adoption had become similar in the surveyed nations (Gulyas 2017). While most journalists felt that they were more engaged with their audiences, national differences remained in the perceptions of the impact of social media on journalism.

One limitation most of these studies share is the fact that they are often based on intensive interviews or newsroom observations with small groups of journalists (e.g., Brems et al. 2017; Chadha and Wells 2016; Mouro 2014) or surveys with non-representative samples (e.g., Cision 2016; Cozma and Chen 2013; Gulyas 2013, 2017; Johnston 2016; MacGregor et al. 2011; Rogstad 2014; Santana and Hopp 2016). Such samples do not allow more general conclusions about how the use of social media in newsrooms has affected journalism overall.

Social Media and Journalists’ Professional Norms

The emergence of Twitter in 2006, and other social media thereafter, has had a significant effect on the daily work routine of journalists in the United States and elsewhere. Suddenly, journalists could easily interact with their audiences, find sources and facts online, and were able to distribute their content instantly to a wide network of connected news consumers (Hedman 2015). The quick adoption of social media among journalists prompted a number of studies that have analyzed how this new “social media routine” might have affected their norms, values, and role perceptions.

Most of the early studies that analyzed how social media might affect journalists focused on analyzing the work of online reporters and editors. One of the earliest studies (Brill 2001) compared the professional roles of 66 online journalist with those of print journalists in Weaver and Wilhoit’s (1996) study of US journalists conducted in 1992. While there were similarities in how both groups viewed the disseminator and

the populist functions, online journalists were less likely than the print journalists to view the interpretive and adversarial functions as very important.

An online survey of 655 US journalists conducted in 2003 (Cassidy 2005) found no significant differences between online and print journalists in their perception of the adversarial and populist functions. However, print journalists viewed the interpretive function as significantly more important than did online journalists. In contrast, online journalists rated getting information to the public quickly (part of the disseminator function) as more important than did print journalists.

With the routine use of Twitter in newsrooms around the world, scholars started asking how exactly social media changed the practice of journalism. Singer's (2005) seminal study of more than 1100 political blog posts published in 2004 was based on the concept of *normalization*, which refers to the process of adapting new journalistic methods to existing traditional practices and norms. While Singer found that the majority of these posts contained personal opinions and links to mainstream media sites, she concluded that "most (but not all) political j-bloggers are retaining their traditional journalistic gatekeeping role by incorporating limited or no material from users, despite the inherently conversational and participatory nature of the format" (189). By doing so, "journalists continue to think in terms of their professional role as information providers as they migrate to the interactive online medium" (192).

A similar content analysis of more than 22,000 tweets by the 500 most-followed US journalists in 2009 (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012) found that online journalists were likely to include personal opinions in their tweets, thus undermining the journalistic norm of objectivity. However, online journalists working at "elite" news outlets were less likely than other online journalists to retweet other Twitter users. The authors concluded that this might indicate that not all online journalists were equally ready to relinquish their gatekeeping function.

The conclusion that journalists might be reluctant to change their professional norms and values despite the technological challenges brought by social media has been supported by in-depth interviews with a small number of political journalists during the 2012 US presidential election campaign. Parmelee (2013) concluded that "participants do not use Twitter in ways that suggest a major shift in traditional journalistic norms, such as objectivity and gatekeeping" (291). Instead, most journalists indicated that they did not deviate from traditional norms because of "formal guidelines, advice from colleagues and their own sense of a journalist's role in society" (303). Similarly, Rogstad's (2014) survey of 241 Norwegian political news journalists found that "few reporters are comfortable sharing political opinions or blurring the boundaries between the personal and the professional, indicating that traditional journalistic norms still stand in political news journalism" (688).

While these studies might be reassuring to those who fear that social media spell the end for traditional journalism, recent studies have found evidence that not all journalists are equally willing to incorporate social media into their work routines—which might be a reflection of their professional norms and values. An online survey of 546 US newspaper journalists conducted in 2014 (Holton, Lewis, and Coddington 2016), for example, found that journalists who were more supportive of the populist and entertainment functions were also more likely to "embrace digital platforms not only as routinized parts of their work but also as emergent spaces for interactions with audiences

who embrace digital platforms” (856). Journalists who were more supportive of other journalistic functions, such as the public service roles, were less likely to use social media and more skeptical of online audience engagement.

One of the few survey studies that have analyzed how *social media use* might affect journalists’ self-perception was conducted by Hedman and Djerf-Pierre in 2011. Based on a survey of 1412 Swedish journalists, the authors identified three distinct types of online journalists: enthusiasts, pragmatics, and skeptics. The mostly younger enthusiasts “fully embraced social media in their work” and frequently used them “for networking, personal branding and collaboration.” The pragmatics used social media more selectively, held more ambivalent attitudes toward them, and often perceived “social media skills as a professional requirement.” The skeptics, mostly found among older print journalists, actively avoided social media and resisted the notion that social media “should change the profession to any significant extent.” Hedman and Djerf-Pierre’s (2013) work suggests that journalists who embrace audience engagement and “commodification of journalists through personal branding” are more likely to use social media in their work. More traditional journalistic norms, such as objectivity and scrutiny, were not associated with social media use.

In a similar study of Swedish journalists, Hedman (2015) found that the most active Twitter users among the journalists do not “normalize” social media “to fit core professional norms and values.” Instead, they adjusted “to the evolving norms and practices of social media related to the specific features of audience orientation and professional positioning” (293). More specifically, the most active social media users were more likely to assign greater importance to “Twitter-specific” features such as interaction, networking, and personal branding than were other journalists.

Other researchers have started comparing role perceptions with role performances on social media. Based on a 2015 survey conducted among journalists in the Philippines, Tandoc, Cabañes, and Cayabyab (2018) compared the role perceptions of 76 journalists with what they actually wrote about in their tweets. The findings show that both the watchdog and “critical change agent” role (what others have called the “populist-mobilizer role”) predicted matching role performances in the journalists’ tweets, while the disseminator and opportunistic facilitator roles did not. Thus, it seems that journalists’ role orientations are only imperfect predictors of their social media output.

Overall, the few studies that have analyzed the potential link between journalists’ use of social media and the way they perceive their professional roles have led to somewhat contradictory conclusions due to different approaches. What seems obvious, though, is the fact that social media might not have a uniform effect on how journalists see themselves—and that normalization might not be the best way to explain these effects.

Research Questions

Given the limited number and contradictory nature of studies that have investigated the relationship between social media use and journalists’ professional role perceptions, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1a: What are the patterns of adoption of social media among US journalists?

RQ1b: How do US journalists perceive the effects of social media on their work?

While there have been numerous studies of how journalists have incorporated social media in their work, most of these studies do not rely on representative samples and therefore cannot provide valid estimates to what extent US journalists use social media in their daily work and how they perceive the effects of such media on their work. This study will provide answers to these questions with a representative sample of full-time journalists working for a variety of media outlets in the United States.

RQ2: How is the use of social media associated with support of traditional journalistic norms and values?

As discussed above, the use of social media might undermine traditional journalistic norms and functions such as objectivity and gatekeeping. Most journalists have been working with social media for more than a decade now—a period long enough to have an impact on how they evaluate the effects of social media on their work and the profession overall. This study tests possible associations between social media use and perceived journalistic roles by relying on a set of journalistic functions that have been used in studies that span almost 50 years of research (see Weaver et al. 2007). Combining these “classic” measures of journalistic functions with detailed questions about the journalists’ use of social media should allow us to provide relatively reliable answers to this question.

RQ3: How are perceptions of the effects of social media on the journalistic profession associated with support of traditional journalistic norms and values?

While the actual *use* of social media should have the most direct effect on how journalists think about traditional journalistic roles, *perceptions* of how social media might affect the work of journalists and the profession overall also could play a role in this process. Consequently, this study tests whether perceived effects of social media are associated with the way journalists think about their roles.

We hope that this study will provide important clues about the current state of US journalism and, as we believe, a rather optimistic message about the resilience and tenacity of US journalists who have faced unprecedented economic and technological changes in the global media environment during the past decade.

Methods

To answer the questions raised above, we conducted a national online survey in 2013 with 1080 full-time journalists working for a variety of daily and weekly newspaper, radio and television stations, wire services, news magazines, and online news media throughout the United States. The questionnaire focused on journalists’ job satisfaction, perceived levels of freedom in their jobs, role perceptions, reporting practices, use of social media in their work, perceived impact of social media on their work, and demographics. The questions regarding the use of social media and their perceived impact were partially adopted from studies by Gulyas (2013) and Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013).

The sample of traditional journalists is based on a multi-stage sampling procedure, which first draws a representative sample of media organizations in the United

States and then, in a second step, samples of journalists from within each of the selected organizations. The sample of online journalists was created by identifying online journalists within a representative selection of traditional media organizations and by obtaining lists of journalists from online-only media organizations and news websites.¹ Overall, 3500 journalists were invited via e-mail to participate in our online survey. The response rate for the final sample of 1080 respondents was 32.6 percent.

Journalists' social media use was assessed with a series of questions that measured the perceived importance of social media in journalists' work, the frequency of use of different types of social media, and the way social media were used. Perceived importance of social media was measured by asking journalists how important they thought social media are for reporting or producing their stories. The frequency of social media use in their work was assessed by asking journalists how often they use social media such as blogs written by other journalists, social networking sites such as Twitter, or audio-visual sharing sites such as YouTube. Finally, in order to get a better understanding of how journalists use social media in their work, respondents were asked whether they regularly use social media to do things such as checking for breaking news, finding new ideas for stories, or keeping in touch with their audiences.²

The survey also included a series of questions that probed how journalists thought about the impact of social media on their work. After asking journalists first how they would rate the impact of social media on their work (from very negative to very positive), they were then asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with eight statements such as "using social media allows me to promote myself and my work much better" or "because of social media, I am more engaged with my audience."³

To measure how journalists think about their traditional functions, respondents were asked to state how important they considered a number of "classic" professional roles that have been identified in prior research (Weaver and Wilhoit 1986, 1996; Weaver et al. 2007). Journalists were asked, for example, how important they thought it was to "get information to the public quickly," "provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems," or to "investigate claims and statements made by the government."⁴

In addition, the survey included a number of questions that measured the journalists' demographic backgrounds, such as sex, age, education, race, political affiliation, and income.⁵

Findings

Journalists' Use of Social Media

Overall, 8 in 10 journalists (76 percent) in the United States use social media in their daily work. Journalists working for television stations (88 percent) and wire services (97 percent) are the most likely to have incorporated social media into their daily work routine, while journalists at magazines (64 percent) and weekly newspapers (53 percent) are the least likely to have done so.

The importance of social media in the creation of news is underscored by the fact that 40 percentage of journalists say that social media are "extremely" or "very"

important for reporting or producing their stories. Another 44 percent say that social media are at least “somewhat important.” The findings also show that journalists working for television (59 percent) and online news organizations (51 percent) are the most likely to consider social media important in their work, while wire service (32 percent) and magazine (24 percent) journalists are the least likely.

Another important question was which kind of social media journalists routinely use in their work. We were particularly interested in how frequently journalists use social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook, audio-visual sharing sites such as YouTube or Instagram, and blogs written by journalists or private citizens.

Overall, more than half of the journalists (54 percent) say they regularly use microblogs (mostly Twitter) for gathering information and reporting. Other social media are used much less frequently, including the blogs of other journalists (24 percent), crowd-sourcing sites such as Wikipedia (22 percent), audio-visual sites such as YouTube (20 percent), or professional sites such as LinkedIn (11 percent). Blogs by citizens (7 percent) are used the least.

A closer look at how each type of social media is used by journalists working for different media shows that Twitter is especially popular among online (71 percent), television (68 percent), magazine and wire journalists (both 62 percent). Blogs authored by other journalists, on the other hand, are used mostly by journalists working for magazines (40 percent), wire services (40 percent), and online news organizations (31 percent). The use of Wikipedia and other crowd-sourcing sites is most prevalent among magazine (40 percent), online (29 percent), and wire (25 percent) journalists. Finally, audio-visual sites—such as YouTube or Instagram—are most popular among television (38 percent) and online (37 percent) journalists.

In order to get a better understanding of how exactly US journalists use social media, the survey included a series of questions that measured whether journalists regularly use social media to do things such as checking for breaking news, finding new ideas for stories, or keeping in touch with their audiences.

TABLE 1

Purpose of social media use among US journalists by media type (percentage in each group)

	Daily	Weekly	TV	Radio	Online	Wire	Magazine	Total
Check for breaking news	78.5	70.2	88.6	83.5	84.8	83.5	63.3	78.5
Check what others are reporting	75.4	62.6	79.5	80.4	75.0	81.6	58.3	73.1
Monitor discussions	48.6	28.6	50.0	46.4	55.4	60.2	58.3	46.5
Find new ideas for stories	57.8	56.7	75.8	72.2	57.6	49.5	50.0	59.8
Interview sources	22.3	20.2	25.0	21.6	19.6	13.6	3.3	20.0
Find sources	56.7	48.7	61.4	54.6	51.1	58.3	40.0	54.1
Verify information	27.9	30.7	22.7	16.5	31.5	7.8	18.3	24.7
Find additional information	57.3	53.8	63.6	57.7	66.3	45.6	43.3	56.2
Meet new people in my field	19.8	18.5	26.5	20.6	29.3	28.2	18.3	21.9
Follow someone on SNS	43.9	32.4	58.3	38.1	54.3	54.4	41.7	44.4
Keep in touch with my audience	56.7	54.2	81.1	62.9	68.5	49.5	51.7	59.7
Post comments	38.5	29.8	56.1	37.1	40.2	28.2	10.0	36.2
Reply to comments	33.5	26.5	52.3	30.9	41.3	15.5	16.7	32.0

Percentages reflect those journalists who “regularly” use social media in their jobs.

As [Table 1](#) indicates, most journalists use social media to gather information for their news stories. About three-fourths (73 percent) of the journalists say they use social media to check what other news organizations do or to see if there is any breaking news (79 percent). More than half of them also use social media to keep in touch with their audiences (60 percent), find new ideas for their stories (60 percent), gather additional information (60 percent), or find additional information or sources (both 54 percent). Other possible uses of social media, such as interviewing sources (20 percent), meeting new people (22 percent), verifying information (25 percent), or posting comments on work-related social networking sites (36 percent) are much less common.

Journalists' Attitudes toward Social Media

Another goal of this study was to explore how US journalists evaluate the effects of social media on their profession. As we have pointed out earlier, with a growing overlap between social media and mainstream news, journalists have been forced to grapple with the ways in which social media impact their work. As a result, it is likely that journalists have ambivalent feelings about how social media might affect their profession.

However, our findings show that a majority (72 percent) of journalists think that social media have a “very” or at least “somewhat” positive effect on their professional work. The most positive among the journalists are those working for online news (80 percent) and television (79 percent), closely followed by radio (74 percent), daily and weekly newspapers (both 69 percent), magazines, and wire services (both 68 percent). Only about 7 percent of the journalists—most of them working for newspapers and wire services—say that the effect is negative.

When asked what specific effects they thought social media might have on their work, the majority of journalists indicate that self-promotion (80 percent), better engagement with their audiences (69 percent), and faster reporting (62 percent) are the three most beneficial aspects (see [Table 2](#)). Significantly fewer think that social media enhance their credibility (30 percent), allow them to cover more news (29 percent), or improve their productivity (25 percent). As expected, few journalists say that social media had decreased their workload (6 percent).

A closer look at the three most positively perceived effects of social media shows that there are significant, but fairly consistent, differences by media type. Television (88 percent) and online (87 percent) journalists are the most likely to agree that social media allow them “to promote myself and my work,” while journalists working for daily and weekly newspapers (79 percent and 72 percent) are somewhat less likely to agree. Similarly, journalists working for television (78 percent) and online media (82 percent) are more likely to agree that social media make them “more engaged with my audience”—a statement that finds less support among journalists working for daily and weekly newspapers (70 percent and 64 percent) and much less support among those working for wire services (55 percent). Finally, the idea that social media allow journalists to report “news stories faster” finds most agreement among television journalists (72 percent), while those working for other media are more skeptical of such a benefit in speed.

TABLE 2
Perceived effects of social media on own journalistic work by media type (percentage in each group)

	Daily	Weekly	TV	Radio	Online	Wire	Magazine	Total
Using social media allows me to promote myself and my work much better	79.0	72.1	87.8	85.2	86.8	79.6	84.1	80.4
Because of social media, I am more engaged with my audience	70.0	63.9	78.1	69.3	81.9	55.3	66.6	69.2
Social media allows me to be faster in reporting news stories	64.3	65.6	72.4	59.6	62.7	42.5	43.5	62.0
Because of social media, I communicate better with people relevant to my work	48.9	45.9	48.3	50.0	55.5	45.8	55.8	48.9
Using social media enhances my credibility as a journalist	34.1	16.6	27.5	26.8	39.0	38.3	34.2	29.7
Social media allows me to cover more news stories	24.8	30.6	40.2	27.3	32.2	21.0	29.5	28.8
Social media has improved my productivity	24.4	23.1	30.5	22.9	29.7	24.5	18.2	25.0
Social media has decreased my daily workload	5.8	9.8	5.0	4.5	4.8	7.6	2.3	6.4

Percentages reflect those journalists who either “agree” or “strongly agree” with each statement.

Predictors of Social Media Use and Perceived Effects

To test the relative contributions of demographic factors and organizational context in predicting the use of, and attitudes toward, social media among US journalists, we ran a hierarchical regression with two blocks of independent variables. The first set of predictors represents journalists’ demographics such as gender, age, education, and income. The second set represents the organizational context of each journalist’s workplace and includes variables such as being a supervisor, job experience (in years), and type of media where journalists are employed (print or broadcast). These predictors were then used to explain (a) the time journalists spend with social media each day and (b) how they feel about the effects of social media on their work (represented by an index of attitudes shown in Table 2).

As Table 3 indicates, younger journalists with higher incomes tend to spend more time with social media each day. And while supervisors spend more time with social media than reporters, journalists who work for print and broadcast media are less likely to spend time with social media than journalists working for online media.

Beliefs about the potential effects of social media closely mirror this pattern. Younger journalists with higher incomes and supervisors tend to perceive the effects of social media on their work more positively than others. While both print and broadcast journalists tend to use social media less frequently than their online colleagues, only those working for print media perceive more negative effects of social media on their jobs.

Overall, these findings indicate that demographic and organizational factors are associated with how journalists use social media and how they think about

TABLE 3

Predictors of social media use and perceived effects among US journalists

	Total time spent with social media each day	Perceived effect of social media on own work
Demographics		
Age	-0.14 (0.01)***	-0.16 (0.02)***
Female	-0.01 (0.11)	0.01 (0.34)
Education	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.18)
Democrat	-0.02 (0.11)	0.02 (0.37)
Income	0.12 (0.01)***	0.10 (0.03)*
Minority	0.06 (0.19)	0.02 (0.60)
ΔR^2 (in percent)	3.00***	2.40**
Organizational context		
Supervisor	0.10 (0.10)**	0.08 (0.33)*
Years in journalism	0.05 (0.01)	0.04 (0.03)
Works in print	-0.29 (0.18)***	-0.21 (0.58)***
Works in broadcast	-0.16 (0.20)**	-0.11 (0.63)
ΔR^2 (in percent)	4.70***	2.90***
Total R^2 (in percent)	7.70***	5.30***
<i>N</i>	792	748

*** $p < 0.001$,** $p < 0.01$,* $p < 0.05$.

Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Total time spent with social media each day was measured on an eight-point scale ranging from 1 = less than 30 min to 8 = more than 6 hours. Perceived effect of social media on own work was measured by combining seven of the eight measures (excluding "social media has decreased my workload") shown in Table 2 into an index measuring support for using social media in job (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83).

the effects of these media on their professional work. While these associations are important in their potential consequences, they relate exclusively to how journalists use social media and how they think they might affect their work. What seems even more relevant, though, is a check on whether the actual *use* of social media might affect how journalists think about their traditional norms and values—a question addressed in the next section.

Social Media and Journalistic Functions

In order to analyze how the various journalistic roles cluster, exploratory factor analysis was used to determine how exactly the 15 journalistic norms might be related. Table 4 indicates that the norms cluster into four general functions of journalism—consistent with earlier studies of US journalists (Weaver and Wilhoit 1986, 1996; Weaver et al. 2007):

Interpretive-watchdog function: Four roles cluster to form the interpretive-watchdog function of journalism ($M = 13.79$, $SD = 2.10$): investigation of official claims for their validity, analyzing complex problems, and discussing national and international policy. Our data suggest journalists who feel strongly about the importance of any one of these roles are also more likely to rate the importance of the others more highly as well.

Populist-mobilizer function: The populist-mobilizer function is ranked second among the four broad role orientations. Four individual roles are involved in the populist-mobilizer orientation ($M = 11.54$, $SD = 2.59$): motivating people to get involved in public issues, letting them express their views, pointing to possible solutions, and

TABLE 4
Factor analysis of professional role perceptions among US journalists

	1	2	3	4
<i>Interpretive function</i>				
Investigate government claims	0.686	0.072	0.170	0.025
Provide analysis of complex problems	0.713	0.156	-0.024	0.125
Discuss national policy	0.686	0.084	0.209	0.027
Discuss international developments	0.862	0.019	0.057	-0.051
<i>Populist-mobilizer function</i>				
Motivate people to get involved	0.040	0.844	0.044	-0.034
Point to possible solutions	0.183	0.705	0.041	0.005
Let people express views	-0.035	0.744	0.068	0.168
Develop cultural interests	0.163	0.476	0.246	0.069
Set political agenda	0.027	0.294*	0.494	0.091
<i>Adversarial function</i>				
Serve as adversary of government	0.172	0.045	0.927	-0.013
Serve as adversary of business	0.175	0.051	0.927	-0.051
<i>Disseminator function</i>				
Get information to public quickly	0.084	0.000	-0.021	0.683
Reach widest possible audience	-0.206	0.213	-0.010	0.651
Provide entertainment	-0.017	0.020	0.031	0.676
Avoid unverified facts	0.0157	0.003	0.022	0.335*
Eigenvalues	8.19			
Total variance (percent)	54.59			

Principal component analysis. Rotation: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Primary loading of a variable on a factor is indicated in boldface. *N* = 1080.

* Not included in the computation of this journalistic function.

developing cultural interests. A fifth item that had been included in previous studies, setting the political agenda, appeared to be an outlier and was excluded.

Adversarial function: This function is a combination of two measures (*M* = 5.05, *SD* = 1.92): being adversarial (skeptical) of government officials and being adversarial toward business. This function is slightly more salient than the disseminator orientation, but somewhat less important than the more highly favored populist-mobilizer function.

Disseminator function: The three elements of the disseminator function are getting information to the public quickly, reaching the widest audience, and providing entertainment (*M* = 7.96, *SD* = 1.69). A fourth item that had been included in previous studies, avoiding unverified facts, appeared to be an outlier and was excluded.

As Table 5 indicates, journalists working for different types of media hold remarkably similar perceptions of journalistic functions. Overall, the interpretive-watchdog

TABLE 5
Perceived effects of social media on journalists' work by media type (percentage in each group)

	Daily	Weekly	Tv	Radio	Online	Wire	Magazine	Total
Interpretive	3.47	3.28	3.32	3.51	3.51	3.70	3.63	3.45
Populist	2.94	2.98	2.82	2.89	2.91	2.70	2.59	2.88
Adversarial	2.57	2.36	2.40	2.61	2.42	2.84	2.73	2.52
Disseminator	2.70	2.64	2.75	2.52	2.63	2.60	2.58	2.65

Cell entries represent mean scores for support of journalistic functions measured on a four-point scale ranging from 1 = not really important to 4 = extremely important.

function is seen as the most important, followed by the populist-mobilizer, the disseminator, and the adversarial functions. Journalists working for wire and magazines value the interpretive and adversarial functions slightly more than other journalists, while journalists from daily and weekly newspapers are slightly more supportive of the populist function. The adversarial function, on the other hand, is most supported by journalists working for television stations. Nevertheless, the observed variances between journalists working for different media are relatively small—which indicates that perceived journalistic functions are mostly independent from the type of news medium a journalist might work for.

Predictors of Journalistic Functions

Similar to our exploration of which factors predict the use and perceived effects of social media among US journalists, we used regression analysis to test the relative contributions of demographic factors and organizational context in predicting the perceived impact of social media on self-perceived journalistic roles. To do so, we used the four journalistic functions identified in the factor analysis (interpretive-watchdog, populist-mobilizer, adversarial, and disseminator) as dependent variables. As before, the hierarchical regression includes two blocks of independent variables that represent the journalists' demographic characteristics and the organizational context of their workplace. A third block of variables represents the use of different types of social media (blogs, micro-blogs, professional sites, audio-visual sites, and crowd-sourced sites) and more general attitudes journalists hold toward social media (perceived effects and importance of social media).

As Table 6 shows, the populist-mobilizer function is the most likely to be related to social media use and attitudes, followed by the disseminator function. The adversarial function, on the other hand, is not significantly related to these predictors, and the interpreter role has only one significant relationship with the use of journalistic blogs. Overall then, social media use and attitudes are related to populist and disseminator functions, but not to interpretive and adversarial functions.

While more positive perceptions of the importance and the effects of social media correlate positively with the populist and disseminator function, social media use is not a consistent predictor of journalistic functions. The use of citizen blogs and professional social media sites such as LinkedIn, for example, is positively associated with the populist function. At the same time, the frequent use of Twitter correlates negatively with this function. The findings also indicate that the frequent use of journalistic blogs and crowd-sourcing sites are negatively associated with the disseminator function.

Thus, while a more positive *perception* of the importance and the effects of social media is associated with more support for traditional journalistic functions, the same cannot be said for more frequent *use* of social media. Given the fact that Twitter is the most often used social medium among US journalists, the observed negative relationship with support for the populist function is puzzling. Overall, though, it seems safe to conclude that the populist and the disseminator function are associated with journalists' use and attitudes toward social media.

TABLE 6
Social media-related predictors of journalistic roles among US journalists

	Interpreter function	Populist-mobilizer function	Adversarial function	Disseminator function
<i>Demographics</i>				
Age	-0.07 (0.01)	0.15 (0.01)***	-0.04 (0.01)	0.13 (0.01)***
Female	0.01 (0.15)	0.03 (0.19)	-0.11 (0.14)***	-0.02 (0.13)
Education	0.06 (0.08)	0.00 (0.10)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)*
Democrat	0.04 (0.16)	0.02 (0.20)	0.05 (0.15)	-0.06 (0.14)
Income	0.21 (0.01)***	-0.14 (0.01)***	0.17 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.01)
Minority	0.03 (0.26)	0.09 (0.33)**	0.01 (0.25)	0.02 (0.22)
ΔR^2 (in percent)	4.80***	3.20***	4.40***	2.30***
<i>Organizational context</i>				
Supervisor	-0.16 (0.15)***	0.02 (0.19)	-0.06 (0.14)	0.10 (0.13)**
Years in journalism	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.01)	0.14 (0.01)
Works in print	-0.04 (0.25)	-0.03 (0.32)	0.10 (0.24)	0.02 (0.21)
Works in broadcast	-0.01 (0.28)	-0.04 (0.36)	0.07 (0.27)	-0.01 (0.24)
ΔR^2 (in percent)	3.10***	0.10	0.80	1.60*
<i>Social media use & attitudes</i>				
Use of journalist blogs	0.15 (0.09)***	-0.04 (0.16)	0.07 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.11)*
Use of citizen blogs	-0.03 (0.10)	0.15 (0.13)***	0.03 (0.10)	0.02 (0.09)
Use of microblogs	0.02 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.11)**	-0.07 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.07)
Use of professional social media	0.07 (0.08)	0.09 (0.11)*	0.07 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.07)
Use of audio-visual sites	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)
Use of crowd-sourcing sites	0.06 (0.08)	0.02 (0.10)	0.00 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.07)*
Attitudes toward social media in job	-0.01 (0.02)	0.10 (0.03)*	0.05 (0.02)	0.14 (0.02)**
Perceived importance of social media in job	0.02 (0.09)	0.11 (0.11)**	0.01 (0.08)	0.13 (0.07)**
ΔR^2 (in percent)	3.50***	5.70***	1.70	5.30***
Total R^2 (in percent)	11.40***	8.90***	6.90***	9.20***
N	744	744	744	744

*** $p < 0.001$,

** $p < 0.01$,

* $p < 0.05$.

Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. The four dependent variables in these regressions represent the “journalistic functions” extracted in the factor analysis shown in Table 4.

Conclusions

This study analyzed how US journalists use social media in their daily work and how this use might affect their perceptions of traditional journalistic functions. The fear that social media not only might change journalism but also disrupt traditional journalistic norms and values that have guided this occupation for so long has been a common theme in studies published during the past decade. Our findings indicate that the now ubiquitous use of social media in newsrooms around the United States indeed might have had a small but significant effect on the perceptions of such professional norms among some journalists.

Our data show that even 5 years ago in 2013 social media had become routine reporting and research tools for most journalists in the United States. About three-

fourths of journalists used social media in their daily work, especially those who worked for television and news (wire) services. More than half of the journalists said that they favored microblogs such as Twitter as newsgathering and distribution platforms. Other social media such as Facebook, blogs by other journalists, crowd-sourcing sites such as Wikipedia, or audio-visual sites such as YouTube were used much less frequently.

Most journalists used social media to gather information for their news articles, including checking on what other news organizations were reporting and seeing whether there was breaking news. More than half also used social media to keep in touch with audiences, to find new ideas for their stories, to gather additional information, and to find additional information or sources. Social media were used by fewer journalists to interview sources, meet new people, verify information, or post comments. Overall then, social media were used predominantly as information gathering tools by US journalists in 2013, and much less often to interview sources, meet new people or to verify information.

The most significant predictors of social media use were age, income, working as a reporter or being employed at a daily or weekly newspaper. While younger journalists with higher incomes generally used social media more frequently and with greater variety, the opposite was true for journalists working as reporters for daily and weekly newspapers.

Overall, our findings indicate that most US journalists in 2013 had embraced social media as an important tool in their daily work routines. At the same time, though, many of the journalists we interviewed thought that the growing use of social media in journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed and that user-generated content might threaten the integrity of journalism. We believe that such ambivalent feelings characterize fairly well how reporters and editors think about the role of social media in US journalism today—an ambivalence that is likely increased by their uncertainty about the future of journalism.

Our findings also indicate that the use of, and attitudes toward, social media are related to perceived importance of traditional journalistic functions—even after controlling for the journalists' demographic backgrounds. Journalists who held more positive attitudes toward the use of social media in journalism, and those who thought that social media were more important in their jobs, tended to be more supportive of the populist-mobilizer and the disseminator functions.

This makes sense if we understand social media as tools for a wider and faster dissemination of information and more engagement with media audiences. Journalists who want to “motivate people to get involved” or “let people express their view” (components of the populist-mobilizer function) or who want to “get information to the public quickly” and “reach the widest audience possible” (components of the disseminator function) should be supportive of social media that allow them to do this.

What is puzzling, though, is that we found mixed relationships between social media use and support of traditional journalistic functions. Journalists who frequently used citizen blogs and professional social media sites were *more* likely to believe that the populist-mobilizer function is important, but the opposite was true for frequent users of Twitter. We also found that those who were more frequent users of journalist blogs and crowd-sourcing sites tended to be *less* supportive of the disseminator function.

While these relationships are difficult to explain without more information about why these journalists hold these attitudes, it seems clear that the normalization hypothesis might be too general to explain how social media continue to affect the way journalists think about their work. Moreover, the proliferation of different types of social media that increasingly find acceptance among journalists (e.g., Instagram and Snapchat) highlights the need to investigate how different forms of social media might affect journalistic practice and the self-perception of those who create news. The fact that some social media have evolved into large and powerful social networks in countries other than the United States (e.g., WeChat and Weibo in China) only compounds this need for more detailed investigations.

We also believe that it is important to consider how social media might have affected journalistic role perceptions *across time*. Weaver and his colleagues (2007) have observed in previous studies of US journalists that the disseminator orientation has declined significantly during the past decade, whereas the populist-mobilizer function has gained a bit and now exceeds the disseminator role. Perhaps the growing use of social media in US journalism during this time has contributed to the decline of the disseminator function, while boosting the perceived importance of the populist-mobilizer function. It is reasonable to assume, for example, that journalists put less emphasis on getting information to the public quickly (the disseminator function) because of the growing competition with news distributed at great speed via social media. Likewise, journalists might believe it has become more important to motivate people to get involved and express their opinions (the populist-mobilizer function) because of the opportunities for greater audience engagement that have come with social media. Such beliefs, if true, might explain our contradictory findings regarding the use of social media among US journalists and how they think about their work.

Overall, though, we believe that the true potential of social media for audience engagement has not been sufficiently tapped by news media around the world. Journalists who truly engage their audiences in the newsmaking process through social media not only might produce more attractive and meaningful stories, but also might help people better understand the newsmaking process. Increased engagement and understanding, in turn, might boost the public's trust in news media and thus reinvigate journalism in the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. The interviews were conducted from August 7 to December 20, 2013. The journalists were chosen randomly from news organizations that were also selected at random from listings in various directories. The response rate for this sample was 32.6 percent (AAPOR RR1). The sample included only journalists who worked full-time for a mainstream, general interest news medium. We compared our final sample percentages with the overall work-force percentages from these estimates and found a relatively close match for all media types. The largest differences were found for the online news organizations, the major wire services of Associated Press and Reuters and for newsmagazines, which we oversampled because of their relatively small numbers. The final sample of 1080 full-time journalists included 358 daily newspaper journalists, 238 from weekly

newspapers, 132 from television stations and networks, 97 from radio, 92 from online news organizations, 103 from the wire services, and 60 from newsmagazines.

2. *Use of Social Media in Job:* How important is social media for reporting or producing your stories? (Coded as: 1=not important at all; 2=not very important; 3=somewhat important; 4=very important; 5=extremely important). How often do you use the following types of social media in your work as a journalist? (1) Blogs authored by journalists or other professionals; (2) Blogs authored by regular citizens; (3) Microblogging sites, such as Twitter; (4) Professional social networking sites, such as LinkedIn; (5) Audio-visual sharing sites, such as YouTube, Flickr, or Tumblr; (6) Content communities and crowd-sourcing sites, such as Wikipedia. (Coded as: 1=never; 2=seldom; 3=occasionally; 4=regularly). How do you use social media in your daily work as a journalist? Please select all that apply. (1) Check for breaking news; (2) Check what other news organizations are reporting; (3) Monitor discussions on social media about my field of work; (4) Find new ideas for stories; (5) Interview sources; (6) Find sources I would otherwise not be aware of or have access to; (7) Verify information; (8) Find additional information; (9) Meet new people in my field of work; (10) Follow someone on social media I met in my field of work; (11) Keep in touch with my audience; (12) Post comments on work-related social media; (13) Reply to comments on work-related social media; Other.
3. *Perceived impact of social media on own work:* Overall, how would you rate the impact of social media on your work as a journalist? (Coded as: 1=very negative; 2=somewhat negative; 3=neither negative nor positive; 4=somewhat positive; 5=very positive). Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the impact of social media on your work as a journalist. (1) Using social media allows me to promote myself and my work much better; (2) Because of social media, I am more engaged with my audience; (3) Because of social media, I communicate better with people relevant to my work; (4) Social media has improved my productivity; (5) Social media has decreased my daily workload; (6) Using social media enhances my credibility as a journalist; (7) Social media allows me to be faster in reporting news stories; (8) Social media allows me to cover more news stories. (Coded as: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree).
4. *Journalistic Roles:* Next, we would like to ask you how important you think a number of things are that the news media do or try to do today. For each of the following statements, please indicate how important or unimportant you think they are. (1) Get information to the public quickly; (2) Provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems; (3) Provide entertainment and relaxation; (4) Investigate claims and statements made by the government; (5) Provide analysis and interpretation of international developments; (6) Stay away from stories where factual content cannot be verified; (7) Concentrate on news that's of interest to the widest possible audience; (8) Discuss national policy while it is still being developed; (9) Develop intellectual and cultural interests of the

public; (10) Be an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions; (11) Be an adversary of businesses by being constantly skeptical of their actions; (12) Set the political agenda; (13) Give ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs; (14) Motivate ordinary people to get involved in public discussions of important issues; (15) Point people toward possible solutions to society's problems. (Coded as: 1 = not really important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = quite important, 4 = extremely important).

5. Sex: Male; Female. Age: In what year were you born? Race: Are you Spanish, Hispanic or Latino? (yes; no). In which one of the following racial groups would you place yourself? White (Caucasian); Black or African-American; Asian or Asian-American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Pacific Islander; Other. Political Party Affiliation: In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat or Independent? Republican; Independent closer to Republican; Independent; Independent closer to Democrat; Democrat; No preference; Other. Income: Would you please tell us what your total personal income was, before taxes, from your work in journalism during 2012? Less than \$15,000; \$15,000 to less than \$20,000; \$20,000 to less than \$25,000 . . . \$150,000 and over.

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