

The American Journalist in the Digital Age: Another Look at U.S. News People

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Abstract

This project is based on interviews with a national probability sample of U.S. journalists to document the tremendous changes that have occurred in journalism in the 21st century. More than a decade has passed since the last comprehensive survey of U.S. journalists was carried out in 2002. This 2013 survey of U.S. journalists updates these findings with new questions about the impact of social media in the newsroom and presents a look at the data on the demographics, working conditions, and professional values of 1,080 U.S. journalists who were interviewed online in the fall of 2013.

Keywords

U.S. journalists, professional roles and values, online journalism, survey

The American Journalist in the Digital Age

During the past decade, great changes have occurred in American journalism, many of them due to rapid advances in computer technology and the rise of new forms of media. What has happened to U.S. journalists in the decade since the early 2000s, a time of tumultuous changes in society, economics, and technology? What impact have the many cutbacks and the dramatic growth of the Internet had on U.S. journalists' characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors—and even on the definition of who is a journalist? Have levels of job satisfaction and perceived autonomy increased, decreased,

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or remained the same? What effect has the rise of social media had on more mainstream traditional journalists and their reporting?

This 2013 survey of 1,080 U.S. journalists addresses these and other questions. It asks many of the same questions included in the 1982, 1992, and 2002 studies so that trends can be tracked over time. But it also includes a series of new questions about the impact of social media on the practice of modern journalism and how journalists use these new forms of communication in their work.

Economic and Political Context of the Study's Origins

The profound change in the American media landscape over the last half century is breathtaking, making it a rich context for the five decades of sociological analyses of journalists that are presented here.

During the past decade, new digital technologies and the growth of online news consumption led to the U.S. media's embrace of media convergence. With this conversion came a greater need to offer content across media platforms, which, in turn, prompted large conglomerates to invest in a variety of media. These investments, of course, often resulted in a concentration of media production and, consequently, a significant reduction in the total number of journalists employed (Diaz, 2017; Nicholls, Shabbir, & Nielsen, 2017).

Although the digital revolution provided journalists with new tools that allowed them to produce content faster and more efficiently, these tools also reduced the need for more specialized jobs, such as audio and video editing—which can now be accomplished by journalists on simple smartphones (Lareau, 2017). This concentration of formerly separate jobs in the hands of individual journalists and the rapid decline in advertising revenue among traditional media organizations led to large layoffs that have continued until today (Lien, 2018).

Our data show that the full-time U.S. journalistic workforce has declined dramatically from its high of 122,000 in 1992 to about 83,000 in 2013—a 32% decline of about 39,000 full-time journalists, at the same time that the U.S. population has increased 24% from about 255 million to about 316 million. This means that there are fewer full-time journalists to do investigative or in-depth reporting at the same time that there are more demands on journalists to continually update stories and monitor what other news organizations are doing on the Internet.

Some scholars say the economic and technological upheaval in journalism since our last study in 2002 is unprecedented in the field's long history. Although their prediction that it is "the end of news as we know it" (Bell, 2016) may be premature, there is no question that modern multiplatform journalism, requiring what one prominent editor called a "digital metabolism," has substantially changed the field.

The digital reformation of news journalism had reached a critical stage in late 2013 when the most recent study was done. Although the interviews with a national sample of 1,080 journalists at mainstream media were done before the rhetorical chaos of the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the hostility toward the press of the

Trump presidency, the findings have significant implications for the unfolding and never-dull climate of journalism and politics in America.

The emergence of the problem of “fake news” and propaganda that is made possible by the dark underbelly of the digital age has combined with the Trump-driven hostility toward journalists to make the focus of this article even more timely. The ubiquity of the terms “bots” and “trolls” in the public debate about foreign influence on social media during and after the election might seem to eclipse the importance of journalists. To the contrary, the larger landscape of journalism in mainstream media becomes even more important as a bulwark against such threats to democracy. One need to look no further than the classic “watchdog” journalism of the *Washington Post*’s “Fact Checker” that 1,318 of the new president’s claims were rated “false” or “misleading” during the first 263 days of his leadership (Lee, Kessler, & Kelly, 2017). Backed up by the *Tampa Bay Times*’ PolitiFact (2017) finding that 69% of presidential claims analyzed during the same time period were either “mostly false,” “false,” or “pants on fire,” their work is ample proof of the continuing relevance of the journalists studied here.

The in-depth analyses reported here on the demographics, working conditions, and professional and ethical attitudes of journalists are placed within the context of five major surveys, beginning in the early 1970s, a time in which some observers see significant parallels to the present day. The professional challenges to journalism during the almost “Shakespearean” era (Scott, 2017) of the Nixon-Agnew administration’s animosity and the suspicion toward *The News People*, the title of the path-setting 1976 book by John W. C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski, and William Bowman, are the early backdrop for our work.

In the fall of 1971, before the Watergate scandal, the Johnstone team interviewed a national sample of 1,313 U.S. journalists for the first survey amid the struggle between the press and the Nixon administration as they fought over the publication of leaks of *The Pentagon Papers* in leading newspapers.

And not only was there bitterness toward the press from the Nixon administration, there were tensions within the press itself, in part because of the emergence during the Vietnam War of an underground, alternative press that challenged traditional news values. From their data, Johnstone and his colleagues interpreted the tension as between the idea of “participant-whole truth” reporting and “neutral, nothing-but-the-truth” journalism, with younger journalists more likely to be “participants.” Overall, though, the 1971 study found that most journalists identified with elements of *both* orientations, and that large majorities were enthusiastic about being a “watchdog” over government and analyzing and interpreting complex problems.

In succeeding studies done each decade since the Johnstone research, the complexion of the roles defined in that original work was found to be somewhat different. Even so, the watchdog and analytic mind-set that was a significant factor then, continues to be an even-more defining orientation of American journalists.

Studies Since the 1970s

In addition to the foundational book, *The News People* (1976) by Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman, three of our earlier books make up the larger canvas for this, the latest portrait of full-time journalists doing serious news work: *The American Journalist* (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986), *The American Journalist in the 1990s* (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), and *The American Journalist in the 21st Century* (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007). The analysis that follows shows major changes over time in U.S. journalism, including dramatic growth in the early 1980s that saw a “bubble” of Baby Boomers joining the ranks at a time when journalism basked in the aura of the classic 1975 film about reporters toppling a president in *All the President's Men*.

The overall picture from research on U.S. journalists from the 1970s to the early years of the 21st century was one of “more stability than change” (Weaver et al., 2007 p. 239), but there were some changes worth noting.

In terms of demographics, the number of full-time U.S. journalists decreased by nearly 5%, the average age increased from 36 years to 41 years, there was a decline in the percentage identifying with the Democratic political party and considering themselves left of center politically, and there was an increase in viewing cable television network news (Weaver et al., 2007).

In terms of education and training, the high degree of educational diversity of U.S. journalists found in the Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976), study eroded in the 1990s. In 2002, more journalists had graduated from college and more had majored in journalism or communications at the undergraduate level. In 31 years, the proportion with at least a bachelor's degree jumped from 58% to 89%, and the proportion majoring in journalism or communication increased from 41% to 50% (Weaver et al., 2007).

In terms of working conditions, there was a downward trend for measures of perceived autonomy from 1971 to 2002, especially for deciding story emphasis, which dropped from 76% of reporters saying they had almost complete freedom to decide in 1971 to 42% in 2002. Likewise, perceived freedom to select stories dropped from 60% in 1971 and 1982 to 40% in 2002, another significant decline (Weaver et al., 2007). The largest drops in perceived freedom were among journalists working for daily newspapers, wire services, and television.

Amount of perceived freedom of U.S. journalists was positively correlated with job satisfaction. Those who were very satisfied with their jobs had higher average scores on autonomy measures. Although levels of job satisfaction increased a bit from 1992 to 2002, the percentage of journalists saying that they were very satisfied declined from nearly half (49%) in 1971 to about one third (33%) in 2002 (Weaver et al., 2007).

In terms of professional roles, there was a decline in the perceived importance of investigating government claims, analyzing complex problems, and discussing national policies from the early 1970s to the early years of this new century. Even though there has been a decline in the perceived importance of this investigative role in the past 30+ years, it is also true that investigating government claims and getting information to the public quickly have remained dominant roles in the minds of U.S. journalists over the years—and investigating government was on the upswing from the

early 1990s to the early 2000s, whereas getting information out quickly was on the decline (Weaver et al., 2007).

In terms of reporting methods, there have been conflicting findings in the American Journalist studies from 1982 to 2002.¹ On the one hand, it could be argued that decreases in support of deceptive practices such as claiming to be someone else and getting employed to obtain inside information are an indication of increased professionalism or ethical standards. And decreases in support for paying for information and revealing the names of rape victims can also be seen as indicators of higher ethical standards and more sensitivity to the rights of others.

On the other hand, there have been increases in support of using confidential business, government, and personal documents without permission, and a substantial majority (60%) of all journalists thought in 1992 and 2002 that using hidden microphones and cameras might be justified in the case of an important story (Weaver et al., 2007).

Research Questions

The unique longitudinal perspective of this work enables the analysis of shifts in the demographic profile of U.S. journalists, their conditions of work, and their professional attitudes over five decades within the context of societal, political, and economic change. Many of survey questions remained constant throughout the five decades. At the same time, though, significant structural and technical developments—such as political turmoil involving journalists and the rise of social media—required new survey questions, enabling originality in the data for each decade. Specifically, the following research questions guide the analysis:

Research Question 1: What are the contours of demographic shifts that have occurred?

Research Question 2: How are the changing roles of women and ethnic minorities reflected in the profession over time?

Research Question 3: What attributes of journalistic work have changed over time, specifically the patterns of job satisfaction and professional commitment?

Research Question 4: What, if any, shifts in perceptions of essential professional journalistic roles have occurred amid substantial political, economic, and technological change?

Research Question 5: Have attitudes about critical and sometimes controversial reporting practices changed over time?

Research Question 6: What are the patterns of adoption of social media in journalistic work and their perceived impact on the professional context of the field?

Answers to these questions provide important clues about the current state of U.S. journalism and, as we believe, a rather optimistic message about the resilience and tenacity of U.S. journalists who have faced unprecedented economic and technological changes in the global media environment during the past decade.

Method

To answer the questions raised above, in the fall of 2013, we conducted a national online survey² of 1,080 full-time U.S. journalists, similar to the ones done in 1971, 1982, 1992, and 2002. The survey asked many of the same questions included in the previous studies so that trends could be tracked over time. However, it also included a series of new questions about the use and impact of the Internet and social media in the practice of modern journalism. In addition to the regular closed-ended questions, the 2013 survey also included open-ended questions to allow journalists to explain some of the quantitative findings in their own words.

Sampling

The 2013 study employs the same basic sampling methods used in the previous studies that include journalists from all the print and broadcast traditional news media. In contrast to the previous surveys of U.S. journalists, the 2013 study includes online journalists as a distinct group in the overall sample because of the increased importance of online journalism.³

The sample of traditional U.S. journalists is based on a multistage 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.⁴

The findings presented in this article are based on 1,080 completed interviews conducted from August 7 to December 20, 2013, with full-time journalists working for a wide variety of daily and weekly newspaper, radio and television stations, wire services, news magazines, and online news media throughout the United States. All 3,500 journalists originally selected for our sample were invited via email to participate in our online survey. The response rate for the final sample of 1,080 respondents was 32.6%.

Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix for details) included a total of 86 questions and focused mostly 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. Most of the questions used in the 2013 survey were asked in previous studies of U.S. journalists and, therefore, can be compared over time. 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).

Overall Trends in Journalism

Journalists' overall perception of their profession was measured by asking whether they thought that journalism in the United States is going either in the right or wrong direction. In addition, they were asked whether the size of their news staff had grown, remained about the same, or shrunk during the past few years. Journalists also were asked to evaluate how well they thought their news organization was informing the public.

Job Satisfaction

Journalists' overall satisfaction with their jobs, one of the key dependent variables in this study, was assessed by asking how satisfied they were with their present job.

Journalistic Autonomy

Journalists' perceived autonomy in their work was measured with three questions that asked how much freedom they had in covering subjects that they thought were important, how much freedom they had in selecting the stories they would like to work on, and how much freedom they had in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized.

Journalistic Practices

To assess how widespread the acceptance of controversial reporting practices is among U.S. journalists, each respondent was asked to indicate—given an important story—whether he or she might approve any of the 12 reporting practices such as “paying people for confidential information,” “claiming to be somebody else,” or “badgering unwilling informants to get a story.” The journalists were able to indicate whether they thought that their use “would be justified on occasion,” that they “would not approve” such methods under any circumstances, or that they were “not sure.”

Journalistic Roles

To gain a better understanding of how journalists think about their own roles in society, respondents were asked to state how important they considered a number of “classical” professional roles that have been identified in prior research. 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.”

Use of Social Media in Journalism

How journalists use social media in their jobs 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, 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.

Perceived Impact of Social Media

The survey also included a series of questions that probed how journalists thought about the impact of social media on their work and the profession overall. 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 the following eight statements: (a) Using social media allows me to promote myself and my work much better; (b) Because of social media, I am more engaged with my audience; (c) Because of social media, I communicate better with people relevant to my work; (d) Social media have improved my productivity; (e) Social media have decreased my daily workload; (f) Using social media enhances my credibility as a journalist; (g) Social media allow me to be faster in reporting news stories; (h) Social media allow me to cover more news stories.

Similarly, after being asked about how they would rate the impact of social media on the journalistic profession overall, respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the following five statements: (a) Social media are undermining traditional journalistic values; (b) Social media threaten the quality of journalism; (c) Social media make journalism more accountable to the public; (d) User-generated content threatens the integrity of journalism; (e) Online journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed.

Demographics

Gender, age, education, race, religion, political party affiliation, political leaning, income, and marital status were measured for both descriptive and statistical control purposes.

Findings

Size of Journalistic Workforce

In 1971, Johnstone and his colleagues estimated the total full-time editorial workforce in U.S. English-language mainstream news media to be 69,500, with more than half

Table 1. Estimated Full-Time Editorial Workforce in U.S. News Media.

	1971 ^a		1982 ^b		1992 ^c		2002 ^d		2013	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Daily newspapers	38,800	55.8	51,650	46.1	67,207	55.1	58,769	50.6	33,160	39.8
Weekly newspapers	11,500	16.5	22,942	20.5	16,226	13.3	21,908	18.9	23,953	28.7
News magazines	1,900	2.7	1,284	1.1	1,664	1.4	1,152	1.0	535	0.6
Total print	52,200	75.1	75,876	67.7	85,097	69.8	81,829	70.5	57,648	69.1
TV stations	7,000	10.1	15,212	13.6	17,784	14.6	20,288	17.5	18,976	22.8
Radio stations	7,000	10.1	19,583	17.5	17,755	14.5	13,393	11.5	4,197	5.0
Total broadcast	14,000	20.2	34,795	31.1	35,539	29.1	33,681	29.0	23,173	27.8
News services	3,300	4.7	1,401	1.2	1,379	1.1	638	0.5	574	0.7
Online media	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,975	2.4
Total workforce	69,500	100	112,072	100	122,015	100	116,148	100	83,370	100

^aFrom Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976).

^bFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1991).

^cFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1996).

^dFrom Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007).

employed by daily newspapers. In late 1982, we estimated this workforce to be 112,072, an increase of 61%, with slightly less than half employed by daily newspapers. In 1992, we projected the total number of U.S. journalists to be 122,015, an increase of just under 9%, with more than half employed by daily newspapers. In late 2002, this number had dropped slightly to 116,148, a decrease of nearly 5% (Table 1).⁵

The change from 2002 to 2013 was much more dramatic—an overall drop of 28% of the total journalistic workforce. This sharp decline was due mainly to the loss of some 25,600 full-time journalists in daily newspapers during the first decade of the 21st century. The total number of radio (−9,200), television (−1,300), and news magazine (−600) journalists also declined significantly, which was only partially offset with a slight increase in the number of journalists working for weekly newspapers (+2,000) or online publications (+2,000). Overall, we estimate nearly 33,000 fewer full-time journalists working for traditional mainstream U.S. news media in 2013 as compared with 2002.⁶

Demographics of U.S. Journalists

One of the main goals of this study is to update the findings of the last comprehensive journalist survey conducted in 2002—especially those that relate to the demographic characteristics of journalists. The main question we try to answer is whether the demographic composition of the occupation has changed significantly during the last 10 years.

According to the survey findings, the typical U.S. journalist today is a married White male, 47 years of age, with about 20 years of work experience and a college

Table 2. Representation of Women Journalists in U.S. News Media (in %).

News medium	1971 ^a	1982 ^b	1992 ^c	2002 ^d	2013
Radio	4.8	26.3	29.0	21.9	38.1
Television	10.7	33.1	24.8	37.4	42.4
Wire services	13.0	19.1	25.9	20.3	36.9
Daily newspapers	22.4	34.4	33.9	33.0	34.9
Weekly newspapers	27.1	42.1	44.1	36.9	42.0
News magazines	30.4	31.7	45.9	43.5	33.3
Online	— ^e	— ^e	— ^e	— ^e	31.5
Total	20.3	33.8	34.0	33.0	37.5

^aFrom Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976).

^bFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, p. 21; 1991, p. 21).

^cFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1996).

^dFrom Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007).

^eOnline journalists were not assessed as a separate category in previous surveys.

degree. These demographic characteristics are very similar to those found in 2002, except for the significantly higher median age, which was 41 years in 2002. Thus, it appears that the profession has aged significantly during the past 10 years, a trend that was observed between 1992 and 2002 as well, albeit to a smaller extent.

Although there are still significantly fewer women in journalism than men, their representation has grown slightly from 33% in 2002 to 37.5% in 2013 (Table 2). A closer look at the survey data also reveals more women with longer careers in journalism in 2013, an encouraging trend. Although longer careers correlate with higher level positions in journalism, our 2013 data reveal some definite differences among news media, with 30% of women at daily newspapers supervising other newsroom employees, 40% at weekly newspapers, 38% at television stations, 42% at news magazine, 28% at wire service bureaus, 33% at radio stations, and 23% at online news organizations.

As Table 3 indicates, the percentage of ethnic and racial minorities in journalism also has increased slightly to 10.8% from 9.5% in 2002. However, African Americans (4.1%), Asians (1.8%), and Latinos (3.2%) are still vastly underrepresented in the journalistic profession. Most of the journalists are Protestants (38.6%) or Catholics (30.4%), whereas 13.6% say they do not follow any religion. More than half of the journalists say that religion is very (26.3%) or at least somewhat (28.1%) important to them.

Minority journalists in the United States are more likely to be women (50%) than are White journalists (36%), and among all U.S. journalists with less than 5 years of experience, 18.4% are minorities, suggesting that efforts to hire minorities in the past few years have been at least somewhat successful. Television employs the largest percentage of minority journalists (22%) and weekly newspapers the lowest (7.6%). News magazines are second (11.7%), followed by radio (11.3%), wire services (10.7%), daily newspapers (9.2%), and online news media (8.7%).

Table 3. Representation of Minority Journalists in U.S. News Media (in %).

Ethnicity	1971 ^a	1982 ^b	1992 ^c	2002 ^d	2013
African American	3.9	2.9	3.7	3.7	4.1
Hispanic	1.1	0.6	2.2	3.3	3.2
Asian American	—	0.4	1.0	1.0	1.8
Native American	—	—	0.6	0.4	0.5
Jewish	6.4	5.8	5.4	6.2	7.6
Other (including Caucasian) ^e	88.6	90.3	87.1	85.4	82.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

^aFrom Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976).

^bFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, p. 23; 1991, p. 23).

^cFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1996).

^dFrom Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007).

^eThe "Other" category for minority journalists in 2013 shown here includes not only Caucasians, but also 0.1% Pacific Islanders and 1.1% "other" minorities (journalists who said they were part of a minority, but did not specify which one it was). The total percentage of minority journalists in 2013, therefore, was 10.8%.

The median income of U.S. journalists rose to US\$50,028 in 2012, an increase of less than US\$7,000 over the median salary in 2001 (US\$43,588). This was a 14.8% increase, only about half of the cumulative inflation rate of 29.5% during this time period (2001-2012). Moreover, Figure 1 indicates that the persistent income gap between male and female journalists has not narrowed during the last decade. Women journalists' median salary in 2012 was US\$44,342, about 83% of men's median salary of US\$53,600, which is about the same percentage as in 2001 and 1991 (81%), but an improvement over 1981 (71%) and 1970 (64%). Thus, despite the fact that there are now slightly more women in journalism with more work experience, women are still paid less for their work than men overall, but for journalists with less than 5 years of experience, women are paid slightly more on average (US\$26,204) than men (US\$24,569), suggesting that steps are being taken to remedy the gender gap for those newly hired. And our data show that the percentages of women decline steadily with number of years of experience, suggesting that women leave journalism at a faster rate than men, which helps explain the gap in pay between men and women.

Unlike previous studies of U.S. journalists, the 2013 study found journalists much more likely to declare themselves as independents politically (50.2%) than to identify with either the Democratic or Republican political parties (Table 4). The proportion of journalists who said that they are Democrats has dropped 8 percentage points since 2002 to about 28%, bringing them closer to the overall population percentage of 30%. This is the lowest percentage of journalists saying they are Democrats since 1971. An even larger drop was observed among journalists saying they were Republicans in 2013 (7.1%) than in 2002 (18%). When asked to describe their political views in general, most journalists said that they consider themselves to be either "leaning left" (38.8%) or "middle of the road" (43.8%), and only 12.9% described them as "leaning right."

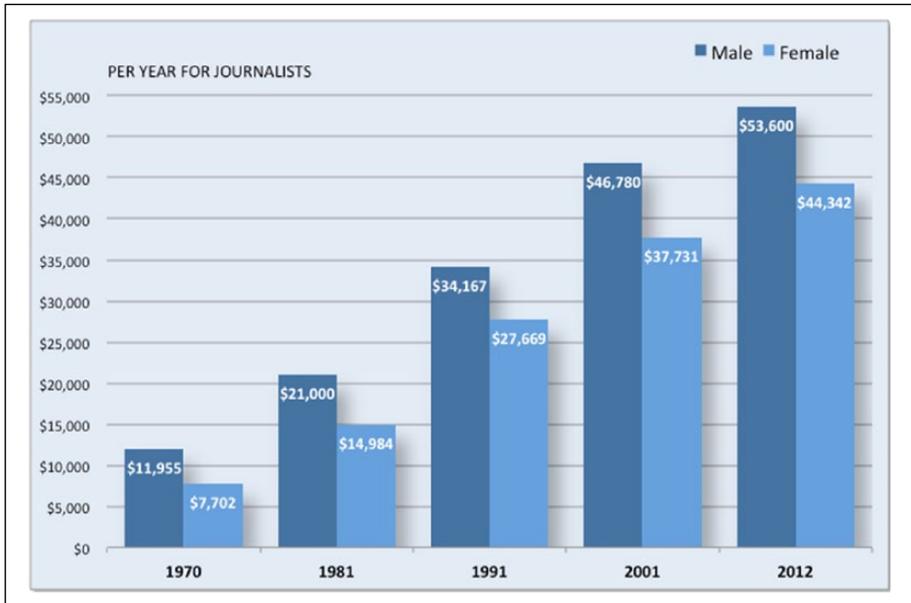


Figure 1. Median income by gender.

Table 4. Political Party Identification of U.S. Journalists (in %).

Political party	1971 ^a	1982 ^b	1992 ^c	2002 ^d	2013
Democrat	35.5	38.5	44.1	35.9	28.1
Republican	25.7	18.8	16.4	18.0	7.1
Independent	32.5	39.1	34.4	32.5	50.2
Other	5.8	1.6	3.5	10.5	9.8
Do not know/refused	0.5	2.1	1.6	3.1	4.8
Total	100.0	100.1 ^e	100.0	100.0	100.0

^aFrom Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976).

^bFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, p. 29; 1991, p. 29).

^cFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1996).

^dFrom Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007).

^eDoes not total to 100% because of rounding.

Education and Training

The vast majority (92%) of journalists hold a college degree. Although about half (46%) of the journalists graduated with a major in journalism, more than three quarters (77%) of them said that they had worked in a college newspaper or some other campus news medium as students. However, only one in 10 journalists (11%) think that their education has prepared them “very well” for the digital media environment. As a

result, a majority (62%) of the journalists have attended short courses or workshops since becoming journalists to sharpen their skills, and 77% said they would like more training.

Job Satisfaction

Another goal of this study was to establish whether journalists' satisfaction with their jobs has declined during the past decade due to the dramatic changes in U.S. journalism. News media ownership became more consolidated when a severe recession led to staff reductions and layoffs. Potential threats to professional autonomy emerged as news organizations became more market-driven, and "civic journalism" challenged the traditional relationship among journalists, sources, and audience members.

Many of these changes can be traced to the influence of the Internet on journalistic work and to news organizations that have embraced online media to reach additional audiences with more targeted and frequently updated news. The specific demands of online news also have changed the way modern journalists work. Although the Internet and social media made it easier for journalists to research and report their stories, many are now expected to write a story, shoot still pictures or video, and then edit their work for multiple media platforms. These are new professional obligations that can increase the risk of burnout, exhaustion, and stress among journalists (Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2012).

Given these significant changes in modern media, it seems important to ask how these developments have influenced the work environment of journalists. The present analysis focuses on job satisfaction as an important indicator of the working conditions of journalists, which in some cases is linked to their perceived autonomy or freedom.

In the United States, declining levels of job satisfaction and perceived autonomy have gone hand-in-hand since the early 1970s (Weaver et al., 2007). Job satisfaction also is an important indicator of journalistic competency because it "creates confidence, loyalty and ultimately improved quality in the output of the employed" (Tietjen, Robert, & Myers, 1998, p. 226). A survey study by Deprez and Raeymaeckers (2012), for example, found that Flemish journalists with higher levels of job satisfaction tended to value journalistic creativity, variation in media content, professional contacts, and intellectual challenges in their work.

Although our findings indicate that overall job satisfaction has decreased in the last decade from 83.9% to 74.6% of those who say they are either "very" or "fairly satisfied" with their jobs, it is remarkable that three quarters of the journalists are still fairly happy in their jobs (Table 5). However, the number of journalists who are either "somewhat" or "very" dissatisfied has jumped about 9 percentage points during the last decade (from 16.1% to 25.4%) and the percentage of those who say they are "very" satisfied has dropped 10 points during the last decade (from 33.3% to 23.3%). Thus, fewer journalists were satisfied with their jobs in 2013—not a very surprising finding given the overall decline of the U.S. news industry during the past decade.

Table 5. Job Satisfaction Among U.S. Journalists by Year (in %).

Rating	1971 ^a (n = 1,328)	1982 ^b (n = 1,001)	1992 ^c (n = 1,156)	2002 ^d (n = 1,149)	2013 (n = 1,073)
Very satisfied	49	40	27	33.3	23.3
Fairly satisfied	39	44	50	50.6	51.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	12	15	20	14.4	19.3
Very dissatisfied	1	2	3	1.7	6.1
Total	101 ^e	101 ^e	100	100	100

^aFrom Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976).

^bFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, p. 89; 1991, p. 89).

^cFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1996).

^dFrom Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007).

^eDoes not total to 100% because of rounding.

The findings also indicate that women were slightly less satisfied with their jobs than were men—72% of women said they were either “very” or “fairly” satisfied, as compared with 76% of men. They also were slightly more likely to say they planned to leave journalism within 5 years. Nearly one fifth of women (19%) said they planned to leave, compared with 13% of men, down slightly from 2002 when 21% of women and 16% of men said this. But both men and women journalists were much more likely to plan to stay in journalism than to leave it in the next 5 years.

As Table 6 shows, news magazine and broadcast journalists are more likely to be “very satisfied” than those in newspaper, news service, or online journalism. Almost half of the magazine staffers are “very satisfied” with their jobs as compared with daily newspaper journalists (19%). The overall media differences are roughly similar to a decade ago, except for magazine journalists, who are much more likely now (15 points) to say they are very satisfied with their jobs.

When asked which aspects are important to them when judging their jobs, most journalists said that they consider the editorial policy of their news organization (63.8%), the chance to help people (53.5%), and job security (51.4%) to be the three most important aspects. These were followed by job autonomy (42.7%), the chance to influence public affairs (38.2%), pay (30.3%), to get ahead in their organization (26.1%), or to develop a specialty (24%).

Journalistic Autonomy

As pointed out earlier, during the last two decades, the work environment of U.S. journalists has been transformed dramatically. News media ownership has become more consolidated. Potential threats to professional autonomy have emerged as news organizations have become more market-driven, and the specific demands of online news have also changed the way modern journalists work. How have these new developments affected U.S. journalists’ job autonomy?

Table 6. Job Satisfaction by Type of Medium in 2013 (in %).

Rating	Dailies (n = 355)	Weeklies (n = 236)	News magazines (n = 60)	Radio (n = 97)	TV (n = 131)	News services (n = 102)	Online (n = 92)
Very satisfied	18.9	23.7	48.3	32.0	25.2	17.6	17.4
Fairly satisfied	51.5	49.6	41.7	52.6	55.0	52.0	53.3
Somewhat dissatisfied	21.7	19.1	8.3	12.4	18.3	21.6	23.9
Very dissatisfied	7.9	7.6	1.7	3.1	1.5	8.8	5.4
Total	100	100	100	100.1 ^a	100	100	100

^aDoes not total to 100% because of rounding.

Our findings indicate that most journalists perceive fairly high levels of autonomy in their jobs, as indicated by the two questions that asked journalists about their freedom to choose which stories they cover and which aspects of a story to emphasize. Overall, about eight in 10 journalists (79.7%) say they can usually pursue the ideas they have, whereas 18.3% can do so “only occasionally.” About three quarters of the journalists also say they have “almost complete” (33.6%) or at least “a great deal” (44.6%) of freedom to select the stories they would like to work on. Similarly, about eight in 10 (78.2%) journalists say that they have “almost complete” or “a great deal” of freedom to decide what aspects of a story to emphasize.

However, our findings also indicate significant declines in perceived job autonomy, which help explain the lower levels of job satisfaction observed in 2013. A comparison of perceived job autonomy during the past 40 years shows that an ever-shrinking percentage of journalists believe that they can freely select the stories they work on or emphasize certain aspects of their stories.

As Table 7 shows, the percentage of journalists who believe they have “almost complete freedom” in selecting stories has declined from 60% in 1982 to 34% in 2013. Similarly, the percentage of journalists who believe that they have “almost complete freedom” to choose which aspects of a story to emphasize has shrunk from 66% in 1982 to 38% in 2013. Thus, perceived levels of job autonomy among U.S. journalists have deteriorated significantly during the past 40 years.

Professional Roles

How journalists define their desired roles in society has been a long-standing question in journalism research. Part of the controversy in this type of research can be traced to the fact that the knowledge on which journalistic practices are based is “both limited and less clearly defined” compared with other classical professions (Tumber & Prentoulis, 2005, p. 58). As a consequence, some of the previous debates have focused on whether journalism is a true profession (Beam, 1990; Lawrence, 1903; Splichal & Sparks, 1994; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986), and some on whether journalism should even be called one (Bowman, 1996; Glasser, 1992).

Previous studies have shown that journalists’ perceptions of their own roles are not one-dimensional, but tend to be composed of several roles at the same time (Deuze,

Table 7. Indicators of Perceived Job Autonomy by Type of Medium and Year (in %).

	Have almost complete freedom in selecting stories to work on					Have almost complete freedom to decide which aspects of a story to emphasize				
	1982	1992	2002	2013	Change, 1982-2013	1982	1992	2002	2013	Change, 1982-2013
Dailies (n = 347)	56	38	36	33	-23	67	49	35	36	-31
News services (n = 99)	46	31	27	15	-31	63	38	32	15	-48
Magazines (n = 60)	39	34	25	21	-18	32	27	20	26	-6
Weeklies (n = 236)	67	63	62	53	-14	64	63	62	59	-5
TV (n = 131)	47	35	22	27	-20	67	39	41	34	-33
Radio (n = 94)	73	59	63	38	-35	73	69	61	49	-24
Online (n = 88)	—	—	35	40	—	—	—	36	38	—
All journalists (n = 866)	60	44	40	34	-26	66	51	42	38	-28

Table 8. Importance of Professional Roles Among U.S. Journalists, 1971-2013 (in %).

Media roles	Percentage saying "extremely important"				
	1971 ^a	1982 ^b	1992 ^c	2002 ^d	2013
Interpretive-Watchdog Function					
Investigate government claims	76	66	67	71	78
Provide analysis of complex problems	61	49	48	51	69
Discuss national policy	55	38	39	40	39
Discuss international policy ^d	—	—	—	48	51
Adversarial function					
Serve as adversary of government	—	20	21	20	22
Serve as adversary of business	—	15	14	18	19
Disseminator function					
Get information to public quickly	56	60	69	59	47
Concentrate on widest audience	39	36	20	15	12
Provide entertainment	17	20	14	11	9
Populist–Mobilizer Function					
Let people express views	—	—	48	39	31
Develop intellectual/cultural interests	30	24	18	17	21
Motivate people to get involved	—	—	—	39	38
Point to possible solutions	—	—	—	24	32
Other^e					
Avoid stories with unverified content	51	50	49	52	45
Set the political agenda	—	—	5	3	2
Total	1,313	1,001	1,156	1,149	1,080

^aFrom Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976).

^bFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, p. 114; 1991, p. 114).

^cFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1996).

^dFrom Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007).

^eThese items did not load with the other four factors.

2002; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Ward (2009) argued that journalists see themselves as “some combination of informer, interpreter and advocate” (p. 299). Although a variety of measures by which journalists assess their profession exist in the literature, “interpretive,” “disseminator,” and “adversarial” journalistic roles are considered to be the dominant ones (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996).

Our findings (Table 8) show that the famous “watchdog” function of the press is still the most valued role in U.S. journalism. More than three quarters (78.2%) agreed that “investigating claims and statements made by government” is extremely important. A majority of journalists also agree that it is very important to “provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems” (68.8%), which has been a traditional role of U.S. journalism. Although it is not surprising that most journalists in the United States think that these two traditional roles of the media are important, it is somewhat surprising to see how much less agreement there is on all the other roles included in our study.

For example, the two classical roles of “getting information to the public quickly” (46.5%) and “staying away from stories where factual content cannot be verified” (45.3%) are considered very important by less than half of the journalists. Thus, a majority of journalists do not consider speed and objectivity as extremely important roles of the U.S. news media. The perceived importance of other roles was even lower, with generally fewer than one third of the journalists saying that they are very important.

However, our findings also indicate that journalists’ perceptions of their roles in society have changed significantly during the past two decades. As Table 8 shows, between 1992 and 2013, “analyzing complex problems” and “investigating government claims” have risen in perceived importance by about 21 and 11 percentage points, respectively. On the contrary, the perceived importance of “getting information to the public quickly” has dropped by 22 percentage points—a curious result given the importance of speed and immediacy in today’s digital media environment. But it should be remembered that all role perceptions we measured are based on what journalists think they *should* be doing rather than on what they actually do.

In contrast to these rather significant changes over time, changes in the other role perceptions have been more modest. For example, “providing entertainment” and “reaching the widest audience” dropped by 5 and 8 percentage points. Similarly, perceptions of being “an adversary” of business or the government have changed only minimally during the past 20 years.

Reporting Methods

Another important indicator of professional values of journalists are their views about which specific reporting methods might be justified in the case of an important story and which ones cannot be condoned.

A majority of our respondents rejected the use of most questionable investigative reporting techniques as justifiable in today’s media environment (Table 9). Although the use of confidential business and government documents without authorization is still considered justifiable in the case of an important story by a majority of journalists (57.7%), support for other controversial reporting methods is usually well below that. For example, less than half of the journalists support the possible use of investigate practices such as “using hidden microphones or cameras” (47.4%), “badgering unwilling informants to get a story” (37.7%), “making use of personal documents without permission” (24.9%), or “getting employed to gain inside information” (25.2%). Even fewer journalists support the use of reporting practices such as “claiming to be somebody else” (6.7%), “using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors” (11.7%), “publishing stories with unverified content” (5.9%), “paying people for confidential information” (4.5%), “agreeing to protect confidential sources and not doing so” (2.3%), or “accepting money from sources” (0.2%).

In addition, our findings show that journalists’ support for controversial reporting practices has dropped significantly during the past 20 years. For example, support for “using confidential business or government documents without authorization” has

Table 9. Journalists' Acceptance of Controversial Newsgathering Techniques, 1982-2013 (in %).

Reporting practice	Percentage saying "may be justified"			
	1982 ^a	1992 ^b	2002 ^c	2013
Getting employed to gain inside information	67	63	54	25
Using confidential documents without authorization	55	82	78	58
Badgering unwilling informants to get story	47	49	52	38
Using personal documents without permission	28	48	41	25
Paying people for confidential information	27	20	17	5
Claiming to be somebody else	20	22	14	7
Agreeing to protect confidentiality and not doing so	5	5	8	2
Using hidden microphones or cameras	—	60	60	47
Using recreations or dramatizations of news by actors	—	28	29	12
Disclosing names of rape victims	—	43	36	15
Total	1,001	1,156	1,149	1,080

^aFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, p. 128; 1991, p. 128).

^bFrom Weaver and Wilhoit (1996).

^cFrom Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007).

dropped from 82% of the journalists who thought in 1992 that such a reporting technique might be justified in the case of an important story to only 58% in 2013. An even more dramatic decline in support was found for "getting employed in a firm or company to gain inside information," which dropped from 67% in 1982 to only 25% in 2013.

Journalists' Use of Social Media

Because social media have become an important part of daily journalism, we included a number of questions in the 2013 survey that probed journalists' use of social media in their work and their perceptions of how social media have affected their work and the profession overall. The questions were not asked in any of the previous surveys and, therefore, cannot be compared across time. However, we previously have analyzed the use of social media by journalists working for different types of media and by different demographic backgrounds (Willnat, Weaver, & Wilhoit, 2017). For this article, though, we restrict our analysis to an overall description of how U.S. journalists use social media and how they think about their effects.

As indicated in Figure 2, most journalists use social media to gather information for their news stories. About three quarters of the journalists, for example, use social media to check what other news organizations do (73.1%) or whether there might be any breaking news (78.5%). More than half of them also use social media to find new ideas for their stories (59.8%), or to gather additional information (56.2%) and find sources (54.1%). Almost six in 10 journalists (59.7%) also said that they keep in touch with their audiences through social media. Other possible uses of social media, such

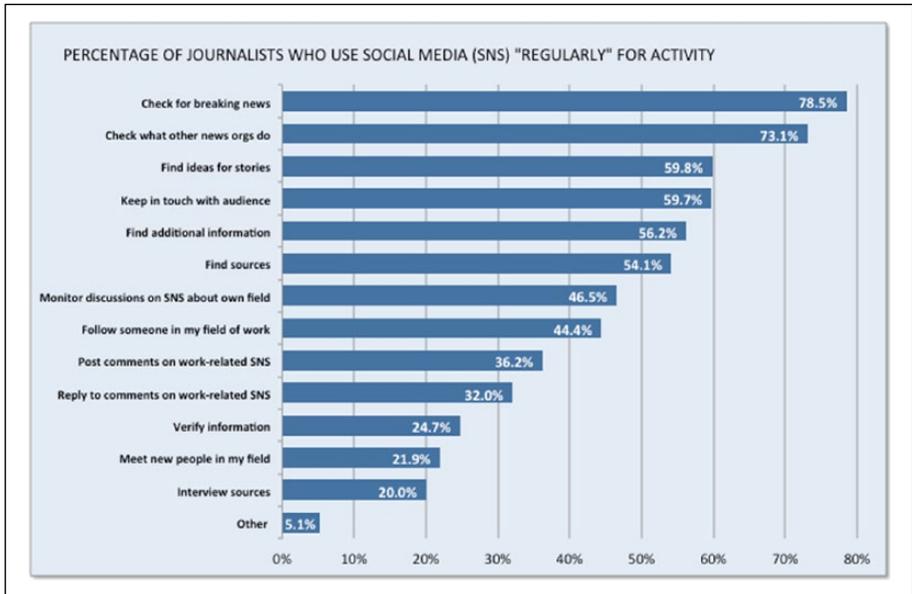


Figure 2. Uses of social media.

as interviewing sources (20%), verifying information (24.7%), or posting comments on work-related social networking sites (36.2%) are much less common. Overall then, social media are used predominantly as information gathering tools by journalists, and much less as a tool to interview sources or to verify information.

Perceived Effects of Social Media

Another goal of this study was to establish a baseline for how journalists see the effects of social media on their profession. Our findings indicate that a clear majority (71.5%) of journalists thought that social media had a “very” or “somewhat” positive effect on their work, whereas only 7.1% said that the effect was negative. Similarly, nearly three quarters (70.0%) of the journalists thought that social media had a positive effect on the journalistic profession overall, whereas 18.9% thought it was negative.

When asked specifically what effects they thought social media might have on their work, most journalists indicated that self-promotion (80.4%), better engagement with their audiences (69.2%), and faster reporting (62.0%) were the three most beneficial aspects. Significantly fewer thought that social media might enhance their credibility (29.7%), allow them to cover more news (28.8%), improve their productivity (25%), or decrease their workload (6.4%).

In spite of the perceived positive effect of social media on the journalistic profession, about three quarters (75.5%) of the journalists think that “online journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed.” Almost half also believe that social media “threatens

the quality of journalism” (48.4%) or that “user-generated content threatens the integrity of journalism” (46.8%). On the contrary, a similar percentage of journalists also believe that social media “makes journalism more accountable to the public” (48.1%).

Overall, the preferred use of social media as a networking and promotional tool in U.S. journalism seems clear, although it might not always yield the desired effects. Whereas a majority of U.S. journalists (62%) agreed that social media allow them to report faster, greater speed does not necessarily imply that journalists can cover more news (only 29% agreed) or that they are more productive (25% agreed).

Conclusion

This study compares the findings of our 2013 American Journalist survey with findings obtained in similar surveys conducted among U.S. journalists in 1971, 1982, 1992, and 2002. The representative nature of these surveys allows us to track and compare the demographic and attitudinal changes among U.S. journalists during the past four decades.

In general, the data from our 2013 study suggest that U.S. journalists compared with those a decade ago are older on average, somewhat more likely to be women, slightly more likely to be racial or ethnic minorities, not likely to make much more money, and more likely to be political Independents. More than nine in 10 U.S. journalists now have a 4-year college degree, for the first time since the 1971 study of U.S. journalists by Johnstone et al. (1976).

Overall, our data indicate that the typical U.S. journalist today is a married White male, 47 years of age, with about 20 years of work experience and a college degree. Thus, women (37.5%) and minorities (10.8%) remain underrepresented in U.S. journalism. We also found that women are still paid significantly less for their work than men, and that the percentages of women decline steadily with number of years of experience, which help explain the gap in pay between men and women.

There is evidence of overall pessimism about the direction of U.S. journalism in general. Six in 10 journalists said that they thought journalism in the United States is going in the wrong direction and reported that their news staffs have shrunk during the past few years. In addition, job satisfaction and journalistic autonomy have dramatically declined over the past decade due to the major changes in U.S. journalism. Overall, the number of journalists who are either “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied with their jobs has jumped about 12 percentage points during the past 40 years. At the same time, the percentage of journalists who believe they have “almost complete freedom” in selecting stories has declined from 60% in 1971 to 34% in 2013. Similarly, the percentage of journalists who believe that they have “almost complete freedom” to choose which aspects of a story to emphasize has shrunk from 76% in 1971 to 38% in 2013.

Our comparative data over time also show that there is more support than ever for the roles of analyzing complex problems and investigating government claims (the classic watchdog role). Between 1992 and 2013, “analyzing complex problems” and

“investigating government claims” have risen in perceived importance by about 20 and 12 percentage points, respectively. At the same time, though, our findings show that journalists’ support for controversial reporting practices has dropped significantly during the past 20 years. Although this trend might be perceived as journalists becoming more “ethical” in their attitudes about using questionable reporting tactics, perhaps a more accurate interpretation might be that journalists have become more *skeptical* about “aggressive” tactics.

Due to the growing importance of social media in the daily news production, the 2013 survey included questions about journalists’ use of online news sources for the first time. U.S. journalists use social media mainly to check on what other news organizations are doing and to look for breaking news events. A majority also use social media to find ideas for stories, keep in touch with their readers and viewers, and find additional information. Thus, journalists use social media predominantly as information gathering tools and much less to interview sources or to validate information.

Finally, our findings indicate that most journalists consider social media to have a positive impact on their work. Of particular value, it seems, is the perception that social media make journalism more accountable to the public. However, only about one third of the journalists also think that social media have a positive influence on the journalistic profession overall. One of the most common negative perceptions, for example, was that online journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed. Overall then, it appears that most journalists do see the benefits of social media in their own work, but fewer are convinced that these new forms of digital communication will benefit journalistic professionalism in the United States.

The trends in the characteristics, backgrounds, working conditions, attitudes, and values of U.S. journalists measured in these surveys are revealing, but they beg the question of whether they make any difference in the actual reporting of news over time. A key assumption in studying journalists is that their characteristics, values, and beliefs do influence their work—what is reported and how it is framed—and that this work makes a difference in public opinion, and public policies, at least in more democratic societies.

But there have been very few studies that have carefully tested the relationships between journalistic characteristics and beliefs and journalistic performance (see, for example, Carpenter, Boehmer, & Fico, 2016; Mellado, Hellmueller, & Donsbach, 2017). Those that have attempted this have generally found weak correlations between the roles that journalists consider most important and the manifestation of these roles in actual news coverage (Carpenter et al., 2016; Vos, 2002; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991, 1996). We suspect that the backgrounds and beliefs of journalists do matter to the kind of reporting they do, but more so at the organizational than the individual level.

Thus, to further develop our theories and knowledge of journalists and journalism we need more studies that link the findings from surveys of journalists with the kind of reporting they produce. In doing so, we can avoid the danger of too much focus on the “inner workings” of journalism that Blumler and Cushion have written about. As they put it in commenting on the recent rise of journalism studies,

The danger is that scholars, authors, educators and students will focus more and more on the complex inner workings of journalism at the expense of attention to its external ties, impacts and significance. In other words, journalism studies could become too inward-looking . . . (Blumler & Cushion, 2014, p. 260)

By focusing on the links between journalists' actual reporting and their characteristics, working conditions and values, we stand a better chance of connecting studies of journalists with the larger field of research on media uses and effects, including various theories such as agenda-setting, framing, priming, and cultivation. In doing so, this increases our chances of developing theories of journalism that could explain the entire complex process more completely than has been done so far.

Overall, we believe our study shows that American journalists continue to believe in a strong watchdog function of the press, even if support for investigative reporting techniques seems to have declined during the past 20 years. Given the current political climate in the United States, this should give us hope that journalists will keep reporting the facts and the information that is needed in a healthy democracy.

At the same time, though, we see that journalists have wholeheartedly embraced social media in their work, which might slowly diminish their gatekeeping and agenda-setting roles by allowing audiences to participate in the valuation and distribution of news. It is this apparent conflict between journalists' willingness to keep uncovering the truth and the challenges of modern news reporting that calls for more analyses and theory building.

Finally, we would like to make some suggestions for future studies of U.S. journalists that might build on our findings. First, we believe that it is time to have a closer look at the attitudes and values of part-time journalists and freelancers—and whether they might differ significantly from those of full-time journalists. The challenge, of course, will be reaching these journalists who move quickly between jobs and are difficult to reach with conventional sampling methods.

Future studies also should pay more attention to how journalists think about the impact of emerging technologies—such as virtual and augmented reality—on their own work and journalism in general. These analyses should include more common mobile technologies, such as cellphones or apps (e.g., Snapchat or Instagram) that enable journalists to create and file their news stories from almost anywhere in the world.

The use of these new technologies in journalism, including social media, have enabled journalists to do innovative work, but they also have resulted in an ever-faster news cycle that demands constant updates on developing news stories. Moreover, advances in digital media technologies and the economy of shrinking newsrooms have forced many journalists to produce their own stories without the help of an extensive production staff. The overall result has been that journalists need to file stories faster and on multiple media platforms.

Surveys such as the half century of work reported in this article provide important insights about the roles and values journalists associate with the profession. The work has shown fairly stable professional attitudes about themselves and their work. Future

studies need to dig deeper into the complexities of their decision making in the highly charged atmosphere of policy making they must now cover in all areas of public life. And given the current attacks on journalism by public officials around the world, such studies should probe how journalists will adjust to accusations that they are elitist and biased professionals who do not understand the average citizen.

Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

The survey contained a total of 83 questions, including nine open-ended questions. The survey questions shown below are those discussed in this article.

Overall perceived trend in journalism. Thinking about journalism overall in the United States today, do you think it is generally going in the right direction, going in the wrong direction, do not know. During the past few years, has the size of your news staff grown, remained about the same, shrunk, do not know. Overall, how good a job of informing the public do you think your own news organization is doing? (Coded as 1 = *poor*, 2 = *fair*, 3 = *good*, 4 = *very good*, 5 = *outstanding*).

Job satisfaction. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your present job? (Coded as 1 = *very dissatisfied*, 2 = *fairly dissatisfied*, 3 = *somewhat satisfied*, 4 = *very satisfied*).

Journalistic freedom. If you have a good idea for a subject that you think is important and should be followed up, how often are you able to get the subject covered? Almost always, more often than not, only occasionally, I do not make such proposals, do not know. How much freedom do you usually have in selecting the stories you work on? Almost complete freedom; a great deal, some, none at all, do not know. How much freedom do you usually have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized? (Coded as 1 = *none at all*, 2 = *some*, 3 = *a great deal*, 4 = *almost complete freedom*).

Journalistic practices. Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve under any circumstances? (a) paying people for confidential information, (b) using confidential business or government documents without authorization, (c) claiming to be somebody else, (d) agreeing to protect confidentiality and not doing so, (e) badgering unwilling informants to get a story, (f) making use of personal documents such as letters and photographs without permission, (g) getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information, (h) using hidden microphones or cameras, (i) using recreations or dramatizations of news by actors, (j) disclosing the names of rape victims, (k) accepting money from sources, (l) publishing stories with unverified content. (Coded as 1 = *not sure*, 2 = *would not approve*, 3 = *justified on occasion*).

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. (a) get information to the public quickly, (b) provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems, (c) provide entertainment and relaxation, (d) investigate claims and statements made by the government, (e) provide analysis and interpretation of international developments, (f) stay away from stories where factual content cannot be verified, (g) concentrate on news that is of interest to the widest possible audience, (h) discuss national policy while it is still being developed, (i) develop intellectual and cultural interests of the public, (j) be an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions, (k) be an adversary of businesses by being constantly skeptical of their actions, (l) set the political agenda, (m) give ordinary people a chance to express their views on public affairs, (n) motivate ordinary people to get involved in public discussions of important issues, (o) point people toward possible solutions to society's problems. (Coded as 1 = *not really important*, 2 = *somewhat important*, 3 = *quite important*, 4 = *extremely important*).

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? (a) blogs authored by journalists or other professionals; (b) blogs authored by regular citizens; (c) microblogging sites, such as Twitter; (d) professional social networking sites, such as LinkedIn; (e) audio–visual sharing sites, such as YouTube, Flickr, or Tumblr; (f) 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. (a) Check for breaking news, (b) check what other news organizations are reporting, (c) monitor discussions on social media about my field of work, (d) find new ideas for stories, (e) interview sources, (f) find sources I would otherwise not be aware of or have access to, (g) verify information, (h) find additional information, (i) meet new people in my field of work, (j) follow someone on social media I met in my field of work, (k) keep in touch with my audience, (l) post comments on work-related social media, (m) reply to comments on work-related social media; (n) other.

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. (a) Using social media allows me to promote myself and my work much better; (b) because of social media, I am more engaged with my audience; (c) Because of social media, I communicate better with people relevant to my work; (d) social media has improved my productivity; (e) social media has decreased my daily workload; (f) using social media enhances

my credibility as a journalist; (g) social media allows me to be faster in reporting news stories; (h) 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*).

Perceived impact of social media on profession. Overall, how would you rate the impact of social media on the journalistic profession? (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 the journalistic profession in general. (a) Social media is undermining traditional journalistic values, (b) social media threatens the quality of journalism, (c) social media makes journalism more accountable to the public, (d) user-generated content threatens the integrity of journalism, (e) online journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed. (Coded as 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Demographics. *Gender:* 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. *Religion:* In what religion, if any, were you brought up? Protestant/Lutheran, Evangelical Christian, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Other. *Marital status:* What is your marital status? Married, widowed, divorced, separated, unmarried living with partner, single, 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. *Political leaning:* In general, would you describe your political views as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, very liberal. *Income:* Would you please tell us what your total personal income was, before taxes, from your work in journalism during 2012? Less than US\$15,000, US\$15,000 to less than US\$20,000, US\$20,000 to less than US\$25,000 . . . US\$150,000 and over.

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Notes

1. The questions focusing on reporting methods were not asked by Johnstone et al. in their 1976 study.

2. Although the previous three surveys conducted in the years 1982, 1992, and 2002 were by telephone, we concluded that this was not possible anymore in 2013. Not only would such a telephone survey be prohibitively expensive, but we knew from experience that most U.S. journalists would be too busy to answer 50-min questionnaires on the telephone. The online questionnaire gave journalists the chance to answer the survey at their convenience and also allowed them to talk more extensively about their work in an open-ended question at the end of the survey. Moreover, online surveys have become the norm rather than the exception among professionals who all work online, which should protect against any response biases due to demographic factors such as age, sex, education, or income. Thus, even though the response rate for this online survey was lower than for the last telephone survey conducted in 2002, we are confident that our results are representative. The online format required only minor adjustments in the questions that were originally designed to be asked in telephone surveys. And while we acknowledge that we were not able to probe any of the “don’t know” answers given by the journalists in the online survey, we did not observe any significant increases in the “don’t know” answers as compared with the previous, telephone-based, survey results. We also did not see respondents skipping questions or answering questions in predictable patterns, which is sometimes observed among panel respondents who are paid for completing large number of online surveys. We might have missed some journalists who simply do not like to participate in online polls, which would be understandable, given the large number of polls many journalists receive. However, we employed a small army of undergraduate students who called each of the journalists who did not respond to our email invitation. The students were instructed to explain the purpose of the survey and ask whether the journalists received our emailed invitation to participate. New survey invitations were emailed to those journalists who had misplaced our original invitations. If necessary, students called nonresponsive journalists one more time to ask for their cooperation. In the end, these “nudge calls” significantly increased the final response rate and ensured that we did not lose any respondents because they had simply overlooked or lost our email invitation. We also believe that these nudge calls—done with charm and gentle insistence—gave our study a more human touch (and an additional chance to explain the purpose of our survey), which might have convinced a significant number of journalists to complete the survey. Given the rather lengthy questionnaire and the fact that most journalists are extremely busy people, we are confident that our online survey methodology represented the best approach to collect data from a representative cross-section of U.S. journalists.
3. The findings we report come from online interviews with 1,080 U.S. journalists working for a wide variety of daily and weekly newspapers, radio and television stations, news services and news magazines, and online news media throughout the United States. These interviews were conducted from August 7, 2013, 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% (AAPOR RR1; RR1 is the minimum response rate, or the number of complete interviews divided by the number of interviews [complete plus partial] plus the number of noninterviews and all cases of unknown eligibility. See American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2004). Because this study was intended to be a follow-up to the 1971, 1982, 1992, and 2002 national telephone surveys of U.S. journalists, we followed closely the definitions of a journalist and the sampling methods used by these earlier studies to be able to compare our 2013 results directly with those of the earlier studies. To be consistent with all our past

studies of U.S. journalists, the 2013 sample included only journalists who worked full time for a mainstream, general interest news medium. We realize that part-timers and freelance journalists are becoming more common, but that is another study for someone else to do. In drawing these samples, we had to make estimates of how many full-time journalists were working in the mainstream U.S. news media. We compared our final main sample percentages with the overall work-force percentages from these estimates and found a relatively close match for all seven 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. In the end, the main sample of 1,080 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. The institutional review board (IRB) at Indiana University Bloomington approved this study in August 2013.

4. The online sample of U.S. journalists was created by first creating a list of U.S. news organizations that publish exclusively online. A stratified random sample (according to their ranking on Alexa) of these news outlets was then contacted to obtain the names of journalists working for each organization. In the final step, a random sample of online journalists was drawn from these name lists. This procedure mirrored the sampling procedure used for the other media types included in this study. Overall, online journalists tend to be fairly similar to their colleagues in more traditional media in terms of basic demographics and attitudes toward journalism. As a result, the inclusion of this new category of journalists should not significantly alter the validity of the comparative findings of this study.
5. We first used the total number of journalists working for the news organizations that responded to estimate the total numbers working for all news media throughout the United States. We did that by calculating the percentage of each type of news organization responding (daily newspapers, television, radio, etc.), then multiplying the total number of full-time journalists working for each type of organization by 100 divided by the percentage of these organizations in our sample. This basic procedure was followed for each of the other types of news media to arrive at our total estimate of 83,370 full-time U.S. journalists. Once we had estimated the total number of journalists, we calculated the percentage working for each type of medium by dividing our estimated total number of journalists (83,370) by our estimates of the total number working for each type of news medium. We then used these percentages to estimate how many journalists from each type of news medium should be included in our national probability sample.
6. These estimated totals include only those journalists working full-time for daily and weekly newspapers, news magazines, radio and television stations with news departments, general wire service bureaus, and online news sites. Our estimates of U.S. journalistic employment do not include part-time correspondents, freelancers, or stringers working on an occasional basis, and our estimates are subject to varying amounts of sampling error because they were based on different-sized random samples of news organizations in relation to their actual numbers.

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