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Journalistic Relations and Values in the Networked Era: A Case Study of *The Guardian*

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ABSTRACT


In this article, I enquire into the ways that journalists negotiate their relationships, now that social media dominate the practices of journalistic newsrooms. Drawing on a Discourse Theory framework, I view journalism as a symbolic practice that is constituted through the discourse of journalists. I draw additionally on pragmatic sociology in order to approach journalists as reflexive practitioners who ground their agreements with others on a plurality of moral values. Studying the case of British news organisation *The Guardian* and analysing a series of newsroom interviews, I show how journalists develop a series of qualifications in order to negotiate their relationships. My findings demonstrate that journalists have indeed expanded the range of their interlocutors. This shift is associated with the inculcation of journalists with the networking logic of social media. Journalists, however, criticise social media as hostile platforms that confine people within their social circles, as carriers of unreliable journalism, and as profit-driven publishers. I claim that this contradiction allows the journalists to connect with others as representatives of an institution, which, unlike social media, upholds its civic commitments. Nonetheless, by attaching themselves to the market-friendly logic of social networking journalists are exposed to market heteronomy.

KEYWORDS

Social media; qualification; values; pragmatic sociology; discourse; relationships

Introduction

About a decade ago, the introduction of social media into journalism was largely justified in terms of a vision for the democratisation of the practice. This was a vision of participatory journalism (Singer et al. 2011), according to which journalists would collaborate with other actors on social media (primarily audiences turned news producers) in making the news. Today, social media are an ubiquitous feature of mainstream journalism. What are the implications of this change in terms of the values of professional journalists? Crucially, who are the people with whom journalists engage in conversation? And how do journalists negotiate their relationships with others? In addressing these questions, I turn to the journalists themselves, taking them seriously as knowledgeable and reflexive practitioners. This approach rests on the understanding that when journalists speak with

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and about others, they actively negotiate their relationships in terms of various moral values. In order to understand how this process unfolds in the actual context of current journalism, I interviewed journalists from *The Guardian*, an authoritative news outlet and a pioneer in social media adoption. As I have found, from a discourse analysis of a series of interviews, journalists value openness, honesty, recognition, and care for others. It is on the grounds of these moral values that journalists establish relations with their audiences, other social media users, their sources, their colleagues, and ordinary people. I thus claim that journalists have indeed extended the range of their interlocutors, granting their audiences greater intervening agency in the production of news stories. This shift came about as the journalists embraced the logic of social media, a logic of flexibility and continuous networking. Paradoxically, journalists today launch a scathing attack against social media which they view as hostile and unreliable forums, antagonistic publishers and monopolistic companies. I view this contradiction between accepting the social media logic and yet rejecting social media as the way in which journalists seek to approach others as representatives of a responsible civic institution. I conclude, however, that by attaching themselves to the market-friendly logic of social media journalists are exposed to commercial heteronomy.

Empirical and Theoretical Context

Historically, the relationships that journalists mostly prioritise are those with their audiences and their sources. Journalists preferentially refer to their audience as the citizens to whom they provide “information and commentary on contemporary affairs” (Schudson 2008, 11). Towards that end, they develop relationships with political actors and various experts in order to gather and verify information. Their relations with these sources are seen as uncertain negotiations of power, in which journalists often compromise their autonomy (Gans 2004). This collaborative relationship does not prevent journalists from assuming adversarial stances towards these powerful actors (McNair 2012). Journalists, however, are often perceived as elitist (Deuze 2008) and oriented inwardly to their relationships with their colleagues (Donsbach and Patterson 2004).

It is precisely these exclusive journalistic relations that digital networks arguably disrupt. For journalists, the adoption of social media was primarily conceived as a way to reconfigure their relationships with their audiences (Loosen and Schmidt 2012) and realise the vision of journalism as a conversation with the citizens (Paulussen, Harder, and Johnson 2017). This was the vision of participatory (Borger et al. 2013) or networked journalism, according to which journalists actively cooperate with their audiences (Van der Haak, Parks, and Castells 2012). The value that seemingly guides the networked journalists’ approach to relationship-building is that of transparency. To be transparent entails an openness to network others and a sense of accountability to audiences (Karlsson 2011). Journalism’s turn towards the audience (Vu 2013) is understood to be to the mutual benefit of journalists and the members of the communities that they address (Lewis, Holton, and Coddington 2014). On the one hand, the journalistic coverage of the issues that matter to particular social groups contributes to their cohesion (Usher 2012). On the other, the various communities reciprocate with a renewed trust in the press (Lewis 2020). As journalists turn to social media for their sourcing (Hermida, Lewis, and Zamith 2014), they include a variety of other voices in their news stories (Paulussen and Harder

2014). Through the tracking affordances of digital platforms, journalists can access quantitative data about their audience's online behaviour (Carlson 2018). Editors rely on audience analytics when they make their decisions and journalists are concerned with metrics of their "impact" (Powers 2018).

And yet, as another strand of research shows, even when journalists invite contributions from online users, they continue to enforce the distinction between professionals and amateurs (Wahl-Jorgensen 2015). Rather than participants in news production, the audiences are mostly perceived as active recipients of journalistic stories (Hermida et al. 2011). It is even the case that, whilst other actors imitate journalistic practice (Robinson 2015), they do not challenge the boundaries of journalism, whose mediation they appreciate as legitimatory of their own standpoint. Furthermore, journalists continue to defer to the factual information provided by expert sources, (Lawrence et al. 2014) and they use social media in order to have conversations among themselves (Usher, Holcomb, and Littman 2018). The belief in journalistic gatekeeping as public service resurfaces (Vos and Thomas 2018) and the ideal of the fourth estate persists (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013). Journalists locate an avenue of undue market influence over their practice in the metrics of online traffic, which include data from social media. The need to respond to audience demands clashes with the occupational values of autonomy and self-regulation (Andersson and Wiik 2013). Against the managerial logic of social media algorithms (Bunce 2019), which construct "calculated publics" by unspecified criteria (Gillespie 2014), the journalists assert their own subjective choices as experts, validated by their own institutional processes (Zamith 2018).

Emerging out of these two strands of scholarship seems to be a binary understanding of the influence that social media have on the ways that journalists negotiate their relations. If the former strand insists on change, by highlighting the diversification of journalistic relationships, the latter focuses on continuity, and the persistence of established ways of communicating with audiences, sources, and elite actors. In my view, a more productive way of investigating what happens to journalism in the era of social media would require an approach beyond the exclusive focus on either stasis or change. This is the dialectical approach that I take in this article: I seek to understand how old and new elements seemingly co-exist in journalism (as Hanitzsch and Vos (2017) argue), by focusing on the ways that journalists talk about their relations and values.

Journalistic Values in Practice: The Discursive act of Qualification

Existing theorisations of journalistic practice have explicated how journalists foreground their adherence to particular values and principles in order to perform three interrelated acts: justify their role in society (Schudson 2001), identify themselves as members of a community (Zelizer 1993), and negotiate their relationships with other actors (Ettema and Glasser 1998). Whilst the above approaches differ between them in the priority that they give to either the relations or the values of journalists, they seemingly share the idea that for journalists to articulate moral meanings is to act with or on others.

I build critically upon this idea by drawing on pragmatic sociology. As a project that challenges spatial theories of practice (primarily Bourdieu's critical sociology), pragmatic sociology contests the understanding of situated actors as habitually tolerant of their context's conditions. Instead, sociologists such as Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) argue that

ordinary actors in various situations exhibit the reflexive capacity to articulate critique. Ordinary critique is grounded on the shared conceptions of morality that allow actors to establish agreements with others. In pragmatic sociology's foundational text (*ibid.*), these shared structures of moral meaning are described as *polities*. Within different polities, different types of moral worth (or value) are distributed according to different principles. Following the authors' typology, I will talk about a polity of public opinion where the opinions of others confer recognition on the self; the polity of inspiration where artistic creativity and religiosity co-exist; the civic polity where collective life is the common good; the domestic polity that respects hierarchies of tradition; the market which places profit as its ultimate end; the industrial polity of professional and scientific efficiency; and finally the polity of connectionism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) as the "new spirit of capitalism", where flexible individuals network in projects.

Within this framework, I understand that journalists negotiate their relationships with other actors by drawing on this plurality of shared conceptions of morality. I refer to this process as qualification: journalists draw upon the various polities in order to attach themselves and others to particular types of moral worth (Thévenot 2002). Referring additionally to the theoretical basis of Critical Discourse Analysis (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999), I view qualification as a discursive act, that is, not as merely representative but as constitutive of subjects and social relations. This discourse-theoretical perspective also allows me to understand that qualification always entails a simultaneous critical move: the disqualification of others. Journalists exclude other actors and practices, precisely on the basis of the moral conceptions that they articulate.

The power of journalism to constitute the various social groups that it represents refers to its institutional power to define reality (Hanitzsch and Vos 2017). Nonetheless, insofar as this power hinges on the exclusion of others, it is a power that can be contested. From this lens, we can approach the apparent tension between institutional continuity and change in terms of the different kinds of journalistic qualifications. Following this rationale, I formulate my overarching research question in this way: *How do journalists articulate their qualifications?* With the following three subquestions that I pose, I focus my enquiry into three important aspects of qualification: (a) *How do journalists attach to themselves moral qualities?* (b) *How do journalists disqualify other actors and practices?* (c) *In which ways do journalists qualify others?*

Methodology

In order to answer the questions of this thesis, I followed a methodology that allowed me to access the journalists' practical knowledge. In my view, this kind of knowledge is contextual; it is acquired over time by acting in the settings of journalistic newsrooms (Flyvbjerg 2001). Thus, I considered that it is with the study of a specific news organisation that I would understand in-depth how journalists negotiate their relationships with others. Contrary to the idea that the examination of cases cannot support generalisations, I contend that case studies allow for analytical, (rather than formal) generalisation. This kind of generalisation refers to the articulation of theoretical propositions, rather than inferences about populations (Yin 2015). Towards that end, the study of paradigmatic cases is most productive. This is due to their character as emergent from and constitutive of the practice to which they belong (Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe 2010, 646). In my view,

The Guardian, as both an authoritative journalistic outlet and a proponent of openness to social media audiences paradigmatically internalises the apparent contradiction between institutional and networked journalism.

I constructed this case study through interviews with some of *The Guardian's* journalists. I selected the potential participants in a purposive way (Gaskell 2000), ensuring that they work exclusively for *The Guardian*. Through an examination of online resources (lists and databases of British journalists, Twitter profiles, and the Guardian's website) I was able to identify and contact 79 candidates.

I conducted in-depth interviews (Morris 2015) with the ten Guardian journalists who responded positively to my request. As the literature suggests, in qualitative studies such as this, the average number of interviews ranges between six (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006) and fifteen (Brinkmann 2013). The journalists that I interviewed were active in a diversity of journalistic beats and positions (Table 1). In the interviews, I first invited the participants to introduce themselves and talk briefly about their roles in *The Guardian*. Following an interview guide, I asked questions about the ways in which my interlocutors used social media in their everyday work. The journalists reflected on their experience offering descriptions of past events together with their beliefs about the role of social media in journalism. In order to concentrate analytically on their meanings I followed the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 2003), the paradigm which is also central in my conceptual framework.

As a hermeneutical method, CDA allows us to look closely at texts with a view to understand wider social processes. This interpretive movement relies on the understanding of the social use of language as discourse. The concept of discourse refers to language as a socially shaped resource with the power to shape reality, including identities and relations (Fairclough 1992). The latter, relational function of discourse is the main interest of this research. As such, for my analysis, I concentrated on the relational meanings of the interviews. I first identified a series of texts where the journalists represented others in various ways. I then analysed these texts by paying attention to their lexical, grammatical, and semantic relations. Concentrating on the speakers' vocabulary, I associated the textured subjects and process verbs with the figures and activities of the various polities. Focusing on the grammatical relations between clauses and sentences (parataxis, hypotaxis) I traced the relations of difference and equivalence that hold discourses together. Concentrating on the participants and processes of modalised clauses, I identified the subjects

Table 1. List of the journalists who participated in my interviews.

#	Role	Main activities
1	Senior Video Producer	Video Journalist. Produces video reportages on public affairs that are published on the Guardian's website
2	Social and new formats editor	Head of the social media team; produces, commissions, and edits textual and multimedia content for dissemination on social media
3	Sports journalist	Investigative reporter covering sports
4	European affairs correspondent/ features writer	Reports European news; produces long-form features
5	Editor/sub-editor/writer	Edits and contributes to the "Books" section of the Guardian
6	Assistant Media Editor	Reports and comments on the media sector
7	Columnist	Comments on current politics; writes lead editorials
8	Editor/Financial journalist	Edits and reports for the "Money" section of the Guardian's website
9	Features editor	Commissions and edits long-form features
10	Political correspondent	Reports on UK politics

with whom journalists act in agreement. I thus located several shared patterns of meaning across excerpts from various interviews, which I considered to be the various discourses on which the journalists draw in order to qualify their relations.

In each of the sections that follow, I unpack these discourses in terms of the types of worth that they suggest for harmonious relations with others. I locate first the politics that seem to be mobilised in the journalistic qualifications. I then focus on how each discourse is consolidated, by looking at how other practices and actors are excluded. Finally, I concentrate on how journalists relate with others in the course of their action.

Openness

It was more than a decade ago, under the leadership of Alan Rusbridger that *The Guardian* embraced, and eventually became known for, what he called “open journalism”. Practically, openness entails that journalists engage in conversations with various networked users, subsequently incorporating their stories, posts, or comments in the reportages that the author or the live-blogs that they curate. As a hybrid practice, this kind of journalism combines online and offline modes of reportage, thus adding another layer to the identities of the journalists’ interlocutors, as the “real people” who can be encountered in face-to-face conversations.

As a features writer suggests in the following excerpt where he reflects on the ways he used Twitter to cover the Greek crisis, the worth of openness constitutes the moral centre of networked journalism.

meeting real people and involving people in the choices of who I was going to meet and where I was going to go, and they felt involved in the whole project. And I think if we can work more transparently and more openly, and more responsibly you know in that way then that kind of thing will help rebuild that bridge of confidence between journalists and readers (Journalist 4)

Transparency, the journalist suggests, is synonymous with openness, as Karlsson (2010) also points out, and entails the participation of other actors in the journalistic process. The argument for transparent practice is organised in terms of a solution to a problem: the fractured “bridge of confidence between journalists and readers”. The solution is posited in very similar terms to Lewis (2020) justification for a “relational journalism”. To work “transparently” and “openly”, connects the journalists with two groups: the “readers”, who are “involved in the project”, and the “real people”, whom one meets in real-life locations. Insofar as the value of openness is associated with continuous networking activity, it sits within the polity of connectionism, what I understand, after Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) as the “new spirit of capitalism”.

Nonetheless, whilst networked journalists are committed to establishing agreements with the public, they draw a line of exclusion on uncivil behaviour. As a sports journalist who is particularly frustrated with the tone of online conversations claims, this kind of conduct desecrates the principles of respectful debate.

But what I've found was that with a lot of the people who have done this on Twitter, that you don't engage in an actual debate, it's just, they carry on telling you what an idiot you are. Now that's not everyone by any means. So sometimes, just basically just finishing up after that point, I basically did not respond to them anymore. I just don't respond. (Journalist 3)

The problem with incivility, abuse, or harassment against journalists on social media and within the comments sections is well documented (Graham, Jackson, and Wright 2019). Reactions are not uniform; some journalists may consider this expression of hostility as professional success (Post and Kepplinger 2019). For this interviewee, however, this behaviour violates the rules of “an actual debate”. As the term “debate” connotes, the sense of justice that seems to be violated in these situations comes from the polity of public opinion, where respect and recognition are paramount. Thus, it is these types of worth that articulate with the imperative for networking effectively enhancing (and restraining) the meaning of openness.

Who the offending others are is unclear in the excerpt above. What we know about them is that they are unworthy of the journalists’ openness. Let us now return to the actors with whom the journalists cooperate, readers and “real people”. In the following excerpt, a social media editor refers to the hybrid way of doing journalism that connects these two groups.

And you know traditionally you would’ve gone out on the train and interviewed some people and taken some notes and then gone away and written it all up, whereas I’ve done it all off this I’ve just spoken to this person, you’ve got a photo of them, you can do it as the journey’s happening and then people are commenting below the line [...] you can get in the comments and see what people are suggesting you do next or where you should go. And that feels like a very interactive, two way.. of telling a story and or exploring an issue but also whilst being out on location and interacting with the audience and still doing you know feet on the ground journalism. (Journalist 2)

In this journalistic modality, live-blogging, the audience is active, “commenting below the line”, “suggesting” and “interacting” with the journalist (Steensen 2014). This type of journalistic action that enables the audience’s participation is coupled with a more traditional way of “on the ground journalism” and “interviewing people”. Through the journalist’s real-time reportage, the audience becomes aware of another group, the commuters of a train. The transparent performance of journalistic work bridges the online and the offline, and brings the concerns of a smaller group of “people” to the wider group of the active Guardian “audience”.

I would, then, argue that the networked journalists who are open to others are more likely to include a variety of non-institutional voices in their stories. The logic that underpins this kind of journalism I find to be that of the connectionist polity. Let us recall that this polity valorises continuous networking around self-initiated projects. By establishing relations with various groups, online and offline, representing and hosting their voices in its news production, journalism acts as their unifier. It is in the public space that journalism constructs that the fragmented audiences come together as a wider collective, the journalistic audience. But, as I find, connectionist journalists now assume critical stances against social media, pointing to their failure to sustain respectful and rational deliberation. Let us now turn to a more traditional way of relating with others which is based on an “industrial” type of worth: honesty.

Honesty

As per the traditional ideal of good journalistic practice, journalists seek to address their readers with honesty and meet their expectations for factual accounts of public affairs. In

corroboration of their truth claims journalists offer verified evidence attributed to reliable sources. As regards their relations with others, autonomy is a core concern for professional journalists. They seek to defend their prerogative to tell the news against the amateurs who deprofessionalise news production and despite the interventions of powerful political and economic actors.

For professional journalists, social media are instrumental both in their truth-seeking and truth-telling efforts. With regards to the latter, as a political journalist seems to argue in the following excerpt, relations with audiences are harmonised when both sides agree on the value of true knowledge.

And I think it makes journalists more honest 'cause again 30 years ago you could write a comment piece which didn't entirely make sense and fudged a couple of arguments or even got a fact wrong and the only redress people would have would be to grumble about it with their friends or send a letter to the paper. And now, something really obviously wrong, then within minutes there'll be a hundred tweets saying that and it makes the newspaper look bad so I think it keeps newspapers a little more honest. (Journalist 10)

Two polities seem to be active in the text, those of public opinion and industry. The first polity, which looks to others' opinions, I find textured in the readers' actions: weak in the past, with "a letter to the paper" as their sole available "redress" against journalists, they are now empowered to post "a hundred tweets" and damage the reputation of the "newspaper". The second polity, that of industry, I identify in the denunciations of the audience, when they point out "something obviously wrong", indicating their commitment to the value of efficiency. The journalist commits to the principles of the industrial polity when he speaks of the errors of a "fudged" argument of a "comment piece" that does not "make sense", and even more gravely, when "you get a fact wrong". Hence the agreements over journalistic truth-telling on social media, in my view, indicate the domestication of social media (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2011) within the industrial norms of honesty and professionalism. As we will see later, social media are also part of the journalistic truth-seeking efforts; but let us first establish who are unqualified truth-tellers.

Whilst the networked audience participates in the verification of true knowledge, the journalists seek to ensure that they have the final word. As a features writer suggests in the following excerpt, journalists rely on their professional principles to uphold their boundaries.

everybody can now be a journalist or thinks they can be a journalist and anybody who happens to be at the right place at the right time and has got a Twitter account or a Facebook page or whatever you know.. can do journalism. And the danger is that people come to think that anybody can and that journalism isn't really a profession that has its own skills and its own codes and its own you know, and that, standards. (Journalist 4)

Citizen journalists, that is, "everybody" who thinks they "can be a journalist", because they "are at the right place" and time and have a "Twitter account", pose a particular "danger" for journalism – arguably, its de-professionalisation (Wahl-Jorgensen 2015). Against these amateur journalists, the speaker presents the supports of the journalistic professional boundary: "skills", "codes" and "standards", which safeguard, as Örnebring (2013) argues, three interrelated areas of legitimacy: expertise, duty, and autonomy. At the same time, journalists seek to keep the market at arm's length, as evident in this quote by the political correspondent.

you have this not kind of monopolistic publisher but nearly monopolistic publisher which is a private company. They.. people see them as being just a platform but they're not, they're profit-making company who have their own views. [...] most of the advertising revenue goes to Facebook and Google. (Journalist 10)

It is, then, private companies and amateurs who are excluded from sharing in the journalists' industrial norms of disinterestedness, work, and factuality. Let us now return to qualified others, by focusing, this time, on truth-seeking. In the following quote, a financial journalist refers to a variety of actors, to whom she routinely turns as sources for factual information.

I do a lot about property, so I suppose that kind of key people for me are the economists at some of the big lenders, Nationwide and Halifax 'cause they do house prices indices and also there's a lot of people in the big property firms who have research departments, so I'll talk to them quite a lot. Then there's obviously the people near the ground so like an estate agent so I'll talk to them. [...] And then think tanks, I get an awful lot from think tanks so people like the Resolution Foundation. (Journalist 8)

The main sources for this journalist are economists from "banks", "big property firms", and "think tanks", with whom she seems to have established relations. Against this elite layer of qualified actors, but equally "key", are the "estate agents", who provide the view "on the ground". In this way of seeking factual information, as existing research also shows, journalists continue to speak with their customary sources (Knight 2012). It also seems the case that for this beat, financial journalism, social media matter less as a field for sourcing (Vliegthart and Boukes 2018). Thus, whilst professional journalists to an extent implicate social media users in their truth-telling endeavours, when it comes to truth-seeking they tend to rely on exclusive relations with other experts.

Considering the activities of the professional and the networked journalists I find that they are not that dissimilar, insofar as they both use social media for reportage. They differ fundamentally, however, in their approach to relationship-building. For networked journalists, it is the relationships per se that matter, whilst for professionals, relationships are subordinated to their commitment to seek and tell the truth. This difference does not mean that networked journalists are less concerned with their autonomy, but rather that for professional journalists autonomy is less of a dialogical negotiation. The following way of relating with others, where journalists strive for the recognition of their peers, is even more exclusive.

Recognition

As already made clear, being concerned with the opinions of others, the measure of worth in the polity of public opinion, is a dominant journalistic preoccupation. Relations with readers are important for journalists; the more, the better. But this social capital matters insofar as it can be converted to peer recognition. It is ultimately the favourable opinions of their peers that journalists prioritise. In the following excerpt, a media editor refers precisely to the idea that it is relations of recognition that social media can facilitate.

the thing that matters to me about social media presence is the ability to talk to people who is [sic] following me, so I notice when someone who I think is respectable in the industry and is interesting, who I might want to talk to at a later date follows me (Journalist 6)

The industry to which the journalist refers is that of media and journalism, and thus it is relations with “respectable” peers that he prioritises. In this particular instance, the connectionist element of social media journalism seems to be subordinated to the imperative of recognition: it is peers that stand out in this journalist’s list of followers as “interesting” “people”. But who are left out of these exclusive relations?

Popular journalism, what the British red-tops produce, or the news content that goes viral on social media, is considered here to be identical with bad journalism. In the excerpts that follow, the pursuit of popularity is attached to *The Guardian*’s competitors. The first journalist who speaks here, the leader writer, recalls an incident when another columnist defended *The Guardian*’s editorial strategy.

I remember her saying to the last editor, to Peter Preston, who was the editor before Rusbridger, she said but Peter any fool can put up the circulation. And it’s true of course, she was saying oh why don’t you put topless women on the front page of The Guardian? It would sell more copies so why not do it? You don’t do it because it’s wrong. It’s not what The Guardian should do, or indeed any other newspaper in my opinion. (Journalist 7)

To measure recognition in terms of a newspaper’s “circulation” is convenient (“any fool can put up the circulation”) and “wrong”. With this critique, as Örnebring and Jönsson (2004) argue, the boundary between elite and low-quality journalism is erected. To defer to the preferences of the readers, represented by the circulation numbers, is to allow reader-consumers to determine editorial decisions. It seems that web analytics have similar significance for journalists, as I understand from the following quote by the media editor.

We don’t use that as the defining feature of our journalism but it’s something you’re always aware of and it’s very good to know what people are likely to read. I think it also probably influences the way we do stories perhaps more than what we cover. Which I think is the responsible approach. We are not as obsessed with viral statistics as some other players in the market. Which is good I think. (Journalist 6)

What seems to be excluded here is the worth of virality, which I identify as the connectionist worth of networked popularity. The journalist represents the space where various news organisations (“players”) compete, as a “market”. The responsible approach for the journalists who realise that profitability is an objective for news organisations is to insist on the prevalence of the value of recognition over networked popularity. To be responsible, and thus distinct from “other players in the market”, is not to be “obsessed with viral statistics”, and maintain control over “what we cover”.

Let us now return to harmonious relations with others, and see how audiences and peers are prioritised. In the excerpt that follows, the long-form editor clarifies how social media can be used in order to establish relations of recognition.

there is probably a community of kind of you know one hundred to two hundred other journalists mostly in New York, who I know and they know me, and we all know the same two- or three hundred people together. So that if I you know if I was at a party in New York and I met someone, I would know them from Twitter or if I was at a journalism kind of event or something like that. So there is a sense in which this thing that used to be very abstract, which was sort of the collective sentiment of a journalistic elite or the kind of discursive community of professional journalists and what they esteemed and what they disliked, it’s visible now (Journalist 9)

For the journalists who pursue the recognition of their colleagues, the ability to participate in networked communities steers them inwards to relations with their peers. Others are members of a “discursive community” of peers; they share in the same values of “esteem” and are known: “who I know and they know me, and we all know the same two- or three- hundred people together”. This is a small community of “one hundred to two hundred journalists”. Their bonds, formed in the course of journalistic action, which includes following each other’s work “from Twitter”, will give rise to occasions for face-to-face interactions at the exclusive location of a “party” or a journalistic “event”.

Journalists use social media, then, in order to map existing journalistic communities, which they reconstruct and extend as networks. This is a process in which the new elements (social media) are operationalised according to established ways of relating with others. Recognition, together with honesty, can be considered the more traditional types of journalistic worth. Relations of recognition, compared to those based on honesty and openness, are clearly the most exclusive. At the exact opposite end of inclusivity stands the value of care that I discuss next.

Care

The journalists who act with care towards others seek to represent them fairly and facilitate their participation in the public conversation. As I find in this section, care entails a particular orientation to others, acknowledging their difference, as collectivities. It is the subjects of politics and political economy, citizens and classes, that seemingly benefit from this type of journalistic action. I have found references to the value of care in just two of my interviews, the ones that I conducted with a video journalist and a financial journalist.

The video journalist spoke of caring about others as his “dominant motivation”. Reflecting on a reportage on refugees, my interlocutor explained how his beliefs shape his relationships.

I care a lot about the people who I film with, their wellbeing, how they're presented, how we represent them, how we take a piece of their life and edit it. And create a manufactured thing product out of that. I don't do that lightly. It keeps me awake at night sometimes. This is aside from the internet from all of any modern change in the internet. It has always made me worried. [...] And I think I hope that's a healthy thing. Anyone who doesn't feel like that and does this job, is, is sort of behaving recklessly I think. So I take that very very seriously right so that.. I carry that feeling with me and that for me is the dominant motivation. (Journalist 1)

The value of care is discernible at two levels. It is active in the local interaction with particular persons, forming the commitments that come from community. Care is for the “wellbeing” of others, a personal relation of endearment as the presence of the “I” signifies. But this moral imperative is generalised, when the question becomes “how we represent them”, how “we take a piece of their life” and “create a manufactured thing”. What is accessed at the level of a “feeling” or a “worry” as compassion, at the moment of representation acquires a political character (Boltanski 1999). Care, then, insofar as it refers to collectivities, seems to belong within the civic polity. It is thus imbued with meanings of solidarity. Before we proceed to look at these civic relations, let us first examine what interferes with the exercise of care, and is thus disqualified.

In the following excerpt, the practice of online analytics emerges as antagonistic to the journalist's civic role as an agent of change. The financial journalist who speaks here grapples with the difference in popularity between two similar articles on the lives of working people, as a problem for her orientation towards others.

I would like to think that I'd do it again but if you had to weigh up and you had finite resources and there was another kind of celebrity case you'd have to think about doing that. I mean those things you have to think about why you're doing them. you're doing them because you want to effect change and you want, but you're only gonna do that if people read them and if people aren't reading them you've got to think oh how ... (Journalist 8)

The journalist seemingly refers to a clash between two principles that are meant to be articulated together: the journalistic role to "effect change" by addressing citizens hinges on the popularity of articles with online audiences. When "people aren't reading" the articles, the articulation that turns consuming audiences into active citizens breaks. The journalist is obliged to re-evaluate her actions, considering a "celebrity angle", or perhaps adjusting the positioning of the articles on the website. Thus, from the perspective of civic-minded journalists, the connectionist organisation of public opinion seems antithetical to a journalism that allies itself with ordinary, working people. What does it mean, then, for journalists to honour their civic roles and care for others, and who can these other actors be? An answer to these questions comes from the financial journalist, who talks about the much-debated problems of the "gig economy".

we've done loads on the workers and the kind of problems, we've done a lot on the delivery strike, did stuff earlier on the year on Hermes and covered kind of the Uber case and I suppose we kind of probably are on the side of workers, we're on the side of workers and we're kind of saying, we're probably taking a line that it's a kind of a bad thing for people to work in the gig economy, which I don't think all people who work in it agree with so I suppose that's the stance that was taken. (Journalist 8)

The relations that the journalist establishes here are unambiguously with the "workers" of the "gig economy" who "strike". The position of *The Guardian* is critical: it is "a bad thing for people to work in the gig economy". But it is also because of the journalistic relations with the workers that a more nuanced understanding of the issue is possible: not "all of the people who work in it agree". The video journalist, who speaks in the following excerpt, makes a similar claim when he speaks of the "real people".

we went to America briefly and we talked about Trump. We've kind of chronicled the rise of it and part of our point has been that it's about escaping the bubble. Your bubbles, your media bubble, your political bubble, your social bubble, and going to a place and just come face to face with real people on the street and giving them space to talk. And we've done this in this series for years and it's delivered repeatedly almost a better reflection of politics and elections than pollsters have, and internet and Facebook and all of that. (Journalist 1)

The antagonism here is between "us", members of the "bubbles", and others, the "real people on the street". To break these power relations is to establish relations with unknown others across boundaries. The political character of this process is explicitly identified, as it relates to "politics" and "elections".

From the perspective of civic-minded journalists, others, the residents of a small town, refugees, or workers are not like "us", the elites of central politics, the media, and urban centres. It is nonetheless the moral duty of the journalist to address these others, precisely

as a different broad collective, and to include them in the conversation. The argument seems to be that the connectionist logic of networked journalism that emphasises openness to difference is not a truly civic rationale, insofar as it does not unify the various social groups under an inclusive category. In other words, to care about others, the civic logic goes, is not the same as being open to them. Thus, as regards networking platforms, civic-minded journalists can be hostile or sceptical.

As I conclude this discussion of the different ways in which journalists relate with others, I find that they have mapped their existing relations onto social media, adding yet another modality of communicating with each other, their audiences, institutional and lay actors. Journalists have not, however, fully embraced the more inclusive political practice of caring for others.

Concluding Reflections

In this article, I have explored how journalists understand their values and relations now that their newsroom practices are dominated by social media. I followed a dialectical approach in my investigation, seeking to avoid the binary conclusions of existing research that emphasise either change or stasis. I, thus, concentrated on how *The Guardian* journalists whom I interviewed, as reflexive practitioners, talk about their values and relations. Drawing on pragmatic sociology (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006) and discourse theory (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999), I understand this kind of talk in terms of the act of qualification. I view qualification as the discursive act by which journalists negotiate their relationships with others. Qualification entails the attachment of moral worth to the self and others in order to establish relations of agreement and difference. In other words, when journalists commit to different types of worth they coordinate with a plurality of others.

Following the principles of CDA (Fairclough 2003), in order to look at the qualifications that my journalists-interviewees make, I found that they commit to four types of worth. The practitioners of networked journalism believe in openness and perform journalistic activities transparently as they engage with others online and offline, incorporating their contributions into the journalistic text. The worth of honesty characterises the professional journalists who seek the truth and present facts and verified evidence, accepting the limitations of this endeavour. The journalists who value recognition look primarily to the favourable opinions of their peers rather than those of large unknown audiences. Finally, the value of care underpins the ways in which journalists relate with ordinary people. To care for others entails showing solidarity with the disadvantaged by representing their claims to justice and giving them the platform to tell their own stories.

Looking at who the “qualified” journalistic interlocutors are, I find that journalists have expanded the range of voices that they include in their stories. Journalists have also added new ways of relating with others, whilst somewhat modifying the existing, more traditional ones. This shift towards inclusivity perhaps does not fully realise the expectations of optimistic literature about the participation of a variety of actors in the news (Jarvis 2006). At all times, the journalist remains the author of the news story, addressing others in varying degrees of recognition of their agency. The representatives of other institutions, most notably sources from the fields of politics and finance continue to be important interlocutors for journalists. Reporters turn to their traditional sources routinely,

via social media or more traditional ways of communication, when they search for facts and truthful accounts of events. Eyewitnesses continue to be sources of information, once their accounts are verified, and they too can be identified and contacted via social media. Relations of mutual recognition between fellow journalists are reinforced in exclusive conversations on various social networking platforms. A broad audience, to which information is disseminated via the various digital channels, continues to be the important addressee of the truth-telling journalists. But others are also addressed more specifically as members of various social groups, citizens, or members of the public, when journalists use social media in accordance with the connectionist logic. Nonetheless, the broad political category of “ordinary people”, understood from a civic perspective as the disadvantaged, is scarcely represented in journalistic discourse.

Turning to the ways in which journalists exclude other actors and practices, I find that the critique against social media is now generalised among the practitioners. The journalists who strive for the recognition of their peers take issue specifically with social media metrics. These journalists consider that the reliance of news organisations on web analytics erodes the quality standards set by the journalistic community. Similarly, the journalists who value honesty are concerned with the influence of social media on their professional boundaries. From their point of view the profession is threatened by amateur news content on social media, as well as from the overwhelming absorption of advertising revenue by the big digital companies. From another, purely civic, perspective that I trace, the connectionist logic of social media interferes with journalism’s commitment to support the struggles of ordinary people. Here the association of quantitatively measured “impact” with social change clashes with the journalists’ aspiration to fulfil their civic role. It is, however, in the qualifications of journalists who are otherwise enthusiastic about networked engagement that I find an important repositioning. Networked journalists now articulate a critique against the pitfalls of social media communication, denouncing the frequent occurrence of online abuse and harassment. They understand the hostile behaviour of social media users as a violation of the rules of deliberation.

In conclusion, I consider that social media are not only domesticated into journalism according to existing norms, but that they also introduced the connectionist logic of networking into newsroom practice. The logic of social media is now an institutional journalistic rationale. On the one hand, this shift contributed towards the permeability of journalism: to an extent, journalists invite others to participate in the news and host their texts. This has even influenced the more traditional practitioners to embrace the idea that truth can be collaboratively verified. On the other hand, it is this co-existence of newer and older logics that allows journalists to defend the boundaries of their profession particularly against the market and the big technological companies. Towards that end, journalists raise a severe critique against the networking platforms. They criticise social media as hostile spaces that confine people within their existing social circles, as forums that cannot sustain rational and respectful deliberation, as carriers of sensationalist and unreliable journalism, and as profit-driven monopolistic publishers.

Thus, journalists today seem to be enveloped in a major contradiction: whilst they have fully embraced the logic of social media they vehemently reject social media. In my view, this contradiction enables the journalists to represent their own practice as a networked way of communicating with different publics, which, unlike social media, is bound by its

duty to citizens. In so doing, however, journalists attach themselves to the market-friendly logic of social media allowing the commercial field to interpenetrate the news sector in a more insidious way. Understanding how this contradiction is negotiated in other news organisations would constitute the productive pursuit of future case study research.

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