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Existential crisis? UK journalists make sense of their professional practice

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Candidate Declaration

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2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
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Abstract

The digital landscape has had some of the most profound impacts on the journalism profession. Social media has bridged the gap between journalists and audiences. Online journalism has led to rounds of downsizing, slowed hiring processes, and corporate mandates for immediate publication that challenge the traditional perspectives of journalists. Added to this are several 21st century controversies, such as the phone hacking scandal and criticism of journalism's responses to tragedies, it is evident that UK journalists face significant challenges to their practice. This research aims to understand how journalists make sense of their daily professional lives amid contemporary challenges to practice. Specifically, it investigates what journalists believe they do on a daily basis, how they view their readers, and how they defend themselves against allegations of unethical practice.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 journalists who represented a broad cross-section of practitioners in the UK. These journalists came from the national tabloid, regional, and freelance sectors of the UK journalism landscape. A thematic analysis revealed that journalists still articulate knowledge claims of their field based on traditional epistemic values attached to western democratic ideals despite challenges from the digital landscape revealing a different reality. Audiences have become commodified, which has furnished journalists with an ambivalent outlook on their readers. Contrary to public perceptions of what is morally challenging, journalists see assignments that push ethical boundaries as a normal part of their practice.

The results highlighted three ways in which journalists make sense of their practice in the contemporary era: judgment, which plays an important role in news-making decisions, ethical practices, and storytelling; traditional epistemic views to make articulated knowledge claims about practice, and; validation of practice, their identity, and to emphasise the value they bring to journalism that is based on their articulated knowledge, informed traditions, and shared repertoire of knowledge.

Keywords: Journalism, Journalism Practice, Phenomenology, Multimedia Journalism

Acknowledgements

A PhD is a life-changing marathon. It is a fluid entity that can change significantly over the course of its life. It is a life's work and a commitment to perseverance. This journey began in the autumn of 1984 when I was a new student at De La Salle College in Toronto. Some of the secondary school students, who ran the student newspaper, came to our class looking for a junior editor/contributor. I wrote a reactionary story about a crucial ice hockey match between Team Canada and Team USSR and won the writing competition to become junior editor. That would prove to be a watershed moment in my life as journalism would come to define my professional life and beyond. During those dark days of post-secondary life, it would be journalism that would provide guidance towards my career path. Back then, I never thought I would spend 16 years working across Canada and then give it all up to move across the Atlantic to study a MA in International Journalism and then conduct postgraduate PhD research in the United Kingdom.

While one person's name is on the PhD thesis, there are many who are in the background who must be acknowledged for their support. First and foremost, I would like to thank my family. My parents, Dr Lionel Subryan and Dr Shubhashnee Subryan, have always provided any support they can for ventures that help to improve their children's and grandchildren's lives. Whether emotionally, mentally, or financially, my parents have always been there to guide me and support me in any venture that is an investment in myself. In 2014, they encouraged me to seek new challenges when I began to lose focus as a journalist. This led to me moving to the UK to enter academia. I would like to thank my mother for the expertise she provided by reading and providing guidance to my work and holding a mini-viva over the phone from Canada. I would like to thank my sister, Dr Andrea Subryan. Andrea and I have always enjoyed a close sibling relationship where we can support and encourage each other in our endeavours.

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Preface

Prior to entering academia, I spent 16 years working as a print and online journalist across Canada in a variety of publications. The best part of my career was when I worked as a crime journalist. In that capacity, I spent my time monitoring police radio and relying on tips from police contacts of crime scenes and collision sites to which I would go to generate content. There were times when I would go to crash sites and people would yell out remarks about why I was there intruding on people's lives when they were at their most vulnerable. I dismissed those comments because I knew my rights as a journalist were protected, which meant I had the right to attend crash sights and crime scenes. But this led me to reflect on my role as a journalist. I believe firmly that journalists are the official recorders of history within the community, similar to those who carved hieroglyphics in ancient societies. I believe understanding journalism practice requires academic inquiry, especially from those insiders who become academics, because there is a comprehension of practice that this brand of academic brings that is not readily evident for academics who are not insiders. This, along with personal reflections, motivated me to shift my perspective from a journalism practitioner to someone who aims to provide understanding of practice through academic research. I chose to pursue advanced academic research to contribute to the rich body of literature related to journalism research in addition to helping me understand my past journalism career.

When I began this PhD, it was at a time of significant upheaval in journalism, especially in the UK. In the aftermath of the Leveson Inquiry, the existing press regulator, the Press Complaints Commission, had been shuttered. In 2014, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) was created and, in 2016, established a more narrowly focussed Editors Code of Practice. In 2016, two seemingly unlikely political outcomes occurred when the UK voted to leave the European Union and Donald Trump became the U.S. president. Social media played a significant role in those decisions (Gorodnichenko, Pham & Talavera, 2018). In 2017, the Manchester Arena attack and the Grenfell Tower fire in the UK led to renewed criticism of journalists for what they public construed to be unethical coverage in the aftermath of both events. These develops turned this thesis in to a fluid entry because the relevancy of these real-world incidents are significant in the greater scope of this research. There has been much exploration and reflection as my PhD has evolved over the course of its life. While this pathway was inspired by a need to explore the Leveson Inquiry and its impact on the UK journalism landscape, it has evolved to explore how journalists are feeling about their position within society amid this period of external critical bombardment. As such, these incidents informed the key research questions that inform this study.

As I stated in the acknowledgement section of this thesis, a PhD research is a marathon. It is a journey that has profound impacts on you, as a researcher and as a

person. Thanks to this process, I have a different outlook on life where I have a better critical understanding of the world. This process is filled with trial and error. There are frustrating times and adrenaline-inducing moments when things become evident. The process of preparing for my research, conducting it, and writing my thesis has had a profound effect on me. Prior to beginning the process, I observed my mother's experience as she pursued her PhD, and this prepared me for my own journey. I have developed the ability to multi-task more effectively as a postgraduate researcher. One of the significant ways in which my PhD journey has benefitted me is that I am more aware of my view of reality of the world and journalism. As a former journalist, I held a sceptical view of the world. As a postgraduate researcher, I have become more critical as I try to understand different perspective. I have engaged in journalism as a profession since I was a 13-year-old junior reporter for my secondary school newspaper in Canada. As I approach the end of my PhD journey, I have gained a deeper understanding of the profession as I reflected upon the profession and the experiences of my research participants.

One of the key ways in which academia has changed me is the need to be as explicit as possible about assumptions, perceptions, and philosophy. It has also meant changing the way I design questions. There is a significant difference between how academics and journalists design questions. While academics are aware of creating a conducive and reflective environment, journalists are more interest in creating reactive and pressure environments because of the need to acquire information that they believe they can use to raise public awareness within the lens of public interest.

One of the most important lessons that I have learned during the PhD process has been that research is based on outlining and qualifying several factors of how people create knowledge and on what knowledge is based. To understand how people construct their experiences requires qualifying how they make knowledge claims, how they construct reality, and how they make sense of their experiences.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Are journalists finding themselves in an existential crisis amid a flurry of criticism? This appears to be the case based on perspectives presented by the academy (Skovsgaard, 2014; Zelizer, 2003, 2009, 2017), the industry (Perreaudin, 2018; Viner, 2017; Greenslade, 2009; Davies & Hill, 2009), and the public (Ipsos-Mori, 2016). The rise of social media has been a boon and a bane for journalism practice (Tandoc, 2014). While it allows for instantaneous feedback it has also led to anonymised bullying. The profession and its practice in the UK are under scrutiny because of incidents, such as the phone hacking scandal and public criticisms in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire. These more recent incidents have contributed to challenges to the trustworthiness of journalists (Perreaudin, 2018). Such challenges require further critical interrogation of journalism practice with respect to what journalists think they do in their professional work lives. Online journalism and social media have had a major impact on contemporary journalism practice. This impact is quite relevant when attempting to comprehend what is considered journalism practice and how the public communicates with the press (Gulyas, 2013).

News aggregators allow readers to subscribe to news that is of interest to them or that resonates with their worldviews. Consequently, there is a shift in the flow of information from journalists to readers (Singer, 2009; Canter, 2013, 2014). The role of the journalist as a gatekeeper has changed to one of being a verifier of information (Canter, 2014). An examination of editorial job postings shows that titles, such as "print" or "broadcast" journalists, no longer exist. In this climate of technological advancements, employers are looking for "digital", "online", or "multimedia" journalists who are knowledgeable of social media and can quickly grasp public opinion and trends. This change has impacted the landscape of practice because

journalists must reflect and understand how contemporary trends affect their practice (Singer, 2009; Canter, 2014; Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016).

The chasm between the press and the public has shown that perceptions of journalism have not changed. The coverages of the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 were examples of this chasm. As such, both the public and journalists acknowledge that journalists must make it a priority to re-engage with their readers (Ipsos-Mori, 2016; Viner, 2017). Consequently, it is important to conduct research to understand journalism practice from the perspectives of journalists in the field because, like the public who are concerned with the press, so are researchers. Örnebring (2009) argues that journalists understanding their profession is in decline. His argument aligns with those of other scholars such as Greenslade (2004), Lloyd (2005), Marr (2005), and Davies (2011). Örnebring reinforces the need to pay attention to these concerns because he perceives that journalists, who believe that their profession is in decline, provide insights into how they define their roles and their understanding of those roles. Such insights result from journalists' reflections on their professional lives.

In this chapter, I address several aspects of my research to provide insight into my approach in this study. Firstly, I define my research parameters with respect to what is a "journalist" within the scope of this research and differentiate between regional and national journalists. I then discuss my conceptual framework comprising my assumptions, expectations, and beliefs that guide this research. Then, I present my research question, supporting research questions, aims, and objectives. Following this section, I discuss the importance of my study and gaps in the literature. From there, I lay out my research method and methodology and explain some terms and expressions in my thesis. Finally, I present the structure of my thesis.

1.1 Research parameters

I begin by defining who is a journalist, the differences between regional and national journalism, and providing a definition of freelance journalism. A more detailed discussion will ensue under the terms and expression section later in this chapter. It is important that I set these parameters because they underpin the context and participant selection of this research which is on print and multimedia journalists in the UK. Also, these parameters contain nuances and factors that add layers of context to what it means to be a journalist. For example, there are marked differences between multimedia journalists who have print or broadcast backgrounds. The professional outlook of a regional journalist can be significantly different from that of a national journalist (Kaniss, 1991; Greenslade, 2009). While a regional journalist may consider sensitivity and the community first, a national journalist would gather and construct news with public interest in mind, while employing assertive practices (Colbran, 2017; Mellado & Lagos, 2014; Ostini & Fung, 2004). Furthermore, the ways in which a freelance journalist conceptualises factors that influence their practice can be quite different from those of a full-time newsroom journalist.

Who is a journalist?

It is challenging to define who is a journalist in journalism research given the various perspectives available. Ugland and Henderson (2007) argue that people tend to present their perspective as universal without considering exceptions to the rule. Black (2010) adds that the conception of who can be a journalist has changed from the days when journalists worked in newsrooms. Today's journalists include freelancers who write for a variety of publications, videographers, and even late-night comedians who provide commentary on the news. Purists tend to view journalists as only highly

moral professionals. However, there are many ways of delineating who is a journalist along ethical, technological, and performance lines. In the digital age, the lines have been blurred further. Fulton (2015) argues that those who work in traditional media tend to refer to themselves as journalists while those who have moved into digital media from other professions reserve caution about calling themselves journalists. Fulton adds that defining journalists depends on how people view the work they do. I align with these researchers in arguing that defining journalism is contextual and an ongoing debate.

The participants in this research represent regional, national, freelance, broadcast, and business-to-business areas of journalism. Therefore, in my study, I make certain assumptions about who is a journalist. As such, I define a journalist as someone who socially constructs (Vasterman, 2005) news events and information, is influenced by newsroom ideology (Breed, 1955), and whose outputs are customised for a target audience that aligns with the organisation's ideology (Hjarvard, 2001). Furthermore, a defining characteristic of journalists includes the working environment of the journalist in a multimedia platform because employers prefer employees with multimedia skills to work in media. While most of the research participants in this study are or were multimedia journalists, many of them identify as print journalists.

I focused on participants who have had a print background because print is the oldest medium. It is synonymous with journalism scandals, such as the phone hacking scandal which led to scrutiny of national newspaper practices. Also, as I was once a print-multimedia journalist, I would be able to understand my participants' worldviews during analysis of their interviews. As such, my research would provide greater insights into my own understanding of my journalism practice while informing journalists about the experiences of their peers from a philosophical perspective.

In some research, it appears that newer journalists embrace digital platforms compared to their senior colleagues (Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016; Grubenmann & Meckel, 2017). However, older journalists have voiced concerns that they have difficulties adjusting because their roles have changed from being gatekeepers to that of verifiers (Canter, 2014; Singer, 2010). Therefore, changes in the way journalists are asked to practise have deeper impacts on professional identity.

Regional versus national press versus freelancers

Journalists who represent the regional press, national press, and freelance practitioners have professional identities that define their roles in journalism. The regional newsgroups produce news that serves the community (Kaniss, 1991) by informing, representing, campaigning, and interrogating as suggested by Greenslade (2009). Informing refers to educating the public about events in their community on new developments with local governments, new businesses, and new health care facilities. Greenslade argued that representation could be construed as news in a reverse flow where it is the public that is informing the press through letters to the editor or community listings. Campaigning would refer to the newsgroup taking up issues the public feel is important. Unlike national levels where the elites or editorial agenda dictate news coverage on issues that impact people (Greenslade, 2009), the regional journalists afford people a more direct role in the news flow.

While regional journalism focuses on community building (Elliott & Ozar, 2010), some researchers, such as Franklin (2005), criticised it for forgoing responsibility to preserve grassroots democracy. He perceived it as a pursuit for maximised revenue streams. One of the hardest hit sectors during the downward cycle of newspaper journalism has been the regional press (Barnett, 2009). The

establishment of free classified advertising websites, such as Craigslist or Gumtree, has had a negative impact on newspapers' advertising streams. The result has been a significant number of redundancies in regional newsrooms, which has caught the attention of the government.

This led to the creation of the Cairncross Inquiry that aimed to create a sustainable future for regional journalism. Dame Cairncross recommended that public funds should be allocated to help finance journalistic initiatives to ensure the continued success of regional journalism. Cairncross (2019) recommended that these subsidies be used to create sustainable and viable online business models and to help preserve investigative and democratic journalism.

A key part of the Cairncross Inquiry into the journalism was focussed on helping to facilitate grassroots democratic coverage, specifically related to court reporting. While courts must lay out justice, they must be seen to do so, which is the role of journalists in the courtroom (Townend, 2020). However, the presence of journalists in the courtroom has declined in recent years. The government has accepted the report and committed to funding news innovation (Townend, 2020). However, the review was not without its critics who felt that the review was meant to divert people from the cancellation of Leveson 2, which would have examined the criminal activities related to phone hacking (Cathcart, 2020). Cathcart was critical of Baroness Nicky Morgan's decision to reject the creation of the Institute for Public Interest News. Citing Morgan's rejection of the institute on the grounds of infringement on freedom of the press, Cathcart points out that Dame Cairncross had explicitly outlined that any institute should have "complete freedom from any obligations, political or commercial (Cathcart, 2020, p. 2).

By contrast, national practice is often associated with more critical interrogation of institutional structures as evidenced by *The Telegraph's* MP Expenses exposé. It is also known for egregious practices such as the phone hacking scandal. Barnett (2009) argues that national news organisations are driven by national and international interests. National media often takes a more critical and/or sensationalist approach to social issues, governance, accountability, and public interest (Deuze & Paulussen, 2002) and the Fourth Estate of accountability (Hampton, 2010). The national press is also under pressure to create compelling content that generates income which can lead to more sensational and ethically compromising content (Frost, 2019; Davies, 2014a).

Freelance journalism was once considered a stigma (Gollmitzer, 2014). However, the number of freelance journalists is growing because of the rising number of digital media where there is more flexibility of practice (Holton, 2016; Gollmitzer, 2014). A key reason for this change in basic assumptions is also due to the relevance of the medium and its ability to challenge old business models (Holton, 2016; Cohen, 2015). Freelance journalists can balance normative professional practice with the flexibility of media entrepreneurship to position themselves as part of a professional outlook in which the lines between news producers and news users are being blurred (Holton, 2016)

Identifying the differences among regional journalists, national journalists, and freelance journalists provides perspectives with respect to how they make sense of their practice. It explains why some journalists have more measured views at the regional level and more critical views at the national level. The role of the freelance journalists accentuates their perspectives in terms of their practice compared to those journalists who work in newsrooms.

1.2 Conceptual framework

My conceptual framework provides an outline of my assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and the variables that inform my research process (Maxwell, 2014; Miles and Huberman, 1994). I drew from existing literature and my familiarity with the profession of journalism as I formulated my overarching research question, my supporting research questions, and my objectives in this study. I explored the literature on public interest and the Fourth Estate to gain insight into the significant role of motivation among journalists in western democratic society to which the UK belongs (Deuze, 2005; Hampton, 2010; Donsbach & Patterson, 2010). As such, I begin this section with issues in journalism from the perspectives of journalists.

Journalism issues — journalists' perspective

In this section, I explore factors, such as public interest, the Fourth Estate, and journalism ethics to present issues within the profession that I believe would shed light on journalism practice.

The public interest

In the UK, public interest is informed by the Public Interest Defences Act 1998, which was designed to protect whistleblowers. While some researchers point out that public interest is a key motivation of journalism practice (Donsbach & Patterson, 2010; Deuze, 2005), there is evidence that journalists do not have a robust comprehension of how to apply public interest in their profession (Morrison & Svennevig, 2002). When the public interest was first defined by the forerunning print regulator, the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), the Editors' Code of Practice outlined three public interest defences: To detect crime, to protect health and safety, and to expose hypocrisy. It was evident that Clause 3 (exposing hypocrisy) was vague

because it did not define hypocrisy. A lack of a definitive set of rules for public interest has led to liberal interpretations and some of the problems that were explored by the Leveson Inquiry. Petley (2012) argues that the public interest defences in the Editors' Code of Practice during the PCC era were hard to define as evidenced by the PCC's chair telling a parliamentary commission in 2007 that there can never be an objective reality for public interest. However, one of the ways forward has been IPSO's (2016) amendments to public interest in the Editors' code.

In 2016, IPSO amended its code by expanding the public interest defences list from three to 11 items (See Appendix G). The emphasis here was on defining hypocrisy and establishing that there is a public interest in freedom of expression. This delineation of public interest addresses some of Morrison and Svennevig's (2002) concerns about the ambiguity of public interest. Some have attempted to conceptualise public interest as interests of the community outweighing the inconvenience of the individual. That is, it should benefit society, and the free flow of information should be prioritised over the control of information (Brock, 2013).

Public interest is a significant concept to consider in this research because it forms the basis of why journalists practise journalism. Deuze (2005) identifies public interest as an ideological characteristic of journalists to defend their practice in democratic countries. It was also significant to the Leveson Inquiry and was part of the foundation of the inquiry when Lord Justice Leveson argued that public interest should be information of interest to the public rather than what the public was interested in consuming.

The Fourth Estate

The 17th century Irish philosopher, Edmund Burke coined the term, "The Fourth Estate" during a debate about allowing the press to report on parliament. He

was credited for coining this expression by the 18th century British historian Thomas Carlyle (Schultz, 1998). Post Second World War research attempted to juxtapose journalism practice with political models (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956). They categorise the UK journalism model as libertarian because of journalists' ability to hold agential structures accountable for their actions. Later research on the Fourth Estate equate it to a negotiation between the press and taxpayers. (Hampton, 2010).

From Hampton's assessment of Fourth Estate, it is possible to align the Fourth Estate to public interest. Much of the expanded defences IPSO introduced in 2016 referred to this concept directly. Several of the newly defined types of hypocrisy in IPSO's Editors' Code of Practice's public interest defence align with the Fourth Estate. Some of these are the miscarriage of justice, misrepresentation, and not fulfilling mandates (IPSO, 2016). This alignment between the Fourth Estate and the public interest means that the Fourth Estate is an important part of the inquiry process to understand how journalists make sense of their roles

Journalism ethics

A key consideration in the daily practice of journalists is ethics. Journalism ethics is treated as a separate factor because journalists use it to defend themselves while readers use ethics to criticise journalists. Research in this area often begins with linking journalism ethics to ethics in society and morality codes. Frost (2016) pointed out that ethics and morality are informed by three structures: religion, society, and self. Through religion, codes are passed from Gods to the people through prophets who outline how to live a virtuous life with rewards in the afterlife. Societal codes are taught by parents, teachers, and other educators to children as a way of building a framework for a good life. Frost argues that the self also informs morality because people want to do the right thing, which is evidenced by the ability to differentiate between right and wrong.

From the perspective of journalism practice, Frost (2019) recommends that a conscientious effort should be made by journalists at the trainee level. That journalists should embody ethical practices by learning to resist pressure to act unethically and set an ethical career path. He cited the newsroom pressure to produce content that sells newspapers as a cause for unethical practice, as was the case at *News of the World* and other publications accused in the phone hacking scandal. This was supported in Nick Davies' 2014 book *Hack Attack* in which Davies referred to a toxic newsroom culture, especially at the tabloid newspapers, that created undue pressure on journalists to produce sensational content.

Frost (2019) posits that the trainee period is a delicate time in the shaping of a journalist. He argues that youth and inexperience could lead to trainees' need to impress their senior colleagues. It is these behaviours that could lead to unethical practice due to the development of a "macho style" of journalism early in a career.

Instead, Frost advocates that best practices and understanding journalism practice are tools for creating a good journalist. He points out that the public wants well-written stories that provide verifiable information. Unethical practices do a disservice to the reader and devalues freedom of the press. Despite these observations, unethical practices have occurred and continue to be carried out in the profession.

A history of journalism ethics and trust

Issues of trust between journalists and the public have existed since the advent of tabloids. Although an Ipsos-Mori poll of the most trusted professions in the UK in 2016 positioned journalists in the bottom third of the list, mistrust can be traced further into history to the relaunch of *The Daily Mirror.* After the failure of *The Daily Mirror* as a newspaper "for women by women", it was redesigned to become the first UK newspaper to incorporate photography with news stories (Bromley, 2003; BBC4, 2007). The result was the creation of a newspaper that was more sensational as photojournalists began hiding in bushes to take candid photographs of public figures and disguising camera equipment within clothing to take photographs surreptitiously, which led to a growing mistrust of journalists (Bromley, 2003).

One of the most well-documented cases of intrusion into the privacy of public figures has been the media versus Princess Diana. She was followed by journalists from early on in her public life (BBC4, 2007). The result of this hounding by reporters was the fatal crash in 1997 that killed the Princess as she was escaping from paparazzi. Very recently, it came to light that the Princess' 1996 interview with the BBC's Martin Bashir was based on manipulation and coercion (Gillett, 2021). Allegations of forged bank accounts had come to light in recent months. Although this was a broadcaster at the centre of an ethics controversy, it was still evidence of endemic breaches of ethical practice associated with the UK's press.

Phone hacking and the Leveson Inquiry

In the mid-2000s, *News of the World* published the Blackadder Column which reported on, among many celebrity-related issues, the British Royal Family. Two short, innocuous news stories, which would have appeared as benign to the public, raised concerns among the Royal Family. Both stories focussed on Prince William. The first was that he had been injured and could not participate in a military drill. The second was a story that the Prince had borrowed recording equipment from ITV. The details in these two stories contained information privy to only the Prince and his inner circle. A police investigation revealed that Royal Editor Clive Goodman and private investigator Glenn Mulcaire had hacked into mobile phones belonging to Prince William's staff members. Following their arrests and trials, Goodman was sent to prison for four months, while Mulcaire was sentenced to six months in prison. Andy Coulson, the editor at that time, dismissed the incident as the work of one rogue reporter (Davies, 2009).

A few years later, *The Guardian* published a series of articles that suggested that the phone hacking was not the work of one rogue reporter. The articles revealed that it was a normative practice at Fleet Street tabloid newspapers (Davies, 2009). However, public outrage was not enough to cause change until *The Guardian* alleged that in 2002, newspaper journalists had tapped into the mobile phone belonging to a missing schoolgirl named Millie Dowler (Davies & Hill, 2011). The article alleged that, not only was the account hacked, but messages were deleted. Although the allegations were never proved, the damage was done. Reeves (2015) argued that the public had become outraged because the press was using the same lens reserved for public figures to invade the privacy of the public. As a result, Prime Minister David

Cameron called for an inquiry into the culture, practices, and ethics of the press in the summer of 2011 which was led by Lord Justice Brian Leveson.

The Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices, and ethics of the press

The UK has one of the most venerated, but often-criticised press corps in the world. Journalists have been responsible for major investigations, such as the UK MP expenses scandal (The Telegraph, 2009). However, they have also been guilty of egregious breaches of standards, such as the 2005 phone hacking scandal in which members of the tabloid press invaded the privacy of celebrities and families of crime victims (Davies & Hill 2011; Davies, 2009). During the early days of the inquiry, *News of the World* closed its doors permanently. The Press Complaints Commission was disbanded as the official press regulator at the start of the inquiry as well. During the inquiry, Lord Justice Brian Leveson heard testimony from 700 participants, including journalists, celebrities, and the public. His key recommendation was for the creation of a press regulator with statutory underpinnings like Ofcom, which oversees the broadcast sector. However, publishers opposed this recommendation and proposed their own regulator, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), which has been in operation since September 2014. The three parties in power at the time agreed to a Royal Charter that would create a Press Recognition Panel whose mandate would be to approve an officially recognised press regulator (Lloyd, 2015). However, regulation of print-online journalism remains fragmented in the UK.

Creation of IPSO and Impress as new press regulators

Publishers felt that state influence on regulation could become a tool to control the press in the future. As the government moved ahead with the Royal Charter, a non-partisan Press Recognition Panel was created. Concurrently, publishers created a new regulator, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), which a significant number of print and online publications across the UK recognised as the new press regulator. Publications, such as *Financial Times, The Independent, London Evening Standard,* and *The Guardian,* do not recognise IPSO as the regulator and have set up in-house regulatory bodies. While IPSO's first board included controversial figures, such as former *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre, more recent iterations of the board (IPSO, 2019) feature a mix of journalists, members of the legal profession, and members of academia. This marks a departure from the PCC which did not feature as diverse a representation of board members (Leveson, 2012).

Initially, the regulator adopted the Editors' Code of Practice and Public Interest defences that the PCC had used in its adjudication of complaints. But IPSO's opponents accused the new regulator of being the PCC with a new name (Gribbon 2014). IPSO has evolved by implementing accountability measures that did not exist under PCC's mandate (IPSO, 2016). These are:

- Allowing for third-party complaints: Complainants no longer must be the affected individuals. Anyone could lodge a complaint with IPSO if they felt the publication of a story could impact someone negatively.
- Encouraging offending publications to print apologies in more prominent areas of a publication or website: There was a tendency in the pre-Leveson era to publish apologies deep in newspapers, which is known as "burying".
- Levelling financial penalties against the worst offenders in which financial rewards up to £1 million could be ordered in more damaging cases.
- Creating a whistle-blower hotline for journalists who believe they are pressured or coerced into committing unethical practices to meet editorial demands.

At this time, no publication has ever faced a financial penalty. At the beginning of 2016, IPSO amended its Code of Practice and public interest defences. The Code of Practice clarified what is protected within the code and narrowed the scope of defences by conceptualising hypocrisy, which was ambiguously worded in the PCC's version of the code. As it was explored earlier in this section, the ambiguity of the old definition of hypocrisy was problematic and subject to extremely liberal interpretations of the definition. The 2016 amendments also addressed issues of freedom of the press, fair comment, and provided further protection for children.

Unlike other professions, such as medicine and law, where breaches in standards of practice can lead to expulsion from the profession, this is rarely the case in journalism. Beyond extreme cases, such as Jayson Blair and Stephen Glass' faked stories in *The New York Times* and *The New Republic* respectively, expulsion from journalism has been rare. One of the problems Lord Justice Leveson pointed out was that publishers conducted the regulation of the press when the PCC was the regulator (Leveson, 2012).

In October 2016, the Press Recognition Panel appointed Impress as the government-recognised regulator. Despite government warnings and incentives attached to joining the new regulator, such as financial compensation for member publications who could be brought in for adjudication, very few outlets recognise Impress and continue to subscribe to IPSO. One of the key criticisms of Impress was that the late Max Mosley was a key financial supporter of the regulator (Jackson, 2016). Moseley shared an acrimonious relationship with the tabloid press based on salacious material published by some tabloids of his private life. The removal of incentives to join Impress and Moseley's connections has meant that many UK

publications did not join Impress, but preferred to join IPSO or set up in-house complaints processes.

While print (Ipso, Impress, and in-house regulators) and broadcast (Ofcom) have dedicated regulatory boards, there is no dedicated online regulator (Fielden, 2016). Instead, all regulators are tasked with overseeing online publications or those from converged media markets. To address this situation, I align with Deuze's (2008a) definitions of multimedia journalism to explain what I consider to be multimedia or converged media. It is:

- A means of presenting news information in two or more formats: written and spoken, written and video, etc., and;
- The dissemination of news information on two or more platforms: newspaper, website, social media, discussion boards.

Deuze's definition of multimedia content points to a regulation issue because, in their current formats, regulators are aligned to either print or broadcast formats. However, in the practical world, it appears that all regulators in the UK (IPSO, Impress, in-house, and Ofcom) have adjusted their mandates to accommodate a variety of media delivery systems.

Fielden (2016) cited this ambiguity in her research. She argued that making sense of regulation meant being able to understand all regulated media content. She stated that media regulation remains divided because there are different codes for different media. While there is recognition for a more blended regulation code that crosses platforms, the UK government has placed the onus on industry to build a framework that bridges the gap (Fielden, 2016). This reinforces previous calls from academics for a code of conduct to address how digital media can be integrated into existing codes (Singer, 2009).

Recent examples of regulation and criticism

The Manchester Arena attack and the Grenfell Tower fire led to challenges to media practice in the UK in 2017. The public alleged that, in the case of the Manchester attack, journalists pursued interviews with victims' families by any means necessary. There were accusations of incessant harassment by members of the press and incidents were cited in which journalists sought interviews with families before they received death notifications of their loved ones (Perraudin, 2018). Following the attack, Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham commissioned an inquiry into the emergency response, in which the focus of one section was the media's reaction. While the commission praised the local newspaper, *The Manchester Evening News* in its findings, it was critical of other news outlets. One of the recommendations from the report was for IPSO to create ethical guidelines in the Editors' Code of Practice for dealing with trauma journalism (Gore, 2018).

Prior to the Grenfell fire, the residents had been unsuccessful in trying to raise health and safety issues with the media. Consequently, they expressed anger towards the media after the fire because of inaction on their part. One of the most compelling pieces of evidence of their anger was the experience of Channel 4's Jon Snow when he tried to present the news on location (Newman, 2018). Snow later argued that the media's failure to listen to the people showed journalists had "little awareness, contact, or connection with those not of the elite" (Newman, 2018, p9). *The Guardian's* chief editor Katharine Viner echoed this sentiment as she reflected on the mistrust of the public towards the press and challenged journalists to fix the problem by stating: "If journalists become distant from other people's lives, they miss the story, and people don't trust them" (Viner, 2017). Although Hampton (2010) and Deuze (2005) have argued that accountability of public figures is a motivational factor in western

democratic practice, Snow's and Viner's admittance of failure demonstrates that there is a discrepancy between the theorised version of practice and its reality. While western democratic journalism should hold authority to account theoretically, the reality is that the press attempted to do so without consulting the public to understand how the public viewed the actions of authority figures.

Modern history of journalism in the UK has revealed a plethora of unethical practices used by journalists. These unethical practices reinforced suspicion of the public towards the press. As stated earlier in this chapter, a 2016 Ipsos-Mori poll of the most trusted professions in the UK, as rated by the public, positioned journalism in the bottom third of the poll as one of the least trusted professions. This is also reflected in the popular culture portrayals of the media. Films and shows based on factual events, such as *All the President's Men* and *Spotlight*, portray the media as pursuers of truth and justice. They represent the idealised version of the journalist as the hero. However, fictionalised interpretations tend to frame the press as rabid hounds who are more concerned with ambition than the truth.

Journalism issues — external challenges

Utilising the full potential of the internet has proved to be a significant challenge for journalists. The print medium found it challenging to make sense of the digital medium. Print journalism practice remained too rigid to adapt to change (Matheson, 2004). Early research into the transformation of print journalism shows that the outline version was a carbon copy of the print product (Boczkowski, 2004). Although journalists wanted to embrace new technology, they were unsure of how to do so (Matheson, 2004). Turning to online means adopting a different writing style, developing a news instinct that relied less on their ability to judge the news with more

emphasis on the audience's needs, and expanding the scope of what journalism practice means (Tameling & Broersma, 2013).

One of the significant changes in print journalism practice, with respect to social media, has been the journalist's interaction with the audience. In the pre-digital era, if someone disagreed with a story, they were invited to write a letter to the editor that would be published in the Opinion-Editorial section of the newspaper. The advent of social media has changed that interaction because the rapid response associated with it allows readers to respond in Realtime. As such, journalists could receive immediate feedback from the public. While the positive takeaway is that immediate impact can help produce a more effective news package, social media interactions have had profoundly negative impacts for journalists (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008). The privileges of anonymity allowed the public to be more abusive towards reporters (Lewis, 2008, Greenslade, 2014).

Journalists can be better informed through online practices. It is because social media provides an instantaneous feedback that allows journalists to gauge what stories are being consumed and what is being criticised (Larsson, 2011; Deuze & Paulussen, 2002). As such, social media becomes a valuable guide to evaluate the balance of power in the journalist-audience communication equation. The result could be a change in the gatekeeper role of the journalist (Canter, 2014; Singer, 1998) which was strongly associated with journalists' pre-digital identity as gatekeepers of information (White, 1950; Epstein, 1974). Factors, such as a journalist's understanding of readers and the political ideology of the newsroom, informed those gatekeeping decisions (White, 1950). However, with the shift in emphasis on interactive and converged content in digital journalism and the reliance on user generated content, journalists

have had to change their roles to verifiers whereby they engage in fact checking and in gauging reader's response (Canter, 2014; Singer, 1998).

Editors make sense of comments to gauge which stories resonate with the public, and which do not. This action signals a new democratic structure for journalism (Goode, 2009; Bruno, 2011). A key criticism of contemporary practice is that journalists have moved from being watchdogs to being guide dogs. In this way, they are merely directing people to seek information from different sources (Deuze & Paulussen, 2002). Currently, journalists are still viewed as the primary players in the journalistic transaction because of their value-added skills such as offering analytical perspectives (Hermida, 2012). But that model is changing especially in areas where acquiring factual accounts is more difficult. For example, the most reliable source of information on the Syrian Civil War is a citizen journalism blog called the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The blog has become the authority on the war and is recognised as a legitimate source by respected news organisations, such as *The New York Times*. However, it is rare that citizen journalism is regarded as a source.

Despite the benefits of social media, such as improved interaction between the press and the public and a gauge for content development, there are drawbacks. These can be seen as negative effects such as the proliferation of online abuse aimed at journalists. Often, correspondences are abusive and threatening (Greenslade, 2014). Such abuses come from not only members of the public who disagree with what they read, but also from groups with political affiliations who attempt to intimidate journalists and discourage content critical of political groups and ideologies (Bradford, 2019; Green, 2019).

Exploring social media is important in this research because it is a part of the journalism landscape. A part of understanding journalists' contexts and roles would

require exploration of their views on social media, especially the interaction they have with the public. I argue that there is a duality in the journalist-reader relationship. With person-to-person interaction, the relationship would be more civil, but on social media or in the user comment section where the reader is anonymous, the relationship could be more combative on the reader's part and dismissive on the journalist's part.

Corporate impact on newsrooms

The impact of corporate culture on journalism has been felt in three ways. These are the downturn in advertising revenue especially in classified advertising, the redundancies and offers of early retirement to journalists, and the changing of the job requirements and skill sets of journalists with greater emphasis on online practices rather than on newspaper journalism. In this section, I explore how these changes within the corporate culture influence contemporary journalism and why this area is important to my study.

The shift towards digital newsrooms and platforms was challenging as newsrooms had to reduce staff and address shrinking revenue streams due to converge resources. In 2019, more than 2,000 jobs were lost in the print and digital sectors in the UK (Bell, 2019). The UK newsroom workforce was cut by 25 percent between 2008 and 2018 (Grieco, 2019). In 2015, within two months, more than 6,000 journalists lost their jobs at the regional level in the UK (Ponsford, 2015; Grieco, 2019). This significant job loss resulted in the government commissioning an inquiry to examine the future of regional and local journalism. In her recommendations, Dame Frances Cairncross advised the government to support regional news organisations with public funds to preserve democracy at the grassroots level (Cairncross, 2019). While some start-ups such as *Vice*, *Buzzfeed*, and *Huffington Post* have flourished online, digital start-ups have not provided more opportunities for unemployed journalists. Cederwall (2019) argues that in the 10 years between 2007 and 2017, 32,000 journalists in the U.S. lost their jobs, but start-ups only created 6,000 jobs.

One reason for the downturn in the profession of journalism in the UK was the £1-billion loss in revenue between 2011 and 2019 (Southern, 2017). Southern identified 2016 as one of the worst years with the shuttering of Trinity Mirror's *New*

Day and the full-time shift of *The Independent* to an online platform. At the same time, he pointed out that advertising revenue from popular, display, and classified advertising in 2014 was more than £1 billion. The creation of free or almost-free online classified advertising websites, such as Craigslist, Gumtree, and eBay, forced publishers to direct resources into digital platforms to compete in the online market (Fenton, 2011). As such, there was a rapid expansion of space in the digital world, an instantaneous delivery system for information, and a much heavier workload for journalists due to a downsizing of newsroom staff (Fenton, 2011).

Southern (2017) also projected a further £500-million loss in revenue in 2019. Despite Fenton's (2011) analysis of a full-time investment by publishers into online advertising streams, Southern's (2017) figures show that projected revenue over a five-year period would not compensate for the losses. His model showed a projected loss in revenue of about £214 million in 2014 which would increase to £227 million in five years. While losses in paper revenue fell by as much as 50 percent, the increase in digital revenue was small. Pressure to maximise profits has caused publishers to change the journalism landscape so that they now expect journalists to have a different set of skills. This change in the journalism landscape aligns with Nikunen's (2014) findings that correlate journalism identity to practice. As he argues, changes in practice have an impact on identity and the values of the profession.

This change in mandate and the subsequent downsizing of newsrooms pose two problems for journalism. These are fewer journalists are doing more work because the workload has not changed despite fewer people being in the newsroom, and a deskilling, reskilling, and upskilling of journalism practice. In her research on the convergence of *The Montreal Gazette* and *La Presse* newsrooms in Montreal, Lynch (2014) found that one of the challenges journalists faced was trying to cope because,

although many journalists were made redundant, the workload remained the same. That is, fewer journalists had to cover the full workload. As a result, journalists felt helpless and overwhelmed since they believed that they could not conduct their own work. Journalists felt that they were doing a disservice to their profession because they could no longer focus their attention on areas that were important to their practice. In support, Bromley (2003) and Deuze (2008b) observed a similar trend in the U.S. and European newsrooms.

Similarly, deskilling, reskilling, and upskilling of journalism practice has had a profound impact on the professional identity of journalists. As such, "print" or "broadcast" journalists no longer exist because hiring advertisements call for "multimedia" or "digital" journalists (Hold the Front Page, 2019). The new role of the journalist requires them to produce content across different platforms, which implies the development of new skills. The move to digital journalism also appeared to be a time to cull senior staff. Nikunen (2014) pointed out that offering retirement packages as a means of reducing newsroom numbers indicated to older journalists that they had lost their professional identity as their employers favoured a digital mandate. Nikunen referred to this trend as a deskilling of a group of journalists who were close to retirement age.

Researchers differed on how reskilling has impacted journalism. Brø, Hansen and Andersson (2016) observed that Norwegian journalists in a converged newsroom felt more empowered and more autonomous than they previously did. Similarly, Nygren (2014) viewed the digital shift, not as an example of deskilling, but reskilling or upskilling because he felt the new media platform allowed journalists to become more flexible in their practice. Yet, Nikunen argued that Finnish journalists were overwhelmed because of the change in their journalism skills and understanding of

sourcing information. Some other researchers argued that reskilling and deskilling measures have changed the journalist's role from gatekeeper to verifier (Canter, 2014; Singer, 2008, 2009) and a new skill set was needed to satisfy job requirements (Reinardy, 2010).

Nikunen, Canter, Singer and Reinardy had views that were different from those of Brø, Hansen and Andersson's (2018) and Nygren's (2014). The views are that journalists feel conflicted by shifts to convergent newsrooms. This is because journalists' perceptions of what it means to be a journalist have changed due to the requirement of having to learn new skills to conduct everyday work. This is not to say that journalists reject digital platforms, but they are still trying to make sense of how to be effective journalists in the medium. The difference between the views could be accounted for by perspectives. While Brø, Hansen and Andersson, and Nygren saw opportunity for increased autonomy, Nikunen and others saw convergence as an opportunity to remove older journalists who may not adapt as easily to a digital newsroom.

Trauma journalism and ethical considerations

Although it is an ethically challenging practice, trauma journalism ticks many boxes because the information tends to hold high news value. Brayne (2007) states that trauma journalism is at the centre of news because it magnifies the human condition, and he defines trauma as:

> "Any event to which a person is connected, that is unexpected, outside that person's usual range of human experience, and that involves some form of loss, injury or threat of injury, whether actual or perceived" (Brayne, 2007, p. 2).

In the landscape of modern journalism, trauma reporting is a main feature of the coverage provided by most news organisations, whether it is news of war, terrorism,

personal tragedy, or death. This practice is problematic because of the ethical implications associated with it from the public's and journalists' perspectives. In the aftermath of the 2017 Manchester Arena attack, the public criticised journalists for invading privacy, misrepresenting themselves, and pressuring families of victims to tell their stories. However, people expect certain information to be disseminated in the aftermath of tragedy, such as names, identity, and details of the incident.

An extreme example from the journalists' perspective was the case of Kevin Carter. He was a South African photojournalist who took a photograph of a weak Sudanese baby who had collapsed with a vulture sitting in the background. The photograph won a Pulitzer Prize in 1994, but Carter committed suicide shortly after. It is evident that although trauma journalism is an important part of journalism practice, the ethical implications must be considered (Keats & Buchanan, 2013; Brayne, 2007). While these examples are extreme due to the nature of the assignments, bereavement journalism is a common assignment that journalists are commissioned to do.

Castle (1999) argues that the practice of "death knock journalism" is the most undesirable but necessary assignment. He points out that such an assignment is sometimes used to indoctrinate new journalists into the newsroom and a means of evaluating how a new reporter handles his or herself when faced with interviewing people in their most vulnerable state. While this is one of the functions of the death knock assignment, it has more practical implications for society. As Duncan (2012) argues, reporting on death serves two functions. Firstly, it is a chance for the family to construct a narrative as part of the grieving process, and secondly, it allows the audience to reflect upon death.

Bereavement journalism is controversial and problematic for two reasons. Firstly, journalists receive little training on how to conduct a bereavement interview (Duncan & Newton, 2010). Duncan and Newton argue against using bereavement journalism as a training tool for new journalists because such practices require experienced journalists who understand their commitment to society, the implications of invasion of privacy, and how to show consideration for the family. Secondly, assignments on death knocks are controversial and unwelcomed due to the stress associated with the practice (Duncan & Newton, 2010). A part of that stress is the unpredictable nature of how people express grief (Gilbert, 1995). Unlike more conventional assignments whereby the journalist has an idea of how the assignment will unfold, bereavement journalism is devoid of such ideas because the journalist cannot anticipate how the person at the door will react to their presence. From a regulatory perspective, IPSO has outlined several clauses to act as guidelines for bereavement journalism. The latest iteration of IPSO's Editors' Code of Practice includes clauses on privacy (Clause 2), harassment (Clause 3), intrusion into grief or shock (Clause 4), and in applicable cases, reporting on suicide (Clause 5).

1.3 Research questions, aims, and objectives.

My overarching research question is:

How are UK journalists navigating their contemporary landscape amid ongoing challenges to their practice?

There can be three approaches into journalism research. These are theoretical, observational, or experiential. Theoretical approaches can focus on building theories to apply to research into journalism (Örnebring, 2009; Hanitzsch, 2007, Deuze, 2005) or on understanding practice from sociological perspectives (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956). Observational approaches focus on widespread

use of ethnography to provide insight into journalism (White, 1950; Breed, 1955; Tuchman 1973; Epstein, 1974; Altheide, 1976; Schlesinger, 1978). Recently, as journalists began to enter academia the more experiential approaches, such as interviewing journalists, gained traction (Zelizer, 1993a, 1993b, 1997, 2017; Schultz, 2007; Grubenmann & Meckel, 2017). My approach in this study is experiential because I, as the researcher, am an insider-turned researcher since I have 16 years' experience as a Canadian journalist. My research question then, may shed light on the experiences of journalists within the current landscape of journalism.

I felt compelled to explore several aspects of the practice of journalism to address my overarching research question. These aspects of journalism practice guided me as I formulated my supporting research questions. I address my findings from these supporting research questions in the three analytical chapters (Chapters 4 to 6). I hope to gain insight into how journalists make sense of practice and its context in everyday life from these overarching research questions. I felt it would be imperative to understand what journalists believed that they did, how they responded to ethically challenging assignments in their daily work lives, and how they perceived external obstacles in their efforts to practise journalism.

Therefore, my supporting research questions are:

- How are journalists making sense of their daily professional lives and how do these sense-making apparatuses align to their understanding of journalism practice?
- How do participants view their relationship with readers and how does social media impact that role?
- How do journalists view assignments the public construe as morally challenging and unethical?

To this end, my aims and objectives in this study are:

- Develop an understanding of what it means to be a journalist in the current landscape.
- Understand how digital journalism has impacted practice.
- Demonstrate how journalists use discourse to make sense of their practice.
- Contribute to the robust body of knowledge of journalism research.

In my aim to realise my fourth objective above, I now address the importance of my study and identify gaps in the literature.

1.4 Importance of research and gaps in the literature.

This study is important because it continues a tradition of academic inquiry into journalism practice, journalists' identity, and professionalism. As Harcup (2012) argues, research is important because critical inquiry leads to improved practices in journalism. Örnebing (2009) concurs by asserting that journalism research provides new insights of how journalists understand themselves and their roles in the journalism landscape. This research is important because it puts the journalist at the centre of the inquiry and puts the onus on the journalist to explore and reflect upon their context, roles, and professionalism. Significant challenges in the past decade, such as increased public mistrust and populism's use of discrediting measures to challenge news critical of leaders' actions, mean that it is an opportune time to offer new perspective on journalism based on the experiences of journalists.

I will further explore the history of research into journalism practice and identity in the next chapter. Several gaps exist in the literature on this phenomenon of the practice of journalism. These gaps include:

- Demonstrating if an existential crisis exists among journalists;
- Presenting a better understanding of how Wenger's (1999) community of practice is used to defend and delineate journalism practice
- Examining the impact social media has had on contemporary journalism practice;

- Presenting how journalists have become further insulated from the public because of online practices, and;
- Contributing to the growing body of research on how journalists make sense of their daily professional lives.

My overarching research question and supporting research questions inform my choice of research methodology and research method which I discuss next.

1.5 Method and methodology

I provide a very brief overview of my method and methodology here which I discuss in detail in Chapter 3. My objective to focus on participants' experiences led me to utilise a research methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology. I needed to analyse my participants' experiences from their perspectives. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach stems from the epistemological stance of social constructionism and an ontological assumption of multiple realities. In other words, how knowledge is conceptualised and contextualised is based on empirical perspectives rather than on theory or one grounded in positivism.

This research explores the different perspectives of journalism practice and professional identity informed by the experiences of journalists in their professional lives. Therefore, the research findings are subject to interpretation and the way in which knowledge claims are being made is based on how each participant views his or her practice and lifeworld. As such, the research method of choice was semi-structured interviews of 19 participants who represented a wide cross-section of the print-digital journalism profession in the UK. While many participants were multimedia journalists who work on a variety of platforms, several of them worked only in print and retired before convergence became a normative journalism approach.

Others worked in business-to-business and broadcast formats. Interview transcripts were then analysed using semantic thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).

1.6 Key terms

Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO): A new press regulator established in September 2014 to replace the Press Complaints Commission (PCC). IPSO initially adopted the PCC's Editors' Code of Practice and public interest defences but has since redefined the code and provided more direction for public interest defences.

Media Convergence: The merging of previously distinct media platforms and technology. In the digital age, many news organisations have brought together their online presence with their physical or broadcast presence to provide a more well-rounded news product.

Fourth Estate: Referred to the press gallery in the 18th century, the Fourth Estate signifies that political power is derived from the relationship between the press and the readers (Hampton, 2010). In democratic societies, the Fourth Estate is the press' ability to hold authority accountable for its actions (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956).

Reskilling: The act of acquiring new skills for everyday work because the work parameters have changed. In journalism, this means the ability to construct news for a variety of platforms.

Legacy media: The term refers to established members of the press such as national and regional publications and broadcasters. This does not include new media, such as cooperative media or citizen journalists.

Identity work: The ways in which people engage in formulating, revising, strengthening, and upholding how they construct their experiences in ways that are productive and distinct to others within their field (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

1.7 Thesis structure and plan

In this section I provide an overview of the structure and layout of my thesis.

- **Chapter 1 Introduction:** Here, I set the scene for this thesis as I laid out my research questions and aims and objectives, and argued why I think this research is important.

- **Chapter 2 Literature Review:** I present an outline of what has been explored and researched in this field. It will establish the body of knowledge and identify gaps in the literature my research aims to fill.

- **Chapter 3 Methodology:** In this chapter, I provide details of my methodological approach. I address how I achieved ethical clearance. I then lay out my research method which includes the research design, data collection instrument creation, participant recruitment process, analytical strategy, theoretical framework, and coding strategy. I then explore my former identity as a journalist and how that influenced my research.

- **Chapter 4: What journalism practice means to participants?** In this first analytical chapter, I explore how participants make sense of their practice from a broad perspective. I will address how my participants make sense of and interpret the public interest, Fourth Estate, and how journalism roles are conceptualised.

- **Chapter 5: Participants' ambivalent relationship with their readers:** here I focus on the dichotomous relationship between participants and the readers. While journalists tend to view the readers as important within democratic contexts of practice, they do not appreciate external criticism of practice from readers.

- **Chapter 6 Navigating morally challenging assignments:** I explore how participants made sense of and defended journalism practice in assignments that are viewed as ethically ambiguous.

- **Chapter 7: Conclusion:** in this final chapter I summarise the data and findings whereby I link the findings to my research questions. I then identify areas for future research. Finally, I reflect on the whole process involved in pursuing my PhD which includes the effectiveness of the data collection method and the analytical framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

One of the aims of this thesis is to contribute to the rich body of journalism research. The fluid nature of journalism makes it important for researchers to interrogate the profession continually. News underpins people's worldviews; therefore, it is important to provide different perspectives on journalism practice (McNair, 2009). Also, as stated at the end of Chapter 1, critical interrogation of journalism means improving practice (Harcup, 2012). People consume news to understand themselves and their world. At a time when there have been monumental shifts in practice and renewed criticism of the press, it is important to examine and understand what journalists have to say about their daily professional lives.

To reiterate, this thesis is driven by the research question: **How are UK journalists navigating their contemporary landscape amid ongoing challenges to their practice?** To address this question, three supporting research questions will be explored:

- How are journalists making sense of their daily professional lives and how do these sense-making apparatuses align to their understanding of journalism practice?
- How do participants view their relationship with readers and how does social media impact that role?
- How do journalists view assignments the public construe as morally challenging and unethical?

To this end, my aims and objectives in this study are:

- Develop an understanding of what it means to be a journalist in the current landscape.
- Understand how digital journalism has impacted practice.
- Demonstrate how journalists use discourse to make sense of their practice.
- Contribute to the robust body of knowledge of journalism research.

This literature review chapter will outline key research that has been conducted in areas of interest to this thesis. These areas have been identified based on the research question and supporting questions. It starts by outlining the journalism and sociological theories that underpin this research. It moves into research that has explored how journalists make knowledge claims and professional justification of practice. This chapter will delve into research into areas that journalists are likely to hold as significant in their profession, such as public interest, the Fourth Estate, and ethical practice. This will lead into an exploration of research in areas of external challenges to journalism, such as downsizing of newsrooms, changing newsroom mandates to accommodate digital journalism, and trauma journalism. The chapter closes by identifying key areas where this thesis will make contributions to knowledge.

2.1 Theories of journalism

Several key theoretical frameworks inform and underpin this research. These are:

- The Libertarian Media Model (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956)
- The Community of Practice (Wenger, 1999)
- Various theories on journalistic metadiscourse (Carlson, 2016; Hanitzsch, 2017, Ekström & Westlund, 2019)

These theoretical models will help to guide this thesis in a variety of ways. The UK media is positioned as being in the libertarian model which means upholding traditions of holding authority figures to account and ensuring the transparency of democratic structures. The second theory, community of practice (Wenger, 1999), helps to account for the ways in which sense-making tools within journalism are discovered within the contexts the journalism community and the key traditions that are upheld as part of the community's shared repertoire of knowledge. The theories

on metadiscourse provide a means of understanding the knowledge claims and other epistemic perspectives that underpin my participants accounts as they make sense of their practice.

Political alignment and journalism practice

Following the Second World War, journalism research shifted scope from examining the newsroom's influence on practice to a broader scope of understanding how political paradigm shifts in the world were influencing journalism. Siebert, Schramm, and Peterson (1956) posited a correlation between journalism practice and government type. The British media model was categorised as an example of the libertarian media model, which upholds the tenets of western democratic society where public accountability forms the cornerstone of practice (Deuze, 2005). Siebert, Schramm, and Peterson argued that libertarian journalistic practice was the end product of their perspective on news publications in western democratic society. However, not all western democratic societies followed the libertarian model as pointed out by Schultz (2007). She argued that Scandinavian nations, which were underpinned by a more socialist democratic ideology, tended to produce more socially responsible journalism.

While Siebert, Schramm and Peterson's (1956) research is considered seminal and remains a key component of the theoretical framing of journalism, it has been criticised for being too idealistic and absent of empirical evidence (Ostini & Fung, 2002). While structure and policy played a significant role in contextualising journalism, the Siebert, Schramm, and Peterson model fell short because it did not consider personal and newsroom ideology (Ostini & Fung, 2002. Ostini and Fung proposed future research must consider political economy, idealism and theory, while balancing individualism as key components to understanding how journalism ought to

be contextualised. Although Ostini and Fung attempt to modernise the Siebert, Schramm, and Peterson model, there is a need to revisit the 1956 model because of significant changes in the political landscape. Research similar to the type of investigation Harcup and O'Neill (2001, 2017) did for news values research is needed to contemporise journalism ideology inquiry. A new gap in the literature has been revealed in the past few years with the rise of populist governments and the challenges to Fourth Estate journalism by leaders who attempt to discredit the media because they do not agree with the content being published about them.

While a significant body of research situates democracy as a cornerstone of journalism practice (Deuze, 2005; Zelizer, 2004; Tomlinson, 1999; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Giddens, 1991), newer research calls for a departure from this argument (Zelizer, 2013). Zelizer argues that the idea of democracy underpinning journalism practice is a western construct and ineffective for more worldwide research. However, this point of view is problematic when exploring the motivations of journalism practice or understanding what journalists say about their everyday roles. Within the context of this thesis, considerations for democracy are fit for purpose because this research's goal is to understand journalism within a specific society that is underpinned by democratic values.

Although journalists tend to align to democratic practices, Knight, Geuze and Gerlis (2008) argued that this was more a theoretical alignment because ideological pressures from senior members of the news organisation's hierarchy have created journalists who are lapdogs of agency rather than the watchdogs. This is evidence of a discrepancy in perception between what journalists think their political role is and how that role is construed by academia and the public. Despite Knight, Geuze and Gerlis' observation, a significant amount of research has been conducted which relates

to the Fourth Estate and the public interest. Within the scope of this research, the ideological belief in practices that are underpinned by democratic practices is important because it accounts for why journalists define their roles in the way they do.

Wenger (1999) Community of Practice

A community of practice is defined as a social system complete with its own language, customs, and traditions. Wenger argues that the community of practice is part of a conceptual framework that allows researchers to understand the social dimensions of a group to envision how that group functions and makes sense of its own existence. Within the community of practice, Wenger states members create a shared repertoire of knowledge based on "words, tools, concepts, methods, stories, documents, links to resources, and other forms of reification" (p. 180). To engage within the social world, Wenger positions newcomers on the periphery of the community and states that they become immersed in the culture as they move towards the centre of the community of practice. To achieve this, new members must:

- Understand the rules of engagement within the community;
- Engage productively by using the tools of the community, and;
- Share the repertoire of knowledge and contribute to the history of learning of the community.

From a journalism research perspective, community of practice theory has been used to explore how sports journalists feel pressured by technology, changes in practice, and changes in mandate (Hutchins & Boyle, 2017). It has also been used to demonstrate how sharing knowledge among online journalists has built a framework for ethical decision making in the Spanish press (Garcia-Avilés, 2014). The theory has also been used to understand how editorial decisions are made in digital newsrooms (Schmitz-Weiss & Domingo, 2010). In each of these cases, researchers used

community of practice theory to demonstrate how journalists made sense of changes in their working environment and present how they believed they adapted to these changes. The community of practice also helps to account for the traditions journalists tend to invoke when asked to make sense of what it means to be a journalist.

Theories of metadiscourse in journalism

While theories of community of practice and motivations for journalistic outputs help to account for the how and why of journalism, another theoretical framework is needed to understand the discourse of journalists. The third theoretical framework that underpins this thesis relates to how journalists use language to describe their lifeworlds and experiences. In other words, how journalists talk about journalism. It takes its lead from the works that explore the epistemic perspectives of journalists (Ekström & Westlund, 2019), the metadiscourses in identity and functions (Hanitzsch, 2017), and metadiscourses in meanings of journalism (Carlson, 2016).

Ekström and Westlund hypothesise that the ways in which journalists make sense of practice includes three approaches: articulated knowledge and truth claims, justifications of practice, and acceptance or rejection of knowledge claims in audience activities. They argue that these three approaches underpin the ways that typify how journalists tend to make sense of their practice by invoking themes from which they can derive meanings in their work. Hanitzsch proposes that discourse used to express journalistic roles is central to understanding how journalism's culture and identity are produced along social constructionist lines. This is where journalists reflect on, struggle, over, preserve, and transform journalistic practices and identities. In his research, Carlson argues that the meanings of journalism — definitions, boundaries, and legitimacy — are discovered in journalistic metadiscourse. Carlson points out that

this perspective does not dismiss how journalists make meaning of practice, but rather how these texts can be used to understand meaning in larger conversations about journalism.

These theories on discourse are fit for this research because they add meaning to the ways in which journalists make sense of practice, delineate their roles, and defend themselves against scrutiny. Since this research is concerned with the socially constructed views of journalism, these theories help to present an understanding of the ways journalists talk about their profession. They are based on an understanding of the cultural meanings, knowledge claims in greater contexts, and defence of practice. Hanitzsch's work suggests journalists delineate their roles based on two levels: role orientation and role performance. Normative and cognitive categorisations exist under role orientation while practised and narrated perspectives underpin reflections on role performance. Normative roles include generalised and collective expectations journalists believe society holds of them. These are generated from journalism's potential impacts within the parameters of practice in democratic societies. Cognitive roles consist of established standards, outlooks, and principles individual journalists embrace based on how they understand their occupation. Hanitzsch argues these roles expose individualist career goals and the objectives they want to achieve through their work. Practised roles refer to the execution of journalism while narrated roles relate to subjective viewpoints on the roles journalists carry out. That is, role performance delineates differences between what journalists ought to do and what they actually do.

Journalism is an interpretive community (Zelizer, 1993; Vasterman, 2005; Carlson, 2016). Research into journalism practice situates news stories as constructions shaped by professional, technological, political, and cultural ideals. As Carlson points out, journalism is a form of knowledge production based on epistemic

views of knowledge and truth claims, common ideologies, and narrative conventions that journalists use to seek legitimacy in their practice. Therefore, a key theoretical framework that underpins this research is one that needs to account for the discursive choices participants would make as they reflect on their daily professional lives.

2.2 The epistemology of journalism practice

This section explores previous research that was concerned with understanding how journalists make knowledge claims and how those claims are justified. It is important to establish that news-making is subject to interpretation based on several factors such as a socially constructed version of reality (Vasterman, 2005), knowledge of audience needs (White, 1950), newsroom ideology (Breed, 1955), and news values (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Research is concerned with understanding how journalists make sense of knowledge because it provides insight into journalism practice and professional identity. Within sense-making communities, strategies exist to direct interpretation, engagement, and communication as evidenced by the early works of White (1950) and Breed (1955). Journalists are governed by concepts that underpin how news is created, selected, and edited (Knight, Geuze & Gerlis, 2008; Schultz, 2007). While appearing to be flexible, these practices are conformist and underpin the news instinct phenomenon (Knight, Geuze & Gerlis, 2008).

Zelizer (1993, 1997, 2009) referred to the double temporal position within journalism that journalists must adopt. By double temporal, Zelizer means journalists must understand what is unfolding from a news perspective and deem it newsworthy first, and then construct the story in a manner that resonates with the audience base. This argument supports Vasterman's (2005) claims that journalism is a product of social construction. In Zelizer's arguments, she made the case that journalism should

be considered as an interpretive community because of its practitioners' use of discourse and interpretations of historical events to contextualise current events. She stated that journalists used past events, such as McCarthyism and Watergate, to reaffirm and legitimise their interpretive communities.

Berkowitz (2018) countered that these shared meanings were not common across journalism, but rather based on how journalists informed themselves of those landmark events. He argued that not all current journalists were practitioners during the McCarthy and Watergate eras, but through the historicity of the coverage of those events, were able to make sense of journalism. It also helped to rationalise and legitimise how current landmark events, such as Princess Diana's death and the September 11 terrorist attacks, allowed journalists to possess a consensual point of reference that represented the profession's shared meanings and values. Having a professional discourse underpinned by how journalists framed landmark events provides the profession with a working framework that underpinned the interpretive nature of journalism (Berkowitz, 2018).

Zelizer (2003) and Berkowitz (2018) were referring to the ways in which journalists interpreted events, which required an examination of how practitioners viewed their roles and conceptualised journalism practice. This was achieved through a construction and analysis of a meta-narrative which is a significant part of what this thesis does to provide data sets for analysis. A key way in which narratives are constructed is to understand daily work, which means examining how journalists know when an event is newsworthy. This is known as having a news instinct or a "nose for news". There are three factors that inform the journalist's knowledge base: news as an interpretive community, news values, and a comprehension of practice.

News instinct in the interpretive community

An extension of socially constructed news worlds is the concept of news instinct which is often referred to as having "a nose for the news". Schultz (2007) explored this concept in an ethnographic study of Danish newsrooms where she accounted for newsrooms decisions by applying Bourdieusian concepts of habitus, doxa, and illusio, to account for hard-to-define practices, such as understanding news values. In her research, Schultz found that editors deemed events newsworthy if they could visualise the event as news and the headline that would accompany the story. Similar to how other people may find it hard to verbalise how they know to do something; journalists may not be able to provide a coherent verbal understanding of how they know an event is newsworthy. Schultz presented this by demonstrating how journalists used phrases such as "hard to define" or "I know it when I see it" when asked to account for their practice. Use of these phrases suggested a reliance on intuition to make sense of day-to-day practices (Schultz, 2007).

Past research (White, 1950; Niblock, 2005 Schultz, 2007; Gravengaard & Rimestad, 2012; Markham, 2012 and Bednarek & Caple, 2014) has explicitly or implicitly explored the concept of the journalistic instinct and its influence on professional identity of journalists. Findings suggested that intuition or instinct could be considered as a contributing factor to the professional identity of journalists. One of the strategies that will be used in this thesis is to pay attention to what journalists emphasise as being important to their practice.

Similarly, Markham (2012) viewed intuition as a means of adding value to the practice of journalism. While Schultz (2007) and Markham (2012) point out that news instinct plays a significant role in determining what is newsworthy, this thesis argues news instinct is based on traditions of journalism practice including as an

understanding of newsworthiness. These findings related to news instinct supported the work Breed (1955) started by focussing on the conformist practices related to journalism. The arguments about gut instinct (Vasterman, 2005; Knight Geuze & Gerlis, 2008; Schultz, 2007) provided significant insight towards the understanding of the news-making process. The argument that can be progressed here is that news instinct is a concept that straddles an understanding of how to produce news based on experience and how conformist practices play a significant role in framing what constitutes news instinct. A key point that past research attempted to make was that several factors go into developing news instinct, such as journalism experience, an understanding of the audience, conformity to newsroom ideology, and an understanding of the news-making process. All of these point towards an emphasis by journalists being placed on the ability to develop an instinct.

Older research into news values and instinct provide insight into how journalists make sense of practice. This is because it allows researchers to understand practice while demonstrating how journalists draw upon traditions of the landscape to elucidate their own practice. An alternative view on news instincts has called on researchers to develop a more holistic view of journalism practice that considers various dynamics. Allern (2002) proposed that news instincts was better understood when researchers considered them to be by-products of traditional practice methods and editorial objectives, as well as commercial practices of the news organisation and its market objectives. In other words, Allern believed that news instincts were the result of news values which were based on traditional methods and objectives. One of the strong points of Allern's (2002) research was that it proposed a holistic view. This thesis aligns with Allern's view that news instinct is one of many parameters that must be considered to understand journalism practice. More emphasis should be placed on

the actual daily activity of journalism methods and objectives. As such, this chapter shifts focus to examine the importance of news values. Understanding news values means incorporating news instinct and traditions associated with journalism practice.

Developing news values

Research revolving around newsworthiness has been a topic that has been the focus of exploration for decades. While some researchers believed news instinct to be more important than news values (Evans, 2000), others believed news values to be a significant part of journalism practice based on routine and working within the framework of a limited knowledge base (Golding & Elliott, 1979). One of the most important bodies of work on news values was the Galtung and Ruge (1965) study to understand how Norwegian journalists selected international news. Unlike White's (1950) research of how journalists at a Midwestern U.S. newspaper selected international news, Galtung and Ruge were concerned about the significance of the incident rather than the journalist's worldview.

Galtung and Ruge (1965) proposed 12 news values that could help make sense of how international news events resonated with a local audience. Of the 12 factors, eight were derived from the psychology of perception and the other four from cultural factors (Westerstahl & Johansson, 1994). Their research was based on three major conflicts of the day in the Congo, Cuba, and Cyprus. Galtung and Ruge's proposed values were frequency; threshold; unambiguity; meaningfulness; consonance; unexpectedness; continuity; composition; references to elite nations; references to elite people; references to people, and; reference to something unexpected.

The Galtung and Ruge research has been recognised for decades as one of the foremost studies of news values and the news-making process (Tunstall, 1971;

McQuail, 1994; Bell, 1991). It forms the theoretical framework for UNESCO's policy for the development of journalism practice in emerging markets (UNESCO, 1980). While it is recognised for its merits, it has been criticised because the model is too limited (Tunstall, 1971), assumes there is a fixed reality (McQuail, 1994), and largely ignores a more subjective understanding of the construction of news (Hjarvard, 2001). The model focussed too much on conflicts and not enough on more benign events that make up the bulk of news coverage on a daily basis (Tunstall, 1971). Tunstall's argument was that war was always an event worthy of significant prominence among the world's press, therefore, it would not serve as a robust evaluator for the proposed news values checklist.

McQuail argued that the model was reliant on an idea that the social world was based on a generally accepted reality which newsmakers would either have to acknowledge or ignore. This perspective would be a paradox to other previous work that had established other parameters, such as the interpretation of the events based on an understanding of the world (White, 1950) or the role of a newsroom ideology on the news (Breed, 1955). Hjarvard argued that the research did not take other parameters, such as platform of delivery, audience, or the political ideology of the outlet, into consideration. That is, the dynamics of a newsroom were omitted to create a theoretical model based on an assumption that all newsrooms thought the same way and all news audiences believed in the same things.

Another criticism of Galtung and Ruge's news values was that it did not account for events that could be classified as hype rather than news (Vasterman, 2005). Vasterman conceptualised hype as events that were based on speculation and not fact. More contemporary examples of this would be conspiracies and unrealistically extrapolated events announced by the American president in recent years, such as

refugee caravans converging on the U.S. border that never came to fruition or alarmist theories of immigrants overrunning the UK if Brexit was not completed. In Vasterman's assessment, news values could not account for the inclusion of these in news line-ups because they are informed by social constructionism of news which has been informed by ideology.

While Galtung and Ruge (1965) lay the groundwork for exploration into journalism practice, it has been revisited to see how applicable it is in a contemporary climate (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017; Caple & Bednarek, 2013, 2016). The main difference in the contemporary re-examinations was that Harcup and O'Neill wanted to evaluate the relevancy of Galtung and Ruge amid profound technological impacts on journalism with the dawning of digital media and, later, social media. Caple and Bednarek's research were more focussed on how linguistic analytical strategies impact news values and what perspectives these methods could have on journalism research.

Despite Galtung and Ruge's research being more than 55 years old, contemporary researchers still re-visit this old study to see if it is applicable in today's landscape (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017; Caple & Bednarek, 2013, 2016). Eilders (2006) pointed to a resurgence in news values research from a cognitive psychology frame of reference because researchers were interested in how news was conceptualised by journalists and how the audience processed the information. One of the findings of the first paper (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001) was that the Galtung and Ruge research had methodological problems because it did not define what could be an unambiguous event or what is meant by negative news. In their 2017 study, Harcup and O'Neill reasoned that ideology, economic factors, and cultural impressions should be part of the news values consideration. Harcup and O'Neill's (2001) research addressed Tunstall's (1971) criticisms of Galtung and Ruge especially by addressing

day-to-day news coverage as part of the news values study. It also aligned with arguments that much of what was considered newsworthy were not really events but manufactured events that offered free advertisement or public relation spin (Curran & Seaton, 2002). Harcup and O'Neill challenged that Galtung and Ruge's research should be questioned rather than accepted without critical evaluation.

A part of the landscape of journalism practice is the development of a news instinct as the above research has demonstrated. A research gap this thesis fills is to provide an understanding of how news values can be used to defend practice. This perspective is closer to the Harcup & O'Neill (2001, 2017) perspectives which include components of practice that are acknowledged by journalists, such as exclusivity, interactivity, and share-ability.

Understanding practice within the work environment

While the early theoretical and practical research provided starting points for journalism practice investigations, authentic insight into the working lives of journalists did not begin until the ethnographic newsroom studies in the U.S. and UK (Reese, 2016). Several key ethnographic studies in the U.S. and the UK formed what Stonbely (2015) termed as the cornerstone of journalism studies. Inquiries, such as *Making News* (Tuchman, 1973), *News from Nowhere* (Epstein, 1974), *Deciding What's News* (Gans, 2004), *Manufacturing the News (*Fishman, 1980), and *Creating Reality* (Altheide, 1976), underpinned American journalism research. Schlesinger's (1978) research on BBC journalists and the Glasgow Media Group's (1976, 1978, 1982) works underpinned the British academy of journalism studies. These works represented a foray by researchers into field study as opposed to analysing news text or conducting theoretical examinations of journalism practice.

Researchers gained access to editorial meetings to witness how senior staff planned newspaper coverage and broadcast line-ups. This new data set gave academics insight into the working lives of journalists. Data demonstrated how journalists must be adaptable to put aside assignments to focus on breaking news. Brø, Hansen and Anderson (2016) viewed this period of research as a time when researchers could correlate journalism practice to newsroom practice.

The work in the 1970s and 1980s was an extension of the theoretical works of Lippman (1922) and Galtung and Ruge (1965). It was the first foray back into the newsroom since White (1950) and Breed (1955) attempted to gain an understanding of news-making decisions by observing journalists at work as opposed to interviewing them outside the work environment. The latter works were more indicative of research aimed at understanding practice from the journalists' perspectives through a combination of ethnographic observation and reflective interviews.

While time and space played significant roles in determining news values and gatekeeping practices, location also became the focus of 1970s journalism research (Epstein, 1974). Based on his ethnographic research, Epstein (1974) argued that news organisations placed emphasis on events from certain cities by prioritising news bureaus or stations in those cities, making it easier to move resources into place to cover events as they occurred. Epstein's research went beyond this strategic means of allocating resources for gatekeeping duties based on geographic relevance to strategies that informed how news line-ups were created for the various news broadcasts in the morning, at noon, at tea time, and in the late evening. His research focussed on NBC News' decision-making process when collating their 30-minute news line-up. According to Epstein, the morning planners allocated up to 100 stories and, from that, the list was reduced to 10 for the final news meeting in which the producer narrowed

the list to a final eight. That meant more than 90 percent of what was considered news was discarded to create a compact 30-minute show, from which the observation that time impacts upon news dissemination can be drawn.

Another key observation that Epstein (1974) makes is that European news did not feature prominently in the U.S. market for myriad reasons. The key reason was technology. At the time, European news was still filmed in black and white while American news was colourised. The five-hour time difference between London and New York was problematic for communicating breaking news, which meant important European news would lose its urgency in the later American time slots. Despite this, Epstein observed that European news resonated with American audiences when the information could be construed as a threat to American culture as evidenced by coverage of the Soviet Invasion of the former Czechoslovakia in 1968. The Cold War and the perceived threat of communism to American freedom meant broadcasts from London became common. Based on Epstein's findings, a link can be seen to the work of Galtung and Ruge (1965). The criteria of consonance (localisation of foreign news), references to elite nations, longevity of news, resonance, and references to elite people were evident in Epstein's (1974) findings. This not only proves validity of news values, but also how those news values are used by journalists to build interest in news from foreign areas.

His findings reflect these criteria because the only international newsworthy event during his ethnographic observation of the newsroom was the 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. The rejection of the majority of reports from Europe underpins the argument in the MacBride Report (UNESCO, 1980) that 80 percent of the news originated from New York, London, and Paris. The Commission was concerned about the unbalanced flow of information from elite nations, which also

controlled the technology needed to disseminate information. In contemporary society, news related to terrorism in the Middle East and Europe is of importance to domestic western audiences because the impact of terrorism is felt in the west, especially its effect on travel.

Power sources within the newsroom was another key consideration of research. Gans' (2004) research aimed to understand where the balance of power lay in the newsroom. Through observational methods and interviews, he concluded that, while journalists demanded and believed in autonomy for themselves, the ultimate balance of power was with the management's imposed rigid deadlines. Although journalists felt free to do their jobs, they were restricted by the news angle senior staff wanted to disseminate to the public and the timeframe in which they were required to publish. Schlesinger (1978) presented similar findings based on his observational research at the BBC whereby he described such a phenomenon as a "stopwatch culture" where production controls everything down to the last minute. Studies, such as these conducted by White (1950), Galtung and Ruge (1965), Tuchman (1973), Schlesinger (1978) and Gans (2004), were considered seminal inquiries that aim to contextualise the challenges journalists face on a daily basis in their roles as gatekeepers of information.

In 1976, Altheide set out to understand the processes of how bias influenced news content. His research involved observing broadcast journalists to understand the impact of ideological bias in news content. He argued that practical and organisational demands on journalists led to the complex process of simplifying facts. Altheide argued that bias in news could be attributed to journalists who wanted to make events more relevant and interesting to the audience. An example Altheide highlighted was the coverage of Thomas Eagleton's vice-presidential candidacy in 1972 when news

focussed on Eagleton's mental health and his ability to fulfil his duties to the office to the exclusion of factors that made him qualified.

The early studies were mostly underpinned by the hypothesis that political ideology played a significant role in the construction of news. White (1950) and Breed (1955) conducted these studies to understand how news was gathered so that its dissemination correlates to policy. Galtung and Ruge (1965) proposed to understand the process in terms of what was published, but did not examine what news had been rejected. In the later studies of the 1970's, research focussed on how journalists coped with daily pressures, such as breaking news and decisions made in editorial meetings. These studies were significant because they highlighted how journalists constructed their realities. Early research focussed on the more pragmatic approaches to inquiry and did not explore the journalists' perspectives in terms of how journalists made sense of decisions and practices. The early researchers also did not address the issue of how journalists view their identities within the contexts of journalism or within society. These investigations were conducted by sociologists in an attempt to understand journalism practices in terms of challenges faced by journalists on a daily basis. Epstein (1974) alluded to the challenges of double standards where journalists had no problems when they probed into the lives of others, but they were suspicious of those who investigated journalism.

More recently, there has been an increase in journalists-turned-academics taking up the research baton. One of the key journalists-turned-academics to do so is Zelizer (1993, 2004, 2017). In her research in 2004, *Taking Journalism Seriously,* Zelizer aligns her findings with Epstein's (1974) observations of journalism that journalists were suspicious of sociologists who wanted to explore their world. Zelizer (2004) further argued that journalists, as well as journalism educators, were suspicious

of sociological inquiry because of the difficulty in applying the theoretical contributions of social sciences to the practical nature of journalism training. Zelizer (2004) took issue with the earlier studies because they chose to pigeon-hole journalism into scenarios. She argued that:

> "Sociological investigation reduced journalists to a given type of actor in a given context. Other disciplinary classifications are necessary to make this image more complex. (Zelizer, 2004, p 80).

One of the shortcomings of journalism research Zelizer (2004) pointed out was the tendency among academic researchers to want to quantify journalism practice in terms of allocating journalists within predetermined categories. She called for more diversified research of journalism as a means of understanding journalists and practice. As such, Wahl-Jorgensen (2013) studied the emotionality of journalism to understand how much priority Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists put into employing emotional discourse in their journalistic practice.

This section was used to outline and highlight key bodies of early research and the progression of investigation into journalism practice and identity. It also explored factors, such as news values and news instincts, as important areas of consideration in research. The next section moves into more contemporary research that applies to the digital age of media.

Online journalism

Digital journalism has changed the way news is produced and how the public consumes news (Van der Haak, Park & Castells, 2012). Using the full potential of the internet has proved to be a significant challenge for journalists. The print medium has had challenges making sense of the digital medium. Print journalism practice remained too rigid to adapt to change (Matheson, 2004). Early research into print journalism's transformation revealed print's online product to be a carbon copy of its physical

product (Boczkowski, 2004). In those early days of digital journalism at the start of the 21ˢᵗ century, journalists wanted to embrace new technology, but were wholly unsure of how to do so (Matheson, 2004). Going online meant a different writing style, the development of a news instinct that relied less on news judgment and more emphasis on the audience's needs, and a general expansion of the scope of what journalism practice means (Tameling & Boersma, 2013).

Online journalism and social media have dominated the research landscape since the late 1990s. At that time, news organisations began to embrace the internet as a viable medium for disseminating information. Early research into newsroom assimilation and acceptance of media convergence tended to focus on observation (Reese, 2016). Boczowski's (2004, 2010) research aimed to understand the transition from paper to digital newsrooms while Usher (2014) conducted an observational study of *The New York Times'* digital newsroom. In Europe, researchers preferred interviews rather than ethnographic methods as seen in studies by Grubenmann and Meckel (2017) and Deuze (1999).

Another area of study has been the impact online journalism has had on the professional outlook of journalists. As prefaced in Chapter 1, researchers have suggested that the gatekeeping duties of journalists have shifted in the online environment (Canter, 2014; Eldridge, 2013, 2016; Donsbach & Patterson, 2010; Singer, 1997, 1998). In Singer's research, news journalists shifted their perspective from presenting the news to presenting why the news matters. Her findings were influenced by the vast numbers of resources available that provided half-truths and errors. Therefore, it was the journalist's role to highlight what was true. Donsbach and Patterson (2010) called for a reorganisation of the professionalism of journalism to help journalists adapt to the changing face of the newsroom. Eldridge (2013, 2016)

conducted research into the alternative disseminators of news, such as whistle-blowers like Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. Eldridge argued that the rise of technology, improved data protection, and encryption meant that secrecy on the internet has become a motivational factor for whistleblowers. Canter (2014) used observation and interview methods to demonstrate how regional newsrooms shifted their role from gatekeepers to verifiers of news information.

Other research explored how journalists could engage with the audience. Dickinson, Matthews, and Saltzis (2013) argued that competition for an audience was greater in the digital age due to the rise of alternative media, an endless array of news aggregating sites such as Google News, and 24-hour news TV stations. This has led to a series of cost-cutting measures, such as large numbers of newsroom staff being made redundant as advertisers pushed for online advertising as opposed to print advertising. Some researchers have pointed out that results of trying to compete with aggregators and 24-hour news channels has been a tabloidisation of online journalism. This is signposted by the proliferation of sensational headlines and clickbait content.

Davies (2014a) argued that the combination of instant news outputs and downsized newsroom resources has led to a rise in the use of news agencies and public relations material. The implication of this finding was that journalism had become "churnalism" in which journalists were rewriting pre-written material to suit their audience and for quick stories that could be posted online. Fenton (2010b) argued that the new competition had led journalists towards sensationalism as they vied for more website traffic. The impacts of the internet on journalism were widespread and significant and was a mitigating factor that impacted professional identity. It was also a factor in how journalists made sense of their practice as the pressures of working in

compact newsrooms meant they had to produce content for both the online and newspaper products.

The more contemporary research into journalist identity tended to focus on the role online journalism and social media played in shaping how journalists made sense of their roles and practices (Grubenmann & Meckel, 2017; Agarwal & Barthel, 2015; Ferrucci & Vos, 2017; Olausson, 2016). In each of these inquiries, the researchers asserted that technology, online journalism, and social media have changed the way in which journalism was practised and how journalists made sense of their professional identities. Grubenmann and Meckel (2017) pointed out that age was a factor in how Swiss journalists interacted with new media. Interviews with Swiss journalists found that older practitioners tended to be more suspicious of new media techniques than their younger counterparts. Older practitioners tried to hold on to old practices to define their professional identities. Agarwal and Barthel (2015) found that a new norm was beginning to take shape among the American journalists they interviewed. In their research, they found that journalists still held on to established traditions, but were opened to understanding how new technology could shape newsroom practices.

Ferrucci and Vos (2017) found that journalists still identified with the tangible newsroom and traditions as a way of defining themselves as journalists in a digital environment. They also found journalists described blogging, social media, and citizen journalism as something different and less professional. Olausson (2016) used virtual observation to keep track of one of Sweden's most followed journalist's Twitter feed to understand how Twitter provided insight into how discourse informed identity. While Olausson's (2016) research pointed to a reification and challenge to the Fourth Estate identity, it also demonstrated how the journalist reified transparency and

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disseminator identities among journalists. She concluded that the discursive practices and Twitter worked together to shape identity through a dialectical process.

Each of these bodies of research demonstrate that journalists are finding it a challenge to understand the full impact online journalism and social media can have on their lives. There is evidence that journalists still hold traditional values in higher regard while journalists view alternative media as something different from what they practice. At the same time, journalists are locked in conflict as they try to understand how traditional news practices and values could work with new media practices and values, but there is evidence that a new identity is developing. Much of the past research tended to be theoretical or explored observation or quantitative data to search for insights. This thesis will explore journalists' experiences to understand how they acknowledge the challenges to their practice, describe their experiences, and make sense of mitigating challenges to their practice.

Changing skill sets and its impact on identity

One of the key trends in online journalism research has focussed on how changing skill sets has impacted professional identity. Key avenues of inquiry attempted to comprehend how digital journalism changed the traditional tasks of everyday practice (Dahlgren, 1996); how technology impacted the way society added value to social and cultural lives (Cottle & Ashton, 1999); how sociological constructs provided an understanding of the changing face of online journalism (Örnebring, 2010); the impact of deskilling and reskilling, and convergence on identity (Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016), and; how journalists were concerned about quality of content (Saltzis & Dickinson, 2008).

One of the earliest researchers to pursue this inquiry was Dahlgren (1996) who correlated news gathering, source development, modes of representation, and discursive practices as sociologically informed characteristics of journalism. He found that online processes, such as interactivity, multimedia, hypertextuality, and archival characteristics, had significant impact on traditional newsroom practices. Dahlgren recommended that digital journalism could lead to a more civic interaction between online journalists and the public as they shaped the news processes and perspectives that could lead to a departure from the old model of top-down agenda setting where elites and news media influenced content. Other research (Singer 1997, 1998; Canter, 2014) showed that this does happen to some extent. However, others were keener to demonstrate how technology influenced content building through technological determinism.

Technological determinism is a theory used by Cottle and Ashton (1999) to argue that technology had social and cultural implications on society. As a result, this determinism informed the corporate and professional perspectives of the media. Building on McLuhan's (1967) proclamation that "the medium is the message", Cottle and Ashton pointed out that technology shaped social structure and cultural values and influenced how information was received and what type of information was being disseminated. They came to this conclusion by examining how the BBC Newsroom became the BBC News-centre and the implications of the shift. From the basis of technological determinism, Cottle and Ashton determined that traditional news practices would suffer under new multimedia strategies. While Cottle and Ashton's research could be used to understand how technological change can impact journalism identity, Örnebring (2010) attempted to apply sociological practices to creating a better understanding of online journalism's impact on professional identity.

Using labour process theory, Örnebring focussed on separating how labour was conceptualised and executed; differentiation in labour processes; technology and how it was used to increase productivity, and; the deskilling of labour to meet new demands. Örnebring advocated for labour process theory because he argued that viewing journalism as labour allowed for a clearer understanding of how the integration of technology and the view of daily work could be addressed. His findings point to two ways in which journalists account for their work: a perspective that technology being highly integrated means that it would be natural to become part of everyday journalistic practice, and; deeply historical roots inform shifts in technological paradigms.

Other research explored how a digitally influenced change in identity could impact the autonomy of journalists (Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016). Based on findings from a case study of the Danish Broadcast Corporation, Brø, Hansen, and Andersson found that a newly implemented workflow had revolutionised how news was produced, not only at the national broadcaster, but also at other outlets that have adopted the approach. The key finding Brø, Hansen, and Andersson (2016) presented was that rather than deskilling and convergence having a proletarianisation effect on the newsroom, journalists were split in their views of their new roles. Whereas some felt that deskilling led to a reduction in autonomy, others, who were more willing to adopt deskilling, felt more autonomy within their newsroom. Essentially, this research demonstrated that individual perspective dictated how journalists viewed their autonomy in the new multimedia newsroom.

Within UK-centric research circles, Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) conducted research with the BBC, Sky News, *The Guardian*, and *The Financial Times* to understand convergence's impacts on newsroom practice. Saltzis and Dickinson were

concerned with understanding how practices were shifting and how journalists were reacting to these changes. Their findings discovered that, despite upheavals in the industry, journalists were still trying to make sense of convergence and its impact on their practice. Journalists felt that new demands within the convergence framework added to their daily routines and increased concerns about journalism quality.

The consensus in these investigations into the impact of online journalism on professional identity is that there are concerns about how journalists adjust to multimedia platforms. Researchers warn that technological shifts impact the ways in which information flows and is received. While much of the earlier research was done at a time when online journalism was relatively new, later research validates earlier findings that suggest journalists are on their way towards a new identity that combines traditional elements of being a journalist with new factors associated with digital journalism.

Online journalism: Reifying professional practice

In the previous section, the focus was on how digital journalism had altered practice and professional identity. This section examines research in which journalists believe they are still disseminators of information. Researchers argued that, despite the public being technologically empowered to become citizen journalists, professional journalists discounted them because the accountability and regulation under which professionals work was not the same in the private environment (Nah & Chung, 2009; Greer & McLaughlin, 2010). For journalists, identity membership was informed by qualities that defined a sense of belonging to a smaller field and added a sense of value to life (Kopytowska & Kalyango, 2014). It gave a sense of stability to

people amid a world filled with changing social dynamics and environments (Deuze, 2005).

One of the biggest changes research has shown has been the stability of routine within the more traditional contexts of journalism (Gans, 2004) giving way to new methods of practising journalism, and interacting with the audience (Ferrucci & Vos, 2017; Canter, 2013b). In their U.S. study aimed at understanding the professional identity of digital journalists, Ferrucci and Vos (2017) interviewed 53 journalists and found that medium, organisational backing, and role construction represented essentials aspects of what it meant to be a digital journalist. Blogging, social media, and citizen journalists were excluded by members of the profession. Ferrucci and Vos' (2017) findings supported earlier work by Jones and Salter (2011) who conducted a study of the BBC in which senior journalists disregarded anyone who had a Twitter account as not contributing to the news flow. Journalism produced by the journalists was evidence of organisational identity where people within a field made sense of their identity from within a work context (van Zoonen, 1998).

Within the context of print-online journalism, Canter's (2013b) research used content analysis to understand the gatekeeper role of journalists in the regional press. Her findings suggest that the gatekeeper role at the regional level had become less authoritative in the digital landscape. Journalists were engaged with readers through social media and were more accountable due to instant feedback. Newsgathering was somewhat reliant on social media because journalists were using the platform to find news stories or integrating user content into journalistic content. Brand loyalty was important because journalists could engage with readers to attract new readership and sustain new relationships.

Canter was able to validate her findings in her 2014 research where she found that regional journalists had shifted the view of themselves from the gatekeepers to professional verifiers. Her research showed that regional journalists were happy with this paradigm shift in their professional identity. While Canter's research showed some significance of audience influence on the dissemination of news, she advocated for a continued commitment of the professionalisation of journalism as a means of reifying professional journalism at a time when "anyone with an internet connection can play a role in the transfer of information" (Canter, 2014 p. 1).

Although she took the stance of advocating for the reification of professional journalism, Canter (2013a) previously argued that user-generated content (UGC) had a place in journalism. In a case study of *The Leicester Mercury* newspaper's Citizen Eye section, Canter makes the argument that UGC had great potential in media markets directly impacted by the downsizing of newsroom resources. One of the key observations she made in the research was how professional journalists referred to organisational identity features to set their work apart from the UGC by highlighting formal training.

While journalists made a point of distancing themselves from citizen journalists, Allan and Thorsen (2009) argued that senior journalists have always relied on citizens for journalism content. More recently, this had been seen with the emergence of the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, a British-based social media offering, that has provided the most accurate information from the Syrian Civil War (MacFarquhar, 2013). Allan and Thorsen (2009) argued that citizen journalism sets an agenda that often was ignored or not known by the legacy press. They argued that technology had meant citizen journalists were able to disseminate news at faster speeds. While technology created a competitive environment for the dissemination of

information, the public largely relied on large media corporations and legacy media titles for its information (Allen & Thorsen, 2009). And, while journalists attempted to distance themselves from citizen journalists, they do recognise that citizen journalism can help create a more comprehensive news package.

Towards a new identity

While American journalists saw the downsizing of newsroom resources as an overwhelming prospect, Nygren (2014) proposed that European journalists viewed multiskilling as a way of reinventing their professional identity. A study of Russian, Polish, and Swedish journalists showed that reporters felt they had more autonomy because converged newsrooms meant producing news on different platforms. They cited autonomy as an empowering factor because they had control over subject choice and content. Nygren stated that his research could not be used to correlate downsizing to a different perspective on practice. Rather, he argued that multiskilling was the new practice because European journalism was more focussed on production and creating news for different platforms.

Deuze (2008) stated that an understanding of a professional journalistic identity, in the context of the online landscape, required an examination of online journalism as it challenged notions of traditional perspectives of journalist identity. Researchers must consider the ways organisations modified and adapted practices from traditional roles and the impact business decisions have had on the newsroom and the public.

Deuze argues that an understanding of how a journalist's identity is shaped in the age of converged media requires looking beyond the traditional markers of identity such as duty, ideology, and job comprehension. This is because of mitigating factors, such as the differences in practice and the problems that are associated with online journalism, must be considered in order to understand the bigger picture of the professional identity of journalists in an online market. Based on his initial examination of the research, Deuze argued that journalistic identity was undermined by a corporate mandate to cut costs and increase profit margins at the expense of the

newsroom. He did not explore how changing media models could be a way of improving journalistic output, but Deuze does argue that any such change could be met with significant resistance from a journalism community that may be opposed to change.

Instantaneous feedback and abuse

The digital landscape has given readers the unprecedented ability to respond immediately to news. In the past, readers had to write letters to the editor if they wanted to engage in debate in news developments. One of the key issues uncovered in the literature (Post and Kepplinger, 2019) was that instant response through social media and online discussion forum has led to abuse of journalists. This development of negative audience reaction (Coe, Kenski & Rains, 2014; Su, Xenos, Rose, Wirz, Scheufele & Brossard, 2018) meant that journalists have added challenges to their daily practice. The result was a biased view of the news by readers (Anderson, Brossard, Dietram, Scheufele, Xenos & Ladwig, 2014, 2018) and negative views of news quality due to this bias (Dohle, 2018; Prochazka, Weber & Schweiger, 2018). Feedback in the digital landscape meant aggressive reactions towards journalists, content, and news media in general (Graham & Wright, 2015; Löfgren & Örnebring, 2016; Preuß, Tetzlaff & Zick (2017); Rodriguez-Martínez, De Los Ríos & Fedele (2017). Studies into audience participation in digital culture have led to concern among journalists (Chen, Pain, Chen, Mekelburg, Springer & Troger, 2018; Löfgren & Örnebring, 2016; Obermaier, Hofbauer & Reinemann, 2018).

Post and Kepplinger's (2019) research led to two key findings. The first was that hostile reaction to news had an influence on future journalism practice. The tendency among journalists was to react negatively to the audience and become

defensive of their practice. The second was to take pleasure in negative audience feedback and wear it as a badge of honour, understanding that negative feedback was a barometer that journalists were on the right track because they viewed public hostility as signs of professional success. This tended to occur with political journalists. Post and Kepplinger's research was based on survey results and not on actual journalist interviews that could provide more insight into how journalists make sense of their relationship with the readers. The existent literature outlined tended to be either theoretical or surveys. This thesis differs because it presents perspectives from journalist participants. This research endeavours to present how journalists themselves view their audience.

In her research, Binns (2017) conducted a survey to understand the impact extreme social media bullying has had on journalists. Those results showed that organised gangs of bullies have had incredibly negative influences on journalism from journalists leaving the profession out of fear for their lives to self-censorship out of fear of abuse. Binns points out that despite the rise of extremist groups with online presence, editors are not ready to get rid of comment sections.

A significant trend in other research into online abuse and its impact on journalists tended to be framed within gender frameworks. Ferrier and Garud-Patkar (2018) examined trolling practices that were aimed at proliferating misogynistic, sexist, and violent threats towards female journalists. Adams' (2018) research involved a survey of 102 female journalists that revealed online abuse had damaged women's lives and impacted journalism negatively. Obermaier, Hofbauer and Reinemann (2018) argue that there is growing concern among German journalists about the impacts of abuse on their ability to practise journalism through their quantitative research survey.

A significant amount of the research into the impacts of online abuse is limited to national and international news resources. Canter (2013) identified a gap that there was limited research into how regional journalists made sense of online comments. As outlined in Chapter 1, regional journalism tends to be less contentious that national news. Canter's research outlined that regional journalists recognised that democratic implications existed in online commentary. She also pointed out that, while negative aspects were a part of the online community, there were also positive interactions between journalists and the community.

2.3 Journalists and the public

One of the most complex aspects of journalism practice is trying to understand the relationship between journalists and their readers. Between mistrust, challenges to journalistic integrity, and the immediacy of social media, this relationship continues to be a tricky one that needs to be revisited as changes to journalism's landscape and practice occur

The commodification of readers

In our attempt to understand how journalists make sense of their practice, it is important to consider the journalist's relationship with his or her reader. A body of knowledge attempts to make sense of the relationship between journalists and the public by positioning readers as citizens or consumers (Gil de Zúñiga, Copeland & Bimber, 2014; Dalton, 2008; Schudson, 2007; Teorell, Torcal & Montero, 2007). In these bodies of research, citizens were defined as people who engaged in political activities, such as voting. Consumers were viewed as readers who engage in non-political activities, often for personal gain. The term, political consumerism, widens the scope of citizenry to include all forms of political engagement, including

interacting with elected officials, attending political rallies and meetings, and contributing to campaigns (Teorell, Torcal & Montero, 2007; Dalton, 2008; Gil de Zúñiga, Copeland & Bimber, 2014).

The findings of these bodies of work tend to be more idealised views of how journalists frame their readers. Jones (2006) argues that journalists present readers as submissive subjects, waiting for journalists to enlighten them. He argues that journalists make three erroneous assumptions:

- News agencies are the primary providers of political communication;
- The most important function of the press is to inform the public with information, and;
- Political engagement is a physical activity.

Journalists construct views of idealised citizens who are unbiased, realistic about their expectations, and unemotional decision-makers. All of these are untrue (Richards, 2004; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006). Instead, Richards and Wahl-Jorgensen argue that people make political decisions to validate their core beliefs, add value to their worldviews, and authenticate political engagement once political ideology aligns with their own perspectives. This view supports Habermas' (1974, 1989) arguments about the public sphere. In his earlier work, Habermas conceptualised the public sphere as a place in which public opinion could be formed by all citizens.

> By ''the public sphere'' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body . . . Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion*that is, with the guarantee of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions*about matters of general interest. In a large public body this kind of communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. (Habermas 1974, p49)

The public sphere was something that began to take shape in the 18th and 19th centuries (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006) as a means of holding government accountable for its actions (Habermas, 1989).

Research into the digital relationship between journalists and readers points to a levelled bond in which readers make decisions about what news they want to read. Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, and Logan's (2012) state that networked media allowed the reader to create bespoke news streams populated with news that reinforced and supported the reader's worldviews. Lee (2016) pointed out that more than 60 percent of the users on Twitter and Facebook in the U.S. relied on those platforms for news. Bergström and Jervelycke Belfrage (2018) argued that society moved from traditional news cycles where content was controlled by media professionals to complex cycles in which people influenced the content that was being consumed. They also supported Lee's perspective that social network websites have become a major entry point into news consumption for people. This new approach has also meant people are able to comment and share news among their friends (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage (2018). This shift in control of the gatekeeping operations to the reader was seen as consumerism in media. While the research tended to be theoretical or based on survey data, it did not include journalist perspectives which this thesis will explore across the analysis chapters.

The difference in ways in which readers are positioned as citizens or consumers is important in understanding journalists' perspectives of their audiences. Previous research positions consumers as those readers who prefer to use news aggregators to gather news content that reflects their world view rather than using more traditional streams in which journalists act as gatekeepers. When the audience engaged civically and positively, they were viewed as citizens and being more of a valued client base for journalists. This thesis aligns with the latter ideas presented in this section. It takes the position that readers are not unbiased, unemotional decision-makers, but rather groups who are in more control of news consumption due to

newsfeeds and access to alternative news websites. The thesis is supported by the concept of the public sphere rather than the idealised top-down media flow of the pre-digital era where journalists held authoritative posts as gatekeepers.

2.4 Public service journalism

Since this thesis is concerned with how UK journalists make sense of their practice in the contemporary era, certain assumptions about journalists have already been made and will be made. In this section, I put forward the assumption of public service journalism as a key perspective in this research. Public service journalism aligns practice with democratic ideologies (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956). Within this tradition, journalism practice is informed by the transparencies and accountabilities associated with western democratic culture. This section explores key aspects of journalism practice that are informed by democratic tradition, such as the Fourth Estate and public interest.

The Public interest

An important factor to establish is that the Fourth Estate and public interest are important components in journalists' understanding of western democratic practice (Deuze, 2005). These perspectives of practice are informed by motivations to keep the public aware of events or political proceedings (Deuze, 2005). Public interest in the UK is underpinned by the UK Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (Thom, 2014). The current Editors' Code of Practice (IPSO, 2016) is similar in its wording to the Act. Existing research into public interest tends to focus on how public interest protects whistleblowers (Ashton, 2015; Lewis, 2008). While this idea tends to emanate from legal research, work from the journalism perspective tends to address the ambiguously

worded public interest clauses. The public interest has been defined as the attempt to establish the truth about events and issues that concern society (Brock, 2013).

Morrison and Svennevig (2002) argued that the public interest reflected the values of a society. They proposed that comprehension of public interest was subjective and similar to attempts to conceptualise national interest. They argued that the ambiguously worded code of practice led to liberal interpretations of public interest by editors who attempted to justify public interest as a means of driving revenue streams. During the early proceedings of the Leveson Inquiry, Lord Justice Leveson spent a significant amount of time conceptualising and setting the scope for what constituted public interest. Petley (2012) observed that the rules of engagement outlined in the Editors' Code of Conduct were hard to define, citing the chairperson of the now-defunct Press Complaints Commission in 2007 telling a parliamentary commission that there can never be an objective standard for the public interest.

Other researchers argued that journalists must invade people's privacy, employ subterfuge, or pay for information if they could prove public information and if traditional avenues of inquiry failed (Morton & Aroney, 2016). This is reflected in the Independent Press Standards Organisation's Editors' Code of Conduct, which outlines 11 public interest defences journalists can use to defend practice (Ipso, 2016). Of the 16 clauses that make up the code, nine could be subject to a public interest defence. Although the Editors' Code of Conduct is not legal regulation, it is admissible as a defence in court.

Past research showed journalists' interpretation of public interest to be highly subjective. As Petley (2012) pointed out, the ambiguously worded public interest defences could lead to liberal interpretations by editors who are under pressure to produce compelling content in profit markets. When it came to defining public

interest, Brock (2013) argued three criteria must be considered: the interests of the community should outweigh the inconvenience of the individual; results should be of benefit to everyone, and; the free flow of information should be more important than the control of information. Brock's research points to the principle of freedom of the press as an underpinning concept for public interest because of his encouragement for the free flow of information based on an idea that the community's interest outweighs the right to privacy if that information is of some sort of benefit to the public. This led to the fair assessment that there was a public interest in freedom of expression (Leveson, 2012; Thom, 2014). This meant that there was no consensus on how to define public interest with an all-encompassing definition. This was supported by academic observation (Morrison & Svennevig, 2007; Morton & Aroney, 2016) and industry defence (Petley, 2012).

In a more practical research, Thom (2014) argued that public interest in the UK landscape was more challenging because of external factors, such as IPSO's Editors' Code of Conduct and the updated Data Protection Act. He argued that working within the framework of public interest would only become more problematic because of these changes. Citing Goldsmiths, University of London, media law professor Tim Cook, Thom (2014) stated that Lord Justice Leveson's comments on the public interest were misguided. Leveson stated that public interest should be what is in the interest of the public and not what the public is interested in. However, Cook argued that there was a public interest in what the public was interested in. Cook drew correlations between the public interest and the public's expectation of the media's responsibility within the context of accountability journalism. In other words: "Public interest is not state interest, the interest of business, oligarchs, professors, or even

media interests. It is recognition of a residual constitutional imperative in people needing to receive and communicate information." (Thom, 2014)

Other research explored strategies, such as crowdfunding and non-profit entities, as a way of preserving public interest amid a changing landscape. Carvajal, García-Avilés and González (2012) argued that new business models that pushed an online agenda were leading to a loss of focus on public interest journalism. They argued that non-profit business models were ideal for upholding public interest principles because they were not influenced by profit margins or revenue streams. In real-world journalism, recent developments have proved that non-profit platforms have been viable for producing public interest journalism. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has been working since 2016 on an investigative series that has exposed corruption and widespread practices of tax abuse with its Panama Papers, Paradise Papers, and other series.

A recurrence in the literature has been the difficulty in conceptualising an overarching definition of public interest due to its liberal, interpretive nature. Researchers attempted to theorise public interest in terms of the needs of the many outweighing the wishes of the few while others demonstrated that journalists create liberal interpretations of public interest because of pressure to produce content that can increase revenue. Others positioned public interest as a means of addressing the needs of the audience over those of the elites. The takeaway from current research is that, due to its empirical nature, invoking public interest tends to be a protection measure to justify certain actions for the creation of content that could be economically viable for news organisations. A key gap that exists in the literature is research that attempts to understand public interest from the journalist's perspective. While other works aim to understand the working lives, there has not been as much evidence of

journalists attempting to conceptualise public interest based on their experiences. Another aspect of journalism practice that must be considered in concert with public interest is the Fourth Estate which is a mandate in the western democratic context of holding authority to account.

The Fourth Estate of accountability

A significant component of the libertarian media model is the media's ability to challenge the decisions made by authority figures (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956). This includes upholding transparency and accountability traditions associated with the openness of democratic society. The earliest versions of newspapers were created as extensions of government, often recording the proceedings of parliament (BBC4, 2007). It was not until the privatisation of the press and the proliferation of tabloid newspapers towards the end of the 19th century that newspapers shifted from record-keepers to gatekeepers (Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin, 2007). Hampton (2010) defined the Fourth Estate as: "whatever the formal constitution, genuine political power resides in the informal role of the press, which in turn derives from the relationship between the press and its readers" (P3). Journalists took their cues from the public when it came to reporting on political power. Deuze (2005) linked the upholding of democratic values with the idea of the public interest and weaved it into the ideological fabric of journalism. This could be construed as the way in which journalists defended their practice and justify their practice. This was also evident in the way in which IPSO (2016) set out its public interest parameters in which misrepresentation, inability to fulfil public obligations, miscarriage of justice, and public debate were paramount defences journalists could use to justify ways of pursuing information when all other avenues of pursuit have been exhausted.

Much of the research into the Fourth Estate tended to correlate the concept of holding government to account (Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin, 2007) or freedom of the press (Carter, 1988; Schultz, 1998; Tumber, 2001). Journalists viewed themselves as watchdogs of accountability and used the public interest to report when authority figures failed to deliver on their mandate (Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin, 2007).

However, there were some researchers who provided opposing views of this practice. Knight, Geuze and Gerlis (2008) argued that journalists were more corporate-focussed than community-focussed which impacted journalists' ability to produce Fourth Estate content. Knight, Geuze, and Gerlis added a perspective that hypothesised journalists' adherence to a corporate policy over the community's needs positioned journalists as lap dogs rather than the watchdogs they believed themselves to be. They argued that journalists worked within a system that relied too heavily on government sources and others who wanted to promote a propagandist mandate in the news. Beyond that, corporate interests, inaccuracies, and the belief that the profession must be held above other institutions within society contributed to a public mistrust. This argument suggested Knight, Geuze and Gerlis believed the Fourth Estate has been diminished due to external influences from governments and businesses.

Tumber (2001) made a similar argument where he called for a re-thinking of Fourth Estate because the changing landscape towards digital platforms has blurred the lines of journalists' identities and objectives. It is evident from Knight, Geuze and Gerlis' (2008) and Tumber's (2001) research that academia has a bleak view of the journalist's assessment that his or her duty is to hold authority to account. A number of factors are put forth, such as pressure to improve revenue streams, changing platforms, and new mandates, support this bleak view.

Ideas of public interest and Fourth Estate have been positioned as public service journalism (Deuze, 2005; Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin, 2007; Zelizer, 2009; Donsbach & Patterson, 2010). The key argument these investigations made was that public service journalism was used as justification for readers as a key component of the research. As Thom (2014) pointed out, public interest was positioned as producing

content that should interest the public or be of interest to the public. Within this perspective the public was viewed as an important part of the communication process.

2.5 Journalism ethics

One of the key contributions to research of journalism ethics has been Christians' (2000) evolution of ethics. Christians allocates journalism ethics into three eras: the 1890s, the 1920s, and the 1960s. During the 1890s period, Christians argued that journalism was striving for a level of professionalism to position itself as a powerful institution in the UK and the U.S. This move towards a powerful identity led to a robust discourse on journalism practice, standards, and professionalism as journalists attempted to secure a footfall in the power corridors at the time. By the 1920s, philosophy had lost its way at the university level. Christians argued this led to the beginnings of journalism ethics literature, the beginnings of codes of conduct, and a reflective look at morality in the press. His research examined historical, social, and economic contexts of these eras to demonstrate changes in paradigms towards ethics (Starck, 2001).

Drawing on Christian's (2000) perspective of time and journalism ethics research, 1960s America was a key point for the exploration of journalism ethics because of the increase in public mistrust of the press during the Vietnam War. Reviewing Christians' perspectives on the 1960s ethical changes, Starck (2001) argued that "press criticism in a free-market economy drives interest towards or away from journalism ethics (2001, p. 136). By this phrase, Starck was referring to an increase in mistrust if the public became critical of journalism performance, which resulted in the press having to find different ways of responding to the public. Starck argued this could lead to an increase in sensational stories or a renewed bond of trust with the public.

Other research into journalism ethics tended to be in the form of case studies and textbooks (Frost, 2016). Texts, such as Harcup's (2006) *The Ethical Journalist* or Frost's (2016) *Journalism Ethics and Regulation*, focussed on exploring a variety of cases with some scope on understanding underlying concepts and assumptions that inform how ethics are conceptualised.

More recently, ethics research has evolved as a way of opening dialogue between industry and academy on journalism ethics. Hanson (2002) examined broadcasters and broadcast journalism students through a survey to understand where each group believed journalism ethics should be addressed. The study showed that journalists referred to codes of conduct as their guidelines to professional practice while educators and academics underpinned journalism ethics within a framework informed by ideas that ethics were governed by either: decisions based on industry practice, decisions based on ideas, or classical theories of Kant, Mills, and other philosophers. Findings showed a discrepancy between the classroom and newsroom's ways of making sense of ethical issues, such as the impact of business pressures on newsroom decisions, the importance of classroom and newsroom ethics training, expertise of journalism educators, and the preparedness of entry level journalists. Despite a significant emphasis on ethics in journalism curriculum, journalism students tended to think like the audience rather than as journalists (Hanson, 2002). This points to a need for critical thinking and more exposure to professional environments, such as through internships and work placements, from which students could begin transitioning from audience perspectives to professional ones.

Another perspective that has been researched was the correlation between journalism ethics and a commitment to professionalism. There were those who aligned professionalism with values as a means of allowing growth (Gardner,

Csikszentmihalyi & Damon, 2008; Wilkins & Brennen, 2004). From a philosophical perspective, Berry (2016) argued that journalism's realities were at odds with ethics, however, morality connected the two concepts. Berry pointed out that, while the philosophical framework of ethics could be a complex one, the way in which ethics-based themes are explored and made sense of is through the scope of journalism and society.

Ethics have been described as the best practices for conducting a principled life (Frost, 2019). Hanitzsch (2007) argued that ethics mirror the morality of the society into which they are embedded. His research proposed four types of ethics from which future analysis can be considered that were underpinned by relative and idealist world perspectives. Relativist approaches to ethics meant that people based personal moral philosophy on a universal code. In other words, subscribers to a relativist view of ethics have values underpinned by society's moral perspectives. Idealist perspectives took consequences into consideration of ethical dilemmas. Within this group, more idealistic approaches aimed to achieve the most acceptable outcome whereas relativist approaches accepted harmful outcomes that ultimately led to a greater good. However, other researchers believe it is not good enough to just understand how to live well

Ward (2009) stated that journalism ethics must go beyond and concern itself with how to live well ethically. He described ethics as "the never-completed project of inventing, applying, and critiquing the principles that guide human interaction, define social roles, and justify institutional structures" (p 296). Essentially, ethics were a fluid concept that must be revisited as times changed. For example, changing views of environmentalism, equal rights, and animal cruelty have meant the ethical considerations for these examples to change over time. While ethics are a theoretical

construct of how journalists should practise, ethical discourses in newsrooms can be different from the theoretical model, such as codes of conduct (Iggers, 2018).

Examples of ethical consideration that must go beyond the lexical associations of journalism ethics is the risk of causing offence (Frost, 2016). Frost argued that discourse, sentence construction, or too detailed an approach can have detrimental effects on some subjects, such as those related to anti-social behaviour, self-harm, and stories associated with children. Another example is objectivity (Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1988; Frost, 2016; Iggers, 2018). From these areas of study, objectivity is contextualised as balance. While it was offered as an empirical construct (Iggers, 2018; Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1988), it was also interpreted as truth and trust (Frost, 2016). From one perspective, it was impossible to pinpoint objectivity because of a belief that true objectivity could never be achieved (Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1988; Iggers, 2018). Instead, these researchers concluded that underpinning objectivity in facts was framed by applying a scientific approach to journalism. That is, journalists believed they were ethical if they produced stories based on the facts furnished to them. Objectivity was also explored from the perspective of responsibility (Frost, 2016) where the journalist must err on the side of caution.

As contemporary journalism research shifted to digital platforms, so did journalism ethics research. Singer (2009) posited that newsroom convergence meant a shift to a web-first focus in newsrooms. As publishers and editors recognised the internet as the great equaliser between broadcast and print journalism, the scope has shifted to posting news as it becomes available. One of the key concerns raised by Singer was that it challenged the ethics of accuracy because, for print journalists to compete with broadcasters, they may be posting information that was inaccurate. One of the key concerns among editors was the downsizing of newsroom staff at a time

when journalists were needed to ensure accuracy in online content. The resulting structural changes meant journalists had to consider what constituted objectivity and accuracy in the digital age, which Singer argued was more critical content that was meant to analyse the news. She argued that one of the most significant changes came from journalists' defence of practice. The traditional defences of autonomy and objectivity were invalid because the public had a forum to scrutinise every word used by a journalist. Instead, Singer advocated for transparency because the internet allowed for conversations and rationalisations that could be used to communicate with the public.

An area of exploration for researchers has been to understand how professional journalists set themselves apart from bloggers and citizen journalists. This was achieved by journalists placing emphasis on investigation, fact checking, and accuracy as key priorities of practice (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Fenton & Witschge, 2009). Due to increased challenges to journalism practice, often associated with digital journalism as outlined in Chapter 1, research has also occurred to understand how changing practices, such as how the cannibalisation of the news has led to new perspectives on journalism transparency (Phillips, 2010b). By cannibalisation, Phillips meant practices where journalists used materials produced by other organisations without proper attribution. In her research, Phillips advocated that new standards on accuracy and transparency could protect journalism in a new era where downsizing of newsrooms led to a rise in the quantity and decrease in the quality of journalism being produced.

Past research focussed on ethical practices in journalism tended to approach the subject by examining how ethics were indoctrinated in practitioners. Whether it was before a journalist began training (Frost, 2016, 2019) or during learning and on

the job (Christian, 2000; Frost, 2019), the ethical perspective was one of significant concerns for researchers. Ethical practice was often linked to the journalist's ability to be an authoritative, reliable figure (Frost, 2019) because the public relied on the press to present ethical, verifiable content. Without ethics, journalists lost credibility and ultimately devalued their free press (Frost, 2019). The research showed that public interest, Fourth Estate, and ethics were the core of the internalisation process of practice among western democratic journalists (Deuze, 2005; Hampton, 2010). While ethical practice was the most valued asset in a journalist's arsenal, making sense of his or her role as a journalist who wrote in the public interest and held authority to account, meant journalists must constantly interrogate their practice within a framework that paid attention to best practices.

One of the key gaps in literature this thesis fills is to address how the changes to the Editors' Code of Practice helps or hinders journalists in the contemporary era. This section has explored past research of areas of practice that form the ideological underpinning of practice among western democratic journalists. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to the external forces that impact journalism practice. In the next section, online journalism, and the downsizing and deskilling of the workforce will be explored.

2.6 Trauma journalism and ethical challenges

While trauma journalism is not a new phenomenon, the literature surrounding it is. Much of the research surrounds the impact journalists face when covering traumatic events (McMahon, 2001; Teagan & Grotwinkel, 2001; Feinstein, Owen & Blair, 2002; Newman, Simpson & Handschuh, 2003; Pyevich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003; Osofsky, Holloway & Pickett, 2005; Feinstein & Nicholson, 2005; Weidmann, Fehm & Fydrich, 2008; Keats & Buchanan, 2009). While these studies focussed on

war and terrorism journalism, their scope was on understanding the psychological impacts on journalists. While these studies were North American-centric, British research tended to focus on the emotional labour of journalism (Richards & Rees, 2011). This body of work focussed on how journalists prepared for the professional world by understanding emotional literacy, not just in reporting the most traumatic types of journalism, but also more mundane journalism practices. Richards and Rees' research showed that journalists were conscious of measuring professional and emotional discourse in their creation of stories related to trauma, but shied away from questions that asked sources to reflect on the emotional impact of journalism practice on the audience.

While much of the research applies to extreme trauma, this research is more closely linked to Richards and Rees' work on emotional literacy because most of the research participants are regional journalists where bereavement journalism has been identified as an undesirable form of assignment (Castle, 1999). Bereavement journalism has been an areas of extensive investigation in journalism research. Some of the emphasis in research has been on creating a preparatory guide for handling this type of an assignment (Duncan & Newton, 2010; Duncan & Newton, 2012; Newton & Duncan, 2012). Research also explored the practice from the family's perspective in terms of narratives helping in the grieving process (Duncan, 2012). Another body of work explored the most effective ways of navigating death knocks from the families' perspectives (Newton, 2011). Other investigations have attempted to make sense of how society's views of death have changed the practice of reporting on death (Hanusch, 2010). Hanusch pointed out that society had become more private, and that meant death became private with the creation of palliative care facilities. He linked this push for privacy to the change in how death was accepted in society. Hanusch

pointed out that this had meant death moved from being a part of the broadcast day to death stories and obituaries in newspapers.

While the literature presented preparatory, speculative, and reflective approaches to understanding trauma journalism, the gap in literature that exists is addressing the issue from the journalists' perspective. Research that existed in which journalists were consulted included New Zealand journalists asked to reflect on reporting on suicide (Collings & Kemp, 2010) and the journalism in the emotional sphere in the UK (Richard & Rees, 2011). An exploration of death knock journalism from the perspective of journalists is an effective way of addressing the second supporting question of this thesis which is: How do journalists align with ethical practices in their accounts of completing assignments that could be construed as being morally questionable?

2.7 Data collection methods in journalism research

The purpose of this section is to outline the types of data collection methods that have been used in past research. This section outlines the data collection methods the strengths and weaknesses of these methods.

Observational methods

Observational methods, such as non-participant and participant observation, have long been a staple of understanding people especially in work environments (Cooper, Lewis & Urquhart, 2004). Observation's strength has existed in the way it can be used to explore social phenomena (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998). In journalism, observation has been a popular data collection method that dates back to the earliest works of the 20th century. White's (1950) and Breed's (1955) research into the early days of journalism practice inquiry used observation to collect data on

how news decisions were made (White, 1950) or how a hegemonic ideology guided news production (Breed, 1955). These early works paved the way for the seminal period of journalism research of the 1970s where observation was the popular data collection method (Tuchman, 1973; Epstein, 1974; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 2004). It was the same in the UK where observation was used by Schlesinger (1978) to conduct research of the BBC and the Glasgow Media' Group's (1976, 1980, 1982) research into how journalists interpret and understand bad news.

Other observational research aimed to understand how convergence and streamlining of journalism impacted the identities and practices of journalists (Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016). Their research was a mixed qualitative approach which combined observation, interviews, and content analysis to understand how journalists at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) coped with a new approach to workflow aimed at streamlining print and broadcast platforms into an integrated system called the news engine. The bodies of work explored in this section position observation as a valuable method for understanding journalism practice by watching journalists in their work environment. Challenges to this approach could be difficult gaining permission to these newsrooms as journalists tend to be suspicious of academics who want to explore journalists (Epstein, 1974).

Survey methods

Surveys have been a traditional go-to method for researchers who want to understand journalist's perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs. Patterson & Donsbach (1996) worked from the hypothesis that political ideology impacts the roles of objectivity and morality in the daily lives of journalists. They surveyed journalists in Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Italy, and Sweden. Their findings showed

that, although journalists liked to think they demonstrated objectivity and balance; they felt pressured into framing news within the context of their employer's ideology.

Pihl-Thingvad's (2015) survey of Danish journalists to examine the relationship between professional ideals and daily practice is another exemplary use of surveys as a data collection instrument. The research was an attempt to build a framework to define journalism as a profession. Drawing on medicine and law to examine what constituted a profession, Pihl-Thingvad argued strict objectives and highly skilled learning sets underpin the professionalism of the medical and legal fields. She used a survey to present how journalists aligned professionalism within their daily routines.

Thurman, Cornia, and Kunert (2016) used surveys to conduct gauge newsroom behaviour. The limiting factor for surveys in the scope of this research would be a significantly larger sample size to gather enough data for an accurate analysis. If there is a smaller sample size, then an interview is more effective for data collection (Crotty, 1998; Cresswell, 2014). The next section explores interviews as a research method that provides a more in-depth perspective on research participants.

In each of these research, the objective was to pinpoint an issue, whether it was personal ideology versus company ideology (Patterson & Donsbach, 1996); conceptualising journalism as a profession (Pihl-Thingvad, 2015) or outlining categories of newsroom behaviour (Thurman, Cornia & Kunnert, 2016). While surveys are an effective tool for establishing perspectives or supporting observational data, they are not adequate for constructing robust perspectives on journalism practice as, for example interviews.

Interview methods

To understand deeper meanings in research, several researchers opted for interviews as their data collection method. Saltzis and Dickinson's (2007) inquiry into media convergence was based on 20 interviews recorded in 2002 and 2003 in print and broadcast newsrooms. A trend existed in contemporary research to use interviews to understand newsroom dynamics, such as audience engagement and the role of social media in journalism (Olmstead, Mitchell and Rosenstiel 2011; Newman 2011; Anderson and Caumont 2014; Phillips 2012, 2015). Another area interviews were used effectively was in the Garcia-Aviles (2014) study of how community of practice theory could be used in online newsrooms to build a framework to understand how newsroom interaction informs standards and practices among Spanish digital journalists. Through interviews, Garcia-Aviles was able to reveal that journalists continued to hold themselves to a much higher standard by not trusting user-generated content until it has been refined by a journalist.

Kvale (2008) made the case for interviews as an effective means of understanding being by positioning interviews as conversations. He argued that if you wanted to know about someone, talk to them. Kvale stated that through conversations researchers can learn about people's experiences, dreams, and fears because knowledge was constructed through an interaction between the researcher and the research participant.

The key issue with interviews is that the method is more effective for understanding specific aspects of a social world. While observation allows researchers to see the world in action (Cooper, Lewis & Urquhart, 2004), interview methods are more conducive for understanding phenomena. Therefore, researchers who use this method tend to not look at the whole landscape, but opt to examine a small part.

Mixed approaches

Mixed-method approaches combine methods of data collection. Within the context of journalism research, there have been a few key bodies of work that adopted a mixed-methods approach, but by combining two qualitative methods. Revers (2014) used observation and semi-structured interviews to understand how journalists working at the state legislature in New York manifested professionalism. Revers' (2014) findings were that journalists' understanding of professionalism is based on daily practice which is informed by the traditions associated with journalism. He spoke with journalists about generalised practice but did not explore specific practices, how journalists felt about their practice, or the experience influences of their practice on professionalism.

Another approach was to conduct a comparative analysis of media systems in Germany and the UK. Esser (1998) aimed to understand how newsroom culture in the two countries differed by examining practice, structure, characteristics, and causation and consequences of practice. The research was a means of examining journalistic tradition, structural characteristics, media law, ethics, self-regulating bodies, working conditions, unions, and other factors that impact practice. Through observation and interviews, Esser determined German journalism tended to be more streamlined while British methods were specific to each practitioner because job titles in the UK influenced practice compared to German newsrooms where journalists are all trained to do any job.

In both Revers' (2014) and Esser's (1998) research, two qualitative methods were used to validate the different data sets collected. The interviews added context to the observational data each set of researchers collected. This is evidence of Kvale's

(2008) argument that interviews alone could be inaccurate because gaps can be found in how people verbalise their experience and what they actually do under observation.

Focus groups

While a focus group can be an effective method for understanding specific demographics of society, such as newspaper journalists, it is a relatively new method for journalism research. Iorio (2014) used focus groups to understand newsrooms in two U.S. cities. One of the key methodological findings was that focus groups provided a group perspective of what it means to a journalist as opposed to an individual perspective, such as in observational or interview methods. Iorio's (2014) work helped the newsroom to reflect and changed the way it provided election night coverage. Willey's (2004) work helped the newsroom to become more attuned to the community it served. From these two bodies of work, focus groups were effective in helping journalists learn and evolve. Mansell, Bennett, Northway, Mead and Moseley (2004) stated that focus groups were beneficial because they facilitated an environment where participants could cooperate and interact with each other to tell their stories. The focus group was ruled out because I was interested in candid responses from participants to understand their practice and identity and how they defend and reify those dynamics. Focus groups' weakness tends to be that dominant voices take over the conversation while shier people are not heard (Mansell et al, 2004). Additionally, it is more difficult to preserve anonymity through focus groups because the format is best suited to understand a group dynamic as evidenced by Mansell et al (2004), Iorio (2014), and Willey (2004).

2.8 Gaps in the literature

As I close this chapter, I turn to the gaps in the literature that this thesis aims to address. These are:

- Use of data directly from journalists to explore how they understand and make sense of their practice;
- How journalism's community of practice, not only informs how traditional epistemic knowledge of journalism is shared, but also how the community creates defences against external criticism;
- Journalists' use of social media has progressed from early research that envisioned a more shared relationship with readers (Dahlgren, 1996; Canter, 2013a, 2013b, 2014);
- The proliferation of digital media has had many impacts on how journalism is practised. One of the most significant impacts has led to the further insulation of journalists from the public as journalists are now scouring the internet and social media for ideas instead of going into the community and keeping in touch with people, and;
- While bereavement journalism is still a stigmatised practice, journalists see the practice as a normal part of their professional landscape. Their most pressing concern with bereavement journalism is ensuring accuracy by at least trying to contact families rather than reverting to third-party accounts of people's lives.

2.9 Concluding remarks

This literature review explored a significant amount of previous journalism research and revealed that research trends have shifted. The earlier observational research of White (1950), Breed (1955), Tuchman (1973), Epstein (1974), Altheide (1976), and Gans (2004) were conducted by sociologists who were interested in understanding how journalism is practised. They followed questions related to how news decisions are made, how newsroom ideology informs output, and how news is prioritised. The shift in emphasis to news values research as a means of providing insight into journalists did shed some light, but more on the characteristics of events that make them newsworthy (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). More contemporary research

revisited the news values issue but still was more to do with understanding how events become newsworthy (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017).

One of the key shifts in researcher has been the advent of the insider-turned-researcher. Researchers, such as Frost, Zelizer, Harcup, and Canter, produced research that focussed on journalists' motivations and perspectives of practice. Since I am taking a similar route of being the insider-turned-research, my aim is to add to the rich tapestry of journalism research by people who were once producers of content and now are academics. Their contributions are important because their familiarity of practice positions them to be able to create research avenues towards better understandings of journalism practice.

This thesis now shifts to Chapter 3 which will be an outline of the design, data collection method, and methodology that have been applied to this research. It will outline the foundations or research and research design. It will address the ethical and other administrative concerns associated with academic research before providing the strategies used in sampling and participant recruitment. The chapter will explore the strategy used, motivations for, and creation of the semi-structured interview instrument used to collect data from research participants. The chapter will then outline the analytical framework that guided the analysis phase of the research and the coding strategy used.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The chapter begins by discussing the epistemological and ontological foundations of my research. I discuss the rationale for the research design including decisions that were made in terms sampling and also the practical steps taken to recruit participants. I then go on to describe the methods of data collection and analysis employed including the construction and piloting of the interview schedule, the analytical strategy used, and how the data was coded. I consider matters of researcher reflexivity, in particular what it means in terms of data collection and analysis to research journalists' experiences of journalism as a journalist-turned-researcher. The chapter ends by exploring how the data was deemed trustworthy and rigorous, To reiterate, this thesis is interested in understanding how UK multimedia and print journalists make sense of their daily professional lives amid a period of significant internal and external upheaval upon their professional landscape.

3.1 Foundations of the research

At all stages of qualitative inquiry, researchers are required to make certain assumptions about knowledge (epistemological assumptions), the perception of reality (ontological assumptions), the research process (methodology), and how our roles as researchers could influence the research process (axiological assumptions) (Saudners, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Cresswell, 2014). This research is borne from a constructionist perspective because the aims and objectives are influenced by the realities constructed by research participants rather than an attempt to guide the data into pre-existing categories (Cresswell, 2014). This research adopts hermeneutic phenomenology as its methodological perspective because it is underpinned by constructionist ideals (Cresswell, 2014; Langdridge, 2007). Data collection was

completed using a semi-structured instrument that was designed to encourage participants to explore and reflect on their careers (Kvale, 1996). Data was then analysed using semantic thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2012, 2013) strategies of analysis. This thesis rejects a positivist approach because it is concerned with understanding the life experiences of people.

Epistemological stance and ontological perspective

The epistemological stance of this research is social constructionism. Knowledge is based on meaning that is constructed, not discovered (Crotty, 1998). Meaning does not simply exist within objects or experiences, but emerges when people engage with them. As Heidegger (1962) points out, the world has always existed. While the actual object may be meaningless, the key concept is that the derivation of meaning comes from interaction with the object or being in the world when the object being studied occurs in a lifeworld. With an epistemological assumption embedded in social constructionism, Crotty (1998) states that any ontological assumption should be similar. Within the scope of this thesis, the ontological assumption is multiple realities because the experiences of each participant will be different. While the ideas of professional identities and journalism practice among multimedia or print journalists may be similar, the way these datasets are constructed will differ because participants will have different experiences and worldviews (Heidegger, 1962).

Burr (2015) argues that social constructionism is a means of understanding that knowledge is a product of human thought and not an observable reality. Important ideas in the sociology of knowledge are focussed on how sociocultural forces construct knowledge and the kind of knowledge being constructed. Social constructionism is concerned with the descriptive perspectives people create about experiences in their

lifeworld. As Hammersley (2013) argues, the constructionist approach focusses on comprehending human action based on accounts related to experience, empathy, and culture from the perspective of an insider as opposed to that of an outsider. Therefore, understanding professional identity and practice of multimedia journalists requires researchers to understand how journalists interpret and make sense of their world (Hammersley, 2013). Researchers must draw from the participants' social experiences or their capacity for learning to understand the phenomenon under study.

It is not possible to understand someone's actions without first understanding how that person interprets and comprehends his/her world. The researcher cannot have preconceived notions when the aim of the research is to understand human experience (Hammersley, 2013). The focus of this study is on the subjective experiences of multimedia journalists, which lends itself to a research paradigm of interpretivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). An interpretivist approach does not follow a hypothetical-deductive approach, but is more concerned with interpreting the experience (Williams, 2000). Consequently, it promotes understanding, appreciation of participants' subjectivity, and flexibility (Creswell, 2007). Altheide and Johnson (1994, updated 2017) argue that social life contains meaning and these meanings provide insight into human phenomenon. To understand these meanings requires an interpretivist approach (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, updated 2017).

Evidence in qualitative research is based on an assertion that certain facts relate to claims being made. Altheide and Johnson (1994, updated 2017) argue the way in which people make claims of knowledge or facts are embedded in ideological or epistemological positions. People hold membership in several epistemic communities. Altheide and Johnson argue that people construct evidentiary narratives to reaffirm certain claims and beliefs they make to solidify their position within the

community. Evidence in qualitative research is not about the facts being outlined, but about the argument. The narrative is contextualised to fit specific assumptions, criteria, and rules of membership within the group.

Within the scope of this research, I must make observations about journalism practice and provide perspectives of the journalists' life based on their constructed experiences. The sample selection process in this study would have to be purposeful rather than random as is the case with a positivist approach. Interaction with the small number of participants would be through dialogue (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This is because understanding journalism practice and identity requires interaction with journalists who fit the mould, in this case, multimedia and print journalists who have worked in the UK. Unlike a positivist paradigm, the subjective nature of this study can facilitate construction of knowledge culturally and socially (Creswell, 2007). An interpretivist research paradigm suggests the use of research tools, such as interviews to understand the life world of print journalists (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this thesis, I will examine and reflect upon the ways in which participants responded to my questions, the ways in which I designed the questions to elicit the intended responses, and how individual reflections on journalism practice fit into broader understanding of journalism practice.

Methodological perspective

The methodology that underpins this thesis is hermeneutic phenomenology. Crotty (1998) argues that hermeneutics is a means of examining human practices, events, and experiences to bring understanding to how people make sense of their lifeworlds. A phenomenological research is concerned with presenting interpretations of experiences in a lifeworld (Cresswell, 2014). In this case, it is understanding what

journalists think of their practice amid contemporary challenges. Hermeneutics promotes understanding of experiences (Heidegger 1962) and phenomenology focuses on lived experiences (van Manen, 2016). Allen (1995) argues there is no clear distinction between phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology, however, he stipulates that phenomenology attempts to provide a valid interpretation that is not based on context of the researcher while hermeneutics is non-foundationalist and is concerned with interpretation through interaction between the researcher and the text. The way in which people make claims to knowledge and understanding of their lifeworld is based on beliefs, knowledge, truths, and values associated with the lifeworld.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is informed by the concept of *dasein* or being in the world (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger argues that it is not possible to bracket oneself out of the research because one cannot exclude oneself from the social world. This is especially true in my case where I am an insider-turned-researcher. This dynamic will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter. Hermeneutic phenomenology is contingent on the researcher drawing on his or her identity, which can relate to experiences of the phenomenon under study to facilitate understanding (Heidegger, 1962; Landridge, 2007; Van Manen, 2016). While hermeneutic phenomenology advocates researchers to immerse themselves within the world, they must also remove themselves from the research during the analytical phase (Heidegger, 1962; Bourdieu, 1988; Langdridge, 2007).

Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on illustrating experiences of the taken-for-granted aspects of life. The aim is to give meaning to a phenomenon. Heidegger's rejection of bracketing is underpinned by the notion that comprehension of the world is not possible without being in the world (Polkinghorne, 1983). As a methodological

approach, hermeneutic phenomenology aligns with the other philosophical assumptions involved in the research strategy of this thesis. Engaging in hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodological approach aligns with an interpretivist research paradigm, an ontological assumption of multiple realities, and an epistemological stance of social constructionism (Crotty, 1998). A phenomenological methodology focusses on the rich and shared experiences of the research participants in this study and has the potential to provide "depth and richness" of meanings from interpretation of data (van Manen, 2016, p 11). The research method was chosen because it was the most appropriate and consistent with the selected methodological approach (Crotty, 1998).

Axiological position

An important step to explore in this chapter is the axiological position. Cresswell (2007) argues that it is imperative to reflect upon the value the researcher brings to the research. The axiological step requires the researcher to point out assumptions made in the research. Doing this helps the researcher to point out the "value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field (Cresswell, 2007, p. 18). The purpose of any research needs to align with the researcher's values and other ethical considerations (Killam, 2013). The axiological step demonstrates a congruency between the epistemological and ontological assumptions (Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu & Abubakar, 2015).

This thesis' axiological position is informed by interpretivism which aligns to the social constructionism epistemological perspective and the multiple realities ontological assumption. Dudovskiy (2018) argues that an interpretivist axiology aligns

with research that rejects an objectivist view for an interpretivist one (Collins, 2018) and accepts that differences in people mean different points of view (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Dudovskiy also points out that interpretivist axiology aligns with subjective research where the researcher cannot bracket him or herself out of the process and is associated with data sets gleaned from small samples of participants. In turn, these criteria, as outlined by Dudovskiy, align with hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodological perspective

Reflexive aspects of the researcher

This section is a reflexive exploration of my position as an insider-turned-researcher. Finlay and Gough (2008) argue that reflexivity is the "defining feature of human consciousness in a postmodern world" (P. 1). What they mean is that reflexivity should enable greater insight into personal and social experiences. Reflexivity in qualitative inquiry allows researchers to consider how their beliefs, experiences, and values play a role in their research. Reflexivity is the way in which the researcher rationalises his or her position (Bonner, 2001; Finlay & Gough, 2008; Patnaik, 2013). Bonner also argues that reflexivity is necessary because researchers must take ownership of claims they make about phenomenology or objects of inquiry.

I draw correlation between my experiences and those of Pierre Bourdieu in his book, *Homo Academicus.* One of Bourdieu's (1988) key objectives with the book was to explore his reflexivity as it related to the epistemological claims he made. Bourdieu wrote the book from the perspective of the sociologist talking to sociologists about sociology, which epitomises the term, the insider-turned-researcher. I viewed my position in my research through a similar lens of a journalist talking to journalists about journalism. Bourdieu (1988) referred to fundamental epistemological problems

that arose from having both practical and scholarly knowledge of a subject. As Wacquant (1990) interpreted it, Bourdieu's objective with the book was to address epistemological problems in his work, such as the knowledge claims he attempted to make. He achieved this by highlighting the need to break from his knowledge of sociology. Bourdieu attempted to establish this with the epistemological break by enhancing objectivity through critical reflection on subjectivity.

To achieve an epistemological break, I followed Bachelard's (2002, original 1938) and Hamza's (2016) arguments that related to the role of the researcher's opinions in any inquiry. Bachelard and Hamza argued opinions could be the first obstacles to scientific knowledge. For knowledge to be truly scientific, it must be processed through a variety of epistemological stages. Epistemological obstacles could be viewed as areas where breaks can occur to separate scientific knowledge from pre-scientific conceptualisation. Scientific knowledge refers to knowledge claims and truth claims this thesis will attempt to make. In other words, for me to make certain claims about the data, I am required to understand how my insider knowledge of journalism guides all aspects of the research from design to construction of the data collection tools to the analysis and interpretation phases.

Reflexivity in the epistemological stage referred back to what Bourdieu (1988) meant by making epistemological breaks between insider knowledge of the field and knowledge claims being made by participants. The researcher must be careful to ensure that his or her knowledge does not infringe upon participant knowledge. During data collection, attention was paid to ensuring that the semi-structured interview instrument encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences as journalists. My insider knowledge allowed me to formulate questions that were informed by two factors:

- Familiarity: My knowledge of journalism in the UK was underpinned by two dynamics: UK and Canadian journalism share characteristics associated with the libertarian media model and I had gained insight into UK practice during the MA International Journalism programme I took a year earlier, and;
- Personal reflection: Asking myself if I were a participant in this research, what questions would I need to be asked to provide a sharp image of my views of journalism practices.

These two factors helped me to understand how my role as an insider-turned-researcher influenced this research. When I was creating the semi-structured interview tool, I used these two factors to formulate the questions for the participants. I felt these factors helped to create a line of inquiry that was fit for purpose in line with the aims and outcomes of this research, along with providing the type of data to answer the research and supporting questions.

There were several considerations to be made. I proposed epistemological claims as a researcher that were based on three perspectives: my knowledge of the profession based on being a former journalist, the existing research literature associated with journalism research, and the research questions that inform this thesis. As a former journalist, I worked primarily as a courts and crime reporter before moving into a management role as an editor. Being a former journalist, I found myself confronted with questions about subjectivity and the intersections of my experiences as a journalist and those of my research participants. One of the first things I asked myself was: "To whom should I be responsible to as a qualitative research?" To make similar claims to epistemological breaks as Bourdieu did, I felt I was responsible to myself and the integrity of my research in terms of critical subjectivity. I appreciated that, at a time when journalists were under greater levels of scrutiny, it was important for me to outline how this research remained objective. At various points of my academic journey where I presented aspects of my work, it was clear that colleagues'

concerns lay with my role as an insider-turned-researcher. As I pointed out earlier in this section, I justified my objectivity by pointing out that journalism practice in Canada and the UK are different on some levels. In most cases, the society's challenges to journalism practice are situated in these differences as I have outlined in Chapter 1.

While I was in a position to understand these claims, there were going to be aspects of the data collection and analysis that were foreign to me. This was because of those nuanced differences. For example, some of the invasive techniques used in the British model were unheard-of in the Canadian system. Paying sources or chasing interview subjects were not practices in the Canadian landscape of journalism practice. There have been isolated examples of chasing interview subjects in the Canadian system, but these were very rare occurrences.

As I have outlined in Chapter 2, much of the early forays into journalism research were conducted by social scientists. Epstein (1974) pointed out that one of the challenges he faced as an outsider trying to explore journalism was the high levels of suspicion journalists held for him. Based on this suspicion, I decided early in the planning of this research to divulge my insider perspective of being a former journalist to my participants. I felt this would reduce suspicion and create a more relaxed atmosphere. Oakley (1982) pointed out that the levelling the power relation between researchers and candidates was a significant factor in her ability to build trust with first-time pregnant mothers in her research. Similarly, I found that when my participants understood that I was a journalist, they were more at ease with me. The result was evident in the participants' tendency to use journalism lexicon to describe their work or to acknowledge my journalism identity as illustrated in the following examples.

There was no scope for comments because we didn't do comments. No scope for editorialising. Our copy was the same agency copy like you got when you worked in Canada. (Ben, Lines 155 to 156)

They used to joke in the office about me because I always rustled through the in-tray on the news desk. People would just scan stuff and throw it in the tray. You'd find one or two gems a week if you looked closely enough. Read your own ads in the personal column it's surprising what you can find. Go to the local pub, well you know all this stuff. (John, Lines 62 to 66)

The only other thing was a sub on [name redacted] as you know we are writers and write stories that appear with no disrespect to the originators of the story but because of the tightness of layout and amount of incoming copy and briefing the actual words are really written by the subeditors. (Steven, Lines 73 to 66)

How much court reporting have you done?

I've been a couple of times. I find it really interesting. I did quite a bit but it is very difficult sometimes getting information from the courts as I'm sure you know. (Clara, Lines 76 to 78)

Phrases in the examples listed above demonstrated the way in which participants were able to relate to me by referring to my journalism experience through the use of phrase, such as "when you worked in Canada", "well you know all this stuff", "as you know", and "I'm sure you know". I found these phrases to be consistent with attempts to build a rapport between participants and me as the insider-turned-researcher.

I felt it was important to put my participants at ease by making sure they understood that I could identify with them as a former journalist. In Oakley's (1982) research, she accomplished this by divulging to her interview participants that she was a mother. She found that the women not only were more willing to speak candidly, but also looked to her as a counsellor about motherhood. In this research, I found that senior journalists related to me by pointing that they felt I could appreciate their experiences as evidenced in the quotes above. Among the early career journalists, the relationship building tended to occur in the pre-interview conversations where they wanted to know about my journalism background or to inquire about what it was like to be a journalist in Canada. My priori knowledge of journalism was a help during the analytical phase of the research. It helped me to understand and identify keywords and

phrases that I felt were important entryways into the datasets. It also helped me to understand and identify areas of practice that were foreign to me.

During the first phases of analysis, I was able to begin unpacking the data by examining transcripts for keywords and phrases that I could identify as by implicitly or explicitly familiar to me about journalism practice. This meant I had to ask myself: How do I address assumptions in my research that I find in the data analysis? It became clear that implicit assumptions became a guide to finding entryways into the data. This led to me reflecting on my understanding of journalism practice to visualise the constructions of practice that were not only familiar to me, but those that were different. For example, the cases in which participants reflected on paying sources or had to dress up in religious garments to gauge public perception. My familiarity with journalism practice allowed me to verify participants' knowledge claims as being reasonably rational and accurate portrayals of what it meant to be a journalist.

3.2 Research design

Research question: How are UK print and online journalists navigating their contemporary landscape amid ongoing and unprecedented challenges to practice?

Epistemology: Social constructionism
Ontology: Multiple realities
Methodology: Hermeneutic phenomenology
Axiology: Interpretivism

Participants: Journalists who work in the UK either in the print medium or who consider themselves multimedia

Data collection: Semi-structured interviews
Analytical strategy: Semantic thematic analysis

Figure 3.1: Thesis research design

Cresswell (2014) states that phenomenological study requires description of several people's experiences of a phenomenon. The phenomenologist aims to describe the commonalities participants demonstrate in the descriptions they construct. Van Manen (2016) points out that phenomenology's strength lies in its ability to reduce experiences to a universal essence. Figure 3.1 is a graphical representation of the research. To meet my aims and objectives and to answer my research questions requires interaction between myself and an ideal cross-section of people who are representative of the journalism community. As I explored in Chapter 2, there are a significant array of ways to go about collecting data. I chose interviews because the best way of understanding how people make sense of experience is by interrogating texts they construct about their experiences.

3.3 Ethics, health, safety, and data management

Since I was working with human subjects as participants, there is a potential for harm. During my application for ethical clearance from the university, I was required to clarify how I would anonymise my participants, as well as their former or current employers as per university guidelines. In each person's case, they were sent copies of the participant information sheet and a consent form to read through and sign to acknowledge their rights within the research and the understanding that they could withdraw from the research at any time. While it was important to ensure the anonymity of the research participants, it was also important to add protection for employment they currently or previously held, as well as for their employers. Gryner (2002) argues that the protection of the identities of candidates is central to the design and practice of ethical research. Therefore, all participants' names were changed. Initially, I wanted to use an alphanumeric system to refer to the participants to remove all aspects of their identity, however, creating pseudonyms is viewed as desirable in achieving anonymity, humanising research participants, and aligning with maximum gains with minimal pains (Guenther, 2009; Mukunga, 2017).

However, complete anonymity was not easy to accomplish. Walford (2005) argues that it is impossible to ensure complete anonymity in academic research. This thesis aligns with his understanding of anonymity and confidentiality. He argues that anonymity is the more straightforward of the two concepts because it means not providing the participant's real name. Walford found confidentiality to be more problematic because he defined confidentiality as something that is private. In that context, the content being divulged should not be disseminated. While it may be possible to keep some things confidential, Walford argues it is impossible to ensure complete confidentiality to anyone. Instead, he argues that the researcher's duty is to

gather data from the participants, analyse the data, and then disseminate the findings. He argues that the issue is the anonymity of people associated with data. To add further protection, any news organisation titles, or town names were redacted to add to the anonymity of the participants.

Anonymity was especially challenging for the two participants because their experiences were already in the public domain and were considered controversial. However, they were afforded the same consideration as other research participants, such as anonymity and redaction of places and names of news organisations. Interestingly, these two participants were the least concerned about ensuring their anonymity, which could be due to their perception that since they are no longer part of the journalism community, they felt immune from any repercussions.

Health and safety

As per university guidelines, a health and safety schedule were planned and implemented. This guideline was a protocol to allow my team of supervisors and I to pinpoint potential threats to health and safety. We identified lone working and travel as the main areas of interest. While we acknowledged that part of PhD research would involve long days of working alone, we were more focussed on health and safety as it applied to travel. Since I had to travel to meet some of the research participants, a plan was developed where I would notify my director of studies of any trips that I was to make for data collection with dates and times being noted and then I would send a follow-up email to notify him that I had returned safely.

Data storage

Upon completion of the PhD, all data will be stored in the university's research archive. During the course of the research, I stored data on encrypted portable hard drives and USB sticks. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) outline three issues researchers must consider in data management:

- Ensuring the data is of high quality and accessible.
- Demonstrate the analytical strategy.
- Method for data and analysis retention.

They advocate two questions that need to be addressed: What does the researcher do to account for data management needs, and how thorough does data management have to be?

In response to these two questions, data management is ensured by keeping recordings of the interviews and transcripts on the encrypted portable hard drive and USB sticks as mentioned before. Transcripts are stored on the same devices and also on my university Google Drive account which is encrypted. Data management is very thorough because it aligns with the ethical commitment to anonymity for research participants. There is a risk that participants could be identified by the sound of their voices if their recordings enter the public domain.

3.4 Sampling and participant recruitment

The main sampling criteria I used was opportunity sampling because I had to rely on participant recommendations from members of the journalism faculty at Sheffield Hallam University. This was due to my lack of access to a network of journalists in the UK from whom I could call upon because my career existed in Canada. In the early days of strategising and planning the participant recruitment process, I contacted several local and national journalists to ask them to participate in

my research. These included journalistic thought leaders, such as Nick Davies and Roy Greenslade, who are leading UK journalists and academics. I felt including high profile participants would lend an air of legitimacy to the research. However, none of the people I reached out to in the early stages responded to requests to participate in my research. Instead, I turned to the faculty members in Sheffield Hallam University's journalism department for potential journalists I could approach.

Since all members of staff were either former or current journalists, I felt confident that they could suggest people I could approach. The early career journalists were students of Hallam's journalism programmes and Sheffield College's NCTJ preparation programme. The senior journalists were former colleagues of members of staff. I rounded out the list with a candidate, whom I had followed on Twitter, who is an academic and critical of regulation in the UK. Another participant I recruited was a freelance national journalist whom I had met on several occasions at journalism conferences. The journalists recommended to me represented a wide cross-section of practitioners who were trainees, retirees, regional, national, business-to-business, broadcasters, tabloid, and freelance journalists.

Opportunity sampling is a quick and effortless way of recruiting participants. However, it could be problematic if the sample does not represent a broad cross-section of potential recruits. I avoided this problem by establishing two groups I wished to interview and defined parameters for the two groups. When I began postgraduate research, this project was going to examine the impacts that the Leveson Inquiry may or may not have had on the journalism landscape. I wanted to establish two groups for comparative purposes: early career journalists and senior journalists. Even though the scope of this research has shifted significantly from those early days, the groupings remained relevant as there was going to be some comparative work done

to understand journalism practice in the digital context compared to the pre-digital landscape.

Early career participant recruitment

Participant	Years of experience (in years)	Regional National	Working condition	Pathway to practice
Adam	3	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Ian	5	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Jack	4	National	Full time	Broadcast-Online
Katarina	1.5	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Martha	4	B2B	Telecommute	Online
Mickey	6	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Polly	2	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Rory	4	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Rose	0.5	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Susan	4	Regional	Full time	Print

Table 3.1: Graphical view of early career participants

The first step towards participant recruitment was to define the term "early career journalist" within the context of the research. The inclusion criteria used for journalists in the early career group were that they had to be:

- Employed in any agreed-to relationship (full-time, part-time, contract, telecommute or freelance);
- At newspapers, online organisations, or any media company with an online presence;
- Must be working in the UK, and;
- Have zero to five years' experience.

The criteria were liberal for working relationships because journalists have faced significant changes to how they work due to widespread downsizing of the

workforce and changes to working relationships, such as telecommuting (Saltzis and Dickinson, 2008; Deuze, 2008a; Brø, Hansen and Andersson, 2016). I was concerned that limiting the scope of employment relationship could limit the number of participants. Of the 10 participants in this group, nine were full-time employees in traditional newsrooms and one worked remotely from a home office.

Participants were recruited based on the recommendations of members of the journalism faculties at Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield College. Research aims and objectives played a significant role in participant recruitment (Morse, 1991; Coyne, 1997). I decided that an ideal participant would be one who could provide in-depth accounts of central significance to the aims and objectives of the research (Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2014). During recruitment, ideal candidates were prioritised as those who represented a broad cross-section based on gender, age, class, and other social divisions.

Table 3.1 provides a graphic breakdown of the early career participants in this group. All of these participants were in their 20s and comprised an even representation of males and females. All 10 are classified as British Caucasian. Of the 10, eight worked on regional news organisations or parish weeklies in traditional print-based journalism roles. One worked for an international broadcaster and came from a broadcast background before settling into the broadcaster's online newsroom. The other worked as a contributing writer for a business-to-business magazine and worked from home while physically meeting colleagues on a monthly basis in London when necessary. The only dynamic that was not covered in this recruitment of candidates was race which will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Sampling — senior journalists

Participant	Years of experience (in years)	Regional National	Working condition	Pathway to practice
Alistair	25	Regional /National	Freelance	Print-Online
Ben	35	Regional	Full time	Print
Clara	7	National	Freelance	Print-Online
Grace	30	Regional	Full time	Print-Online
Harry	5	National	Full time	Print
Jamie	25	National	Full time	Print-Online
John	35	Regional	Full time	Print
Steven	30	National	Full time	Print
Vicki	20	Regional	Full time	Print-Online

Table 3.2: Outlook senior research participants

The inclusion criteria for participant recruitment for the second group in the research put more emphasis on career advancement and experience levels. While early career participants tended to be at the beginning of their careers, participants in the senior group tended to be more advanced, specialists, editors, or national journalists. This group also included freelance writers because there was a tendency for senior journalists to move into freelance writing after building a reputation for themselves as newsroom journalists. With more experience, the likelihood of these journalists having worked on a variety of publications in various working relationships was greater than their junior counterparts. Therefore, working agreement was not a consideration. I defined senior journalists as those who:

- Entered the workforce in mid-2000s or earlier;
- In the pre-digital era, focussed would have been on newspaper journalism;
- Could have transitioned into online journalism;
- Have experience working at a variety of levels such as national, regional, and/or weekly publications, and;
- Could be retired or close to retirement.

Retired journalists were included because they could provide insight and context from a historical point of view to highlight any significant change that may have occurred in journalism practice in the digital age. Previous research demonstrated that journalists placed emphasis on certain factors, such as autonomy of the journalist and the ability to sense news (Epstein, 1974; Gans, 2004), therefore, I felt it would be relevant to explore these power factors and determine to understand how they are applied in the digital landscape. While the objective was to recruit 10 to 15 senior journalists, nine chose to participate, which turned out to be a good cross-section of accounts for data collection.

Within this group, there were two types of career paths: those who chose to spend their careers in the regional press and those who spent all or most of their careers in the national press. Of the nine participants, three considered themselves freelance journalists, three had retired following long careers in the profession, two had left journalism under very contentious conditions, and one still worked on a large regional title. Similar to the early career group, all of the participants in this group were Caucasian. They ranged in age from early 30s to late 60s. While two participants began their careers within the past 10 to 15 years, the rest had been journalists for at least 30 years. With the exception of the freelance journalists, the other participants worked primarily in traditional full-time roles in newsrooms. And even among the freelance journalists, two of the three held traditional newsroom positions at some point in their careers.

Reflections on participant recruitment and sampling

Recruitment was carried out using opportunity sampling because I was reliant on the network of lecturers since I did not know any journalists in the UK. I also called

on aspects of maximum variation and phenomenal variation sampling when it came to defining the criteria for the type of journalists I wanted to recruit for the research. Advocates, who endorse the combination of sampling strategies, argue that the results could be more effective with a well-rounded representative base of the phenomenon (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). I found that having a well-defined criteria for candidates allowed me to communicate to lecturers the types of candidates I required for this research. The result was an excellent cross-section of participants who represented a wide array of journalism perspectives. I aimed to embody Langdridge's (2007) maximum variation by attempting to recruit participants who represented a variety of social backgrounds based on gender, age, socioeconomic, and news organisation types. My recruitment strategy also aligned with Coyne's (1997 and Sandelowski's (1995) perspectives on phenomenal variation to target participants who came from as wide a variety of journalism backgrounds as possible.

Of the 19 participants, 18 came from a print journalism background with most moving into digital media. The other candidate had a background in broadcast before moving into digital media. The participants represented a cross-section of backgrounds, such as experience levels, national journalists, regional journalists, weekly editors, online broadcasters, business-to-business journalists, and freelance writers. The experience levels ranged from six months in the job to retirees. While the gender split was almost even, all of the participants were Caucasian British. One of the problematic areas in the UK journalism landscape is a lack of racial diversity in the profession. A City University/Changing Media Summit study revealed that 94 percent of journalists are white, 86 percent are university educated, and 55 percent are male (Martinson, 2018). Another study commissioned by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) supported the City University finding of 94 percent of

journalists being white. Spilsbury's (2018) research also showed that only 14 percent of journalists are considered ably challenged. Therefore, the recruitment of participants who represented minority demographics, such as race or those with disabilities, was problematic.

As I stated before, my original plan was to explore the impacts of the Leveson Inquiry on the journalism landscape. This dictated the groupings I created for the participants. However, the groupings were still fit for purpose when the scope of the research shifted to exploration of the contemporary journalism landscape. The rationale for creating two sample groups was to do some comparative research during the analysis to determine if the changing landscape of journalism in the UK changed the way journalists practised their profession and potentially impacted on their identity. In a hermeneutic phenomenological research, participants are chosen based on their lived experiences, their willingness to talk about those experiences in a candid manner, and the variety of perspectives they can provide (Sandelowski, 1995; Coyne, 1997; Laverty, 2003; Patton, 2014). The research participants recruited matched with these criteria and satisfied phenomenal variation sampling (Coyne, 1997) because they had a wide variety of experiences in journalism practice.

While 80 percent of the participants worked in the newspaper industry, the remaining 20 percent worked for publications that would not be classified as traditional print journalism but called upon the same practices associated with multimedia journalism. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) support the inclusion of outlier candidates so as not to narrow the participant pool too early in the research. Although these candidates may not share the same experiences and practices as those in print journalism, they could provide perspectives on journalism practices and experiences (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Geographically speaking, most of

the participants worked in the Yorkshire and Lancashire areas of the UK while a few worked in the Midlands and Southwest England. Those who had national experience were based in London. None of the participants worked in Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland. The number of participants proved to be ideal because data saturation was achieved. Data saturation is the point at which a clearer understanding of the experience can no longer be discovered (Sandelowski, 1986; Laverty, 2003).

Contacting potential participants

The first participant was recommended by my director of studies and contact was made using Twitter's direct messaging system. After she agreed to participant in an interview, the candidate was sent more information that outlined the research objectives and what was required of her. The participant information sheet and participant consent form were sent one week before the interview. The first interview was conducted at the university in one of the meeting rooms. Unlike most meeting rooms, this one was furnished with a settee, chair, and coffee table which created a less formal environment than conventional meeting rooms. It meant a more relaxed atmosphere so that the interview felt more like a casual conversation than a data collection exercise. The interview lasted about 45 minutes because the candidate was quite vocal and provided in-depth responses to the questions.

The rest of the candidates were contacted in the same starting with social media, then more direct communication for the dissemination of the participant forms. Contact with those participants recommended from Sheffield College was made via email addresses furnished to me by the lecturer from interested candidates. Including the initial interview, four interviews were conducted face-to-face with the others taking place over the telephone to accommodate participants due to location,

schedules, and availability for interviews. I found that in-person interviews provided accounts that were richer only in terms of being able to make observations of participants as they reflected on the questions. In-person interviews did not differ significantly in terms of interview lengths or richness of data sets that those conducted over the telephone (Johnson, Scheitle & Ecklund, 2017). As Novick (2008) argues, there were advantages to telephone interviews because the added buffer of anonymity provided by the phone meant candidates were more willing to speak without feeling judgment about their experiences. This was especially true with the two candidates who reflected on controversial experiences as journalists.

3.5 Designing the semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview was selected as the optimal data collection instrument early on in the research planning stages. Interviews are ideal for their ability to capture the ways in which people construct experiences (Bernard, 2002; Longhurst, 2003; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Rabionet, 2011; Murakami et al, 2013). This correlates with the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin this thesis as discussed earlier in this chapter. Kvale (1996) argues that qualitative interviews are designed to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to discover meaning in people's experiences, and to uncover their lived world. Semi-structured interviews elicit the types of descriptions of the lifeworld that would be ideal for interpretation to understand the meaning of described phenomena.

Keeping with the framework of this research and its phenomenological methodology, I agree with Kvale's (1996) perspective of how phenomenology and interviews work in concert to uncover social phenomena based on participant experiences, descriptions of the world as experienced by the participant, and the assumption that the reality is what people perceive it to be. The aim of phenomenology

in interviewing is to lend clarity to the phenomenon (Kvale, 1996). The objective is to study the participants' perspectives of their world, to describe the content and structure of the candidates' consciousness, grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences, and explicate the essential meaning. Qualitative interviews provide the researcher access to lived experiences. Phenomenologically, these types of interviews are ideal for gaining access to basic experiences in the participant's lifeworld. These arguments are a fit with the aims and objectives of this thesis; therefore, a semi-structured interview was the ideal data collection instrument.

Creating a semi-structured interview

I followed Kvale's (1996) seven-step process for creating an interview instrument.

- Thematising: With the aim of the interview in mind, the "why" and "what" of the investigation must be clear before "how" can be posed;
- Designing: Consideration must be made in conjunction with the intended knowledge and moral implications of the investigation in mind;
- Interviewing: Reflexivity must be considered when basing an interview guide;
- Transcribing: Converting the interview from speech to text;
- Analysing: Deciding, based on the aims, outcomes, and nature of the material, the method most appropriate for analysing the interviews;
- Verifying: Ascertaining the veracity of the data. Reliability refers to how consistent the results are. Validity refers to the understanding that the interview investigated what it was meant to investigate, and;
- Reporting: Communicating the findings.

Denzin (1989), and Barriball and White (1994) warn that faulty design could lead to a distortion of the data. After the decision to use a semi-structured interview as the data collection instrument, an interview schedule was developed to allow research participants to reflect on their experiences and provide robust datasets of their everyday professional experiences. The research questions, literature related to journalism research, and my prior experience guided the line of questions. The first draft of the data collection instrument was subject to assessment by my research supervisors, at which point any ambiguous language, leading questions, and general criticisms were outlined. These discussions about the types of questions were very valuable to me because it helped in my development as an academic researcher. This helped me to shift the paradigm towards designing questions that were open-ended to allow participants to reflect on their experiences. The interview questions development phase was a key lesson because it showed me that data collection

development must be as transparent and as ethical as possible. Questions must be designed so as not to cause undue stress for the participants.

I selected semi-structured interviews because of their allowance for original perspectives. I followed Doody and Noonan's (2013) perspectives on semi-structured interviews. Working from an ontological assumption of multiple realities, it would be reasonable to assume that I could not think of all possible perspectives participants could contribute during the interviews. Therefore, I agreed with Doody and Noonan's argument that semi-structured interviews allowed researchers to consider new pathways that may not have been previously evident (Gray, 2004). For example, as a journalist, I had never worked as a freelance writer, therefore, I would not have been able to anticipate how freelance journalists made sense of reality. Therefore, when the freelance journalist participants were interviewed, I was able to shift direction during the interviews to explore the freelance identity in more detail.

The conversational style associated with interviewing (Patton, 2014) meant that it was easy to remain on course during the interviews. Doody and Noonan (2013) argue that a potential problem with interviews, especially among first-time researchers, was the lack of experience of knowing where to prompt questions or how to shift the direction when something said needs clarification or exploration. I did not find this to be the case because of two reasons. As part of my doctoral training, I took a module on qualitative research in which part of the module focussed on how to conduct interviews, how to ask questions that required reflection from the participants, and how to remain quiet as a strategy to encourage the participant to fill the silence. Second, I drew from my career as a journalist where, through experience of asking questions, I had developed an instinct to help me know when to ask the next question and to understand when further clarification was needed. While in the strategising

phase, I was aware of the ethical implications of conducting interviews, such as people's vulnerabilities and regrets they may have later. These were made explicit in the participant consent forms that each candidate had to sign before being interviewed that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

Gillham (2005) points out that researchers must be aware of potential vulnerabilities of an interview subject. During the design phase of the data collection component of the research, this meant using more neutral language that would not cause undue stress for the participants. One example of this was having to change a question from "Please recount a time when you were forced to breach your ethics" to "Please reflect on a time when you felt challenged by a morally questionable assignment". The difference in language construction is that "forced to breach" could put participants on the defensive due to the accusatory tone of the phrase "forced to breach your ethics". "Felt challenged by a morally questionable assignment" removes any feelings of being put on the spot because it removes the implication of blame (Gillham, 2005).

Another consideration was for regret. Researchers have an obligation to their participants who may make regretful disclosures during the interview and must be conscious of how to approach the interview (Gillham, 2005). This was not generally the case with my interviews because I sent back the typed transcripts to participants to read with the instruction to send back any clarifications they wanted to make. All of the participants except one were satisfied with the transcripts. The one who was not completely satisfied wanted me to redact his job title because he felt he could be identified by it.

During the planning phase, I was more concerned about approaching the controversies attached to two of the participants. I was aware of the extreme

circumstances of two participants based on a media law module I took as a masters'
student. The first was one of six journalists who faced trial for paying government
sources and the second had a very public way of resigning from his tabloid newspaper
employer. These two candidates were selected because of the extremely unique
experiences as journalists. Although I attempted to develop a strategy to broach the
controversial experiences, both participants were very eager to talk about those
experiences and directed the interviews immediately in that direction.

Reflections on setting the interview questions

While most of the questions were asked of all participants, there were a few
questions that were different. This was because those questions were only applicable
to members of one group but not the other. For example, only participants in the early
career group could answer questions about how the Leveson Inquiry featured in their
educational training since the inquiry occurred concurrently to the participants'
pedagogical development Similarly, questions that explored how journalists got
involved in mentoring and shaping trainee journalists was a question only a senior
journalist could answer. Questions were divided into four sections:

- Section A covered exploratory issues such as how the participant was trained, career aspirations, employment relationship, and reflections on what it meant to be a journalist;
- Section B focussed on the ethical issues such as reflections on morally questionable assignments, reflections of the Leveson Inquiry, public interest, and public trust;
- Section C explored how participants viewed newsroom culture, such as what constituted news, how stories are assigned, the coverage of local council and courts, and any emphasis on news idea generation by journalists, and;
- Section D was concerned with how the participants viewed their newsroom communication which covered topics such as web analytics, communication in the newsroom, and crisis management.

While this was the outline for the early career journalist group, some questions were altered for the senior participant group.

Rationale behind the questions

In this section, I will highlight the rationale for questions in the data collection instrument.

Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?

How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

How many jobs have you had journalism since graduation?
Why did you want to become a journalist?

These were open questions aimed at helping me to understand the participants' educational backgrounds and where they were in their careers at the time when I interviewed them. These helped to establish some contexts that would be helpful during the analytical phase.

What does journalism mean to you?

What are the main roles of a journalist?

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?
And how has your thinking changed since you started working?
What are your career goals?

These questions were the starting point for the interview where I encouraged the participants to reflect on their careers, their understanding of journalism, and to construct accounts that would form the basis for analysis in Chapter 4 that aimed to answer the supporting question: **How do journalists view their practice and the public interest in their views of the journalism profession?**

The next set of questions were aimed at having the participants construct accounts of their ethical alignments as journalists.

What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

What impact did Leveson have any impact on your career in journalism?

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

What is your understanding of the public interest?

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for? Praised for?

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

Thinking back to when you were a student, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry?

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. How were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues?

Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues faced a moral dilemma? How did this make you feel?

This section began by getting participants to reflect on the Leveson Inquiry before it encouraged them to move closer to their own journalism practice and how they made sense of ethics in their daily professional lives. The Leveson questions were meant to serve two functions. For the early career journalists, it was an opportunity to explore if the inquiry played a part in their development. For the senior participants, it was a chance for them to reflect and respond to an external forensic investigation into their profession. The questions that required the participants to reflect on criticism and praise were meant to allow the participants to begin to think and reflect about how

they defend their ethical choices. These questions were also insightful for understanding how they viewed the readers.

Up to this point, the questions were geared towards their reflections on things they could control or embody. I included the question on public interest in this section because it goes together with the ethics of the press since Lord Justice Leveson related public interest to the hacking scandal. The public interest also featured prominently in past literature that explored western democratic journalists' motivations. These lines of inquiry are useful for all three analytical chapters because the first chapter is concerned with the understanding of journalism practice and the public interest, the second with ethical defence of morally ambiguous assignments, and the third with the external factors, such as public trust, on journalism practice.

The final question of the section got to the core of Chapter 6, which explored how journalists defended ethics when faced with morally questionable assignments. The purpose was to challenge the participants to talk about their experiences of being faced with an assignment with which they felt uncomfortable because of the ethical implications. This question tied in with one outlined earlier in this section that asked them to reflect on their awareness of best practices because it helped to paint a clear picture of what they would consider to be ethical journalism and how they defended themselves in real world scenarios.

The emphasis in Section C was on the newsroom culture. With the literature pointing out that newsroom culture and other external circumstances influenced the workflow of journalists, it was important to have the participants construct their accounts of the changing landscape of practice. It was also designed to understand the machinations of contemporary newsrooms and to compare them to older practices which would appear in the senior participant narratives.

What is a news story?

What are the ground rules of how news is defined?

Is there a clear list of what sorts of stories your newsroom is interested in?

What kind of stories do you write?

Are you given stories to pursue?

In what ways have social media and web-based journalism impacted your newsroom?

How much emphasis is placed on covering courts and local authority?

How much emphasis is placed on journalists generating their own story ideas?

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

These questions serve two purposes. First, it allowed the participants to construct their views of their daily practice within the context of a digital landscape. Second, it allowed for comparison especially with the older participants who spent all of their careers or the vast majority of their time in pre-digital newsrooms. These questions were especially important ones for those participants who worked in regional journalism because of the concerns outlined in the Cairncross Inquiry in Chapter 2 about the state of regional and local journalism today.

Section D was concerned with adding some context about newsroom communication.

How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

There have been instances where errors have been "edited into copy" during the production phase? Has this ever happened to any of your stories? How was the situation dealt with?

These questions were designed to allow participants to reflect and provided insight into how communication occurred in the newsroom. These types of questions

provided the basis for an understanding of how professional learning occurred in the newsroom environment where it could be reasonably assumed a community of practice exists. That is, these questions provide insight into how professional development occurred and how journalists learned on the job through experience and interaction with senior colleagues.

The questions for senior participants were almost the same as they were for early career journalists with the exception of three questions, I felt they were in a position to answer.

> *What sort of pressures exist in the newsroom?*
> *Thinking back to the first time you worked in a newsroom, what sort of advice did you receive from your senior colleagues in terms of ethical practices?*
> *What sort of advice do you impart upon new journalists?*

These questions were meant to serve as comparison data to the early career participants' positions. They were designed so that senior participants could reflect on the pre-digital era to provide an understanding of the newsroom culture, how they learned as trainees, and later how they conveyed their experience and knowledge to new trainees. The reason that questions related to types of pressures that existed in newsrooms was only asked of early career journalists because this research is focussed on contemporary challenges faced by journalists. It was felt that the challenges in the newsroom senior journalists faced would not be within the same context. For example, contemporary challenges, such as working to digital deadlines, thinking of the internet first, and having to work across many media platforms are contemporary challenges senior journalists did not have to consider in their print newsrooms. Older participants' challenges in the newsroom were different and were addressed when they constructed their experiences in their experiences in other questions.

Piloting the data collection instrument

While no official pilot study was conducted, the first interview was used to evaluate the data collection instrument. Piloting is important because it helps researchers understand how interviews unfold, the effectiveness of the questions, the appropriateness of the questions, and the quality of the data (Simkhada, Bhatta & Van Teijingen, 2006; Barriball & White, 1994). Based on this initial interview, it was determined that the questions were ideal with the exception of one that had to be reworded because it was slightly confusing for the participant.

This first interview was conducted in-person in an interview room at the university. The roundtable lasted about 45 minutes. It was recorded using three devices: the GarageBand recording programme on a MacBook Air laptop, a recording application on a smartphone, and a recording device borrowed from the university's media department. Three devices were used to test which devices would be the most reliable method for recording future interviews. GarageBand and phone methods were clear, reliable forms of recording interviews while the microphone stopped working on several occasions. Subsequent interviews were recorded on GarageBand and the phone which served as backups to each other.

The interview went smoothly with the participant feeling at ease. There were no moments of undue stress. This could be due to several factors: the participant was known for having a pleasant personality, the participant was a former student of the university so there was a nostalgia for her, or the participant was recommended as having an exceptionally high interest in journalism as a student which translated into the person's early career keenness.

Transcription practices

An often glossed over aspect of the research process, transcription is a necessary and pivotal aspect of qualitative inquiry (Oliver, Serovitch & Mason, 2005). Oliver et al argue that there are two approaches to transcription: naturalism in which every utterance, pause, and stutter is included, or; de-naturalism in which everything is removed except for the actual text of the transcript. Schleghoff (1997) states that naturalised speech is more reflective of the real world because it includes the normal speech patterns while the denaturalised transcript is more aligned with the meaning and perspectives used to construct reality (Cameron, 2001). Since the analytical strategy was not yet fully developed during the data collection phase, I opted for a naturalism approach. However, during the analytical phase, the interviews were examined in their denaturalised phase since I was interested in how my participants constructed reality.

Transcription occurred within hours of the interview unless the interview was held late in the evening then it would occur the following day. I drew from my experiences as a journalist to write stories as quickly as possible because the interviews and other intangible factors that may not have been evident in those interviews were still fresh in my mind. Similarly, by transcribing as quickly as possible, I was able to remember much of the interview and able to add in notes that I felt were of relevance from the interviews. Transcription was conducted by first listening to the recording in full. Each interview was typed out, which took two to three hours per interview depending on how in-depth participants went with their responses. As part of the member-checking process, each transcript was emailed to the participants to verify or amend if they felt something was missing. Only one participant asked that I redact his job title because he felt he could be identified by it.

Reflections on participant recruitment and interviews

Being a former journalist was advantageous during the data collection process. It helped me to understand the participants, played a role in the construction of the data collection instrument, and endeared me to the candidates. In his research, Epstein (1974) was valid in his assessment that journalists can be wary of outsiders who want to conduct research into their lifeworld. This was especially true of that era when much of the research was carried out by sociologists. It was not until recently that journalists began to move into academia. Although there was no definitive way to know if my prior experience as a journalist was helpful, there were indications, such as the participants relating back to me using phrases such as "as you would be aware", "as I'm sure you know", and "you must have done this during your time". Another key factor was the power structure of the interviews, which was emphasised during a module on qualitative research I was required to take. The interviews felt more like conversations than interviews with no one expressing feelings of anxiety or stress by the process.

As part of her reflection on research on first-time expectant mothers, Oakley (1982) wrote about her experiences in the interview process by pointing out that creating a perception of not having a power structure in the interview led to more meaningful datasets because her participants felt more relaxed. She accomplished this by telling her participants that she was a mother. Oakley found that her participants began to see her as a counsellor who could answer her questions on motherhood, in addition to her being a researcher collecting data. Similarly, I let participants know I was a former journalist and felt that it helped to create an atmosphere of equality where participants felt comfortable. A second method to achieving comfort was through the networking of candidates. All of the participants and I shared a mutual contact who

was either a lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University or Sheffield College. With the early career participants, these mutual contacts were lecturers while the tendency was that the contact was a former work colleague of the senior participants because the members of the journalism faculty were current or former journalists.

Despite working with research participants with whom I shared a mutual contact, there was a need to reflect upon the efficacy of these people's data. There could be concerns about the veracity of the experiences participants constructed during interviews. I felt I was able to validate the experiences based on my priori knowledge and ability to identify authentic journalism understandings based on my experience. As I have stated earlier in this chapter, there were aspects of UK journalism practice that were foreign to my comprehension. However, I found the experiences expressed by participants to be robust and fit for analysis. I was also aware of the factor that people say things they think you want to hear, but will eventually resort to a narrative that is more in line with reality. This became evident when I was analysing the data as I was able to see how early responses were meant to build a positive impression, but when the questions began to explore challenges that directly impacted their practice, participants' accounts became more embedded in reality that idealism. I felt their earlier responses were idyllic because they were the types of responses that pointed towards ideal views of what journalism ought to be and did not represent what journalism truly was for my participants (Ekström & Westlund, 2019, Deuze, 2005).

While I was aware of the need to keep participants at ease by levelling the power structure, I also kept Kvale's (1996) perspectives on the power structure in mind. Kvale wrote that even though it would be helpful to put the participant at ease, it is a misnomer to believe that interviews are normal conversations because the researcher still holds power since there is an objective for holding the interview. He

also pointed out that interviews were one-way dialogues where the participant contributed most of the content with some direction from the interviewer. The interview was seen as an instrumental dialogue where the conversation's function was to collect the lifeworld experiences of the participants (Kvale, 1996). The interview served an important role for providing me with descriptions, narratives, and texts that were robust for interpretation and were in line with the research questions, aims, and outcomes. Overall, I felt that I made a concerted effort to ensure the comfort of my participants while maintaining a desirable level of power since I was able to control the interviews and moved them in any direction I felt needed to be explored.

Interview styles: face-to-face versus telephone

Of the 19 interviews conducted for this research, four were done face-to-face and the remaining 15 by telephone. The logistics of travelling around the UK, coordinating interview times that would be conducive, and a preference by participants for phone interviews, meant a reliance on telephone interviews. Interviewing by phone is an acceptable way to collect data (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Novick, 2008). A key reason is the added layer of anonymity the phone provides. Novick (2008) pointed out studies where drug addicts felt freer to admit drug use when they were interviewed by telephone. Similarly, my participants felt more comfortable reflecting on experiences where they felt they were not fully ethical, including two participants who had controversial experiences in the profession. The participants whom I interviewed in person needed some encouragement to speak frankly about those experiences that may not portray them favourably. Specifically, when I interviewed "Mickey", he provided very short responses until I asked him to reflect on the Leveson Inquiry. This subject

served as a trigger because he became more candid in his responses and provided some of the most detailed claims for this research.

A key difference between the two types of interviews was the lack of nonverbal cues with telephone interviews (Novick, 2008). I was not able to pick up on nonverbal communication on phone calls as I was able to do with the participants who were interviewed in person. While Novick argues nonverbal cues can contribute to the robustness of data, she also states that those cues can easily be misinterpreted. These cues are also more effective for datasets collected from field notes rather than transcripts (Novick, 2008; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). While nonverbal cues may be lost, Novick argues audible cues may become enhanced, such as signs, hesitations or pauses for thought. Since my datasets are transcripts, there would not be a cause for concern that telephone interviews made up a significant component of the data collection process.

Another key area for consideration was what Opdenakker (2006) referred to as contextual data loss. Contextual data refers to cues, such as where the participant is situated during the interviews. However, Cresswell (2007) dismisses this perspective because interviews are more likely to be conducted in neutral settings rather than in the participant's natural setting. While Novick (2008) argues that contextual data can provide signals of the participant's socio-economic status, this was not a consideration in this research. Another area for consideration was the potential distortion of data (Novick, 2008). Since the in-person interviews tended to be longer than the telephone interviews, there could be a distortion of the robustness of data from telephone interviews. Shuy (2002) argues that telephone interviews are not as likely to generate a natural response as an in-person interview would where rapport has been built beforehand. However, Novick (2008) points to a burgeoning strategy of using the

internet for qualitative research as a counterargument to Shuy's position. In other words, more remote forms of data collection are becoming more acceptable.

While there were some differences between in-person and telephone interviews, there was no cause for concern. There was a difference in the duration of interviews with in-person interviews tending to last 40 to 45 minutes compared to telephone interviews lasting 30 to 35 minutes. I attributed the 10-minute difference to the fact that those who were interviewed in person tended to be more reflective and paused a great deal more before answering the questions than those interviewed by telephone. In the end, I felt both datasets were robust enough for the research

3.6 Analytical framework

I chose semantic thematic analysis for this phase of the research. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) argue that while the theoretical and philosophical foundation sets the tone for the research, the most important component is the data collection and analysis. This is because researchers need a way to make claims that align with the process outlined about how those claims are to be made. This section will be divided into two subsections. The first will outline my justifications for choosing semantic thematic analysis. The second will explore the coding strategy I used during the analysis. Analysis was done without the use of computer software because technology implies a scientific objective on what is a subjective and interpretive process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Semantic thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a strategy that focuses on identifiable trends in data that provide insight into how people live their daily lives. It can be used within a phenomenological framework (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, interpret, and analyse themes in

qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2013). This strategy allows researchers to approach the data without any theoretical commitments. Braun and Clarke (2012, 2013) argue that thematic analysis can be applied across research paradigms and frameworks. Thematic analysis allows for the generation of codes from qualitative data. Codes are clues that can lead to larger patterns of meaning that are key to a concept or a shared core idea (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2013). Themes serve as the guidelines for reporting the findings. Thematic analysis is not a way to summarise data content, but a way to identify and interpret features of the data that can answer the research questions.

Thematic analysis is not a new strategy, having been used in the 1970s (Christ, 1970), but it is often associated with quantitative research. Merton (1975) associated thematic analysis with approaches to research. It is only in more contemporary research landscapes that this strategy has become a more conventional form of analysis. Qualitative researchers describe thematic elements in their analytical strategy, but without direct reference to thematic analysis. The foundations of thematic analysis as an approach to qualitative research analysis is more contemporary (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2012, 2013) state that thematic analysis is effective when it is used to detect commonalities across the data in relation to lived experiences, points of view, perspectives, and practices.

This analytical strategy moves beyond the surface meanings to explore aspects of the data that can inform the research questions (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun and Clarke's (2006) inductive approach involves linking themes to the data sets. If the data was collected in a manner that matches the research, the themes may not be indicators of the research questions. Therefore, inductive analysis requires the researcher to code the data without using predetermined code frames or involve the preconceived notions

of the researcher. On the other hand, theoretical approaches are informed by a researcher's predetermined theoretical assumptions about the research. This version tends to be less detail-oriented in describing the data and more focussed on pulling out aspects of the data that supports the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Since this research is concerned with understanding journalism practice based on the participants' experiences, the strategy used in this thesis takes an inductive approach where preconceived ideas about theories that underpin the data are suppressed. Rather, themes were discovered when the data was coded and analysed. To achieve this, analysis focussed on describing the data to tease out themes that could be used to understand journalism practice from the perspective of research participants. This thesis is informed by Braun and Clarke's (2012, 2013) assertion that thematic analysis can be underpinned by positive psychology as evidenced by Akhtar and Boniwell's (2010) research on the benefits of interventions for teenage alcohol abusers or Holmqvist and Frisén's (2012) research of positive body image perceptions among adolescents. Sheldon and King (2001) define positive psychology as the study of ordinary human life. Positive psychology is concerned with questions related to what is right, what is good, what works, and what improves in human lifeworlds. Advocating for positive psychology aligns with people's overall satisfaction of their lives (Sheldon & King, 2001; Meyers, 2000).

Positive psychology works within the framework of this research because the data sets are borne out of research participants' lived experiences. It is assumed that people will speak positively about their professional experiences and position themselves favourably as ideal journalists who are only interested in doing a good job, pursuing the truth, and acting ethically. This thesis agrees with the assumption that people want to see themselves as good, which is reinforced by Swann and Brooks'

(2012) views on self-verification. Their argument states that people with positive views of themselves are likely to magnify those opinions to combat negative perceptions. This is a significant consideration because of assertions in Chapter 1 that journalists are not viewed favourably by the public. This is also similar to van Wormer's (2015) arguments about cognitive dissonance. She argues that cognitive dissonance is built on the idea that people want to portray themselves and their groups positively. In this case, cognitive dissonance is contextualised by the view that participants are expected to speak positively about their practice despite public criticism of journalists.

Earlier in this section, I stated that preconceived notions about theories and participants' responses would be minimised. However, I aligned with the positive psychological views explored in this section because they helped to put my participants' responses into perspective. Positive psychology helped to explain my participants' focus on the more favourable aspects of their careers as they made sense of journalism practice. Even before I began analysing the data I was under the assumption that my participants would position themselves favourably even when they were reflecting on aspects of their careers that could be interpreted as being negative. Therefore, analysis was conducted in line with Braun and Clarke's (2015) perspectives on thematic analysis and positive psychology.

Braun and Clarke (2006) called for consideration of two types of thematic analysis: semantic and latent. Semantic approaches tend to remain within the explicit or surface meanings of the data. This approach is underpinned by inductive perspectives of thematic analysis because the objective for the researcher is to provide a deep description based on the data and interpret it by theorising the thematic elements, their broader meanings, and implications (Patton, 2014). Latent themes

explore beyond the surface of the data and attempt to discover ideas, constructions, and conceptualisations that underpin the data. Latent thematic analysis tends to involve interpretation that is informed by pre-existing theories and by a constructionist perspective which often overlaps various forms of discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burr, 2015). This is where meanings are theorised to demonstrate what is being articulated by the data. Having chosen to pursue an analytical perspective that was inductive, it became evident that a semantic thematic analysis framework would be ideal because of the aims and objectives to present perspectives of how journalists make sense of their daily professional lives based on the participants' experiences.

Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed a six-step process that was used to interrogate the data:

- Becoming familiar with the data;
- Generating the first set of codes;
- Interpreting the codes to find the themes;
- Conducting a review of the themes;
- Defining the themes, and;
- Writing up the findings and discussions.

Another consideration that was made was to take an emic approach (Hanitzsch, 2007) when analysing the data. From an emic position, analysis pays attention to the culture specific to the participants' views. Hanitzsch argues that an emic approach produces understandings that are culturally informed and are specific to group being interviewed. In this case, an emic approach meant that analysis of participants in this research would produce culturally informed themes. To accomplish this, I began by reading the transcripts several times before identifying phrases and keywords that stood out to me and were common in their meaning across other transcripts. These keywords and phrases were then examined to demonstrate what they meant in

journalism terms. These overarching meanings were construed as the key themes of the data with relation to the research questions.

Coding strategies

My coding strategy was underpinned by Patel (2014) and Saldaña's (2016) views on data analysis. The first step was to examine the transcripts for coding patterns. Patel (2014) and Saldaña (2016) proposed several strategies to use to begin the analysis process: similarities, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation. Examining the data began by looking for similarities and differences in the data. Causation was also used in later stages of analysis. I used questions proposed by Patel (2014) and Saldaña (2016) to find an entryway into the data. These questions were used to interrogate participants' meanings, how they were trying to convey those meanings, how they characterised and understood their practice, what I found to be surprising, and what I found to be interesting.

First coding cycle

Four considerations were made during the first coding technique: grammatical, structural, versus, and holistic. With the grammatical method, I separated the data sets into early career participants and senior participants. This was done for reference purposes to provide a layer of context of understanding. I then used what Patel (2014) referred to as structural coding where labels were applied to keywords and phrases in the data sets that represented descriptors for larger chunks of the data. For example, the way in which participants constructed their understanding of journalism practice were reduced to shorter descriptions, such as Fourth Estate, public interest, and autonomy, which are all signposted in the literature review. I then employed versus coding which allowed me to examine the data to understand how individuals and

groups established power. To do this, I examined different ways in which the participants had positioned themselves as being unique and different from their colleagues. I used exploratory coding next to establish labels that could be the start of the narrowing of codes to overarching codes. I did this by using holistic codes (Patel, 2014; Saldaña, 2016) where I began labelling large chunks of the data that appeared to be similar across transcripts and participants' accounts.

Second coding cycle

Once again, I followed Patel (2014) and Saldaña's (2016) recommendation for a second coding cycle. They argued that a second cycle allowed researchers to reorganise and condense a large number of coding strands that would be found in the first cycle. I used patterned and focussed coding, which allowed me to group summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes, and coding constructs while being aware of similarities and differences across data sets. I then used a concept called code weaving that provided me an opportunity to merge keywords and phrases into narrative form to understand how the components of the data worked together. Patel (2014) suggested that, during code weaving, researchers should examine these data sets for evidence that supported summary statements researchers could make about the data. These summary statements were informed by the research questions that underpinned each of the analysis chapters.

3.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter has covered and accounted for a variety of strategies that were used during the planning, data collection, and analysis stages of this thesis. As I have stated, my epistemological and ontological assumptions are informed by social constructionism and multiple realities respectively. Phenomenology underpins the methodological perspective of the research. I chose a semi-structured interview as the data collection instrument because of its flexibility and effectiveness for collecting experiences of people's reflections on their lifeworlds. Data analysis was conducted using semantic thematic analysis to identify the key themes that will be explored in the next three chapters that will contribute to answering the overarching research question:

How are journalists making sense of their daily professional lives and how do these sense-making apparatuses align to their understanding of journalism practice?

This research is borne out of a constructionist perspective because knowledge claims are based on the constructed realities of participants. It is informed by an ontological assumption of multiple realities because people's experiences are different. While they may be addressing a similar phenomenon, how they do so may be different. This research is driven by hermeneutic phenomenology as its methodological perspective because it is underpinned by constructionist ideals. Data collection was completed using a semi-structured interview instrument that was designed to task participants with constructing their realities based on their experiences in their careers. Data was then analysed using semantic thematic analysis.

In Chapter 4, the first sets of the findings will be delineated, explored, and discussed. This chapter is informed with addressing the first supporting research question: **How do journalists make sense of their daily practice and how does this align to their views of the journalism profession?**

Chapter 4: What journalism practice means to participants

The purpose of this chapter is to present what my participants think they do as journalists. It is concerned with providing an understanding of how my participants made sense of their practice. It is underpinned by a metadiscourse that is informed by traditional views of practice, educational guidance, and the knowledge claims journalists make when reflecting on their careers. This chapter is tasked with addressing the supporting research question: **How are journalists making sense of their daily professional lives and how do these sense-making apparatuses align to their understanding of journalism practice?**

As outlined in the methodology chapter, there are two participant groups in this research: early career and senior journalists. The categorisations of candidates into these two groups plays an important role in this chapter because it provides a comparison of how participants view journalism practice in the predigital and digital eras. It is assumed that time influences the way in which participants make sense of their professional practice. Digital journalists' views of journalism will be different from their pre-digital counterparts because technology has had profound effects on journalism practice as evidenced by the literature explored in Chapters 1 and 2. A series of questions were designed specifically to encourage participants to reflect on and construct their experiences:

- What does journalism mean to you?
- What are the main roles of a journalist?
- What is your understanding of the public interest?
- What kind of stories do you write?
- Are you given stories to pursue?
- In what ways have social media and web-based journalism impacted your newsroom?
- How much emphasis is placed on covering courts and local authority?

Three key findings were drawn from a thematic analysis of the data:

- Traditional understandings of journalism practice underpinned the participants' sense-making apparatuses when they reflected on their daily professional lives. These knowledge claims were borne from judgments journalists used to make of decisions especially within the contexts of Fourth Estate and public interest practices;
- There were clear signposts of frustrations in the digital era for participants, such as a lack of professional development and a sense of frustration over digital policies, and;
- Prestige within journalism played a significant role in the ways participants made sense of their practice. This was signalled by an emphasis on news values and news instinct in their accounts.

4.1 Traditional views of journalism practice

"Holding authority to account"

Participants tended to call on traditional democratic roles as they reflected on what journalism meant to them. These invocations were in line with the type of statements journalists tend to make when talking about journalism with outsiders as evidenced by phrases, such as "exposing or uncovering corruption", "keeping feet to the fire", or "holding authority to account. These phrases indicated a noble pursuit of journalism in which journalists act on behalf of the public.

> I enjoyed holding power to account. And I certainly got that opportunity while I was at the [name redacted] because at that time … the [name redacted] sold 150,000 copies a night. It probably sells about 15 [thousand] now and [name redacted] was an important and politically interested city and it was an interesting place to be and probably why I stayed as long as I did. (Ben, Lines 41 to 45)

These views were based on a combination of factors: journalistic understanding, knowing the community, and a firm belief in a selfless pursuit of public service journalism. This was evidenced in Ben's framing of practice by referring to the politically charged nature of the community he served. While this view reflected

the pre-digital era of practice, the view was different from participants who have worked in both the pre-digital and digital landscapes.

> Journalists should be questioning those people who've got power. We should be the proper Fourth Estate, but a lot of that doesn't go on basically because of cutbacks and so on. It's hard for the public to understand. They just think, 'oh well, they don't care'. People understand when they are reading press releases, they are sussed up on things like that these days. So, they turn to alternative sources for news. (Grace, Lines 57 to 61)

While Ben held more authoritative views of practice, Grace's represented something that may be closer to the reality of contemporary practice. Her account conveyed a sense of frustration of knowing what she ought to do, but could not do because of factors she felt were beyond her control, such as staffing cutbacks. The broader implication of Grace's account was that staff shortages were becoming evident to the public because of substantial changes in the quality of journalistic outputs. She felt the public was sophisticated enough to be able to differentiate between rewritten press released and originally sourced content.

Early career participants tended to construct experiences similar to Grace's. The role being conceptualised highlighted limitations in ability to uphold the traditional democratic practices of journalism. Some participants felt there was more demand for in-depth journalistic investigation at a time when the factors of the contemporary era prevented them from this type of practice.

> Exposing corruption, exposing bad things that go on in the world. I think… I think a lot of the stories that have come out in the last 12 months have been down to very, very good journalism. I think investigative reporting is valued more and more now, ironically, in a time when journalists aren't given the time or the money to do big investigations. (Ian, Lines 112 to 114)

Ian's account highlights a dichotomy of practice. On one hand, he understood that investigations were an important part of daily practice that was in demand with the public. On the other hand, the current landscape makes it difficult to conduct such investigations. He conveyed a sense of frustration at not being able to fulfil this vision of practice because of factors beyond his control. In this vein, Ian's experience was

similar to that of Grace's. Some participants pointed out some areas in which they felt they still were able to practise the Fourth Estate.

> … I like to expose corruption, not that there's much of a chance to do that these days… I also like going to court. I think it's important that people understand the judiciary system and that people … have been convicted and this is brought to the knowledge of the public and the principle of open justice is conveyed through newspapers. (Katarina, Lines 24 to 30)

Katarina's view of practice was underpinned by the prospect of transparency, especially in the justice system. She saw her role as one in which she helped people make sense of what justice ought to look like in a democratic society, which was underpinned by protecting public safety by publicising crimes and criminals. Her emphasis on court reporting was interpreted as an area in which she could point out as a form of public service journalism that she still practised. Another way in which Fourth Estate journalism was constructed positioned a journalist's duty as being the critical interrogators for the public.

> … A journalist in news is to … deliver anything that's in the public interest… and that's obviously not necessarily things the public are interested in… It's to sort of uncover anything that might need uncovering. It's to ask questions that people might not necessarily ask if a council is putting something out there. People might believe what they're saying. You might need to question them, and you might need to sort of get both sides of an argument … I think that's the main thing I've learned whilst working is that getting both sides of an argument is a big part of being a journalist. (Rose, Lines 45 to 63)

Rose situated herself as a critical interrogator whose duty is to challenge authority to ensure transparency for her readers. Her use of words like "uncover" illustrates her point further. Journalism's function is to uncover things which would require specialised skills that journalists learn. The statement "It's to ask questions that people might not necessarily ask" further reified this validation because it suggested that the types of questions that needed to ask required critical awareness. That critical awareness needed was underpinned by the value-added skills journalists learn in training programmes and within their newsroom culture.

In all three cases, Ian, Katarina, and Rose highlighted Fourth Estate as problematic in the current climate. Despite this challenge, they all presented accounts that attempted to validate their understanding of journalism practice. While they constructed experiences in Fourth Estate journalism, they pointed out various obstacles in the digital landscape that make it problematic to fully engage in the Fourth Estate practices.

"Being the voice of the voiceless"

A similar approach was to frame journalism practice as a service to the public. These accounts were supported by a view that some highlighted working on behalf of the public to facilitate for people or to provide them with a platform. Some participants viewed their role as mediators or facilitators for people who felt unfairly treated by government agencies, courts, or businesses. These participants envisioned their experiences as acting on behalf of the public. This was evident through the use of phrases, such as "being the voice of the voiceless". To foreground their experience, they pointed out their ability to visualise news or to emphasise the difficulty members of the public could have cutting through bureaucracy.

> When I was at [name redacted] I found something that someone had thrown away in the bin that was from a woman who was complaining. She had two Downs' Syndrome children and the council wouldn't fix her central heating and they were freezing. We did a story on that and the very next day the whole council came around to fix the central heating. (Alistair, Lines 85 to 89)

Other ways in which participants felt they served the public was through prestige of the title, "journalist". Being a journalist qualified them to act on behalf of people because of a set of skills they learn that positions them as being able to challenge authority figures when people feel ignored by government or the business community.

> I would say it's very difficult for a member of the public … that's not getting a fair time either with the council, um, or with a firm or anything like that. Their voice is so small, but as soon as a newspaper knocks on that council or that firm's door and says 'we're running a story about this person' it gets answers to people who have been struggling to get answers for a long time. (Mickey, Lines 83 to 87)

Another perspective was to work within the tenets of sound practice to ensure balanced coverage.

> I think for my job it's telling a story. But also giving people both sides of the argument at the same time … in journalism. Also, it is important to give people a voice when they may not have one in other conventional forms … It's like giving people a voice up against, you know, councils, when they feel like they've been wronged in some way. … journalism to me is about truth in a lot of respects. It's about holding authority to account. I've done lots of stories now about [name redacted] council complaints department and how they've mishandled complaints... I think it's holding authority… keeping their feet to the fire and basically telling the story without too much bias … you know, trying to keep. That's important. (Rory, Lines 23 to 31)

Another point of view was that being the voice of the voiceless was an idealistic view of practice especially at the national level.

> *Why did you want to be a journalist?*
>
> My motivations to become a journalist were I thought it was a career I could make a difference really. I thought I could do some good.
>
> *And when you left newspapers what were your thoughts of journalism?*
>
> Ha. Ha. I think that the structure you are working in doesn't necessarily allow you to do the good perhaps you wanted to do and perhaps that isn't only down to the publications you are working for. (Harry, Lines 18 to 25)

Participants, who viewed their roles as facilitators, cultivated experiences that positioned themselves as public service journalists. They understood their role as having the ability to get results for people who did not have the resources to pursue their own cases. In some situations, simply using job titles led to help for people in need. In Alistair's case it was his ability to find news where others could not find it as evidenced by his emphasis on finding something "that someone had thrown away in the bin". For Mickey, it was having the power of being a journalist that worked to get results where people failed. For Rory, it was being able to position himself as an unbiased facilitator who got results if they were justified. Harry's perspective was more cynical. His motivation for becoming a journalist was to help people. However,

the circumstances in which he found himself did not allow him act on behalf of the public. The main message in each of these participants' reflections was that the power of journalism to get results was a significant part of their motivations for being journalists because this perspective served a goal of validating practice and legitimising journalistic experiences.

What participants' experiences revealed about them

Participants invoked the Fourth Estate in two different ways: as adversaries who held authority to account and as facilitators who worked for the public. There were overarching similarities to these different approaches. In both cases, participants used the two platforms to give an impression of what they thought journalist practice ought to be. However, as it will become evident later in this chapter, these views were problematic because of the fragmented nature of Fourth Estate journalism in the digital landscape. Instead, these views were interpreted as being the type of metadiscourse journalists used when asked what journalism meant to them. These arguments represent an idealistic view of practice with undertones of pursuing noble causes while searching for the truth and working for the people. These arguments were viewed as self-validating forms of reflection that defended and justified journalism practice. Participants' idealised constructions of practice were indicative of people who wanted to convey an image of supporting the community and a belief in democratic practice. However, the theme of noble causes did more to provide evidence of self-worth and self-validation. The metadiscourse, in which participants engaged, was more indicative of the epistemic position journalists tend to invoke when asked about their practice. Despite these views that invoked a sense of nobility or validation, there were some that were much more pragmatic and situated in a different context of reality.

"It's a trade for making money"

A more pragmatic view was that practice was a means to an end. The freelancer's view was different because of a focus on journalism as a living rather than a service.

What you've got to understand is the difference between a staff reporter and a freelancer. My main motivation is to get a story in the paper and get paid for it because if I don't, I'm not getting paid to do it… All I want to do is get the story in the paper and not get complaints on it. So, it's threading a fine line between getting the most out of it and not crossing the line so they get a complaint and the complaint comes back to you. But my sole motivation as a journalist now is it's a trade for making money. I mean if I stopped doing it, I would miss it especially historical stories that happened a long time ago that I find in archives but primarily it's about making money. It's not looking for the next Watergate or something like that. It would be nice but only if I could sell it to someone. (Alistair, Lines 96 to 110)

Journalism was no longer a noble practice to help people, but rather a way of making a living. As a freelance journalist, Alistair was concerned about producing content he knew was guaranteed to be published. Publication meant compensation for Alistair. However, he does hold on to his journalistic identity by not ruling out producing more investigative content if the conditions were right. The pragmatic view of journalism practice, where earning a living was the main goal, meant that aspirations of quality journalism were replaced by the need to produce quantity journalism to survive.

Another view was that of the journalist as the counter-revolutionary or the anti-professional. This imitable view positioned journalists as tricksters who were not whom they appeared to be.

I don't see journalism as a profession quite the reverse. Journalism is the antithesis of the profession. Journalism is meant to be anti-regulation, anti-professionalisation, and anti-codes. That's the heart of journalism and I get very uncomfortable with a lot of Hacked Off's persuasion. All of those people seem to be saying they want journalists to be accredited in some way as if they want them to have the world seal of approval that they are saying somehow, we want our journalists to be licensed. Journalists shouldn't be licensed. It has a trickster function it has a disruptive function. (Steven, Lines 224 to 234)

Steven's view was a departure from the traditional views of Fourth Estate. Instead, it was a more renegade type of practice that acted outside of the boundaries and similar to an antihero. Those boundaries were not limited to journalist accountability and regulation. Within literary contexts, anarchist roles were meant to interrogate and challenge the status quo with the view of creating a new normal society (Jeppesen, 2011). Steven's view was that journalists were the people who challenged

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the status quo and, therefore, should not be subject to accreditation. While the counterrevolutionary could be viewed as an unpopular figure, his or her antihero qualities point towards another perspective of the noble journalist who works with the public in mind. The view is similar to the role of the undercover law enforcement officer who appears to be something he or she is not in pursuit of upholding the law. Therefore, Steven sees his role as serving a greater good by not appearing to be who he is.

Steven's view was not interpreted as an extreme one when considered in context with other practices, such as disclosing sources which can be considered a cardinal sin by journalists.

> [Not] to diminish … or excuse the phone hacking that went on, I'm much more annoyed about the way in which News International gave up all their contacts to the police that was a dreadful thing. North American journalists would never have done that. I thought that was a far bigger crime than some of phone hacking that went on. Giving up of contacts was an awful thing, acceding to police request if you remember by News International so I thought that was terrible. That to me was truly unethical. (Steven, Lines, 137 to 142)

Steven's views of journalism practice as a counter-revolutionary function correlated to more pro-tabloid and anti-regulatory views. His viewpoint was interpreted as being an extreme way of upholding the traditions of the Fourth Estate. Steven felt disclosing sources or senior newsroom managers giving up journalists was a far greater problem than the more egregious practices journalists were accused of conducting. Essentially, he felt betrayed by a lack of protection from the same people who would ultimately make the decisions that led to egregious practices such as phone hacking, or paying sources that led to several journalists being tried and acquitted in court.

A key part of this view of practice was evident in Steven's call to challenge the need for reinforced regulation against journalism. The essence of journalism is its ability to be counter-revolutionary and to challenge the status quo as tricksters have

been positioned to do. In other words, Steven's view of journalism practice was that to produce the type of results that benefitted the public meant to push the boundaries as far as he could.

Summarisation of findings: Fourth Estate

Findings in this section suggested that participants held diverging views in their understanding of journalism practice. Their initial responses were informed by idealised views of journalists in noble pursuits of truth and justice — practices informed by the Fourth Estate and public service journalism. It was clearly evident that these perspectives were not the reality, especially in the digital landscape that will be explored in the next section. Reliance on Fourth Estate was seen as being indicative of the epistemic and articulated knowledge claims that journalists make about their practice. These claims are informed by the training they receive in journalism school and when they are inducted into the profession as trainees. These knowledge claims form the basis of their validation of practice because they are conditioned to believe that these pursuits position them as noble journalists and ideal practitioners. Participants invoked the obstacles of the digital landscape to defend themselves and account for the reasons why their reality differed from their idealist views of journalism practice.

The use of certain phrases, in which participants invoked authoritative positions, such as "ought to", "I enjoyed holding authority to account," or "we are the people who", were consistent with ways of underpinning professionalism. They were seen as validating statements that were meant to justify the participants' positions as journalists. These phrases were indicative of rationalisation points in which

participants were outlining why they were qualified to make news decisions based on their understanding of journalism practice.

Alternatively, when participants shifted the focus away from conventional views of journalism practice, there were some interesting points of view. When the reason for being a journalist was linked to making a living, then the construction of practice became more pragmatic because journalism became a means to justifying an end. It was no longer about serving the public. It was about the ability to survive. Therefore, public interest and Fourth Estate were no longer prime considerations of practice. They were sacrificed for softer content that would have a better chance of being published because publication meant financial compensation

The view of the journalist as the antihero or the counterrevolutionary was unique. This was because of the implications that journalists should be viewed as true critical interrogators of society without accountability because they served a version of the greater good. Even though this perspective differed significantly from other participants, it was meant to achieve similar results — serving the people. This ties back into the idea discussed in this section of public expectations of journalists. Steven's perspective of what it meant to be a journalist highlighted a point of view where the public could be more appreciative of the result rather than the process. However, public reaction to the phone hacking scandal, Grenfell Fire, and Manchester attack were real examples that journalist accountability was as important as public expectation.

4.2 The digital landscape

From my participants' accounts, the view of the digital landscape is lined with both positive and negative experiences. While it was evident in Section 4.1 that constraints on practice, that have emerged in the digital landscape, have impacted the

traditional views of what it means to be a journalist, technology has created new ways of sharing information. Social media, multimedia, and share-ability have become key characteristics in contemporary journalism. The purpose of this section is to explore how my participants made sense of the digital landscape. From Section 4.1, it has been established by my participants that there are problematic areas in the digital landscape. For senior participants, it was a belief that today's journalists rely heavily on press releases for content. For the contemporary practitioners, it was the challenges they face trying to hold onto traditional journalistic views when they are burdened by the downsizing of staff, having smaller budgets, and having to fulfil a web-first mandate that is meant to attract more readers. It will become evident that participants hold mixed views of working in the digital landscape. While they embrace the opportunity of using technology in innovative ways, they feel challenges to their understanding of journalism in terms of quality and professional development.

Challenges: More tabloidisation and click-bait content

This sub-section explores the negative views participants held of the digital landscape. Participants tended to be more negative about aspects of new media that did not fit their understanding of journalism practice, the presentation of advertising to mimic real stories, and the impact on professional development. A contentious area for some participants was the use of click-bait journalism and sensational headlines. These practices tend to align with policies aimed at increasing website traffic. It contradicts the ways in which participants make sense of their practice because these practices are not in line with the views participants presented about journalism being a noble service for the public. Instead, these tended to be viewed as shortcuts of practice.

> I think [the public] do see us as a respectful newspaper but also, I think the online stuff is slightly more tabloid-y… a lot of people definitely say [name redacted] is full of rubbish, but then there are those people who buy it every day and read it cover to back and go on the website as well, so I think it's a bit of a mixed message. (Rory, Lines 117 to 121)

> I'm sure you're aware there's a lot of pressure in newspapers now to get a lot of website hits. It also means we do a lot of news stories about celebrities… TV news or that kind of thing. (Polly, Lines 90 to 93)

These two accounts were evident of the discomfort that journalists with the tabloidisation practices in the digital landscape. Based on how they reflected on what journalism meant to them in the previous section, these new practices do not fit into their understanding of journalism practice. They envisioned practice as something that helps the community and ensures accountability and transparency.

Other participants painted a bleaker picture that positions the publisher's policy as being more concerned about profits than news. This was evident in Katarina's account where she felt that cost-cutting to improve profits had taken precedence over professional journalism practice.

> Like I said, the industry is undergoing drastic cuts at the moment to pay off debts… They worked out they can spend less money and they could get by with click-bait content now and less good quality, in-depth investigative journalism. (Katarina, Lines 200 to 202)

Katarina presented an account in which she felt constrained in her ability to produce quality investigative journalism because she felt the priority was to produce click-bait journalism to attract readers.

Sponsored content as a cause for concern

Another area of concern, more so among senior and retired participants, was the reliance on press releases.

> It's hard for the public to understand… People understand when they are reading press releases. They are sussed up on things like that these days. So, they turn to alternative sources for news. (Grace, Lines 59 to 62)

> What I do now is interesting because I can set my own agenda… I wouldn't enjoy working for a local paper anymore, stuck in offices, cutting, and pasting press releases all the time. (Alistair, Lines 18 to 19)

> The last thing you want to do is rewrite bloody press releases. At my first newspaper, I was told it is a cardinal sin ever to copy out and rewrite a press release. It was also a cardinal sin to use the point that the people in the press release want to make. Ferret down

to the bottom and find something much more interesting. And that was great advice. These days, you can see press releases going in virtually unchanged. (John, Lines 68 to 72)

Grace's key argument against press releases was that the public was sophisticated enough to differentiate between prepared content and originally generated content. Alistair's view outlined a particularly negative stereotype of a newsroom journalists who were "stuck in offices, cutting and pasting press releases all the time". While John held a negative view of "bloody press releases" which were seen as "cardinal sin" in the newsroom, they did have their uses which involved critical interrogation of the press releases message and challenge the story from that perspective. These three participants appeared to have reflected on the use of press release reliance based on how they viewed contemporary practice as compared to what they did in their careers.

There appeared to be a paradox between how senior participants viewed the use of press releases and how they early career counterparts used them. The tendency among older journalists was to view press releases as a predominant part of contemporary practice. However, early career journalists viewed press releases as tools in the news-gathering process. In other words, they held the same views as their senior colleagues that press releases were a source and they tried to interrogate them as much as they could.

> At (name redacted) … 80 percent of the content comes to the news editor. What happens is we have a system called the journalism portal where any story coming or press release about a football press conference goes into this online planning diary and then the news editor basically decides who … does that story. It all comes down to staffing from their point of view. The news editor has to decide what is going to form today's stories, what's going to be achievable. (Jack, Lines 112 to 117)

> We're actually not considered a breaking news company… We're 24/7 online and we're in print weekly… Our focus is [on] subscription news. There are a lot of free publication news where we provide a breakdown of a press release that's just came out so we're in the analysis factor of things. (Martha, Lines 108 to 111)

> I think the most important thing about a news story is that … it's got to be about people everyday people… where I cover, but it's also got to be again about holding people to account in positions of power and prestige … I think representing the community … that's

also extremely important. We use all sorts of press releases. We get calls … and emails sent to us. You [have to] decide if it's a story on how it affects people affects [name redacted] if someone's been wronged by council or police or something like that or something in the public interest in a certain area of [name redacted] (Rory, Lines 196 to 204)

So, if for example we get a press release where the editor likes something in the press release … they want a story from. [That means] more comments [or] vox pops… things might get passed on to me. um and they'll say do you want to follow this up. (Rose, Lines 280 to 283)

Despite senior participants' perceptions of contemporary practice, early career journalists portrayed experiences in which press releases were challenged, explored, or used to start stories. Participants presented views in which they tended to challenge press release content by either delving deeper into the content, critically analysing the press release's message, publishing the analysis, or finding different way of treating the press release, such as public opinion interviews.

As a B2B editor, Martha's views on press releases must be examined from a different perspective. Within the context of B2B magazines, a significant way in which communication occurs between industry leaders and clients is through press releases. Therefore, her reliance on press releases was interpreted differently from the views of those in legacy media. In Martha's case, press releases were important because they tend to be starting points for news content.

While the evidence above presented a positive perspective of the use of press releases, an area of concern was the proliferation of sponsored content. Sponsored content differs from press releases because it is a form of advertising that has been designed to mimic a news story. Sponsored content is seen as problematic because it blurs the lines between journalistic output and advertising. (Matteo & Dal Zotto, 2015; Ikonen, Lumo-Aho & Bowen, 2016). The cause for concern among participants was that sponsored content could threaten the integrity of journalism practice.

But … there is an issue of sponsored content in my papers. I'm asked to provide sponsored content sometimes which means you're asked to provide something that looks like a story, but someone is paying you to do it. I have problems with it but it's very early days yet, so we have to work our way through it. But as far as the bosses are concerned, PR has been paid to write this stuff for a long time. Advertising is going down and there is panic, so they are trying to find ways of monetising and I think that's a dodgy, dodgy road to go down so at the minute I'm trying to hold a line but it's tough because nobody's done it enough to reflect on it. But I think that's where the union has to get in and start to think about the ethics of this. Otherwise, if you do and people start to understand what's happening, they won't trust it. Trust is an issue if you want people to read your papers, look at your adverts, check your website or click on your social media you have to provide something that is trustworthy. It's transparent, which is a bit of a buzzword these days, but you have to do that. (Grace, Lines 124 to 137)

In Grace's account, sponsored content was concerning because it impacts journalists' already tenuous credibility among the readers. If advertising begins to resemble content, it becomes difficult to differentiate between the two. Grace's concern lies in the implication that sponsored content as on trust. It was another way in which changes negatively impact practice.

Challenges; 'So, they've downsized and it's very, very bad'

As it has been outlined in this chapter, the big challenge facing my participants is understanding the digital landscape. This section explores those challenges to the participants' view of what it means to be journalists. Key areas of concerns that will be explored in this section include downsizing of news staff without replace integral members of the newsroom, newsroom pressures, and delayed professional development. A common concern among participants was that, despite having smaller numbers in the newsroom, the workload either remained the same, or more, likely increased. As it was outlined in Chapter 1, the number of journalists who were made redundant in newsrooms is much larger than the number of journalists hired in the digital landscape. The result puts pressure on participants because they have to sacrifice other aspects of their professional activity to compensate for a lack of newsroom resources.

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We've got less staff on the weeklies. The majority of our time we are at our desks… we don't get to go out as much as they would like. (Adam, Lines 180 to 181)

We have checks and balances in place, but … there just isn't enough staff. So, I tend to find I'm a lot more concentrated and I'm getting things done as fast as I can. (Rose, Lines 68 to 69)

There was a phase when newspapers went into decline and got rid of lots of staff, as resource, they didn't have enough journalists to go out and find stories. (Vicki, Lines 112 to 114)

These accounts highlighted the concerns of participants having to sacrifice an aspect of practice to adjust to the changing landscape. These ranged from not being able to go into the community to multitasking to content shortage. Other participants were more concerned about the deeper implications of staff cuts, such as impacts on accuracy, the integrity of content, and their own professional development.

I think a third of the staff [has] gone at [name redacted]. The newsroom itself has shrunk to a quarter of its size when I first joined 30 years ago. Now, it seems no one has time ... Our bosses have come up with this idea of being right the first time because they got rid of the sub-editors and proof-readers. We [used to] check for grammatical mistakes, [verify] information or to tell reporters they got [something] wrong. All of that has gone out the window. Sometimes, someone might look at it quickly, but quite often there's not the checks and balances as before which is really dangerous. (Grace, Lines 165 to 171)

While accuracy is a prime objective, some participants still felt newsroom accountability should be a part of a commitment to accuracy. It was evident that Grace felt that new policies challenged the quality and integrity of journalism practice. This was similar to her argument in the previous section in which she was concerned about the impact of sponsored content in publications. The broader implication of Grace's views of practice in the digital era will be further magnified in Chapter 5 when the dimension of public trust will be explored.

Accuracy remained a common theme when participants made sense of obstacles in the contemporary landscape. Another example of this related to the issue of immediacy in publication. From a managerial point of view, immediacy in publication is signposted as a way of increasing readership and, ultimately, profits. However, from a journalist's perspective, the practice is problematic from an accuracy viewpoint. As participants point out, journalists in the pre-digital era had a day to

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ensure they constructed the most balanced and accurate story. Today, corporate policy mandates journalists to post content as it is released.

> I think in this day and age … everything is going online as quickly as possible. Journalists back in the day … would have written one article over the course of a day for the following day's newspaper and that one story would have all sides of the argument. … In online journalism, there is a growing call from the powers-that-be that stories go up as they happen. So, you might have one side of an argument going up in a single article then several hours later a different [version] article goes up … So, if a reader was to read just one of those stories, they would think journalists haven't [balanced the story] or … checked these facts properly. (Ian, Lines 101 to 108)
>
> I don't think people realise the pressures of being in a newsroom like being pressured to get something done quickly for the website even if it may change later on then there is the accusation of inaccurate reporting. (Clara, Lines 34 to 38)
>
> I think criticism is for unverified stories, churnalism. I don't think people realise the pressures … to get something done quickly for the website even if it may change later on. … There is the accusation of inaccurate reporting. (Clara, Lines 34 to 38)

The fluidity of news makes it problematic for journalists who are guided by principles of accuracy. The implication for participants was the concern of unwarranted criticism because breaking news and in-depth stories could be remarkably different, but it does not mean readers are following all updates on a story. Therefore, participants were concerned that rapid publication contradicted their commitment to accuracy. As Ian pointed out, pre-digital journalists worked on stories until they were balanced and accurate before they were published the next day. In the current era, the competition to increase revenue streams has led participants to feel they were compromising their commitment to accuracy to satisfy corporate policies. Accuracy is paramount to journalists. It is listed as the first clause in the Editors' Code of Practice (Ipso, 2016). Participants appeared frustrated because of the contradiction between a commitment to accuracy and the corporate emphasis on rapidity.

Stunted professional growth

On a smaller scale, but a victim of circumstance, has been staffing decisions and how they impact progression. In the UK, a journalist begins as a trainee and begins to build a portfolio while working towards their National Qualification in Journalism

(NQJ), which tends to be done about 18 months into a career. It is where the trainee begins to progress to senior status and the prestige that comes with the position, including promotion and better pay. However, as part of the cost-cutting measure that impacts journalists, there was evidence that there were significant delays in professional development.

> So, they've downsized basically and it's very, very sad … It's something that's really affected the quality of journalism in regional news. I'm not sure about national news… There's less training, less investment these days. You get people like me wandering in and it took two and a half years to make me permanent and to start my proper training to become a senior reporter. So unfortunately, even in light of the inquiry you are studying the people at the top of these companies only care if they want viewers… higher views on the internet they don't really care about their print publication anymore it's only about, I feel anyway, it's only about the money. (Katarina, Lines 201 to 211)

Katarina was frustrated by cost-cutting measures because they delayed her development as a journalist which plays into the prestige aspect of practice which will be discussed later in this chapter. The deeper implication in Katarina's experience was the impact the delay had on her development as a journalist. Being delayed by 30 months meant her professional development could not being until she became a fully recognised member of staff. It meant delays in progression, experience, prestige, and earning potential.

Downsizing of news staff has had a profound impact on contemporary journalism. In the current landscape, a shortage of sub-editors and proof-readers and the insistence on publishing immediately challenge the accuracy of content. Not being able to progress at the normal rate was used to express disillusionment. Each of these factors were similar because they represented negative aspects of how my participants made sense of practice within the context of the digital landscape. These developments contradicted how participants viewed journalism from traditional knowledge sources and how they learned to be journalists. On one hand, they were trained and indoctrinated into a system that valued accuracy greatly, but on the other, the digital

landscape has meant publishers want content published before competitors. Often, that means breaking content changes constantly, but the challenge lies in accusations of inaccuracy by people who may not follow the latest updates.

Challenges: Existing public service practices

Coverage of local council and courts was still an important part of practice for many participants despite the move to digital platforms and the obstacles associated with this move. There was also significant evidence that these practices have been altered in the converged media market where newsgroups control content for large areas. In these converged newsrooms, it has become common to have specialists parachute into different communities within the coverage zones of the newsgroups to report on local government or courts.

> … Our newsroom is small ... I work for the [area name redacted] side of my company and there're about five papers in there. We all tend to help each other out. I work in a town called [name redacted] and there's another paper based in [name redacted]. They have more reporters because it's a bigger town… One of them takes care of the court side of things. I do go to court sometimes if he's not around, but because [town name redacted] is in the [area name redacted] … he goes to court. If he sees, there's a [town name redacted] story he will pick that up as well and send it to me. … Council stories… I keep an eye on it. If I'm not available to go to a council meeting that's important I'll tell my editor and we'll see if anyone else at a different paper is available or we will contact the press officers and ask if they will cover it for us. And they will send us the information. (Katarina, Lines 250 to 263)

Because Katarina works in a small newsroom, she often relied on specialists from the larger newsroom within the group to come in and report on government. There were also times when the crime journalist would furnish her with content if someone in her community were to appear in a courtroom in a larger centre within the region. It was evident that one of the key strategies in the converged newsroom model has been to uphold standards related to public service journalism by having specialists provide news coverage for journalists in smaller newsrooms who often have conflicts with other stories. The general consensus among participants is that there is still a place for grassroots democratic journalism.

> Still a lot of emphasis [on courts and council] … I mean probably not as much as in previous years in some respect, but it's still a big part making sure all the big council announcements and council stories are covered and making sure the council is well scrutinised and making sure that all the well the very least the serious crime and criminals are reported. (Mickey, Lines 175 to 179)

I'd say there's still quite a lot of emphasis on the important stories, but not quite as much as before since pressures have been brought in about website hits that kind of thing but as a trainee reporter, I do see they want me to develop those skills where I'm going to court and council. (Polly, Lines 106 to 110)

I think especially for [name redacted] council and [name redacted] crown court there are always stories that are available for the paper. Court stories do extremely well for the website … There is a real emphasis on covering council as well. Again, you know, we used to have a council reporter who does literally everything council, council, council. Now it's usually shared out to the reporters because we don't have the manpower anymore, but we try and cover them as much as we can. Everyone is always poring through council documents to see if there's anything hidden in there because some of the best stories, I find … especially council stories… are hidden away where the average person on the street may not, may not want to spend time going through. So yeah, not definitely courts and council, especially for a local newspaper is actually pinnacle for our work flow. Stuff that goes in the paper yeah. (Rory, Lines 264 to 277)

We try to cover courts and council as much as is practically possible. But we can only afford to send a reporter to court only one day. We send a reporter to the local council meeting every month or every two weeks I think they are. So, there is quite a lot that comes out of them because it's a small parish. In the larger area some of the bigger stories we might not cover because they might not be relevant to [name redacted] and [name redacted] if that makes sense. (Susan, Lines 106 to 111)

Benefits: Towards a digital autonomy

Obstacles to practice, removal of checks and balances, threats to accuracy, and delayed professional development have been areas of concern for participants. However, there were some participants who embraced the digital landscape because of the potentials technology held for them. As it was point out in Chapter 1, one of the early challenges journalists faced in the digital landscape was the inability to explore new ways of producing content (Boczkowski, 2004; Matheson, 2004). However, in the current landscape, participants have found different ways of presenting the news by using lists, bullet points, and other innovative approaches to communicate content.

The five most read I see two or three are [name redacted] sports stories There'll always be a crime story that's always there. Then you do get daft stories … I remember we did one a while back on the computer game FIFA. Before it got released almost every newspaper [compared the game] ratings of each individual club so we did [name redacted] player ratings. When we put it online it just flew. It just got lots of hits. That wouldn't go in the paper ever. Online because people would click on it on Facebook and it's a very different audience. [This] is what the workshop was about this morning. Things will work online that won't work in print. … I think the hard news will always be in print. The online is about a mixture of different things for a different audience, I think. (Adam, Lines 140 to 150)

One of the key takeaways in Adam's account is the reactionary way journalists view online practices. Success was based on trial and error and underpinned by analytic reports that highlighted reader trends. His anecdote about the FIFA videogame story highlighted a different approach to a news story. It also played into the share-ability and interactivity that past researchers have delineated (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). Social media and share-ability were also seen as being important in Adam's experiences in online journalism. At the same time, traditional content, such as hard news or traditional news, still had a place in the newspaper. This account typifies how contemporary journalists view news content in the digital landscape. Social media, analytic reports, a comprehension of how to use platforms different, and an understanding of the importance of traditional media roles are key components in the contemporary landscape. In some cases, the social media and analytic reports were seen as entryways into understanding the type of content that was in demand.

> There's a digital team so there's a head of digital, deputy head of digital and someone who just uploads to Facebook all day that's their sole job. (Adam, Lines 72 to 74)

> Yes, there's a big team. I mean reporters send all their own stories to the website and usually promote them by Facebook and Twitter. But then there's also a team that decides which stories go on the website and when to repost them and then engage with people on social media as well so yeah, I mean in the (name redacted) office alone there is a team of about three digital people. (Mickey, Lines 168 to 173)

> Social media is massive. It's absolutely huge. I mean I can't stress the importance of social media. We have a night reporter who … as we speak now will be trawling Twitter for any breaking updates. I think, especially Twitter, and Facebook especially… Facebook is an ever-increasing tool for lots of various reasons … some of my best stories have come from Facebook. …From people posting stuff on Facebook and I've contacted them, and I've made some of my most hard-hitting stories have come from Facebook. I wrote about a guy, a 15-year-old lad, who got who got beaten up by 30 kids on a school playing field, … some of the best pictures that we've, ah, that we've published have come from Facebook. Ahm, I really can't stress how big it is. Ah, I think it provides a lot of content. Especially in a big city like [name redacted] there's always something knocking around.

> *(The photos from Facebook you have to get permission…)*

> We always ask permission, and we'd say, 'Would you mind if we use your photo for publication' … we'd always ask them. I know of other organisations who may use a Facebook photo … without permission … on the whole yeah, we definitely ask permission. (Rory, Lines 244 to 262)

For the early career journalists, these various platforms have been incorporated into their daily professional lives. In the pre-digital era, certain responsibilities, such as checking overnight emergency services reports or government communication were habitual practices, in today's landscape, social media and analytics have been added to the daily checklist. This finding was consistent with arguments in the literature that pointed towards new forms of autonomy in the digital age, acceptance of digital practices among contemporary journalists, and shifts in the perception of some forms of practice. The proliferation of Facebook and Twitter in the newsroom was consistent with the impacts of social media on journalism practice. Participants tended to use these platforms to promote content or to find story ideas. This also shed light on previous reflections in this chapter where senior participants tended to believe their junior counterparts spent a lot of time at a desk. In the new landscape, technology has become an important tool in the gathering and dissemination of information.

Summarisation of findings: Digital media

Digital media has had profound impacts on the participants and how they practise journalism. Although senior participants held negative views of digital practices in the future of journalism, contemporary practitioners' outlooks were more positive. Technology, social media, and unprecedented access to reader trends meant participants could be innovative in their practice. While a reliance on press releases has been a result of the changing policies in newsrooms, a greater concern was for the integrity and quality of digital journalism. A removal of checks and balances in the newsroom, due to cutbacks, and the proliferation of sponsored content, was a significant concern. Other deeper concerns included the feeling of sacrificing accuracy to ensure speedy publication online to meet corporate policies. This was problematic

for journalists who place significant value on accuracy over immediacy. The immediacy of publication, removals of copyeditors and fact checkers, and a proliferation of sponsored content has been problematic for participants.

On the other hand, it was clear that contemporary practitioners had embraced technology in their daily practice. Their engagement with digital practice, through social media, analytic reports, and multimedia platforms, illustrated this view. Contemporary participants were able to visualise how technology enhanced their delivery of content across myriad platforms. The early career participants' experiences illustrated a symbiotic relationship with the readers. Social media has become an integral part of the strategy to promote content and solicit ideas, tips, and audio-visual content the public may possess. At the same time, analytics provided participants with clear understandings of the readers' habits.

4.3 Making sense of practice: news values and instincts

An extension of Section 4.1's exploration of newsroom practices, this section explores how participants invoked news values, news instincts, and prestige important parts of their practice. These factors are more supportive of how professional identity plays a role in how journalists make sense of their practice. This section explores how professional identity influenced participants' sense-making processes of journalism practice. Caza and Creary (2016) argued that people manage engagement with their profession using a variety of roles to construct an identity. In this case, through the use of news values and news instincts.

News instinct and news values were interpreted as ways in which participants were able to demonstrate independence within the newsroom. By highlighting themselves as focussing on news values and instinct, some participants were creating space between themselves and colleagues who relied on editors for content. It

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illustrated how initiative played a significant role in how candidates made sense of their practice. News values referred to an understanding of what was newsworthy based on participants' experience and comprehension of journalism practice. News instinct was viewed as the participants' ability to find newsworthiness in events. Based on these two factors, professional identity related to how participants used their specific roles to add richer context to their comprehension of journalism practice that set them apart from their colleagues. Prestige within the newsroom was more prevalent among senior participants than their junior colleagues because experience allowed them to progress into roles of greater responsibility where they became the gatekeepers of information.

News instinct, news values, and professional identity

Perceived prestige was a way in which some of my participants chose to contextualise how they made sense of journalism practice. Placing emphasis on being able to navigate their daily professional lives independently rather than with the guidance of editors was important. It demonstrated a socially constructed understanding of autonomy within the newsroom. This was interpreted as being a sense of independence in the newsroom, which was signposted by placing emphasis on news instinct and news values, and by highlighting job titles and specialisms. A key way of signposting news values was through comprehension of the community.

> The main roles? The main roles are to be able to seek out stories, develop an instinct as to where news might be but might not be immediately obvious. It's important to be able to relate to lots of different kinds of people. It's important to be assertive but not in an overly pushy or aggressive kind of way. And to just be aware of events that are happening in your community really. (Polly, Lines 16 to 20)

Polly's use of the phrase "… develop an instinct as to where news might be, but might not be immediately obvious" was interesting. This phrase suggested the need of investigative skills or tenacity to detect news within the community. It also

was a validating point for her experience because of the implication that news may not be obvious to the untrained eye. Therefore, she was able to detect news by relying on skill and experiences that set her apart from others. Polly's account illustrated critical awareness of the community to be a factor in her practice. The development of the news instinct came from a constant interrogation of the community needs, understanding of the readers' knowledge, and critical thinking of how news has to evolve and be presented to the public. Another way of contextualising perceptions of journalism practice was by reflecting on ideal-type journalists by highlighting that having a news instinct or understanding news values are more important than being able to write a story.

> I used to tell them there were three kinds of journalists: those that can write but cannot find a story, those that could find a story but couldn't write, and there were much fewer who could actually find a story and write it up. I used to give them all the sort of various advice for going out and finding stories, but I found quite a few were happy to sit there at the news desk being told what to do. (John, Lines 54 to 58)

John placed emphasis on those journalists who had the ability to envision newsworthiness in events, which was evidence of news instinct development. Unlike writing, which John presented as something that could be taught through coaching, repetition, and experience, the development of news instinct was something that had to be honed by "going out and finding stories". The most important aspect of the job for John was the development of the unique ability of finding the newsworthiness of an event. John favoured those journalists who understood instinct and news values over those who relied heavily on editors for assignments. Being a journalist for John meant being proactive. This was evident in his own career where he placed more value in being an "off-diary man" than someone who relied on editors.

> I always hated being told what to do so I was always an off-diary man. So, I got out of courts and council and stuff like that. I was a gossip columnist... a staffer for about 10 to 12 years. I did a humour column; I did reviews … I was a self-starter. I always try to advise younger journalists if you get a story and it's something you want to do... You might as well write what you want to write. (John, Lines 58 to 63)

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John's account tended to be indicative of the idea of journalism as the official record. This view was supported by John's preference to write observational stories about the community rather than covering courts and councils. Developing a news instinct was a means of understanding the community and representing the people's stories in his publications. The concepts of instinct and autonomy worked in concert to highlight what John were characteristics of a good journalist.

Newsroom prestige was another way in which participants positioned themselves positively. Emphasising roles, such as specialisms, was interpreted similarly to the development of news instincts because specialists tended to be the gatekeeper or experts in their fields.

> I was what they considered a specialist writer, a political editor ... It was me who was breaking stories and going to the news desk and saying look this is my news digest for the day these are the stories I've got, I think this is the best one and then they'd agree or say, 'no actually we're more interested in this other one'. It was directed that way because we were more trusted and there was more freedom. You'd get to go out there and do the stories you felt were important. You did that in the context of knowing the interest of the editor, the interest of the newspaper, and hopefully with an idea of what the interest of the local community was. (Ben, Lines 212 to 224)

Ben's account delved into the identity aspect of this section. His experience, understanding of the political climate, and judgment were key factors in positioning him as a newsroom authority. They point in this account was trust. There was trust that Ben understood his specialism, which translated into more autonomy except in those isolated situations where the editor was interested in something different from Ben. Being a trusted member of the newsroom validated Ben's practice because trust enabled him to have more power to make judgments, dictate news flow, and publish news that he felt was in everyone's interest.

Another perspective was the value some participants placed on their job titles. For example, Jamie's view of "news reporter" was someone who traded on reputation.

> … I was a general news reporter. I didn't work on the showbiz… it seemed to be that the showbiz reporters sort of got away with running stuff that didn't always stand up to

scrutiny or was supplied by certain artists who wanted their names in the paper, and they'd go along with certain things. I regarded myself as a proper news reporter who was only interested in the truth. (Jamie, Lines 56 to 63)

"News reporter" was seen as someone who was highly self-accountable and for whom reputation was important. Jamie felt that being a news reporter was a highly reliable member of staff when he compared those journalists to show business writers. In his view, being a show business reporter did not bear the same sort of self-accountability he felt was placed on news reporters. Towards the end of his account, Jamie reflected on being "interested in the truth". However, further reading of his transcript would reveal that this truth was not an objective one, but rather a subjective one.

Because, as a journalist, you're only interested in the veracity of what you're being told. (Lines 98 and 99)

Within the context of this chapter, Jamie's views of the truth were not based on an objective reality, but one that he could envision as being acceptable among his readers. This was indicative of arguments in the literature of the socially constructed nature of journalism practice.

4.4 Discussions of findings

This chapter aimed to add address the supporting research question: **How are journalists making sense of their daily professional lives and how do these sense-making apparatuses align to their understanding of journalism practice?** The findings suggest that participants make sense of their practice in four ways.

- Journalism practice is informed by a series of judgments that are based on experience, knowledge, consultation with colleagues, but without consulting the public;
- Participants rely on traditional knowledge and truth claims about journalism to seek meaning in their practice despite there being no links between these articulated claims and their actual practice;
- The digital landscape has had profound impacts on journalism both positively and negatively, and;

- Prestige through titles, either self-labelled or part of the journalism community, were important factors for how some of my participants made sense of their understanding of practice.

Discussion on newsroom practice

The ways in which participants made sense with journalism practice illustrated Ekström and Westlund's (2019) views on the epistemic positions of journalists. They argue the ways in which journalists make sense of their practice are informed by articulated claims, a justification of practice, and the acceptance or rejection of claims made in reader behaviours and expectations. These claims are based on the belief that journalists provide information that has been verified and deemed accurate (Carlson, 2017). The way in which participants constructed responses to the question "What does journalism mean to you?" highlighted journalism's community of practice (Wenger, 1999). My participants tended to refer to traditional, idealist views of practice despite significant changes to the journalistic landscape that prevent these views from becoming reality. The responses invoked a noble sense of service in which journalists felt they worked on behalf of the people to reveal truths, expose scandals, and ensure justice. This view is also tempered by a socially constructed approach to news in which the pursuit of truth is not an objective one, but a subjective one that participants believe is acceptable by their readers.

The traditional views of journalism practice have become fragmented in the digital landscape because of several mitigating circumstances. Downsized newsrooms, reliance on press releases, corporate policies pushing for immediacy and web-first thinking, delay of professional development, and the proliferation of sponsored content were causes for concern among participants. The implication here is the digital landscape has had a profound impact on public service practices (O'Toole & Roxan, 2019; Donsbach & Patterson, 2010; Zelizer, 2009). While there was anecdotal

evidence that contemporary journalists were upholding these practices, this was more in line with upholding key areas of coverage, such as local government and justice.

Despite this, in the converged media market, specialists tend to be parachuted into communities to provide coverage because the local reporter is too busy to attend meetings or court. While specialists possess the skills, expertise, and knowledge in general terms, the implication in the converged market is that they lack the sort of nuanced understanding of the community a local reporter may have, especially if he or she lives in that community. While newsgroups attempt to uphold a commitment to grassroots democratic practices, it has become cause for concern in power corridors as evidenced by Dame Cairncross' recommendation of funding local journalistic initiatives aimed at preserving democracy (Cairncross 2019). And, as evidenced by Townend (2020), the British government has pledged to preserve court journalism because justice must not only be carried out, but must appear to be carried out as well.

The participants' accounts illustrated the point Tumber (2001) made that social media and globalisation have displaced journalism's function of providing and interpretating information from the public sphere to their readers. The internet has led to serious implications of how the public accesses information, how people in power disseminate information, and what are journalists' roles in new media. The changes to journalism's landscape have resulted in changes to journalists' roles. Due to the changes in how people access information or how those in power disseminate information in the digital age, the implications have meant journalists are now verifiers and fact checkers while loosening their grip on their roles as gatekeepers (Canter, 2013a, 2013b). These implications support findings by Knight, Geuze and Gerlis (2008) who argued that journalism practice was influenced by corporate policy rather

than public duty. Compliance with web-first policies and other corporate agenda were indicative of control of the corporate sector of the media.

Discussions on digital journalism practices

Participants' accounts of digital media's profound impact on journalism were divisive as evidenced by both positive and negative views of changes to the profession. Among senior journalists, there was concerns about compromised traditional practices. These views tended to be dystopic about the future of journalism which illustrated Grubenmann and Meckel's (2017) argument that senior journalists had difficulties envisioning the digital world. However, early career participants' accounts demonstrated that they still carried out a duty of care to pursue stories along traditional lines with accuracy in mind. Digital autonomy, or ways of exploiting digital resources, was important for contemporary practitioners. This was illustrative of research into how journalists have taken ownership of the digital culture in other parts of the world (Grubenman & Meckel, 2017; Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016).

Grubenmann and Meckel argued that experience and age contributed to how journalists viewed new media. In this research, senior participants, especially those who had retired or moved out of the newsroom, were suspicious of new media and tended to hold on to more traditional values of practice. Older participants tended to reflect on news instinct and news values to define their professional identities (Grubenmann & Meckel, 2017). Those participants who worked in the digital media age tended to embrace technology and seek new forms of autonomy in the contemporary landscape (Grubenmann & Meckel, 2017; Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016). Those who worked in both predigital and digital media attempted to adapt to

their new environment while still holding onto traditional values and coming to terms with new ones.

The implementation of digital teams within newsrooms signalled a change in style that supports Tameling & Boersma's (2013) views on news values and instinct. They advocated for more emphasis on the audience's needs and called for a re-examination of the scope of journalism practice. Research findings illustrated this advocation because of the emphasis participants placed on analytic reports that charted reader trends and how they reflected on the significance of social media as a tool for improving practice. While Tandoc (2014) argues that journalists must temper how they use analytics because of its implications on gatekeeping duties, the participants tended to use analytics to confirm their practices rather than to alter them to meet readers' demands. This finding was more in line with Gans' (2004) that journalists tend to practice in ways that validate themselves. However, further exploration in this area would be required to provide a more definitive response to how contemporary journalists in the UK use analytic reports. The way in which participants still placed priority on traditional practices in the digital landscape illustrated Agarwal and Barthel's (2015) findings. They found contemporary journalists were making sense of how technology could shape their practice while still upholding pre-digital traditions. This was evident in the way participants still placed emphasis on coverage of local government and courts.

The ways in which early career participants reflected on how they used social media for story idea generation or to find supporting media was consistent with previous findings on how the gatekeeper role has changed (Singer, 1997, 1998; Donsbach & Patterson, 2010; Eldridge, 2013, 2016; Canter, 2014). The literature suggests that the role of the gatekeeper has changed in the digital era. The participants'

accounts point to a relaxing of the reins on the gatekeeper's role as evidenced by the use of social media to generate story ideas or to solicit user generated content. Senior participants' accounts correlated to older research on gatekeeping being a journalist's prerogative (White, 1950; Breed, 1955; Epstein, 1974; Gans, 2004). However, among the contemporary participants' experiences, practice enabled journalists to maximise their outputs with the public's co-operation through user-generated content (Canter, 2013).

Discussions on news values, news instincts, and identity

Judgment played a significant role in how participants reinforced their understandings of journalistic practice based on professional epistemic views. Through judgment, participants attempted to validate themselves as exceptional journalists based on their ability to understand how news values, news instinct, and newsroom prestige shaped their practice. This finding supported a wide range of research outlined in the first two chapters that pointed out how news values (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017; Bednarek & Caple, 2014) were inward facing decisions that provided insight into practice. The findings of this chapter also correlated with previous results where editorial decisions were still based on conformist ideas of the newsroom (White, 1950; Breed, 1955; Schultz, 2007). These decisions were made to the exclusion of public input because of the insular nature of the newsroom (Epstein, 1974; Brants & de Haan, 2010).

Participants tended to validate their work through a belief in autonomy practices. While there were noble constructions of their understanding of Fourth Estate and public interest, participants tended to see themselves as independent thinkers or individuals within the collective entity of the newsrooms. As Robinson (2019) argues,

a key objective of journalists is to seek validation that they are doing a good job. This was evident in participants' emphasis on news values or news instinct. These ideals were interpreted as value-added factors to a journalist's skillset. The findings suggested that participants drew correlations between professional identity, and news values and news instincts. This supported the claims that intuition and instinct were contributing factors to professional identity (White, 1950; Niblock, 2005; Schultz, 2007; Gravengaard & Rimestad, 2012; Markham, 2012 and Bednarek & Caple, 2014).

Past research linked news values and instinct to experience, comprehension of the audience, conforming to newsroom ideology, and knowledge of news-making processes (Vasterman, 2005; Knight Geuze & Gerlis, 2008; Schultz, 2007). These experiences supported past findings. However, claims cannot be made that participants' experiences were informed by newsroom ideology because my participants did not reflect on their practice within this context. Different questions would be required in order to determine if, for example, political specialists correlated political news to newsroom ideology.

The tendency among senior or retired participants to portray themselves as highly as they did was consistent with Aldridge's (1998) findings. Aldridge points out that much of the journalist's occupational ideology is "residual and anachronistic" (1998, p. 124). In other words, participants' perceptions were based on past constructions of journalism practice. Participants presented romanticised roles of what it meant to be a journalist within the context of the specialist, the off-diary journalist, or the antihero. While Aldridge's (1998) findings tended to be situated at the national level of journalism, contemporary practitioners do not appear to be adopting romanticised identities especially at the regional level. One of the key observations that was made among the contemporary participants was that technology now played

a role in the way autonomy was expressed in the digital landscape. While the participants who were most disillusioned with contemporary practice were either retired or those who worked in both the pre-digital and digital landscapes, contemporary participants chose to reflect positively on how digital practices could benefit their professional lives.

4.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter started out with the intention of addressing the supporting research question: **How are journalists making sense of their daily professional lives and how do these sense-making apparatuses align to their understanding of journalism practice?** Participants relied on judgment to highlight decisions that validated practice. Judgment was informed by an epistemic knowledge of journalism, experience, skill, and their community of practice. Participants held positive and negative views of the digital landscape. The positive views related to new forms of digital autonomy in which participants could use innovative ways of disseminating news. Participants also saw the digital landscape as a way of justifying the discrepancy between what they thought constituted sound journalistic practice and what they were actually doing. Finally, prestige played a significant role in terms of how participants positioned themselves as being effective practitioners in relation to their colleagues. This was emphasised by the value they place on understanding news values and having a well-developed news instinct.

Judgment was the underlying commonality across the themes and the ways in which participants constructed their understanding of practice. It served as a signpost of how journalists make knowledge claims about their profession. This was apparent in their understanding of news values and news instincts, which were based on experience and judgment, and was a significant way in which participants made sense

of practice. It was apparent in the way they positioned themselves as "off diary", specialists or what constituted an effective journalist.

The concept of judgment and news instinct also was significant in terms of how participants made sense of the digital landscape. As it was outlined in the previous section, one of the perspectives was that the findings validated and conflicted a variety of studies on digital practices and the role of the journalist as a gatekeeper in new media. Judgment plays a role in how participants view gatekeeping duties in the digital age. Participants highlighted analytics, social media, and the ability to produce content in a variety of ways for different platforms as perceived strengths in new media. In the pre-digital era, gatekeeping duties were based on several factors: newsroom ideology, knowledge of the target audience, and an understanding of events. Based on participants' reflections, new gatekeeping roles are still in tune with the historical perspectives, but insight into readers' habits, the ability to communicate instantly with readers through social media, and tailor-making content on different platforms are now strong considerations for the new gatekeeper. Participants' reflections on digital journalism provided an understanding of how identity in the medium has been enhanced by implementing new skills, newfound abilities in technology, and new relationships with readers to help them in their roles as digital journalists.

Chapter 5 Participants' ambivalent relationship with their readers

This chapter explores how my participants made sense of their relationship with their readers. As it was outlined in Chapter 1, a problematic area for journalists throughout their history has been the way readers view them. History shows that mistrust of the press is not something new (BBC4, 2007; Ipsos-Mori, 2016). More recent events, such as the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire, have added to the increasing amount of mistrust of the press. This chapter will focus on addressing the supporting research question: **How do participants view their relationship with readers and how does social media impact that role?**

The data will demonstrate that participants held ambivalent views of the public. This was based on the ways in which participants framed the ways in which they made sense of this relationship based on:

- What they thought the public expected of them;
- What they felt they did for the public, and;
- how they interacted with the public in social media and digital technology.

The key findings of this chapter were:

- Participants believed they shared a common view with their readers about journalistic expectations of investigative journalism;
- Candidates validated their practice by outlining how they work on behalf of people to raise awareness of lesser-known aspects of democratic society, such as the transparency in the criminal justice system;
- Journalism was an under-appreciated profession in which the public rarely praised journalists but were quick to criticise small mistakes. Praise tended to be given for stories that benefitted someone or a group of people;
- The public was portrayed as an irrational group that made baseless arguments and lacked understanding of what journalists did, and;
- Participants saw immense opportunity in the digital landscape to co-construct news with the help of the public through analytical trends in

readership, instantaneous feedback from the public, or the ability to elicit user-generated content that journalists may not possess.

This chapter explores the findings in two contexts: non-digital and digital. The non-digital context refers to the ways in which participants reflect on daily, sometimes physical, interactions between themselves and the public. Digital contexts refer to the social media and online experiences to understand how journalists interact with their readers. Presenting the chapter in this way allows for a clearer delineation of the ambivalent relationship between journalists and the public. Data was generated from a series of questions in which participants were asked to reflect on their impressions of the public and what they thought the public impressions were of them. Candidates were tasked with reflecting on the public's trust of journalists, criticism of their practice, and praise of practice. The key questions that applied to this chapter were:

- How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?
- What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for?
- What sort of things do you see journalists praised for?
- In what ways have social media and web-based journalism impacted your newsroom?

These questions were deemed worthy of eliciting responses that would help address the supporting research question because the questions required participants to explore their relationship with the public. Doing this would help them provide accounts of their relationship with readers. Research candidates were able to reflect on those areas where the public's mistrust existed and to express how they believed the public perceived them. The first question challenged participants to reflect directly on public trust between themselves and their readers. The second and third questions asked them to look at their careers and talk about the type of content for which participants were criticised or praised. The final question challenged them to reflect on how social media is used in the newsroom.

5.1 Non-digital contexts

This section explores several key perspectives from the analysis on how participants viewed their relationship with their readers in the non-digital context. It explores what participants thought the readers expected of them, the frustration of a lack praise for their work, the public's constant focus on trivial errors, and the public's lack of understanding about what goes on behind the scenes in journalism production.

'I think investigative reporting is valued'

When participants were asked to reflect on what they thought the audience expected of them, the result pointed to a shared vision in which both sides expected investigative practices. As evidenced in Chapter 4, journalism that challenged establishments was put forward to describe what participants felt was good daily professional practice.

> I think a lot of the stories that have come out in the last 12 months have been down to very good journalism. I think investigative reporting is valued more and more now, ironically, in a time when journalists aren't given the time or the money to do big investigations. So, I think we are praised for when we expose something or break news. (Ian 123 to 128)

> What's interesting when I talk about it, to my colleagues is that we are criticised for is not publishing enough good news or positive news and it's funny because when we do publish good news or there's a good news story on our front page, we will experience a drop in sales. So, people are not interested in positive news even though ironically when we do get praised that is what it's for, positive stories that are about the community and good deeds and things that like which is quite interesting. (Katarina, Lines 97 to 102)

> If investigations come to light ... good freedom of information requests and I think freedom of information is done a lot. I mean look at the MP expenses scandal that was a FOI and when it got leaked it was well done. Rotherham sex abuse scandal I'm from Rotherham so that, for me, when that was revealed, they have, it's things within the public interest they're getting praise for because they're revealing something that's been going off and it's been a scandal then they've done a good job with it. (Rose, Lines 152 to 157)

Candidates felt any type of content that "revealed" or "exposed" information was important, not only to them, but also their readers. The participants felt public expectations of journalism practice should include ways in which journalists helped the public, uncovered truths to raise awareness for the public, or to preserve public safety through investigative practices. Within this context, it was evident that the

relationship between journalists and their readers was fractured because participants'

realities did not correlate with practices of accountability and Fourth Estate. It was

evident that that there were discrepancies in the relationship between journalists and

their readers. Participants were quick to point out that, despite the demand for

investigations, the public was critical of those practices. Participants felt the public

was critical of journalists who turned investigative powers on them, citing invasion of

privacy. Participants highlighted these experiences by focussing on how they are

received when they go into neighbourhoods to gather news, especially when

something bad has happened.

> Crossing the line invasion of privacy those are probably the key points for criticism, but I suppose what you hear most about is when they've gone too far… not necessarily sharing secrets… government level secrets is more accepted celebrity invasion of privacy and I suppose social media more recently saying too much. (Martha, Lines 62 to 65)

> Umm I think intruding into personal grief people just see you as intrusive and insensitive you know asking people questions when, say there's been a murder, or someone's been killed in a residential area just going around knocking on doors and taking photographs and stuff of people is intrusive and I would say as journalists you get accused of not being straight with the truth as well. (Mickey, Lines 78 to 82)

> [We're] generally criticised in effect for just being nosy. I always get that 'you're just a little bit nosy, aren't you, this is a private matter'. (Katarina, Lines 85 to 86)

The results illustrated that participants did not believe the public understood

the implications of investigative journalism. Participants believed people objected to

invasive methods in the aftermath of a crime or other tragedy when journalists

descended on a community. This view was consistent with the way in which the public

criticised journalism coverage following the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell

Tower Fire. While the public condemned journalists, they also want to know what

happened, who were the victims, and how they died.

Participants also attempted to validate their relationship with readers as an

educational one. This was highlighted by passages in the transcripts in which

candidates emphasised how they would try to appease angry readers about the lesser-

known aspects of the criminal justice system.

A big one is courts. People don't understand it and say you can't print [identities] when we can because it's been said in court providing there's been no orders placed on it. So, we can print their names, what happened, what was said etc. Sometimes, we get a gripe about that, but once you explain it, they do understand. So that's not really criticism of a person that's them criticising the practice. (Adam, Lines 96 to 100)

We're criticised for court reporting and crime reporting. So, if somebody's been through the court system and they've been sentenced, and we are legally authorised to publish that information we get a lot of stick for that because people argue that it's confidential when of course it's not because that's the principle of open justice. (Katarina, Lines 85 to 88)

These accounts framed a perspective that a part of the relationship with the readers was to educate them on lesser-known aspects of the law. The participants pointed out that they were able to help people understand that the transparent nature of justice meant most information from court is in the public domain. Therefore, it appeared that participants were emphasis another value of their practice which was to remind people of these aspects of democracy that may not be as well publicised.

'We don't tend to get a lot of praise'

On the subject of professional adulation, participants appeared to feel under-valued. Their accounts suggested that public expectation was given predominantly for content that benefitted individuals or groups who were the subject of the story. Content that promoted charities and their events or celebrated people's achievements tended to elicit praise from readers. It was not surprising that this was the view of regional journalists where this type of content is more prevalent than at other levels of journalism.

Obviously, there's numerous awards and scoops and stuff like that. Locally, there is a lot of praise. We've got praised for the Hillsborough Coverage there was a lot of praise for that especially for reporters from Liverpool and Sheffield … stuff like that. Most of the time you don't hear about it. But if we do a mistake or an error that's when people tend to ring you up. (Adam, Lines 107 to 110)

We don't tend to get a lot of praise, but I suppose that when we are praised it's for things like when we run campaigns to help charities, so our paper ran a campaign to help the Royal British Legion encouraging people to donate, raise awareness of what they do. We're praised for publicising people's achievements so we might get an email saying thank you for the write up. (Katarina, Lines 93 to 97)

I think journalists are rarely praised especially [in] local journalism. I think we are rarely praised, but when we are praised, I think it is for stories that are important to the

community … like a charity story or something that's not hard hitting, breaking news, or anything like that. In my own experience, I did a story about 30 guys who shaved their hair off for charity raising money for a mate who had cancer and the story wasn't a big story, might not be the greatest story that I've done, but it had so much feedback and lots of people saying thank you for helping fundraise and stuff like that. I think, I think, there is a flipside to it but on the whole, I think journalists sometimes don't get credit that they deserve in some respects because some of the stories, the man hours, that might be put into stuff and how certain stories are crafted, put together, isn't seen so the praise goes missing sometimes. (Rory lines 150 to 160)

Not much (laugh) No that's not true to be fair We do get some praise here if we did a really nice tribute piece or something. More than one person would come back to us and say 'well done. I thought you covered that really well'. But it is often that you only hear the complainers rather than people wanting to say the job was well done. (Susan, Lines 41 to 44)

These accounts support the participants' argument that praise is given sparingly. In some of the participants' views, the type of content that elicits praise is not the type of content they like to produce. This was highlighted by phrases, such as Rory's statement: "… the story wasn't a big story, might not be the greatest story that I've done…". The type of content to which Rory referred was not in line with what participants considered to be ground-breaking for noteworthy in journalistic terms, but this content is a staple of community journalism. The participants' reflections suggested that public praise in this context was not taken as validation. This sense of frustration over public praise was further exacerbated by public criticism even for minor errors.

'I don't think people realise the pressure'

While participants felt praise was given sparingly, they felt criticism was more readily handed out. They felt the public was quick to judge journalists, often without any critical understanding of practice. For example, participants felt the public labelled all journalists as guilty of phone hacking despite hacking being found at the national level. Often, the scandals that occurred at the national level magnified the feelings of mistrust felt by journalists even at the regional level where those types of practices are frowned upon. This belief was indicative of the type of stereotypes and generalisations

made of groups in which the behaviour of the worst element tends to be magnified across the group.

> Nationally, you've got the guy who [was involved] … in the Tulisa case. He got sent down, didn't he? The undercover sheikh. He was a Sun journalist. That kind of thing will have a lot of impact on the industry. Like I say a lot this stuff happens at the nationals. It's rarely you'll see a local reporter get caught up in stuff like that, but it does happen. (Adam, Lines 101 to 105)

> I think there is all sorts [of criticism] these days. I think if you're looking at the tabloids … they used to get criticised for phone hacking and things and now it's a lot of the scandals where sometimes it might be [doing] things like … fishing expeditions to catch out MPs by posing as 16-year-old girls or 13-year-old girls. They didn't receive a tip-off. I think the perception … the thing journalists are being criticised for is they have no reason to do it and sometimes they might be making the news or creating a bit of trouble with it. But I mean with regional papers where I work this certainly is not the case because it's a very different audience and I think that's sort of a key thing I'd outline with that. (Rose, Lines 142 to 150)

Participants also situated public criticism as being a way of disagreeing with content. If people did not agree with a story, they would attempt to discredit the journalist.

> The public criticism is 'we can't trust you because you are… telling us lies or you're telling us things you want us to hear, or you're sensationalising stuff. Particularly, all of us were shocked when the details of the Millie Dowler hack came out. It was shocking because it meant the family thought that she was alive because it changed what on her voicemail. You know, that just drags us into the mire basically. Yellow journalism has been around for hundreds of years, but this dragged us to a whole new gutter level. And there was a lot more of it and there is a lot of it that's not been discovered. Clearly the other tabloids have been at it but they got away with it. (Grace, Lines 42 to 49)

> I should make a distinction between local papers and national papers. We certainly couldn't get away with a lot of the things the nationals do. Generally, I would say journalists were quite respectful of other people and I can't say that any bosses would expect you to be disrespectful either. (Vicki, Lines 18 to 21)

Participants tended to feel frustrated by the public's broad generalisations of journalists. A sticking point for participants was the public's inability to differentiate between regional and national journalists. For regional journalists, this meant being accused of practices they never did or were too young to have committed. This was interpreted as stereotyping which tends to occur when people use blanket statements to criticise a group. In this case, not attempting to differentiate regional from national journalists was seen as a form of uninformed criticism.

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Participants felt readers made a lot of assumptions about them that were not informed by more critical understandings of what goes on in journalism. Judgments made of practice were done irrespective of an understanding of the limitations or difficulties journalists face trying to gather information. The result is one of frustration for journalists because of blanket statements made against their practice.

> So, I think readers who are not trained in journalist practice and may not understand the story may blame the journalist for not checking the facts properly while that may not be the case. (Ian, Lines 119 to 121)

> I think a lot of people misunderstand the role we play in the town that we represent We often get a bit of stick for weather stories like when we do stories about snow and when it doesn't snow, we get grief saying ah … that you're lying, but if it's come from the Met Office that's a reliable source. (Rory, Lines 135 to 138)

> I think the biggest criticism … if we're talking about journalism as a profession is, 'oh, they are not particularly professional, they don't know their subject, they are politically biased'. The usual familiar things that are always thrown at journalists with rarely any of it supported in much the same way people criticise estate agents or car salesmen. (Ben, Lines 55 to 59)

> I think criticism is for unverified stories, churnalism. I don't think people realise the pressures of being in a newsroom like being pressured to get something done quickly for the website even if it may change later on then there is the accusation of inaccurate reporting. (Clara, Lines 23 to 25)

It was evident that participants were referring to uninformed comments made of journalists. Participants invoked frustration to express how they felt about baseless criticisms made of journalism practice. Although some participants felt readers were sophisticated enough to differentiate between rewritten press releases and original content, there was still a sector of readers who were irrational. For example, Rory recounted an anecdote in which journalists were criticised for inaccurate weather reporting.

But despite somewhat negative views of public criticism, some participants used criticism as barometers of success. Instead of internalising and feeling negative about criticism, some participants, especially those in more political roles, viewed criticism as a badge of honour and success.

When I was [specialism redacted] editor at the [name redacted], which I was for a number of years, I was quite happy if I was criticised by the Conservatives for being too Labour-leaning and invariably Labour would accuse me of being too Conservative-leaning. So, I thought that's fair enough because it balances it out. But they could never criticise the accuracy of my reporting, so they always tried to get you on bias. I worked hard and I know the editors I worked for tried to ensure there was balance. (Ben, Lines 59 to 64)

I think in general people are untrusting of journalism. But then at the same time the majority of time when you speak to a member of the public, they'll be quite open. I think people tend to trust journalists and are happy to talk to them and quite flattered. They are quite interested that journalists have to talk to them about something. So, when you knock on someone's door to ask them something or the other people tended to be quite responsive. (Harry, Lines 29 to 33)

I don't think I myself was ever criticised by members of the public. The newspaper I worked for [name redacted] was often criticised but usually by people who were opposed to the politics of the newspaper or by people who disapproved of tabloid newspapers generally. (Jamie, Lines 37 to 49)

In this context, criticism served to validate practice. In the case of political journalists, criticism of bias from all sides was interpreted as signposts of success. Candidates felt reified in their practice by emphasising factors, such as perceived political bias, tabloid newspaper employment, or perceptions of the newsroom's ideologies. These examples of public criticism were signposts that disapproval of practice went beyond what readers thought of journalists towards what the product represented, which was especially galvanising at the national tabloid level. In the more politically engaged communities, criticism of bias instead of accuracy was a badge of honour and a signpost of sound journalism practice. The underlying objective of the participants was their commitment to accuracy and their need to make that known in their interviews. In their view, if they were criticised for being biased, they interpreted that as the public's inability to accuse them of being inaccurate.

'We're only human, we make mistakes'

To this point in the chapter, participants' concerns about their readers were due to perceived invasions of privacy and accusations of bias. Another area that participants were frustrated by was the perceived overreaction to errors that were out

of the participants' control. Even though readers were quick to criticise inaccuracies, journalists felt frustrated by criticism. There was little evidence of candidates taking ownership of inaccuracies, but there was evidence that participants were frustrated by criticism even though journalists acknowledge errors can occur.

> Not checking their facts. Readers offer a different set of eyes on the story, and they notice a side that hasn't been accounted for by the journalist. (Ian, Lines 111 to 112)

> Everything. Inaccuracy. I suppose if we make errors which can happen. We're only human, we make mistakes. We try our very best not to be inaccurate, but sometimes it happens. (Katarina, Lines, 82 to 84)

> Oh everything. It's very difficult to be a journalist because you never really get any respect from your readers. If you make the slightest error, it's a huge deal. So, we're criticised for a lot of things, but I would say those are the main things. (Katarina, Lines 89 to 91)

> I think if you can deliver a good, accurate story… Especially today when people are getting mixtures of information from different sources. I do think reporting things properly and fully is important today as ever, in fact, more so. (Vicki, Lines 30 to 37)

While participants appeared to be discouraged because of the complaints they received, there was evidence that some participants saw opportunity in these complaints. As Adam pointed out, "readers offer a different set of eyes on the story". This suggested a form of interaction between journalists and their public. Readers played a part in the construction of content by highlighting errors or providing further information on stories. However, the overall consensus in this context was that participants were defensive by arguing that journalists are human and could make mistakes.

Summarisations of findings

There were several key takeaways in the analysis of this section of the chapter. First, journalists shared a common expectation of what journalism outputs ought to be with their readers. However, the public is not as welcoming of this practice when it occurs in their neighbourhoods as evidenced by accusations of invasion of privacy. Participants held beliefs that a part of their practice was to provide a type of public

service in which they educated people on the lesser-known factors of democratic society. These defences were construed as ways of validating practice within the context of public service journalism.

Second, participants felt unappreciated because reader praise rarely went beyond positive remarks about stories that benefitted people directly. The tendency was for the public to give praise only when it benefitted them. Instead, participants framed the relationship as praise being far between, but that people were ready to criticise for the most minor of errors, incorrect weather reports, or other types of content out of the journalists' control. Participants felt they were stereotyped and generalised against by a public that could not differentiate between different types of journalists.

In some cases, participants welcomed negative reviews from the public as a gauge of good practice. Accusations of bias were badges of honour for participants because they signalled that the public did not really have any complaints which meant their content was accurate and accusations of bias in political news is a normal part of the landscape. Despite their views of their readers in the non-digital context, participants still described a symbiotic relationship between themselves and people because they felt they provided a service of raising awareness of not-well-publicised aspects of democratic life and that they work on behalf of the public. As the literature indicates, an audience is an integral part of public service practice (Deuze, 2005; Zelizer, 2009; Hampton, 2010: Donsbach & Patterson, 2010). Overall, despite participants' acknowledgement of critical aspects of their relationships with readers, they continued to be committed to their practice. Despite a somewhat negative view of the relationship with their readers, participants' practice remained unaffected. This illustrates a point Robinson (2019) made that journalists are able to distance

themselves from the public, which means they do not rate criticism highly as they would if criticism came from people closer to them.

5.2 "Social media is massive"

Participants' views of their relationship with the public on social media tended to be more positive than the non-digital context. Although the ability for people to anonymise themselves on social media platforms has led to the proliferation of online abusive behaviour, there was not much evidence that this was a concern for participants. The candidates' perception of public misuse of social media to gather news was more of a concern. Participants were more positive in their reflections of how social media validated their practice and helped them create more beneficial relationships with the public. The focus of this section is on how participants viewed their audience within the context of social media.

While participants were not concerned about abusive content, they were frustrated by baseless arguments against journalists. One of the ways participants viewed online interactions with the public was to emphasise how some readers acted emotionally about content, often without critical exploration of stories. This was similar to arguments made in the previous section, but the ways in which participants reflected on online abuse was less personal. An implication of this was that anonymity added a further buffer between journalists and the public, which could account for participants not being as concerned about online comments as past literature suggested. Instead, participants took the view that online comments were part of the contemporary landscape, and the removal of abusive comments was part of their new daily practice.

While their approach to online comments was more benign, participants did reflect on these types of comments as being a part of the broad-based stereotyping journalists normally face.

> I think journalists are criticised for a number of things, but I think mainly the one that I've seen on social media is one … is flippant comments of lazy journalism not getting the facts right. (Rory, Lines 142 to 144)

> I suppose in the day and age of the 21st century and social media people can react to things so quickly now in a kneejerk way. A lot of the time it is easy for journalists to be attacked quite quickly without reading the full facts of the story or sort of understanding the story properly. … Some people might not like a story … So, it's just easy to attack journalists online all the time … We are not particularly liked or trusted. It's a difficult one. I think you would broadly say journalists are probably trusted less now but I think we form an important role and people do appreciate that (Ian, Lines 80 to 88)

> I think … you can see what people think of journalists by the Facebook posts … There are a lot of swear words on there and we have to remove a lot of posts [that say] journalists this and journalists that. (Rose, Line 116 to 118)

Ian, Rose, and Rory's experiences highlighted the negative aspects of social media where people were able to hide behind pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. They all were wary of how social media has been used to leave negative comments about journalists. Ian acknowledged that journalists were not well liked, which was seen as a way of positioning negative commentators as petty because of the emphasis on people leaving comments rather than interacting and engaging with journalists in more constructive ways. However, Ian was not bothered by these types of comments because there were many people who still valued his work. Rose tended to be dismissive of online commentators in her daily task of removing abusive content. It was construed that while these comments are detrimental and negative, the participants did not view them as threatening, but rather a new part of daily journalism practice. A more worrying concern for some was the way in which participants felt readers gathered news on social media platforms. The implication in their accounts was that participants felt reliance on alternative news sources could be inaccurate and devalued journalistic output. Like the findings in the previous section, the argument participants

constructed was meant to validate themselves as being qualified to deliver news based on their commitment to accuracy.

> It's alarming when you hear how people get their news. A high percentage of people get all their news from Facebook. It's only snippets of news they are getting that are made into facts and reality that I find quite disturbing. Not necessarily fake news just out of context news really. It'll be little bits that people pass around. It's not necessary that someone set out to make fake news, but this is the way it's delivered. It's the way it is interpreted that I do find quite alarming. There is a lack of the in-depth, well-researched news that maybe 20 years ago we did get by reading big features in newspapers. (Vicki, Lines 109 to 118)

This account illustrated further validation and promotion of professional journalism practice as the main source for verified, accurate information. Vicki's perspective was highlighted by her belief that reliance on news from social media tended to be less objective, manipulated to meet varying worldviews, and often taken out of context.

A key takeaway from the participants' accounts was how they were making sense of practice to create positive ways of engaging with technology. Participants at the regional level tended to use social media as a platform for sharing ideas with the public. Whether this was to elicit feedback about content, finding news ideas, or acquire user generated content to use in stories, the idea of the journalists as the authoritative gatekeeper was changing.

> Facebook is an ever-increasing tool, ahm, for lots of various reasons … some of my best stories have come from Facebook. Ahm, from people posting stuff on Facebook and I've contacted them, and I've made some of my most hard-hitting stories have come from Facebook. (Rory, Lines 232 to 235)

> Actually, Facebook and social media have been effective for this because people have got the idea that they can get out there and tell the story and they get in touch with you through social media to ask if you [saw] something or to send you some video they have recorded. (Grace, Lines 158 to 160).

> And if you're in a particular town on a particularly slow news day then you're all going to be scrambling for the same kind of stories. If you notice something on Twitter or Facebook, then you start chasing it up. (Ian, Lines 225 to 227)

> I check the council website I check the social media it's a big one. A lot of people are on social media so they will post so they will post things to our page, so they send us Facebook messages, so I'd say the source of a lot of news now is on social media and on the internet. There's less time these days to go out into the community to have a look around to see what's. (Katarina, Lines 219 to 223)

> There's also a team that decides which stories go on the website and when to repost them and then engage with people on social media as well so yeah, I mean in the (name redacted) office alone there is a team of about three digital people. (Mickey, Lines 157 to 161)

These accounts pointed towards a loosening of the authoritative reins by journalists as gatekeepers of information and the one-way flow of content. Instead, the participants evidenced communications on social media platforms as ways of gathering news and searching for inspirations for content. Being a relatively new medium, participants were still making sense of how to use social media to maximise their journalistic outputs. Similar to how they are using digital platforms in new ways, participants demonstrated how they used social media for feedback and as a news source tool. Key ways in which participants were using social media was as a source finder, to welcome user generated content to complement outputs, or to understand trends in how the public consumed news. It was clearly evident that social media has had a significant impact on the way contemporary journalists practise. Even though journalists still emphasise the value their training brings to the role, they envision ways in which interactions with the readers could help to enhance output through user-generated content. In the pre-digital era, luck or vigilance were required to capture unique or breaking news contents. In the era of smartphones and social media, anyone can record content which could be used to provide enhanced coverage of events.

Summarisation of findings

Despite previous findings in the literature that suggested cause for concern about the abusive nature of social media on journalists, this was not the case in this research. Instead, participants tended to be dismissive of abusive comments. Less concern for online abuse could be due to two circumstances. First, the literature tended to situate most of the most vitriolic abuse at the national and international levels while

most of the participants worked at regional levels. Second, participants did not take the comments personally because of the added layer of buffer between journalists and readers offered by the anonymisation of comments. Instead, participants emphasised ways in which they could improve their journalistic outputs by reaching out to readers online. This type of engagement is a significant development because it suggests a loosening of the ways in which journalists engage with the public to create better outputs, whether that is through suggesting story ideas, providing content to complement stories, or analytic data that chart people's reading habits. Despite the concerns about the implications of the public's reliance on social media for news, this was seen as further validation for journalists because the view reinforced the ideas that journalists are best equipped to disseminate news because they feel committed to accuracy and balance.

5.3 Discussion and situating findings

Journalists and the audience

Robinson (2019) identifies a central irony in journalism in which journalists make decisions with readers in mind, but without consultation with them. The journalist's view of audiences tends to be abstract, framed by assumptions, folklore, and grounded in idealism. This audience is submissive and needs public service journalism to navigate their way through daily life. However, the reality is the audience is a living, breathing, diverse entity that constructs its worldview and is often intolerant of anything that challenges that perspective. People tend to gather news that informs their points of view with little to no critical opposition. In the digital age, news aggregators, such as Google News, have become a boon because they allow people to create bespoke newsfeeds filled with content that matches their view, ideology, and understanding of the world.

The implication is that readers have become more important because they have more control over the news flow. The result is unprecedented access to a variety of sources beyond legacy media. This illustrates the arguments that participants constructed to validate their practice as acting on behalf of people and forewarning of the potential dangers of newsfeeds. Participants felt that the negative proliferation of social media as a source has led to an increase in misinformation and partial truths. The implication participants made with this observation was to add further value to their position as journalists with specialised training and a commitment to accuracy. This point illustrates Ferrucci and Vos' (2017) findings that journalists tend to view blogs, vlogs, or alternative media as something different from media, which indicates further reification of professional practice.

The findings supported the literature on the shift in how people consume news. The ability to create bespoke newsfeeds has enabled people to control what news they want to consume. This was illustrated by Lowrey and Anderson's (2005) findings that a majority of people sought news from alternative websites with about ¼ of the people setting up newsfeeds to provide themselves with news that match their worldviews. This was also consistent with the findings of Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, and Logan (2012) that bespoke news streams tended to be populated with news that reinforced people's view. The findings illustrated that digital culture has moved away from traditional news cycles that were controlled by media organisations to cycles in which people gained control (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018). This was evident in the concerns some participants held of digital media usage that positioned readers in a more tenable position in the eyes of journalists (Robinson, 2019). These findings demonstrate a remarkable change from the earlier literature in which journalists made all news decisions as gatekeepers (White, 1950; Breed, 1955). Despite the changes in

the way people consume news, participants still maintained that their skills added value to information because they could interpret and interrogate information and present balanced viewpoints.

Habermas' (1974, 1989) views of the public sphere supports the way in which people engage with news in a fluid and diverse community. The data illustrated that participants held an idealised view of their readers in which candidates tried to validate their practice as mission-critical in helping to raise awareness and educate people. These perspectives illustrate Jones' (2006) argument of a flaw in how journalists position themselves as the primary providers of news, having a duty to inform the public, and encouraging political engagement. As Richards (2004) and Wahl-Jorgensen (2006) argue, there is an assumption of an idealised citizen who is unbiased, realistic, and unemotional. This was evident in the research participants' accounts as they portrayed readers as an audience that relied on them for information or an audience who journalists could educate about the lesser-known nuances of the justice system. This indicated a failure to grasp that political engagement was socially constructed because people tended to align with political material that verified their core beliefs, adds value to their worldviews, and confirms themselves as citizens in political engagement. This accounts for the participants reflection on criticism that they felt was basis and was focussed on simple disagreement with the content.

Self-validation and the audience

The findings illustrated Robinson's (2019) argument that readers were positioned as being both important and a nuisance. Participants recognised the importance of having an audience, but were clearly dismissive of the same audience for what candidates considered to be trivial, often poorly constructed arguments about journalism practice. This was indicative of the often insular and folkloric views

journalists have of readers (Robinson 2019; Brants & de Haan, 2010). While participants felt compelled to dictate news as gatekeepers, they were not as receptive to reader input, which was interpreted as a continued practice of seeking reassurance from colleagues rather than exploring and understanding reader criticism. It also highlighted the dismissive and insular nature (Robinson, 2019) that journalists tend to have of the public.

One of the recurrent themes throughout the chapter has been the idea of the journalist as the altruistic individual whose practice is for the readers. Robinson (2019) argues that journalists place value in audiences as a way of placing value in themselves. It was evident in the data that participants were somewhat disillusioned by the praise they received, which tended to occur only when stories benefitted individuals or groups, such as those doing charity work. There was no evidence that any of the participants had been singled out for praise based on their general practice. Robinson argues that journalists may be altruistic, but they work within the profession because they want to produce content that is compelling and significant. Instead, validation of journalism is an internalised concept based on journalism awards, newsroom praise, professional development, job promotion, and title status.

Value of audiences and validation

The invocation of public service journalism by participants served to illustrate the value journalists place on their practice. Public service journalism (Deuze, 2005; Zelizer, 2009) validates the key principles of journalism embodied by my participants to justify their practice as working on behalf of the public to disseminate news (Robinson, 2019). There are two key goals of journalistic output: The first is to emphasise the importance of events or news, and; the second is to generate interest and encourage the audience to read the content (Robinson, 2019). Validation was an

important part of how participants reflected on the readers because journalism training added value to their position and commitment to public service journalistic practices.

My participants framed their experiences with readers as being paradoxical. While their interaction with readers signalled a demand for more investigative journalism, participants highlighted experiences in which they were criticised when they conducted this type of journalism in people's neighbourhoods. This was reflective of what went on in 2017 when people criticised journalists in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire. While there were examples of serious breaches by some journalists in those incidents, there were also prime examples of the fractured relationship between journalists and readers. As Robinson (2019) points out, the irony of the criticism by the public is that they tend to demand details about incidents and victims in the aftermath of tragedies.

Findings that showed how folklore and stereotypes informed perceptions of people were consistent with Brants and de Haan's (2010) results. They argued that journalists' preconceived notions inform the ways in which they view their readers. Participants framed their relationship with readers based on stereotypical views that journalists and readers held of each other (Brants & de Haan, 2010). While newsroom folklore was evident in how participants viewed their readers, participants' accounts also suggested stereotypes of journalists underpinned the public's view of journalism. However, further research that accesses reader experience would be needed to provide a more authoritative discussion on how each party views each other.

Participants' emphasis on public service journalism roles signposted authoritative constructions of practice and modes of validation. Participants highlighted key roles that correlated to their understanding of practice to validate their belief in public service journalism. Their understanding of public service journalism

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is informed by a shared repertoire of knowledge (Wenger, 1999) that began when they learned to be journalists as students and carried on as they became indoctrinated into the profession as trainees. This illustrated Hutchins and Boyle's (2017) research on the reliance on authorative roles to defend changes to practice and fragmentation of the public's trust in journalists. Hutchins and Boyle argued that journalists are forced to defend their authoritative role as news providers by referring to their practice. Within the context of this thesis, this was achieved by highlighting public criticism for conducting normal practices. Essentially, participants felt aggrieved because they were criticised for doing their jobs.

Digital relationships

A key implication of journalism in the digital landscape is that journalists have a more improved relationship with their readers. Instantaneous feedback, analytic reports, direct channels of communication, and a more interactive relationship with the public have bridged the gap between journalists and the public in some ways. As stated in Chapter 1, pre-digital communication tended to take the form of letters to the editor. Unless someone was motivated enough to write a letter, feedback was often not given. However, the interactive nature of social media means that anyone with a smart device and an internet connection can comment and provide feedback instantaneously.

While participants outlined authoritative understandings of practice, they were opened to allowing readers to contribute to some aspects of the newsgathering process. Despite evidence of anonymised abusive content online, the candidates did not find the practice troubling, but saw its deletion as a part of the new daily digital routine. This finding contradicted much of the research that addressed concerns among journalists as they relate to audience participation in digital cultures (Chen, Pain, Chen, Mekelburg, Springer & Troger, 2018; Löfgren & Örnebring, 2016; Obermaier,

Hofbauer & Reinemann, 2018). A likely reason for the differences in findings could be because most of the research participants worked in the regional press where complaints tend to be more about mistakes or invasion of privacy (Frost, 2006) than trolling within a political context (Löfgren & Örnebring, 2016; Obermaier, Hofbauer & Reinemann, 2018). As Robinson (2019) summarised, journalists tended to dismiss online negative comments. Participants glossed over reflections of these comments without exploring these types of interactions, which was indicative of a negative perception journalists have of anonymised commenters (Anderson, 2011).

Audiences have become much more important to journalists in the digital age primarily because the business model of journalism has changed. Internet traffic is an important tool for publishers to use to attract advertisers, which makes the audience a critical part of survival in the digital age. That is, the audience has become a commodity and a necessary part of the success of online news organisations. Although this was the case, there was a tendency among participants to still remain somewhat dismissive of the audience, especially in the context of online comments. Despite having contradictory views of online comments to the existing literature, participants tended to view online negativity as an inconvenience.

When it came to reflections of working with the public, participants' responses were consistent with two ways of making sense of their interaction with readers (Robinson, 2019; Tandoc & Thomas, 2015; Tandoc, 2014): learning from people and learning from data. Learning from people was informed by the interactive nature of digital journalism where participants gauged their practice based on reader reaction or how they used social media to elicit user generated content from the public to enhance news coverage. Data learning was informed by the use of analytic reports to understand the public's reading habits. One of the key developments in the digital

landscape has been the unprecedented insight analytics have afforded journalists to help them understand how people read news.

Although participants seemed to be happy relinquishing some of their gatekeeping duties, this was only the case if the audience could contribute content to enhance news reports. This included content such as witness videos or photographs in breaking news stories that could enhance content. Essentially, one of the key roles of social media has led to a form of the co-construction of news content. While there was acknowledgment of how important analytics were in newsrooms, there was very little evidence that those reports were being used to create news that aligned with readers' preferences. Instead, it was used to validate journalists' news decisions, such as leading with crime stories over other types of content. Despite views of a closer relationship with readers (Canter, 2013a, 2013b), news decisions were still being made within the insular newsroom world (de Haan, 2012). This context demonstrates that the findings of the ethnographic studies of the 1970s and 1980s (Tuchman, 1973; Epstein, 1974; Altheide, 1976; Schelsinger, 1978; Gans, 2004; Fishman, 1980) are still relevant in contemporary journalism research.

Journalists tended to oppose any external influence over their practice. Despite the proliferation of online data about how people read, candidates did not provide any insight into how those analytics were used beyond using social media to find news, seek permission for content, or to promote news. This differed from Robinson's (2019) findings that the potential from online data could mean measuring stories' effectiveness, quantifying people's online trends, and transforming news into more personalised experiences. Instead, a significant amount of digital outputs were still journalist-driven.

The findings evidenced that the early research and recommendations of the changing journalistic landscape have been slow to take shape. Dahlgren's (1996) recommendations that digital journalism could lead to a more civic interaction between online journalists and the public is occurring to some extent. However, that extent is more to the organisation's benefit rather than a departure from what Dahlgren described as a top-down agenda where the elites and news media influenced the content. Instead, the sharing of who controls information is more in line with Singer (1997, 1998) and Canter (2014) where the sharing of the content flow only occurs when it enhances journalistic outputs.

If anything, a key implication can be envisioned that relates to further insulation for journalists in the social media landscape. Anonymised online criticism adds a further buffer because journalists do not know who is criticising them. With commenters being nameless, faceless entities, journalists are more dismissive of online negative comments and see them as a part of their daily professional lives. Additionally, the positive aspects of social media, such as instantaneous feedback, understanding readers' habits, or relying on readers to supply user generated content further isolates journalists from the public. It was evident among senior journalists, who practised in the pre-digital era, that a key component of their practice was being able to go into the community and immerse themselves to find content. Contemporary journalists appear to be relying more on social media to generate story ideas, therefore, further isolating themselves from the communities they represent.

5.4 Concluding remarks

The purpose of this chapter was to explore how participants viewed their relationship with readers. This chapter was tasked with addressing the supporting research question: **How do participants view their relationship with readers and**

how does social media impact that role? Participants' ambivalent views of readers was evident when the data was considered in non-digital versus digital contexts. Within the non-digital context, participants tended to invoke traditional, folkloric views of the irrational audience that was quick to judge journalists. My participants tended to portray the public as not being able to understand and differentiate between regional and national journalistic practices. They saw the public as being self-centred, only giving praise for content that benefit personal gains, but quick to criticise for the smallest of errors. Invocations of public service journalism served as a common expectation of participants and the public (Van der Wurff & Schoenbach, 2014). One of the problematic areas of the participants' reflections on their readers was the traditional, one-dimensional view that journalists tend to hold of their readers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006). Participants did not contextualise their reflections to address the diversity of readers or their varying political alignments that emerged in the data (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006; Jones, 2006, Habermas, 1974, 1989).

The digital relationship consisted of mixed emotions. While the participants acknowledged a proliferation of anonymised online criticism, they were not concerned about it from a personal perspective. Instead, they saw it as a part of being a journalist. Going online and deleting abusive content has become part of the daily digital practice. This contradicted the rising concerns about abusive and bullying content on journalists in the literature. Instead, participants focussed on how analytic reports and the immediacy of social media could be used to produce better directed content. This view illustrated the changing role of the digital journalist. Despite evidence of some changes to the digital gatekeeper role (Singer, 1998, 1999; Canters, 2013a, 2013b, 2014), the main activities in online journalism remained journalist driven. Participants were more

concerned about the ways in which people used social media to acquire news, often from less reliable alterative media sources.

Participants' attempts to co-construct content with the public was only reserved for those instances where user generated content enhanced journalistic outputs. The era of smartphones with cameras has meant anyone can record news and share it with news organisations. This shift to a two-way interaction in gatekeeping duties has meant journalists have access to content from readers instead of having to rely on being in the right place at the right time to gather news. Despite access to analytics, journalists were not using these resources to gain insight into the reading patterns of the public. Instead, they were using data to verify their content and decisions about what was newsworthy. As the literature shows, there has been little change to how journalists view the readers despite unprecedent ways of interacting with the public in the digital landscape.

A commonality across the findings explored in this chapter is the idea of the commodification of the public. This was evident in the variety of ways in which my participants made sense of their relationship with readers. The public was positioned as significant players in the non-digital context because they represented a validation point for participants. Candidates tended to try to reify their roles as journalists by pointing out the services they provide the public through value-added skills that they acquired through formalised training. As Robinson (2019) argues, the commodification of people in the digital context takes on a variety of faces.

To the publisher and sales representatives, people are quantified in analytic reports that show readership figures, which, in turn, are used to solicit advertising revenue. This strategy is much more precise than the circulation figures of the pre-digital era where numbers were based on the number of copies distributed. Those

figures were wholly inaccurate because they did not differentiate between sold copies and copies given away in promotions or for people who pick up discarded copies of newspapers to read. However, analytic reports are much more accurate because they represent the exact number of people who visit a website. To the journalists, the commodification of the public was evident in how journalists were willing to relax their authoritative hold on the gatekeeper reins if the public had content that could enhance stories. It is through the commodification of the public that value and positive views are invoked by the participants.

Chapter 6: Navigating morally challenging assignments

This chapter explores how participants reflected on assignments readers often deemed to be morally questionable. The chapter is underpinned by the supporting research question: **How do journalists view assignments the public construe as morally challenging and unethical?** It is concerned with the types of assignments that have ethical implications and bearings on the Editors' Code of Practice. Analysis in this chapter was underpinned by two questions from the semi-structured interview:

- How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?
- Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues faced a moral dilemma? How did this make you feel?

These questions were designed to elicit reflection among the participants to help them construct perspectives of how they comprehend ethical practice in their daily professional lives.

The overarching finding from this chapter was that participants viewed morally challenging assignments as they would any other. Although they were viewed as acceptable assignments, participants defended them as a part of the journalistic landscape. These types of stories were a part of the daily professional life of being a journalist. While this was the reflection they held about these types of assignments, there were common ways they used to make sense of these practices. Four overarching themes became evident that led to the following finding:

- Participants did not see anything wrong in assignments people could construe as being morally challenging, but instead highlighted ways of preparing for these assignments;
- Participants engaged in identity work as a way of validating and defending practice;
- Public interest was used to defend morally challenging assignments.

- The Editors' Code of Practice played a role in how participants went about their daily professional lives.

During the interviews, participants tended to reflect on bereavement or "death knock" journalism as a source of ethical consternation. Castle (1999) argues that bereavement journalism is one of the most difficult types of assignments a journalist could be asked to complete. Because these assignments tend to occur within days or even hours of a death, families' emotions are very raw which makes these types of stories very challenging since journalists must balance professionalism with sensitivity. As Hanusch (2010) argues, journalists do not have the same type of control in these assignments as they would in others due to the unpredictable nature of how grief is manifested by people. As it will be discussed later in this chapter, there are schools of thought that advocate for this type of practice because these stories allow families to construct narratives to help them make sense of grief. As important as it is to give the family an opportunity to co-construct these narratives, journalists must also address key ethical issues, such as accuracy and privacy (Newton, 2011).

Public antipathy tends to be very prevalent, which is often influenced by how popular culture frames journalists who intrude on grief. This was clearly evident in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire in 2017. In both of those incidents, journalists faced harsh criticism, in person and online, from people who opposed bereavement journalism practices. While there were a few extreme cases of unethical journalism practice in the Manchester Arena attack's aftermath, the regional press, especially *The Manchester Evening News,* were singled out for sensitivity in the way they worked with grieving families (Kerslake, 2018). Katherine Viner of *The Guardian* and Channel 4's Jon Snow pointed out that a lack of public faith in journalists has made it difficult for journalists covering the London tower block

fire. Viner (2017) argued that journalists must work on re-establishing bonds with the public they believe they serve.

This chapter will explore four key areas that relate to the four themes outlined above:

- The strategies participants used to defend their practice;
- The way in which professional identity served to validate practice;
- The way in which participants made sense of public interest, and;
- The role the Editors' Code of Practice plays in daily journalistic life.

6.1 'Say it's a tribute piece' and other strategies

This section will be used to present the ways in which participants made sense of bereavement journalism. Overall, participants did not find bereavement reporting to be objectionable, but rather, a part of the journalistic landscape, especially at the regional level where death could be seen as part of the community. Participants prioritised professionalism as a way of handling these types of assignments. The significant difference between how they handled bereavement content and other types of news was with a higher level of sensitivity when they interacted with families. This was exhibited by a development of strategies to put the families at ease by framing the assignment as a "tribute" or by respecting people's privacy. Participants also presented accounts that demonstrated how experience played a significant role in helping them develop strategies to deal with bereavement stories. Candidates achieved this by understanding that a more professional role benefitted them than taking human responses to death. They were there to do a job, and that was the focus. This section begins by exploring how participants respected privacy, how they defended the practice through strategy, and how they progressed from human responses to professional ones.

Privacy in practice

Two of Ipso's five clauses have implications on bereavement practice: privacy and intrusion into shock and grief. Considering that people's emotions are at their rawest in the early aftermath of a death, the participants use self-interrogation or a willingness to walk away as ways of elucidating privacy.

> It's [deciding] whether it's worth going out. So, it's not necessarily something we'd obviously demand. If it's a no, then we walk away and that is how it is. We won't haggle. (Rose, Lines 222 to 224)

> We're not here to … dish dirt, you know, we're not interfering. And if they tell us to go away … we go away. (Rory, 110 to 111)

One of the key decisions that participants had to make was the merit of performing the assignment. Here, Rose demonstrated how self-interrogation was used by asking if it was worth interviewing the family. In both Rose and Rory's accounts, the willingness to go away or not to haggle were seen as ways in which they respected people's right to privacy. This was a significant departure from how journalists used to conduct these types of assignments.

> I can tell you we did a lot worse things in the 1980s than have been done more recently. … When I worked as freelancer in 1986-87, it wasn't uncommon for [name redacted] to send you back to the same house 6, 7, 8 times just keep going until you got something and these days that would be unheard-of. You're not wanting people to tell you get away. But the stories I used to hear from older journalists … people in the 1950s, freelancers from agencies bought coats to look like policemen and they used to turn up at crime victims' houses saying they'd just come from the station and needed a statement and if pressed they were told to say, 'train station sorry for any confusion'. In those days journalists were told to steal photographs off mantelpieces and things like that. Daily Express reporters in the 1950s were given crash courses on what car bits to remove from Daily Mail reporters' cars. (Alistair, Lines 43 to 53)

Although participants did not explore privacy in more explicit terms, the ability to walk away was supported by Alistair's list of extreme behaviours that were prevalent going back almost 70 years. While these assignments are viewed as challenging, there are two key considerations to be made when assigned a bereavement

story: always asking the family even if journalists assume the family was to be left alone and accuracy is an important aspect of this type of practice

> Death door knocks are hard, but you have to ask the question. You can't assume someone doesn't want their story to be in the paper. You don't know that until you find out. It might actually be completely opposite and [they] really want you to write a story about how their husband died or whatever and do a kind of tribute and … [they] have their influence over how the story comes out rather than them not talking to us and us writing what we think we know based on information given to us by the police. I always just explain that you never know what someone's going to think unless you find out, unless you ask them. (Susan, Lines 79 to 85)

Susan's account highlights the problems with assumption of privacy which include taking away the decision to celebrate a life from a family and the risk of inaccurate information. While some families may want to be left alone, journalists should not make the decision without consulting the family. Susan's account also demonstrated how raising awareness of accuracy could be a factor to help families reconsider and allow a journalist to interview them. As is often the case, third-party or social media accounts can lead to inaccurate portrayals of the deceased.

'Would you like us to do a tribute piece?"

A more successful way participants use to approach grieving families is by framing the assignments as "tributes" rather than stories. Tribute has a gentler connotation that conveys families are directing the flow of the content, what is being divulged, and how it is constructed. However, the objective of securing the interview is still the goal for the journalist.

> We'd just knock on the door and say do you want to pay a tribute we're looking at putting something in the paper … (Rose, 223 to 226)

> But also, when I have done what are called death door knocks where people die and you go out to the family's house … and ask if they'd like to be interviewed … You have to go around there and say it's a tribute piece to your son or daughter, mum, dad, grandma, granddad etc. (Rory, Lines 107 to 110)

People tend to avoid them if they can. They are really difficult, but … I try to remind myself … if I do a door knock, especially if it's a murder or if it's a person who has died in suspicious circumstances this is something that can help police with their appeal. It's something that can make the community aware if there is any danger to be on alert and also, if they didn't die in suspicious circumstances, it's an opportunity to say to the family would you like us to do a tribute piece in the paper, you know, a positive tribute piece. So, you have to put these steps in place when you do these kinds of things to make yourself feel better and also to make sure that person feels a little more comfortable about why you're there and why you're intruding upon their privacy (Katarina, Lines 186 to 195)

As a young reporter and also as a news editor I had to get people to go to see people under very difficult circumstances, death knocks as we call them. I know you were a practising journalist, so you know what I mean by that. Going along to somebody's home when something terrible has happened to a family member and asking them questions and so on my take on that was to be as sympathetic as possible and do what you could to get the information you needed and do it in as polite and thoughtful way as you could, as professional as you could then you go away and leave them alone. (Ben, 168 to 174)

In these passages, participants invoked professionalism two ways. First, they framed bereavement stories as tributes which held more personable connotations to offset the more clinic approaches the word "story" would suggest. Secondly, they situated themselves as part of the public safety process where their stories could lend a hand in the solving of crimes by helping police with their investigations. Tribute was framed as a personal touch where care, empathy, and sensitivity took precedence over more conventional story-collecting methods where journalists tend to exert assertive measures to complete an assignment. Despite this outward display of empathy through the use of the word tribute, the objective remains the same, which is to complete the assignment, bolster their professional reputation, and build prestige. As Robinson (2019) outlines, while outputs are important, personal fulfilment is also significant. While journalists tend to justify their actions as being part of the democratic process, a key defence in bereavement practice is the protection of public safety. This was contextualised by a believe that a story may help police in cases of intentional death.

The use of tribute or to frame the assignment as integral to capturing a killer signposted professionalism. These sense-making devices were indicative of validation of practice. Participants had framed themselves as being part of the group that kept an official record of the community, possessed the necessary skills to tell someone's life

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story, or to work in conjunction with people to help ensure public safety. When considered with accounts from the first part of the section on privacy, it was evident that participants envisioned bereavement journalism as a necessary part of practice especially at the regional level. This was because all of the participants were regional journalists, they were working with the community's best interests in mind, and the willingness to walk away was consistent with the more sensitive nature of the regional press.

Professionalism in bereavement journalism

While participants' responses illustrated the need to respect privacy, the strategising of practice, and the emphasis on public safety, another key consideration was professionalism. This point was well illustrated by Ian's account where he spoke explicitly about distancing himself from the assignment.

> I didn't allow myself to get caught up in the emotions all you can do is go up, knock on the door, ask the question you either get a yes or no and then you walk away. (Ian, 158 to 159)

"Not getting caught up in the emotions" suggested a way of distancing oneself from the natural reaction towards death. While the assignment deals with immense loss and tragedy, Ian's account was indicative of the need to remain professional and complete the assignment. Several of the participants provided insight into how a more emotional response to the assignment could be problematic. Emotional feelings about the assignment had a tendency of handcuffing participants which led to procrastination and feelings of dread at having to knock on the door.

> If I'm completely honest with you … I delayed. I procrastinated. I put it off until my editor had to say to me 'you need to go and do this now. We need this information now' and I did dither … I only knocked on a couple of doors and I was met with the hostility … [It] wasn't a very good experience in my first one. … I didn't get straight on it. These days, I feel a lot more confident... (Katarina, Lines 177 to 184)

> I was nervous... very nervous about their reaction to being asked to speak to me, but I didn't feel I was doing anything morally wrong. (Polly, 86 to 87)

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I had a panic. I pretended I needed the loo for half an hour, and I didn't... I thought to myself, right, I need to get out there. It's got to be done once the first one's done. I'll be fine doing the rest but it's a scary thing. (Rose, Lines 230 to 233)

Katarina, Polly, and Rose's accounts not only revealed their anxiety over the assignment, but also how they overcame that anxiety to gain experience and adopt a more professional outlook on bereavement assignments. While they "dithered", "procrastinated", or "felt nervous", they also grew in confidence or understood that there were no moral implications to the practice within the framework of journalism practice. These accounts were indicative of a transition from a normal human response to death (nervousness and anxiety) to a more professional approach by journalists (confidence, within the confines of journalistic morality). This further highlighted professionalism as a strategy of dealing with morally challenging assignments. The move towards a more professional outlook on practice ("a lot more confident", "I didn't feel I was doing anything morally wrong", or "I'll be fine doing the rest") illustrated the participants' progression with experience to a more professional outlook on bereavement journalism.

Summarisation of findings

The concept of the bereavement story is riddled with problems. The practice is invasive, it requires journalists to interact with people in a state of extreme vulnerability, and it requires professionalism. Participants did not envision any problems with the practice but chose to highlight how they respected privacy by walking away, demonstrated empathy by framing the assignment as a tribute rather than a story, exhibited professionalism by not becoming emotional, and positioned themselves as helping the community to heal. These assignments often bear the brunt of public criticism, are likely to result in a complaint to a press regulator or are the source of online criticism. However, bereavement journalism is a necessary and

integral part of the landscape at the regional level. Journalists view themselves as the writers of the public record, therefore, death is a part of that record as much as birth or community success. Journalists validate this practice by positioning themselves as having the skills to record accident death, murder, or any other form of death. Through these skills, they believe they are helping to bring closure for the family, assisting the community or helping police investigations.

Key issues, such as accuracy and privacy, are important to the participants. The Editors' Code of Practice's first five clauses have implications in bereavement journalism. Walking away, not haggling, and going away were construed as signifiers that participants respected people's privacy that fit a non-invasive approach to defend criticism of the practice. The willingness to walk away illustrated this defence against public scrutiny. Participants also understood that it was important to ask if families wanted to be interviewed. This demonstrated due diligence on participants' behalf to ensure a commitment to accuracy since families can give more accurate portrayals of a loved one than third parties or social media.

6.2 Identity work and lines in the sand

Some participants chose to reinforce their commitment to ethical practice based on professional identity being a signpost of morality in journalism. This was achieved by framing their career progression as a road to moral redemption, emphasis on intentionally avoiding certain career paths to preserve ethical practice, or a belief that job titles indicate morality and accountability to ethical journalism. In the first case, it was evident in the reversal in aspiration following particularly negative events.

> There was a very tragic incident where the agency found out that a young boy who was about 10 or 11 had hanged himself and we weren't sure if it was an accident, or it was a ... on purpose. Anyway, obviously, we go to the house, knock on the door and there was no one in. Back in the office, they start searching for contact details. Eventually, [they] managed to get in touch with the mother of this child and she's [says] 'I don't want to talk about it'. At a local newspaper at this point, you'd leave it, but they told me to just wait

outside her house until she came back and take a photographer and try to get some comments from her. … I said to the photographer I was with I'm going; I'm not doing this. I just disobeyed the order (Mickey, Lines 126 to 135)

Mickey's experience was evidence that journalists were making moral judgment calls in the field even if it meant disobeying orders. In this perspective, he was signposting morality over his career. It was interpreted as moral judgment outweighing the assignment because Mickey felt it was wrong to pursue the interview with a mother who had just experienced the worst type of loss — that of a child. As he pointed out in his account, if he was a regional journalist, the story would have ended when the mother refused to be interviewed. Since the story was commissioned by a national tabloid, he felt pressured to pursue the story. While this was an extreme example of journalism practice, Mickey's account served to position himself as a moral journalist. The reflection of the experience also informed Mickey's worldview of journalism practice in some instances.

> I gotta be honest with you … to give you some context of how my career has panned out. I started out with (name redacted) which is a small backwater weekly newspaper went to (name redacted) which was a larger weekly newspaper, but still, you know, still relatively small. Then went to (name redacted) agency based in (city name redacted) which was an agency which sold or took orders for tabloid newspapers predominantly. I'd say actually on every local newspaper I've worked for; the morality has been quite high only because … there's the reputation to uphold. But some of the things I was asked to do as an agency journalist and some of the common practices as an agency journalist would make you think that Leveson never happened.
>
> *Any specifics?*
>
> Secretly recording people that sort of stuff… asking 30 people who'll all say one thing until you get one person who says another and running with that quote. Hounding people, waiting at people's doors that sort of stuff
>
> *Is that something you did on your own or did that come from on high?*
>
> That was directed mainly. … When you were on order from a newspaper [name redacted] … some of the worst [offenders] and often you'd have reporters from [name redacted] who would have to relay orders through the agency news desk, but what would happen is they would relay orders straight to the reporters and then push the reporter to do more things essentially. (Mickey, Lines 41 to 62)
>
> The agency gave me a real sense of my moral compass and what I thought was right and wrong. The fact of the matter is I think you do have to sometimes break a few eggshells to make an omelette, but you have to judge that and as long as you know your sense of morality ... and… you [act] according to it, you just have to have courage in your convictions really to make the call... make the right call (Mickey, Lines 92 to 97)

> [My career goal] has changed. I did actually want to be a tabloid journalist initially and then I decided I didn't want to be anymore. So, I came back into local newspapers… So yeah, it has changed it has changed a lot. (Mickey, Lines 169 to 171)

Mickey's account illustrated the way in which he justified his career choices so that they correlated with his personal morality, which was illustrative of the idea that morality supersedes practice. Although he aspired to be a tabloid journalist at one time, the experience with the grieving mother served as a stark reminder that the realities of tabloid journalism practice contradicted his own morality. The way in which journalists bypassed the chain of command to put direct pressure on him was a glimpse into the type of world he wanted to enter. Rejecting his aspirations to become a tabloid journalist signposted the validation of his decision to choose morality over prestige. Morality, in this case, represented the less invasive nature of regional journalism practice and prestige being his view that success meant national fame.

The objective of early career training was to rise to a position in a national tabloid, which, at the time, was the pinnacle of his career. However, the pressure he was put under as an agency journalist by the same tabloids to which he aspired served as a stark warning of what could happen in his future career path. Emphasising his commitment to his moral compass and his re-alignment of his career goals were evidence of ethical decision making based on morality and validation his professional identity. This was somewhat similar to Ben's experience where he made the decision to work for regional or news agencies before he became a journalist.

> I've been very lucky. I've never worked for a Fleet Street national newspaper that's required me to, you know, keep going back to people's homes, badger them. The [name redacted] never did that when I worked for them and the [name redacted] never did that either. I never worked for one of the big Fleet Street tabloids, but I know that was demanded of people there. It wasn't accidental, I didn't want to work in that environment. (Ben, Lines 182 to 187)

Ben made a commitment to an ethical career by intentionally avoiding working in the national press where he felt he would be pressured into unethical acts. This was because he held a belief that Fleet Street tabloids held a certain reputation of

harassment, which he felt did not occur in his professional destination. Like Mickey, Ben's reflections on ethical practice were informed by acknowledging a professional identity underpinned by morality, even if it meant foregoing national prestige.

The invocation of job title was another way that participants chose to validate themselves as ethical practitioners. Jamie's emphasis of "news journalists" was to frame the position as being a highly accountable and moral position compared to other newsroom titles. He staked his reputation as a journalist on the title of "news journalist". In his view, news journalists' priority was on their reputations and a commitment to the truth. He felt he held himself accountable more than, for example, show business journalists.

> I always like to think that the stories I worked on [were reliable] because I was a general news reporter, I didn't work on the showbiz… it seemed to be that the showbiz reporters sort of got away with running stuff that didn't always stand up to scrutiny or was supplied by certain artists who wanted their names in the paper, and they'd go along with certain things. I regarded myself as a proper news reporter who was only interested in the truth. (Jamie, Lines 44 to 49)

In Jamie's account, he elevated the position of news journalist as being one that is focussed on reliability and accountability as evidenced by his assertation that he "was only interested in the truth". This contrasted his perception of show business writers whom he felt were less than ethical and potentially co-constructing news with celebrities instead of cultivating news along more traditional lines. Truth was an important factor for how Jamie made sense of his journalistic practices.

> I never sent over a word in any story that I wrote knowing it to be untrue. And if my news desk knew that I'd done that or my editor knew that I'd done that your ass wouldn't touch the ground and it's the same, it was always the same, on the broadsheet newspapers. (Jamie, Lines 170 to 173)

Jamie went further to stress everyone in the news department felt the same way about building a reputation of reliability. If he wrote anything untruthful, then he felt he would held accountable. Public perception of the tabloid press is underpinned by accusations of sensationalism and unethical practices. A subject of public debate has

been the practice of paying sources for information. In Jamie's case, his experiences of this practice led to him being arrested, charged, but acquitted of paying government sources for information. The acquittal not only vindicated his practice but bolstered his support of it.

> This idea of chequebook journalism … that journalists from national newspapers in the nineties and noughties would have handed over money. There's absolutely nothing wrong in that and in the eyes of juries every single one of the reporters on trial was acquitted. Juries take a very different view of what is right for journalists and what is right for public officials. (Jamie, Lines 121 to 125).

The acquittal was viewed as justification and validation for paying sources for information because the jury accepted the practice as a viable public interest action. Jamie added further context to payments for information by returning to his commitment to truth. Although, truth was a subjective entity that he felt had to be reasonable before he would accept it.

> Because, as a journalist, you're only interested in the veracity of what you're being told. Whether it's truth or not, whether it's fact, in my mind, if you have to pay for that information, there is nothing wrong with that if it's in the public interest the same way that police officers routinely did and still do pay criminals for intelligence effectively because it's in the greater good. (Jamie, Lines 109 1o 114)

In this account, Jamie tapped into traditional views of practice, such as an understanding of the audience's expectations of content. In this context, truth could be classified as something that he felt would be reasonable to his readers. His commitment to this truth meant that he felt justified paying for information if it benefitted the public but was not accessible via conventional avenues of inquiry. Benefit was judged based on how verifiable the information was for Jamie and if that meant he could present it as being reasonable for the public to accept. An interesting correlation Jamie drew was between himself as a journalist and the role of police paying informants for the greater good. Jamie's acknowledgment suggested that a 100 per cent ethical record is not possible for news journalists because they need to push boundaries because information may not be readily available if it is contentious. This

was similar to Mickey's understanding that he has to "break a few eggs if he is making an omelette". Essentially, one cannot complete a journalism career without pushing ethical boundaries especially in the public interest.

Focus on professional identity and morality highlighted the way in which these participants defended their practice, validated their careers, and justified professional decisions they made. A high self-evaluation of news reporters served to add the context that news reporters base their careers on their reputation of providing information that could be taken as truth. The ethical defence in this section was based on internal reflection of what was important to the participants, whether that was serving a public interest or making decisions that align to personal moral compasses.

6.3 'A real sense of my moral compass'

Some participants chose to reinforce their commitment to ethical practice based on robust identity work as a way of signposting morality of practice. This was evidenced by emphasis being placed on how their careers progressed, the conscious decisions to avoid certain career paths, or a belief that a job title held certain prestige and accountability to it.

> There was a very tragic incident where the agency found out that a young boy who was about 10 or 11 had hanged himself and we weren't sure if it was an accident, or it was a ... on purpose. Anyway, obviously, we go to the house, knock on the door and there was no one in. Back in the office, they start searching for contact details. Eventually, [they] managed to get in touch with the mother of this child and she's [says] 'I don't want to talk about it'. At a local newspaper at this point, you'd leave it, but they told me to just wait outside her house until she came back and take a photographer and try to get some comments from her. … I said to the photographer I was with I'm going; I'm not doing this. I just disobeyed the order (Mickey, Lines 126 to 135)

Mickey's experience was evidence of fluid moral judgment calls made in the field even if it meant disobeying orders. In this context, he chose morality over career aspirations. This account was interpreted as a moral judgment outweighing the assignment because morality informs ethical conduct. Mickey felt no amount of

prestige was worth it if it came from pressuring a mother whose child may have committed suicide. As he pointed out in his account, if he was a regional journalist, the story would have ended when the mother refused to be interviewed. Since the story was commissioned by a national tabloid, he pointed out that he was pressured into pursuing the story. Mickey's account served to position him as a moral journalist. The experience afforded Mickey a view into the national tabloid world and served to reinforce his career path.

> I gotta be honest with you … to give you some context of how my career has panned out. I started out with (name redacted) which is a small backwater weekly newspaper went to (name redacted) which was a larger weekly newspaper, but still, you know, still relatively small. Then went to (name redacted) agency based in (city name redacted) which was an agency which sold or took orders for tabloid newspapers predominantly. I'd say actually on every local newspaper I've worked for; the morality has been quite high only because … there's the reputation to uphold. But some of the things I was asked to do as an agency journalist and some of the common practices as an agency journalist would make you think that Leveson never happened.
>
> *Any specifics?*
>
> Secretly recording people that sort of stuff… asking 30 people who'll all say one thing until you get one person who says another and running with that quote. Hounding people, waiting at people's doors that sort of stuff
>
> *Is that something you did on your own or did that come from on high?*
>
> That was directed mainly. … When you were on order from a newspaper [name redacted] … some of the worst [offenders] and often you'd have reporters from [name redacted] who would have to relay orders through the agency news desk, but what would happen is they would relay orders straight to the reporters and then push the reporter to do more things essentially. (Mickey, Lines 41 to 62)
>
> The agency gave me a real sense of my moral compass and what I thought was right and wrong. The fact of the matter is I think you do have to sometimes break a few eggshells to make an omelette, but you have to judge that and as long as you know your sense of morality ... and… you [act] according to it, you just have to have courage in your convictions really to make the call... make the right call (Mickey, Lines 92 to 97)
>
> [My career goal] has changed. I did actually want to be a tabloid journalist initially and then I decided I didn't want to be anymore. So, I came back into local newspapers… So yeah, it has changed it has changed a lot. (Mickey, Lines 169 to 171)

Mickey's account illustrated the way in which he justified his career choices so that they correlated with his personal morality, which was indicative of the idea that morality supersedes practice. Although he aspired to be a tabloid journalist at one point in his career, the experience with the grieving mother served as a stark reminder that the realities of tabloid journalism practice contradicted his own morality. The way in

which journalists bypassed the chain of command to put direct pressure on him served as a cautionary tale that made Mickey rethink his career plan. Rejecting his aspirations to become a tabloid journalist signalled the validation of his decision to choose morality over prestige. Morality represented the less invasive nature of regional journalism practice and prestige rather than the pressures that awaited him at a tabloid newspaper.

Mickey's experience was somewhat similar to Ben's where he made the conscious decision to work for regional newspapers or news agencies rather than a national daily reporter.

> I've been very lucky. I've never worked for a Fleet Street national newspaper that's required me to, you know, keep going back to people's homes, badger them. The [name redacted] never did that when I worked for them and the [name redacted] never did that either. I never worked for one of the big Fleet Street tabloids, but I know that was demanded of people there. It wasn't accidental, I didn't want to work in that environment. (Ben, Lines 182 to 187)

Ben made a commitment to an ethical career by intentionally avoiding working in the national press where he felt he would be pressured into unethical acts. This was because he held a belief that Fleet Street tabloids held a certain reputation of harassment, which he felt did not occur in his professional destination. Like Mickey, Ben's reflections on ethical practice were informed by acknowledging a professional identity underpinned by morality, even if it meant foregoing national prestige.

The invocation of job title was another way that participants chose to validate themselves as ethical practitioners. Jamie's emphasis of "news journalists" was to frame the position as being a highly accountable and morally position compared to other newsroom titles. He staked his reputation as a journalist on the title of "news journalist". In his view, news journalists' priority was on their reputations and a commitment to the truth. He felt an obligation to be more accountable to his readers and his supervisors.

> I always like to think that the stories I worked on [were reliable] because I was a general news reporter, I didn't work on the showbiz… it seemed to be that the showbiz reporters sort of got away with running stuff that didn't always stand up to scrutiny or was supplied by certain artists who wanted their names in the paper, and they'd go along with certain things. I regarded myself as a proper news reporter who was only interested in the truth. (Jamie, Lines 44 to 49)

In Jamie's account, he elevated the position of news journalist as being one that is focussed on reliability and accountability as evidenced by his assertation that he "was only interested in the truth". This contrasted his perception of show business writers whom he felt were less than ethical and potentially co-constructing news with celebrities instead of cultivating news along more traditional lines. Truth was an important factor for how Jamie made sense of his journalistic practice.

> I never sent over a word in any story that I wrote knowing it to be untrue. And if my news desk knew that I'd done that or my editor knew that I'd done that your ass wouldn't touch the ground and it's the same, it was always the same, on the broadsheet newspapers. (Jamie, Lines 170 to 173)

Jamie went further to stress everyone in the news department felt the same way about building a reputation of reliability. If he wrote anything untruthful, then he felt he would held accountable. Public perception of the tabloid press is underpinned by accusations of sensationalism and unethical practices. A subject of public debate has been the practice of paying sources for information. In Jamie's case, his experiences of this practice led to him being arrested, charged, but acquitted of paying government sources for information. The acquittal not only vindicated his practice, but bolstered his support of paying sources if he felt the information was in the public interest.

> This idea of chequebook journalism … that journalists from national newspapers in the nineties and noughties would have handed over money. There's absolutely nothing wrong in that and in the eyes of juries every single one of the reporters on trial was acquitted. Juries take a very different view of what is right for journalists and what is right for public officials. (Jamie, Lines 121 to 125).

The acquittal was viewed as justification and validation for paying sources for information because Jamie felt that the jury accepted the practice as a viable public interest action. Jamie added further context to payments for information by returning

to his commitment to truth. Although, truth was a subjective entity that he felt had to be reasonable before he would accept it.

> Because, as a journalist, you're only interested in the veracity of what you're being told. Whether it's truth or not, whether it's fact, in my mind, if you have to pay for that information, there is nothing wrong with that if it's in the public interest the same way that police officers routinely did and still do pay criminals for intelligence effectively because it's in the greater good. (Jamie, Lines 109 1o 114)

In this account, Jamie tapped into traditional views of practice, such as an understanding of the audience's expectations of content. In this context, truth could be classified as something that he felt would be reasonable to his readers. His commitment to this truth meant that he felt justified paying for information if it benefitted the public but was not accessible via conventional avenues of inquiry. Benefit was judged based on how verifiable the information was for Jamie and if that meant he could present it as being reasonable for the public to accept. An interesting correlation Jamie drew was between himself as a journalist and the role of police paying informants for the greater good. Jamie's acknowledgment suggested that a 100 per cent ethical record is not possible for news journalists because they need to push boundaries because information may not be readily available if it is contentious. This was similar to Mickey's understanding that he has to "break a few eggs if he is making an omelette". Essentially, one cannot complete a journalism career without pushing ethical boundaries especially in the public interest.

Focus on professional identity and morality highlighted the way in which these participants defended their practice, validated their careers, and justified professional decisions they made. A high self-evaluation of news reporters served to add the context that news reporters base their careers on their reputation of providing information that could be taken as truth. The ethical defence in this section was based on internal reflection of what was important to the participants, whether that was serving a public interest or making decisions that align to personal moral compasses.

6.4 Understanding the significance of ethics codes

The Editors' Code of Practice serves as a guide for journalists as they navigate through their daily professional lives. To this point in this chapter, participants have made sense of ethical journalism practice through ethical navigation, identity work, and morality. Another thing participants were asked to reflect upon was the Editors' Code of Practice. They made sense of code reliance in one of four ways: complete reliance on the code, a combination of code reliance and experience, commitment to professional development to remain current on top of changes to media law and the code of practice, and the code played no role in the newsroom.

Full commitment and belief in ethical codes

The first way in which journalists interacted with their ethics code was by erring on the side of caution. This tended to be either participants at the start of their careers or those who constructed their ethical awareness through identity work.

> Yeah... [I am] very aware. I follow the editors' code and IPSO… that's always in the back of my mind. Having to do stuff properly and best practices, for instance, everything to do with children … if we do a picture in school, [I] just double check [and ask] can we use this definitely, can we use the names? Stuff like court obviously you check if there's any orders on. Just little things like just going through everything with a fine-tooth comb just making sure there's nothing you can get tripped up on. (Adam, Lines 113 to 117)

> I've got a copy of the editors' code on my desk and sometimes I'll have a really quick look … I think it is really important, but again, you have to take it on a case-by-case basis and I do think, especially for a local paper, without a massive budget, legal budget, it is important to be extra careful. (Rory, Lines 171 to 174)

> I always ring up my boss if I'm out on the job. I ring him up and tell him this is what I'm doing is it right is there anything I need to do, and I will boss him around. He doesn't necessarily ask me to ring him, but he appreciates that I do, and he will give me the advice and the guidance and it's always really sound. I'll always refer back to the code of practice and it's always with me at all times (laughs). (Rose, Lines 180 to 185)

Being overly cautious tended to be the case for some participants. Double checking permission for photographs in school, ensuring there are no reporting restrictions in court, or carrying a copy of the code of practice are all indicators of the ways in which participants demonstrated being overly cautious in their practice. This

was a stark contrast to the anecdotal evidence Alistair offered in Section 6.1 about egregious acts and sabotage committed by journalists in the pre-digital era. Early career participants constructed their code reliance by aligning to their dependence on the code and within the factors of the post-Leveson landscape. Physical and symbolic accessibility to the code was deemed to be important for Adam, Rory, and Rose because it provided them with a way of defending themselves against accusations of unethical practice.

Pragmatic approaches to ethical practice

While some participants demonstrated a very close relationship in their assessment of code reliance in the previous section, others chose to rely on experiences as a guide to ethical practice. Practice was guided by experience and instinct rather than code consultation, but it did not mean complete dismissal of the code of practice.

> I've had all the exams about the editors' code of practice and court reporting. … I won't be able to list every single rule … but I do think that my qualifications have instilled in me a common sense and instinct in things I'm allowed to report on and not report on. If there's anything I'm unsure then I know I can always ask my editor. (Polly, Lines 68 to 71)

> [The code is] just in the background. At the first sign of trouble, you ring up the commissioning editor who gave you the job and say things are getting a bit fraught and 9 times out of 10 they'll say forget it. (Alistair, Lines 97 to 100)

> The way I do things … I've never been in trouble with any of the regulatory bodies … and I think that's because you always behave to a certain standard and the newspapers that we worked for did too. If there was anything we were working on that was contentious, particularly at [name redacted] where I spent most of my career in [name redacted], you'd call in the lawyers if there was anything remotely dodgy. I would say great care was taken not to fall foul of any codes of practice. (Vicki, Lines 64 to 71)

> Yeah, I mean, it's always in the background. When I did the investigative journalism course, we had theory on media law sessions. I try to make a habit of going to media conferences where there's a media lawyer and refresher courses on the law so it's always there in the background. (Clara, Lines 68 to 72)

> [The code is] in the background, really. Since Leveson, we at [name redacted] have had training on the code of conduct and you had to pass it. It was an eye-opener for me. I never realised the extent of the privacy clause. For instance, there was one sort of weird example where you were looking at a picture of a restaurant full of diners and apparently there was a real case where I think there was a football manager. I think it was a restaurant review picture where you do the review and get the photographer to go and take pictures of the place and there was someone in there who was with someone who was not his partner. He

had a right of privacy even though he was in a public place … that really shocked me I think that's gone too far. I think if you are in a public place with whoever you need to think about what you're doing. And if a photographer turns up to take a perfectly innocent picture that's just tough if you get caught out. (Grace, Lines 73 to 84)

It was there in background, really. You never sort of think about it from one month to another except if you knock on a door and … introduce yourself accurately and politely. In food journalism if the chef came round to your table and asked how you enjoyed your meal you would say loved it, thank you, and then you go away and slay them in print. It may well be in the code of conduct, I don't know. But my guiding principle was never to say anything that I contradicted in print. If that happened, they could say, 'Oh, your guy said it was alright and there he is blistering away in print at me'. I used to often have my mouth full and let my wife speak. (John, Lines 11 to 17)

Participants constructed accounts in which they did not obsess over ethical implications in their work because their experience and other resources, such as legal advice and consultation with senior members of the newsrooms, helped them to understand their practice. Instead, they understood that there were resources available to them so they did not feel the need to be overly cautious.

Continuing education was seen as a proactive way of understanding media law amendments and how they could impact journalists' practice. Clara placed an emphasis on attending media law conferences to keep herself updated on the latest legal amendments. This illustrated one of the challenges freelance writers could face where they need to take the imitative to ensure they are following the latest rules. This was unlike Grace's experience where the editor or senior manager would send journalists to classes. Another perspective on freelance journalism, and one that was explored in Chapter 4, is how the clear understanding of practice as a way of making a living dictates ethical practice. Similar to his views on public interest, Alistair tended to distance himself from content that had ethical implications and he pointed out that commissioning editors tended to do the same thing.

When ethics are not considered

While some participants defended practice through identity work, exploring their relationship with guideline resources or seeking validation of practices, there

were instances where ethics were not considered in daily practice. A correlation was drawn between an absence of code reliance and a toxic newsroom environment.

> *So how much of an influence or role did the code of conduct play in your practice?*
>
> Little to none I would say. (Harry, Lines 50 to 51)
>
> *In journalism we have the public interest. What was your understanding of the public interest?*
>
> My understanding was that if it was legal then that made sense. But what the public was interested in was at a much more practical level. The public interest was this idea of the public good, but I don't think that was much of a priority really. (Harry, Lines 43 to 47)

From Harry's account, it was evident that ethics did not feature in his practice. Instead, the paper's policy was if it could pass legal muster, then a story was publishable. Understanding Harry's experience and his positioning of himself ethically required a deeper examination of how he described his experience at the tabloid.

> *OK so it's quite well known how you left one of your employers and that you had outlined some very strange things they made you do. What was the rationale behind those practices in your opinion?*
>
> I think the rationale was to provoke. They had a feeling that their readers had an anti-Muslim sentiment and I think at the time the burqa in France was being banned. So, the idea came up [that] maybe we should be doing something about that, which was their stupid idea.
>
> *How did it make you feel to do some of these strange things?*
>
> It doesn't make you feel particularly great. I think it's something that you're not given much of a choice. You're told to go and do something you have to go and do it. There's not much of a democracy at work in a tabloid newspaper. So, I found myself being tasked with doing quite a few of these stories.
>
> *It is well documented the verbal abuse tabloid journalists receive was that accurate in your experience.*
>
> Yes, definitely. There was pressure of being the first with a story or not having the strongest story. I think more than anything the reason that you'd get bullied or whatever is generally due to back chat about issues.
>
> *How did you gauge the atmosphere in those newsrooms?*
>
> It was quite competitive. That's probably a fair way to put it, but, at the same time, there was a lot of fear as well because people were on short term or quite intricate contracts. So, you didn't know from week to week, month to month, basis whether you'd still be there. It was definitely a culture of fear. (Harry, Lines 52 to 72)

Harry's career was littered with forced egregious behaviour, such as wearing a burqa as a way of gauging public reaction. His experiences illustrated the toxic newsroom environment where editors played on a culture of fear to coerce journalists

to do things with which they were not comfortable. This view reinforced the exploitative environment Davies (2014a) wrote about in his book about the pressures associated with working in national tabloid newsrooms. The removal of job security was viewed as a forced compliance measure that editors could use to coerce journalists into doing things they did not want to do. It was evident that Harry's experience was extreme and one in which he was a victim of circumstance. This was indicative of his employer, a national tabloid newspaper, where more aggressive, often ethically questionable practices, have dominated the landscape since the days of *The Daily Mirror* in the 1930s. This type of behaviour is at the core of what Ben referred to in the section on identity work where he intentionally voided career progression to a Fleet Street publication. In the end, Harry resigned from the newspaper in a public way. This public resignation was construed as a form of moral validation because he was making it known that he had distanced himself from the practices of the tabloid newspaper.

Different approach to ethical perspective

Ben's experiences reflected on a period in his work life that paralleled the development of the PCC's version of the code of practice in the late 1980s. Although the National Union of Journalists' code has existed since the 1930s, Ben chose to focus on the PCC code because its development had a direct impact on his career.

> … I was a journalist for 3 decades, so we didn't really have [PCC code] when we started as such, but I was aware of [codes of practice] when there was one. Certainly, in the [name redacted], we were extremely driven by it because my editor … was on the editors' code committee and was a very diligent individual in terms of ensuring the code was followed by others and certainly by the journalists we employed. (Ben, Lines 90 to 98)

In the context of this segment, Ben reflected on a period in time when the PCC was constructing its code of practice. In this context, ethical practice was linked to newsroom conformity. Since the editor promoted an ethical-accountability policy because he was part of the PCC's code committee, ethics were important in his newsroom. Reputation was an important motivation for ethical adherence in Ben's newsroom. While Ben's view of ethics in this context was similar to the professional identity emphasis explored earlier in this chapter, it was different because the identity alignment in this case was that of the collective newsroom rather than the individual. This perspective moved the way journalists reflected on ethical practice closer to the conformist nature of journalism newsrooms that were the focus of early journalism research (White, 1950; Breed, 1955) in which conformity were important factors in the landscape.

6.5 Discussion of the findings

Participants' tended to hold different views from what those of the public when it came to making sense of morally challenging assignments. Although many of them pinpointed bereavement journalism to be a challenging practice, the consensus was that interviewing grieving families was not out of the ordinary but required more

strategising, empathy, and sympathy. Accuracy was a key focal point participants used to justify their presence at people's doors. This was illustrated by participants' defence of practice in the context of giving families a chance to agree or refuse to be interviewed, and their willingness to walk away if families refused to be interviewed.

Ethics perspectives in morally challenging assignments

It was evident that participants felt bereavement or death knock journalism practices were assignments fraught with moral implications. Ipso's (2016) Editors' Code of Practice's first five clauses (accuracy, privacy, harassment, intrusion into shock and grief, and reporting suicide) hold relevance in this practice. Frost (2006) points out that there are many factors to consider when reporting on death. Accuracy, privacy, and public interest are key considerations to be made when pursuing these types of stories. However, not all arguments of public interest are justified. Sometimes, journalists' judgment calls on public interest in a bereavement story may be unwarranted, but that may not be realised until after the interview has been completed. The implication of this is added grief if the journalist decides not to publish the story.

The bereavement story is difficult for both the journalist and the family. For the family, the difficulty lies in the invasive nature of the practice, which often has little justification beyond a standard defence of there being a public interest in death. It is problematic for journalists because they are knocking on doors of people who are in their most vulnerable state. One of the key concerns about bereavement journalism is the unpredictable nature of how people express grief (Hanusch, 2010). Therefore, the implication here is that journalists do not have the same control over these types of assignments as they would more conventional reporting situations. Although journalists must be professional, they must be sympathetic to the raw state of vulnerability in mourners. Participants demonstrated this empathy by taking a

different approach to the story and asking families to pay tribute to their lost loved ones.

Despite the difficulties associated with bereavement journalism, there is nothing wrong with the practice. The issues related to the practice lie in the implications of this type of content. Accuracy and privacy are key considerations in these practices (Frost, 2006; Newton, 2011; Duncan, 2012). Participants made direct references to these two factors while defending bereavement journalism. Privacy was a key issue among regional participants which was signposted by their willingness to walk away from an assignment. In the case for some candidates, the context of working at a regional title meant careful navigation between newsworthiness and sensitivity. As one of the anecdotes in this chapter demonstrated, some participants had to choose between career progression and morality. These judgments played a role in outlining the need for morality in ethically challenging assignments.

The word "tribute" commonly recurred in the data sets and was interpreted as the lynchpin of the accuracy argument. Frost (2006) argues that journalists must allow the family to take control of the interviews. The framing of the assignment as a tribute illustrates Frost's point further. The family constructs the narrative as part of their grieving process (Duncan, 2012). It is up to the family to decide what will be included and what will be omitted from the story. The practice is often criticised by the public as being invasive. This was evident in the online forum debates about journalists' intrusions on grieving families in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire. As Duncan and Newton (2010) and Robinson (2019) point out, a paradox exists in how the public views death. While they criticise when journalists invade privacy to report on death, the public demands the media provide then with details of tragedy, such as age, circumstances of death, and who the victim was.

Frost (2006) points out that privacy is a key consideration in bereavement journalism. However, as Duncan and Newton (2010) argue, there is a paradox to the privacy issue in a tragedy because people want to know about the victims, who they were, and how they died. Although research candidates did not reflect on privacy within this context, they did in different contexts related to overall ethical perspectives. The significance of privacy was evident because participants stated they had to take professional development modules to refresh their understanding of the issues surrounding privacy. In those cases, participants admitted that they did not have as robust an understanding of privacy as they thought they did.

Since most of the participants were regional journalists, experience in writing bereavement stories was vast because this practice is a staple of community journalism. As the literature points out, the ethos of regional journalism is situated in the community (Kaniss, 1991; Frost, 2006; Greenslade, 2009). As some of the older participants pointed out, a visit from a journalist used to be as normal a part of the death process as visits from undertakers and counsellors. However, as Hanusch (2010) argues, death had moved from the public to the private sphere as illustrated by the creation of palliative care centres. This led to the change in the public's perception of death and the need to grieve privately. However, with the proliferation of social media, people are moving death back into the collective conscience by posting tributes and obituaries of loved ones on their social media for contacts to see.

Even though participants felt bereavement practices were a normal part of their daily life, this did not mean that they welcomed these types of assignments. The data supported Castle's (1999) argument that bereavement journalism practices are not popular assignments among journalists. Despite this, it was interesting to see how experience played a significant view in terms of how participants viewed the

assignments. There was significant progression from the natural human reaction towards death in those participants who reflected on their first bereavement assignments. The implication of this finding was the remarkable way in which participants' professionalism took over and guided their practice. While death is tragic, the participants' experiences demonstrated how they were able to move beyond the anxiety of the assignment and focus on how they were going to complete the task.

Within the context of the data, participants offered a catalogue of reasons to defend bereavement practices. Making assumptions about people wanting to participate in a story, framing stories as tributes, and showing a willingness to walk away were examples of defences to validate participants' practice of interviewing grieving families. As Frost (2006) pointed out, there is nothing wrong in the practice. However, issues, such as accuracy, privacy, harassment, and intrusion into grief and shock are important considerations journalists make when they are assigned one of these stories.

Past research into morally challenging assignments tended to focus on trauma journalism. Much of the research surrounds the impact journalists face when covering traumatic events (McMahon, 2001; Teagan & Grotwinkel, 2001; Feinstein, Owen & Blair, 2002; Newman, Simpson & Handschuh, 2003; Pyevich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003; Osofsky, Holloway & Pickett, 2005; Feinstein & Nicholson, 2005; Weidmann, Fehm & Fydrich, 2008; Keats & Buchanan, 2009). It also relates to theoretical research into how journalists should approach traumatic journalism coverage (McMahon, 2001; Teagan & Grotwinkel, 2001; Newman, Simpson & Handschuh, 2003; Pyevich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003; Browne, Brayne, 2007; Weidman, Fehm & Fydrich, 2008; Kay, Reilly, Amend & Kyle, 2011; Evangeli & Greenberg, 2012; Keats & Buchanen, 2013). Other research tended to be centred on the emotional labour

of journalism practice (Richards & Rees, 2011). The findings of this research are more in line with the literature that specifically addresses bereavement journalism (Gilbert, 1996; Castle, 1999; Frost, 2006; Hanusch, 2010; Duncan, 2012; Duncan & Newton, 2010, 2012; Newton, 2011; Newton & Duncan, 2012).

While prior research focussed on theoretical explorations of bereavement and trauma journalism, this thesis focussed on the lived experiences of journalists. The primary concerns of participants were different from previous scholarship. Participants were concerned about highlighting that morally challenging assignments were a part of the normal everyday life of a journalist. Although the emotional labour of journalism practice (Richards & Rees, 2011) was not a primary consideration for participants, there was some insight in which research into the emotional labour of journalism practice could be pursued in the future within the scope of how participants reflected on their first bereavement assignment and how they professionalised those experiences.

Moral identity

A key trend among some participants was to defend their ethical positions by invoking professional identity as a factor in sound journalism practice. Identity was contextualised as moral identity. Participants foregrounded identity by focussing on career aspirations or placing emphasis on job titles with moral implications in mind. Findings that were underpinned by personal morality were consistent with Christians' (200) views that morality plays a significant role in how journalists align their ethical standpoints. Career and position validations were the other ways participants sought to defend their ethical perspectives in practice. Hamilton (2008) referred to this as peer-reviewed validation, where the complexity of insider actions was based on the complexities of what was being practised. Peer review validation is underpinned by

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the judgment calls journalists make within the competency and ethical guidelines of the profession. This summarisation was consistent with the way participants used identity work to validate their practice. They highlighted career decisions and an emphasis on job titles as correlating with the ethical guidelines of journalism.

It was evident that career paths for some participants were informed by moral decisions. Participants invoked morality and personal ethical boundaries as ways of making sense of their journalism ethics. They also aligned ethics to shared newsroom values, proximity to the community, and their own ideas of practice. These factors illustrated Christians' (2000) and Villegas' (2015) findings that commercial, economic, political, and technological factors influence the ethical outlooks of journalists. This was evident in the way participants drew correlations between their ethical perspectives and defences of their practice by emphasising a public interest in death, an understanding that their medium can reach a large swath of the public, or acknowledgement that bereavement stories are well-read in the communities.

The findings were also consistent with Berry's (2016) views that journalism ethics invariably return to morality. Participants returned to morality to validate their positions as ethical practitioners whose decision-making processes were underpinned by a sense of decency. It was interpreted that morality was informed by a commitment to serve public interest, as well as a commitment to personal fulfilment. Participants' accounts implied that being a good journalist meant striking a balance between personal morality and knowing when to push ethical boundaries in the pursuit of truth while serving the public. At the same time, accounts were used to reify reputations as journalists. Berry (2016) argues that morality can be reflected through journalism and society. This was evident in the way some participants constructed their experience within the framework of their job title or their sense of morality. In both cases, those

constructions were based on how those participants viewed their job title or moral compass as it related to their expectations of what they contribute to the community and the community's expectation of them.

These findings illustrated Frost's (2019) advocation of living a virtuous life as a journalist. Frost points out that temptations exists where trainees could be overzealous as they try to impress their superiors. The key argument Frost makes is that ethical practice should be concerned with producing accurate, verifiable, and balanced content for readers. Participants' accounts reflected this by emphasising their commitment to accuracy. Several participants correlated ideal practice to the need for accuracy and balance in content which were tenets that were advocated by Frost (2016, 2019).

Ethics perspectives in morally challenging assignments

It was evident that participants felt bereavement or death knock journalism assignments needed more reflection and consideration. Ipso's (2016) Editors' Code of Practice's first five clauses (accuracy, privacy, harassment, intrusion into shock and grief, and reporting suicide) hold relevance in this practice. Frost (2006) points out that there are many factors to consider when reporting on death. Accuracy, privacy, and public interest are key considerations to be made when pursuing these types of stories. However, not all arguments of public interest are justified. Sometime, journalists' judgment calls on public interest in a bereavement story may be unwarranted, but that may not be realised until after the interview has been completed. The implication of this is added grief if the journalist decides not to publish the story. This was evidenced in the interviews where senior staff had to rein in journalists who wanted to rush out and conduct the interview. This was especially true among

participants who worked at the regional level where sensitivity and consideration take precedence over sensationalism (Kaniss, 1991; Greenslade, 2009).

The bereavement story is difficult for both the family and the journalist. For the family, the difficulty lies in the invasive nature of the practice, which often has little justification beyond a standard defence of there being a public interest in death. It is problematic for journalists because they are knocking on doors of people who are in their most vulnerable state. One of the key concerns about bereavement journalism is the unpredictable nature of how people express grief (Hanusch, 2010). The implication is that journalists do not have the same control over these types of assignments as they would have in normal reporting situations. Although journalists must be professional, they must be sympathetic to the raw state of vulnerability in the mourners. Participants demonstrated this empathy by taking a different approach to the story and asking families to pay tribute to their lost loved ones.

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Since most of the participants were regional journalists, experience in writing bereavement stories was vast because this practice is a staple of community journalism. As the literature points out, the ethos of regional journalism is situated in the community (Kaniss, 1991; Frost, 2006; Greenslade, 2009). As some of the older participants pointed out, a visit from a journalist used to be as normal a part of the death process as visits from undertakers and counsellors. However, as Hanusch (2010) argues, death had moved from the public to the private sphere as illustrated by the creation of palliative care centres. This led to the change in the public's perception of death and the need to grieve privately. However, with the proliferation of social media, people are moving death back into the collective conscience by posting tributes and obituaries of loved ones on their social media for contacts to see.

Even though participants felt bereavement practices were a normal part of their daily life, this did not mean that they welcomed these types of assignments. The data supported Castle's (1999) argument that bereavement journalism practices are not

popular assignments among journalists. Despite this, it was interesting to see how experience helped journalists evolve in their practice from exhibiting natural human emotions to developing strategies and implementing professionalism in their practice. The implication of this finding was the remarkable way in which participants' professionalism took over and guided their practice. While death is tragic, the participants' experiences demonstrated how they were able to move beyond the anxiety of the assignment and focus on how they were going to complete the task. A key part of completing these assignments is a means of validating professional practice to themselves, their peers and their superiors. As Castle (1999) pointed out, a big part of bereavement journalism is to gauge a journalist's mettle. This is further supported by Robinson's (2019) perspective that a key part of journalism is that journalists want to do their best and receive accolades for their work.

A key defence that my participants used to justify bereavement journalism was accuracy. They stated that they did not want to make assumptions about people. Instead, they felt that framing the story as a tribute, showing empathy, and asking permission to write a story were key parts of approaching a grieving family. They wanted to give the family the opportunity to accept or refuse an interview instead of relying on social media accounts and third-party information about the deceased. My participants also felt emboldened by their willingness to walk away if refused because it signalled that a refusal was not sign of failure as it might have been during other periods of journalistic history. As Frost (2006) points out, there is nothing wrong in the practice. However, issues, such as accuracy, privacy, harassment, and intrusion into grief and shock are important considerations journalists make when they are assigned one of these stories.

Past research into morally challenging assignments tended to focus on trauma journalism. Much of the research surrounds the impact journalists face when covering traumatic events (McMahon, 2001; Teagan & Grotwinkel, 2001; Feinstein, Owen & Blair, 2002; Newman, Simpson & Handschuh, 2003; Pyevich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003; Osofsky, Holloway & Pickett, 2005; Feinstein & Nicholson, 2005; Weidmann, Fehm & Fydrich, 2008; Keats & Buchanan, 2009). Past inquiries tended to take the form of theoretical research into how journalists should approach traumatic journalism coverage (McMahon, 2001; Teagan & Grotwinkel, 2001; Newman, Simpson & Handschuh, 2003; Pyevich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003; Browne, Brayne, 2007; Weidman, Fehm & Fydrich, 2008; Kay, Reilly, Amend & Kyle, 2011; Evangeli & Greenberg, 2012; Keats & Buchanen, 2013). Other research tended to be centred on the emotional labour of journalism practice (Richards & Rees, 2011). The findings of this research are more in line with the literature that specifically addresses bereavement journalism (Gilbert, 1996; Castle, 1999; Frost, 2006; Hanusch, 2010; Duncan, 2012; Duncan & Newton, 2010, 2012; Newton, 2011; Newton & Duncan, 2012).

While prior research focussed on theoretical explorations of bereavement and trauma journalism, this thesis focussed on the lived experiences of journalists. The primary concerns of participants were different from previous scholarship. Participants were concerned about highlighting that morally challenging assignments were a part of the normal everyday life of a journalist. Although the emotional labour of journalism practice (Richards & Rees, 2011) was not a primary consideration for participants, there was some insight in which research into the emotional labour of journalism practice could be pursued in the future within the scope of how participants

reflected on their first bereavement assignment and how they professionalised those experiences.

Moral identity

A key trend among some participants was to defend their ethical positions by invoking professional identity as a factor in sound journalism practice. Identity was contextualised as moral identity. Participants foregrounded identity by focussing on career aspirations or placing emphasis on job titles with moral implications in mind. Findings that were underpinned by personal morality were consistent with Christians' (2000) views that morality plays a significant role in how journalists align their ethical standpoints. Career and position validations were the other ways participants sought to defend their ethical perspectives in practice. Hamilton (2008) referred to this as peer-reviewed validation, where the complexity of insider actions was based on the complexities of what was being practised. Peer review validation is underpinned by the judgment calls that journalists make within the competency and ethical guidelines of the profession. This summarisation was consistent with the way participants used identity work to validate their practice. They highlighted career decisions and their commitment to the characteristics of job titles as correlating with the ethical guidelines of journalism.

It was evident that career paths for some participants were informed by moral decisions. Participants invoked morality and personal ethical boundaries as ways of making sense of their commitment to journalism ethics. They also aligned ethics to shared newsroom values, proximity to the community, and their own ideas of practice. These factors illustrated Christians' (2000) and Villegas' (2015) findings that commercial, economic, political, and technological factors influence the ethical outlooks of journalists. This was evident in the way participants drew correlations

between their ethical perspectives and defences of their practice by emphasising a public interest in death, an understanding that their medium can reach a large swath of the public, or acknowledgement that bereavement stories are well-read in the communities.

The findings were also consistent with Berry's (2016) views that journalism ethics invariably return to morality. Participants returned to morality to validate their positions as ethical practitioners whose decision-making processes were underpinned by a sense of decency. It was interpreted that morality was informed by a commitment to serve public interest, as well as a commitment to personal fulfilment. Participants' accounts implied that being a good journalist meant striking a balance between personal morality and knowing when to push ethical boundaries in the pursuit of truth while serving the public. At the same time, accounts were used to reify reputations as journalists. Berry (2016) argues that morality can be reflected through journalism and society. This was evident in the way some participants constructed their experience within the framework of their job title or their sense of morality. In both cases, those constructions were based on how those participants viewed their job title or moral compass as it related to their expectations of what they contribute to the community and the community's expectation of them.

These findings illustrated Frost's (2019) advocacy of living a virtuous life as a journalist. Frost points out that temptations exist where trainees could be overzealous as they try to impress their superiors. The key argument Frost makes is that ethical practice should be concerned with producing accurate, verifiable, and balanced content for readers. Participants' accounts reflected this by emphasising their commitment to accuracy. Several participants correlated ideal practice to the need for

accuracy and balance in content, which were tenets that were advocated by Frost (2016, 2019).

Ethics and codes

Participants exhibited varying reliance on the Editors' Code of Practice. Not surprising, trainees tended to consult their code regularly to help them make judgments and decisions about scenarios that were situated in grey areas of ethics. Among the more experienced participants, accountability within their newsrooms was put forward as an important part of making sense of ethical practice. That is, they were expected to produce by editors to produce fair, accurate, and truthful content. This signified a third ethical dimension of ethical consideration. In addition to committing to producing content that benefitted the public and was committed to the truth, some participants revealed an ethical accountability to their superiors in the newsroom. These findings were consistent with Frost's (2019) argument that journalists should strive for ethical careers, not only to themselves, but because of a duty to report accurately and truthfully to the audience. Newsroom accountability plays an integral role as journalists strive to achieve a well-rounded commitment to ethical practice.

Findings were consistent with Hanson's (2002) observations that codes of ethics should be considered in any exploration of ethical practice. Hanson highlighted that journalists referred to codes of conduct as their guidelines to professional practice while educators and academics underpinned journalism ethics within a framework informed by ideas that ethics are governed by either: decisions based on industry practice, decisions based on ideas, or classical theories of Kant, Mills, and other philosophers. While the data cannot address the second part of Hanson's findings as they relate to the pedagogical development of journalists, it does support Hanson's (2002) findings of code reliance and ethical guidelines. The participants' accounts

built on Hanson's perspectives on code reliance and ethical guidelines because participants reliance on the Editors' Code of Practice tended to be more explicit when they were trainees. As participants gained experience, their code reliance shifted to an understand that the code was a resource in their toolkit. With a new code from IPSO in 2016 that attempted to create clearer guidelines for practice, it was evident that participants were still coming to terms with the new code.

6.6 Closing remarks

This chapter explored how participants made sense of their ethical positions as journalists. It examined how they defended their practices, especially those that the public consider to be ethically challenging. The supporting research question that underpinned this chapter was: **How do journalists view assignments the public construes as morally challenging and unethical?** It was clear that participants used judgment and strategies to complete morally questionable assignments. To them, writing about someone who has died was a part of the daily life of being a journalist. Accuracy, a respect of privacy, and personal self-assessment were important factors in determining how to address these types of assignments. Accuracy was a key hallmark of how participants made sense of bereavement journalism. While they understood and accepted a family's right to privacy, my participants still felt they should at least seek permission rather than assume the family will refuse. To them that was a more effective practice than not contacting family members and relying on social media tributes or third-party accounts about the deceased person. Privacy was a consideration that was highlighted by participants' willingness to walk away if families refused to be interviewed. The implication of the significance of accuracy and privacy in bereavement journalism is clear because these are the first two clauses of

the Editors' Code of Practice. This adds further credence to how participants defended their ethical practices in line with the most important clauses of the Code of Practice.

As Frost (2006) points out, journalists must allow families to tell the story of their loved one in their own terms. Anything beyond the family's construction could be viewed as harassment or inaccuracy. Therefore, bereavement journalism is a challenging assignment because of the ethical implications associated with it. Navigation between accuracy and inaccuracy or privacy and harassment can be very difficult in this type of practice. The participants views also support Duncan (2012) and Newton's (2011) argument that a significant part of the bereavement assignment is to provide a platform for families to construct narratives to help the grieving process.

The results also indicated that self-awareness and a sense of morality played significant roles in how ethical perspectives were defended. By invoking identity or titles, participants placed emphasis on career choices and job titles as ways of validating their ethical practice. Reassessing career choices or making deliberate decisions to avoid certain pathways were ways in which participants signalled ethical practice. The use of job titles was meant to lend prestige and character to certain roles based on the participants' belief in what roles meant to their reputations as journalists.

Chapter 7: Discussions and conclusion

My goal in this research was to address the overarching research question:

How are UK journalists navigating their contemporary landscape amid ongoing

challenges to their practice? To this end, I formulated three supporting research

questions to address my overarching research question:

- How are journalists making sense of their daily professional lives and how do these sense-making apparatuses align to their understanding of journalism practice?
- How do participants view their relationship with readers and how does social media impact that role?
- How do journalists view assignments the public construe as morally challenging and unethical?

In this chapter, I:

- Respond to the overarching research question.
- Reflect on my findings.
- Identify implications of my findings.
- Discuss my contribution to knowledge.
- Reflect on my research process.
- Discuss the purpose of my research.
- Discuss ways of enhancing my findings.
- Identify areas of future research.
- Relate my final thoughts.

7.1 Responding to the overarching research question.

To recap, the key findings in the three analytical chapters were:

Chapter 4:

- Judgment played a significant role in validating practice, making sense of what it meant to be a journalist, and finding ways of situating practice as being unique within a wholly conformist society in the newsroom;
- Contemporary journalists were making sense of how to maximise technology to improve journalistic output, and;
- Prestige was a significant validation point for some participants, which they used to situate their experiences as being unique within the otherwise conformist society of the newsroom;

Chapter 5:

- Participants believed that the public wanted investigative content, but were wary when investigations focussed on their communities;
- Participants validated their practice by outlining how they worked on behalf of people to raise awareness of lesser-known aspects of democratic society;
- Participants felt underappreciated by the public because praise was rare, but people were quick to criticise small mistakes;
- Some public perceptions of journalism were viewed as being irrational, and criticisms were baseless and without consideration for what goes on behind the scenes in journalism practice, and;
- Participants provided evidence that they were willing to loosen the gatekeeper reins if doing so enhanced journalistic outputs.

Chapter 6:

- Participants viewed assignments that could be construed as morally challenging as a normal part of daily practice;
- Identity work was an important way in which some participants attempted to defend themselves as ethical practitioners, and;
- Experience was inversely proportionate to how participants relied on their Editors' Code of Conduct with the less experienced participants said they carried copies; their more experienced colleagues saw the code as a resource they could consult.

At the end of the analysis phase of this research, the key themes from each chapter were compared to each other to determine any commonalities across the chapters. Judgment, traditional understandings of practice, and validation were three common themes to the analysis which suggested that journalists use these three factors when making sense of their professional practice. In other words, these three dynamics underpin how journalists navigate their contemporary landscape amid ongoing challenges to their practice.

Judgment

Judgment was significant because it provided insight into how my participants strategised and reflected on their daily professional lives. Judgment was significant in

how they decided the newsworthiness of events and content, which played a role in how they determined public interest, practice, and how they tackled assignments that they felt were important to their readers. Whether journalists are paying sources for information, knocking on the door of a grieving family, or pursuing a politician on the grounds of hypocrisy, judgment plays a significant role in their decision-making processes. Judgment is often based on a combination of experience, critical examination of events, and in consultation with peers, it is not based on consultation with the public. Outside of soliciting user-generated content to enhance online journalistic outputs, consultation with the public is not as forthcoming for journalists.

Traditional understanding of practice

Within journalism circles, tradition still plays an important role despite profound changes to how the profession practises. As Ekström and Westlund (2019) point out, journalists still commit to epistemic and articulated knowledge claims that are firmly embedded in more traditional views of practice. Journalists are indoctrinated into their community of practice (Wenger, 1999) by having these claims reinforced at the pedagogical stage and again as they sit on the periphery of journalism as trainees. This further reinforces Altheide and Johnson's (1994, updated 2017) claims that people's assertions of their lifeworlds are based on ideological and epistemological knowledge claims. These claims are reflected back into the community of practice since the epistemic claims being made are underpinned by the traditions of journalism practice as evidenced by the ways in which my participants outlined what journalism meant to them along traditional lines. My participants' articulated knowledge and truth claims about their practice were underpinned by tenets of western democratic journalism practice (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956; Deuze, 2005; Hampton, 2010). These included commitments to the Fourth Estate,

public interest, and upholding democratic ideals. However, they were quick to invoke defensive positions to defend their inability in the contemporary landscape which was evident in the discrepancies between their views of what journalism meant to them and what they were actually doing.

Validation of practice

Validation of practice was important for the participants, whether that was finding ways of positioning themselves uniquely, demonstrating how they worked on behalf of the public, or how digital and social media made their practice better. Validation meant my participants could position themselves as key players who have the skills to create the record of their community, provide the type of balanced and accurate content they believe benefits people, use analytic reports and social media to verify their understanding of the community's needs from its journalists, and to justify their need of readers within the context of public service journalism. Validation was interpreted as a key way of navigating the contemporary landscape because participants reflected on their concerns in the contemporary landscape, such as sponsored content, press releases, and readers' habits of searching for news that is based on part truths. Doing this added validation to my participants' because they were highlighting the added value to news dissemination, they possess which is based on a skill set in which they are committed to accuracy. In other words, my participants firmly believed that the skills they learned and developed position them favourable as being able to understand events, construct news, and disseminate it to their readers. Validation of practice is situated in the articulated knowledge claims journalists make when reflecting on their daily professional lives.

These three themes provide an insight into how journalists make sense of their professional daily lives, inform their view of their readers, and how they understand

and interrogate ethical perspectives. Despite profound changes to the journalistic landscape with the advent of online journalism, journalists still believe in their traditional views of practice. While there are many mitigating factors that prevent full compliance of traditional practices, there is evidence in the UK, at the regional level, to try to preserve traditions through the British government's commitment to help fund aspects of journalism, such as court reporting (Cairncross, 2019; Townend, 2020).

7.2 Reflections on my overall findings

While my participants called upon various aspects of traditional epistemic claims associated with journalists, the ways in which they made sense of practice did not appear to the informed by those claims. While they cited Fourth Estate and ethics as key guidelines of practice, there was little evidence to suggest that this was the case. Despite understanding that journalism practice ought to mean holding authority accountable for its actions, facilitating for the voiceless, or providing a platform for the public, the reality of contemporary practice was littered with obstacles participants pointed to that prevented these practices from occurring. Instead, participants' experiences suggested that they were far removed and insulated from the public because of their focus on the digital landscape on readership trends, social media feedback, and searching social media for content. These practices have rapidly replaced more traditional practices in which journalists immersed themselves in the community to find content and report on life. Participants were more concerned about maximising their digital outputs, professional development, and advancement.

I draw upon theories of journalistic metadiscourse in identity and functions (Hanitzsch, 2017) and in meanings of journalism (Carlson, 2016) to account for discrepancies between journalists' thoughts and actions. The focal point of journalistic discourse is where journalism's distinctiveness and ethos are formulated and

defended. This is where journalists preserve and justify their practice and account for and defend changes or discrepancies in practice. Hanitzsch points out that the way journalists talk about their roles and practices occurs on two levels: role orientation (normative and cognitive) and role performance (practised and narrated). The normative orientation represents journalism's potential outputs in a democratic society while cognitive orientation signifies the institutional values, attitudes, and beliefs that result from occupational socialisation. In other words, role orientation is dependent on an understanding of journalism that occurs in a community of practice (Wenger, 1999). In this community of practice, the shared repertoire of knowledge of what it means to be a journalist is based on occupational socialisation.

My findings revealed evidence of normative and narrated roles in the idealised view of journalism as a noble profession that followed the Fourth Estate. These factors are qualities such as holding public figures accountable to the public, acting on behalf of people who felt ignored by government or business, or providing the public with a platform to air grievances. Cognitive roles represented participants' views of prestige and validation, such as perceived autonomy within the newsroom, commitments to news instinct, and emphasis on news values. These have been earmarked as key characteristics of journalism practice (Schultz, 2007; Gans, 2004; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Participants' views of practice lie in the practised roles in which they reveal what they do, which, in the contemporary era, involves a significant reliance on technology. While commitment to traditional roles, such as coverage of courts and local government was evidenced, much of that practice was governed by converged media. Often in converged media, a senior journalist parachutes into the community to provide coverage. While senior journalists have the expertise to provide robust

content, a journalist who is immersed in the community would be better because of his or her understanding of the community.

Normative roles are informed by journalists' understanding of what is expected of them and derived from what they believe their contributions should be. The cognitive roles define the aims and objectives journalists hold true in their professional assessment of their daily lives. The practised roles of performance delineate the realities of practice while the narrated roles represent the subjective perceptions of journalism practice. Within this perspective, the discrepancies between the idealistic and realistic versions of practice, presented by participants, become more evident. Participants understand what they ought to do based on the shared repertoire of knowledge (Wenger, 1999) that started from their days as students and reified as they entered the workforce.

However, mitigating circumstances prevent ideal practices from being enacted in the real world. Instead, journalists rely on tangible factors to delineate why they are unable to fulfil the narrated roles they should be performing. Evidence of the practised roles can be seen as the focus on obstacles that prevented participants from upholding democratic values of journalism practice. Staff cutbacks, emphasis on web-first publishing, and exclusivity of content were reasons given for this change in practice. This evidence illustrated that grassroots democratic journalism was still a key practice at the regional level. This supported a key recommendation from the 2019 Cairncross Review that called for public funding to preserve regional journalism because of the grassroots democratic factor (Cairncross, 2019). The insular nature in digital journalism exacerbated the point senior prominent journalists have made about the widening mistrust the public holds for journalists (Viner, 2017; Newman, 2018). To this end, I discuss what discourse signified about participants' experiences.

Significance of experiences

In a sociological examination of the institutionalisation of medicine, Starr (1982) argues that the medical community sought to position itself as the authority of healthcare. While doctors could not coerce the public into accepting this assessment, they had to construct arguments to establish their cultural authority in which definitions of reality, judgments of meaning, and value could prevail as valid and true. I draw upon Carlson's (2016) views on the metadiscourse on journalism to support the findings in this thesis. Citing Star's (1982) assessment of how medical professionals make sense of their practice, Carlson was able to explore metadiscourse of journalists to understand how they made sense of journalism practice.

The ways in which the journalists reflected on what they did, illustrated Ekström and Westlund's (2019) findings of the epistemic views of journalism. In their research, they described journalism as a practice that served to articulate knowledge and truth claims, as well as justify journalistic practice. When I explored the findings of my study as a unit, I detected several key themes that provided clarity into how my participants viewed journalism practice. Judgement, truth, and validity were the common points that prevailed in the three analytical chapters. Judgment referred to the decision-making processes that govern daily practice. This factor spans the spectrum from deciding what events are newsworthy to justification of completing morally challenging assignments based on public interest defences. Truth related to ethics and aims of ensuring best practices. Truth is a subjective reality based on participants' understanding of newsroom ideology, audience expectations, and what they felt was reasonable. Validity referred to the justification of professional practice by highlighting what participants' training does that limits non-professionals, such as bloggers or citizen journalists.

The value-added skills that journalists possess support these themes. These skills are their abilities to be good storytellers, to interrogate critically, and to account for their professional lives. Validation is a form of legitimisation of knowing and understanding the practices that reify how knowledge is created. As Carlson (2016) and Ekström and Westlund (2019) argue, journalism is based on knowledge claims. In journalistic contexts, validation is based on two factors: Institutionalised news practices and an interpretive process. The result is a discourse that shapes and adds meaning to professional work and demonstrates how practice is inseparable from comprehension (Carlson, 2016). My participants' focus on traditional news practices was indicative of validation based on institutionalised practices. They felt that Fourth Estate was an important part of the journalistic landscape despite robust evidence that this practice had become the exception in the digital landscape. The use of defences of downsized newsrooms, immediacy of publication, and web-first policies were all defences used to account for the idealistic views my participants used to make sense of practice. Within the context of the digital landscape, new norms were created including the reliance on press releases as a way of meeting in-house expectations and daily goals. A new norm was also evident in the way technology has helped journalists create innovative ways of disseminating information.

The way in which my participants reflected on what it means to be a journalist speaks to a socially constructed process. As Vasterman (2005) argues, news is not a strict reiteration of events, but a socially constructed version that is influenced by professional, technological, and other cultural factors. These participants emphasised how they made epistemological claims through their practice. This was evident in the overall flow of the participants' transcripts as they constructed experiences that

positioned themselves as ideal-type journalists notwithstanding evidence of problematic interpretations of journalism practice.

The findings illustrated and supported Zelizer's (1993, 2004) claims about how journalists speak about their practice. She pointed out that journalists' reflections are endemic of the type of defensive posturing used to validate practice or to defend changes to practice brought about by technological impacts, differing circumstances, and profound changes to the way journalism is practised. This view underpins the participants' reflections as they defended the insular nature of digital media, the proliferation of press release journalism in the digital landscape, and their relationship with their readers. The insular nature of journalism practice can be seen as participants presented idealistic views of their practice.

Insular nature of journalism practice

Examples of this included contextualising newsroom practices within the Fourth Estate, validating practice along public service journalism lines to justify relationships with the audience, and anecdotal commitments to ethical perspectives that rarely went beyond acknowledgment of the code of practice. I interpreted these viewpoints as idyllic because they differed from the reality of practice. These views were illustrative of the epistemic claims (Ekström & Westlund, 2019) associated with how journalists make sense of their practice.

The findings were consistent with Hanitzsch's (2007) views of how journalists make sense of practice. Hanitzsch's findings conceptualised the Fourth Estate as a focal point for how journalists make knowledge and truth claims (Ekström & Westlund, 2019) about daily professional practice. From my participants' accounts, I drew correlations between practice and the adversarial or facilitator roles as informed by Hanitzsch's model of journalistic knowledge claims. I realised that some of my

participants were invoking the public service context of journalism practice (Siebert, Schramm & Peterson, 1956; Deuze, 2005; Zelizer, 2009; Hampton, 2010). Those participants, who aligned their thinking with the public service perspectives, constructed experiences that positioned themselves as important participants in daily democratic life, whether that was holding authority accountable for its actions, acting on behalf of citizens, or providing a platform for people.

Judgment as a theme was evident in the way my participants made sense of the public interest. The consensus was that they exhibited clear understandings of public interest and its empirical nature. The more difficult part was critically interrogating assignments on a case-by-case basis. While most participants provided accounts in which public interest was self-explanatory, there were instances where reflection was needed to justify the action. But, in some cases, public interest meant nothing at all because the newsroom was more interested in pushing legal boundaries rather than reflecting on the implications of a story. Public interest decisions were made within the newsroom and without public interaction. This is because the decision-making processes of journalism are informed by a series of judgment calls. Journalists make these calls daily to decide whether events are newsworthy, how to address the ethical implications, and how to consult senior members of the newsroom to understand how to proceed with assignments. Not only was this evident in the newsroom practices, but it was also indicative of other worldviews that journalists held.

Perceived autonomy was another way in which my participants chose to make sense of their practice. They used autonomy to frame their experiences as being different from their colleagues by emphasising their news instinct, by paying attention to news values, by presenting themselves as individuals in otherwise conformist newsrooms, or by the prestige they associated with their job titles. However, the

concept of autonomy is problematic because of the conformist nature of the newsroom (White, 1950; Breed, 1955; Knight, Geuze & Gerlis, 2008). Gans (2004) argues that the concept of autonomy was a belief system in journalism. It was a way of journalists positioning themselves in a favourable light. In the same way. My participants who spoke of autonomy validated their practice based on their belief that they had a well-developed news instinct, understood news values, or subscribed to the prestige newsrooms assigned to titles of specialisms.

Digital journalism and social media

The digital landscape has had profound impacts on how journalism is practised. This was evident in my participants' accounts. Digital practices have enabled participants to defend their inability to perform democratic practices, such as the Fourth Estate and other public service journalism functions. By emphasising staff redundancies, slow hiring practices, web-first policies, and striving for exclusivity online, participants safeguarded their inability to engage fully within the democratic framework of Fourth Estate journalism. The reality of journalism practice in the digital landscape has meant a reliance on new practices. A key issue with contemporary practice is the further isolation of journalists from their readers. Although there was anecdotal evidence that some traditional practices, such as coverage of justice and local governments, continued, participants reflected on new self-sufficiencies associated with technology that help them to disseminate information in new and innovative ways that did not exist in the pre-digital era. Participants presented experiences where newsrooms relied on analytic reports that charted reader trends and demands.

As Tandoc and Thomas (2015) stated, a balance needs to be struck between traditional ways of gathering information and reliance on analytic reports to produce

content. While the reports benefit newsrooms to help them understand what readers want, there was little evidence to suggest that my participants were using the reports to understand reader trends. They were more likely to use the reports to validate news-making decisions.

Participants' perspectives on online relationships were interesting. They did not seem to be as concerned about online abuse as the literature suggested. Instead, negative comments on social media and digital forums were expected and a new part of the workday for some participants was to go online and remove the more abusive content. This signalled that some participants accepted online abuse as a part of the daily life of a journalist. This was a departure from the findings in the literature I explored in Chapters 2 and 5 which signalled a growing concern. However, those findings were concerned with national and international journalists. Most contemporary practitioners in this research worked at the regional level. While there is concern among researchers and journalists about abuse along racial and gender lines, participants did not contextualise the negative comments along these lines. Rather, they focussed on the positive aspects of social media and audience interaction. This was consistent with Canter's (2013a, 2013b, 2014) findings that suggested there has been a relaxing of the authoritative gatekeeping role of the journalist online. However, that relaxing has been only to allow journalists to engage with their readers to source story ideas or request user-generated content to enhance their digital outputs.

Ethical practice

I found that ethical practices and the defences of morally challenging assignments were based on personal morality, identity work and consultations within the newsroom. The decision to knock on a grieving family's door requires journalists to temper news gathering with respect for privacy. These decisions to report on death

can be problematic because journalists can be quick to contact families when they are in their most vulnerable state before determining a public interest in the story. Often, public interest is a flimsy defence for intrusion into grief. A key defence of this practice by my participants was to emphasise a commitment to accuracy, which has its merits (Duncan, 2012; Newton & Duncan, 2012; Newton, 2011). While the defensive arguments participants made were consistent with research into grief journalism, participants did not reflect on other aspects of ethical practice that merited consideration.

Frost (2019) pointed out that ethical practice is more than self-accountability. He argued that ethical practice should also be considerate of how journalism outputs impact readers. Participants' emphasis on accuracy and privacy were clear constructions of self-accountability. Events, such as the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire, highlighted the need for journalists to be more reflective about how their outputs, or lack of outputs, impact the public. A third direction of accountability that some participants spoke about was newsroom accountability. This tended to occur among journalists who worked primarily in the pre-digital era compared to their digital counterparts. While ethical perspectives in journalism research tend to be concerned with public reaction to journalists, it was important to understand that accountability in the newsroom to editors was a significant consideration in how my participants made sense of their daily professional lives. This concept circles back to the idea that journalists' decision-making processes are based inward-facing judgments without public consultation. In this context, a certain level of newsroom accountability is justified. As Robinson (2019) argues, journalists can act as the public when evaluating the work of their peers. This form of peer review is viewed more favourably than public criticism of journalists.

The emphasis on professional identity to make sense of ethical perspectives was similar to the invocation of autonomy to define professional practice. Participants, who chose to contextualise ethical awareness in relation to identity, did so by implying that identity defined ethics. Being a news reporter or having a strong sense of morality were seen as different ways of justifying ethics. In some cases, participants relied on the implication that the news journalist title suggested that journalists traded on their reputation. Therefore, some of my participants believed it added validation to a scenario where practice meant pushing the ethical boundaries of journalism. This reinforces the idea of the noble pursuit of public service journalism and acting on the public's behalf.

Others attempted to frame their practice by highlighting their intentional career choices that pushed them away from national newspapers because they felt they would be pressured into compromising their principles to gather news. However, Frost (2006) points out that working at the regional level did not signal a commitment to ethical practice because regional titles are sometimes more likely to be reported to a regulator for a complaint than national titles. He argues that national titles are more likely to trigger complaints about harassment or misrepresentation while regional titles tend to be reported for intrusion, privacy issues, and trivial errors. While participants chose to highlight this context as a means of self-validation it did not necessarily mean that working on regional titles was more ethical than at national publications. However, there is not enough data to explore this argument further.

Relationship with audience

Lastly, I address my findings with respect to my participants' relationships with their audiences. The interesting takeaway from the exploration of participants' views of the readers was the role of social media in such a relationship. The ongoing

relationship in the broader scheme of journalism practice has not changed. There is still a lack of trust of journalists by the public (Ipsos-Mori, 2016). Current events have demonstrated how the lack of trust has widened in the past few years (Viner, 2017; Newman, 2018). As stated earlier in this section, the role of social media has impacted practice. The immediacy of social media feedback, the interactive ability journalists have to source news idea, and an avenue to request user content to enhance digital outputs have led to a commodification of the public. That is, journalists see the audience as a potential avenue for creating news they feel matches the audience's demands. Interactivity represents a new way of immersing in the community.

7.3 Implications from the research

My research has led to two areas in which implications arose. One was the practical implications, and the other was the theoretical implications.

Practical Implications

At the outset of this research, my aim was to present an understanding of how journalists make sense of their practice in the contemporary landscape. My findings revealed three main implications that I explore here:

- No existential crisis among journalists
- Isolation and alienation
- No clear shift in how journalists view ethics and regulation.

My participants faced no existential threat. At the onset of this research, one would expect that these journalists faced an existential crisis about their practice and their profession due to the scandals, criticism, and lack of trust that they encountered. However, my participants' reflections on a variety of aspects of journalism practice revealed that they were sure of their practice and not worried about how mitigating circumstances impact journalism. With some exceptions, journalism remains the

same. Senior and retired journalists were concerned about a reliance on press releases among contemporary practitioners. While they did admit to a reliance on press releases, contemporary journalists viewed their reliance as a way to solve problems caused by new digital mandates and downsizing of newsrooms. The evidence suggested that press releases were viewed as a source of story ideas. The aims and objectives of early career participants in journalism remained similar to those of their senior colleagues. They exhibited a sense of duty to provide content for readers.

The difference was that technology afforded contemporary journalists new and innovative ways of presenting the news. They took advantage of strengths of the various platforms to create different styles. One of the key concerns in the literature about early digital journalism practice was a lack of vision of how to use the internet (Boczowski, 2004; Matheson, 2004). In the initial stages, news websites tended to resemble the physical products. A growing autonomy evident in the participants' experiences was to take ownership of technology and its applications to journalistic outputs (Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016).

My study has implications for isolation and alienation among journalists. The Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell Tower fire were of significant relevance to me because these two incidents held real-world implications for my research. From the perspective of how the public perceives the press, the aftermath of these two tragedies exacerbated already low levels of trust of the media (Ipsos-Mori, 2016). Shortly after the Grenfell fire, *The Guardian's* editor Katherine Viner pointed out that journalists had lost touch with their audiences and the vitriol of these two incidents was indicative of that loss. Within the viewpoints of the participants in my research, there were potentially concerning implications about their views of online journalism. While participants championed the new innovative ways of presenting news, there was

evidence of further isolation from the public as some participants reported incidents in which they were spending more time behind computer screens rather than in the community.

Several of the senior and retired participants expressed pride in their ability to immerse in the community to find stories instead of sitting in offices. Contemporary journalists pointed to ways in which they engaged with people through social media. However, there was a sense that community involvement was at risk. As Tandoc (2014) argues, while analytics have become a vital tool in the journalist's toolkit, practitioners must avoid becoming overly reliant on them. Full reliance on analytics could mean sacrificing gatekeeping roles since journalists become dependent on reader trends to dictate content. While Canter (2013a, 2013b, 2014) argues that journalists are willing to relinquish some gatekeeper roles if it means better quality online journalism, a commitment to democratic practices is still an important part of the journalistic process.

Lastly, I address implications for ethics in journalism with respect to practice. Ethics in journalism remains a hot topic as evidenced by the public's reaction to the Manchester Arena attack, Grenfell Tower fire, and further back to the phone hacking scandal. Despite public scrutiny of ethically challenging scenarios, participants did not appear concerned about what the public construes as morally challenging. Instead, they viewed assignments with ethical implications as being a part of the landscape of journalism practice. While morality underpinned how some participants made sense of practice with ethical implications, others sought validation in their professional identities and how those identities reified their commitment to ethical practice based on being able to present a verifiable version of truth. While the least experienced journalists reported some reliance on the Editors' Code of Practice, the more

experienced ones pointed out that ethics was something that existed in the background and were viewed more as a resource for consulting when warranted. There was also little evidence to suggest that new clarifications to the editors' code had any impact on practice or in producing a clearer understanding of ethical practice. Although there has been a narrowing of the scope of the clauses and defences in the code, there was no evidence to suggest greater clarity in navigating ethical scenarios in the participants' experiences.

Theoretical implications

In Chapter 2, I outlined three key theoretical perspectives that underpinned this research. These were Siebert, Schramm, and Peterson's (1956) libertarian media model, Wenger's (1999) community of practice, and a set of theories on the metadiscourse of journalism (Carlson, 2016; Hanitzsch, 2017; Ekström & Westlund, 2019). Siebert et al's theory informed my research because it provided the contextual framework of a libertarian media model within which British journalism practice is situated. As Oni (2018) points out, the function of theory in the research is to help find compelling and original perspectives from which to begin to develop the analysis component of the research. Siebert et al's theory, which proposed that the libertarian model is indicative of western democratic political models, helped me to identify the kinds of motivational factors that guided participants' contexts of journalism practice. Within the scope of this theory. I was able to begin to identify themes of practice.

Wenger's community of practice identified the ways in which shared repertoires of knowledge helped trainees to acclimatise to the journalism community and to develop their professional identities and practices. In addition to learning how to be journalists, it became evident that journalism's community of practice guided

my participants' defences against criticism. The community of practice signalled the contexts within which participants chose to speak. It provided an understanding of how knowledge claims about journalism were derived. The approaches to metadiscourse provided an understanding and background of how discourse was used to show purpose. That is, how journalists use discourse to provide insight into what they think journalism means to them, how they think readers view them, and how they reflect on morally challenging assignments. Clearly, these three theories are conducive to the study of journalism practice within a phenomenological framework of experience.

7.4 Contributions to knowledge

The opening line of this thesis referred to the potential of an existential crisis among journalists amid challenges and changes to their practice. However, after speaking with journalists and analysing their experiences, there was no such crisis to practice. Within the lexical context of existential crisis in which people are negatively impacted by questions of identity, meaning, and value of the self, the participants did not feel this way. While their accounts on practice, relations with readers, and reflections on ethics served to validate, add meaning, and reify practice, the participants tended to be sure of themselves. They justified their idealistic views of journalism practice which did not match their practical perspectives.

Their views of the public's criticism of journalists online and along pre-digital lines indicated that criticism was a normal part of the landscape. Instead of focussing on fixing the relationship between the public and the press, my participants chose to validate their practice by situating themselves as having skills as storytellers to produce journalistic outputs. Herein lies my contribution to knowledge in that these

validations supported Ekström and Westlund's (2019) findings of the key epistemic views that journalists use to defend their practice.

The second contribution is to the way in which the theory of community of practice is applied to journalism (Wenger, 1999). While much of the previous research tends to view the community of practice as way of improving work, indoctrinating journalists into the community, or making sense of developments in the field (Garcia-Avilés, 2014), my research demonstrates how the community of practice is used to defend the field. The metadiscourse participants used to defend journalism practice is informed by old and new traditions. Invoking democratic and other traditional understandings of practice were indicative of older traditions. The invocation of digital autonomies (Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016) illustrated how British journalists were using technology to improve output.

A third contribution to knowledge is how social media can be used at the regional level. Building on Canter's (2013a, 2013b, 2014) research, it was evident that participants engaged with social media in three ways: understanding what interests the readers, the instantaneous nature of feedback, and the ability to access user content to enhance journalistic output. It was evident that the once authoritative nature of journalists as gatekeepers has relaxed to allow some public input, but only where it benefits output. This does not necessarily mean more external input into journalism practices, but rather a means of providing that may not be available to journalists.

A fourth contribution reveals the insulation of journalists from their public. As Brants and de Haan (2010) argue, journalists choose to reject public criticism and seek reassurances from within their newsrooms. The use of social media, analytic reports, and digital platforms mean that journalists spend more time at their desks rather than in the community. A key focal point among pre-digital practitioners was their ability

to immerse in the community. Accounts provided by contemporary digital journalists, suggest that they do not go out into the community as much as their predecessors did since the focal point in their newsroom has been on gathering news ideas from social media. Immersing oneself into the community was a staple of pre-digital journalism practice. Social media allows journalists to be in touch with the community which can allay some concerns that mistrust of the press is due to journalists ignoring the public (Viner, 2017). But it comes at the expense of sacrificing physical time in the community.

The fifth contribution relates to bereavement journalism practices. While the previous research focussed on grief narratives (Duncan, 2012), teaching about bereavement journalism (Duncan & Newton, 2010; Newton & Duncan, 2012), and the implications of the practice in the social media age (Newton & Duncan, 2012), no study explored the ways in which journalists reflected on the practice. My findings reveal that journalists adopt a professional perspective of these types of assignments and recognise the importance of balancing sensitivity, accuracy, and privacy when navigating these morally challenging assignments.

7.5 Reflecting on my research process.

I chose semi-structured interviews as my data collection instrument to address my overarching research question. This instrument was fit for purpose given that I aimed to obtain robust data based on the experiences of my participants. As such, I felt that a methodological approach of hermeneutic phenomenology was ideal in this study. This approach required an ontological stance of multiple realities and an epistemological perspective of social constructionism, which warranted a focus on personal experiences and; as such, it justified my decision to utilise semi-structured

interviews to obtain data whereby I focussed on the personal experiences of each journalist.

For my participant selection criteria based on my definition of journalists, I recruited journalists who represented print and multimedia publications. I chose to focus on these groups because print is the oldest medium, it is often the focal point of major journalistic scandals, and it was the medium within which I worked. I defined journalists as those who socially construct news events (Vasterman, 2005) that are influenced by newsroom ideology (Breed, 1955) for a targeted audience whose worldview aligns with that of the organisation. For the purposes of this research, I selected journalists from a diverse background who worked in both the pre-digital and digital landscapes. While most of the journalists represented the regional press, others included national tabloid reporters, freelancers, and business-to-business contributing editors. This diversified group of journalists offered some significant insights into their practice. A thematic analysis of the interviews revealed several threads that provided an insight into how these journalists made sense of their daily professional lives. Each component of my research design worked in concert with each other to produce an analysis of the data that was fit for purpose and aligned with the aims and objectives of this research.

I felt that the data collection process was ideal for this research. I conducted semi-structured interviews face-to-face or by telephone based on which was most convenient for the participants. While in-person interviews were more effective because those participants felt more inclined to provide in-depth discussions of their experiences, telephone interviews required that I asked more questions to obtain information from participants to cover the depth of their experiences. Telephone interviews elicited more details without prompting. Participants who chose to be

interviewed over the phone also tended to be more candid about their experiences as journalists. This may have been due to the fact that the telephone added an extra buffer, which meant they felt more comfortable talking about difficult subjects. Examinations of transcripts revealed that in-person and telephone interviews produced robust datasets for analysis.

I also found that my past identity as a journalist was an immensely positive thing, especially for my participants. Anecdotal evidence in the transcripts, such as the way they related their experience to me, used industry jargon, and were relaxed in the interviews pointed towards a high comfort level my participants had with me. My prior knowledge was also helpful in guiding the early planning stages of the research. My experiences as a journalist were a great benefit during the framing of the semi-structured interview questions which were based on my research questions, the literature, and my prior knowledge of the profession.

Reflections on Chapter 4

The data collection questions that informed this chapter were ideal because they allowed the participants to reflect on their careers to present accounts that were fit for the supporting research question. Compartmentalising participants into early career and senior participant groups worked effectively in this chapter. The responses provided insight into both pre and digital landscapes. While the traditional perspectives of practice were similar, having contemporary journalists who could provide responses on the impacts of digital media practices provided interesting perspectives on contemporary journalism. While there was concern among senior and retired journalists about a future of journalism that relies heavily on press releases, contemporary practitioners seemed to have a firm grasp on practice. While they did rely on press releases, they were also armed with resources that were not available to

those from the pre-digital era. Therefore, it was interesting to see how the transformation of journalism practice has been happening and how views of practice are changing. The only limitation in this chapter was not being able to collect observation data. It would have been interesting to see how newsrooms are operating in the digital era as a means of evaluating participants' responses.

Reflections on Chapter 5

The semi-structured interview questions used to collect data in this chapter were ideal. The questions motivated the candidates to reflect on their practice in the context of how they thought the public views them. The lines of inquiry were intentionally designed to elicit a specific type of response through which it would be possible to understand how journalists view their readers and what they think readers think of them. The questions, where participants were asked to reflect on praise and criticism, tended to elicit emotional responses. They provided insight into the emotional well-being of participants. At the start of this thesis, disillusionment of a thankless practice was not a consideration, but it was evident that the participants felt they were not appreciated for their work. Lacking the data to provide deeper insight into how journalists engaged with their readers was a limitation in this chapter. While it was important to frame arguments around how participants viewed their readers, the data sets could not provide insight into how they interacted with the public to create constructive relationships.

Reflections on Chapter 6

The data collection questions designed with this chapter in mind worked well because they allowed participants to reflect on their ethical perspectives. The responses elicited provided the type of insight into ethical practice that went towards answering the supporting research question. The use of semantic thematic analysis

was an effective analytical tool because it was able to provide the pathways towards the overarching theme and the sense-making themes that informed this chapter. The main limitation in this chapter was providing a different perspective on bereavement journalism. A well-rounded view could have been provided with interviews with grieving families, however, that was not possible since the thesis is only concerned with understand how journalists view their profession. A potential area for future research that emerged from this thesis would be a holistic view of bereavement journalism that also takes families' views on the practice into consideration.

7.6 Purpose of this research

During the planning stages of this research, I set out several aims and objectives. Due to the fluidity of the PhD process, I interrogated my aims, re-examined them, and condensed them into four key areas. These are to:

- Develop an understanding of what it means to be a journalist in the current landscape.
- Understand how digital journalism has impacted practice.
- Demonstrate how journalists use discourse to make sense of their practice.
- Contribute to the robust body of knowledge of journalism research.

Originally, I aimed to explore how traditions have changed as practices evolved in the digital environment. However, I realised that this research would be guided by my participants' account of their experiences as journalists. Although this study was not a comparative examination of contemporary and past practices, some comparisons were done to understand the position of contemporary journalists. For example, social media has had a profound impact on the way in which journalists gather news by trawling social media platforms to search for news or soliciting user-generated content from readers to enhance news products. This led to remarkable differences in how retired and senior journalists viewed themselves as authoritative

gatekeepers of content who dictated the flow of information compared to contemporary journalists who were willing to open the gate if it benefitted their outputs. The final version of the aims of this research, then, aligned with my overarching research question, my supporting research questions, and my goals that guided this research.

To understand what it means to be a journalist, I asked my participants to reflect on what journalism meant to them, what types of stories they wrote, and have them reflect on intangible factors such as news instinct and news values. While participants instinctively invoked the Fourth Estate as a key practice, it became clear that the digital landscape had impacted how Fourth Estate journalism was practised. Instead of the full measures of traditional accountability, staff cuts, web-first publication, and a growing disillusionment of the public positioned Fourth Estate as an ideal rather than a reality. Instead, journalists use these factors to excuse themselves for not producing Fourth Estate journalism as they envision it.

I needed to understand how participants viewed and positioned their readers because it provided insight into the relationship between journalists and readers. As such, I explored their views in these areas in my research. The relationship between journalists and the public has been weakened as seen in a lack of public faith in journalists as reported by Ipsos-Mori (2016), or by the growing chasm between journalists and readers (Viner, 2017) in the aftermath of the Manchester Arena attack and Grenfell fire. Therefore, it was important to understand this relationship to provide a more well-rounded portrait of what it means to be a journalist.

Finally, I aimed to provide an understanding of how journalists viewed what is deemed to be morally questionable as construed by the public. This understanding was also important within the greater scope of the research because public opinion

provided the participants with a platform to outline how they viewed practices that were judged to be unethical.

7.7 Potential ways of enhancing findings.

The data sets that I generated from the interviews were robust and fit for analysis. However, I felt that I could have further enhanced my results if I had been able to gather data sets from the experiences of BAME journalists or broadsheet journalists. As I outlined in Chapter 3, a lack of racial diversity is a problematic area in the journalism landscape in the UK. As reports have shown, 94 percent of journalists are white, 55 percent male, and 86 percent university educated (Spilsbury, 2018; Martinson, 2018). As such, I was unable to recruit BAME journalists. The participants in this research were all white. While I approached several broadsheet journalists to participate in my research, none of them responded. Despite this, I believe that the data sets I obtained were robust enough to produce findings to address my research question.

7.8 Future research

I have identified several topics for future research that have emerged during this PhD study. These topics emerged because they could not be analysed further based on the data collected, emerged on the landscape during my research, or are based on ideas I have developed as a researcher. These subjects are with respect to readers' thoughts about the practice of journalism, use of analytics to create content, and the impact of cultural identity on the professional identity of journalists. Much of the research into journalism practice tends to be theoretical or from the perspectives of the journalists. For this reason, I would like to explore, during future research, the practice of journalism from the readers' perspectives.

A key area of my research was to explore journalists' opinion of the public. My findings revealed that my participants held ambivalent views of the public. It would be interesting to find out what the public thinks of journalists and their practice by exploring the views of focus groups in conjunction. The key area to focus on would be regional or community journalism where there has been great concern about the future of grassroots journalism practice. This type of esearch would require two different focus groups to examine how those in rural communities engage with regional journalism compared to those who live in urban centres where regional publications compete with national publications. The focus of this research would be on presenting an understanding of how the audience views journalism practice, what are the public's expectation of regional journalism practice, and if the audience thinks they are being accurately represented by their regional press.

Another area of future research could be exploring how new and traditional practices are being interwoven in the daily news production in digital newsrooms. As my research has demonstrated, journalists gained unprecedented access into the

reading habits of their audience through analytics and have engaged with technology to create new journalistic outputs. It would be interesting to explore how multimedia journalists in democratic nations have used analytics to maximise the effectiveness of their workflow. My study showed that some journalists visualised different ways of using different platforms. However, there was insufficient evidence to show how these journalists used these platforms from web analytic tables and other resources to enhance their practice; although, they mentioned the analytic teams in the newsrooms and how they were encouraged to continue to cover court and council. Although research in this area has been conducted in Scandinavia (Brø, Hansen & Andersson, 2016), I opine that some exploration should be done in other countries. The most effective means for data collection would be newsroom observation and sitting in on editorial meetings.

The third future research would be on cultural identity and its impact on the professional identity of journalists. Spilsbury (2018) and Martinson (2018) pointed out that a significant majority of journalists in the UK are white and male. I was not able to interview any journalists from different ethnic backgrounds other than white. Therefore, it would be insightful to find out how ethnically diverse journalists make sense of their professional identity. One of the areas of potential inquiry would be to explore how these journalists incorporate their diversity into their practice. In this vein, several areas can provide potentially robust insights into racial diversity in journalism practice. One key area of research could be on how ethnic minority journalists make sense of working in communities that are either racially homogenised or where one race dominates the societal demographics of the area. Another area for future exploration could focus on the challenges of being an ethnic minority in the journalism landscape in terms of career advancement, selection for desirable assignments, or

assignment to cover news that no one else would. This would be very relevant in today's landscape with the surge of groups like Black Lives Matter and the proliferation of extreme police brutality in the United States. Data collection would be conducted by using either a semi-structured interview or a focus group.

7.9 My final thoughts

My journey, as I undertook this research, was challenging. As a novice researcher, my greatest obstacle was in managing and interpreting the data. Works by Patel (2014) and Saldana (2016) guided my initiation into managing and analysing data. My role as an insider-turned-researcher was valuable because it helped to guide my research in the planning stages and set my participants at ease. My research question and literature search, together with my knowledge of the journalism profession, facilitated the design of the data collection instrument. My prior knowledge also helped the journalists to be at ease so that they could revert to using journalism jargon which signposted their increased comfort level with me. This way of communicating by using professional jargon meant that they could identify with me, and they were more forthcoming in their interviews. I feared that my prior knowledge would influence the research leading to less robust findings. However, I combatted this by being extra vigilant and questioning my actions at every stage of the research process.

At the start of this research, I thought I could predict how participants would respond to the questions. But as the research progressed, I realised that was not the case. While my own experiences as a journalist were like those of the research participants, there were aspects of their practice that I found surprising. As I near the end of my study, I draw attention to the importance of this research. My findings provide insights into the journalism practice from journalists' points of view. This, in

turn, could be valuable in training future journalists and in staff development. Here, the practical aspect of my research outweighs the findings in more theoretical or academic studies. I argue that research that involves journalists and their readers is important. This research demonstrates that the professional identity of journalists is in a state of flux and as such, it is evolving so that they can adapt to changes in their profession, and, therefore, journalists are not in a state of crisis. In this way journalists could understand how those changes fit within their worldview of journalism practice. At the end of my study, I go forth, secure in the knowledge that I can conduct qualitative research with rigour and integrity and that I have contributed knowledge to enhance the journalism profession and research.

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Appendix A: SHUREC-1 Ethics form 1

Sheffield Hallam University

RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST (SHUREC1)

This form is designed to help staff and postgraduate research students to complete an ethical scrutiny of proposed research. The SHU Research Ethics Policy should be consulted before completing the form.

Answering the questions below will help you decide whether your proposed research requires ethical review by a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). In cases of uncertainty, members of the FREC can be approached for advice.

Please note: staff based in University central departments should submit to the University Ethics Committee (SHUREC) for review and advice.

The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research and with the principal investigator for staff research projects.

Note that students and staff are responsible for making suitable arrangements for keeping data secure and, if relevant, for keeping the identity of participants anonymous. They are also responsible for following SHU guidelines about data encryption and research data management.

The form also enables the University and Faculty to keep a record confirming that research conducted has been subjected to ethical scrutiny.

- For postgraduate research student projects, the form should be completed by the student and counter-signed by the supervisor, and kept as a record showing that ethical scrutiny has occurred. Students should retain a copy for inclusion in their thesis, and staff should keep a copy in the student file.

- For staff research, the form should be completed and kept by the principal investigator.

Please note if it may be necessary to conduct a health and safety risk assessment for the proposed research. Further information can be obtained from the Faculty Safety Co-ordinator.

General Details

Name of principal investigator or postgraduate research student	Mark Subryan
SHU email address	Mark.G.Subryan@student.shu.ac.uk
Name of supervisor (if applicable)	Dr. David Clarke
email address	david.clarke@shu.ac.uk
Title of proposed research	Post-Leveson Journalistic ethics: Has it changed or is it business as usual?
Proposed start date	15/1/2016
Proposed end date	15/2/2016
Brief outline of research to include, rationale & aims (500 – 750 words).	The history of United Kingdom tabloid journalism is synonymous with news of scandalous behaviour of the Royal Family, politicians and celebrities. In 1843, John Browne Belle recognised that scandal sells newspapers when he, created News of the World based on the fictional Penny Dreadfuls that were popular in 18th century England

(The Guardian 2011). Browne used titillating news to create the UK's best-selling newspaper of the era. The focus of the News of the World was clear from the outset and reflected in its motto: "All human life is there". Lord Northcliffe was the second tabloid pioneer when he created The Daily Mail in 1896 and The Daily Mirror in 1910. His vision of more sensationalistic news coverage was reflected in his mantra to journalists to write stories that were fewer than 200 words in length (BBC4 2007). While UK society accepted salacious coverage of celebrity lives, they revolted when The Guardian, in 2011, revealed unethical and illegal methods used by journalists to gather information about murder victims and their families. There was an "outpouring of anger towards the callous and cynical actions of these tabloid journalists and their bosses" (Reeves 2015, P. 65). Publication of alleged phone hacking methods by News of the World galvanised Prime Minister David Cameron to launch an inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press (Davies and Hill 2011; Leveson 2012). During the course of a year, the Leveson Inquiry received testimony from more than 700 sources (Leveson 2012).

Four years have passed since the inquiry, but what has been the impact on print journalism? Did the inquiry get to the heart of how journalists justify what they do? Have there been profound changes to the ethical landscape of journalism in post-Leveson UK or is it business as usual? My thesis aims to examine what, if any, changes have occurred in journalism and among journalists. In the larger researcher project which forms the framework for my PhD thesis, I will examine the context of the post-Leveson landscape; analyse critically how print journalists' identities shape how they position themselves within society and determine what print journalism has done to respond to Leveson's recommendations. However, at this time, my supervisory team and I have decided to undertake a pilot study that will serve several purposes: it will provide a feasibility study for the overall project; provide data that would be valuable for gauging progress at the RF2 stage and to start developing an understanding of how journalists view their profession.

This initial entry into the research is directed at interviewing a small demographic of print journalists. My goal is to interview between five and 10 early career journalists who graduated in 2012-13 or after and are working in print or online journalism in the UK. My rationale for focusing on such a concentrated sample is to gather data from journalists who started their careers after the Leveson Report was published in 2012. Logically, the 2012-13 graduating class would be the first cohort of journalists to be impacted by any possible newsroom changes related to journalistic ethics that would be implemented based on Leveson's recommendations. I anticipate I am examining a very small sample of journalists based on the factors I will use to approach these journalists. They must be recent graduates, working in the UK and working in print or online newsrooms.

Initially, I plan to access graduates of the journalism programs at Sheffield Hallam University from contact lists maintained by the journalism department and interacting with invited alumni at a career day being organised by the department. Should that not yield sufficient participants, I plan to expand my search by consulting with

	a contact at the University of Sheffield in order to find similar demographically-specific candidates. The third contingent would be employ snowball sampling which entails having existing participants suggest potential participants who are would be similar in nature to themselves in order to keep the sample uniform (Porta 2008). Data will be collected based on a series of semi-structured interviews, each lasting 45 to 60 minutes, aimed at learning how early career journalists view their identities, their profession and ethical practices during their professional lives. This information will be used to accomplish three goals: to determine the feasibility of the overall research project, to understand how early career journalists view their professional identities and to underpin initial findings for the RF2 stage of the PhD process. **Note: This is to elaborate on the question below of foreseeable risk or harm (Research with Human Participants No. 7). While I do not have reason to believe this would be an issue, the potential exists that asking probing questions about a person's past experiences could have the potential of emotion harm if the responses means reliving past stressful experiences.** **Note 2: We have completed the design of the semi-structured interview instruments and will want to begin interviewing as soon as possible.**
Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymisation, storage and disposal procedures if these are required (300 -750 words).	At this point, my goal is to conduct five to 10 semi-structured interviews with journalists who would have graduated during or after 2012-13. The interviews will be phenomenological in nature, based on the professional experiences of early career journalists. I plan to use two avenues to contact potential participants through alumni lists maintained by the department and at a career day hosted by the journalism department at Hallam in late winter. For now, my intent is gather contact details for journalists who would be interested in participating in PhD research once I have secured ethical clearance to begin the research. Due to the exacting parameters for participants, if this proves to be unsuccessful, I will expand my search by contacting the journalism department at the University of Sheffield, as well as making contact with members of a trainee and student journalist Facebook Group associated with the National Union of Journalists. Once ethical clearance is given, journalists who previously agreed to participate in the research will be sent a fact sheet outlining the nature of the research, their obligation as participants and other details such as how anonymity will be granted, their right to choose location, time and dates of interviews and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Anonymity will be granted by coding the participants. For example, I plan to refer to participants as J1, J2 which would denote Journalist 1, Journalist 2, etc. Another factor I must consider is jigsaw identification. By jigsaw identification, I mean avoiding certain types of information and data which would potentially identify participants to a small group of people who would be familiar with the information given. For example, if a

	journalist states she or he was threatened with career termination if they did not breach ethics, that would not necessarily make them identifiable. However, if the journalist stated she or he were forced to wear a religious garment to gauge how the public views them, the chances are there will be at least one person who could potentially identify them based on the specifics of this example. Data storage will be in line with Sheffield Hallam University standards through the SHU Research Data Archive once information has been analysed and interpreted. In order to preserve confidentiality and privacy, all transcriptions of interviews will be conducted by me.
Will the research be conducted with partners & subcontractors?	**No** (If **YES**, outline how you will ensure that their ethical policies are consistent with university policy.)

1. Health Related Research involving the NHS or Social Care / Community Care or the Criminal Justice System or with research participants unable to provide informed consent

Question	Yes/No
1. Does the research involve? • Patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care • Relatives/carers of patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care • Access to data, organs or other bodily material of past or present NHS patients • Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients • The recently dead in NHS premises • Prisoners or others within the criminal justice system recruited for health-related research* • Police, court officials, prisoners or others within the criminal justice system* • Participants who are unable to provide informed consent due to their incapacity even if the project is not health related	No
2. Is this a research project as opposed to service evaluation or audit? *For NHS definitions please see the following website* http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/	No

If you have answered **YES** to questions **1 & 2** then you **must** seek the appropriate external approvals from the NHS, Social Care or the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) under their independent Research Governance schemes. Further information is provided below.

NHS https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx

* Prison projects may also need National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Approval and Governor's Approval and may need Ministry of Justice approval. Further guidance at:
http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/applying-for-approvals/national-offender-management-service-noms/

NB FRECs provide Independent Scientific Review for NHS or SC research and initial scrutiny for ethics applications as required for university sponsorship of the research. Applicants can use the

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NHS proforma and submit this initially to their FREC.

2. Research with Human Participants

Question	Yes/No
1. Does the research involve human participants? This includes surveys, questionnaires, observing behaviour etc. Note If YES, then please answer questions 2 to 10 If NO, please go to Section 3	Yes
2. Will any of the participants be vulnerable? Note 'Vulnerable' people include children and young people, people with learning disabilities, people who may be limited by age or sickness or disability, etc. See definition	No
3. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	No
4. Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?	No
5. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	No
6. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	No
7. Is there any reasonable and foreseeable risk of physical or emotional harm to any of the participants? Note Harm may be caused by distressing or intrusive interview questions, uncomfortable procedures involving the participant, invasion of privacy, topics relating to highly personal information, topics relating to illegal activity, etc.	Possible. See Note 1 at end of research outline
8. Will anyone be taking part without giving their informed consent?	No
9. Is it covert research? Note 'Covert research' refers to research that is conducted without the knowledge of participants.	No
10. Will the research output allow identification of any individual who has not given their express consent to be identified?	No

If you answered **YES only** to question **1**, you must complete the box below and submit the signed form to the FREC for registration and scrutiny.

Data Handling

Nature of data

Data is based on responses to a series of semi-structured interviews carried out with participants drawn from early career journalists who graduated from undergraduate or postgraduate journalism programs in 2012-13 or later. This is because this sample of journalists would be among the first impacted by recommendations drawn from the Leveson Inquiry. Journalists would be those employed in the UK and working in newspaper newsrooms or online journalism related to print journalism. The data will be lived experiences and observations participants make based on their opinions of their professional identities, their perception of how journalism views itself and accounts of their ethical underpinning as applied to the profession.

Factors for anonymity of interview participants

The information data sheet which will be sent to potential participants will outline the nature of the pilot study, their obligation and their right to withdraw from the research without notice. Participants will be reassured in the participant contract of their right to anonymity to protect their identities and their professional standing within journalism. Care will be taken to ensure jigsaw identification cannot be used to

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identify them. For example, if a journalist states that she or he was forced to wear a religious garment in order elicit certain responses from the public, co-workers could potentially identify them if the details are very specific. The journalists' identities will be protected by a coding system in which they will be identified by the research team by an alphanumeric code. This will be achieved by assigning a code to each journalist, for example, if there are five participants, they will be identified as J1, J2, J3, J4, J5. Care will also be taken not to identify where they work or from where they graduated because, along the lines of jigsaw identification, it would be come easy to identify who participated if someone can link graduation year, university and newsroom in which they work.

Data storage and disposal

I plan to record interviews using a digital audio recorder. Those interviews will be transcribed and stored on an encrypted portable hard drive which a back-up copy stored on Sheffield Hallam University's student Google Drive which has added layers of encryption. Data storage, once the study is completed, will be done on SHURDA, Sheffield Hallam University's data archive and will be disposed of in line with the university's policy on data protection.

If you have answered **YES** to any of the other questions you are **required** to submit a SHUREC2A (or 2B) to the FREC. If you answered **YES** to question **8** and participants cannot provide informed consent due to their incapacity you must obtain the appropriate approvals from the NHS research governance system.

3. Research in Organisations

	Question	Yes/No
1	Will the research involve working with/within an organisation (e.g. school, business, charity, museum, government department, international agency, etc.)?	No
2	If you answered YES to question 1, do you have granted access to conduct the research? *If YES, students please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain safely.*	
3	If you answered NO to question 2, is it because: A. you have not yet asked B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access.	
Note	*You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted access.*	

4. Research with Products and Artefacts

	Question	Yes/No
1.	Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes, existing datasets or secure data?	No

2.	If you answered YES to question 1, are the materials you intend to use in the public domain?	
Notes	'In the public domain' does not mean the same thing as 'publicly accessible'. – Information which is 'in the public domain' is no longer protected by copyright (i.e. copyright has either expired or been waived) and can be used without permission. – Information which is 'publicly accessible' (e.g. TV broadcasts, websites, artworks, newspapers) is available for anyone to consult/view. It is still protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice. In UK law, copyright protection is automatic and does not require a copyright statement, although it is always good practice to provide one. It is necessary to check the terms and conditions of use to find out exactly how the material may be reused etc. If you answered YES to question 1, be aware that you may need to consider other ethics codes. For example, when conducting Internet research, consult the code of the Association of Internet Researchers; for educational research, consult the Code of Ethics of the British Educational Research Association.	
3.	If you answered NO to question 2, do you have explicit permission to use these materials as data? If YES, please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain permission.	
4.	If you answered NO to question 3, is it because: A. you have not yet asked permission B. you have asked and not yet received and answer C. you have asked and been refused access.	A/B/C
Note	You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted permission to use the specified material.	

Adherence to SHU policy and procedures

Personal statement
I can confirm that: – I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures – I agree to abide by its principles.

Student / Researcher/ Principal Investigator (as applicable)	
Name: Mark Subryan	Date: 08/03/16
Signature:	
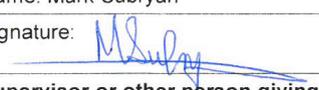
Supervisor or other person giving ethical sign-off
I can confirm that completion of this form has not identified the need for ethical approval by the FREC or an NHS, Social Care or other external REC. The research will not commence until any approvals required under Sections 3 & 4 have been received.

Name: DAVID CLARKE	Date: 14 / 3 / 2016
Signature:	
Additional Signature if required:	
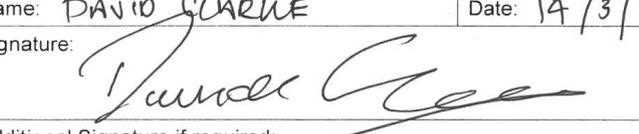
Name:	Date:
Signature:	

Please ensure the following are included with this form if applicable, tick box to indicate:

	Yes	No	N/A
Research proposal if prepared previously	☒	☐	☐
Any recruitment materials (e.g. posters, letters, etc.)	☐	☐	☒
Participant information sheet	☒	☐	☐
Participant consent form	☒	☐	☐
Details of measures to be used (e.g. questionnaires, etc.)	☒	☐	☐
Outline interview schedule / focus group schedule	☐	☐	☒
Debriefing materials	☐	☐	☒
Health and Safety Project Safety Plan for Procedures	☒	☐	☐
Data Management Plan*	☐	☒	

If you have not already done so, please send a copy of your Data management Plan to rdm@shu.ac.uk
It will be used to tailor support and make sure enough data storage will be available for your data.
Completed form to be sent to Relevant FREC. Contact details on the website.

Appendix B: SHUREC-2 Ethics Form 2

Sheffield Hallam University

APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL (SHUREC2A)

SECTION A

Important Note - If you have already written a research proposal (e.g. for a funder) that answers the methodology questions in this section please include a copy of the proposal and leave those questions blank. You **MUST** however complete **ALL** of Section B and C (risk assessment).

1.   **Name of principal investigator:** Mark Subryan

      Faculty: ACES

      Email address: Mark.G.Subryan@student.shu.ac.uk

2.   **Title of research:** Post-Leveson Journalism Ethics: Has there been changes or is it business as usual?

3.   **Supervisor** (if applicable): Dr. David Clarke

      Email address: david.clarke@shu.ac.uk

4.   **Proposal Tracking number** (applicable for externally funded research):   .

5.   **Other investigators (within or outside SHU)**

Title	Name	Post	Division	Organisation

6.   **Proposed duration of project**

      Start date: April 2016   **End Date:** May 2016

7.   **Location of research if outside SHU:**

8.   **Main purpose of research:**

      ☒ Educational qualification
      ☐ Publicly funded research
      ☐ Staff research project
      ☐ Other (Please supply details)

X

9.   Background to the study and scientific rationale (500 words approx.)

The history of United Kingdom tabloid journalism is synonymous with news of scandalous behaviour of the Royal Family, politicians and celebrities. In 1843, John Browne Belle recognised that scandal sells newspapers when he created News of the World based on the fictional Penny Dreadfuls that were popular in 18th century England (The Guardian 2011). Browne used titillating news to create the UK's best-selling newspaper of the era. The focus of the News of the World was clear from the outset and reflected in its motto: "All human life is there". Lord Northcliffe was the second tabloid pioneer when he created The Daily Mail in 1896 and The Daily Mirror in 1910. His vision of more sensationalistic news coverage was reflected in his mantra to journalists to write stories that were fewer than 200 words in length (BBC4 2007). While UK society accepted salacious coverage of celebrity lives, they revolted when The Guardian, in 2011, revealed unethical and illegal methods used by journalists to gather information about murder victims and their families. There was an "outpouring of anger towards the callous and cynical actions of these tabloid journalists and their bosses" (Reeves 2015, P. 65). Publication of alleged phone hacking methods by News of the World galvanised Prime Minister David Cameron to launch an inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press (Davies and Hill 2011; Leveson 2012). During the course of a year, the Leveson Inquiry received testimony from more than 700 sources (Leveson 2012).

Four years have passed since the inquiry, but what has been the impact on print journalism? Did the inquiry get to the heart of how journalists justify what they do? Have there been profound changes to the ethical landscape of journalism in post-Leveson UK or is it business as usual? This interview serves two purposes:

•   As part of the Qualitative Research 1 module I am taking as per agreement with my PhD supervisory team, one aspect of the interview will be used to produce a body of work required to pass the module in which students are required to interview a participant, and transcribe and analyse the interview;

•   The interview is also be used to pilot the semi-structured interview component of my overall PhD research.

This initial entry into the research is directed at interviewing a small demographic of print journalists. My goal is to interview between five and 10 early career journalists who graduated in 2012-13 or after and are working in print or online journalism in the UK. My rationale for focusing on such a concentrated sample is to gather data from journalists who started their careers after the Leveson Report was published in 2012. Logically, the 2012-13 graduating class would be the first cohort of journalists to be impacted by any possible newsroom changes related to journalistic ethics that would be implemented based on Leveson's recommendations. I anticipate I am examining a very small sample of journalists based on the factors I will use to approach these journalists. They must be recent graduates, working in the UK and working in print or online newsrooms.

I am choosing a phenomenological research path because phenomenology underpins qualitative research in which the researcher aims to understand and make meaning of experiences of participants from the field of journalism. It can also be noted that there are no immediate copyright issues with this body of research because the material is based on interviews prior to which the participants will sign a consent form in which they agree that information ascertained from the interviews will be used in the analytical and publication stages of the PhD. In line with my development as a PhD candidate, I undertook a seminar in intellectual property towards the end of 2015 and I am fully aware that, as a Vice Chancellor

Scholar, the intellectual property of my work is owned by Sheffield Hallam University while the copyright of the thesis is under my domain.

10. **Has the scientific / scholarly basis of this research been approved?** (For example by Research Degrees Subcommittee or an external funding body)

☐ Yes
☒ No - to be submitted
☐ Currently undergoing an approval process
☐ Irrelevant (e.g. there is no relevant committee governing this work)

11. **Main research questions**
How do early career journalists in the post-Leveson journalistic landscape understand their identity within the profession?
What role does best practices and newsroom interaction play in their overall professional lives?
Has the Leveson Inquiry had a direct or indirect impact on their professional identities?

12. **Summary of methods including proposed data analyses**
For this assignment, I will undertake a semi-structured interview with an early career journalist who has graduated from a university program in 2013 or later. The journalist must be working full-time, freelancing or a mixed employment agreement at a UK newspaper or online media website. I have created a series of questions that will delve into the journalist's rationale for choosing journalism as a career, how do they practise journalism and what dynamics are at play within the workplace environment as they relate to post-Leveson best practices.

SECTION B

1. **Describe the arrangements for selecting/sampling and briefing potential participants.** This should include copies of any advertisements for volunteers or letters to individuals/organisations inviting participation. The sample sizes with power calculations if appropriate should be included.
The main selection process for selecting participants will be done with the co-operation of the journalism faculty at Sheffield Hallam University. My demographic for this component of the research is early career practitioners who graduated in 2013 or later, are working full-time, part-time, freelance or any other agreed upon arrangement with a UK newspaper or online media organisation. Therefore, my supervisors and I agreed the best plan would be to consult the faculty for early participants and then use snowball sampling based on the recommendations of those participants to fill out the participant list. Ideally, for this qualitative research, I am aiming to interview five to 10 early career journalists at this stage of the research. Attached to this application are the participant information sheet and the participant consent form. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted on a one-to-one basis which will be audio recorded. I am currently consulting lecturers in the journalism faculty with the technical expertise and experience in order to determine the best and least invasive equipment in order to create ideal recordings for transcription while creating a conducive environment for the participants.

2. **What is the potential for participants to benefit from participation in the research?**

**** It has been five years since the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press. To the best of my knowledge, there has not been any research done into changes of best practices within newsroom or post-Leveson journalistic identity. Therefore, this research has the potential to provide greater insight and understanding of post-Leveson journalism which could provide new knowledge to help the industry as it continues to redefine itself following the phone hacking scandal. It will also other journalists in the field to question their own identities and practices based on the responses participants provide during the research and any possible newsroom ethnographies that could be conducted during the research year in 2017.

3. **Describe any possible negative consequences of participation in the research along with the ways in which these consequences will be limited.**
   There are two possibly negative consequences of participation

   First, the interviews can cause them to relive extremely negative parts of their professional lives when asked to identify occasions where they felt their best practices were lacking. Second, there is a potential that some journalists may use the interviews to provide comments that could be potentially damaging to their employers.

   In order to limit the the first incident, participants will be reminded that they have to refuse to respond to questions with which they are uncomfortable. In the second instance, part of the anonymity to the participants includes anonymity of their employers. The anonymity not only protects the participant from punishment from their employers, it also protects the employer from being identified by damaging information from the participant.

4. **Describe the arrangements for obtaining participants' consent.** This should include copies of the information that they will receive & written consent forms where appropriate. If children or young people are to be participants in the study details of the arrangements for obtaining consent from parents or those acting in *loco parentis* or as advocates should be provided.
   When a participant agrees to a meeting, he or she will be emailed copies of the participant information sheet and the participant consent form at least one week in advance of the interview. This will give them time to read through the information and contact me to seek clarification to anything with which they may be unfamiliar. On the day of the interview, the participant and I will go through the information sheet and then sign the consent together. Both of these forms are attached to this application.

5. **Describe how participants will be made aware of their right to withdraw from the research.** This should also include information about participants' right to withhold information and a reasonable time span for withdrawal should be specified.
   Right to withdraw from research will be outlined in the participant information sheet and consent form. I will also reiterate this at the interview.

6. **If your project requires that you work with vulnerable participants describe how you will implement safeguarding procedures during data collection.**
   Not applicable

7. **If Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are required, please supply details**
   Not applicable

8. **Describe the arrangements for debriefing the participants.** This should include copies of the information that participants will receive where appropriate.

**** Once I have conducted my interviews, I plan to transcribe them and then send them to the participants for them to verify the content for accuracy. I am cognisant that there is a potential for the content to be intercepted if sent to the incorrect email address or if the email is compromised. In order to remedy this, I have three options available to me: 1. To use my laptop's email program which I had encrypted during the Centre for Investigative Journalism conference last year; 2. From what I have been told in data management seminars, the university's Google Drive account each student has is encrypted. Google allows users to share components of the Drive with collaborators which can be used to share them with participants; 3. Using a secured Dropbox account could work in a similar manner to the Google Drive concept. In both of the Google Drive and Dropbox options, links to the sites will be sent via encrypted email. I believe these practices will help to secure the data from interception and protect anonymity of participants and their responses.

9. **Describe the arrangements for ensuring participant confidentiality.** This should include details of:
   - o   how data will be stored to ensure compliance with data protection legislation
   - o   how results will be presented
   - o   exceptional circumstances where confidentiality may not be preserved
   - o   how and when confidential data will be disposed of

Confidentiality will be achieved by assigning alphanumeric codes to each participant. In this stage of the research where I plan to interview up to 10 early career journalists, they will be identified as ECJ01 to ECJ10. In this way, there are no names used that could potentially reveal their identity to the public. I will be the only person who knows the true identity of each of the participants. During discussions with my supervisors, any data they will see will be attributed to the alphanumeric code that corresponds to the participant and not the participant's true identity.

Results are to be presented in three potential stages. First, it could be used as part of the makeup of the RF2 Confirmation of PhD stage of the PhD program which I plan to submit towards the end of 2016. Second, it will be used as part of the monographic PhD thesis which will be due in either late 2018 or early 2019 depending on any unforeseen obstacles between now and then. Finally, the data could be presented as findings at academic conferences in the UK or internationally.

In the event in which anonymity cannot be preserved, for example if the participant incriminates themselves or others, these matters will be subject to decisions made with the co-operation of my supervisors and the university's research ethics committee. It should also be noted that my director of studies David Clarke; second supervisor Lily Canter and I have extensive training in ethics guideliness, both the academic and journalistic related to the Independent Press Standards Organisation's Editors' Code of Practice and the Office of Communications ethics codes. We have the professional qualifications to identify and assess potential matters of ethical significance.

Initially, data will be stored on an encrypted, external hard drive during research and analysis. A copy will also be stored on the encrypted Q Drive available to researchers at the university. Once the PhD is completed, the data will be transferred to the Sheffield Hallam University Research Data Archive and stored and disposed of as per university terms and conditions.

10. **Are there any conflicts of interest in you undertaking this research?** (E.g. are you undertaking research on work colleagues or in an organisation where you are a consultant?) Please supply details of how this will be addressed.

There are no conflicts of interest of which I am aware. Although I am a former journalist, my professional career took place in Canada where media practices are different from the UK. While my hope is my former career will help me to build relationships with participants in order for them to provide me with richer data, I do not anticipate my career as a journalist as a detriment to the research that could provide any bias because the practices questioned in the Leveson Inquiry were never the practices in Canadian journalism.

11. **What are the expected outcomes, impacts and benefits of the research?**

The expected outcomes is that I will be able to provide new knowledge about the identity and practices of UK journalism in the post-Leveson media landscape. To the best of my knowledge at this point, no research of this nature has been conducted in the UK. While there has been research that critically examined the Leveson Inquiry, the knowledge gap appears to be in how journalists have been impacted by the Leveson Inquiry and Report. The impacts and benefits could be to help journalists understand their role in the profession and to society in order to make them more cognisant of the role they play as information gatekeepers and the responsibility of best practices in the ascertaining and dissemination of that information.

12. **Please give details of any plans for dissemination of the results of the research**

Dissemination of results from this research can take place is three components:

1. As part of the RF2 presentation/progression report which will be done toward the end of 2016;
2. As part of the monographic PhD thesis which will be due towards the end of 2018 and;
3. Potentially as part of conference presentations on findings in the UK or internationally.

SECTION C

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR THE RESEARCHER

1. **Will the proposed data collection take place on campus?**

   ☒ Yes (Please answer questions 4, 6 and 7)
   ☐ No (Please complete all questions)

2. **Where will the data collection take place?**
   (Tick as many as apply if data collection will take place in multiple venues)

Location	Please specify
☐ Researcher's Residence	
☒ Participant's Residence	**** If the participant is more comfortable in their home then this will be considered. While I don't anticipate objection to the university setting, future research could be conducted off-

☒   Education Establishment

site if the candidate does not live within a 50-mile radius of **** Hallam, for example, London, C3RI Cantor Building Sheffield Hallam University

☐   Other e.g. business/voluntary organisation, public venue

☐   Outside UK

3.   **How will you travel to and from the data collection venue?**

☐   On foot   ☐   By car   ☒   Public Transport
☐   Other (Please specify)

Please outline how you will ensure your personal safety when travelling to and from the data collection venue
**** If I am required to travel off-campus to conduct research, I will examine the health and safety guidelines with David Clarke and we will add this examination to the existing health and safety folder we have started for the purpose of the PhD research which can be made available upon request.

4.   **How will you ensure your own personal safety whilst at the research venue?**
My director of studies and I have consulted and filled in the forms for the health and safety, and lone work practices as part of the PhD process. These are available upon request.

5.   **If you are carrying out research off-campus, you must ensure that each time you go out to collect data you ensure that someone you trust knows where you are going (without breaching the confidentiality of your participants), how you are getting there (preferably including your travel route), when you expect to get back, and what to do should you not return at the specified time.** (See Lone Working Guidelines). Please outline here the procedure you propose using to do this.
In the event I have to conduct research off-campus, I will notify my supervisors of the date, time, location and mode of transport of these data-gathering events. On the day of the collection, I will email my director of studies to notify him that I am leaving and will also email again once I have completed the work within one hour to notify him that I have left the facility safely.

6.   **Are there any potential risks to your health and wellbeing associated with either (a) the venue where the research will take place and/or (b) the research topic itself?**

☒   None that I am aware of
☐   Yes (Please outline below)

7.   **Does this research project require a health and safety risk analysis for the procedures to be used?**

☐   Yes
☒   No

(If YES the completed Health and Safety Project Safety Plan for Procedures should be attached)

Adherence to SHU policy and procedures

Personal statement
I confirm that:
• this research will conform to the principles outlined in the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics policy
• this application is accurate to the best of my knowledge

Principal Investigator
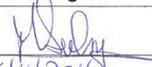
Signature	
Date 18/11/2016	

Supervisor (if applicable)

Signature	
Date 18/11/2016	

Other signature

Signature	
Date	

Please ensure the following are included with this form if applicable, tick box to indicate:

	Yes	No	N/A
Research proposal if prepared previously	☒	☐	☐
Any recruitment materials (e.g. posters, letters, etc.)	☐	☐	☒
Participant information sheet	☒	☐	☐
Participant consent form	☒	☐	☐
Details of measures to be used (e.g. questionnaires, etc.)	☒	☐	☐
Outline interview schedule / focus group schedule	☐	☐	☒
Debriefing materials	☐	☐	☒
Health and Safety Project Safety Plan for Procedures	☒	☐	☐

Appendix C: Complete ethics clearance

Dear Mark,

Post-Leveson Journalism Ethics: Has there been changes or is it business as usual?

Your application for ethics approval was considered at the last meeting of the FREC. The Committee felt that all ethical issues have been properly addressed so your application is approved.

Good luck with your research,

Kind regards,

Marcos A Rodrigues
FREC Joint Chair

Marcos A Rodrigues, BEng, MSc, PhD
Professor of Computer Science

Sheffield Hallam University | GMPR Geometric Modelling and Pattern Recognition Research Group

Cantor Building room 9101
153 Arundel Street, Sheffield S1 2NU, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 114 225 6911 or +44 (0) 1482 843 617
https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-us/our-people/staff-profiles/marcos-rodrigues
http://www.shu.ac.uk/gmpr

Appendix D: Participant information sheet

You are invited to participate in a PhD research project which will examine journalist identity and newsroom practices in Post-Leveson UK. I am a PhD candidate at Sheffield Hallam University in Sheffield, UK. My supervisory team consists of Director of Studies Dr David Clarke, First Supervisor Dr Kathy Doherty and Second Supervisor Dr Lily Canter. This component of my research has been approved by the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee (SHUREC).

You have been selected based on the following criteria:

• You graduated from a collegial, undergraduate or postgraduate journalism program in the UK in 2013 or later;

• You work in print or online journalism and;

• You are currently employed in the United Kingdom.

Your obligation to this research will be to participate in a semi-structured interview that will require you to outline your experiences as an early career journalist, professional practice, codes of conduct and ethics. By semi-structured, what I mean is I have a pre-existing list of questions but I may ask other questions not in my list if I want to explore or delve deeper into a response you supply.

This interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes at a location and time of your choosing. While I expect this to be a one-time interview, later on while transcribing your interview, if there is something I need clarification about, I may contact you by telephone or email. You have certain rights as underpinned by the university's ethics committee, the Nuremburg Code, the Declaration of Helsinki:

• You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without explanation;

• Should you choose to withdraw, you can request any data collected to be destroyed;

• You have the right to refuse to answer any questions that is asked of you;

• If you have any questions at any point in your participation, or before or after, you can contact me or any member of my supervisory team at the contact information supplied at the end of this information sheet. Your confidentiality is taken very seriously and is underpinned by university ethics codes and UK and European statue. Under the university's confidentiality codes, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Right to Privacy Act Article 8:

• All research participants will be given full anonymity;

• Your name will not be used anywhere in the research. You will be identified by a yet-to-be determined coding system.

Once your interview has been completed, I will transcribe it from the recordings and the data will be stored on an encrypted Q Drive specially created for Sheffield Hallam University's research students. This disk space will only be accessible to me. Once coding has occurred, any discussions of the data and/or analysis with my supervisory team will be done under anonymity in which you will be referred to by the identifier code instead of your name. As PhD candidates, part of our mandate is to present the most recent researches at conferences. Any findings and analysis I present will be done with complete anonymity to you. You will either be referred to by the identifier code or not at all depending on the context of the presentation. Once the PhD has been completed, the university will store any data in a secured data archive for a period of their choosing. For more information on the university's data protection policy, go to www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics/data-managementpolicy.html.

Thank you for your co-operation in this research. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me or any member of my supervisory team at the contact details listed below.

<div align="right">

Mark Subryan
PhD Candidate
Sheffield Hallam University

</div>

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Director of Studies
Dr David Clarke

First Supervisor
Dr Kathy Doherty

Second
Supervisor
Dr Lily Canter

Appendix E: Participant information sheet

Contemporary journalism: How UK multimedia

journalists

perceive their practice and identity

You are invited to participate in a PhD research project which will examine journalist identity

and newsroom practices in Post-Leveson UK. I am a PhD candidate at Sheffield Hallam University in Sheffield, UK. My supervisory team consists of Director of Studies Dr David Clarke, First Supervisor Dr Kathy Doherty and Second Supervisor Dr Lily Canter. This component of my research has been approved by the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee (SHUREC).

You have been selected based on the following criteria:

• You have been employed as a journalist prior to the mid-2000s;

• At some point in your career you worked either in print (newspapers and/or magazines)

and/or online journalism;

• You work or have worked in print or online journalism and;

• You are or were employed in the United Kingdom.

Your obligation to this research will be to participate in a semi-structured interview that will

require you to outline your experiences as a journalist, professional practice, codes of conduct and ethics. By semi-structured, what I mean is I have a pre-existing list of questions but I may ask other questions not in my list if I want to explore or delve deeper into a response you supply. This interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes at a location and time of your choosing. While I expect this to be a one-time interview, later on while transcribing your interview, if there is something I need clarification about, I may contact you by telephone or email. Once I have transcribed interviews, a transcript will be sent to you to ensure that what is written reflects your thoughts, opinions, and experiences.

You have certain rights as underpinned by the university's ethics committee, the Nuremburg

Code, the Declaration of Helsinki:

• You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without explanation;

• Should you choose to withdraw, you can request any data collected to be destroyed;

• You have the right to refuse to answer any questions that is asked of you;

• If you have any questions at any point in your participation, or before or after, you can contact

me or any member of my supervisory team at the contact information supplied at the end of

this information sheet.

Your confidentiality is taken very seriously and is underpinned by university ethics codes and

UK and European statue. Under the university's confidentiality codes, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Right to Privacy Act Article 8:

All research participants will be given full anonymity;

• Your name will not be used anywhere in the research. You will be identified by a yet-to-be determined coding system.

Once your interview has been completed, I will transcribe it from the recordings and the data will be stored on an encrypted Q Drive specially created for Sheffield Hallam University's research students. This disk space will only be accessible to me. Once coding has occurred, any discussions of the data and/or analysis with my supervisory team will be done under anonymity in which you will be referred to by the identifier code instead of your name. As PhD candidates, part of our mandate is to present the most recent researches at conferences. Any findings and analysis I present will be done with complete anonymity to you. You will either be referred to by the identifier code or not at all depending on the context of the presentation. Once the PhD has been completed, the university will store any data in a secured data archive for a period of their choosing. For more information on the university's data protection policy, go to www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics/data-managementpolicy.html.

Thank you for your co-operation in this research. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me or any member of my supervisory team at the contact details listed below.

<div style="text-align: right">

Mark Subryan
PhD Candidate
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Director of Studies
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First Supervisor
Dr Kathy Doherty

Second
Supervisor
Dr Lily Canter

Appendix F: Semi-structured questions

Exploratory questions related to journalist identity
1a. Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?
1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?
1c. How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?
1d. Why did you want to become a journalist?
1e. What does journalism mean to you?
1f. What are the main roles of a journalist?

1g. How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?
1h. In the ongoing debate of journalism being a trade or a profession, which side do you take? Why?
1i. Is there anyone in journalism who inspires you and, if so, why?
1j. What are your career goals?

Leveson Inquiry
2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

•Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

•How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

•What is your understanding of the public interest?

•What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for? Praised for?

•How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

•What is your understanding of the public interest?

2b. Thinking back to your student years around 2011 and 2012, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry as they unfolded?
•How much emphasis was placed in your journalism modules with relation to ethics and regulation?

•Have you received special training on the editors' code of conduct?

•On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

Your journalistic practice in newsroom environment
3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?
3b. How did that make you feel?
Newsroom practices
4a. What is a news story?
•What are the ground rules of how news is defined?

•Is there a clear list of what sorts of stories your newsroom is interested in?

4b. What kind of stories do you write?
•Are you given stories to pursue?

•How much emphasis is placed on journalists generating their own story ideas?

4c. In what ways have social media and web-based journalism impacted what is meant by news in your newsroom?
•Is there a significant focus by senior staff on web analytics?

•How much impact do those have on the direction of news within the newsroom?

4d. How much emphasis is placed on journalists covering courts and council meetings?
4e. What do you write about?
•Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?
•There have been instances where errors have been "edited into copy" during the production phase? Has this ever happened to any of your stories? How was the situation dealt with?

Appendix G: Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct

The Code – including this preamble and the public interest exceptions below – sets the framework for the highest professional standards that members of the press subscribing to the Independent Press Standards Organisation have undertaken to maintain. It is the cornerstone of the system of voluntary self-regulation to which they have made a binding contractual commitment. It balances both the rights of the individual and the public's right to know.

To achieve that balance, it is essential that an agreed Code be honoured not only to the letter, but in the full spirit. It should be interpreted neither so narrowly as to compromise its commitment to respect the rights of the individual, nor so broadly that it infringes the fundamental right to freedom of expression – such as to inform, to be partisan, to challenge, shock, be satirical and to entertain – or prevents publication in the public interest.

It is the responsibility of editors and publishers to apply the Code to editorial material in both printed and online versions of their publications. They should take care to ensure it is observed rigorously by all editorial staff and external contributors, including non-journalists.

Editors must maintain in-house procedures to resolve complaints swiftly and, where required to do so, co- operate with IPSO. A publication subject to an adverse adjudication must publish it in full and with due prominence, as required by IPSO.

1. Accuracy

i) The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.

ii) A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected, promptly and with due prominence, and — where appropriate — an apology published. In cases involving IPSO, due prominence should be as required by the regulator.

iii) A fair opportunity to reply to significant inaccuracies should be given, when reasonably called for.

iv) The Press, while free to editorialise and campaign, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.

v) A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless an agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.

2. *Privacy

i) Everyone is entitled to respect for his or her private and family life, home, health and correspondence, including digital communications.

ii) Editors will be expected to justify intrusions into any individual's private life without consent. In considering an individual's reasonable expectation of privacy,

account will be taken of the complainant's own public disclosures of information and the extent to which the material complained about is already in the public domain or will become so.

iii) It is unacceptable to photograph individuals, without their consent, in public or private places where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.

3. *Harassment

i) Journalists must not engage in intimidation, harassment or persistent pursuit.

ii) They must not persist in questioning, telephoning, pursuing or photographing individuals once asked to desist; nor remain on property when asked to leave and must not follow them. If requested, they must identify themselves and whom they represent.

iii) Editors must ensure these principles are observed by those working for them and take care not to use non-compliant material from other sources.

4. Intrusion into grief or shock

In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively. These provisions should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

5. *Reporting Suicide

When reporting suicide, to prevent simulative acts care should be taken to avoid excessive detail of the method used, while taking into account the media's right to report legal proceedings.

6. *Children

i) All pupils should be free to complete their time at school without unnecessary intrusion.

ii) They must not be approached or photographed at school without permission of the school authorities.

iii) Children under 16 must not be interviewed or photographed on issues involving their own or another child's welfare unless a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult consents.

iv) Children under 16 must not be paid for material involving their welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child's interest.

v) Editors must not use the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life.

7. *Children in sex cases

The press must not, even if legally free to do so, identify children under 16 who are victims or witnesses in cases involving sex offences. In any press report of a case involving a sexual offence against a child -

i) The child must not be identified.

ii) The adult may be identified.

iii) The word "incest" must not be used where a child victim might be identified.

iv) Care must be taken that nothing in the report implies the relationship
between the accused and the child.

8. *Hospitals

i) Journalists must identify themselves and obtain permission from a responsible executive before entering non-public areas of hospitals or similar institutions to pursue enquiries.

ii) The restrictions on intruding into privacy are particularly relevant to enquiries about individuals in hospitals or similar institutions.

9. *Reporting of Crime

i) Relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime should not generally be identified without their consent, unless they are genuinely relevant to the story.

ii) Particular regard should be paid to the potentially vulnerable position of children under the age of 18 who witness, or are victims of, crime. This should not restrict the right to report legal proceedings.

iii) Editors should generally avoid naming children under the age of 18 after arrest for a criminal offence but before they appear in a youth court unless they can show that the individual's name is already in the public domain, or that the individual (or, if they are under 16, a custodial parent or similarly responsible adult) has given their consent. This does not restrict the right to name juveniles who appear in a crown court, or whose anonymity is lifted.

10. *Clandestine devices and subterfuge

i) The press must not seek to obtain or publish material acquired by using hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices; or by intercepting private or mobile telephone calls, messages or emails; or by the unauthorised removal of documents or photographs; or by accessing digitally-held information without consent.

ii) Engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge, including by agents or intermediaries, can generally be justified only in the public interest and then only when the material cannot be obtained by other means.

11. Victims of sexual assault

The press must not identify or publish material likely to lead to the identification of a victim of sexual assault unless there is adequate justification and they are legally free to do so.

12. Discrimination

i) The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's, race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.

ii) Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story.

13. Financial journalism

i) Even where the law does not prohibit it, journalists must not use for their own profit financial information they receive in advance of its general publication, nor should they pass such information to others.

ii) They must not write about shares or securities in whose performance they know that they or their close families have a significant financial interest without disclosing the interest to the editor or financial editor.

iii) They must not buy or sell, either directly or through nominees or agents, shares or securities about which they have written recently or about which they intend to write in the near future.

14. Confidential sources

Journalists have a moral obligation to protect confidential sources of information.

15. Witness payments in criminal trials

i) No payment or offer of payment to a witness – or any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness – should be made in any case once proceedings are active as defined by the Contempt of Court Act 1981. This prohibition lasts until the suspect has been freed unconditionally by police without charge or bail or the proceedings are otherwise discontinued; or has entered a guilty plea to the court; or, in the event of a not guilty plea, the court has announced its verdict.

*ii) Where proceedings are not yet active but are likely and foreseeable, editors must not make or offer payment to any person who may reasonably be expected to be called as a witness, unless the information concerned ought demonstrably to be published in the public interest and there is an over-riding need to make or promise payment for this to be done; and all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure no financial dealings influence the evidence those witnesses give. In no circumstances should such payment be conditional on the outcome of a trial.

*iii) Any payment or offer of payment made to a person later cited to give evidence in proceedings must be disclosed to the prosecution and defence. The witness must be advised of this requirement.

16. *Payment to criminals

i) Payment or offers of payment for stories, pictures or information, which seek to exploit a particular crime or to glorify or glamorise crime in general, must not be made directly or via agents to convicted or confessed criminals or to their associates – who may include family, friends and colleagues.

ii) Editors invoking the public interest to justify payment or offers would need to demonstrate that there was good reason to believe the public interest would be served. If, despite payment, no public interest emerged, then the material should not be published.

The Public Interest

There may be exceptions to the clauses marked * where they can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

1. The public interest includes, but is not confined to:

Detecting or exposing crime, or the threat of crime, or serious impropriety.

Protecting public health or safety.

Protecting the public from being misled by an action or statement of an individual or organisation.

Disclosing a person or organisation's failure or likely failure to comply with any obligation to which they are subject.

Disclosing a miscarriage of justice.

Raising or contributing to a matter of public debate, including serious cases of impropriety, unethical conduct or incompetence concerning the public.

Disclosing concealment, or likely concealment, of any of the above.

2. There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself.

3. The regulator will consider the extent to which material is already in the public domain or will become so.

4. Editors invoking the public interest will need to demonstrate that they reasonably believed publication - or journalistic activity taken with a view to

publication – would both serve, and be proportionate to, the public interest and explain how they reached that decision at the time.

5. An exceptional public interest would need to be demonstrated to over-ride the normally paramount interests of children under 16.

Appendix H: Participant profiles

Senior journalists

Alistair

Alistair is a freelance journalist who worked his way up from trainee reporter with an extensive background in news agency and regional journalism and a small amount of time spent on national media before becoming a freelancer. When he was young, Alistair aspired to be a journalist after watching *All The President's Men,* the seminal film about how Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein collapsed the Nixon administration with the Watergate scandal. A must-see film for aspiring journalists, Alistair's motivation, based on the film, represents an idealist view of what he felt journalism meant. The idea of toppling corruption at the highest level can be viewed as an idealist one underpinned by the fourth estate function of journalism. Later in his career, Alistair shifted to freelance because he did not want to be tied to an office desk. This action represents a more realist, somewhat cynical, view of the world. The observation to be made in this account is Alistair viewed more autonomy as a sign of success. As a freelancer, he dictates his hours, what he writes, for whom he writes, and when he writes.

Ben

From a progression perspective, Ben was the most accomplished journalist from both groups. After starting in regional news, he progressed to political editor then up the hierarchical structure of the regional news ladder before leaving to take up a senior position at a news agency. Ben's account demonstrates he firmly believes in the democratic process and the role of fourth estate by the media. He provided a unique perspective, among the participants, about public mistrust in journalism. While he began his response by pointing out the usual complaints the public has of the press, he opted to respond within the context of political journalism where he was accused by the Conservatives of being pro-Labour and by Labour of being pro-Conservative. Although he categorised this as mistrust, he also took this criticism as a badge of honour. The fact that both major parties accused him of bias towards the other side was a sign to Ben that he was on the right path. Ben took the phone hacking personally as a means of allowing the public to attack journalism further. He believed his career was dedicated to making journalism better and more trustworthy, but felt his work was for nothing because of the actions of the phone hackers.

Clara

Clara is a unique individual among the journalists who participated in this research. While most have some form of base education in journalism, Clara's education is in law but also complemented by a postgraduate degree in investigative journalism which situates her among the most highly educated of the participants. Her career path has been on a higher trajectory than most and her progression has been different. With the exception of the B2B journalist and the broadcaster from the early career group, the rest of the participants in both groups started in smaller publications and worked their way to regionals and beyond to nationals. Clara's path has always been in investigative journalism because of her early belief in the public interest role of journalism in western democratic society. She believes that journalism as a component of democracy, conducted in the fourth estate, is the most important form of journalism. Therefore her career has been situated in national and international publications.

Grace

Grace's has a strong allegiance to the newspaper union. Much of her practice and identity relies on her identity as a union member. She sees that membership as a support system for when she feels she needs to challenge direction from her superiors which she believes she is empowered to do in a newsroom with a strong unionist identity. She is a very traditional journalist in the sense that she believes in established values of the profession, such as having a healthy dose of scepticism when it comes to what sources tell her about events. She questions the gains sources need from having certain information divulged to the press. She views younger journalists as being too reliant upon PR agencies and taking what has been told them at face value. This is informed by her experiences as a trainee when her work was scrutinised by editors and senior colleagues, something she believes has been lost because of the shrinking newsroom room. Today's newsrooms do not have the resources to challenge trainees because of the demise of sub-editors, fact checkers, and proof readers.

Jamie

Of all the participants in my research, Jamie's experiences were the most contentious. He, along with a handful of his colleagues, were turned over to the Crown Prosecution Services to face trial for paying sources for information, a charge he never denied and one from which he was acquitted. During his career with a national tabloid, Jamie worked in a northern bureau before being moved to London where he progressed to the position of deputy editor before stepping back to become a bureau reporter in eastern England. Jamie uses a significant amount of separation to make sense of his identity as a tabloid news journalist. When asked about the unethical practices often associated with tabloid reporting, Jamie distances himself from the practice by talking about how those practices are more associated with gossip writers

rather than the news journalists. Despite the hegemonic view of unethical practices at tabloids, Jamie believed that his identity as a news journalist, made him as legitimate a journalist as a broadsheet journalist.

John

John was a retired journalist who spent his entire career working in regional journalism. The main thing that stands out in John's interview is his use of the term "provincial journalist" to describe what he did. The phrase connotes a sense of sophistication, which provides deep insight into John's identity as a journalist. The term conveys a sense of not getting one's hands dirty on the job while holding a highly regarded sense of self. It's similar to the term "gentleman farmer". According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a gentleman farmer is defined as a person who owns a farm for pleasure rather than income. It can be construed, as well, as a person who does not do the farm work. Throughout his interview, there are signs how this assessment has contributed to John's identity, such as him not considering himself a normal journalist. Instead of waiting to have something assigned to him or writing for a specialism, John preferred to go out and find his stories. This sense of autonomy serves as cultural capital for John. Because he worked as a columnist, John was happy be exempt from the normative tasks of journalists. Another key aspect for John is having a news instinct. He contextualised this by outline three types of journalists: those who can write but has no nose for news, those who cannot write but have a nose for news, and; those who can write and have a nose for news.

Steven

Cultural capital and class structure play significant roles in how Steven perceived his journalistic identity. Having worked for two national tabloids, Steven's career was dominated by working at this level. Cultural capital and class structure play a prominent role in how Steven makes sense of his journalistic practice and professional identity. An important memory for Steven was when he called his father, a former market trader in East London, to tell him he was hired by a national tabloid. The context used by Steven was to situate his experience in terms of who his father was: a market trader in South London which suggests working class. He also states that if he were to be hired by reputable organisations, such as the BBC which do not resonate with the working class, his father most likely would not have expressed as much excitement as he got for being hired by a tabloid. This is further contextualised by Steven's account of how his father and his friends would seek information about boxing matches directly from the tabloids. This anecdote set the tone for Steven's experiences of journalism in terms of the politicised nature of class struggles manifesting themselves in his journalism practice.

Vicki is a regional journalist and she first contextualises this when providing an account of public perception. She separates herself from national journalists by stating regional journalists are held to a higher standard than national journalists which suggests an investment in the community. Because they are immersed in the community, there is an emotional bond with the people that does not exist at the national level where journalists swoop in, get the story, and leave. While she makes that separation, she is aware than not all regional journalists think this way. She examines the concept of door stepping where journalists visit people at their most vulnerable but puts the practice into perspective by stating regional journalists employ sensitivity and empathy where national journalists would not. Accuracy is paramount for Vicki because she believes there is a lot of misinformation in the public domain but she believes the public appreciates journalism that aims for accuracy. She does believe the public is misinformed about the media and label all journalists with the same negative tag based on what they see occurring at the national level. Vicki takes time to explain to the difference between the regional and national press but still sees the misinformation when people believe all journalists pay for stories.

Early career journalists

Adam

Adam works on a daily newspaper in Northern England as a news reporter with aspirations to become a sport reporter. Much of his motivations as a journalist are underpinned by his desire to work in sports. He has a firm understanding that, in order to get to the sports desk, he must progress which is accomplished by working on the news desk in an effort to get a good grounding in journalism practice. He was one of the first journalists interviewed who went through the NCTJ-approved college route where journalism students undertake an intensive, six to eight-month program to become certified to practise journalism in the United Kingdom. Currently, Adam is working towards what he terms his NQJ which is the qualification to become a senior journalist and entails having a portfolio of stories that cover a broad cross-section of journalism. By achieving this qualification, Adam feels it will put him in a stronger position in terms of moving closer to his goal of becoming a sport reporter.

Ian

Ian was one of three of the 10 early career journalists who did not have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in journalism. He studied a BA in English literature and pursued journalism via the NCTJ college route which is a labour intensive eight-month program. Although Ian's goal was to become a sport journalist,

his entry into journalism started as a news reporter. Although he did not work during the pre-Leveson era, interaction with senior journalists gives him an understanding of how journalism was practised and contextualises the post-Leveson practice. From the information shared by senior colleagues, Ian concludes journalism is much more difficult because of structures in place by outside sources as a means of protection. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that all of the early career participants have a similar informed knowledge based on interaction with senior colleagues because of the interactive nature of the newsroom, which is more evident in how the senior journalist participants make sense of newsroom culture.

Jack

Jack is one of two participants who does not work in newspaper journalism. He works for a major broadcaster with a focus on online, TV and news which directs its news to a more worldwide audience. He believes the prestige behind the name of his employer means more sophistication and professionalism in practice. He highlights the fact that no story is published or broadcast without at least a second source which suggests a commitment to balanced and accuracy journalism. There is a very definitive way in which news is selected and covered at the organisation. Jack had a bit of trouble conceptualising the public interest but that could be down to his understanding being public interest is subjective rather than objective, therefore, he had difficulty conceptualising an all-encompassing definition for public interest.

There is a contrast in Jack's career aspirations. On one hand, he had recently moved onto his dream position, but he still had aspirations within that job. On the macro level, securing employment at the broadcaster was his goal which he has achieved. But on a more micro level, what he wants to do is still a real goal in terms of working at major events such as the European Football Championship, the World Cup or the Olympics. The overall impressions I have of Jack is he is focussed and has a good understanding of himself as a journalist and what he wants to accomplish. Unlike other interviews, the semi-structured interview went in a different direction because some of the questions were not relevant to him. His demeanour is one of calm and confidence and forwardly focussed.

Katarina

Katarina is the second of the three participants whose undergraduate degree was not journalism. Initially, she had no intentions of becoming a journalist but having to do a placement for a university module made her realise this was the ideal profession for her. Katarina's comprehension of journalism is in terms of the public interest and education. In her experience, journalism's function is to raise awareness of issues that the public may not know exist or to educate the public on processes and practices that are not immediately evident. For example, the way in which she contextualises her relationship with the public is that she believes the public does not understand journalistic practice or capable of paradigm shifts. She also is a believer in the open

justice system, but does not believe most people understand it. There is empathy in way in which Katarina practises journalism. She draws upon her family's background as psychiatric nurses when she covers court and the defendant has mental health issues. This manifests itself when she wrestles with ethical dilemmas related to court stories involving people with mental illnesses.

Martha

Similar to Jack, Martha's journalistic experience is not traditional. She writes for a business to business (B2B) trade publication that sometimes publishes articles to its website that are available to the public. She describes her publication as the "BBC of the health industry" which suggests the organisation receives a high level of respect from its audience. She is about three years into her career and has an awareness of what she wants to do and what she thinks about her form of journalism. One of the key things she highlighted in the interview was the almost equal hierarchical structure of the newsroom. Even though they have an editor and managing editor at the top of the chain, each journalist has expertise in certain areas which balances the newsroom.

Mickey

Mickey's interview was probably the most insightful of the early career journalists. In terms of years of experience, Mickey had to most at the time of interview with three years. Although his interview started with short responses, he opened up when asked for his impressions of the Leveson Inquiry. The question worked as a trigger for him to turn the interview into a confessional where he provided in-depth details of his bad experiences working as a news agency journalist where tabloid newspapers would bypass the chain of command to exert pressure on him to conduct questionable practices such as subterfuge or asking questions until he got a response they wanted. He stated that the experience helped to reaffirm his moral compass and make him realise that his aspiration to become a tabloid journalist was not the best use of his skills.

Polly

Polly is the third participant who completed a BA in English before doing the intensive NCTJ program. Unlike the other participants, Polly had insider knowledge of journalism because her older brother is a journalist. She works in a small regional newsroom and had been employed full-time since 2015. She was a trainee at the time of the interview in late 2016, working towards her NQJ qualification with the goal of becoming a court reporter. Similar to other participants in this group, Polly had a rudimentary understanding of the Leveson Inquiry based solely on what she learned in the NCTJ program. Although her knowledge of the inquiry was limited, her understanding of the impact was more substantial as contextualised by her experiences of dealing with a more rigid bureaucratic structure especially when reporting on

emergency services and government. She is forced to go through official channels to gather information instead of being able to call a contact. For Polly, this bureaucratic structure has a trickle-down effect because, when she is not able to get the information she needs, the public's perception is that it is Polly who has been practising lazy journalism which further bolsters the mistrust in the press. Similar to others in the group, the experience Polly is trying to convey is the public is misinformed and prefers to draw conclusions based on part of the evidence without considering her version of events.

Rory

Rory went the route of the NCTJ program but also did a journalism degree. Rory's approach to journalism reflects the mythologisation of journalism (Dahlgren, 1992) in terms of motivation being the Fourth Estate identity of journalists as the overseers of government. Rory's road to journalism began at his grandmother's house where he read newspapers at a young age. He sees himself as the voice of the voiceless and uses strong discourse to make this point, such as "holding authority to account" or "keeping their feet to the fire". Rory has a difficult time defining the roles of a journalist which is most likely due to the phenomenological nature of the experience of journalism. Rory contextualises success in journalism in terms of geography. When asked what his career aspirations are, he mentions wanting to end up working in either London or Manchester, the UK's two main media markets.

Rose

Although Rose was the least experienced of the journalists in the early career participant group, she had the most to say. She chose to reflect upon several key relationships she has with journalism, the public, the public interest, and her editors. There is a sense of emotional detachment journalists go through. They tend to learn not to get emotionally involved in their stories, but may still be passionate about journalism. While being a new journalist, Rose's experiences demonstrate she has this quality as contextualised by her experiences of death knocks where she replaces feeling badly for the grieving family with an understanding that knocking on doors of families of the deceased is a normal part of her daily work. Even when she was lamenting about some of the examples where she felt the public accused her of unethical practices that had come to be characteristic of journalism in the pre-phone hacking era, she appeared to be motivated by the distrust as a challenge to be a more ethical journalist. In the early part of any career, there is an optimistic sense that people's experience will be different from what others have experienced in the profession.

Susan

As a newspaper editor, Susan holds the highest position within journalism's hierarchy among the early career journalists. The initial impression this conveys is that there is an added layer in terms of how she contextualises her professional identity; not only from the perspective of the challenges of a young journalist, but also that of an editor in a small weekly newsroom. From this perspective, two key relationships for Susan are the one she has with her newsroom and the one she has with the public. She has an ongoing negotiation with the practice and identity of journalists as a component of how she understands journalism in smaller communities.

Appendix I: Early career journalist transcripts

Adam

1a. Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?

So I went to university and did an undergraduate at [name redacted] in sports journalism and media degree … 3-year degree. I finished that in 2012. And then I freelanced before doing the NCTJ course in 2015. So 2-1/2, 3 years between finishing at [name redacted] and starting at [name redacted].

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

Yeah full time

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?

Ah (pause) freelance quite a few. So this is the only full-time job I've had in journalism. Before that I was freelancing at the local newspaper group. I freelanced at match … football match websites, national newspapers and, ahm, sports agencies, one or two sports agencies. So quite busy ahm you know in terms of the work that I have to do. That was all freelance. That was just, you know, not in contract jobs in terms of full time.

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

Ahm well I wanted to go for the sports angle. I still do. Ah my passion is sport and, like I said, I did the course at school in sports journalism and, yeah, that's the end goal to be working in sport, you know, every day.

1d. What does journalism mean to you?

Ah it means a lot. It's what I do every day. Day in, day out. And, it's interesting as well how it's come on in terms of how it's embraced, you know, digital media and how digital has taken it on board as well. And you're competing, especially in print … in the newspaper … you're competing constantly but you've got to embrace new technology or you're just forgotten.

What are the main roles of a journalist?

To be impartial is the most important, you know, to a lot of people. Even yesterday, you know, with the Trump news, you know, slamming Trump and whatnot. The thing is, you're not involved with it but you get away with it. I don't think you can have too strongly an opinion. You know, even in my personal case I would go … in terms of sport … I support a certain team I don't go out of my way to, you know, brag about that. I could easily report on my rivals I've got no problem with that. You know, with impartiality.

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

Hmmm since college did you say or university (ah, both because you did journalism twice) yeah, ahm, yeah I think for the first part, you know, the university that's the sports one I don't think that's changed knowing what you're going into but in terms of the college course I think it put you in good stead but not really. I had the

benefit of working in industry before I think that probably help me. I think I'm not well placed to answer that. I think that … yeah … the course is like a dummy run for what you will expect

1f. Is there anyone in journalism who inspires you and, if so, why?

Yeah, in terms of broadcasting obviously the BBC they're always ahead of the game. And obviously impartiality is massive for them. In the print I have no preference I do like to read print I always try and buy a paper everyday So I always differentiate I don't stick to just one. I like to read local newspapers especially if I go to a new city or whatnot. The other… two weekends ago I had been in different cities so I picked up their, their daily paper. Just … just … I think you learn more if you read different stuff but my personal preference is either regionals or the I newspaper or the Times I think they're both well-constructed. The I especially is, you know, that's probably the most unbiased paper in terms of how it reports on stuff.

1g. What are your career goals?

Well I currently, obviously during the week I work in news, ahm, and then weekends I still freelance reporting on matches so that's good because, you know, it gets you out for a start. It keeps myself in the sport element of it, ah, going forward, once I become senior going towards the exam period when you take senior exams to become senior journalists well that's it in terms of exams. You don't really have any more grading. So once I've got that I'm definitely going to move back into sport. Probably on a local sports desk. I don't know … you never know. I might want to go into TV you know, something like that. I wouldn't want to go radio because it doesn't really appeal to me. I think I'm better with either words or maybe TV I'm not too sure. But a local sports desk would be my preference going forward.

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

Obviously that was, uh, a breakthrough… a ground-breaking event that alerted people to some of the practices that were going on. Obviously, the majority of it was in London, you know, the big national titles but I think it just … it makes people be more cautious and, you know double check what you're doing is morally right, ethically right, etc. Ah we have Ipso training we have modules … I'm doing one today actually. Ahm, where you have to go through to ensure you know what you're doing is morally and ethically right. So I think it's good in that it's brought stuff out obviously with all the stuff that came out that I think, on the whole,

Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

Not really no it was a few years ago and I started in May. I think just having standards and having to do everything by the book which people should be doing anyway. Just make sure you have that thought process where you think twice, you know, before you say something, etc. I don't know think twice before you do things a certain way. But it's good in a way they've done that then people are more cautious.

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

Ahm. I'm not too sure really. I think yeah probably some people never liked journalists some people probably don't, you know, ah, don't have much trust for them.

I think it's very different locally. When we do a thing where we go out … I used to do it I don't do it now but we go out and do a vox pop on a Friday. You know, just go out and ask a generic question and get five people on the street to just answer it and some of the … I think I did it for a couple of months and I think only once I got an answer … you know people ignore you or say I'm too busy … only once did somebody you know said ah something about journalism so that is few and far between. I like to think more nationally you're going to get that especially when a big issue happens locally like a scandal happens and some of the nationals would never turn up and the perception of the from some people is not – is not great.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

The public interest? What you mean in terms of (one of the big themes of Leveson was this idea of the public interest) Yeah, ok. Well the whole thing with Cliff Richard obviously he got…police had a warrant to, ah, search his house in regard to some historic allegations and the BBC, I think they live streamed it or something live broadcast it. Obviously that isn't public interest it was an allegation it's not been proved guilty. He's not been charged or anything ah so stuff like that Was it an interest? If he was a nobody just a 70-year-old man probably not. But there were all sorts of legal loopholes and legal issues with that so … I think he sued them actually. In terms of that … yeah. Obviously there's the Ipso code to adhere to which is stuff in the public interest. If someone's kid … celebrity kid was out in public with them is that in public interest? No. We've got to follow that code

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for?

Ahm in terms of the national media? (yes and in terms of your own experience) Personally I don't think we get that many criticisms to be honest with you. A big one is court stuff, you know, people that don't understand it and say you can't print that when we can because it's been said in court providing there's been no orders placed on it. So we can print their names, what happened what was said etc. Sometimes we get a gripe about that but once you explain it they do understand So that's not really criticism of a person that's them criticising the practice. Ah nationally you've got the guy who got those names … who got … in the Tulisa case. He got sent down didn't he? The undercover sheikh He was a Sun journalist. That kind of thing will have a lot of impact on the industry. Like I say a lot this stuff happens at the nationals. It's rarely you'll see a local reporter get caught up in stuff like that but it does happen

Praised for?

Obviously there's numerous awards and scoops and stuff like that Locally there is a lot of praise. We've got praised for the Hillsborough Coverage there was a lot of praise for that especially for reporters from Liverpool and Sheffield … stuff like that. Most of the time you don't hear about it. But if we do a mistake or an error that's when people tend to ring you up.

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

Yeah very aware. I follow the editors' code and Ipso that's always in the back of my mind. Having to do stuff properly and best practices, for instance, everything to do with children … if we do a picture in school, just double check can we use this

definitely can we use the names. Stuff like court obviously you check if there's any orders on. Just little things like just going through everything with a fine tooth comb just making sure there's nothing you can get tripped up on.

How much emphasis was placed in your journalism modules with relation to ethics and regulation?

We did very brief in university … we had six modules and one had to do with law ethics but it wasn't as detailed as the college course because obviously we did media law we did an exam on that. You learned a lot more about the laws and that was more detailed at college which was also a fast-paced course 22 weeks. So it simply told you what you needed to know while in university it went more into the case study side. College was more of what you need

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

We had a course not until I joined I had to do a module where you had to go and answer questions that's what we got given to complete. The one today was just an internal module that had to do with privacy. But yes it is more general knowledge questions and answers about the new code and stuff

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

Ah trying to think off the top of my head. Ah (long pause) no I can't think of one no. Nothing springs to mind. I might have to come back to you on that.

What are the ground rules of how news is defined?

Ah well some people would argue what does and what doesn't. Obviously we've got a digital first policy at [name redacted] so we're very big on digital, you know, on getting web hits so the maj... well everything goes online first unless it's an exclusive you know something nobody else has got So, as a result, a lot of stuff goes … if I look now on the most read stories I'm just on my computer at the minute. The five most read I see two or three are [name redacted] so sports stories There'll always be a crime story that's always it there. Then you do get daft stories like I remember we did one a while back you know the computer game FIFA before it got released almost every newspaper was doing it, ahm, the ratings of each individual club so we did [name redacted] player ratings. When we put it online it just flew online. It just got lots of hits. That wouldn't go in the paper ever. Online because people would click on it on Facebook and it's a very different audience which is what workshop was about this morning what I did. Things will work online that won't work in print. You don't want to read about … it was just something that would be online and would be about people clicking on it and commenting. I think the hard news will always be in print. The online is about a mixture of different things for a different audience I think.

Are you given stories to pursue?

It's a mixture certainly. You'll always have your court where you can look through and see what's happening. You can always go around your contacts and whatnot but the majority of time if you've got something that is off-diary that you want to pitch feel free to present it to your editor. It's a mixture. We do have news lists what you go through and check off

Is there a significant focus by senior staff on web analytics?

Yeah. There's a digital team so there's a head of digital, deputy head of digital and someone who just uploads to Facebook all day that's their sole job

How much emphasis is placed on journalists covering courts and council meetings?

Our company has got a lot of weeklies and we've got two dailies So the dailies have got a specific court reporter that's all he does. He just goes to court every day and files from there. He does quite a few cases that's for the daily. The weeklies not so much because we've got less staff on the weeklies the majority of their time they are at their desk they don't get to go out as much as they would like. Maybe not council meetings as much. I don't think many papers go to as many council meetings or want to certainly court makes a big difference

4e. What do you write about?

I do a mixture so news and community. In the middle section of the paper it's for when people send stuff in it's called user generated content we get that sent in then we kind of like tidy it up because of errors you would expect from people who are doing it voluntarily. We chase up pictures. We have subeditors who make it fit in with the house style and that kind of thing. We're not writing it from scratch. We're just editing it making sure it is worthy to be in the paper.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

Ahm not really no. I would have preferred to be involved in sport. But I'm a trainee at the minute so after 18 months you do a … once you've got a portfolio of stories then you do a senior exam to become a senior journalist so that's what my focus is on at the minute just getting that and then see where I go from that. So that's like the end of examination then I can say I've become senior and try to move into the area I want to maybe sport.

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

Good. Open plan newsroom so we have lots of desks about so everyone is near each other

There have been instances where errors have been "edited into copy" during the production phase? Has this ever happened to any of your stories? How was the situation dealt with?

If it happens we have a quick word and we're pretty relaxed about it.

Ian

1a. Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?

I got the postgraduate diploma on a fast track. It was officially at [name redacted] it was up the [name redacted] campus. I did a Bachelor of Arts honours in English literature at [name redacted]

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

Full time yes

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?

Does that include freelance and shift or just a full-time basis? (any type of job). OK. So my first job after finishing in [city redacted] was as a trainee news reporter with the [name redacted] newspaper in [county redacted]. That's where I completed my NQJ I became a senior reporter there. And then on the side of that whilst I was working in [name redacted] I was also doing freelance news desk shifts with [name redacted] newspaper in [city redacted] so I was going there the odd day here and there. So I was getting a little work with national newspapers as well. So I started in [name redacted] in June 2013 and then I departed in December 2015. That's when I came down to [name redacted] and now my official title is sports journalist with the [name redacted] and the [name redacted].

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

I think as a kid so when I was very young I was mad on football as the majority of kids are in England when they grow up so I was a really, really huge fan of football. I found I had a head for stats and numbers. I was really good with names and shirt numbers, appearances and goals that sort of thing. I was really interested in the statistical side of things. I found I had a good head for it so I thought why not put that to good use. I also found I was a fairly good writer through my experiences at school. And I thought the very idea of getting paid to watch football for a living was pretty good. So I decided to pursue it thinking I could make a good job of it and hopefully progress to a national newspaper. I think I also like the fame side of it as well in a reductive way I suppose. It's not a good reason for doing things but nice to gain a bit of notoriety. As a kid before I matured I liked the idea of having my name in the newspaper and my friends seeing it thinking it was something important. As I got more mature, my aspirations are more about the idea of traveling and live sports is what I really like. I mean it's the life experiences rather than seeing myself as some kind of investigative journalist so sort of blows news wide open and uncovers scandals as such. I think it is good but I don't think it is my motivation. It's paid to watch live sport and meeting the managers and players and interviewing them. I think if you're interested in something like that that passion comes across. You're much better at things you're passionate about aren't you so I think that was why I wanted to pursue it.

What are the main roles of a journalist?

I think it's to tell something they didn't already know. So, as reporters, we report daily life what's going on around our local areas.

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

I think less idealistic because, obviously, when you're just training and not in the daily grind or working life having a job, friends and family trying to keep up appearances you kind of see it in an idealistic way because you think of doing everything by the book, making all the right calls you have to make, ticking all the things off your to-do list you have to do each do so I think certainly less idealistic but I don't think that means being sloppy or not following the basic principles of being a journalist

1g. What are your career goals?

At the moment, my ambition is to try and become a national sports journalist and maybe try and do as much traveling as possible on the job. It's certainly more difficult nowadays but the idea of traveling and seeing other countries whilst working is a huge motivation of mine

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

It was undertaken by a gentleman called Leveson I believe under instructions from politicians in terms of an investigation into the basic news practices. It all seemed to snowball on the back of the Millie Dowler case which involved the hacking of her voicemail and from there it snowballed and became more and more cases of national newspaper journalists, particularly at the red tops hacking people's phones celebrities especially I believe that was the source of it. Initially it was the hacking scandal and the official inquiry was put in place to investigate newspaper practices on a wider remit and generally how journalists felt about their jobs how particularly stories which had complaints came about and eventually after a very very long process ended in the Leveson Report I believe with Leveson making a whole line of suggestions. I don't think he made any changes to law so it was just suggestions as to how the newspaper industry should be regulated. And it was the PCC I believe which was changed or abolished and Ipso became a much more important body. So yes I don't think it's all settled yet. A lot of the national newspapers editors were obviously right at the heart of it and involved with it and a number of meetings various bodies to either support or challenge what Leveson was saying but it led a set of regulatory rules

Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

Oh it's made it very very difficult I can't talk about the era I didn't work in it but I know older more experienced journalists tell me about how the job was in the 70s 80s and 90s and I think it was a lot I suppose easier is the word. It was easier for them to cultivate contacts especially within public bodies police, fire service hospital trusts. I think contacts were much willing and had much more trust in journalists and I think if they believed they spoke to a journalist off the record or gave a journalist a tip off they were pretty confident it wouldn't come back to them. So it wasn't perceived as breaking the law or undermining their job it was their way of blowing the whistle I suppose but I think since the phone hacking scandal it seems the world has been painted with the same brush I've probably experienced as a news reporter in

[name redacted] let's for instance say you get the phone number of a police officer and you want to make a very very basic inquiry about something which is going on at the time or a breaking news story eight times out of 10 they will give you absolutely nothing and say please ring the press office and I'm led to believe back in the day they would give you chapter and verse on what was going on knowing they were doing their public bit because reporters were the eyes and ears of the public and therefore should be told about what was going on. Obviously the birth of press officers has made it more and more difficult for journalists to get information quickly and directly from the source as it were. So generally it has made the job more difficult. People generally trust journalists less they are less willing to speak freely on the telephone less willing to meet up and talk to journalists without going through official channels

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

I suppose in the day and age of the 21st century and social media people can react to things so quickly now in a kneejerk way. A lot of the time it is easy for journalists to be attacked quite quickly without reading the full facts of the story or sort of understanding the story properly journalists will be mistrusted or attacked might be reasons for why some people might not like a story rather than the reasons for said story so I think social media helps engage in how trusted journalists are so it's just easy to attack journalists online all the time and you can come across at first glance that not we are not particularly liked or trusted. It's a difficult one. I think you would broadly say journalists are probably trusted less now but I think we form an important role and people do appreciate that

What is your understanding of the public interest?

I think it's a very very important defence for journalists when it comes to especially when it comes to defamation and I suppose court stories too when a journalist would perceive things in the public interest and yet those in power may… let me rephrase that… Public interest is a very important defence for journalists writing stories it's quite hard to say without using the words public and interest. It's something… it's a hard phrase to define without using those words I suppose it's things like corruption I suppose for instances if it's a public body that is publicly funded everything that goes on within that organisation should be known by the public because it's in their interest because they are funding it. I think matters of security or things that impact the general public on a very very wide scale are matters which are in the public interest

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for?

Ah… not checking their facts. Readers offer a different set of eyes on the story and they notice a side that hasn't been accounted for by the journalist. I think in this day and age when everything is going online as quickly as possible journalists back in the day will have they would have written one article over the course of a day for the following day's newspaper and that one story would have all sides of the argument but in online journalism there is a growing call from the powers-that-be that stories go up as they happen. So you might have one side of an argument going up in a single article then several hours later a different article goes up with the right to reply in it.

So if a reader was to read just one of those stories they would think journalists haven't got the right to reply or they haven't checked these facts properly. So I think readers who are not trained in journalist practice and may not understand the story may blame the journalist for not checking the facts properly while that may not be the case

Praised for?

Exposing corruption, exposing bad things that go on in the world. I think… well 2016 has been quite a bad year it has left a bit of a sour taste in a lot of people's mouths. I think a lot of the stories that have come out in the last 12 months has been down to very very good journalism. I think investigative reporting is valued more and more now ironically in a time when journalists aren't given the time or the money to do big investigations. So I think we are praised for when we expose something or break news

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

I think ethical thinking should play an important role in every journalist's diary through history. I don't think Leveson has made ethical thinking any more important. In my mind I think it should have always been important I don't think Leveson has particularly changed things for me. I think we are governed by the rules of the land and we have to follow those rules of the land and I think any conscientious journalist who is properly trained will be aware of the ethical matters in every story that they write. Less so in sports because a lot of it is involving matters on the field but in the arena when it comes to news journalism I think every story you write you're thinking about the ethical problems of the story you write I don't think that's been particularly heightened in recent years for me anyway.

2b. Thinking back to your student years around 2011 and 2012, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry as they unfolded? How much emphasis was placed in your journalism modules with relation to ethics and regulation?

I was taught between September 2012 and March 2013 and I think at that point, off the top of my head, Leveson was still actually going on and I don't think any sort of conclusions had been drawn and I think the NCTJ was in the process of updating their syllabus but since then there's been an actual ethics module put in place and rebranded as ethics. Obviously we were given full training on law and public affairs so there was emphasis but I wouldn't say it was greater on any of the modules.

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

So I had already started working down here in sports. I don't think off the top of my head it was communicated directly to me, say, in my email inbox it was a long time ago now. I think I read about it in things like The Press Gazette but I don't think it was actually communicated to me directly by my employer.

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

Yes… I think you always I think you always feel if you're a good-natured human being I think you always there's always a tinge of if what you're writing is

going to hurt somebody if it's damaging character whether it was right or wrong and for instance it if is something that needs writing about or somebody's said something about somebody else that is negative there's always a tinge of wondering if this story is going to be to the detriment of somebody. But if it's lawful and it's all above board you actually do it without fear or favour so I have had instances especially in news where sort of you have to question your morals and values. But more often than not, you just have to bite the bullet and again if it's legal and what you're writing is in the public interest as we've already said I think after you've written it you have put your personal emotion to one side. The death door knocks. I did quite a few of those. That's a very good example of difficult challenges of whether it is morally correct.

The first time you did one what was going through your mind?

I'm confident and quite blunt person so it certainly affected colleagues or people I have met in my life more than it affected me. It was very sort of me just doing my job all I can do is knock on the door. You would think they are expecting the call or expecting the knock on the door so all they can do when you go to the door is slam the door in your face or say no thank you and then you just leave them alone so I didn't allow myself to get caught up in the emotions all you can do is go up, knock on the door, ask the question you either get a yes or no and then you walk away. So it didn't affect me too much. I was warned about it

4a. What is a news story?

What are the ground rules of how news is defined?

So I work in sports so I would think the all encompassing phrase is is it going to do well online? And that is in this day and age where newspapers prints are declining I think it's going to be quite difficult to stop that decline now so I think very much all attention is on the website and how you can generate website hits so if we've got something we can deliver online… online traffic… that's positive. So in terms of sports journalism football is very much the most popular online source of news and sport. So the priority is to write as much as possible about the local football club. Our football club is in the fourth division of English football and gets between 8 and 10,000 people every week so there's a large sort of fan base there as it were. So if we can prioritise that football club then certainly that is what we would define as news. I think having only been in the industry almost five years I certainly think that what is defined as news online is different from what is defined as news in the newspaper. Certainly some stories work better online that just simply wouldn't work in a newspaper. The paper is still a platform for straightforward reporting on news and events so the he-said-she-said, this happened on this day, the football club had a match this was the score and this is what happened that sort of thing or the manager said this ahead of the upcoming football match whereas online you would have much more fan-friendly things like 5 talking points from a particular match, or who is the most lethal goal scorer in the division based on their appearances and goals so there's very much very formal fan-based articles that work online that won't make it into the newspapers.

How are stories generated, you or are they assigned?

I do. You will still get the odd idea or asked to do something if we're short-staffed or you're told such and such manager has to be called on this day so therefore

you do that. But yes broadly speaking we're quite autonomous and trust to know what we're doing so we get on with it. As well we are communicating to make sure there's no duplication of ideas

What happens during summer when there is no football?

It can be difficult. I think things like transfer speculations become more the focus of football fans I think that's one of the things we try to keep track of. Transfer rumours. So rumours about which player might be joining your club so you have to generate a lot of that content a lot of fanbase stuff like where the club needs to strengthen this summer or which players might be leaving and sort of expand on that and look at former players and what they are doing so we talk about people who are relevant with our local audience. It's difficult it's very difficult. Summer is a difficult time for sport but there's also other minority sports as well. This area is very very good for swimming and diving so. So we had the Olympics this summer we had a few swimmers and divers there which generated quite a lot of traffic as well.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

Ah… that's a good question as well. I suppose it's difficult. I mean I was at a stage where I always wanted to go into sports journalism but to get that first step on the ladder I had to go into news down in [name redacted]. So I probably spent longer in [name redacted] than I anticipated but I'm certainly pleased I've made it into sports journalism. I certainly didn't expect to be working in [county redacted]. It's a long way away from everything that's going on really. Put the positive is I am in sports and the next move is getting into a larger city or a larger organisation but I wouldn't say I expected to be where I am but I expected I would be working in a fairly large regional organisation on a sports desk.

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

Probably could be better actually. I think in [town redacted] where I was working in news I think teams of reporters are very small nowadays and the number of pages being produced haven't gone down there's an increased pressure on each individual reporter to provide more each day. And if you're in a particular town on a particularly slow news day then you're all going to be scrambling for the same kind of stories so if you notice something on Twitter or Facebook then you start chasing it up. You don't want to get into the routine of telling everyone in the office what you're doing every 10 or 15 minutes just for the sake of communication so unfortunately you get cases where you've gone three-quarters of the day down the line getting a story and you find out oh bloke sitting next to me has already done that or someone is working on it. So I think communication in that term could be better. That's happened once or twice. It can be difficult you can get a one-tracked mind and want to get on with what you're doing and you want to get the best stories out there you can and you don't want to act like a 7 or 8 year old where you're telling everybody what you're doing every 20 minutes

Jack

Early Career Journalists questions

Exploratory questions related to journalist identity

1a. Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?

I was an undergraduate

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

Ah I am currently full time

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?

Ummm … well … I have done lots of different jobs but in the same place (rising emphasis). It's an awkward response but the easy answer is to say I've had two jobs I worked at (name redacted) in a number of roles and am now working in (name redacted) in one role. So two positions is probably the easiest answer to give.

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

Amm That's really – I've not thought about that for a long time. Ah (long pause) I think that's because I am fascinated by the ah (long pause) and current affairs and particular ah a particular interest in being part of breaking stories and in particular as well big events and that's part of the reason I got into journalism because I want to cover big events be they sport or other fields. There are obviously drawbacks to working in journalism like the anti-social hours etcetera but the chance to be part of that is mainly why I got into journalism

1d. What does journalism mean to you?

In regards to (like what journalism means to you) am it means I get paid (laugh) am it's am … what does it mean to me? … yeah I'm not really sure what to say umm I can probably speak about what I don't know (I mean about the profession when you hear the term journalism what does that mean) ah to be a journalist means to be someone who reports with and gathers information with integrity and um with the audience in mind and make it easy for people to also take in the information they themselves are trying to formulate into a structure

1e. In the ongoing debate of journalism being a trade or a profession, which side do you take? Why?

Wasn't familiar with that debate if I'm being honest. Um trade or profession… I'm not too sure about trade so I'd say profession.

1f. Is there anyone in journalism who inspires you and, if so, why?

Umm yes although working more in broadcast side of things lots of people lots of broadcasters I can pull names lots of sports people like Dan Walker Mark Pugash the sports writers for BBC actually Mark Pugash is at ITV now. Sportswriters like Phil McNulty he's been bbc senior sports correspondent I look up ahm ah I suppose I kind of admire the people who have worked extremely hard who are older who have embraced the multimedia approach to the job now. For example they used to turn up to do a spot and now they have to be up on social media, website writing yeah people like that.

1g. What are your career goals?

Yeah I'm there now. It's taken a while to get where I want to be but ahm I was working at (name redacted) for five or six days a week on news output. But now I'm in a full-time sports role. In terms of goals I think I'm in the right place a place I want to be but I don't think there is one particular role one role I am currently working towards because I've literally just started this job. So I'm making the most of that opportunity without thinking too much about what, ahm, might be next.

Leveson Inquiry

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

Well it seems like a long time ago doesn't it but of course it really isn't. Now Leveson is interesting for me because it was still prevalent and ongoing during my degree and certainly started during my degree. So it finished right after my graduation. It's obviously completely ahm dressed down the you know the style and bullying nature of tabloid journalism or what I perceive to be a bullying nature I've never worked there. People were acting unethically hacking people's phone. The sickening practice of hacking Millie Dowler's phone etcetera that's just not how I mean they were acting really unprofessionally. As far as I am aware the report so far has been um generally respected although I'm sure somewhere down the line we'll find someone has continue to do something similar to bend the rules and invade someone's privacy

Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

Ahm working in sport I have to say it's been fairly limited. Obviously what I'm aware of everything that came out of Leveson The copy I deal with comes out of either interviews I would have conducted face to face or it's kind of like wire copy that we're effectively rewriting and turning around and or it's it's correspondents who will send stories that are transcribed word for word. So So in that respect in the news respect The Leveson Report is geared toward so I haven't got much of an opinion

What is your understanding of the public interest?

Ha ha. Good questions I hope you get good responses to this one. It's … it's hard to answer … I'm trying to think back to my media law training. Something is in the public interest if it … ahhh… I guess … depending on what the intended end of the story is justified. By that I mean which is more … ah … if … the story has been an interview or information obtained a means that entails a journalist actually going into ahm actually no let me start again. Public interest to me has got to be something that would have an impact on the public life um. So for example if If I wanted to obtain information about a terrorist attack planned and then it was sent to police or flagged up in some what that is quite a noble thing to do. If if you are talking about some model who people generally who has fame inflated by reality TV if they did something and the media did stories on their private life doesn't mean it is public interest.

Duties

Producing radio programs, lunch interviews, telephone operative chasing stories basically what they want me to do. Yeah anything sport, news, getting an MP on to talk about different things.

How do you gauge the public's trust in journalism?

Long pause. Ahm well I certainly find it easier to speak to people that when I was doing my degree. When I was doing my degree and went out to try to speak to someone and they'd say what's if for and I'd say well it's for my degree and they'd be like OK and then didn't seem very interested anymore whereas when you say you work for [name redacted] they know their opinion is going to go on to be heard um by a lot of people and have maximum gravitas in the grand scheme of things so in that respect it's easier to market yourself as a potential interviewer when you're working for a major programmer like the [name redacted] that ah in terms of actual day to day you still find when you go onto the street doing a vox pop there are still people who don't really want to speak. But maybe think there have been instances where people say to me oh edit that bit out or they say something and say oh actually I don't want that to be recorded. Or people who have been following Leveson and other controversies so say oh I don't trust media. Generally speaking, when you try to book a guest and you say you're from [name redacted] it's easier. Surveys show people trust [name redacted] more than other broadcasters as a media entity.

Your journalistic practice in newsroom environment

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

Ahm long pause there have been a few good examples I'm trying to think of at the moment. When I've produced a program there has been instances where we've left it to the autonomy of the reporter to make sure they are happy with the copy. As producer I have to trust them but I do check with them beforehand. Ethically I'll have to think about it … can you repeat the question one more time. Yeah the only thing I can think of at the moment is the biggest thing I've done there was um I went to Srbenica in Bosnia to do a documentary of the 20th anniversary of what is not really a genocide but should be. 8-and-a-half thousand men and boys shot and killed because they were Muslim. I went out there with a group of people from (area redacted) who were going as a national charity on the 20th anniversary. Ah… I gathered loads of powerful stuff when it came to presenting it although it was widely believed to be a genocide or an act of genocide it's not officially known as genocide because the court at The Hague hadn't deemed it to be. So when I was preparing my content I had to think of both sides of the coin.

Newsroom practices

4a. What is a news story?

At (name redacted) I can answer in two ways actually. At (name redacted) all the news 80 percent of the content comes into the news editor. What happens is we have a system called the journalism portal where any story coming or press release or opportunity ahm forthcoming trials ahm a football press conference it goes into this online planning diary and then the news editor basically decides who … if… finds that story. It all comes down to staffing from their point of view. The news editor has to decide what is going to form today's stories what's going to be achievable ahm so even for instance there are two smaller there are two smaller events where we're based it would be better to go to one kind of how it works. At (name redacted) this is like the beating heart of (name redacted) operation and it has breaking news scenarios that are

interesting. I'm on the online team so all the managers radio, TV are all together in a big open plan office. So if someone gets wind of a story we talk amongst ourselves to plan what we're going to do about it … for example with what's going on with Russia and the doping scandal a lot of that comes from really high up and officials so you can trust the information straight away, but there have been examples when you get a single source and the (name redacted) always always always second-sources all stories it would never never take a single wire story as gospel always second source which in turn, actually part of the reason I like working there because I know that we very rarely get it wrong ah in terms of the stuff we put out there. If you look at [name redacted] they flash a yellow strap on the bottom of their channel and say XYZ and it will turn out that it wasn't XYZ it was ABC anyway I'm digressing slightly. It's difficult it just goes to show no one really knows especially in player transfers in football. The two clubs have a real handle on the situation and aren't letting anything slip.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

I think so yes yes it is. I finished my degree in May of 2012 in June I got offered an 8-week place I earned an 8-week placement (name redacted) after that I was kept on to work as a casual broadcast assistant which is a sort of dog's body role and then and then fortunately some people left which allowed me to become more established I wasn't a fulltime staff member until recently I was working sort of freelance but only working there so it was contracted and certain shifts I'd only get I was trying to move on to the next thing and finally achieved it. It's fairly short term but I feel a little more challenged hopefully that will lead to more challenges I'm in online now which is different from radio but I will be rounded journalists I'm happy I want to try things. I'd like to be covering big events like Rio for the Game or France for the Euros maybe I'll go to the next one.

Katarina

1a. Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?

I did that in 2013 and I did an NCTJ. Before that, I went to [name redacted] university and I studied English literature.

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

Yes, I am full time. I was actually, up until recently, I was working on a freelance basis and they decided to make me permanent starting from January.

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?

This is the first job I've done in journalism.

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

Well I never set out with the intention of being a journalist when I started with the English lit degree. I always wanted to be a writer. And I was quite lost I think and during university we did a module called working with words where we had to find a practical work placement which involved writing so what I did was I went to a local paper called [name redacted] and asked them for work experience, not really particularly wanting to do it if I'm honest but as soon as I got there I just loved it… just fell in love with it straightaway and decided that's what I wanted to do. And when I asked them if there was any possibility of them taking me on they said I would need to complete an NCTJ. So that's what I did. I'm from [city redacted]. I went back to [city redacted] and did the [name redacted] program.

1d. What does journalism mean to you?

Ahm … that's a really good question. No one's asked me that before. Journalism means to me… there's a quote by George Orwell, I don't know if you've heard it. He said that anything anyone wants printing is just PR so basically that's about uncovering truth and writing things people don't necessarily want printed and made available to the public. So I guess I like to get… I like to expose corruption not that there's much of a chance to do that these days. I also think it's a nice job in the sense you become involved in the community so you're publicising people's achievements. I also like going to court I think it's important that people understand the judiciary system and that people are brought justice in the sense that the fact they have been convicted is brought to the knowledge of the public and also the principle of open justice is conveyed through newspapers. So it's quite a complex answer. I don't really have a simple one for you. It's just such a varied job that there is really just a simple answer to that question really. To simplify things, what it means to me is just getting the word out there about everything

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

I can't describe for you how much they've changed. The reason being for that is that I suppose when I left college I was quite naïve and I… I loved the idea of print journalism because there's a charm that goes with it I suppose and I didn't realise how digital-based it would be how digital-orientated it would be. I don't know if you're aware of this, but in a lot of publishing companies across the country a lot of schemes

have been implemented in newsrooms so that reporters can focus on digital journalism so print, in effect, comes second and digital takes priority and I didn't know that's what would happen I didn't know I would be focusing really solely on digital journalism.

1g. What are your career goals?

What kind of career goals? Ah, I would… I really want to work my way up we might get to this later but I think that will be difficult. There have been a lot of cuts that are taking place across newspapers at the moment. I would like to… what happens when you do NCTJ is when you get a permanent role at a newspaper you do something called an NQJ which is workplace training and that allows you to become a senior reporter and then you can progress to a sub-editor role or a news editor role eventually I would… the ultimate I suppose is to become an editor but I think that would be a difficult road. A lot of journalists tend to go into PR because it's more secure it's better paid and you're not as overworked so I don't know if I'll end up there. For now, I'd like to stay where I am and at least try.

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

Well this is where I'm going to let you down because I don't know much about it. Was it in America? (Oh no it was an inquiry into the phone hacking scandal in the UK). Was this at News of the World (Yes)? I know that it was to do with phone hacking… was it? (yes). I know it was to do with direct… direct… certain ethical codes were breached and that the newspaper ceased to publicise after that because it was so scandalised and journalists were scandalised. I don't know much about it if I'm honest because when all of that happened I didn't even want to be a reporter. When I… when I became a reporter I suppose it has been mentioned in our lectures when we were talking about ethics and media law but hacking into someone's phone … I mean I work for a regional newspaper where we don't even have the resources to do that anyway and and ethically to be that would have not been an option so I don't really even think about it so I don't think I would ever get to that level

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

People tend to be very mistrusting of us from the off. You can be met with a lot of hostility from people when you approach even if it's something really small say you approach a school about how the school is performing people are very very suspicious. It's one of the hard parts of the job is the fact you are met with a lot of suspicion and and mistrust and you really have to work to build a rapport with people so they will trust you.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

Public interest. I suppose that's something that… it's information that should be ethically and legally accessible to the public. Just as a small example I covered a house fire not that long ago and it was elderly man that had been involved and had been taken to hospital and they believed that it was arson and the son of this man got in touch with me and said that he wanted me to take the story down and my editor argued that it was public interest and he said it wasn't but it was because it was an

arson case. So it was something that people needed to be made aware of. So we decided, despite there was an elderly gentleman involved and it was his property, that we would report on it because it was public interest.

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for?

(laugh) Everything. Ah inaccuracy, I suppose if we make inaccurate news which can happen. We're only human, we make mistakes. We try our very best not to be inaccurate but sometimes it happens. Ah, generally criticised in effect for just being nosy. I always get that 'you're just a little bit nosy, aren't you, this is a private matter'. We're criticised for… criticised for court reporting and crime reporting. So if somebody's been through the court system and they've been sentenced and we are legally authorised to publish that information we get a lot of stick for that because people argue that it's confidential when of course it's not because that's the principle of open justice. Oh everything. It's very difficult to be a journalist because you never really get any respect from your readers. If you make the slightest error it's a huge deal. So we're criticised for a lot of things but I would say those are the main things.

Praised for?

We don't tend to get a lot praise but I suppose that when we are praised its for things like when we run campaigns to help charities so our paper ran a campaign to help the Royal British Legion encouraging people to donate, raise awareness of what they do. We're praised for publicising people's achievements so we might get an email saying thank you for the write up but what's interesting and I talk about it a lot to my colleagues is one thing that we are criticised for is not publishing enough good news or positive news and it's funny because when we do publish good news or there's a good news story on our front page we will experience a drop in sales. So people are not interested in positive news even though ironically when we do get praised that is what it's for, positive stories that are about the community and good deeds and things that like which is quite interesting.

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

It's… sometimes you become so desensitised to ethics because you just want a good story that's going to get a good reaction and is going to be popular that your editor has to remind you that no, you can't publish that. That's not ethical. For instance, yesterday I went to a crime scene where there was a lot of blood where someone had been assaulted and I wanted to… and there was somebody washing the blood away and I wanted to publish that when I arrived at the scene there were people washing blood from the pavement and it was a 78-year-old man that had assaulted an my editor… I took pictures as well and my editor said I could not publish the pictures of blood and I couldn't draw too much attention to the blood either because it wasn't ethical and that's somebody's granddad that's somebody's dad and that would be upsetting. And that's the kind of role that it plays and sometimes admittedly, I do become desensitised and I think this is really dramatic and this is going to get a good response and my editor has to remind me to be ethical and to demonstrate sensitivity when I'm reporting

2b. Thinking back to your student years around 2011 and 2012, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry as they unfolded? How much emphasis was placed in your journalism modules with relation to ethics and regulation?

If I'm being honest we learned more about what you can legally report and how ethics and law tie in but when it came to ethics we didn't have any… our modules were media law, reporting, video journalism, shorthand and public affairs. So there wasn't an actual ethics module and I really wished there would have been one because, like I said, it's still something that I'm still learning about it's something I'm still having to ask me editor about it's something if I came into a position where I can edit articles I would struggle with ethics because I like a good story. I like a good dramatic story. I like something that's going to get a lot of views on the internet and usually when you don't report ethically that is when people click on a story. So I would say that not enough emphasis is placed on ethics when I was studying.

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

You know what? When it's something at this kind of level, it's something that I have to ask my editor about and if he's unsure he would read the McNae's. The thing is law… media law is changing constantly so many different sections of law imposed at different tmes. And it's constantly evolving. Again as a new journalist I don't think that is being conveyed to me and because we because we are experiencing so many cuts in the newsroom and because our priority is getting stories online quickly and getting our views up and getting our advertising up it's all learned on the trot and we haven't been exposed to that much training. I didn't know about what you just said about the public interest. It's not been flagged up with me. The importance of it hasn't been confirmed to me so I'd say not really conveyed that well. In regional news, I'm not sure about national newspapers, but steps have not been taken make sure that doesn't repeat certainly in our publishing company.

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

Let me think of an example. I have felt the most morally challenged when I'm in court and it's a really good story where — I can't think of any examples right now — but I'd say vaguely when I'm in court and there's a vulnerable person in the dock and they've done something that our readers would love something shocking and this person has and this person has a history of mental illness or they have a really bad background that is when I feel morally challenged. I have parents in the mental health sector who are psychiatric nurses and I know about these types of people and what they go through. When I'm having to write about what they've done, shaming them in effect, making it known to the world how… how far they've dropped that is when I feel morally challenged. Because, as desensitised as I am to murder and things, you know, they are people and they're only going to spiral downwards more once their names are shamed. So that's when I feel most morally challenged when I know a person's had a difficult background and this is only going to make things worse. But it's my job and it's part of the open justice system we sit in court we report on what's

happening people have a right to know what's happening in the court so I feel it's my job. Death doors knocks are probably the hardest about the job and inquests as well. Death door knocks… in fact, I have a specific example a man near where I work was in his early 70s but he was quite a fit and active man and he was walking home from a party and he fell into a canal and drowned. So obviously my editor wanted me to go to the road and he wanted me to knock on all these doors and his daughter answered… weirdly enough, I ended up knocking on his door I didn't know his address but I knocked on a door and it turned out to be his and his daughter was there and she was furious I stuck my nose in and it's completely understandable. She couldn't understand why her, her, beloved father suddenly he was a story suddenly he was something people wanted to read about as entertainment and I was there to set that in motion, ah, I have been to a few death door knocks. People tend to avoid them if they can they are really difficult but you know what I try to remind myself of is if I do a door knock especially if it's a murder or if it's a person who has died in suspicious circumstances this is something that can help police with their appeal. It's something that can make the community aware if there is any danger to be on alert and also, if they didn't die in suspicious circumstances, it's an opportunity to say to the family would you like us to do a tribute piece in the paper, you know, a positive tribute piece. So you have to put these steps in place when you do these kinds of things to make yourself feel better and also to make sure that person feels a little more comfortable about why you're there and why you're intruding upon their privacy

How did you deal with the first time you did a death door knock?

Ah I'm to think what my first death door knock was. Yeah, I remember now. Ah, if I'm completely honest with you, yes, I delayed I procrastinated I put it off until my editor had to say to me you need to go and do this now we need this information now and I did dither and — I wasn't driving at that point I do drive now — so I walked over to the road and I dithered really and I only knocked on a couple of doors and I was met with the same hostility the same 'what are you doing here? This is a person that's died. What's wrong with you? Why are you doing this?' so that wasn't a very good experience in my first one. So I did dither I didn't get straight on it. These days, I feel a lot more confident than I would but I wasn't back then.

4a. What is a news story?

If something is newsworthy, unfortunately these days, it's a headline on a website people would click on to be interested in. anything news worthy, let's face it these days is anything that is entertaining or something that is semi-informative

Is there a clear list of what sorts of stories your newsroom is interested in?

4b. What kind of stories do you write?

Everything. I was completely thrown in the deep end when I started. On my first week, I was sent to court, I reported on a school story, someone was dragged out of the canal so I reported on that, I do crime, I do charity stories, I do stories about education, stories about inquests. I'd say politics, council stories anything like that. So I do everything.

How many people are in your newsroom?

When I first started at my newsroom, there were six reporters. And now there's just me. When I started there were six reporters, a sports editor, two community reporters and there was a news editor and an editor. And now there's just an editor, me, and two community reporters. Like I said, the industry is undergoing drastic cuts at the moment to pay off debts and because they worked out they can spend less money and they could get by with click-bait content now and less about good quality in-depth investigative journalism. So they've downsized basically and it's very very sad and it's something that has turned the tables around. It's something that's really affected the quality of journalism in regional news. I'm not sure about national news. I know The Guardian are currently looking for donations for journalism and they have a lot of freelancers working for them so it's pretty dire at the moment. And that's maybe something you can reference in your PhD there's less training, less investment these days. You get people like me wandering in and it took two and a half years to make me permanent and to start my proper training to become senior reporter. So unfortunately even in light of the inquiry you are studying the people at the top of these companies they don't care they want viewers… higher views on the internet they don't really care about their print publication anymore it's only about, I feel anyway, it's only about the money.

How much emphasis is placed on journalists generating their own story ideas?

It's a mixture of both. Basically when people send emails it usually gets sent to a generic inbox and my news editor will pick that up and if he thinks that's newsworthy he will send it to me and have me look into it but most of the time it's on me and because I've been here three years now I've built up contacts so I get people ringing me up saying 'did you know this is happening?' a lot of it is internet based so I check the police website I check hospital websites I check the council website I check the social media it's a big one. A lot of people are on social media so they will post so they will post things to our page so they send us Facebook messages so I'd say the source of a lot of news now is on social media and on the internet. There's less time these days to go out into the community to have a look around to see what's happening I actually live on my patch now I moved specifically to be on my patch and even now I don't get time to walk around to see what's happening in my town. I usually have to stay unfortunately at a computer and see what's going on on there.

4d. How much emphasis is placed on journalists covering courts and council meetings?

So basically our newsroom is small but I work for for the [area name redacted] side of my company and there's about five papers in there. And we all tend to help each other out. So if for instance I work in a town called [name redacted] and there's another paper based in [name redacted] and they have more reporters because it's a bigger town and one of them takes care of the court side of things. I do go to court sometimes if he's not around but because [town name redacted] is in the [area name redacted] because if he goes to court and he sees there's a [town name redacted] story he will pick that up as well and send it to me. So I do sometimes go to court if there is not a lot of availability but most of the time it's him. Council stories I keep an eye on it. If I'm not available to go to a council meeting that's important I'll tell my editor

and we'll see if anyone else at a different paper is available or we will contact the press officers and ask if they will cover it for us. And they will send us the information across.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

I would have thought, in an ideal world, I would have had my senior qualification by now. As soon as I… as soon as I started I should have been trained I should by now, with nearly three years experience, I should now be a senior reporter so I'm a little bit behind but if I'm honest with you I'm just so grateful I have a job in journalism anyway. Because now it is so difficult to attain one You can get one if you've got drive, you're willing to do work experience, if you're really willing to really get yourself out there. Acquire the relevant skills that they're looking for now like they want social media skills. You can get one but it is notoriously hard now. There aren't as many work experience places. So I feel a little bit behind but I do feel optimistic for the future especially now they took me on permanently I think I could probably rise through the ranks if I'm careful and I adapt to the schemes they are putting in place.

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

Well I'm in a very small newsroom so I have a very good relationship with my editor and I learn a lot from him. In the good days and even when I started at the paper before things went downhill the editor was a lot more absent. There were six reporters a sports editor, communities reporter and the editor oversaw us all and he was less available because he was talking to different people. Yeah he seemed more absent and now it's just me and the editor who talk together in the office so I have a better relationship, a closer relationship with him. I don't know what's it's like in other newsrooms but I admit in regional newsrooms anyway it's probably the same I think that people spend more time with their editors now they're not this absent figure. It felt a little bit like school you know how you hardly see your headmaster he's always off doing other things but now you seem to spend a lot more time with your editor because actually editors now are having to take on some of the jobs of reporters. My editor actually had to finish off our paper the other day he actually had to write a story and go back into a reporting role so they kind of have less authority now So they have to go back a little bit and relive their reporter lives and and write stories because there's no one to do it.

Martha

Exploratory questions related to journalist identity

1a. You did a ba

Yes. I graduated in 2012

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

I'd had a part-time job after graduating unrelated to journalism and then I went to London (rising tone) for a placement with a travel agency company a travel publication. It wasn't very long and then I was employed by (name redacted) which is an, um, pharmaceutical news company. It's a bit like the BBC but entirely on one industry. We do all around coverage but just on pharmaceutical industry, business, science everything

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

Uh I really wanted to be a private detective and then stepped DOWN one level and when I was quite young I used to run a local magazine and then I ran college magazines Ah I didn't do A Levels I went from GCSE to college to university to journalism

What are the main roles of a journalist?

Erm I think it's providing fair and balanced news that's educational there's an interest and entertaining part as well. Important to get the message across in an unbiased way as well.

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

Erm I was really really newspaper focussed when I was a student and that was probably not the best route to go down. Now I think online is where I predominantly work now and the reason I was an intern for three months and now four years later I'm in the same job and that was predominantly for my tech knowledge it wasn't for my print journalism.

Your company is in London?

Ah yes. We are global the European office is in London I work from home most of the time. I go into London about twice a month.

1e. In the ongoing debate of journalism being a trade or a profession, which side do you take? Why?

Ah a profession. I suppose there are aspects of both but I would say we're in a profession

1f. Is there anyone in journalism who inspires you and, if so, why?

That's a good question. I'm going to not name anybody good now (laugh). Er I still like Andrew Rasp for his comedy He does a lot of indie voices pieces I enjoy indie voices a lot some of those guys are really interesting I think it's a lot more freer than straight news publications A few people higher than me who I work with Mike Ward's been a very focussed kind of journalist who is really intelligent where I work now is really interesting.

1g. What are your career goals?

Erm for now just um learning everything I can So I came into (name redacted) having a journalism background and absolutely no biochemistry science or even business expertise. I started in the business area. I did a couple of years of learning and then did financial reporting and that sort of thing and then moved into the scientific area and I do kind of trial data reporting. So Id like to carry on growing that expertise and maybe move into more general health which becomes more of a lay topic which is very specialised and maybe a different topic completely.

Leveson Inquiry

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

erm I suppose at a very basic level about ethics and morals um there's a legal requirement from the discussions that were going on that came from criminal proceedings that at the core of it I think was journalism and where you draw the line.

Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

I suppose it made me more aware of how newsrooms could be working I didn't have a lot of experience working in national newspapers but the way we thought things through it highlighted the negative aspects

What is your understanding of the public interest?

Um I think it's always a touchy subject. When I meet new people and they ask what I do when I say I'm a journalist I get one of two responses it's either I better stop talking to you now then or that's interesting you don't look like one which I find quite funny. But um I think some publications journalists get a better reception than others I think a lot of it is a focus on the public issues Public interest is not always what the public is interested in but what they should be able to access

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for? Praised for?

Crossing the line invasion of privacy those are probably the key points for criticism but I suppose what you hear most about is when they've gone too far… not necessarily sharing secrets… government level secrets is more accepted celebrity invasion of privacy and I suppose social media more recently saying too much

Em I think investigation skills er uncovering secrets in a way so a lot of them are praised for political based stories MP expenses Some health stories there's been really good examples even recently with bribery scandals in companies like GSK and similar investigations specifically in China

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

I think being predominantly a kind of B2B where our audience is the industry we don't get as many issues that involve the public so it's a bit different than national or regional newspapers where in a trade publication it's being aware how involved we should be with the companies you're writing about as an audience

2b. Thinking back to your student years around 2011 and 2012, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry as they unfolded?

A lot I did law for the final two years so it was a big thing and I actually did my dissertation on Leveson.

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

Yes it is application I think so erm being in my job particularly we don't talk about it a lot really I think we're expected to know what we should follow I would probably say the PCC code of conduct is what I follow so it's what I apply

Yeah the changes were not communicated to us at the b2b level and you're expected to sort of know

Your journalistic practice in newsroom environment

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

Yes I mainly do business reporting but occasionally done slightly more human interest pieces. I did a piece on lobbying for a particular drug in Australia which is not very UK as we are a global publication and I actually spoke to families and that kind of thing and I put their stories with the industry and that's a bit more tricky to put together in one piece. To get the balance between voices and make sure you're not just promoting one side it's hard when you're writing about a health subject where all you're hearing about is these kids needing a drug they can't get and they could just get it if companies drop their prices ridiculous and drug pricing is always a tricky subject because it's just ridiculous it's so hard

Gifts from PR

Yep so we um because we're global and there's a lot of erm big conferences and it's important for us to be there we have a smallish travel budget so we do take sponsorship from companies within the industry We try and limit it to the point that we wouldn't unless we were going to cover that news anyway You're also ... we sign waivers that you're not obliged to write about that company because they've sponsored the travel and then we have to declare it within our own company's policies

Newsroom practices

4a. What is a news story?

erm so we're actually not considered a breaking news company er publication so we're 24/7 online and we're in print weekly and our focus is so we're subscription news so there are a lot of free publication news where we provide a breakdown of a press release that's just came out so we're em in the analysis factor of things so we take breaking news and go for the so what question because we're very focussed on who are audience is so we know what is news to them might not be news to other people

Who is your audience

Predominantly pharma er pharmaceutical companies themselves at all levels so from management on down to workforce a lot of them use (name redacted) on their own internal internet as news sources em the biotech industry some academics em financials

Is there a clear list of what sorts of stories your newsroom is interested in?

em we have a daily news call where one person each day so I do two days a week is responsible for checking all the newswires, Twitter, competitors em and puts together a list of what's going on em we go through that or either pick up ideas from that list and then people will get assigned but then we do so that's like our news and

then we have our original content so we have access internally to a lot of databases and analysis sites and then picking up your own stories like interviews with people within the industry on particular topics of interest Brexit's been a pretty big thing for us even though it's not necessarily our topic em so we've gone in totally on different aspects and how it affects different areas rather than on how it affects the UK

4b. What kind of stories do you write?

Em so I used to be more focussed on financials so it's MnA deals partnerships that kind of thing. Now I do more scientific side like clinical trials data updates, pipeline, in-depth looks at particular therapy or disease area and we do a lot of profiles and interviews

How much emphasis is placed on journalists generating their own story ideas?

erm for us social media can always be tricky. So we're subscription behind a paywall so you don't want to tweet constantly about things that people can't access. It makes interacting with a social media audience a little bit harder. So we'll release free content occasionally on really interesting topics that reaches further than our audience. So Brexit was a good example and we released five articles that were of a wider interest. Em we do interact with social media daily and it's more sharing of opinions and we use it build up the individual reporters so we focus on the fact we are analysts in our area so we used social media to share what we're interested in

4c. If you go to the office twice a month what do you do when you're in London

Erm keeping in touch with the team usually different projects that might be going on that might require just a bit of more face to face outside of editorial so I speak to my editorial team on a daily basis but If I require something that requires the marketing team the ads team the sales guys then it's easier to get them all in one place they all work mainly at the office erm and then recently I had an intern working on a wider project that was just the two of us so I'd go into work with her in person

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

Erm we are a close knit team there's not much of a hierarchy there is an editor and a managing editor and then there's quite a few journalists people have expertise in areas somebody could be a senior report and the go-to person for Latin America or a particularly regulatory interest but it is a close knit team we have a kind of like an MSN that's called link so everyone uses that all the time. It's free communication where you can skype on it.

There have been instances where errors have been "edited into copy" during the production phase? Has this ever happened to any of your stories? How was the situation dealt with?

Er I think headlines is always the issue they tend to be the ones that get more tweaking than the rest of the article we have had cases where someone has put in a slightly more scandalous or click-bait headline that doesn't represent the story as well and that might get a few complaints but it's not very often. How is that remedied? it depends we've had one where we had to change the headline because it is no point angering your audience over a clever headline usually we won't just change the paper because one person said they don't like it. We'll go to a discussion if that happens and

just because one company is annoyed because they don't like something we've said about them. It needs more foundation if it is not factually incorrect

Mickey

Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?

um I was an undergraduate. yeah (Oh OK).

How are you employed: full-time, freelance, other forms of work or a mixture of employment agreements?

Full time yeah

How many jobs have you had since graduation?

ummm pause ah five in total I mean um some jobs ran only in the summer times and uh and what not. (OK). I guess five, five gigs overall yeah

Why did you want to become a journalist?

Umm long pause I don't know it just seemed like an exciting thing to do for a living and something a bit out of the ordinary and umm yeah and just something just a little different something with a little bit of adrenaline and um something that was fun and I I like to write as well. And it gave me the opportunity to write.

What does journalism mean to you?

Umm long pause Journalism **pause** at its best means truth I'd say.

What are the main roles of a journalist?

I mean I suppose it's a cliché but to educate inform and entertain really (right)

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

Um yes. Yeah it has it has somewhat err I mean to be honest with you the industry has in the in the almost five years I've been working and in the five years I would say the industry itself has actually changed exponentially in that time even from when I started so yeah the vision I had of journalism as a student is different. There are certain things which are similar but on the whole it's a lot different. A lot more idealistic yeah

In the ongoing debate of journalism being a trade or a profession, which side do you take? Why?

I'd say it is it is a profession ... the quality journalism is a profession amm on some of the smaller titles that I've worked on where they're not selling a great deal of copies and the staff force has been cut so drastically it can feel like a trade when you're forever filling boxes ... told to fill boxes ... and it doesn't really matter what goes into these boxes it does feel like a trade yeah

Is there anyone in journalism who inspires you and if so why?

ahhm long pause I think am someone I suppose it's more I suppose Mehdi Hassan from al Jazeera is a inspiration John Snowchild 4 News um Off the top of my head.

What are your career goals?

(long pause) no idea. No. No Idea. I don't think there is any real structure to journalism really um so I have no idea what the future has in store (OK).

What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry?

ahm Well the Leveson Inquiry was launched on the back of the phone hacking scandal really. Ah. Into the practices of predominantly tabloid journalists and newspapers

Has Leveson had an impact on your career in journalism?

Ahhhm not a great deal to be honest with you. yeah I don't think so. especially I gotta be honest with you because just to sort of just to give you some ah ahm context of how my career has panned out ahm I started out with (name redacted) which is a small backwater weekly newspaper went to (name redacted) which was a larger weekly newspaper but still you know still relatively small. Then went to (name redacted) agency based in (city name redacted) which was an agency which sold or took orders for tabloid newspapers predominantly And then I'd gone to (name redacted) again and I'd say actually on every local newspaper I've worked for the ah morality has been quite high only because only because you can't be seen to just um there's the reputation to uphold. But umm some of the things I was asked to do as an agency journalist and some of the common practices as an agency journalist would make you think that Leveson never happened.

Any specifics?

umm secretly recording people that sort of stuff. umm asking asking 30 people who'll all say one thing until you get one person who says another and running with that quote (right). hounding people waiting at people's doors that sort of stuff

Is that something you did on your own or did that come from on high?

um that was directed mainly that was mainly when you were on order from a newspaper like the especially especially [name redacted] some of the worst and often you'd have reporters from [name redacted] who would have to relay orders through the agency newsdesk but what would happen is they would relay orders straight to the reporters and then push the reporter to do um to do more things essentially.

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

Mmm I would say on the whole you feel like journalists aren't very welcome when you're in places so I don't think journalists are particularly popular at the moment. We are seen in a similar light as police (right ok)

What is your understanding of the public interest?

Inhales mmm tricky one to define really. I mean there's definitely (laughs) definitely you have to make the distinction. There's a lot of things the public is interested in which isn't necessarily in the public interest. (right) I don't know I would say anything involving people which are a role model an example authorities councils police people with high profile positions These people need to be scrutinised more it's it's it's such a grey area it just depends what what ah what the person I mean there are certain things which wouldn't be public interest for some people but would be public interest for others. (right). You know so it doesn't necessarily I don't know it's a difficult one to define. (OK) I think it's one of those things you feel it (pause) you just feel it.

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for? Praised for?

Umm I think intruding into personal grief people just see you as intrusive and insensitive you know asking people questions when, say there's been a murder or someone's been killed in a residential area just going around knocking on doors and taking photographs and stuff of people is intrusive and I would say as journalists you get accused of not being straight with the truth as well.

I would say it's very difficult for a member of the public that is that's been that's not getting a fair time either with the council, um, or with a firm or anything like that and their voice is so small but as soon as a newspaper knocks on that council or that firm's door and says we're running a story about this person and it gets answers to people who have been struggling to get answers for a long time. and tells people things they wouldn't that people tell people information that they would not be able to get on their own. an authorities and the powers-that-be would not tell people umm they're probably the main the main things

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

Yeah I'm very aware of that. And actually the agency gave me a real sense of my moral compass and um what I thought was right and wrong. the fact of the matter is I think you do have to sometimes break a few eggshells to make an omelette but you have to judge that and as long as it's you know your sense of morality compass is in check and and you are according to it you just have to have courage in your convictions really to make the call make the right call

The agency was a preparation for you

Yeah I would say so yeah. It was really just really thrown into the deep end really. umm it was covering the whole of South York- Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and parts of Derbyshire really. so it's a huge patch to cover and it was just the biggest breaking court cases and anything that really happened in the whole area that was yeah it really gave me a moral compass now.

Thinking back to when you were a student, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry?

Definitely was some definitely was some I'd probably say a fair amount. I'd say it's not the sort of thing you could teach in classroom I mean you can to a certain degree and you can tell people what the law is and the general consensus but again every story every situation is different and this is why it's one of those things you do, you feel you, you cross the line sometimes Sometimes you feel maybe I didn't push that line far enough um and I think you just tread your way and I think you just learn what you think is right and wrong and someone else might turn around and say I think what you did was wrong or I think you weren't pushing it hard enough and that's where their line is drawn It's a personal thing you got to figure out (right)

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. How were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues?

umm we were we were basically an email was sent out to everyone in (company redacted) which was a copy of the new guidelines.

Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues faced a moral dilemma? How did this make you feel?

laugh yes yeah lots lots for instances um there was a very tragic incident where the agency found out that a young boy who was about 10 or 11 had hanged himself and we weren't sure if it was an accident or it was a um purpose anyway obviously we go to the house, knock on the door and there was no one in back in the office they start searching for contact details eventually managed to get in touch with the mother of this child and um she's like I don't want to talk about it. and at a local newspaper at this point you'd leave it but they told me to just wait outside her house until she came back and take a photograph and try to get some comments off of her and I said to the photographer I was with I'm going I'm not doing this I just disobeyed the order but it's not always that extreme there was for instance I was doing an order for (name redacted) and it was about a guy in (city redacted) who make a lot of money selling laughing gas cannisters and you know obviously it's not legal to sell those as a drug for a balloon but it's not actually illegal to sell them. Basically you know I had to go to this guy to pitch the sun wanted to do an article about what a great entrepreneur he really was ... really just to stitch him up as being a crack millionaire so it's things like that I think … I think … um … it was the thing of often stating the reasons for being there on door knocks and and actually meaning something else was one thing. I think harassing people or edging to the point of harassment sometimes how they'd make you wait outside people's houses. (OK)

What is a news story?

exhale that's difficult. Well currently in (city redacted) it would be anything … about (city redacted) or people from (city redacted) that just had something quirky about them or something new that no one else had known about

Is there a clear list of what stories your newsroom is interested in?

Well a lot of stuff is sent to us directly story ideas are sent to us and the also reporters are asked to come up with ideas of things they would like to look into which you pitch so you either work on diary where it's a mixture of court breaking news stuff that's sent to you stuff you find out but then you have off diary days like what I was doing today where you suggest an idea off the back of an issue that's been happening and when you are off diary they don't expect any stories from you that day but you've got to then get something together.

What kinds of stories do you write?

Yeah anything really

Are you given stories to pursue or is the emphasis on your generating your own story ideas?

It's about 50-50 (OK). Umm no reward as such but obviously in the newsroom you want to get as many of your stories further to the front of the newspaper really the position that your idea ends up in the paper is really the reward. So if you've got ideas and they are stuck back on page 12 and 13 then it's harder. but if you are suggesting ideas and they are making the front page or page 3 and stuff then that's good.

In what ways have social media and web-based journalism impacted your newsroom?

Ahh it's huge. It's huge.

Is there a significant focus on web analytics?

Yes yeah there's a big team a big digital team now. I mean reporters send all their own stories to the website and usually promote them by Facebook and Twitter. But then there's also a team that decides which stories go on the website and when to repost them and then engage with people on social media as well so yeah I mean in the (name redacted) office alone there is a team of about three digital people.

How much emphasis is placed on covering courts and local authority?

Still a lot of emphasis yeah still a lot of emphasis on that. I mean probably not as much as in previous years in some respect but it's still a big part making sure all the big council announcements and council stories are covered and make sure the council is well scrutinised and making sure that all the well the very least the serious crime and criminals are reported.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

Yeah it has changed. I did actually want to be a tabloid journalist initially and then I um I decided I didn't want to be anymore. So I came back into local newspapers so yeah it has changed it has changed a lot.

To be a tabloid journalist means putting aside the moral compass?

Yeah I think so I think some I think it can be borderline psychopathic for some journalists

How would you assess communication between reporters and editors?

The um the current editor actually the new editor (name redacted) sits with the reporters rather than in the editors office but certainly the deputy editor news editors and such like all sit in the area so there's a lot of dialogue constant dialogue actually.

There are situations where errors are edited into copy. Has this happened to you? How was it resolved?

It certainly has happened in the past yes.

Uh it was an apology really. I raised my annoyance at it and um an apology basically. It's happened once or twice. My credibility is at stake. It's one thing to be criticised for your own mistakes but it's quite a different thing to be criticised for someone else's

Polly

1a. Did you complete an undergraduate or postgraduate degree?

[College name redacted] is where I did my NCTJ as part of the six-month fast track course. I also did an English literature degree in 2013 and then I had then I had a couple of years working to save up for my journalism course.

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

I am full-time employed.

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?

One.

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

I do have an interest in people. I don't really enjoy sort of small talky conversations I like to feel that I'm getting to know people so that was one of the reasons. As I said I've got an English literature degree and I really do love writing. I'm also interested in public affairs really and sort of news going on around me.

What are the main roles of a journalist?

Oh, ah, hard question. The main roles? The main roles are to be able to seek out stories, develop an instinct as to where might be but might not be immediately obvious. It's important to be able to relate to lots of different kinds of people. It's important to be assertive but not in an overly pushy or aggressive kind of way. And to just be aware of events that are happening in your community really.

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

I think I was quite lucky in that my brother… my older brother… has also been a reporter and so before I did my college course I heard a lot of things that he said and I thought I had quite a good sense of the kinds of expectations that would be on me working in a newsroom I've probably go more awareness now and I'm better at… more confident than when I first started college but I think because my brother was a journalist I had an idea of being a top journalist doing amazing stories all time or working in a local newsroom.

1g. What are your career goals?

At the moment I see myself in the next maybe 3 to 5 years I'd love to develop my court reporting skills and move on to more crime reporting. I quite like I really like working on a weekly newspaper and I'd love working towards becoming a chief reporter at this newspaper.

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

I probably should know more than I do, ah, just the Leveson Inquiry was an investigation into the practices of journalism and now there are a lot tighter rules in the way we conduct our investigations.

Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

Ah, because I've started my career quite recently I've only been a reporter for about 18 months probably not because it had all come into force by the time I started

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

I don't think the public trusts journalists all that much which is a shame. I think it's not helped by recent hackings and things like that but I also think that it's very frustrating now when we have to go through for instance police and public relations teams they can be very difficult and not willing to give you information and obviously we can only report the information that's been given to us. And if that's limited and that's what people see that we've published sometimes they think we're not doing our jobs probably and not investigating enough and I think that can lead to the perception that we're lazy and we're not bothered and why should people tell us things when in reality we can only publish the information that is being given to us.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

So for example if I was reporting a court case that involved a defendant under the age of 18 if they crime was particularly horrific or bad and if we thought that the public deserved to know the name of that person then you would challenge a court order in order to report their name

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for? Praised for?

Ah… quite a lot of things really. Not spinning stories but I guess making a story sound more exciting than it maybe actually is in reality or as I mentioned not reporting enough detail and if we can't get it from PR teams or we can't it from the sources we need to get it from. And obviously we get accused a lot of if people are involved we make them look bad Ah or just things like that really.

Praised for?

Ah I think we're praised for making people aware of crimes that have gone on, making people aware of what's happening, for identifying criminals and for writing stories about people we're interviewing who have good achievements or again good in charity in their communities for having an interest and awareness in our communities.

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

Ah, I think that after I've had all the exams about the editors code of practice and court reporting and I won't be able to list every single rule I've sat exams in but I do think that my qualifications have instilled in me a common sense and instinct in things I'm allowed to report on and not report on and if there's anything I'm unsure then I know I can always ask my editor.

When did you graduate from the college program?

2015

How much emphasis was placed in your journalism modules with relation to ethics and regulation?

I'd say a lot ah I'd say there's quite a high degree of it by putting us in real life situations and sitting in court and seeing the rules and ethics put into practice.

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

I think we were sent an email about it. We pretty much had to look it up ourselves.

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

Ah, not really. This may sound awful but I've done death knocks but I didn't feel… the person they have to be want to speak to me but if they said no then of course I would just have left it I wouldn't push it or anything like that.

3b. How did that make you feel?

I was nervous very nervous about their reaction of being asked to speak to me but I didn't feel I didn't feel I was doing anything morally wrong.

4a. What is a news story?

In [town name redacted] it's obviously breaking news, crime stories, traffic accidents, community events new business openings charity fundraising and then… I don't necessarily agree with this but I'm sure you're aware there's a lot of pressure in newspapers now to get a lot of website hits it also means we do a lot of news stories about celebrity kind of news or TV news or that kind of thing.

4b. What kind of stories do you write?

I write crime stories, new business openings, entertainment, charity fundraising stories and public affairs everything really.

Are you given stories to pursue?

It's a mix I come across my own stories and get stories assigned to me.

4d. How much emphasis is placed on journalists covering courts and council meetings?

I'd say there's still quite a lot of emphasis on the important stories but not quite as much as before since pressures have been brought in about website hits that kind of thing but as a trainee reporter I do see they want me to develop those skills where I'm going to court and council.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

I hoped so (laugh) I think it's different for everyone and when I have conversations with my deputy editor about my progress I've always been told I'm doing fine and we've had reporters come in who have been ahead of me but we've also had reporters come in who are behind me and I think the main thing you've got a willingness to put yourself out there and try and take on court stories and council stories you might be nervous about at first and have a willingness to give it a try but I do think it's I don't think it's a race.

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

Ah unfortunately at my newspaper recent one of the editors was made redundant recently and now our editor is now the editor of the [paper name redacted] and the [paper name redacted] as well and sometimes I feel because of the pressure she's under communication is not as good as it could be so with my colleagues I do think we tend to communicate quite well and so we help each other out.

Rory

Exploratory questions related to journalist identity

1a. You went through the college?

Yes, that's right. It's called a six-month fast track course. Ah, if you pass all the modules, ah, you are, ah, qualified to become a trainee journalist If you get taken on. I studied at ah, [name redacted] and I actually did broadcast journalism and I chose to do my NCTJ through [name redacted] after that.

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

Ah yeah full time yeah

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?

Ah (long pause) ah I'd say freelance stuff probably two or three. I graduated uni in 2013 and college in 2015 so I did a PR placement … media PR placement six months for a charity and worked for [name redacted] and [name redacted] on a freelance basis and, ah, before joining [name redacted] so … about three, about three jobs

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

I think I've always been very interested in how news is organised … or trade to people ah it's always seemed like an exciting job. Ah from the outset I grew up reading newspapers as a young kid, a young child at my grandmother's breakfast table where I used to have breakfast sometimes I used to read Daily Mirror and Sheffield Star actually so I was very intrigued about how people got stories how to write stories stuff like that. And it's not just a job it changes on a daily basis and that's how I happen to be in the industry now

1d. What does journalism mean to you?

I think for my job I think it's telling a story but also giving people both sides of the argument at the same time, ahm, in journalism also it is important to give people a voice when they may not have one in other conventional forms … it's like giving people a voice up against, you know, councils, when they feel like they've been wronged in some way. Ahm, journalism to me is about truth in a lot of respects. It's about holding authority to account. I've done lots of stories now about [name redacted] council complaints department and how they've mishandled complaints, ah, stuff like that. I think it's holding authority… keeping their feet to the fire and basically telling the story without too much … I'd say too much bias … you know, trying to keep (pause) clear as possible for the reader as well. That's important

What are the main roles of a journalist?

I think it's a lot of what I've just said. The main role of the journalist is to tell the story well (pause) being a voice to people who may not have a voice in other conventional forms of life. I think the role ... the role of the journalist is to keep, ahm, the (long pause) … quite a hard question actually … I think it's to keep people on the toes when … when „„ people in power who are electable like councilors MPs people like that I think it's keeping them (Pause) to account and really (pause) showing that (pause) people … hmm it's a tough one (in audible whispering repeating the question to himself). I think there are different ways you can answer that but off the top of my

head I think it really is giving a voice … succinctly to your question … giving a voice to people who feel they may not have one and listening to their story and really holding authorities to account

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

I do think I was quite— Ah I think I speak for a lot of students … journalism students … who go through this a lot of people are like, ah, of what the job actually entails … a lot people think it's a really exciting fast paced environment which it is and also it can be very stressful ahm, and you learn very quickly if you're not organised … you know daily … with your workflow of jobs to do then stuff gets left by the wayside sometimes. I think being organised is very very important. I think a lot … a lot of students sometimes don't … well … they don't realise what they're getting into and it seems pretty tough when you get into it but it seems pretty easier when you get a bit of training.

1e. In the ongoing debate of journalism being a trade or a profession, which side do you take? Why?

Essentially it's almost, to me, a job. At the end of the day it's all … being a journalist … you know … for some people it's held in quite high esteem and for others it's not but to me it's a job first of all and certainly it's a trade because you're developing a series of skills that are very vital to the job and I do think it's a trade yes, ah, I would class it as a trade.

1f. Is there anyone in journalism who inspires you and, if so, why?

Long pause (sigh) … not … not not particularly. No one's sort of … what I try to stay away from … ok … well aspiring to be I would probably I've always liked how BBC reports straight down the middle non-biased, non-partisan so no one in particular … ah, just trying to think off the top of my head (long pause) Robert Peston is a broadcaster I think he's very different always puts across his points very well Robert Peston used to be on ITV … BBC now. IN print Ken Maguire at the Daily Mirror ah ahm yes off the top of my head I'd say Robert Peston and Ken Maguire

1g. What are your career goals?

It's a tricky one. I am due to sit my senior journalism exams in March next year so the short-term goal is to pass that which comes with a pay rise and then I'll be classed as a senior reporter. Ah but the long-term goal will probably … I've not thought about this often … to get along to bigger and better things … no disrespect to [name redacted] but I'd consider moving to London or Manchester because that's where a lot of the lead jobs are now. But in terms of the career going into PR or press … the idea of being a press officer doing a bog standard 9 to 5 is more work than a reporter. The general consensus you get is they are on way more money which gets people's backs up slightly. Ah, in terms of PR it wouldn't be a bad thing so possibly moving to PR or being a press officer ah later on in life but I'd be open to an opportunity in Manchester if the opportunity arose

Leveson Inquiry

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

The Leveson inquiry was carried out ehm due to the reckless nature in a lot of papers on people who felt it was big invasion of their privacy. I think the Leveson inquiry was good and I think it was long overdue in some respects. The new press complaints commission keeps it stronger than the one before it that was, that was good because newspapers, you know, were recklessly pursuing sensational stories. Phone hacking to any journalist would be absolutely appalling and I also think and I think this might be coming up in your later questions when I meet people for the first time and tell people what I do people sometimes might have a joke … sometimes people say to me ooh don't hack my phone or something like that which is which is a bit of a joke but to good, honest journalists it can be very worrying. I do think Leveson was a very positive step into drawing a very clear line between public interest and respecting privacy

Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

I think it's given … I think in local newspapers it's slightly different. I think you've got to realise local newspapers is … a lot of the nationals who carried out some of this stuff I'm not going to name names it's pretty obvious who a quick Google search should tell you who did it. I think on local newspapers I think with stories we have to approach it with extra caution because we have to work in the same city that these people are living in. So we have to … basically … breathe the same air as these people everyday whereas another newspaper … another national newspaper maybe they might use a news agency to go out to a scene and possibly this report may struggle with ethical rules to get the story or they won't feel to beat the cushions on that but when they leave the place afterwards it's … you know … they turn up, get the story and go away whereas with local reporters have to deal with the consequences of that. In terms of how it's affected me in terms of the inquiry and I am aware of it but I don't think in local newsrooms it's an issue … in your local newsroom you are extremely careful anyway. A lot more careful than the nationals because we don't have the money to fight a lengthy legal battle

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

I think it is low. I think it is quite low. I do think there is a lack of trust in journalists. Then I also think if one person had a bad experience with a journalist news gets around and they will tell other people. But also when I have done what are called death door knocks where people die and you go out to the family's house knock on their door and ask if they'd like to be interviewed … you have to go around there and say it's a tribute piece to your son or daughter, mum, dad, grandma, granddad etc. We're not here to, we're not here to, dish dirt, you know, we're not interfering. And if they tell us to go away … you know … we go away. Now a lot of people will be pleasantly surprised after, especially with me and other people in the newsroom who have gone out to stuff like this and we've handled stuff with care and they've often said thank you. There is that side to it but I think they still see us … [name redacted] in general I think they do see us as respectful newspaper but also I think the online

stuff is slightly more tabloidy so (long pause) a lot people definitely say [name redacted] is full of rubbish but then there are those people who buy it every day and read it cover to back and go on the website as well so I think it's a bit of a mixed message but I do think that a lot of people do mistrust journalists but they are looking at the stuff that went on in the hacking scandal and those journalists are giving journalists a bad name

What is your understanding of the public interest?

I think the public interest is what it is. I think if it is the public's right to know then I think it's worth doing then there's always that line between privacy and public interest but I think you have to weigh it up on a case by case basis. I don't always think that … we often have a debate in the newsroom that we something on Facebook that some thing if it's on Facebook for everyone to see then it's not private others will say otherwise so I think for the public interest it has to be seen on a case by case basis

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for? Praised for?

I think journalists are … I think journalists are criticised for a number of things but I think mainly the one that I've seen on social media is one … is flippant comments of lazy journalism not getting the facts right when I think a lot of people don't understand how we've come to that bit conclusion eh I don't always … I think a lot of people misunderstand the role we play in the town that we represent and I think the main … it's quite a hard one because we often get a bit of stick for possibly weather stories like when we do stories about snow and when it doesn't snow we get grief saying ah that, you know, that you're lying but if it's come from the Met Office that's a reliable source but people don't always see that people just look at us and go ah it's the [name redacted] they're lying it's stuff like that it's quite a hard one and they say why don't you uncover scandals or stuff like that and I think every local newsroom probably tell you differently. It's a case of manpower as well they want proper news but we do always cover news a lot of the proper news sometimes is not read as much and a really sensational news, I'm struggling to think of one off the top of my head ahm, we did a story about a woman who was walking through [name redacted] city centre with no clothes on and a lot of people who read that said it was lazy journalism but we can justify that because it's not lazy journalism it's a story because it's read by thousands and thousands of people whereas a story that is proper cornerstone journalism might not be read as much. I do think people give us stick

Praised for?

I think journalists are rarely rarely praised especially local journalism. I think we are rarely praised but when we are praised I think it is for stories that are important to the community that we serve and again some of the stories some reporters might write that are important to some people like a charity story or something that's not hard hitting breaking news or anything like that. In my own experience, I did a story about 30 guys who shaved their hair off for charity raising money for a mate who had cancer and the story wasn't, you know, wasn't a big story, might not be the greatest story that I've done, but it had so much feedback and lots of people saying thank you for helping fundraise and stuff like that. I think, I think, there is a flipside to it but on the whole I think journalists sometimes don't get credit that they deserve in some

respects because some of the stories, the man hours, that might be put into stuff and how certain stories are crafted, put together, isn't seen so the praise goes missing sometimes

2b. Thinking back to your student years around 2011 and 2012, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry as they unfolded?

There was (pause) a full module dedicated to law, media law, which is very very important to any journalist. You have to know your law or you won't be allowed in any newsroom. Ahm ethics less so but there was always … there was always a module on ethics but ethics at university was more about a discussion not merely about how to handle a situation when you're in the newsroom. It was more an academic discussion on ethics. It wasn't put into context in a real life situation so ethics was taught and media law was very important

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

Public interest defences have helped. A lot of people do have a negative view of journalists who and will cry foul. Many of the clauses in Ipso are … over half of them have got public interest defences I think that does help us but again it's handled on a case by case basis. We got given out… I've got a copy of the editors' code on my desk and sometimes I'll have a really quick look and I think it is really important but again you have to take it on a case by case basis and I do think, especially for a local paper, without a massive budget, legal budget, it is important to be extra careful.

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

(long pause) I'd probably say previously when in [name redacted] when someone was murdered and I was working on the weekend and we got told off the record that he died by a good source and the family was not happy with that information being shared and I found it hard to explain to this woman who had contacted me that it was public interest that this man had died. It was a very very hard difficult thing to handle obviously a very emotional time for the family but we had to, I had to think, I was told this by a source off the record told by a police source who asked not to be named or to say where the source came from. But I just said the source had told the [name redacted] that his person had died but the family weren't really happy about that. But I think in a case like this where the guy was first on life support I think the ethics kind of comes into question at that point But I think the public interest outweighed … because you do get a lot of stick online sometimes some reporters might cave others stand firm you can't please everyone obviously but then they say we intruded into family life and stuff like that and then you stop to think someone, someone's, been killed and the public has a right to know about that.

4a. What is a news story?

I think … I think the most important thing about a news story is that first of all it's got to be about people everyday people living living in [name redacted] in [name redacted] where I cover but it's also got to be again about holding people to account in positions of power and prestige in certain roles eh I think representing the

community standing up for [name redacted] standing up for the people we write about as well I think that's also extremely important. We use all sorts press releases we get calls come in tips emails sent to us you kind of decide if it's a story on how it affects people affects [name redacted] if someone's been wronged by a council or police or something like that or something in the public interest in a certain area of [name redacted]

4b. What kind of stories do you write?

I write virtually everything. I mean I write, like today, I've been tackling FOIs from police [name redacted] council. For me it's mainly hard news but I do all sorts of stuff for people who want to do charity. I wrote a feature about a name who was made homeless and found a charity that turned his life around and who's walking 90 miles across the UK to raise money for charity. I've done literally, mainly as a trainee, I need to pass my senior exam in march I have to show 40 stories from 20 different categories so that's police, crime, charity stuff, all sorts of stuff I do all sorts of stuff court I've done quite a lot of court [name redacted] crown court attended press conferences so it is a good mix.

How much emphasis is placed on journalists generating their own story ideas?

I think it does … I think it does vary a lot of … a lot of, ah … reporters do offer their own stories … definitely not everything that I write is is my own stuff. I do get some stories to do. Ah, the stories that are generated by reporters … I mean, again the classic one for a local reporter is taking a national issue and make it … and find a [name redacted] angle for it. If it's a government ruling, how does that affect [name redacted] how does that affect the people of [name redacted] how many people will be affected … the Brexit example the high court ruling speaking for the cabinet member about how this ruling will affect people in [name redacted]. Maybe the bedroom tax … yeah we often find that we get press releases come through to us and… you know… if it's you know if people of [name redacted] might read about then we include it. We're not … I'm not really house proud. I will not not use a press release but obviously as a journalist you often find that some of your best stories come from your own … from your own ideas … so it is a mixture.

4c. In what ways have social media and web-based journalism impacted what is meant by news in your newsroom?

Social media is massive. It's absolutely huge. I mean I can't stress the importance of social media. I mean we have a night reporter who … who … as we speak now will be trolling Twitter for any breaking updates. I think, especially Twitter, and Facebook as well for… Facebook is an ever-increasing tool, ahm, for lots of various reasons … some of my best stories have come from Facebook. Ahm, from people posting stuff on Facebook and I've contacted them and I've made some of my most hard hitting stories have come from Facebook. I wrote about a guy, a 15-year-old lad, who got who got beaten up by 30 … 30 kids on a school playing field, ahm, some of the pictures as well … some of the best pictures that we've, ah, that we've published have come from Facebook. Ahm, I really can't stress how big it is. Ah, I

think it provides a lot of content. Especially in a big city like [name redacted] there's always something knocking around.

(The photos from facebook you have to get permission…)

Yeah yeah yeah we always ask permission and we'd say 'would you mind if we use your photo for publication' and we'd always ask them, ah, I know there's … I know there's … especially well I know of other organisations who may use a Facebook photo ah without permission … on the whole yeah we definitely ask permission

4d. How much emphasis is placed on journalists covering courts and council meetings?

I think especially for [name redacted] council and [name redacted] crown court there are always stories that are available to paper. Court stories do extremely well for the website ah certain court stories, if the affects are there, if they are about a specific area of [name redacted] then it's quite good. Councils … there is a real emphasis on covering council as well. Again, you know, we used to have a council reporter who does literally everything council council council. Now it's usually shared out to the reporters because we don't have the manpower anymore but we try and cover them as much as we can. Everyone is always poring through council documents to see, ah, you know, if there's anything hidden in there because some of the best stories I find … especially council stories… are hidden away where the average person on the street may not may not want to spend time going through. So yeah no definitely courts and council, especially for a local newsapaper is actually pinnacle for our work flow. Stuff that goes in the paper yeah.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

At the age I'm at now? Ah, (long pause) yes and no. Ah before I broke into journalism full time I was working in a bar. Ah I was very very close … breaking into that first full time in journalism is absolutely … it's really difficult. Ah I was working full- I was working about 30 hours a week in a bar and, you know, I was doing well and they actually offered me if I wanted to join the fast-track management scheme. I was very … I was considering hitting journalism on the head because, you know, I got loads of offers to do stuff for free but I said I want paying, you know, So, it was a difficult one that point. Thinking from back then to where I am now it's a complete world away I suppose but I … I supposed when I was at uni I would have like to have thought at age 18 years old I would be at this point but the age I am now there was a time when I left uni when I thought it would be quite difficult to find myself in a situation like I am now … so yes and no. Depends on how far you look back.

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

How do I assess that? Mainly yeah yeah I mean (long pause) just to double check with this what I'm dong here my name won't be published or what or the publication I work for? (No no I will be redacting that). Yeah I mean on my personal experience our former chief editor who I … I hardly spoke to in probably 12 months of me being there whereas our new editor is very very approachable I can go into her office and talk to her whenever I want to and our news editor I can speak to even

though we're at other ends of the office You know if I'm working on a big story I'll always pitch it to the news editor I say pitching I'll do that informally. Ah, yeah, it's mainly it's quite open the communication channels. I always find that between me and the news editor we interact quite often so yeah it's a fairly open process sometimes it could be better sometimes but it's quite good.

There have been instances where errors have been "edited into copy" during the production phase? Has this ever happened to any of your stories? How was the situation dealt with?

Yeah I mean yeah it happens to be I get … I've often emailed … less so now..., in the early parts of my career I'd send copy through, you know, with mistakes in it and sometimes it would get missed I've sent it through and it's got past the news editor and two subs as well before it's printed and obviously it's slightly annoying but again it's gone through myself as the trainee and it's gone through three other people. Yeah I mean it has happened once or twice where I've sent stuff I mean I've had one time where I sent copy over and a news editor changed a couple of lines and it and it kind of shifted the story to another area and I got quite annoyed by it where I had to confront the person about that but that' sonly happened once. But mainly we run a quite tight ship actually if there's any if there's any mistakes before deadline te sub editor will come over and point it out and stuff like that. There's no big no big inquiry or anything like that but if it's quite a big mistake the news editor might come over and say come on you need to sort that out. It's not a big … I feel bad saying it's not a big deal but the amount of stories people do and the amount of words on the paper something will you know something will get through it's human error a mistake sometimes they get through but you try to get it right before you send your copy on

Rose

1a. You did an undergraduate degree?
Yes

b. When did you graduate
Uh just this year yeah 2015

You started in 2000--
and 12.

ok
I did the journalism course (ok)

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?
Yeah full time um permanent not freelance permanent um reporter on a group of newspapers

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?
Oh wow em so I finished uni and while I was still here I was doing a lot of work experience at the same time managed to get a freelancing job at the radio sta- the BBC radio station worked for quite a jobs did that then did a bit of freelancing for the new paper group I'm at now but I did it for different titles so technically two jobs because I've done the BBC freelancing and then I got taken on permanently from the freelancing I did

OK
but I work on like quite a lot of different titles it's weird it's just how it works.

OK I know how that is.
Yes.

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?
Everybody asks me this and now I'm doing I know that it is the best job in the world. I think 1. I'm a nosy person (laugh). 2. I've always taken an interest in news items from being quite young I spent a lot of time with my grandma and stuff and she'd always have the radio on which had a lot of talking programmes not necessarily music like, you know, young people might listen to stereotypically. Um and I always was inquisitive about things and when I was 12 I got a job I was a paper girl and would sneakily (laugh) read some of the newspapers before I sort of posted them through the letter boxes um and I've always had-- I've always liked writing talking about news telling stories every part of being a journalist really meeting new people.

1d. What does journalism mean to you?
(exhales) I think it is the best job in the world. I think it's the importance of what's in the public interest I think there's also that element of keeping people entertained with things like features which I've done a lot more of since I started my job here. I did a lot of hard news when I was at uni a lot of sort of working in teams for stuff but now I've also had a chance to do features and you know things like reviews that people might enjoy reading so for me it's got such a broad sprect - spectrum - it's hard to explain. Every- (laughs) to me journalism is my life because I just don't find anything more fascinating than asking questions and meeting new people

OK.

Does that make sense?

Yeah

(laugh)

What are the main roles of a journalist?

Um a journalist in news is to … deliver anything that's in the public interest. Em and that's obviously not necessarily things the public are interested in although you know with things like features and things that might come to but it's to sort of uncover anything that might need uncovering it's to ask questions that people might not necessarily ask you know if a council is putting something out there. People might believe what they're saying. You might need to question them and you might need to sort of get both sides of an argument and I think that's the main thing I've learned whilst working is that getting both sides of an argument is a big part of being a journalist as well

How has your perception of journalism changed from when you were a student? Would you say you had a more or less idealistic perception of journalism when you were a student?

Em yes because and I know this might sound a bit daft but I've spoken to a lot of people who were on my course since and not many others have actually gone into the profession but they sort of saw it as this big thing where it was glamourous to be a journalist whereas I knew no matter where I end up and, you know, I am aspirational and I do want a career out of it and not just a job I'm doing day in day out. (inhale) I knew I wanted to start off in regional news and I knew it was going to be hard and I knew there was going to be some horrible jobs but at the end of the day when you've done some horrible jobs and when you've gone out and do the things no one else wants to do because I'm a trainee and these things happen I still feel fulfilled at the end of the day. So I do think it was idealistic.

And how has your thinking changed since you started working?

Since I've been working? Oh (laugh) this is a good one (laughs). Em, quite a lot actually. em because I think I was a little bit nervous about it all at first and I thought I was going to have a lot of time on stories whereas now there is all the legal things. We have checks and balances in place but there just enough time because there just isn't enough staff. So I tend to find I'm a lot more concentrated and I'm getting things done as fast as I can and I'm not as leisurely as I was at university where you have months to hand assignments in if that makes sense.

1e. In the ongoing debate of journalism being a trade or a profession, which side do you take? Why?

Oh I've read Andrew Marr's book as well. em …. at the moment where I'm working I actually do see it as a trade because there's a knack to it there's a way you get around your contacts and all that side of things. However, I have been for job interviews at places like the BBC and I do still do a lot of work with them where they are run, I'd say a lot more professionally and academically. I think it can vary depending on the organisation but I'd say what I'm doing at the minute I feel it's more like a trade

1f. Is there anyone in journalism who inspires you and, if so, why?

Ooh … (laughs) I go through phases with it I suppose I'd read columnists like, I'd read Caitlyn Moran and I'd think oh deary me I'd thinks she's quite quirky I'd probably like to write some entertaining pieces like her but then I'd look at investigative journalists and there's a woman who puts together a current affairs program on investigations at the BBC she's called Gail Champion and I think she's quite good. So yeah, I can't pinpoint anyone specifically but I'd say across the board there are quite a lot. Sorry if you were looking for someone more specific

no

1g. What are your career goals?

Em … never stay in the same place or the same job too long. So always try and progress or try a new role. Em …. I don't necessarily think at the minute I can determine exactly where I want to be because I've got to gather different experiences but to stay on print or online I'd certainly like to take on different reporters' roles specific ones maybe a crime reporter but ideally I'd like to end up in broadcast eventually but that could be doing anything

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

Well … it was all happening whilst I was at university and it was good because we had {**NAME REDACTED**} who as you know he's very good with his law and public affairs and things that were happening. Em so we had updates on the Leveson Inquiry and when it all, you know, when it all came out. I know what's come out of it is x and it's all change in terms of who runs it and the code have … the code has changed slightly. At work we are given copies of the code, actually I've brought one to show you. Would you like to see it. Might have brought a spare one There's been some updates in it hasn't there? So you … I'm sure I brought some I have a lot of these things ah I might not have got it. Ah hah.

That's quite tiny. So you carry that around?

So this is what they give us at work. So if …. sorry … I was telling you about Leveson So the Leveson Inquiry we all followed since it all came about because of the phone hacking scandal and a lot of people were interviewed and um more importantly I know what came out of it in the end which was Ipso and there were these new regulations but none of them are actually … there isn't any sort of hard laws with a lot of them yet but it is all anticipated … Would you agree with that?

Yes

So the Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

Yes

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

Oh ho ho. That is a good question. I think obviously I work in regional news so it's slightly different but and I think this is the digital age as well you can see what people think of journalists by the Facebook posts when you post stories on the Facebook page. And there are a lot of swear words on there and we have to remove a lot of posts journalists this, journalists that and sometimes I can go to a job I'm trying to think … there was an incident the other month where a lady was trying to jump off

a building and the fire brigade and everyone were out there and I got sent out to the scene to see what happened afterwards So I sort of went into the pub and I had a chat, with the permission of the landlord of course (laugh), and had a chat to a couple of people about what they'd seen um I asked one guy if he'd mind talking to me I'd told him straightaway who I was and what I wanted and the impression you get from them is oh well are you going hack into my phone or are you going to pay me loads of money then otherwise go away because that's what journalists do otherwise you're just going to print lies about me. And that is what I tend to get a lot of the time. I feel like I really have to be myself and talk to them like a normal person to earn their trust in me. I feel like I have to put the extra effort in than maybe I would have had to before [rising inflection] if that makes sense (yes) But obviously I wasn't a journalist before but that's how I feel.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

Public interest … em … is I mean it's hard to I find it quite hard to define but it's obviously unveiling something for the public to see you know if they've been misled by something or if it's revealing crime that's happened. I mean Obviously it's everything within the code of practice. So if there is anything I ever need to refer to I know certain clauses are sort of passable if it's within the public interest. So, not that I've ever had to do it, but I always look at them and think just in case.

OK.

What sort of things do you see journalists criticised for? Praised for?

Uh … me personally looking at them or

yes.

Um … I think there is all sorts these days. I think if you're looking at the tabloids a lot of the things they -- I mean they used to get criticised for phone hacking and things and now it's a lot of the scandals where sometimes it might be things like they go on fishing expeditions to catch out MPs by posing as 16-year-old girls or 13-year-old girls and they've gone out looking for that. They didn't receive a tip-off. I think the perception … the thing journalists are being criticised for is they have no reason to do it and sometimes they might be making the news or creating a bit of trouble with it. But I mean with regional papers where I work this certainly is not the case because it's a very different audience and I think that's sort of a key thing I'd outline with that.

OK

Em ... if their investigations come to light ... good freedom of information requests and I think freedom of information is done a lot. I mean look at the MP expenses scandal that was an attempted repeated FOI and when it got leaked it was well done. Rotherham sex abuse scandal I'm from Rotherham so that, for me, when that was revealed, they have, it's things within the public interest they're getting praise for because they're revealing something that's been going off and it's been a scandal then they've done a good job with it.

For example like the Panama Papers is another good one

The what? Sorry?

The Panama Papers? the offshore accounts

Oh Yes yes. Sorry. Yeah I mean that's key as well. Because the MPs won't like … the MPs won't be praising them but the public will be. It could be a biased argument but journalists have to balance it.

Do you think the public appreciates the work that went into the Panama Papers?

Actually I was thinking this the other day. I was reading about how long it took them. My first thought the poor journalists who had to sit who had to sit through all those papers. I enjoy what I'm doing but I'm running left, right and centre at the minute and I'm not at that level yet. and I think I appreciate it as a journalist but I don't necessarily think, my dad, for example, he's a regular working class man I don't think he would get how much work it is. Yeah I Yeah

How aware are you of conducting your career with the best possible practices in your daily professional life?

(laughs asks for elaboration)

When you're doing your stories are you aware of using proper ethical practices? Is that a big factor for you?

Yes all the time. They all have a bit of a running joke with me at the office because, can you understand my accent by the way

yes.

I talk funny I know. Because if I go out I'll sort of vox pops or or there was a really bad robbery at a house the other month and I went to go and knock on the door and I always ring up my boss if I'm out on the job I ring him up and tell him this is what I'm doing is it right is there anything I need to do and I will boss him around he doesn't necessarily ask me to ring him but he appreciates that I do and he will give me the advice and the guidance and it's always really sound em, but I'll always refer back to the code of practice and it's always with me at all times and I'll think, mmm, this is not harassment (laughs)

2b. Thinking back to your student years around 2011 and 2012, how much emphasis was placed in the classroom on learning about or keeping track of the developments in the Leveson Inquiry as they unfolded?

Oh that was in my first year and that would have been a module, I don't think it exists anymore, called journalism law and society which was like a combination of PA and law.

right.

Em, and then I had {REDACTED NAME} for law again in my final year where Leveson was all finished. It was nice with that sort of break in modules.

How much emphasis was placed in your journalism modules with relation to ethics and regulation?

Yes, I would say so however they were through chosen modules. I think in first year that was the basis we got. but every other module we did the ethics in was a module I'd chosen

Have you received special training on the editors' code of conduct? On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

Oh well this is quite interesting. We have an intranet for the company and we have a thing called training. It's like a training section. It's exactly like Blackboard actually it looks like Blackboard and we go in and we had to do a training thing so there were multiple choice questions um and then there was, like a, a bit where we watched 12 slides and we had to answer questions about what we'd do in certain scenarios so they actually tested us on it and they gave us a deadline of, I think it was two weeks to get it completed. So we actually had a test to do and then we were give these (points to pamphlets) at the same time and anybody who didn't do so well it in, I think we had pass with like 90 percent and then everybody had to be spoken to about it if there was any problems. I think that quite, and I was impressed by that, actually I know I shouldn't be because but I was impressed

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

Yeah there's been a few things I mean even if it's a few things like doing a death knock I always think 'God are we infringing on them if they only died yesterday' but the deadline for the papers is this afternoon and we need it that kind of thing is always horrible and whenever that happened I always say to the editor look this is the case and sometimes he will say to me no that's bang out of order don't go near them that's not fair but he will always say look knock on the door, tell them we want a tribute. This always happens with death knocks because people always happen to die -- just by coincidence that's a bit of a joke by the way -- probably shouldn't have said that (nervous laughter). It always seems to happen just as we're having a deadline so it's like do we get out there or do we leave it a week because then it's old news isn't it and It's that sort of agenda of whether it's worth going out so it's always necessarily, not necessarily something we'd obviously demand but we'd just knock on the door and say do you want to pay a tribute we're looking at putting something in the paper and if it's a no then we walk away and that is how it is. We won't haggle.

(Have you done a lot of death knocks?)

Yes I was sent out to one in my first week.

3b. How did that make you feel?

Umm ... I had a panic I pretended I needed the loo for half an hour and I didn't I was dithering (laughs). Obviously did a lot of research on death knocks whilst I was at uni. I did an essay on it actually um at one point and I thought to myself, right, I need to get out there it's got to be done once the first one's done I'll be find doing the rest but it's a scary thing

Right

um and I did that I think it was my fourth day that I was in {PLACE REDACTED} but we have quite a high public interest death rate with people sort of crashing and that sort of stuff so I tend to do them

right

quite a bit. So I have done quite a few I would say.

4a. What is a news story?

Ooh okay so anything we would deem suitable for the front of the paper so things so we can have hard or soft news things that our readership, our audience, would want to read or things that are in the public interest. Is that what you're looking for?

What are the ground rules of how news is defined?

Yeah so we all have our own news gathering time. uh and we'll all have certain days where we might be sent out on patch to investigate certain things or to go and speak to people or do to vox pops to follow up a story that we've already got. Em and we'll have meetings and sometimes the editors will give us stories that they want us to follow up because they will already deem them newsworthy. but in the news meeting we'll go through them with a list and they will tell us. Um because we work from different offices we have a weekly news meeting on the phone, you know like on a conference call, and it's all very bizarre.

Is it a weekly or daily?

It's a string of weeklies. It's 14 weeklies but it ends up being like a daily by the time you've done it, yeah.

Is there a clear list of what sorts of stories your newsroom is interested in?

Em not necessarily no. I mean I'm trying to think now … because there's so few of us it's a bit of a free for all in terms of who gets what because we don't have specialist reporters or anything like that. So I think it's a case of sometimes of having too much stuff anyway for the papers. But if there's anything that we are lacking the editor will say where is this or can somebody please follow this up for next week. If that makes sense.

4b. What kind of stories do you write?

Yes we're on a rota So this next week coming up I'll be on calls so I'll be getting up at 7 in the morning ringing through to the fire, police voice bands so any breaking stories I'll be covering that way. And if anything happens for example if there is a house fire it's up to be to get in touch with the fire press officers to follow the story up if we need pictures, video comments um it can sometimes be passed on to a reporter who deals with print if there's a lot of things happening breaking, in breaking news. Um and then I'll have two weeks on pages emm where I will uh will be assigned, it's really weird, there's a new thing called page flow where technically we have to fill three pages a day (voice inflection rises). Which is quite bizarre which doesn't count breaking stories that's all for the web to be followed up for the paper. So for your three pages it could be three leads and bits of down page or it could be double page spread and lead you'd sort of liaise with the editor what you want so at the beginning of the week I would say this is what I want to do so types of stories I could cover could be anything from if we there's something with the hospital, the hospital went into special measures, I've covered that that was obviously double page and front page so it's a massive variety of stories. education. it's just a chan- a case of keeping my list updated and it's constantly crossing things off a list.

Are you given stories to pursue?

Um sometimes So if for example we might get a press release through where the editor likes something in the press release and they want a story making from it so more comments from it vox pops and things it might get passed on to me. um and they'll say do you want to follow this up. However, because I'm working in the news team and not on the community team it only happens like … once every couple of weeks. It might not be a big job I need to do. It just depends what it is.

How much emphasis is placed on journalists generating their own story ideas?

Yes … and just making sure we've got all bases covered.

What do you mean by bases covered?

So to make sure that we've an appropriate balance of save the MPs in there. We obviously don't want too many stories to do with the MP or whatever. So that's why at the beginning of the week we'll have the discussion with the editor because we don't want a paper full of similar stories. So he'll sort of put together what he wants the variety to be and say we'll have this story that can be on your three pages for today that can be on yours and he'll tell us. Does that answer your question?

What are the three pages? Do you have to write enough for three pages?

Yes it's bizarre the system is you write onto the pages so the templates are on there now so you can sort of tell them what templates you can't mess with them yourself otherwise it has to go to the design team. It's mental. I think it's all budget cutbacks and things. there's the headline we have to write ourselves put the pictures in ourselves put the captions on any pull-out quotes or fact boxes we have to make sure it's all filled and completed by the end of day. There'll be some cases where if we are doing a big story they might tell us two pages or if we're having a news gathering day they'll say no pages today go out and gather us some as much content as you can

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

No I didn't think I'd be this far.

OH OK

because I'm getting a chance to do because there's hardly any of us in the {PLACE NAME REDACTED} offices there's three full-time four now four full-time reporters in the office and we all cover sort of six of the weekly newspapers and two of them are huge as well two of them are quite big newspapers So I have a chance to go out and do the death knocks I've done the health stories I've been to court I've done like a huge mixture a huge range um and I recently went for a new job actually took my portfolio up and they were sort of quite impressed with how much I've done in the nine months that I've been working. Did you expect me to say no to that one? yeah I just didn't think I'd have developed uh yeah so I'd have personally developed to be trusted this much does that make sense because I thought the more experienced journalists would do all the good stuff whereas I wouldn't get a chance to do more I am doing what I expect a journalist to do but I didn't think I would get a chance to have a go at such good stuff yet Does that make sense? I agree on a personal level but doubting myself

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

mmm When they're in the room with you it's good but because of the cutbacks and things there could be days when the editors aren't there in which case they're easily accessible because of messaging and the email system we can all talk pretty quick and we can all have some group emails and hangouts personally, as a trainee, I have a lot of contact with my editors and if I have any problems I don't hesitate to ask them. and I'd always ask for criticism as well in terms of I'm never going to improve if I don't get criticised I always say what can I have done better you know what did I do well what do I need to keep up I'd say the communication is actually is quite good um from my experiences

There have been instances where errors have been "edited into copy" during the production phase? Has this ever happened to any of your stories? How was the situation dealt with?

Yes (look of contention; deep breath) yes because the thing is I know they know better and I know I'm a trainee and sometimes I'll read it and think there's at typo or there's no full stop on the sentence and this particular am I allowed should I talk about this it was a particular story I'd written and it was annoying because and I'm trying to think of a way to explain it the deadline of the paper was Thursday morning the paper was out on a Friday and there was a brand new market launching on the Thursday so I had to write the stories as though it happened the day before but it hadn't happened at all but I had to say you know new market anticipated it's quite a small town for this particular newspaper it got put on the front page and there was a lot of errors in it and I read it and thought my first thought was how disappointed the readers were going to be does that make sense and I felt a personal embarrassment because I'm sort of going out there and I'm the one communicating with people and I didn't want them to think I'd done it. I would never say otherwise

How did you feel about that situation

Um it wasn't a major error I was I didn't say anything to the editor I didn't dare

Susan

Exploratory questions related to journalist identity

1a. What is your qualification

I did an undergraduate journalism degree.

1b. How are you employed: full-time employed, freelance, other forms of work, a mixture of employment agreements?

I am full-time employed yeah

How many jobs have you had in journalism since graduation?

Ahm … three.

1c. Why did you want to become a journalist?

Oh …. Ahm … I just really like talking to people finding out stories and I think it's quite a good career … you know … holding people to account, ahm, making sure that companies are doing what they should be doing … the government the council that kind of thing

What are the main roles of a journalist?

Finding out information really and disseminating that to the public who need to know

1g. What are your career goals?

Oh ahm one day I'd like to work, ahm, either on a national newspaper or in a national newsroom because obviously at the moment I'm just on a weekly

Leveson Inquiry

2a. What can you tell me about the Leveson Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press?

Ahm to be honest I don't know a great deal about it other that it was obviously… it was the result of some criminal activity at News International and it led to a massive inquiry into the practices of journalism and how journalists work and their sources of information and whether they are being legal and ethical. It included two parts to it. The first part came out in 2012 and then part of it is still pending into criminal investigation at News International

Has Leveson had any impact on your career in journalism?

I would probably say not, no, not at the current stage but I don't know if that's because a lot of what it was focusing on was national newsroom practices and I just … obviously I just started in 2012 I couldn't say but the kind of thing like phone hacking that's not something that would never happen in my newsroom. Kind of put a stop to a practice that we just weren't doing

How would you describe public trust in journalists and journalism in your experience?

Hmmm I think it's … well… getting better but at the time of 2012 when I graduated I think it was rock bottom.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

I think obviously there are pieces of information that are out there that people should know and there is a test to find out if it's something that should be kept from them or if it's something that they have a right to know

What sort of things do you see journalists criticized for?

Making errors, misunderstanding information, ah, putting their own assumptions into stories

Praised for?

Not much (laugh) No that's not true to be fair We do get … we do get some praise here if we did a really nice tribute piece or something More than one person would come back to us and say 'well done. I thought you covered that really well'. Ahm, but it is often that you only hear the complainers rather than people wanting to say the job was well done

What role does ethics and best practice play in your daily life as a journalist?

Ah I think, well, in our newsroom we always try to do… make it fair for everybody. There are always two sides to a story and I think ethically we do try to err on the side of caution. Quite a lot we'll take out pieces of information that are sensitive and try and cover things in the most sensitive way, ah, to make … kind of … it fair to everybody because it depends on the story but, you know, there are times when we know a story has to be covered but we also know it might be controversial and will upset people going in.

How much emphasis was placed on Leveson when you were at uni?

Yes quite a lot during our media law seminars obviously we were keeping up to date with it every week but it was ongoing and it didn't come out fully until after I had already graduated. Yes the public hearings were being held while we were at university but there was a lot of coverage on ethics and whatnot … what is the right thing to do while I was at university but I would have like to have covered it in more depth I think.

On 1 January 2016, the Ipso Editors' Code of Conduct changed. Were these changes communicated to you and your colleagues? How was this done?

Well we just held a meeting and printed off copies of the new code and got everyone to read through it and ask us any questions.

Is there any ongoing professional development in terms of ethics?

Not really. Unfortunately, not. I'd like to say there is but no. We have a few students who come to us to take their NCTJs so it's kind of covered through the NCTJ examination but there's not a program in place that is organised by the company at all

3a. Can you provide some examples where you or your colleagues were faced with moral implications related to your work?

I mean … well… there was a time when I used to court report and there was a time when a woman came up to me at the end of ah, ah, a hearing and said 'I'd really like you to not publish this'. I just passed the message on to my editor at the time and I explained her reasons and my reasons for wanting to publish the story. I think in the end … I can't remember … I think in the end we didn't end up publishing it (why was that?). Mixture of space and her reasons. I'm thinking it was … I'm recalling now … I think the story wasn't particularly exciting. So I think my editor took the decision it was not going to benefit the wider readership much by knowing that this woman was… I think it was speeding or something.

How many reporters report to you?

I've got six plus a sport editor.

If they have ethical dilemmas, how are those dealt with?

Death door knocks are hard but you have to ask the question. You can't assume someone doesn't want their story to be in the paper you don't know that until you find out. It might actually be completely opposite and really want you to write a story about how their husband died or whatever and do a kind of tribute and get their piece … have their influence over how the story comes out rather than them not talking to us and us writing what we think we know based on information given to us by the police. I always just explain that you never know what someone's going to think unless you find out, unless you ask them.

4a. What is a news story?

Bit of a broad question. (laugh). Ah. I guess it's got to be of importance to our local community. It's got to be new. Something we have not heard before.

How is news generated? Do you assign stories or are reporters required to generate their own ideas?

It's a combination of the two really. It's their responsibility something and report it back to us and then we'll decide whether it makes it in or not.

4d. How much emphasis is placed on journalists covering courts and council meetings?

We try to cover courts and council as much as is practically possible. But we can only afford to send a reporter to court only one day. We send a reporter to the local council meeting every month or every two weeks I think they are. So there is quite a lot that comes out of them because it's a small parish. In the larger area some of the bigger stories we might not cover because they might not be relevant to [name redacted] and [name redacted] if that makes sense.

Are your publications weekend then? (Yes). So I guess the web is your main driver of content?

Actually no. No we don't have a website at the moment. Yeah, we're a bit unusual. But the direction of the company is it doesn't agree with, ah, giving news away for free. So we don't have any online presence other than you can get a copy of the paper via app. So that's kind of our digital presence we have but it's kind of the same as buying a copy of the paper. It comes out on a Thursday and you still pay for it. So yeah we don't have a website.

You have social media presence? Facebook? Twitter?

We've got … no Facebook is big for us. Ahm, but we don't use it to put our news out if that makes sense. It's more community things that are happening that we'll post about or we'll advertise … well today's our press day so we'll put up a post saying what's in this week's paper. So they can go buy it rather that posting news stories on Facebook.

What sort of stories do you write?

Everything. In a small, weekly newspaper you just have to do anything and everything. We don't have the resources to do specialist writing and just write about education, for example. **(So you're still writing?).** No not really I don't have that

much time for it now. I'll I'll put my hand in for a feature if I can manage it but the main bulk of my work load is not writing.

Is this what you expected you would be doing at this stage of your career?

Absolutely not. Not at all. I thought I'd still be a reporter maybe on a different paper by now but I've kind of been lucky and been in the right place to get a promotion.

4f. How would you assess the communication between reporters and editors?

Yes, it's good. Ah, we have a monthly meeting to kind of iron out any issues. But it's a very lively newsroom that we will always be talking about what we're working on and I'll be giving advice on how reporters can develop their stories and develop contacts. Who to talk to, and what questions to ask. Yeah, I think communication is very good in the newsroom. **(So it's almost like a learning newsroom?)** Yes, definitely a lot of our staff … in fact all of our staff bar one have come straight out of university so it is quite a collaborative environment.

There have been instances where errors have been "edited into copy" during the production phase? Has this ever happened to any of your stories? How was the situation dealt with?

Ah, do you mean if we get someone ringing up to complain? **(Yes something along those lines).** You mean in a subbing kind of capacity? **(Yes I guess there are different types of errors. There are errors journalists make and sometimes you have where an editor might edit an error in).** that has happened. It depends on what it is. The process is the reporter will write a story and send it to me. I will sub it and it will go to the editor and she will read the final page and make any corrections on the page. So generally we do try and pick up spelling errors because do spellcheck and things like that but there are obviously things that you can't check like people's names could be spelled wrong or the report could say the person's called Dave when they're actually called Steve. We do have a good process but some do get through in that case, if there is something glaringly wrong with the story we will print a correction but it's not often that we have to do that. There are sometimes when we have to print a clarification that is different where the person, you know, is being quoted in the story wants the reader to know that there may be more meaning behind what they've said … something like that. Yeah. I deal with members of the public who ring to complain about errors and more often than not they are complaining about court stories. There isn't anything wrong with those they just don't know we're allowed to publish what's said in court essentially. But there was one time where we … well we didn't get into trouble for it, but we get court lists …. Court registers sent to us from the court, like, ah, so if we haven't had a reporter in court, the court will send us a list of who's been in and what's happened to them in terms of charges just like a brief kind of document. And on one of them there was a reporting restriction and in the charge it mentioned a person's name who was the victim of a crime but it didn't say the victim was a child there was nothing in the paperwork to say … like there should have been … there was nothing in the paperwork to say that this person was a child and that we shouldn't include their name. We had, you know, there parent ring us up to complain we'd

reported it but we just kind of apologised and and sent them back to the court and said you need to take it up with the staff there.

Appendix J: Senior participants transcripts

Alistair

How long have you been a journalist for?

Since 1985 March.

What sort of jobs have you held in journalism since then?

I started off as a trainee reporter at [name redacted] in 1985. In December of that year I joined a news agency called [name redacted] who covered [name redacted] at the time. We worked exclusively for the national papers, local radio, and TV. I was there for a couple of years then in December 1987 I left to join the evening paper in [name redacted] which is now a weekly paper. Then in 198-, in 1989 September, I joined [name redacted] and initially I was based in [name redacted] office and later the [name redacted office] as deputy chief of [name redacted]. Then I joined the [name redacted] in 1992 as a [name redacted] correspondent I was with the [name redacted] until 2011 when the climate became so bad due to cost cutting that I left to become chief news editor at [name redacted] and after 15 months of doing that I set up as an independent freelancer in July 2012 and became a limited company two years later. And I've done shifts at The Sun in London as well.

When you first became a journalist what were your motivations for wanting to do with job?

I watched *All The President's Men* and felt it was a cool job.

How do you feel about journalism now?

Ahh what I do now is interesting because I can set my own agenda but I wouldn't enjoy working for a local paper anymore, stuck in offices, cutting and pasting press releases all the time.

How does your job as a freelancer work? Do you find stories and sell them or are you commissioned?

It's a bit of both I mean I sort of I always trawl through all the local papers first thing in the morning to see if there are any follow-ups in it. There are some things in local papers you can write for national papers like council, safety stories, political stories those kind of things. If I see those things, to be honest, I rip them out the paper on the basis of if I don't someone else will and you change it around a bit and you alter a few quotes so you can sell it to national papers so they can use your stuff. I'll get calls to do things. It's either things they can't do remotely like knocking on doors or covering inquests or court cases or research on [name redacted] features where anyone can do it in London but they don't have the staff so they farm it out to you to do it. I trawl websites where I can find information from and there are whole bunch of websites which aren't hooking directly into national newspapers so if you keep an eye on their newsletters.

How did the commissioning work for stories at news agencies?

Well it has changed tremendously. When I worked at [name redacted] in the mid-80s which was a boom time for newspapers you'd frequently be on order for all the national papers on one job. Nowadays you're lucky if you get one order because

cutbacks are so much. (Do you mean the nationals are cutting back?) The nationals are but they still have more money than the local papers and they still pay for stuff. Yes, they are cutting back. When I started on agency, we competed with the Press Agency when today no agency would dream of doing that because nationals will choose press agency to save money using their version of stories whereas before they wanted versions that were more in line with their writing styles

What have you seen journalists criticised for?

Well, I can tell you we did a lot worse things in the 1980s than have been done more recently. I mean when I worked as freelancer in 1986-87 it wasn't uncommon for [name redacted] to send you back to the same house 6, 7, 8 times just keep going, you know, until you got something and these days that would be absolutely unheard-of. You're not wanting people to tell you get away. But the stories I used to hear from older journalists when I was a young journalist, people in the 1950s, freelancers from agencies bought coats to look like policemen and they used to turn up at crime victims' houses saying they'd just come from the station and needed a statement and if pressed they were told to say 'train station sorry for any confusion'. In those days journalists were actually told to steal photographs off mantelpieces and things like that. Daily Express reporters in the 1950s were actually give crash courses on what car bits to remove from Daily Mail reporters' cars.

So you think things were worse in that era compared to now?

I think so yes. A Daily Express journalist who is sadly near death with Parkinson's said in the 1950s if you used a payphone for a major incident after you've filed your copy, rip out the phone so no one else could use it.

What do you see journalists praised for?

Occasionally you will get something that everyone has missed I had a front page lead in The Mirror last year that a prominent DJ had been named in a BBC report I got from FOI so it's quite good to see that come out as a story through trawling through stuff. In general, unfortunately I don't think we're praised for a lot these days the public's gone hypercritical. There are heart warming moments. When I was at [name redacted] I found something that someone had thrown away in the bin that was from a woman who was complaining she had two Downs' Syndrome children and the council wouldn't fix her central heating and they were freezing. We did a story on that and the very next day the whole council came around to fix the central heating. She rang me up and thanked me for that and I thought well that's a job well done. I think it's things like that, social injustices in local papers. But yes, we don't get lots of praise these days I don't think.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

I'm probably the totally wrong person to ask this. What you've got to understand is the difference between a staff reporter and a freelance is my main motivation is to get a story in the paper and get paid for it because if I don't I'm not getting paid to do it. I think I'm definitely the wrong person to be asking because frankly all I want to do is get the story in the paper and not get complaints on it so it's threading a fine line between getting the most out of it and not crossing the line so they get a complaint and the complaint comes back to you. But my sole motivation as

a journalist now is it's a trade for making money. I mean if I stopped doing it I would miss it especially historical stories that happened a long time ago that I find in archives but primarily it's about making money. It's not looking for the next Watergate or something like that. It would be nice but only if I could sell it to someone.

Are you under PCC, NUJ, Ipso codes of conduct?

Well I have actually just re-joined the NUJ. I had let that lapse. But the codes of conduct today are stricter now than before. If you go to a house, you go once and that's it. If they tell you go away, you go away. They are more frightened about getting a complaint than getting a story in they would rather give up a story if it is going to lead to a complaint. In way, it's a lot easier now as a freelancer than it was in the 80s because things are getting sticky and difficult so self-policing is stricter.

How do you use the code? Do you find you are consulting or referring to it?

No, it's just in the background. At the first sign of trouble, you ring up the commissioning editor who gave you the job and say thing is getting a bit fraught and 9 times out of 10 they'll say forget it then.

In terms of the Leveson Inquiry, what are your thoughts about what went on and what came out of that?

I regard it as quite niche really. I mean it was principally about phone hacking. The public was mistaken in thinking it was about listening to live conversation it wasn't it was all about hacking voicemail and it was a small number of people doing it. And the celebrities who complained, like Charlotte Church, kept the money didn't they? She's already got millions. And I think in this world of hurt I took the view what is worst damage that's been done to these people who have loads of money anyway, it's a very small number of journalists involved, it was a massive inquiry they got massive amounts of compensation and lot kept the money like Charlotte Church rather than giving it to charity and I think it paled in significance compared to what went on before. I don't think anyone was seriously harmed by having their voicemail hacked. Was Hugh Grant traumatised or anything? I know it was wrong but I don't think a lot of journalists were involved anyway. The guy who was doing it wasn't even a journalist was he? He was a private eye, security guy. So yeah I didn't really get agitated by it all.

Can you think of incidents in your career where you might have thought you could have done that in a more ethical manner? I'm trying to think (10 second pause). I'm struggling to be honest (7 second pause). No I don't think so. But you've got to bear in mind what journalists do involves an unusual amount of detachment. If I went around worrying about what a person might think of a story when it got into the paper, I wouldn't write it would I? I'd go off and be a supermarket manager or something. I'm not remorseful but you have to bear in mind that I think I suffer from a lot more disassociation than a lot of people and I think journalism tends to draw people who do have that because it's a career advantage. I mean there are many journalists who are compassionate about things but to do the job effectively you have to have a severe amount of detachment otherwise you just emotionally collapse every time you're doing something if you stop and pitch in to help instead of doing what you're supposed to do which is gathering information about

it objectively. So no, I can't think of anything that I've regretted. I've been physically assaulted a number of times over the years and I suppose I could have gone to the police about it but you never do because you put it down to an occupational hazard

You said before that [name redacted] had sent you back 6, 7, 8 times to a house was that death door knock?

Yes but if we leave [name redacted] out of it, all national newspapers were doing it in the 1980s. They were fiercely competitive and they would not take no for answer so you'd have to go back, keep knocking, discuss money, shove notes through doors offering money that kind of thing; just generally be persistent to an extent that would not be tolerated now.

Ben

You are retired?

Not exactly. Not exactly. I've retired as a journalist is a good phrase but I had the opportunity about 3 or 4 years ago to take a voluntary severance package from the [name redacted] where I'd work and I'd always wanted to do … I'd done an MA in Military History while I was still working a part time thing at the [name redacted]. I was enjoying that so I decided to go and do a PhD. So that's what I've done and I'm sort of in the last stages of it obviously you know what it's like it's quite demanding and quite enjoyable but I've nearly finished it now. So yes, I'm not current as a practitioner but I've still got lots of contacts and friends who are but that's where I am really.

How long were you a practitioner for?

I started in full time newspaper reporting in 1980 where are we now, 2017, to 2013 so 33 years.

Can you tell me about the different jobs you've had in journalism?

Sure. From 1980 until about 1999, I worked in regional newspapers most of that time on the [name redacted] newspaper in [name redacted] actually which is how I know [name redacted] because we worked together for a while there. Basically, in 1980, I started as a trainee reporter. I joined on a weekly newspaper in [name redacted] near [name redacted] and then three years later I went to the [name redacted] as a general reporter and worked my way through numerous jobs news editing, subediting, specialism editor, until I wound up as deputy editor and I did that job for about 5 years. Then in 1999, I moved on to be managing editor, group managing editor, at the [name redacted].

When you started what were your motivations for wanting to be a journalist?

That's a good question, that. I'd always wanted I'd always been interested in the whole idea of immediacy. I don't necessarily think I had any high ideas about about changing the world or anything like that. I liked the immediacy about what I thought journalism was about. I liked the idea of being at the heart of events if you like as a participant-observer. My first degree was in politics although I'd wanted to be a journalist since I was about 14. I'm not sure why I didn't know anyone who was a journalist but I'd always liked the idea of it. But I supposed there was a degree of romanticism you know reading work, reading books, by the greats of journalism I suppose and on TV. But I was never particularly interested in broadcast journalism actually. The printed word always interested me. But I suppose, as I got more and more into it, it was about wanting to, not wanting to sound pompous about it because I don't think I am pompous, but I enjoyed holding power to account. And I certainly got that opportunity while I was at the [name redacted] because it was at that time when I joined the [name redacted] sold 150,000 copies a night. It probably sells about 15 now and [name redacted] was an important and politically interested city and it was an interesting place to be and probably why I stayed as long as I did.

Towards the end of your career, did that motivation change?

No I was lucky because when I went to the [name redacted] it wasn't a good time when the company, the sister organisation that owned the [name redacted], the

[name redacted] had changed hands numerous times as newspapers always do and was going through another ownership issue and every time that happened inevitably it seemed there would be fewer journalists or more people doing other things. In other words, I thought the journalism mission was suffering. I understand why it was because times were tough economically and when I joined the [name redacted] I was lucky because the [name redacted] was expanding. It had got some new contracts it was starting to service these contracts itself rather than using freelancers so they were recruiting young journalists, trainees, and fresh-out-of-trainee young journalists who would be based around the country and indeed overseas occasionally. That sort of mission as a new editor in chief appealed to me very much and that's why I joined them actually. It was a mission that I liked and I spent the rest of my, the next 14 years, basically doing that so when everyone was making journalists redundant we were recruiting journalists, training them and taking people from places like [name redacted] university from the MA course there and turning them into journalists. So it was great actually. It was a breath of fresh air from the time I spent in the latter years at the [name redacted] when it was all about making savings.

What did you see journalists being criticised for?

I think the biggest criticism both … well, if we're talking about journalism as a profession it was always, 'oh, they are not particularly professional, they don't know their subject, they are politically biased', the usual familiar things that are always thrown at journalists with rarely any of it supported in much the same way people criticise estate agents or car salesmen. When I was [specialism redacted] editor at the [name redacted] which I was for a number of years I was quite happy if I was criticised by the Conservatives for being too Labour-leaning and invariably Labour would accuse me of being too Conservative-leaning. So I thought that's fair enough because it balances it out. But they could never criticise the accuracy of my reporting so they always tried to get you on bias. I worked hard and I know the editors I worked for tried to ensure there was balance.

What were you seeing journalists being praised for?

I felt that in [name redacted] in particular that our work was valued by the democratic bodies if you like. [Name redacted] city council at that time was a big authority, employed a large number of people, had an enormous budget, vast areas of responsibility that they are now and was dominated by some very ambitious politicians [name redacted] being one of them and then [name redacted] who is now an MP. They were quite senior players in their own right nationally as politicians as well as locally and I think they, not just them as individuals, the corporate body if you like, appreciated the fact that, when I worked at the start, the editors were keen to ensure that local government, local institutions, courts of law were covered well, you know, in detail. Ensuring that democratic process was visible to people. Again, it sounds rather high and mighty I don't think we sat down and philosophically discuss it in a way I've just tried to do for you, but I think that's what we thought our job was. Again, it was to hold power to account.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

What's my idea of the public interest? How long have we got? I think that the public has a right to know what their elected representatives and those not elected who have power over their lives are doing. Their actions ought to be open to question and open to challenge and they ought to be able to or required to expected to explain themselves and I think the public interest is that, anything that touches the ordinary person. That's true in the hypocrisy of some people's lives especially those who hold themselves up to be a moral authority however we define moral whether that is political or democratic or whether that is religious or some other kind of authority if you like. If those people are behaving hypocritically saying one thing and doing another then exposing that behaviour is in the public interest.

Were you under the governing bodies of PCC and Ipso?

PCC not Ipso

How reliant were you on the code of practice in terms of your daily work?

Well obviously the editors code developed over, I was a journalist for 3 decades, so we didn't really have that when we started as such but I was aware of it when there was one and certainly in the [name redacted] we were extremely driven by it because my editor, the [name redacted] had an editor under managing editor, and you had a chief executive who was a journalist, the editor and managing editor were equals if you like. The editor was responsible for the day to day output editorially while I was responsible for the budget, management of staff in terms of salary, recruitment, and all of that sort of stuff. So the editor, my opposite number, was on the editors' code committee and was a very diligent individual in terms of ensuring the code was followed by others and certainly by the journalists we employed.

In terms of public inquiries like Leveson, how many occurred during your career?

I don't think there was one in the time, size, and scope of Leveson. I was for many years on the parliamentary and legal committee of the society of editors and we would regularly meet with politicians in a formal/informal way to try to influence them in terms of press freedom and openness and also listen to what they had to say about what they felt we were doing wrongly sometimes and well occasionally. So there was that dialogue I was actively involved in but I don't know anything like Leveson in my career.

What are your thoughts on the whole Leveson Inquiry? Do you think it achieved what it was supposed to achieve?

I have different views. I believe that newspapers that conducted themselves as they did especially in terms of phone hacking and so on which was obviously the main driver of Leveson was contemptible. I'm not aware of any viable explanation I'd ever heard for it and those people who did that, in my view, criminally, they did it knowingly in my opinion for the most part and they damaged my profession something I'm very proud of and at the same time I think there were all sorts of bandwagon jumpers who decided they would use Leveson and everything around it such as what those journalists did to damage the press, the media, to paint us all the same and to control the media. Something the establishment, whatever the establishment is, had always wanted to do in every country. And that's why I think it was so damaging. Not

only for the individuals who were hacked I don't know any of those, well I do know some of them, but for the most part many of them were senior people, a lot of them were not. But my view of it was damaging to everything I stand for and have always stood for and I held in contempt the idea that here's a bullseye on my backside come along and kick it.

Can you recall any incidents you felt ethically challenged by?

I'm not sure I ever did. And I've often thought about that and again, and I don't want to sound pompous or saintly because I'm not, but I spent the bulk of my journalism writing about politicians and I was a writer writing about politicians and it was my view if you put yourself up as a politician then you can expect to be under scrutiny, you can expect to be challenged, and sometimes expect to get the rough end of the stick and some criticism justifiable or otherwise even. But I think that comes with the job and my experience of most of the politicians I dealt with was that's what they thought as well. They might have been cross with some of the things I'd done but I think they took it as part of the territory. As a young reporter and also as a news editor I had to get people to go to see people under very difficult circumstances death knocks as we call them. I know you were a practising journalism so you know what I mean by that. Going along to somebody's home when something terrible has happened to a family member and asking them questions and so on my take on that was to be as sympathetic as possible and do what you could to get the information you needed and do it in as polite and thoughtful way as you could, as professional as you could then you go away and leave them alone. I think I always did that. In my experience I found quite often that people wanted to talk to me. I always ensured I would turn up looking smart especially when I was doing this 30 years ago I would turn up in a suit and just look professional and if they didn't want to talk to me, then they didn't want to talk to me. That was fine and I would go away. I've been very lucky. I've never worked for a Fleet Street national newspaper that's required me to, you know, keep going back to people's homes, badger them. The [name redacted] never did that when I worked for them and the [name redacted] never did that either. I never worked for one of the big Fleet Street tabloids but I know that was demanded of people there. It wasn't accidental, I didn't want to work in that environment.

You worked in two different types of newsrooms. Was there a difference in the philosophies of those newsrooms?

Well, inevitably, regional newspapers are always trying to present a local perspective and their role is trying to represent their locality and the people who live there, their community if you like. I think they have to be representative of that community and stand up for the people who they, in a sense, represent. Because it's a newspaper they can take positions. They can put a spin on a story and put a spin on comments and features and so on to represent the editorial position which if done well represents the best interests of the people they serve. The [name redacted] was different. It was an organisation of record. Its job was to go out there, cover the facts of the best stories of the day, do that in a fair, balanced, and accurate way, and do it very quickly. There was no scope for comments because we didn't do comments. No scope for editorialising. Our copy was the same agency copy like you got when you

worked in Canada. What people did with our copy once it hit their news desk was a matter for them. For me that was the main difference. Of course, it was national. I worked in London and we considered ourselves to be part of Fleet Street which we were, but in a sense, apart from it as well. We were a good training ground for journalists who were, especially for new journalists, if they have [name redacted] on their cv then they would get jobs almost anywhere.

How would you describe the communication among reporters and editors?

Multi-faceted. Let me see, this is going back a way. It was very top-down. If you were a general reporter or a reporter who was reacting to breaking news a lot of that was quite top-down. Because I was what they considered a specialist writer, a political editor, for most of my writing career it was in the opposite direction. It was me who was breaking stories and going to the news desk and saying look this is my news digest for the day these are the stories I've got, I think this is the best one and then they'd agree or say, 'no actually we're more interested in this other one'. It was directed that way because we were more trusted and there is more freedom we'd get to go out there and do the stories you felt were important. You did that in the context of knowing the interest of the editor, the interest of the newspaper, and hopefully with an idea of what the interest of the local community was.

Thinking back to your early days as a journalist what sort of advice did you get from senior journalists in terms of the ethical side of journalism?

Ah, let me try to think of some of my colleagues that I admired. I think it was always about, there was some very simple things like being courteous, look smart, being tidy and presentable to people. Look professional, listen to what people have to say to you, and be respectful and most of all, get it right. Just get it right. If you can't report accurately then don't work here basically.

Later in your career was this the sort of advice you gave trainees when they were coming in?

Oh yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. At the [name redacted] the motto was fast, fair, and accurate. If you were able to do those three things, we didn't really expect anything else of them.

Clara

Tell me about your progression through journalism.

Sure. After I finished my law degree, I spent a year doing lots of different internships and then I did the investigative journalism course at City University.

What sort of jobs have you held in journalism?

My first job, I worked for [name redacted] which is community interest organisation that focuses on freedom of information requests. Some of those stories we worked on landed on the front page of [name redacted]. I have also done a lot of freelance work primarily for [name redacted] and then ended up at [name redacted] for a while, about a year, and now I'm with an investigative journalism unit in London called [name redacted] which looks at corruption, tax abuse. One of our recent investigations was picked up by [name redacted] about a week ago.

Would you agree that the extent of your journalism is on a freelance basis?

Yes, the majority of my time has been freelance.

How do you generate stories? Are they commissioned or is it up to you to find content?

It's a bit of both really. Sometimes, it's me sitting on my computer looking for something that piques my interest. Then I'll do a bit of research around it or I get ideas when reports are released and then I will have a look through to see what I can follow on.

What were your motivations to become a journalist?

Motivations? After my law degree, I didn't want to be a barrister. It wasn't who I am. Weirdly, I wanted to be a music journalist. I did some work on a music mag in London, but found it horrible, but then I did an internship at [name redacted] and loved it and really believed in the public interest.

In your experience what are journalists criticised for?

I think criticism is for unverified stories, churnalism. I don't think people realise the pressures of being in a newsroom like being pressured to get something done quickly for the website even if it may change later on then there is the accusation of inaccurate reporting.

On the flipside, what are they praised for?

I think there are some very outstanding journalists. I really respect the work of the type of journalist who keeps trying to uncover the truth and get to the bottom of stories. So I think this is what the public also praises journalism for, the times when major revelations are made.

So we've had some really big exposes that have turned up a lot of developing stories like Panama Papers or the Expense Scandals, do you think the public has an appreciation for what goes into presenting these stories?

The people? I don't think they are really aware of it. But I think a lot of that is the secretive nature of journalists. Journalists don't want to share how they got their stories or what methods they used in investigation and the need to protect their sources. But there are a few instances where journalists are open. If you read Panama Papers, they were fantastic on the processes and how they dealt with such a large amount of

data. It depends. At the time that things are published, readers may not be aware of the scope and magnitude of the work, But they could a little later but I'm not sure.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

Public interest to me is shedding light on corruption and public interest is challenging government actions and policy. It's about holding people, holding officials, to account. I think it's not just government but also business. I think it is all of this and it is the need to inform people. That's key for the public interest.

How does the code of conduct play a role in your writing?

Yeah, I mean, it's always in the background. When I did the investigative journalism course, we had theory on media law sessions. I try to make a habit of going to media conferences where there's a media lawyer and refresher courses on the law so it's always there in the background.

So there's a lot of personal professional development on your part?

Yeah I try to as much as I can. I try to go to the Centre of Investigative Journalism's summer school every year because there are some really interesting sessions where I can learn new techniques and developments, research techniques or even just hearing how journalists uncovered something. I've always been interested in media law.

How much attention did you pay to Leveson?

I did a lot actually. I did a placement with a media centre in London and it was always on in the background. I found it interesting watching the people who were speaking. I remember I went to one of the tents they had outside the World Justice Week in London and thought it was interesting to see how reporters were reporting on the inquiry. So yes I did pay close attention to the inquiry

Do you think it has had an impact?

I like to think there's been an impact. The work of the journalists who uncovered the hacking was interesting, the tactics that were used was eye opening. It was all quite illuminating. I hope that practice never happens again.

During your interactions with senior colleagues have they spoken about bad practices?

No I have never worked with any journalist talked about those things or worked on tabloids.

Have you heard of complaints about stricter protocols?

Not so much that, but more of what I hear is about the lack of resources in the newsroom or having money to conduct journalism in the way it should be done

Can you recall a situation which challenged you ethically?

I don't think so. I did a story about court decisions once and their impact on children so there was some concern about interacting with children but it turned out there was a reporting restriction on it so that worked out well. That was the only time I could think of where I questioned whether we should publish because of the presence of children. If I was in that position where there is an ethical challenge I will talk to my seniors about it or try to get a lawyer involved just to double check.

How much court reporting have you done?

I've been a couple of times. I find it really interesting. I did quite a bit but it is very difficult sometimes getting information from the courts as I'm sure you know.

Have you ever had to deal with someone trying to obstruct your reporting in court?

No but I have heard from one person I know who took student journalists into a court for reporting and they were asked to leave. There have been several incidents I think of court reporters or other journalists turning up to court and being asked to leave.

What are your thoughts about proposed laws that could endanger FOI requests?

I'm against any type of law that restricts people's access to information especially government. It limits the ability of people to be informed. What I'm worried about is the introduction of fees. If you challenge a tribunal or court fees would impact the ability to do FOIs.

Grace

How long have you been a journalist?

I started training in 79 and got my first job in 1980 so, Jesus, 37 years.

What sort of jobs have you held in journalism?

I worked in local newspapers the whole time. I started as a trainee on a weekly newspaper around the edge of London. After I qualified, I went up to [town redacted] to gain paid experience with the intention of going back but I didn't for various reasons. I spent four years in [town redacted] on the [name redacted] then came up to [city redacted] in 88 and I was a production journalist by that time. So I used to sub and do subediting as it got called later so I did layout until about the millennium I think. Then I had to redeploy because of the threat of redundancy. I was then effectively the deputy editor of the [name redacted] and then when that sort of merged into the [name redacted] newsroom I moved to another job as a features writer. I'm on what's called the communities team. Now I do things like retro, entertainment and general features.

What were your motivations to become a journalist at the start of your career?

I could read from when I was a toddler and there wasn't a huge amount of books in the house so I used to read the Daily Mirror… my dad used to get the Daily Mirror… and I loved Paul Foot and I loved Rob Hilger and from when I was about 7 I thought that's what I really really wanted to do because you could help change the world, well you can and you can't, but not everyone can be Paul Foot and Rob Hilger. But I got into it because I'm interested in people's stories. I like telling them, I like hearing them, I like being involved in all that so it's the best job for someone who is nosy about people.

Has that changed as your career progressed?

It changed a bit because I went into the production side and at first when you go into the production side you are sort of mentoring the reporters, helping them, telling them come and rewrite this. But things have changed again. Now I'm back to writing about people which I like best and sometimes you get news stories out of it. I'm probably a news journalist at heart.

How do you generate your stories?

There's a whole range of things. A lot of time now people are sending you emails from social groups, people who have events on or just want coverage for whatever they are doing. A lot of the stuff originates as emails from PR these days and a lot of the stuff… because of the retro stuff I do which is nostalgia a lot of that is what you call user generated content from readers writing in who are interested in stuff. So partly I interview people and partly people like to write stuff about themselves.

What are your thoughts on the public's perception of journalism?

I think the public has a hard time trusting journalism after what the national papers did. We were all shocked about how… you knew there was dodgy dealings on the national papers in my opinion because after Murdoch got in the unions were smashed and then you've got a lot of people working on short-term shifts and a lot of people on national papers are under pressure because they have to get their next

contract. And that skews things because you end up doing stuff you'd never think you'd do.

What do you see journalism being criticised for by the public?

The public criticism is 'we can't trust you because you are… you're telling us lies or you're telling us things you want us to hear, or you're sensationalising stuff. Particularly, all of us were shocked when the details of the Millie Dowler hack came out. It was shocking because it meant the family thought that she was alive because it changed what on her voicemail. You know, that just drags us into the mire basically. Yellow journalism has been around for hundreds of years but this dragged us to a whole new gutter level. And there was a lot more of it and there is a lot of it that's not been discovered. Clearly the other tabloids have been at it but they got away with it.

What do you see journalism being praised for?

We're trying to at [name redacted] the editor is doing a good job trying to rebuild trust, trying to make the paper into something that stands up for the city. She is trying to get across how ordinary people feel and get across to power to say this is not acceptable people don't want to see their trees chopped down, don't want to see their libraries closing, all of those things and just being a bit more questioning about things and I think that's what we should be doing. Journalists should be questioning those people who've got power. We should be the proper fourth estate but a lot of that doesn't go on basically because of cutbacks and so on. It's hard for the public to understand they just think 'oh well they don't care'. People understand when they are reading press releases they are sussed up on things like that these days. So they turn to alternative sources for news.

What in your experience is the public interest?

We are the people to question… to act on the behalf of people who do not have access to any corridors of power. Locally, you might be talking about the council, you might be talking about the courts, you might be talking about health organisations, like the NHS. I used to go and cover those sort of things at one point. At the local level I think we should be asking the questions of all of those people about why people want to take over our city, take over our green spaces, etc. That's what journalists should do and we should be doing freedom of information, everything available to us legally to get information. But when the national press used illegal methods we all became scarred by that because now of the issues of trust with people. When you do that sort of thing you run the risk of not being taken seriously because people will think you're basically making stuff up. Why would anyone trust you to tell them the truth about other issues.

What sort of influence did codes of conduct play in your career?

They were in the background really. I mean now since Leveson we at [name redacted] have had training on the code of conduct and you had to pass it. It was an eye-opener for me. I never realised the extent of the privacy clause. For instance, there was one sort of weird example where you were looking at a picture of a restaurant full of diners and apparently there was a real case where I think there was a football manager I think it was a restaurant review picture where you do the review and get the photographer to go and take pictures of the place and there was someone in there who

was with someone who was not his partner. He said he had a right of privacy even though he was in a public place and it was found to be true and that really shocked me I think that's gone too far. I think if you are in a public place with whoever you need to think about what you're doing. And if a photographer turns up to take a perfectly innocent picture that's just tough if you get caught out.

There seems to be this idea among more established journalists that we've gone from a lack of regulation to over regulation

Oh yes. I think so, yes because the thing is there is fine line between people saying this has gone too far and an actual public interest. If there is a justifiable public interest for a story without doing anything illegal or immoral, I think you should be able to use methods to uncover that if it is sufficiently important. I mean you have to judge really but there are all sorts of situations. We can't allow people to hide behind that because there may be situations where people need to know things to do with their money for instance.

How much focus did you give the Inquiry?

When it was going on there was a lot of focus, there was a lot of stuff coming around from our bosses there was a lot of 'we have to be careful about this, this is what Leveson means.' A lot of discussion and debate as well.

What are your thoughts of the inquiry in terms of its effectiveness and impact?

I don't think it was effective. We're still waiting for Part 2 and whoever actually decides they are in charge after this election might have to sort that out. So yes I think we have a long way to go with that and where it may be the case to look at people and shine a light on people I'm happy for them to do that. But people have to understand there are some things you have to be able to do in order to maintain decent journalism. And I think the NUJ, for example, I'm member for life and an active member but I think the union got too much on board with Ipso and Hacked Off and I think it's crossed a line really and done a disservice to journalism because we have to be able to be able to keep things to ourselves sometimes.

In your practice as a reporter what are instances you may have felt ethically challenged?

I think if I ever felt ethically challenged, I challenged it. And you can only do that if you've got a strong union in the office and you and you're empowered to do that. One of the things that worries me these days a lot of the time particularly with the younger journalists they don't really get it. They… they are in the age of PR and spin and they don't understand that you don't take that at face value and it shocks me what goes into papers, magazines, online. You think to yourself 'oh my God, why did you not just take a step back and ask yourself who is saying this to me and what's their agenda'. You've always got to ask those questions. But there are stuff at the minute where there is an issue of sponsored content in my papers. I'm asked to provide that sponsored content sometimes which means you're asked to provide something that looks like a story but someone is paying you to do it. I have problems with it but it's very early days yet so we have to work our way through it. But as far as the bosses are concerned, PR has been paid to write this stuff for a long time. Advertising is going down and there is panic so they are trying to find ways of monetising and I think that's

a dodgy, dodgy road to go down so at the minute I'm trying to hold a line but it's tough because nobody's done it enough to kind of reflect on it. But I think that's where the union has to get in and start to think about the ethics of this. Otherwise if you do and people start to understand what's happening they won't trust it. Trust is an issue if you want people to read your papers, look at your adverts, check your website or click on your social media you have to provide something that is trustworthy. It's transparent, which is a bit of a buzzword these days, but you have to do that.

We've heard a lot recently, especially after the terror attacks in Manchester, about the death knock where journalists have been reflecting upon when they did this practice, how did you handle those sorts of stories?

It's always a tough thing to do but we'd always go to people and say 'we want to give you a chance to tell the story of the person you've lost'. When I worked in [name redacted], there was such a good relationship between the paper and the people in those days you could almost expect a procession of social services, the undertaker, possibly the police, and the paper. We'd be bang straight in. It is a difficult thing if someone's been murdered for example then it's very valuable to a family, for example to say this is what this person was like so then people come forward who buy into the story see that this was a real person who had a job and puts things into perspective and makes a real difference. You know obviously it sells newspapers there's no secret there. It's a good story but at the same time I always have to treat people with sensitivity and if they say no, well I have to respect that. These days I don't think its right when people on… there's been discussion in the Press Gazette online forum about the Manchester attack and people would say it's wrong for you to go knock on people's doors, but actually some of those people want to say 'this is my beloved person and this is what they were like'. Especially when you're looking at a multicultural society some of those people are Muslims and everyone is pointing their finger at Muslims these days. It doesn't harm to have Muslim families these days saying this is my person and I'm the same as you. I think it's fine. What is wrong for instance is what goes on with people getting information from people's Facebook Page or Instagram account. A, you're accessing those accounts without anyone's permission, and B, we all know our Facebook pages do not really reflect what we're like and you're going into something that is technically public but talking to the family is actually more respectful than just going into people's social media.

You just spoke about this closeness between the paper and the people in your first job, was this reflected in other communities?

No no it wasn't. that was in the 80s, the mid-80s and it stunned me when I got there because I had worked in London before I went there and in London people were never familiar with your paper unless you worked on the nationals because they'd never heard of their own paper because they were never particularly interested. But in the smaller communities there was an interest in ensuring you knew what was going on. So if there was a crash, a murder or a big story people would ring you up to see if you got it. It happens to some extent in [name redacted]. Actually Facebook and Social media have been effective for this because people have got the idea they can get out

there and tell the story and they get in touch with you through social media to ask if you seen something or to send you some video they have recorded.

When you started out, what sort of advice did you get form senior colleagues?

I think check, check, and check again was the big thing. As a trainee especially, your stuff was forensically examined and you'd feel really embarrassed because you'd have to ring people back and ring them back because someone wanted to know this, that and the other. These days, because we've lost so many jobs in the industry, I think a third of the staff gone at [name redacted], the newsroom itself has shrunk to a quarter of its size when I first joined 30 years ago now it seems no one has time for that sort of thing. Our bosses have come up with this idea of being right the first time because they got rid of the sub-editors and proofreaders We would check for grammatical mistakes but also asking where's this information or to tell reporters they got that wrong. All of that has gone out the window. Sometimes someone might look at it quickly but quite often there's not the checks and balances as before which is really dangerous.

What advice do you give to trainees?

Similar sort of thing really. Take a step back and think about things. Don't just take people at face value especially people with a vested interest in you writing nice things about them. And also think hard before coming into the job. It's a hard job and the pay is not great. I find that, and I'm not being disrespectful of being doing journalism degrees, but it's not like when I did the NCTJ course you couldn't get onto it unless they thought you could make the grade in industry. They would rather not have people on the course when I was doing it and that's because it was very vocational a year's intensive training and then we got mentored and that's all changed. Now they are just thrown into the deep end so if you really want it and you love it and if you can put up with rubbish pay and long hours then that's my other advice.

Harry

How long were you a journalist for?

I am still a journalist, but on newspapers for about 5 years.

And you said you still practice journalism?

Yes, yes more as a filmmaker with some influence of journalism in it.

What publications have you worked for?

I worked mainly for [name redacted], [name redacted] and I also worked for [name redacted], [name redacted] and [name redacted] on a freelance basis.

How did you go about getting your jobs? Were they through conventional advertising?

No it's ah, I don't think I've ever applied for a job in journalism to be honest. It's more a case of maybe you know someone or calling them up and trying to convince them to let you come in but I think that's more when you start out. In the first job I got, I badgered them to let me come in and work and then after that it tended to be word of mouth and through contacts really.

Why did you want to be a journalist?

My motivations to become a journalist were I thought it was a career I could make a difference really. I thought I could do some good.

And when you left newspapers what were your thoughts of journalism?

Ha ha. I think that the structure you are working in doesn't necessarily allow you to do the good perhaps you wanted to do and perhaps that isn't only down to the publications you are working for.

As a tabloid journalist what sort of areas were you writing in?

Mainly news or showbiz not a lot of sport yes and a feature occasionally. I think quite a broad range.

Did you find any difference in practices whether you were writing for news or showbiz or features?

No not really. I think that's one of the problems really that showbiz reporting goes in quite fast and loose with the facts and I think that sort of culture of half truths and innuendos didn't factor in political reporting or hard news reporting.

What were your impressions of the public's trust in journalism?

I think in general people are untrusting of journalism. But then at the same time the majority of time when you speak to a member of the public they'll be quite open. I think people tend to trust journalists and are happy to talk to them and quite flattered. They are quite interested that journalists have to talk to them about something. So when you knock on someone's door to ask them something or the other people tended to be quite responsive.

What were you praised for?

Nothing outstanding off the top of my head ha ha. I remember one story where I helped out with one family who came home from holidays to find that some gypsies had moved into their home. Quite completely random. It was a bizarre story because they'd turn up from holiday and their house had been taken over and these people were trying to say it was their house and they called for the police who said it was a civil matter. They called us, they called the paper, and sort of said look we don't know what

to do and within five minutes it became completely apparent they had been mugged really and I managed to sort it out, get these people out so the family was very happy. That one stands out at the top of my head.

In journalism we heard of this concept of the public interest. What was your understanding of the public interest?

My understanding was that if it was legal then that made sense. But what the public was interested in was at a much more practical level. The public interest was this idea of the public good but I don't think that was much of a priority really.

As a pre-Leveson journalist you were under the PCC?

Yes, that's right.

So how much of an influence or role did the code of conduct play in your practice?

Little to none I would say.

OK so it's quite well known how you left one of your employers and that you had outlined some very strange things they made you do. What was the rationale behind those practices in your opinion?

I think the rationale was to provoke. They had a feeling that their readers had an anti-Muslim sentiment and I think at the time the burqa in France was being banned so the idea came up maybe we should be doing something about that which was their stupid idea.

How did it make you feel to do some of these strange things?

It doesn't make you feel particularly great. I think it's something that you're not given much of a choice. You're told to go and do something you have to go and do it. There's not much of a democracy at work in a tabloid newspaper. So I found myself being tasked with doing quite a few of these stories.

It is well documented the verbal abuse tabloid journalists receive was that accurate in your experience?

Yes, definitely. There was pressure of being the first with a story or not having the strongest story. I think more than anything the reason that you'd get bullied or whatever is generally due to back chat about issues.

How did you gauge the atmosphere in those newsrooms?

Yes, it was quite competitive that's probably a fair way to put it, but at the same time there was a lot of fear as well because people were on short term or quite intricate contracts. So you didn't know from week to week, month to month, basis whether you'd still be there. It was definitely a culture of fear.

Why do you suppose people have this perception that the broadsheets are reputable while the tabloids are not?

I think that traditionally the way things have been. Tabloids have traditionally been thought of as scurrilous and they've often revelled in that while broadsheets were always taken more seriously so I think that's just the national position that they take.

What were your impressions of the Leveson Inquiry?

I think that it did its job. I think it was a very thorough examination of the press standards. I thought Justice Leveson did a very thorough job under difficult

circumstances. I think it shone a light in places that were perhaps darker. I think it did good in the sense of its inclusions of those practices.

Were there any other practices that you found ethically or morally challenging?

Nothing that I haven't spoken about in the past. I spoke about them at Leveson.

Were you aware of the hacking while working as a journalist?

Well I was a journalist sort of at the tail end of the hacking era. But I heard of things happening but it wasn't something that taken very seriously it was sort of a joke. It only was taken seriously when it became public that it was happening so I was aware of it as something that used to happen and not currently happening

Jamie

How long were you a journalist?

I started working in 1985 on a local paper and I finished working as a journalist in 2009. So 24 years.

You said you started on a local paper, what other jobs have you held?

So I started on a local newspaper in my hometown on a paper called [named redacted] in [name redacted] near [name redacted]. I worked there for two years from 85 to 87 And then from 87 until 1990 I worked for a press agency called [named redacted] in [name redacted]. We didn't produce a paper we produced copy for local, regional, national newspapers, broadcasters, radio stations from the [area redacted] area around [name redacted]. And then I started working casually in 1990 for [name redacted] newspaper. And what I mean by causal is I basically gave in the job at [name redacted] and started doing what they called casual shifts so you got paid a day rate. You gave up a salary job, but it was the traditional way to get a foot into national newspapers. You take a chance if you're any good you might get a contract or taken on but at least you tried. I did just under a year's work of casual shifts and then got taken on as a full-time member of staff at the end of 1990 and I worked as a reporter for [name redacted] in [name redacted] in the [name redacted] office until about 1995 and then until 1998 at the news desk in the [name redacted] headquarters in [name redacted]. I started off as a reporter and then I moved on to the news desk as assistant news editor which is basically number 3 on the news desk so I was obviously office based instead of out reporting. I didn't particularly enjoy that so after a year of that I asked to go back on the road. So from 1998 until 2009 when I was made redundant I worked as the paper's district reporter in [name redacted]. I worked from home supplying all the copy for the paper in that area. So I did 19 years altogether as a reporter.

What were your motivations for becoming a journalist?

To be brutally honest, when I was at school, the careers teacher asked me what I was interested in and I was interested in creative writing and it was suggested I do journalism. I didn't have any burning desire at the time and I ended up being told by the teacher there was a course that was run for journalists that is still run to this day by the NCTJ which was a yearlong course. You got shorthand which was extremely useful and still is, and various public administration, newspaper law. But while I was at school, I had already written reports, submitted stories on local sports clubs. I actually went to the sport editor of my local paper and asked if there was anything I could do. And he asked me to start covering one of the local cricket clubs and then then I graduated to covering one of the local football clubs. And after, I did a big report on my school's rugby tour to Canada and after I finished my one year away at the NCTJ the local newspaper I provided copy for as a teenaged budding reporter they took me on and gave me a chance. It worked out well for me, really.

What are journalists most criticised for?

I don't think I myself was ever criticised by members of the public. The newspaper I worked for [name redacted] was often criticised but usually by people who were opposed to the politics of the newspaper or by people who disapproved of

tabloid newspapers generally. But I always like to think that the stories I worked on because I was a general news reporter, I didn't work on the showbiz… it seemed to be that the showbiz reporters sort of got away with running stuff that didn't always stand up to scrutiny or was supplied by certain artists who wanted their names in the paper and they'd go along with certain things. I regarded myself as a proper news reporter who was only interested in the truth. Although I worked at [name redacted] for 19 years, I was approached by other papers in my career to transfer my skills. I always thought that as a tabloid news reporter I could go work on a broadsheet because I had the writing skills to do so but people who worked on a broadsheet wouldn't necessarily be able to come and work for… to do the kind of stuff I would do which was much tighter and more succinct writing.

I guess it would be difficult to go from writing long copy to short copy.

Well it is, yes, but I don't mean that. I mean we all love to be able to write 1,000 words and be creative but a lot of the time at [name redacted] but not always, a lot of the time we were restricted to 400 or 500 words. You would never write three paragraphs or one paragraph and squeezed into a space someone thought that was all it was worth. You would always write yourself 20-paragraph stories that all the pertinent facts in it, was balanced, and had comments from all the various people. But to go back to your original question about what the paper was criticised for, I joined the paper after [name redacted] its infamous [name redacted] headline about the [incident redacted] disaster and the ramifications of that obviously have continued to this very day and are solely down to the one individual whose decision it was to run that story and give it the prominence that he gave and that person is still giving newspaper journalists generally a bad name. He just wouldn't go away of course I'm talking about [name redacted].

Actually I was reading he's been removed from [name redacted].

Yes after being editor he moved on to various other things but you have to question the judgment of the people still at [name redacted] now because, I don't know if you know the background, but I was one of the numerous reporters who were put on trial some years ago after [name redacted] and his management standards committee decided to betray his former employees for his nefarious business reasons by handing over details of confidential emails and then [name redacted] turned up one day on my trial to write a sort of colour piece column for the newspaper… they had still retained him as a columnist. He ended up making a comment about my former employer who was a local council, by this stage I was working in [field redacted] and I was sacked when I was charged. When I was charged by the police I was cleared I was only charged with one charge relating to supposedly paying £300 for a story about prison suicides. Not my money, not my decision to run the story, not my decision to pay yet I was the one who was hung out to dry by the newspaper. But [name redacted] came along and wrote a particular column about that decision by the council to sack me after I was charged which was painful for me but I understood why they had to do it and ended up maligning council workers everywhere. And obviously you read now he is no longer writing because on the anniversary of the [incident redacted] he wrote what he wrote about the [story redacted]. The idea that anyone would let him write

about that city or that area considering that he solely singlehandedly the person who gave that story the prominence it got it was almost unbelievable

Were you part of the Leveson Inquiry in any way?

No I'm not sure when the first series of hearings started but I suspect it might be shortly before or after I left (2011). Yes, so it would have been after I left in 2009. Although curiously I remember covering a trial when I worked at the press agency in the late 90s Brian Leveson was actually the prosecutor in that case. But that was my only dealings with him.

There are a lot of references to paying of sources, did you find this to be a common practice?

Paying of sources? Well no the paying of people for stories, the paying of people, is commonplace in all newspapers certainly tabloid newspapers. The difference obviously in my case and the people who were prosecuted was the allegations that public officials were paid and the charges related to unlike a lot of the other former colleagues who were charged there was an equivalent public official whether it was a police officer or a prison officer who was put on trial as well in an attempt to find out who it was I was supposed to have paid. If you ever Google my name and look at the reports of my case you'd realise how ridiculous the whole thing was. Generally speaking, public officials have always been paid. And the reason they have always been paid, although it doesn't happen a lot it's still a very minority practice, the reason is if it is in the public interest then, in my view, and I said this in my trial to the judge when he asked me, If I had known the person I handed the money over was a prison officer would I do it have stopped me, and I said I don't think it would. Because, as a journalist, you're only interested in the veracity of what you're being told. Whether its truth or not, whether it's fact, in my mind, if you have to pay for that information, there is nothing wrong with that if it's in the public interest the same way that police officers routinely did and still do pay criminals for intelligence effectively because it's in the greater good. So it wasn't something that happened a lot even if you were just a news reporter like me there would be people who would ask for money and the decision to pay is never made by the news reporter. Most reporters in my experience didn't have enough money knocking around in their current account to pay. You would always have to ask the news desk and the news editor might have to make the decision like that. Towards the end of my career, every single decisions about payments, whether they were made in cash or by cheques, regardless of who they were to were authorised at managing editor level or above. So this idea of chequebook journalism that journalists from national newspapers in the nineties and noughties chances are you would have handed over money. There's absolutely nothing wrong in that and in the eyes of juries every single one of the reporters on trial was acquitted. Juries take a very different view of what is right for journalists and what is right for public officials.

In terms of the public interest, what is your understanding of it?

That's a massive question but to me it is something that the public should know and that is very subjective in many respects. It clearly is not in the public interest to anybody if you're talking about public interest tested payments like a story about a

celebrity whose made another celebrity pregnant I don't think is in the public interest regardless of if they are married or not. The story about a politician who's cheated on his wife with his secretary and made her pregnant or not as the case may be probably nowadays wouldn't pass the public interest test unless that politician was someone who had been very strident in talking about family values and that kind of stuff. If you look at the stuff in our culture, our western democratic society that is covered up by organisations and Hillsborough tragedy is a perfect example of that in the way police statements were doctored and everywhere, people from different walks of life attempted to cover up things and journalists should be given free licence to and all the tools at their disposal to able to unpick and uncover the truth about what happens. So for me public interest is very difficult to define, but anything you see that members of society need to know about what the state or agents of the state are doing that breaks their own laws.

Was there any pressure to get stories?

There were massive pressure all the time because of the competition you don't get that often in local newspapers but it changed in the early 90s when I worked at the paper and when [name redacted] edited the paper. There were times we'd get screamed out over the telephone, screamed out to your face in the newsroom, told you were going to get the sack if you didn't get a particular story. The pressure was horrendous but that didn't mean you had to resort to bad practice to get the story you had to rely on your journalistic skill. In fact, most journalists are decent and that's the vast majority of them would put themselves under far more pressure than any idiot sat in a news room can because we did it for the glory of story. We did it because we wanted to be the reporter who gets that story. I never needed anyone to shout at me and I would find it terribly counterproductive to me if I had someone screaming at me because it was the same everyday. I knew they would expect us to get the story and they would expect us to be the best in our coverage the next day. So I put myself under plenty of pressure so did my colleagues professionally. So there was always pressure but the pressure was probably greater for tabloid newspapers because obviously of the sales involved, the circulation and everything. But in my experience, if you're alluding to the fact pressure might mean journalists straying off what is acceptable, in my Fleet Street career of sort of two decades, I only came across a handful of journalists who I would say cheated, lied, deceived members of the public. And there was as many of them working for broadsheet newspapers as there were for tabloids and they were a minority. Most journalists, especially those working for tabloids have been horrendously badly portrayed by the media on TV dramas, for example, in my experience it has been completely the opposite.

Why do you suppose there is this perception that tabloids are bad and broadsheets are good?

Apart from the fact that broadsheets don't sell anywhere near the copies, in my mind it's more to do with the politics of the paper. I never sent over a word in any story that I wrote knowing it to be untrue. And if my news desk knew that I'd done that or my editor knew that I'd done that your ass wouldn't touch the ground and it's the same, it was always the same, on the broadsheet newspapers. I don't know, I guess

the fact is the public, the perception of tabloids is very often sort of grudging acceptance of people to read it. But you tend to find the most vitriolic criticism of tabloids is reserved for people who have never read them and just see the way they are portrayed in the popular dramas and the popular media. The number of people who've said to, you know you go to dinner parties and I'd never say what I did or I'd avoid saying what I did for a living because you'd get the same stereotypical stuff like 'well, if it's not true then you'll just make it up', or blah blah blah and I found it offensive because I pride myself on digging up some of the biggest stories that happened over those two decades by doing proper investigative journalism. People on broadsheets do investigative writing, but those on tabloid have the power to get the story… a story that lands in the [name redacted] is vastly more influential than a story that ends on page 27 of the Independent or page 35 of the Guardian which are both excellent newspapers, but the tabloids have a clout because of their readership. It's not just the 4 million that bought it, it was the 10 million that read it everyday because it was passed around from office to office. You know it was hugely political influential it wasn't just a newspaper that was read by taxi drivers, bus drivers, and street sweepers. Towards the end of my time there it became hugely influential largely because if [name redacted] decided he thought Labour had a chance of winning an election he'd cleverly pin his colours to the mast of whoever he thought was going to win so now every political party clamours to try and get the backing of something like [name redacted].

What were your impressions of the Leveson Inquiry?

If I'm being brutally honest I didn't follow much of it. All I saw was a procession of people I respected and had worked for and worked against sat in that rather strange room on television I know it got some coverage here and there and I thought the whole thing was a talking shop I really did. I don't think it's achieved anything. It's just another vast waste of public money, navel gazing into what has no doubt been excesses by the British media. And, it's not just newspapers either, you know. Even respected broadcasters like the BBC are capable of shoddy journalism when it suits them are guilty of gilding the lily and presenting stories in a certain way. Only in a minority of occasions but to me I had already left the industry by then and I was somewhat disillusioned to a certain degree but apart from the fact I had recognised friends of mine I had worked with or against on television. I really couldn't see the point of the whole thing. Sorry if that's not what you want to hear (no no that's fine). I could have very well been called to talk about the particular coverage of a particular story and I would have gone along because I was someone who gave evidence to two criminal trials for the prosecution. Probably over my time I have given evidence to the prosecution for my stories and I gave evidence in libel trials as well. I was never successfully sued for libel and I was always prepared to back it up, stand up and be proud of the fact I was a proper journalist and I was always interested in the truth.

What kind of advice were you given by senior colleagues?

One of the things you pick up very quickly you don't tend to get much advice but you can see for yourself, you can make judgment decisions for yourself, on who the real quality operators are. And you often are, when I first started working in [name

redacted], I was one of about five reporters who were all roughly the same age and in many respects maybe not officially but played off against each other, it wasn't quite the same as the creative tension like at [name redacted] where they send two reporters on the same story without telling them it wasn't quite like that but we were always in competition with each other. I tended to look up to the oldest journalists who'd been there, seen it, bought the T-shirt, done all the big stories, had all the war wounds, the medals, and worked out how they had survived, but unfortunately by the time I came into the [name redacted] some of those really respected heavyweight journalists were being regarded by the editor like [name redacted] as overweight, overpaid, etc. He just wanted young guns who would come in from wherever partly because he could pay them less. There was this perception in his mind that journalists spend all their lives stood at the bar drinking gin and tonics and didn't do the job. Obviously we did stand around drinking gin and tonics but that only after a hard day's work where we put a great story into the paper and you were unwinding so. There were huge number of journalists at the [name redacted] and other papers that I worked with on jobs all over the world who I looked up to and respected. You don't get to stay in that job at any level unless you're good at what you do. I very rarely came across people I didn't respect.

The main hacking scandal was down to News of the World, but then came allegations of it being more widespread. Did you hear of any such thing?

I was never aware of any of that going on. I knew that, unless you password-protected your mobile phone, it was impossible for someone to hack into your phone using the factory settings. I think when the first mobile phones came out for Vodafone and Cellnet I think unless you password protected your messages, I seem to remember we'd worked out that I think it was in the manuals of these phones you could access your messages by going asterisk 0000 unless you'd changed the password. I seem to remember there were some journalists who had a bit of fun messing around with each other's messages but as soon as it happened to you, you changed your password. I still don't know how they managed to do all that. But, I know while I was at the [name redacted] there was no talk of it. There was no culture of it. But, I certainly have my suspicions about where it might have emanated from in terms of showbiz department because they were under the most ridiculous pressure and there's been stuff written about where it might have emanated from and which kind of people were doing it. When I worked at [name redacted] newsroom in the mid-90s I left to work from the sleepy yonder of [name redacted] after about 98 but while I was in London I had absolutely no knowledge of that happening. But what I will say, everything I've said before to you the tabloid newspapers the Sunday papers were a different kettle of fish to me. Now I regarded pretty much all Sunday newspaper reporters with a bit of suspicion because even if they worked for [name redacted] because they parachute into these big stories towards the end of the week. Because they had only one day to impress if you like and they just tended to be a slightly different breed and I was offered a chance to go work at [name redacted], but turned it down. I just didn't like the way they came across when I was talking to them. I viewed the Sunday newspapers as a completely different world and when I found out stuff had been going on at the

[named redacted] I was surprised but not entirely surprised. And the fact it was going on at other newspapers didn't surprise me either. But it was not something that I was ever aware of, how to do it, nor did ask anyone how to do it. And to my mind, I can't see any situation where it would be justifiable to do that even in the public interest. If somebody could specifically tell you that if you hacked a particular person's phone because there was hugely important information you would find out is in the public interest, then you might be able to justify doing it, but I don't see how that situation would ever arise. … [I]t's a bit like the corrupt payments that my colleagues and I were put on trial because our proprietor [name redacted] decided to tell the British police that apparently there was evidence that stories in which public officials had been paid but [name redacted] was made newspaper of the year and its editor was made editor of the year for paying a [organisation redacted] official for all [incident redacted]. They got lauded to the hilt and given the plaudits we got sent to trial. And what made it even more galling was the then-editor of [redacted] public official a large sum, quite rightly in my mind I have to say for a fantastic series [redacted], that same individual later came to work for [name redacted] … and led the witch hunt against other journalists doing exactly what he'd done. So there was a look of hypocrisy that's gone into it but the hacking was something I was never aware of now would I defend it. I can't see how you could defend it in one iota. And for all of that to have happened very often the hacking was being done, it seems to me, by reporters who were interested in showbiz tittle tattle which never interested me. It's another example of what's in the public interest and what interests the public. Which are two totally different things.

John

Where are you in terms of your journalism career?

I am now retired from full-time journalism. I worked in 8 or 9 towns altogether. I began in the 1964 and retired from newspapers in 2010. I still write a blog so if you count that, I've been in journalism for almost 50 years. I've had a broad spectrum of jobs unlike some of former colleagues at [name redacted] who only ever worked for one paper in their life.

How would you assess your practices as a journalist?

We never played it rough but you could be forceful but that's the nature of the job.

Back when you were practising journalism what codes of conduct were you under?

Well primarily the PCC. But I was also a member of the NUJ So there was their code of conduct

How much of an influence did codes of conduct play in your practice?

It was there in background really. You never sort of think about it from month to another except if you, you knock on a door and you would introduce yourself accurately and politely. In food journalism if the chef came round to your table and asked how you enjoyed your meal you would say loved it thank you and then you go away and slay them in print. It may well be in the code of conduct, I don't know. But my guiding principle was never to say anything that I contradicted in print. If that happened, they could say oh your guy said it was alright and there he is blistering away in print at me. I used to often have my mouth full and let my wife speak.

How did you handle what you could consider ethically challenging incidents?

I learned very early on when I worked for the [name redacted] when I was 18, 19, 20 I worked on a local paper called [name redacted] and the local undertakers would come around with a list of stiffs they'd call them and they'd say he's alright and she's alright go and knock on their door. I would knock on the door and say I was sorry to hear about the death of your father, husband or wife etc. could I come in and talk about them and get a biography. And it was amazing, 9 times out of 10 you were invited in for a cup of tea and a biscuit. And you sort of learn. I didn't regard it as a challenge. This was in [name redacted] in the mid-60s and people expected it.

Back then was this done for anybody who died or was it a death under unique circumstances?

Well it would usually be a local pillar of the community or sometimes anybody who died really there were a lot of pages and columns to fill in the [name redacted]. It was a great practice but they don't do it now. And you got the basic threads of somebody's life in about 15 or 20 minutes. You could also stop at church doors and see the names of mourners.

In your time do you think the public's perception of journalists has changed?

No it was always a bad one for journalists so I don't think it has really changed. I remember my careers teacher turning his nose up when I suggested I wanted to be a journalist. Well that suits you, he said. I don't think that, as a profession, we rank much higher than used car salesmen. I think Leveson probably reinforced people's attitudes

about the stereotypes. I think basically most journalists are decent, legal and honest. As a provincial journalist I didn't get into some of the habits the national journalists did

What kind of advice did senior journalists give you when you were a new journalist?

Oh a lot. I had six months' probation and then I was indentured for three years. For a couple of years, I had to spot along after a senior-junior journalist, in others words, someone a year or two ahead of me who would vet my copy until the paper was quite happy I wasn't going to put them into a libel action. So I got a great deal of advice when I started: learning how to ask questions, not putting your best question at the beginning, how to write in the style of the newspaper. So yes I had a substantial amount of help at the start. When I was working there were half a dozen senior journalists and they could hire three or four junior journalists which doesn't happen now.

As a senior journalist what sort of advice did you give trainees?

I used to tell them there were three kinds of journalists: those that can write but cannot find a story, those that could find a story but couldn't write, and there were much fewer who could actually find a story and write it up. I used to give them all the sort of various advice for going out and finding stories but I found quite a few were happy to sit there at the news desk being told what to do. Whereas I always hated being told what to do so I was always an off-diary man. So I got out of courts and council and stuff like that. I was a gossip columnist a staffer for about 10 to 12 years. I did a humour column; I did reviews so I was a self starter. I always try to advise younger journalists if you get a story and it's something you want to do if somebody else it may not be what you want to do. You might as well write what you want to write. I gave a couple of lectures a year at [name redacted]. I mean it's having a nose for news. I mean the greatest, best journalist I ever knew was half educated and didn't have a journalism background but he used to hang around newspaper offices and he would always come up with a story and tell you about it and he was always right but he couldn't write up a topic. You need to have a nose for news. They used to joke in the office about me because I always rustled through the in-tray on the news desk. People would just scan stuff and throw it in the tray. You'd find one or two gems a week if you looked closely enough. Read your own ads in the personal column it's surprising what you can find. Go to the local pub, well you know all this stuff. Even look at cards in newsagents' windows. It's amazing what you can find particularly when you're a gossip columnist. I can get 7 or 8 items a day and it's churning it out churn, churn, churn. The last thing you want to do is rewrite bloody press releases. At my first newspaper, I was told it is a cardinal sin ever to copy out and rewrite a press release. It was also a cardinal sin to use the point that the people in the press release want to make. Ferret down to the bottom and find something much more interesting. And that was great advice. These days, you can see press releases going in virtually unchanged.

Towards the end of your career there was the rise of digital journalism, how did you see that playing out? A lot of people see digital journalism as the death of print journalism?

I think the jury is out on that. I hate this practice you've got where not only are you writing your own copy you are putting it out on the website. I was a sub at one point. Digital journalism has lost subeditors, people who are creative on a page who can write a really good teasing headline, they've lost that mainly because a lot of reporters can't write a headline. I mean if you look at [name redacted] and others papers sites they look so boring because they are all in templates. And it looks like something out of the 1930s or the 1940s. I hated having to learn it but now having learned it I now practise it with the blog. In about 2-1/2 years I've had 53,000 hits. So much of digital journalism is poor. A lot of it is people who can't write or can't see stories. It's sort of like a print version of YouTube. You go on and you see so many badly edited videos. Online journalism has a lot of badly written stories and there are relative few good blogs. It's like Kindle isn't it. At first Kindle was outdoing books but now books are being bought again. I have 3 children. They grew up in a journalist's household but none of them buy newspapers regularly they look at their tablets. They might buy a newspaper on a Sunday but you won't see a newspaper lying around any of their houses. I don't want to sound like the old Thames water carrier but things change. But I think there will still be a place for newspapers I think people get tired looking at screens. In my case I've moved on a bit into self-publishing in a way and if it's any good people will read it. I've got a small group of people who used to follow me when I was writing for [name redacted] who now follow the blog because they like the way I write.

Steven

Tell me about your journalism background.

Well, I worked as a trainee in local and regional newspapers for a few years but spent almost 30 years at [name redacted] and [name redacted]. By the end of my career I was a department head as a production journalist.

What were your motivations for becoming a journalist?

I'd always wanted to be a journalist. I can't really give you a rationale it was always something from when I can remember I always to do. It might have something to do with Clark Kent I'd always joke. That was always the plan I think what happened later in my life in terms of my proclivities I was good at English and I like people, I like talking to people. My father was a street trader so his days were always spent talking to people and I like stories it was all those things really.

What did you see the main criticisms being about journalists?

I guess the bulk of my career I worked on tabloid newspapers particularly [name redacted] so it's not hard to see what the criticisms of [name redacted] were and one thing I might say and this is relevant I think. When I first got my job in Fleet Street, I was 26 years old and my first staff job was on [name redacted] and nobody in my family was connected with journalism and I rang from Liverpool Street Station I rang my father up who was as I say was a street trader who had two flower stalls in the west end of London and was never interested in stuff but had been pleased whenever I got jobs on local newspapers and things but when I said I got a job on [named redacted] he was hugely impressed. I could have said I got a job on the BBC or the Times that wouldn't have impressed him but to get a job on the [name redacted] for him as a punter as a reader was a real mark of achievement because for him when he and his pals used to have bets for example in South London where they were from, they'd take bets on boxing on what boxer had won in what fight in what round they'd ring the [name redacted] to get the answer and whatever the sport desk told them was taken as gospel. And the reason I make that point is because there was a completely different relationship between the readership then of tabloid newspapers, although then it wasn't really a tabloid paper, and tabloids now. So there's a level of cynicism now compared to then, but it wasn't that everyone slavishly believed what was in print then. But there was a different dynamic between working class readership and British and popular types of journalism. Going on to [name redacted], there was much to criticise. It is well documented the whole discussion around the [content redacted], the famous controversies, the political backing of right wing political parties and yet though when I did my own dissertation and did the maths [name redacted] almost equally supported Labour and the Conservative party. When I joined [name redacted], it was a Labour party-supporting newspaper. In 1977 when I joined [name redacted], [name redacted] was a Thatcher-supporting newspaper. In the late 60s, [name redacted] supported Labour then it flipped to Thatcher then it flipped to Blair and now to the Tories. And of course we know the controversies over [incidents redacted] and the phone hacking scandal which closed News of the World. In that era, much of my cohorts were actually left of centre I was an active Labour party member and a trade unionist I'm still a life member of the NUJ. Some people often found that odd the

conflict of being left of centre and working on what was seen as a reactionary newspaper that presented the challenge of keeping political purity as a working journalist. Probably the biggest controversies were actually internal. When deregulation came in [name redacted] when [name redacted] shifted out of Fleet Street and went to East London and the Wapping years that followed so they were internal industrial frictions which me as a trade union rep had its strongest effect.

Were you there during the hacking era?

I think technically I had just missed it depending on how you define it. I left in 2004/ 2005 and I think most of the events were alleged to have taken place after that I believe. I mean I'm not being churlish. I'm not aware of that method of voicemail interception it is called hacking and that's fair enough I mean phone hacking is what the world calls it. I mean it wasn't really hacking it was more a blagging scenario, guessing at the digits you needed to access voicemail on phones. What I would say about that right from the nearly days at [name redacted], it was a quite technological paper. One of its fortes was turnovers, exposés of a sexual nature. There were a couple of very excellent investigative journalists one was a guy and the other a younger very attractive female journalists and they would explore sexual indiscretions they were always miked up they had a lot of heavy technology they would use. Technology itself, the use of technology by journalists in general by the tabloids was always there. The phone… the voicemail accessing was not a method I was aware of and if you check the facts it only became illegal I think in the early 2000s obviously because the technology did not exist therefore the law hadn't caught up with it yet.

What incidents have you look back at think it was unethical?

No most of my Fleet Street career was as a production journalist so I was never out there reporting. My reporting career was mainly on regional newspapers and I think the closest I ever got to doing that might be considered unethical was I was a twenty-something enthusiastic reporter and a famous snooker player ended up in a local hospital after a questionable car crash and I did slip on a white coat and walked down a hospital corridor to talk to him. Now I didn't claim to be a doctor but I did put on the white coat. I think these days that might be described as unethical.

Was that something you chose to do or was it something from up the chain of command?

No I chose to do that. I needed to get in and I don't think I was challenged so I think it was easier for me to walk in down the corridor if I had a white coat on. I was never challenged so I don't know if that is true or not. The only other thing was a sub on [name redacted] as you know we are writers and write stories that appear with no disrespect to the originators of the story but because of the tightness of layout and amount of incoming copy and briefing the actual words are really written by the subeditors. I think the only time I ever refused to write something was when way way back in 79 when there was a [incident redacted] we used to write captions on them in those days. The captions were supplied I mean they weren't made up. The caption would say 'Joyce enjoys water skiing and hopes to bring about world peace' or whatever and once I was asked when writing one caption to make sure in the first sentence that I highlighted the age of this woman who was young. She was 16. And I

was uncomfortable with that and said I was not doing that. Nobody made me do it they took it away and dealt with it themselves but other than that I've never… I was there when [name redacted] printers wouldn't publish a photograph of Arthur Scargill there was a pose of him with his arm up addressing his members and it looked like a Hitler-like salute and that was captured and the headline said "Mine Fuhrer" and printers wouldn't print it. I wasn't involved in that decision but I was there. The printers wouldn't print it and [name redacted] published with a big white hole where the picture would have been. That was when… when I joined we were a closed show you know. A national union of journalists closed shop. You couldn't work there unless you were a member of the national union of journalists. All of the unions had a say in terms of their attitudes which I didn't think was a bad thing really.

What was the newsroom culture like at that time?

I don't think the culture has changed much. I think it changed before Wapping which was 1986 even thought there were journalists who were not bothered. I think it's fair to say that many journalists enjoyed the privileges given them by their union. I liked it for example when I was in my 30s working as a subeditor on [name redacted] which I think then and still now which was widely regarded as the best subs desk in Fleet Street, known for their skills and professionalism, I didn't have to climb a greasy pole to seek advancement because I got a good salary for a job I enjoyed which was thanks to the protection of the union. So there was that from a cultural point of view. That changed from the Wapping point of view when [name redacted] derecognised the NUJ and extinguished the print unions. It became more, first of all wages were driven down and pensions was taken away from us. So there was a culture change because there was less security with more powerful management and I would say not quite as self-protected as we were although journalists by their very nature are very asshole-y. They do their own thing and still to a certain extent but less so I think they are more tamed than we were 30 years ago.

What are your thoughts of Leveson in terms of what it has done with journalism?

It depends on what you mean. If you mean were the recommendations of the inquiry taken up in full the answer is clearly no. Any sort of objective study of what happens shows that. In my view the Leveson Inquiry was a crazy inquiry. It was an inquiry about tabloid newspapers and yet there wasn't a single expert on tabloid newspapers on the panel around Leveson. I think famously it didn't address the internet. The complete non-comprehension of how journalism works in the digital age was not addressed. We've got this government-recognised regulation body called Impress and hardly anybody is a member of Impress. I think the press exposed the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry as unreal. However, having said all of that I think it is absolutely true that the culture of [name redacted] and others is certainly much more careful now. I don't think that's necessarily a good thing frankly. I mean there is the flip side of the coin. I mean for example nobody minded about illegal methods in achieving news when the news stories achieved are deemed to be of national interest, public interest. For example, when the bombing, the Omagh bombing, in Northern Ireland occurred. I believe I'm right in saying, I don't want to

say something that wasn't published but I know something about that investigation and the way that the bombers, and they were never brought to justice, they way they were located and identified was by having access to mobile phone records showing connections between the masks and a 4x4 that was driving the bomb into the market. Similarly, more recently, the Telegraph's acquisition of the MPs' fiddling expenses not quite conclusively but virtually conclusively can be shown to be an illegal acquisitions, i.e., the paying of money for illegally acquired digital content, i.e., MPs' expenses. But of course nobody complains about that. What we're really talking about is not the means, the methods of acquiring the news, it's always about the outcome, it's always about the conflict between the public interest and the interest of the public. And that's where I get uncomfortable I don't like people telling me what's in my interest to read and what isn't. There is also the underlying class divisions, conflicts and tensions. There is no doubt to me a lot of the Leveson Inquiry and Hacked Off and a lot of the driving force behind the anti-Tabloid fervour is very much class driven. It's very much the sort of a smear at what us working class people like to read. The celebrity culture, that's a bad thing and we should all watch Panorama. So there is this cultural class division which in my view has coloured a lot of the onslaught on the popular press. But that is in no way meant to diminish what would justify or excuse the phone hacking that went on. I'm much more annoyed about the way in which News International gave up all their contacts to the police that was a dreadful thing. North American journalists would never have done that. I thought that was a far bigger crime that some of phone hacking that went on. Giving up of contacts was an awful thing, acceding to police request if you remember by News International so I thought that was terrible. That to me was truly unethical. I'm not one for…. I don't see journalism as a profession quite the reverse journalism is antithesis of the profession. Journalism is meant to be anti-regulation anti-professionalisation and anti-codes. That's the heart of journalism and I get very uncomfortable with a lot of hacked off persuasion all of those people seem to be saying they want journalists to be accredited in some way as if they want them to have a the world seal of approval that they are saying somehow we want our journalists to be licensed journalists shouldn't be licensed. It has a trickster function it has a disruptive function

Vicki

How long have you been a journalist?

Oh blimey 30 years actually since 1987.

What sort of jobs have you held in that time?

They've all been in regional newspapers, but I've covered lots of different disciplines from general news, sports, features, and what I do now, business.

What were your motivations for wanting to be a journalist?

It's always something I wanted to do since I was 10 years old. I was good at writing at school and enjoyed finding things out and writing about them and basically letting people know about things. It was a way of communicating I suppose. It's something I had always wanted to do, finding out things and reporting them. I did a degree, not English, but history degree which I found quite useful

Did you go the NCTJ route?

I applied to do the NCTJ 1 year course when I graduated but it was at a time when grants for higher education were starting to be cut back. I couldn't get a grant to do the course, I was accepted, but I couldn't get the grant to do it. I did actually get a job on a weekly paper and then they paid for my training. I did the 10 week NCTJ program.

In your time as a journalist what have you seen journalists being criticised for?

In my time, do you mean personally? (Could be personally or what you have seen in the newsroom). I should make a distinction between local papers and national papers. We certainly couldn't get away with a lot of the things the nationals do. Generally, I would say journalists were quite respectful of other people and I can't say that any bosses would expect you to be disrespectful either. There was during my time one or two people I can think of when I was working on a daily paper who would sort of want to get this story, not at all costs, but would probably send you back if you said the person didn't want to talk they would send you back to talk to them again. But I wasn't really comfortable, there was an element of door stepping obviously when there'd been accidents or bad things happened. There was always that element of door stepping people at upsetting times which I'd never felt that comfortable with. So long as you were doing things in a fairly sensitive way I didn't think there was a need to do it.

What have you seen praise for?

I think if you can deliver a good, accurate story. You know I'm pleased to say I've had people come back and say thanks I really liked that you did a good job with that or you or you told a story or told us things we didn't know already and I think it is important to other journalists to inform people. Especially today when people are getting mixes of information from different sources and I do think probably to report things properly and fully is important today as ever, in fact, more so. People today say that we wouldn't have known that if we hadn't read it in your business magazine. So I think that's what sticks in me in terms of what journalists are praised for. That's the job they should be doing really.

In your experience what do you think is the public's trust of journalists?

I don't think we've got a very good reputation generally. I think a lot of people do assume all journalists are the same and if they see sort of bad behaviour in the national press they could quite easily think that all journalists behave in that way. There have been times when I've had to explain we don't work in that way. Occasionally, people will ask us when we are doing a story 'Oh yeah, what are you paying me for it?' and we don't actually pay at the regions. I think there is that expectation that we are all the same.

What is your understanding of the public interest?

Well, I remember when I was training back in the late 80s in the NCTJ that there was a line that was said to us by our lecturers: 'In the public interest doesn't necessarily mean of interest to the public.' I think that's the distinction you have to draw that there are certain things that are in the public interest. Certain people, politicians for example, need to be accountable to the public. I think to a certain extent you do need journalists and investigative journalists to hold certain people to account. When you get to the point of is it in the public interest or of interest of the public you get into the debate of if you should chase celebrities down the street just because they are celebrities which is different from journalists asking awkward questions of people in power who should be accountable to the public. That's what I've had in my mind in terms of some things being in the public interest. Just because the public may enjoy gossip does not mean you should be chasing people.

How much of a role has codes of practice played in your career?

I don't know as organisations that I'm aware of if they have played a role in my career. They way I do things, I've never been in trouble with any of the regulatory bodies or the Press Complaints Commission and I think that's because you always behave to a certain standard and the newspapers that we worked for did too. If there was anything we were working on that was contentious, particularly at [name redacted] where I spent most of my career in [name redacted] you'd call in the lawyers if there was anything remotely dodgy. I would say great care was taken not to fall foul of any codes of practice.

What are your thoughts of the Leveson Inquiry and its outcomes?

What was going on? I think the whole News of the World thing everybody knew the News of the World used to get up to. Mainstream journalists would disapprove of a lot of the measures that they used. When you got to the phone hacking end of things you know it's quite incredible to learn they were doing it and doing it so much. It was something that was so removed from how we would operate. It was almost as though it was a totally different world, really. The outcome I thought was fair enough. I was keen to have heard that the media should be, not scrutinised, regulated too much. I do think a free press is vital if you are in any democracy really. But I do think there were measures that needed to be taken against the more unscrupulous elements. I think much that came out we were already doing. We do self-regulate. You do know there is a line that you can go over or not. I do think a lot of newspapers certainly in my experience do self-regulate and don't really need somebody telling them what to do and what not to do. But having said that what went on at the News of World needed stamping down on.

Have you noticed changes in the newsroom before and after the inquiry?

No not in the way journalism was practised. I'm a freelancer now and work for several magazines. That's a different world to newspapers. I can't see there would be any different way for me to work as a result of the Leveson inquiry because of how I was working before it. I personally haven't seen any difference in terms of how I operate. But people working in nationals possibly could do.

As a freelancer how do you go about getting news?

Generally, it's a mixture of things. I'm out and about a lot so I meet a lot of people, do a lot of networking. I have an editor business magazine so a lot of my stories literally come from being out in the business community, talking to people, generating ideas, obviously responding to issues whether it is responding to Brexit. Sometimes people come to me wanting to hire me to highlight issues or stories. I do work for a couple of lifestyle magazines as well and again sometimes I'll come across a story I will pitch to them or they will come to me and say can you do me a story on xy and z. A mixture of ways really. I'm either commissioned to do things or I pitch stories.

How long did you work in newspapers?

At newspapers? 24 years.

So you would have left as web journalism was taking?

I left as the Leveson Inquiry was beginning.

OK what I'm getting at is how did you find the rise of digital journalism?

It depends who is doing it really. Obviously there are actual journalists involved in online journalism and newspapers have their own websites and maintain them. It's alarming when you hear how people get their news. A high percentage of people get all their news from Facebook. It's only snippets of news they are getting that are made into facts and reality that I find quite disturbing. (The rise of fake news seems to be predominant). Well, not necessarily fake news. Just out of context news really. It'll be little bits that people pass around like Chinese Whispers. It's not necessary that someone set out to make fake news but this is the way it's delivered. It's way it is interpreted that I do find quite alarming. There is a lack of the in-depth, well-researched news that maybe 20 years ago we did get by reading big features in newspapers

In your opinion, how do regional newsrooms view the community?

In regional newspapers, they view the community as absolutely vital. A few times at [name redacted] when I was at [name redacted] in [name redacted] there were actual moves to engage more with the community. I think now [name redacted] is moving towards a more community-based perspective. I think it can be difficult if you get caught up in it. There was a phase when newspapers went into decline and got rid of lots of staff, as resource, they didn't have enough journalists to go out and find stories. So they became quite adept at having stories sent in and rehashing those and I think that's a danger that you can lose that connection with your community. I mean the communities are vital sources of news and when I started out on a weekly newspaper we were literally covering everything parish council meetings every week, local council, all the police, fire, ambulance, courts. We were very much rooted within the community and I think that varies when you get into your bigger daily papers.

Every so often they think, 'that's right, we have to be connected with the community'. I mean where I live in [name redacted] there's been quite a growth in community magazines. In the area where I live there is one called [name redacted] which isn't actually done by a journalist but he literally covers every little item of news, everything that is going on on your doorstep. And that is hugely popular because I think people still want to know what is going on on their doorstep.

When you were a trainee what sort of advice were you given by senior colleagues?

When I started at my first newspaper I was very much thrown into the deep end. You just got on with it and did it which was a bit scary at first when you're going about it with no experience but you certainly learn very quickly. But I was very lucky in the sense that within 8 months or so I was on the NCTJ course. And I would say we got most of our actual training from that 10-week course. Of course, when you're doing the job day in, day out, covering courts, covering inquests, dealing with the police, MPs, local council, you sort of learn quite quickly

Later on, what advice did you impart to trainees?

Probably quite general information on how to do things. Probably if they were unsure of how to deal with situations then yes I would have given advice. When I was on the [name redacted] we didn't take a lot of trainees so it wasn't particularly an issue. It was only when the journalism degrees came in that we started taking in trainees and then they would have already done three years at university so they probably got quite a grounding.