DISSERTATION

AUTONOMY IN LOCAL DIGITAL JOURNALISM: A MIXED-METHOD TRIANGULATION

EXPLORATION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND INDIVIDUAL MORAL

PSYCHOLOGY FACTORS OF DIGITAL NEWS WORKERS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

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The main purpose of this mixed-method dissertation was to examine the shifting

digital news industry, especially in regard to individual and organizational-level

autonomy. Specifically, this work responds to calls in media ethics, media sociology, and

moral ecology to better understand how organizational structure and individual moral

psychology factors influence how digital news workers exhibit autonomy within their

digital news organization. The autonomous agency of news workers is an essential

indicator of how journalism work is fulfilling its role as the fourth estate in the function

of American democracy.

This dissertation examined how autonomy is either inhibited or enabled by a

myriad of factors on the digital news frontier. I worked with the editorial staff at a

hyper-local digitally native news organization, The Golden Gate, over the course of one

year. I began the research process with a participant observation period. Then a few

months later the staff completed a moral psychology-based survey online. My data

collection period ended with in-depth participant interviews based on the themes found

during the first two phases.

My data collection resulted in several themes to answer my research questions

concerning the organizational structure, leadership, socialization, and autonomy of the

staff at The Golden Gate. These themes included company culture (divided into several sub themes), routine and workflow (also divided into several sub themes), individual autonomy, individual processes of growth, organizational autonomy (also divided into several sub themes), professional autonomy, and moral autonomy.

The first overarching perspective I gained during this study was that the experimental hyper-local journalism model enacted by The Golden Gate digital news organization represented a new wave of digital journalism. The Golden Gate's digital product was a carefully curated newsletter representing a richer take on conveying not just their original reporting, but the story of the city. A second overarching perspective I gained during my research process was seeing the strength of how the moral psychology components informed the media sociological considerations of my research site. The moral psychology survey components teased out the ethical climates of the staff. The highest-ranking ethical climate (according to the Ethical Climate Questionnaire results) for The Golden Gate was the social responsibility climate, a climate that speaks to journalistic professional norms of serving the public good. The second highest ranked ECQ was the teamwork climate. These ethical orientations stemmed in part from the company's founding vision of an audience-first focus, but they also flowed from the staff's strong allegiance to professional journalistic norms, as deciphered from the moral psychology components of my survey.

I also found support for my variables. When I examined my data on The Golden Gate's organizational structure and routines, I found that in some ways, the company practiced traditional news culture. They exemplified high levels of independence in their reporting processes. The routine of the staff needing to divide their time between traditional reporting and public relations roles, however, was where the culture of the

organization shifted significantly from typical legacy news culture. They also exemplified a highly collaborative and role sharing work ethic.

When I evaluated the leadership structure at The Golden Gate, I found a culture where each staff member was expected to take complete ownership of their own role in the company. From the top down, everyone pitched in as needed, and they were all asked to actively participate in money and workflow committees as part of their regular duties.

When I evaluated levels of autonomy, The Golden Gate staff exemplified high levels of autonomous agency in nearly every area of their work. Even in collaborative moments, the staff members each contributed their unique strengths and perspectives to get stories out. The staff also expressed a high level of freedom from top-level oversight as they shaped the voicing and coverage of their city. The staff did convey, however, a tension of the audience-first focus as a major driver of what stories they would work on.

I also explored future research implications for media ethics, media sociology, and moral psychology, all research paradigms that can offer rich and varied perspectives on the future of digital journalism work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I remember that bright spring day vividly. My grandparents, dad, and I were packed into the bleachers at the University of Colorado stadium in Boulder, CO to watch my mom walk across her graduation stage and receive her Ph.D. I was 13 years old. At the time, graduations and college life were normal rhythms for me. I grew up in family student housing with both of my parents simultaneously pursuing multiple degrees. I remember we got to travel as a family a few times as my mom wrote her dissertation. I saw data collection and interviewing in live action.

It wasn't until I started my own graduate school journey that I realized all of the intensive time and sacrifices my parents made to achieve their successes, and how those sacrifices paved the path for me too. There was never a doubt in my mind that I would rock graduate school. Actually, when my husband wanted to propose to me, the first words out of my dad's mouth to Matt were "well, she is going on to get her master's degree you know, and maybe her Ph.D. Don't mess it up!" I started my Ph.D. journey with my beautifully vivacious 18-month-old girl, Elleanna Joy, bouncing on the back of the couch while I tried to grade student assignments or read deep philosophical pieces. (At our house we joke that my main family role is to be the armchair philosopher). By the time I was ready to start writing this dissertation, Asa Everett Robert was here. Right after the data collection phase of this work, I found out I was pregnant with Maceo Oliver. Am I crazy? Yes. Have I slept at all in the last 7 ½ years of my Ph.D. journey? Not really.

I have been daydreaming about writing this acknowledgment for a long time. What would it feel like to actually finish my dissertation work? What would I suddenly do with all of my "free time?" Probably wrestle with my kids more often on the living room floor, or finally tell them that I actually don't need to head out to my back yard shed office and write out a few more pages before I pass out and go to sleep. The journey of motherhood and dissertation work is not for the faint of heart, and there were many times I wanted to give up completely. There was even this one time, when I was in my first year of my tenure track position (and trying to finish this dissertation while wrangling a 9-month old Maceo) that the COViD-19 pandemic rocked our entire world. Somehow through quarantine and working from home, I pulled through. How does it feel to write this acknowledgment? Humbling and empowering. One step at a time, I did it, with an entire army of support behind me.

me how to organize myself for my comprehensive exams, and many of our conversations about analytics, storytelling, media ethics, and moral psychology helped shaped the research questions for this project. Heidi, you have been such an amazing support and cheerleader for me. You knew exactly what I was walking through, and so you could answer both practical but also life balance questions to no end.

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To my kids Elleanna, Asa, and Maceo: When you each walk into the room, I feel wonder and awe. I pray that as I walk out being the best me I can be, you will be inspired to be the best yous that you can be. I love each of you so very much.

To my Matt: I am not even sure where to begin. Nearly our entire relationship has consisted of me being in graduate school. This accomplishment is at least half yours. I love you forever. I also still like you too.

To my Jesus: May I always wonder at what You have created. May all that I do glorify You.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

On a crisp fall day, Rene, Nora, and Leslie met a group of 20 attendees at a local cemetery to lead a historical walking tour. The event was months in the works, and an important avenue for their digital news startup, The Golden Gate, to connect in-person with their audience. Then, the unthinkable unfolded. Around 9:30 a.m., three blocks away, a man entered the local community center and opened fire on worshippers attending a religious service. The shooting continued with a police standoff as the congregants ran for cover.

Rene, the editor for The Golden Gate, jolted into action. She asked Nora and Leslie to stay with the tour group to make sure the guests were safe. Nora, a reporter-curator on the editorial staff, and Leslie, the advertising director, both got out their laptops right at the cemetery and prepared story outlines and social media updates while Rene made her way to the community center. Because Rene was a former crime reporter for a different news organization, she immediately called her contacts in the police department to start confirming details as they unfolded. By 11:15 a.m., the shooter had surrendered to the police, leaving many people dead in his wake.

As the morning of the community center shooting unfolded, the staff at The Golden Gate nimbly shifted roles back and forth between each other to get the news out as quickly as possible. Managing editor, Melissa, became the central desk editor, assigning stories and dispatching the team as needed. Reporter-curator, Seth, jumped on his computer from home and started making phone calls to fill in story details. Very

quickly the editorial team of The Golden Gate had news of the shooting out on all of their digital platforms.

"We had built this structure where we all trusted each other and relied on each other and knew how to do each other's work and work outside of our comfort zone," Rene said. "[The community center shooting] was absolutely horrific, and it was one of the worst days of my entire life, but the team worked together."

Over the next eight days, the team focused nearly 24/7 on covering the unfolding ripple effects of the shooting on their community. Piles of food poured in from the community as the staff kept working, Nora said. A former full-time reporter-curator, Carrie, came back to town to help the staff as they attended the funeral of each victim. The Golden Gate staff also maintained a constant connection with each other, either online or in-person, as they worked to make sense of all that was happening in their city around the tragedy.

"To be producing a major news event and to not be in the same room together is extremely hard," Rene said. "That's … how our team's dynamics played out on a day-to-day basis."

"We never had trouble when we needed people to jump in and pitch in," Seth said.

"There's no way any of us would have gotten through [the community center shooting] without each other," Nora said.

Shifting newsrooms in the digital age

As both digital and traditional newsrooms continue to face tumultuous industry shifts, understanding the impact of technology and economics on the organizational norms and routines of newsrooms has never been more important. One big focus of the

field of media ethics is to examine how media workers (and media organizations) navigate ethical dilemmas, especially in consideration of the duties of a free press system, such as the one found in the United States. In order to fully assess the impact of evolving media digital spaces on the ethical decision making of both audiences and media practitioners, more empirical and qualitative work is needed to complement the abounding philosophical accounts of the effects of the digital frontier on media ethics (Berg, 2018; Ess, 2017; Heider & Mannanari, 2012; and Vanacker, 2012). Media employee titles are shifting to encompass more and more duties and skills; and all news organizations, whether they have a print product or not, are having to meet the increasing audience demands of a digitized 24/7 breaking news world. Are these shifts in workload impacting how the news is produced? Media ethics as a field must continue to consider the evolving impact of digital spaces on ethical decision-making, especially by the people who produce this digital content. Answers to these questions can be found by looking at how leadership, organizational structures, and individuals operate within digital news organizations.

Study Approach

For this dissertation, I worked with an all-digital news startup, The Golden Gate, to contribute to answering these questions and more. Drawing upon mixed-methods of research from media sociology, moral psychology, and media ethics, I considered both individual and organizational factors in the development of The Golden Gate's work culture. I observed the structure and functions of the organization by looking at how the editorial team was enabled to practice journalistic professional ethics, such as journalistic autonomy, in their fast-paced digital news startup environment. I also looked at individual moral psychology correlates to observe the ethical processing of

each individual on the editorial team. For the first phase of the study, I conducted a qualitative media sociology-based participant observation. For the second phase, I developed a moral psychology-based quantitative survey that was administered to each participant. Then for the third and final phase, I conducted qualitative semi-structured respondent interviews with each employee concerning ethical development, journalistic autonomy, moral autonomy, organizational structure, and individual norms.

CHAPTER 2 – THE PROBLEM

To build my rationale for this study, I considered many different influences on journalistic autonomy in a digital news culture. I defined journalistic autonomy as the ability of journalists to make practical work choices, both internally and externally, including choices while navigating ethical dilemmas (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Victor & Cullen, 1988; Ryff et al., 1989). An example of an ethical dilemma every journalist faces is how to balance source demands with audience demands while producing a story. One main question I considered as I built my study design was: as the mediums and story formats of journalism shift, especially as compared to legacy news models, are journalists navigating new choices as they face ethical dilemmas?

The first component of capturing how current media practices are changing both the process of media (and maybe even media workers themselves) was to define what constitutes a digital news organization, and whether or not they differ from their traditional media counterparts. While digital news originates from both "born on the web" organizations and legacy journalism organizations, the Pew Research Center defined digital news organizations as digitally native news publishers that are "originally founded on the web" (Stocking, 2017). Conversely, traditional news models represent pre-digital formats, such as television broadcast and newspaper outlets (Alejandro, 2010). This dissertation examined one digitally native news organization that was born on the web in 2016 as a hyper-local startup experiment in a bustling metro United States city. For the sake of this study, I named the organization The Golden Gate, a pseudonym to protect the true identity of the organization and the employees.

The integration of empirical and qualitative methods of analysis at both the individual level (i.e. through moral psychology measures) and the organizational level (i.e. media sociology methods of inquiry) helped me understand how this digital media organization navigated the ethical challenges of the quickly shifting digital news work climate. The following chapter overviews my arguments for why and how I used the methods and theories that I chose.

Methodological framework overview

The methodological framework for this dissertation drew upon media sociology, media ethics, and moral psychology methodologies. The combination of these theories helped me to build a methodological framework for understanding the work flow and decision-making processes of the employees at The Golden Gate.

Traditions in media sociology for studying news organizations. Media sociology is a research tradition with a rich history of questioning power and structure. This questioning includes attempts to decipher the impact of both historical and organizational culture on individual media workers, media messages, and audiences. The "golden age" of media sociology in the 1970s and 1980s helped to establish media studies as an independent academy apart from sociology. Researchers during that time recognized how important a sociological analysis of news organizations and journalism was to understanding current culture (Tumber, 2014). Not very many media sociology-driven studies have been conducted in the current digital age to assess the technical, societal, cultural, and ethical challenges faced by digital news organizations (Waisbord, 2014). Doing so will require an analysis of individual digital media workers as situated within organizational culture, including a consideration of how the power structures of organizations are shaping those individuals and the media products they craft.

Sociological methods can offer a holistic, in-depth qualitative picture of how organizational cultures function.

Historically, media sociology practices have contributed substantially to how the inner workings of news organizations are understood. The call of Shoemaker and Reese (2014) and others (Paterson & Domingo, 2008; Singer, 2008; Waisbord, 2014) for an increase in media sociology-based research as a way to understand emerging digital media practices has gained some traction. These media sociology-driven projects represent traditional sociological methodologies such as ethnography (Cook, 1998; Ferrucci et. al, 2017; Ryfe, 2012; Ryfe, 2009b; Ryfe, 2006; Schauster, 2015; Sparrow, 1999; Usher, 2014), participant observation (All & Janson, 2017; Ivask, Russell & Schau, 2013; Lou & Chang, 2016; Menon, 2005; Napoli, 2003; Trasel, 2018) and interview work (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015; Besley, Dudo, Yuhan & Abi Ghannam, 2016; Besley & Roberts, 2010; Hinton, Kurinczuk & Ziebland, 2010; Neil & Schauster, 2015).

Media sociology practices can greatly complement media ethics research agendas (Couldry, 2006; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014), as media ethics paradigms also call into question beliefs, decision-making, and motivations of individuals and organizations. And as Schauster argued in her ethnographic study of advertising ethics within an advertising agency, ethical problems "are faced within a unique organizational context, which is shaped in part by organizational leaders … A new approach to advertising ethics should consider the unique, and complex, organizational context where ethical problems are faced" (Schauster, 2015, p. 150). Some media sociological work has been done looking at digital journalists as individuals and as freelancers within content aggregation sites (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015 and Ferrucci & Vos, 2017). However, to my knowledge, no media sociology work has been done on-site with digital news

organizations (where content is originated within and distributed solely through digital channels).

Integrating media ethics and moral psychology to study digital news. The field of media ethics has traditionally operated as a philosophical field of study, but in recent years, more researchers have implemented both qualitative and quantitative research methods to help shape responses to the ethical dilemmas faced by media practitioners. Psychology methods, such as reliable and validated survey measures, have also been implemented more recently into media ethics queries to help contribute an empirical understanding of ethical decision-making to the philosophical underpinning of media ethics theory (Plaisance, 2016).

Moral psychology survey items are one tool used increasingly in media ethics to consider the psychological correlates of moral decision-making. Moral psychology considers how moral identities develop, and how people make moral decisions (not what types of moral decisions they should make). Moral psychologists are interested in how behaviors, motivations, and moral autonomy intersect; they are on a quest to understand how moral functioning works (Plaisance, 2015). The field of moral psychology integrates both science and philosophy to explore morality, a mixed-method approach to study design for considering how moral reasoning works. It is a relatively new and independent field that blends both philosophical and psychological inquiry (Keene, 2020). The field is home to philosophers who ponder the reasons and justifications people have for embracing different moral principles, as well as psychologists, neuroscientists, and other cognitive researchers who question what shapes behavior (such as personality, society, and different cultural environments)

(Plaisance, 2015).

Over the past several decades, moral psychology has explored how affective reactions, emotion modeling, brain biology, and evolutionary components contribute to moral decision-making (Haidt, 2013). The moral psychology perspective recognizes that people are "neither mere bundles of emotional impulses, nor are we automatons who adopt a moral framework and proceed to apply it uniformly in every dilemma" (Plaisance, 2015, p. 25). Various tools from moral psychology measure different aspects of moral cognition, such as personality components, value structures, and skills for moral reasoning (Plaisance, 2015). These tools are often translated into well-tested scales for measuring different aspects of moral cognition.

Media ethicist Patrick Plaisance (2016) also called for a return to individual-level analysis in media ethics as necessary for the field to evolve. From his perspective, moral psychology is one of the greatest knowledge bases media ethicists can draw upon to empirically investigate individual-level concerns. Implementing moral psychology methods to research media ethics questions is an approach that helps researchers discern both individual and broader organizational patterns. Plaisance's media exemplar study took this approach by presenting a model for measuring morally motivated self-identity through four considerations: individual moral development, ethical ideologies, personality traits, and the influence of professional environments (2015). His model combined narrative themes with the quantitative analysis of moral psychology-based surveys to craft a profile "of ethical motivation among media practitioners" (Plaisance, 2015, p. xi).

With a similar study design in mind, this dissertation combines media sociology frameworks of organizational structure and culture with moral psychology frameworks

of the individual psychological dynamics of ethical decision making to examine both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy in modern digital newsrooms. My study design was inspired by Plaisance's 2015 study. I built an ethical profile of how autonomy is expressed by these digital media workers, but also extended beyond individual-level data by looking at how these workers were shaped by their organization. I drew upon several moral psychology tools for assessing the autonomy and self-determination of media workers at a digital news organization and then situated those discussions within the organization's culture.

Theoretical Framework Overview

To shape my understanding of the workings of The Golden Gate, I considered many theoretical implications, as outlined in my literature review (see Chapter III). A few theories and concepts are key to mention here, though, to establish the rationale behind my research questions. These theories and concepts are: autonomy, levels of culture (Schein, 2010), and the hierarchy of influences model (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016).

Autonomy. Autonomy as a concept has ancient roots (as well as modern implications), as many societies place importance on ideals of self-governance and self-determination (Chirkov, 2011), or "being able to follow one's own convictions" (Plaisance, 2016, p. 462). This is especially true in journalistic practice, where sociologists have repeatedly found that personal journalistic autonomy of workflow is a major dimension across the profession (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015 and Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska & Anikina, 2015), as have media researchers (McDevitt, 2003; McQuail, 1992; and Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). In media studies, journalistic autonomy is the

degree of freedom journalists have to shape their own work regardless of internal or external powers (Scholl & Weischenberg, 1999). This autonomy is constrained by political, economic, organizational, technological, and social structures. However, despite these constraints, journalists need freedom to select information as they cover stories; news organizations need freedom from political and commercial entities; and media systems need to sustain the freedom of the press (School & Weischenberg, 1999). Practically speaking, journalistic autonomy represents the "extent to which journalists are free to decide on the stories they cover or edit, as well as the selection of story angles, sources, and narrative frames" (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013, p. 136).

Autonomy has been deeply researched in journalistic studies (Camaj, 2016; Craft, 2017; Hughes et. al, 2017; Lauk & Harro-Loit, 2017; Örnebring, 2016; Reinardy, 2014; and Sarrimo, 2016). At the individual level, journalistic autonomy has been operationalized as work satisfaction (Reinardy, 2014), the right to discretionary judgment in most aspects of workflow (McDevitt, 2002), as constrained by marketing pressures (Petre, 2013), and as a watchdog capacity (Hanitzsch, 2011), among other dimensions. In digital workspaces, autonomy has been operationalized through considering: how digital journalists operate within the demands of traffic quota (Cohen, 2018); how workers function in microwork flow-like demands for collaborative content production (Bucher & Fieseler, 2017); how user-generated content influences journalists (Goldstein, 2012); how journalistic autonomy is challenged by the digital media environment (Singer, 2007); and how journalistic autonomy is negotiated for freelance and crowdfunded scenarios (Cohen, 2017 and Hunter, 2015).

Defining autonomy in journalism as the freedom to decide on workflow (as defined above), is only the first part of considering the role of deciphering modern digital journalism decision making responses and patterns. Moral autonomy, as traditionally defined by philosophy (Christman, 2020), considers how people take ownership of their actions, given the moral obligations that they have embraced (Maclagan, 2007). In this dissertation, I will tease out how moral autonomy is distinct from journalistic freedoms, as conventionally defined for the profession. I will also show how these different layers of autonomy work together in moral decision making through examples of the decisions made by journalists and editors at The Golden Gate.

Additionally, for some researchers, the freedom to act within the workplace is also deeply shaped by culture, as "culture is absolutely necessary for human autonomy to develop from potentiality to actuality; but, when autonomy has been fully developed, an autonomous person can reflect on the cultural influences and prescriptions and either endorse or reject them" (Chirkov, 2011, p. 67). In both organizational culture and individual considerations, "claims about the relative strength of influences in these new media structures require a better understanding of the degree of autonomous agency that exists within different production settings and cultures" (Plaisance, 2016, p. 461). Capturing degrees of autonomous agency within an organization requires both an assessment of organizational culture as a whole and also how individuals operate within that culture. Such an approach will helps define how digital news workers and organizations operate and will create a platform for observing how individuals are empowered to make ethical decisions within the evolving digital news organizations. Additionally, to holistically understand how these individual moral psychology factors manifest in the workspace, my data was situated within the contextual influences of

organizational culture, and ultimately within the social construction of reality crafted by the digital news organization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Schein's Three Levels of Culture. When looking at organizational culture, Schein (2010) recommended three levels to decipher the culture of a workplace: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions (p. 24). The surface level and the artifact level stem from phenomena collected by the senses when a person encounters an unfamiliar culture. These artifacts are all visual, such as how the physical environment is put together, how people talk and present themselves, the technology that is used, and the creative products that are produced. These artifacts can also include myths and stories, emotions displayed, published information about the company, and any rituals observed.

Workplace climate, which is a manifestation of culture, is also considered an artifact (Schein, 2010). "In other words, observers can describe what they see and feel but cannot reconstruct from that alone what those things mean in the given group" (Schein, 2010, p. 24). If the observer can exist with the group long enough, the meanings of artifacts can become clear. However, to access this information in a more timely manner, talking to insiders about "the espoused values, norms, and rules that provide the day-to-day operating principles by which the members of the group guide their behavior" (Schein, 2010, p. 25) is the next step. Schein further argued that questioning individuals about their perceptions of themselves within the group, and then about the group itself, would give richer meaning to the artifacts discovered (Schein, 2010).

The last layer in discovering the full culture of a group is to look for basic assumptions, or the beliefs that "have become so taken for granted that you find little variation within a social unit. This degree of consensus results from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values" (Schein, 2010, p. 28). These basic assumptions will often stem from ethical codes of conduct, organizational philosophy, and individual statements of beliefs and values, and the basic assumptions provide the patterns to help explain those espoused beliefs and moral functions (Schein, 2010).

The Hierarchy of Influences Model. In an effort to deviate from pervasive traditions of media effects research, Reese and Shoemaker built a "holistic conception of media sociology" (2016, p. 396) called the Hierarchy of Influences model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, 2014). This model looked at individual, professional, and macro-social structures (at five different levels) to build an all-encompassing analysis of the variables that shape media content. The levels are: individuals, routines, organizational concerns, institutional issues, and social systems. "At each level, one can identify the main factors that shape the symbolic reality—revealed through content, constituted and produced by media-work—and show how these factors interact across levels and compare across different contexts" (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016, p. 396). When agency is over-ascribed as a main component to media production, the authors found researchers tend to place too much emphasis on the personal characteristics of media workers. Conversely, when the emphasis is placed too deeply within macrostructures of institutions and societal issues, agency fades into the background of the discussion. Reese and Shoemaker argued that their model better evaluates the multiple levels of influence happening in media production, yielding "greater explanatory power" (2016, p. 397).

Individual level. The most micro level of the Hierarchy of Influences model, the individual level of analysis, "considers the relative autonomy of individuals, how they are shaped by, contribute to, and identify with their surrounding organizations" (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016, p. 398). Analysis at the individual level helps researchers understand how professional roles are shifting in changing media business structures, making both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy crucial variables for understanding how digital news organizations function, adapt, and survive.

Routine level. Considerations of routine look at the "patterns of behavior that form the immediate structures of mediawork. As a social practice, routines are the ways of working that constitute that practice, including those unstated rules and ritualized enactments that are not always made explicit" (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016, p. 399). News routines have been studied extensively by sociologists (e.g. Archer, 1996; Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984). Newsworkers (or actors, as described in sociology) all possess agency, and "actively engage in production and reproduction of routine" investing in "the cultural codes of social life that lend particular symbolic templates their structural force" (Ryfe, 2009b, p. 673). These autonomous agents actively work out with each other interpretations of structure. While structure often limits the ability of someone to imagine how work culture could operate differently, it can't extinguish those abilities (Ryfe, 2009b).

As routines represent a large influence on news production, deciphering how digital tools have disrupted and reshaped routines is necessary to understand digital newsrooms (Ferrucci et. al, 2017). In their interview work with online journalists, Agarwal and Barthel (2015) questioned the professional practices and norms of modern online journalists. They found explicit routines that differ from legacy journalism, but

also a desire for thorough reporting standards. "As online media organizations become more professionalized, their workers are both crafting a new definition of what it means to make the news while selectively adapting existing journalistic norms and practices" (p. 377). The authors also found that the pressure of faster post-event turnaround, and the number of required stories, have deeply impacted the routines of online journalists, including independent working situations with less editorial oversight and the gathering of sources through mostly online channels. "While the daily habits of journalists are changing, workflows through the news organization are shifting as well. Idea generation, editing, and meetings are all different in the online context," (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015, p. 386). Observing routines remains an important variable for charting how digital news organizations function.

Organizational level. Media sociology work at the organizational level has "contributed the insight, now well accepted, that media representations are an organizational product" (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016, p. 400). Defining these organizations can be a trickier task, as more and more organizations enter into mergers or collaborative contracts, and as organizations range from the "large-scale enterprise of daily news gathering to the small-staff, minimalist blogging operation," (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016, p. 400). Essentially, the organizational level of The Hierarchy of Influences Model considers how the organization functions (or, what makes it tick).

Social Institutions Level. This level of analysis in the Hierarchical Influences Model looks at how media organizations function underneath the larger media institution. From this perspective, the media institution as a whole operates from "structured dependency relationships with other major systemic players: including the

state, public relations, and advertising. It is this structure that has become an increasingly important area for research" (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016, p. 404).

Social System Level. This level concerns how "traditional theories of society and power as they relate to media" (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016, p. 404). From the social system perspective, ideals such as the fourth estate and objectivity are major considerations. While my work at The Golden Gate did not deeply focus on this level, themes about the role of journalism in American democracy - both present and future - did come up often.

How I observed culture and influences at The Golden Gate. I used Schein's (2010) Three Levels of Culture to shape how I observed The Golden Gate staff. I started by gathering both digital and in-person artifacts. Then through my observation phase and later on into my interview phase, I asked questions to decipher the meanings behind their workflow processes and routines. I also asked for clarification on even seemingly simple workplace operations. I then circled back around and asked many questions about the espoused values, norms, and routines of their work organization, such as when I asked each staff member to reminisce on their personal and organizational beliefs about the value of their work. An example of this last level of questioning was when I asked the editorial staff to explain how they aligned with the company's vision statements.

I used The Hierarchy of Influences model (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016) to shape my participant observation prompts. I especially looked at the routine-level during the observation phase. Gathering artifacts (as suggested by Schein), was also a big part of

observing the staff. My survey and my interview time also looked deeply at the individual-level variables for the staff. I addressed organizational-level variables from The Hierarchy of Influences model through all three of my study design phases, but the most consideration of organizational-level influence was assessed with a survey tool called the Ethical Climate Survey, as detailed in my methodology chapter (Chapter IV). I looked at the social institutions level through survey questions about how the staff is influenced by varying social institutions, and then these themes surfaced during the interview period as well. For the social system level, the staff weighed in on their perceptions of how their work sustained democracy, and the role of the press in American politics (as well as other parts of society).

Major Variables for Studying Digital Media Organizations

After synthesizing media ethics theorizing, a few perspectives from moral psychology, Shoemaker and Reese's Hierarchical Model (2014, 2016), the guidance of structuration theory (Giddens, 1979; 1984), and Schein's (2010) approach to examining organizational cultures, this dissertation focused on the individual, routine and organizational levels of a digital news organization. These levels provided deep consideration for: the expression of journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy for each individual; how individuals are shaped by the structure of the digital newsroom; and how behavioral norms shape the structures of the digital workspace.

Several key variables emerged from examining the individual and organizational structure of digital news organizations. The variables this dissertation focused on are: the socialization process, autonomy, and organizational leadership. Socialization represents how natives and newcomers are taught the cultural values needed for

competent functioning within a group or society (Maccoby, 2007). Journalistic autonomy concerns the freedoms journalists have to independently complete their work (Scholl & Weischenberg, 1999). Moral autonomy concerns how people take ownership of their actions (Christman, 2020), given the moral obligations that they have embraced and their capacity for moral thought (Maclagan, 2007). Organizational leadership represents the people in an organization who determine the tone, workflow, and group dynamics of both macro and micro work cultures (Schein, 2010).

Socialization. Socialization refers to the "processes whereby native individuals are taught the skills, behavioral patterns, values and motivations needed for competent functioning" within a culture, and how "culture is transmitted from one generation to the next, including training for specific roles in specific occupations" (Maccoby, 2007, p.3). Socialization also involves the "acceptance of values, standards, and customs of society, as well as the ability to function in an adaptive way in the larger social context" (Grusec & Davidov, 2007, p. 158). While the socialization process begins during childhood, it continues to build (and sometimes shift) through all stages of life, including through employers (Maccoby, 2007). Examining the socialization practices of an organization (and how employees access social capital) echoes theories of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), where the authors aimed to show "that the world is already structured before the individual arrives on the scene. It is not by accident that we construct reality in almost identical ways to the people who guide us through primary socialization" (Vera, 2016, p. 6). These processes of defining reality are shared deeply by group culture, which is then passed on to generations of new group

members. Schein detailed the benefit of studying what new members are taught when he wrote:

> Studying what new members of groups are taught is, in fact, a good way to discover some of the elements of a culture … how people learn and the socialization processes to which they are subjected may indeed reveal deeper assumptions. To get at those deeper levels, we must try to understand the perceptions and feelings that arise in critical situations (Schein, 2010, p. 19).

The variable of socialization was operationalized in my study as to how employees perceive their fit within the digital newsroom. I collected artifacts about training processes at The Golden Gate. During survey and interview work, I also questioned group members about their experiences of entering into the digital newsroom workspace, and how each of them journeyed to understanding the structure and cultural expectations of their organization. Also several of my survey questions addressed confidence in workplace leadership decisions and fit within the company, as well as how each subject perceives their workplace environment.

Autonomy. Studying the degree of autonomy exhibited by each individual within a digital news organization is at the heart of this dissertation. This includes exploring both how journalists use their freedom to make decisions, and their levels of duty to moral obligations. Expression of autonomy, as situated within a cultural context, has not yet been explored in digital news organizations. As Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) noted, professional autonomy is investigated through how it is perceived by journalists, as it is a social phenomenon that is subjected to the specific organizational environment

through which it exists. I also used questions from the Worlds of Journalism project to assess the moral autonomy beliefs of the staff at The Golden Gate (Worlds of Journalism, 2011). This dissertation operationalized autonomy at the individual level as psychological well-being and in the context of professional demands (see Appendix A). Autonomy at an organizational level was operationalized as perceptions of work climate and ethical work climate (see Appendix A).

Leadership. Culture is deeply connected to leadership within organizational structures, where culture is often founded and sustained by a leader. "Culture is ultimately created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders" (Schein, 2010, p. 3). Examining the leadership structure of a digital news organization is a pivotal variable in understanding how digital news organizations work, and one key to unlocking the structural and cultural dynamics shaping the journalistic autonomy of each media worker. For this dissertation, organizational leadership was operationalized as the people who create, embed, and evolve group culture within the digital newsroom, regardless of whether or not they carry a "leadership" title. Leadership was explored through observation, survey work, and follow-up interviews (see my methodology section for more).

Problem Statement

The goal of this dissertation was to explore themes of workplace culture, constraints, how workers navigate ethical and workplace tensions, and issues surrounding autonomy in digital media spheres. Essentially, to help the field of media ethics move forward in assessing the impact of primarily digital news spaces on the ethical decision-making factors of organizations and individuals, the problem I needed

to answer was: how has the new media environment affected the manifestations of both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy at both the organizational and individual levels in digital news organizations?

Research Questions

This dissertation explored the moral implications digital news workers face while working in digital news spaces. As stated previously, the broad research question guiding this mixed-method research study was: how do organizational culture and individual moral psychology factors impact the moral autonomy (as seen through steps in the ethical decision-making process) and autonomy of media workers at a digital news organization?

In response to the sociological understanding of the importance of routine in newsrooms (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015; Ferrucci et. al, 2017; Reese & Shoemaker, 2016), documenting the routines of digital news organizations will create an initial baseline for interpreting the three levels of culture within the organization (Schein, 2010). To that end, two research questions guided my inquiry about routines within the digital newsroom:

RQ1: What are the routines of digital news production?

RQ2: What are the beliefs and assumptions held by each media worker regarding the routines of digital news production?

Organizational leadership greatly influences how organizations function, and also how workers are socialized to (and share in) the social capital of each unique organizational culture (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Maccoby, 2007; Vera, 2016;). This literature guided the creation of the following research questions:

RQ3: What is the leadership structure of the digital newsroom?

RQ4: How are the digital newsworkers socialized to this structure?

As both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy are both hallmark dimensions of journalistic work (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015), assessing how each of these levels of autonomy functions within and outside of organizational structure is pivotal to understanding how digital news organizations (and individuals within those organizations) make professional and ethical decisions. The following research questions explored the potential relationships between organizational structure and autonomy:

RQ5: What role, if any, does organizational structure play in shaping both the journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy of digital news workers?

RQ6: To what level will digital news workers exhibit both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy within their digital news organization?

Just as organizational structure deeply influences individuals and groups (Schein, 2010), highly autonomous individuals exert themselves within their culture as needed to achieve their ends (Chirkov, 2011; and Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015). Gauging how employees perceive the ethical climate of their organization sheds light on the degree to which both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy are enabled within that particular workspace. My final research question considered:

RQ7: What is the relationship between perceptions of organizational ethical climate and manifestations of autonomy?

Limitations of the Study

The main purpose of this dissertation was to look into the shifting digital news industry and to provide both a quantitative and qualitative perspective on how roles and

models are shifting among those organizations, especially in regard to how both individuals and organizations function with journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy. I set out to do this by looking at the structure of one digitally native news organization, a deep dive that included a participant observation, survey, and in-depth interviewing. This dissertation represented data from only one news organization, and as such, I posed my research goals as research questions. Replicating the same methods with similar digital news organizations would help confirm the findings here.

Because this study design charts unexplored territory in media ethics and media sociology, I am justified in hand-picking an organization that represents the frontier of the new media business model that I am interested in: a digital news organization "born on the web" that produces all content virtually, yet meets as an in-person staff so that cultural structures can be observed in-person. One tradition in media sociology is to deeply examine one organization for themes and structure (Robinson & Metzler, 2016). This study was patterned after that tradition. Instead of seeking generalizability through the breadth of surveying multiple new media agencies, I wanted to take a closer look at the inner workings of one organization to capture the bigger picture of the relationships happening between new media workers and the changing power structure of media organizations. Additionally, each worker completed a moral psychology-based survey that offered enough data power to complete statistical quantitative self-reported observations of autonomy and organizational ethical climate. The artifacts for this study were co-created by me and the workers of The Golden Gate through my observations, my interactions, and my surveying of this new media organization.

CHAPTER 3 – LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will define organizational culture and journalistic autonomy, and then trace the theories, methodologies, and variables needed for capturing the potential relationships between organizational structure and individual autonomy within digital news organizations. These discussions provided the rationale for my three-phase study design: a sociology-based participant observation, a moral psychology-based survey questionnaire, and follow-up semi-structured interviews. Specifically, organizational culture was explored in this project as a probable influencer of journalistic autonomy within the digital news workplace, and perhaps (to a certain degree) even individual-level moral autonomy. All three of my research methods worked to build a mixed-methods analysis for understanding how journalistic autonomy functions in a digital newsroom, and also how individual moral autonomy is expressed by individuals working within that digital news organization. These considerations flowed from a framework of seeking to understand how organizational culture and structure empowers (or places constraints on) both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy. The following literature review traced the concept of moral ecology, the relevance of organizational culture in digital news organizations, journalistic autonomy, journalists as curators, key media sociology theories, and several different moral psychology tools used to assess my research problem.

Moral ecology

The concept of moral ecology in sociological work refers to the normative considerations of what affects "the ability of media workers to follow their moral

compasses, uphold ethical standards, and, in general, behave virtuously, or not," (Plaisance, 2019, p. 1). Research based in moral ecology considers the influence of long-standing media values as well as newer dynamics that influence both "higher-order individual level and organizational-level moral reasoning," (Plaisance, 2019, p. 2). The root meaning of the word "ecology" is to consider the totality of the nature of something by classifying and structuring it (Keller & Golley, 2000). While originally based in scientific inquiry, such as genetics and environmentalism, the term ecology expanded to social concerns as early as the 1950s. This was when sociologist Robert Park first used the term "social ecology" to explore the "dynamics in human environments" (Plaisance, p. 3, 2019). Modern social ecology considerations are often activism-focused in nature by searching out the root causes of social problems, such as the darker sides of industrial progress and expansion (Bookchin, 2006, p. 20).

The focus of media ecology has traditionally concerned the effects of media on various social ecologies, but contemporary work in media ecology has shifted to consider the sociological and organizational components that influence how media content is produced. A major component of media ecology is seeking to understand the moral ecology of an environment, such as what norms "mediate among various needs and interests" (Plaisance, 2019, p. 6), such as considering how content is made and the ethical decisions that must be made as that content is crafted. A moral ecology perspective asks what "social and organizational factors that help or hinder moral behavior" (Plaisance, 2019, p. 6). This dissertation is rooted in considerations of moral ecology, with a methodology designed to consider group culture, perceived standards, organizational structure, and codes of conduct (Plaisance, 2019).

Organizational Culture in Digital News Organizations

According to organizational literature, organizations represent a living and adaptive system of internal members and external stakeholders "who communicate within and across organizational structures in a purposeful and ordered way to achieve a superordinate goal" (Keyton, 2005, p. 10). One of the most important ways to measure how an organization works is to consider that organization's culture, as the culture of organizations helps to define the values, ethics, atmosphere, and behavioral norms within the workplace (Jones, 1999). Schein (2010) defined culture as both an in-the-moment influence and as a background structure.

> Culture is constantly reenacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by our own behavior ... culture implies stability and rigidity in the sense that how we are supposed to perceive, feel, and act in a given society, organization, or occupation has been taught to us by our various socialization experiences ... Organizational cultures will vary in strength and stability as a function of the length and emotional intensity of their actual history from the moment they were founded (Schein, 2010, p. 3-16).

Several norms need to be deciphered in order to understand what makes an organizational culture tick. These norms include "the distribution of influence, authority, and power" (Schein, 2010, p. 104). These organizational norms specific to each work culture will function when external tasks can be regularly accomplished, and group members are "reasonably free of anxiety" (Schein, 2010, p. 104), and consistently empowered to do their part in accomplishing these tasks. The evaluation of organizational culture helps to create a holistic account of practice, routines, social structure, leadership and other power structures that are at work in an organization.

However, organizational culture only tells part of the story. While people are most always socialized to broader societal and group cultures (Maccoby, 2007), trained professional norms and individual development also deeply contribute to how people work and live. Specifically for journalism-driven fields of work, enabling an individual to effectively operate within the structure of a newsroom is of utmost importance, as journalistic work requires a lot of independent and ethical decision making. Agency and structure operate together to help media professionals navigate the creation of their work (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). An autonomous agent is someone who acts independently and with free choice; this agency is, however, constrained by structure (Barker, 2005). So understanding to what degree an individual can assert both their journalistic autonomy and their moral autonomy within their media culture is imperative to understanding how organizational culture operates overall, and vice versa.

Journalistic Autonomy

John Merrill (1974) argued that journalistic autonomy is the most essential component of journalism, as freedom "is essential to authentic journalism, to creative press systems and to expanding, vigorous and self-assured journalists" (p. 63). Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) argued that in journalistic considerations, "autonomy stands for the freedom from interference, domination, and regulation" (p. 134). This autonomy is also needed by journalists to foster independent decision making for their work (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015).

Several media researchers have also noted journalistic autonomy as a major dimension of the journalism profession (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015; McDevitt, 2003; McQuail, 1992; Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). Drawing from survey data of over 1800 journalists across 18 countries, Hanitzsch (2011) found that western journalists

operated from a predominantly detached watchdog paradigm of journalistic autonomy, and that professional autonomy decreases significantly in journalists operating under heavy corporate and commercial influences. From the same data set, Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) found that individual and national level factors determine journalistic autonomy more than organizational factors.

This dissertation drew upon how journalistic autonomy has been researched in traditional journalistic settings, as mentioned above, to see if autonomous practices have shifted in the digital news context. This research considered both the individual and organizational levels of autonomy through observational work, a moral psychology-based survey of autonomy, and follow-up interviewing (see my methodology section descriptions of these methods).

Moral Autonomy

The concept of moral autonomy stems deeply from Immanuel Kant's (1785/1998) categorical imperative, a moral framework conveying that there are universal moral laws guiding how humans are obligated to treat both themselves and others. These obligations also imply choice, and the freedom to make those choices, based on a law that comes as individuals take action from their own will. Individuals must be free from any outside influence to make Categorical Imperative-level decisions, and so from this perspective, autonomy is the "self-imposition of the moral law" (Christman, 2020). The moral law is autonomous and higher-order, and can't be derived from human senses or desires (from Kant's perspective). On the other hand, substantive law (or the hypothetical imperative), integrates the use of rationality to help individuals make moral choices based on observed data (Maclagan, 2007). There are several versions and layers to Kant's Categorical Imperative, such as the logical imperative. However, for the

sake of this dissertation, the main tenant of moral autonomy to remember is the freedom individuals have to answer to their own moral obligations. What those moral obligations are spans multiple centuries worth of philosophical debates (Kant included), and is also not the work of this dissertation to determine.

Ryff defined moral autonomy as whether or not people "viewed themselves to be living in accord with their own personal convictions," (2014). Benson (1994) emphasized self-worth as an important component to moral autonomy, as an individual must also believe in their abilities to make choices that support their responsibilities. When Ryff and Singer (2006) considered moral autonomy, they highlighted how well-being is essential to helping humans effectively function during times of stress and adversity, and thus make moral decisions. This dissertation took a cue from defining moral autonomy as individual freedom of choice to make decisions, and used survey and interview tools to help assess the well-being and self-worth of the individuals at The Golden Gate displaying different degrees of moral autonomy thinking.

It should also be acknowledged that professional obligations can heavily influence individual moral obligations, and when considering ethical actions within the workplace, levels of both hierarchical control and the enablement of individuals to act from their own moral autonomy must be taken into account (Maclagan, 2007). There are moral choices people must make based on their obligations to the roles they have accepted. So in this dissertation, moral autonomy will be defined separately from professional (or journalistic autonomy), or both will be mentioned as prominent factors in a particular situation or theme.

Journalists as Curators

The official title of the reporter-level position at The Golden Gate was "reporter-curator." The curation expectation of journalists has continued to grow over the last decade or so, as more and more job descriptions for primarily digital newsrooms increasingly include curation components from other news outlets or from social media. These links are often shared in an email newsletter format, (much like the daily newsletter produced by The Golden Gate), in addition to original content funded by the organization. In considering the massive amounts of content produced by audiences, a curator component to a reporting position acknowledges how journalists now use much more of that community generated data and information. While aggregation in content generation is an automated process, curation relies on the conscious human searching "out content, editing content, enriching content or combining content from different sources" (Bakkar, 2014). Fahy and Nisbet (2011) found that science journalists in prominent US and UK media organizations were "performing a wider plurality of roles, including those of curator, convener, public intellectual and civic educator, in addition to more traditional journalistic roles of reporter, conduit, watchdog and agenda-setter" (p. 778).

When tracing how media organizations have implemented more curator job descriptions into reporting positions, Bakkar (2014) found that beginning in 2011, European media companies were increasingly taking on roles of managing content, rather than solely sourcing their own work. These companies started finding ways to cut costs for their online platforms, but one area that is difficult to automate is that human touch to finding the niche daily information relevant to a specific audience. The harvesting of information from sources outside of the newsroom walls is an important

role in modern media businesses, because it's not just audiences that live on the internet, but also "governments, research institutions, non-governmental organizations and businesses make more data available. Finding, gathering, cleaning and formatting these data require new technical skills of programming and visualization," (Bakker, 2014). Journalists must now combine writing skills with the "ability to code and interpret data," (Ziemer, 2015).

The time demand of curation, as well as any other "non-traditional" tasks that may be performed by those in reporter-curator positions, will most likely shape the autonomous expression of workers at The Golden Gate. Time, resources, cognitive, and technical demands will all shape the final product of any organization. This is where capturing the big picture of organization culture and the structure of The Golden Gate media company were needed to help me interpret the individual-level analyses of the moral psychology profiles of the staff. Media Sociology methods offer a robust plan for analyzing organizations, and there's a rich history of using these research rhythms to look at media organizations specifically.

Media sociology: exploring the organizational culture of digital newsrooms

Beginning in earnest in the late nineteenth century, sociology sought to "understand industrialization, its disruptive effects on society and its impact on people transplanted from rural agriculture to urban industrial lives" (Butsch, 2014, p. 84). The first sociology department in the U.S. (located at the University of Chicago), conducted participant observation research by examining how working-class immigrants used newspapers. Media studies has deep sociological roots, as sociologists were some of the first researchers to view communication processes as "fundamental to societies and particularly mass media in modern industrial democracies" (Butsch, 2014, p. 81).

Media sociology stems from the critical review of "the existing structures of practices which are usually not considered or taken as naturally given" (Tumber, 2014, p. 77). The "golden age" of media sociology in the 1970s and 1980s established community practices of how to best research the organizational cultures of news organizations. Mining the interdependence of structure, culture and agency all contribute to the quest of media sociology (Butsch, 2014 and Tumber, 2014). Autonomy has also been a major theme in media sociology, where many "Golden Age" powerhouse researchers such as Gans (1979), Soloski (1989) and Tuchman (1978) studied autonomy as "the extent to which journalists can make decisions free of pressures from management, commercial factors, as well as other forces that reside inside the news environment" (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). Essentially, media sociology exists to interrogate and discover the relevance of media in order to understand how society functions. The examination of social processes mixes with theory to look at the "industries, institutions, audiences, content and policies" of media (Waisbord, 2014, p. 8). The development of sociological theories for media studies offers an important way to look both at how different media operate and how media impacts audiences. Waisboard described this endeavor as the development of a sociological sensibility, or "the interest in linking the analysis of media industries, text, and audiences to questions about stratification, order, collective identity, sociability, institutions, domination/control, and human agency" and it is "grounded in the analysis of social process and forces that shape the dynamic interaction between structures and agency" (Waisbord, 2014, p. 15-16). Resse and Shoemaker defined media sociology as "our own approach to journalism: to tie social structures to symbolic formations (media content),

understand how social reality takes shape, and bring to the foreground normative concerns of how well journalism is working" (2016, p. 396).

Major shifts have happened in news cycles and the media since the "Golden Age" of media sociology. News organizations increasingly rely on the Internet as the main platform for disseminating their messages (some news organizations are even relying on crowdsourcing to help find leads and as a system for fact checking; see Wilkins, 2015). Reporters face greatly reduced resources and the pressures of entertainment news (like featuring YouTube videos and content submitted by audiences) on deciding "what's news" (see Gans' seminal 1979 work defining "what's news"). For these and many other reasons, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) argued for a revival of media sociology as an essential component to understanding how current media is changing, as media sociology "provides a broad perspective on the ways in which mass media content is subject to external influences, ranging from the content producer's personal values to national ideologies" (2014, p. i). Plaisance and Deppa (2009) argued that media sociology methods are needed to examine the pressure increases and rapidly changing professional requirements of all media workers. Additionally, Ryfe argued that "little is known about how the routines and practices of news production are changing (if at all), how journalists understand these changes, and what all of this means for the production of news" (Ryfe, 2009, p. 198), and that few studies about the performance of journalists are out there.

Structure and Digital News Organizations. Structure plays an important role in the sociological imagination. Shoemaker and Reese discussed media sociology as part of a larger body of interests concerned with the structural context of societies, specifically in "how the mediated symbolic environment gets constructed – by

individuals within a social, occupational, institutional, and cultural context" (2014, p. 2).

Benson elaborated on the power of structure as a way to "emphasize the patterned character of human action and to thus create categories that group together various patterns," and that while "each case is unique, it also shares certain properties with other cases, making generalization possible" (Benson, 2014, p. 26). In essence, a structural approach to sociology considers how the discursive and the social interact, and calls out inequalities, such as resource unbalance (either in physical or virtual spaces), and seeks to explain variation systematically (Benson, 2014). Recognizing that structures have always come before strategy is a way of acknowledging how centuries of human thought and action have all contributed to how societies (and thus media) behave in the moment.

In media sociology, hierarchical systems have been observed the most in traditional news organizations, where production leaders enforce organizational practices that are typically used industry-wide (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015, p. 377-378). And for all employees, the "organizational routines within which an individual operates form a structure, constraining action while also enabling it" (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p. 7). Gidden's structuration theory (1979; 1984) helps researchers look at action, structure and the relationships between individuals and institutions. The theory considers "the ways in which cultures, organizations, and social systems are constituted or created through the micro-practices of individual people" (Tracy, 2013, p. 59). A major component to structuration theory is the concept of the duality of structure, or "the idea that rules, policies, and structures are only made "valid" when individuals follow them and make decisions based upon them" (Tracy, 2013, p. 59). In other words, people look to rules as a resource for action and thought, but then they also reproduce

those rules. People within structures act with agency, but are "constrained by the rules and resources or the structure of [their] environment ... The outcome of agency or action is the production and reproduction of structure" (Schauster, 2012, p. 83).

An additional concept within structuration theory is the dialectic of control, which is a realization that power depends mostly on the actions of those underneath dominant people and structures. "Qualitative researchers coming from a structuration perspective examine how individual micro-practices serve to uphold and disrupt larger structures of power in work, play, and relationships" (Tracy, 2013, p. 60). These micro-practices are pursued primarily through listening to talking patterns within a group, and seeing how group members use those patterns to "receive guidance in their social action" (Tracy, 2013, p. 60).

This dissertation used multiple methods to look at how one digital news organization follows rules and policies, and how people make decisions within their organizational structure. By tracing relationships, resources, daily routines and disruptions, I pieced together a picture of how structure both enables and constrains agents to operate, and to what level each of those agents exhibits both journalistic and moral autonomy over their actions.

Social Construction of Reality. One of the major roles of sociologists is to examine differences in realities. Sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's seminal work, *The Social Construction of Reality*, defined reality as phenomena "independent of our own volition" and knowledge as "the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics" (1966, p. 1). Furthermore, reality is "socially constructed and...the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in

which this occurs" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 1), and specific types of realities and knowledge exist within specific social groups. Social construction draws "attention to what people conceive to be real and what is taken for granted while conducting everyday life" (Vera, 2016, p. 5). Berger and Luckmann contend that deciphering societal knowledge must first start with people's everyday knowledge, as these common sense structures determine the bulk of a society's time spent and functionality. Within this everyday knowledge, people agree on what is real, and they use these measures to weigh truths, space allocation, how people should get along, and how to measure time (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Language is a primary carrier of everyday reality. "Language is capable of transcending the reality of everyday life altogether. It can refer to experiences pertaining to finite provinces of meaning, it can span discrete spheres of reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 38). Through language, routines are oriented through the work of everyday, and social stock of knowledge is established, or how reality is determined by degree of familiarity.

Social stock of knowledge weaves in and out of individual and societal levels. Each person operates from within their own relevance structure, and we all learn to operate within a collective social structure of knowledge. Individuals "encounter knowledge in everyday life as socially distributed, that is, as possessed differently by different individuals and types of individuals" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 43). The reality of everyday plays out where individual realities meet and negotiate, and groups then negotiate shared realities and norms (majorly determined by structure and power). In order to succeed within a social structure, we must all operate in a flow of accepting

(and giving) knowledge to those around us, culminating "in exceedingly complex and esoteric systems of expertise. Knowledge of how the socially available stock of knowledge is distributed, at least in outline, is an important element of that same stock of knowledge" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.44). And so a research perspective stemming from the social construction of reality would seek to witness how individuals have built their own stock of social knowledge, how they yield to and share that knowledge with a specific group and how available stocks of knowledge are distributed.

Institutions help sustain definitions of realities, where they are "explained by legitimations, and maintained by social and symbolic mechanisms … the social construction of reality is an element of the continuing human activity in the world, and one of the essential dynamics in the production and reproduction of social life" (Vera, 2016, p. 5). These realities are shared and enduring, and "reinforced by collective mechanisms. Our paramount reality (everyday reality) exists as an intersubjective reality" (Vera, 2016, p. 6). And so according to theories of the social construction of reality, individuals do not construct reality on their own. Their self-evident realities are built from infancy and then maintained and reinforced by society as each person matures.

Much of the construction of society and everyday knowledge plays out within workspaces. Here, leadership and organizational culture majorly define what is real for that group, and then the group consensus helps to build and perpetuate the particular workplace reality. The "developing human being not only interrelates with a particular natural environment, but with a specific cultural and social order, which is mediated to him by the significant others who have charge of him" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.

46). Workspaces serve as a platform for perpetuating specific realities, larger group structures and microcultures. Organizational realities will usually live on even when some members of the group leave (Schein, 2010).

Situating individual viewpoints within an organization will help decipher common structures within a workplace. Observing routines, resource allocations and relationships all contribute to a deeper understanding of how a specific organization has constructed their reality. Methodologies for collecting specific artifacts to help understand how groups and individuals have constructed their realities will be discussed in the methodology section.

In addition to examining The Golden Gate from a broad organizational perspective, the moral constellation of each individual staff member was observed and examined. This work was specifically done through moral psychology instruments that have been used in many other types of organizations (as well as in media organizations) to understand levels of autonomous expression in individual workers.

Moral Psychology Tools for Individual-Level Analysis

The core inquiry of moral psychology work is to consider the origination and processes of ethical decision making. Philosophers throughout the ages have grappled with all manner of topics around morals and ethics, and the moral psychology paradigm seeks to help answer these questions by delving empirical findings from a wide range of fields (such as philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, evolutionary biology, and sociology (Voyer & Tarantola, 2017). The object of such a robust integration of theories and tools across several disciplines is to help answer the hows and whys of human moral motivation by identifying the roles that "cultural upbringing, habit, reason, emotion, and circumstance play in each opportunity an individual has to make a moral decision,"

(Keene, 2020). Philosophers, in turn, have used findings in moral psychology to explore debates (both ancient and modern) about moral motivations, especially concerning "normative theory, moral agency, moral and nonmoral judgment, and moral intuition," (Sauer, 2017, p. 6). Essentially, moral psychology "centers on the intersection of moral codes and human behavior," (Voyer & Tarantola, 2017, p. 2).

One of the foundational moral psychology theories is psychologist Jean Piaget's moral development theory. In the early 20th century, he conducted extensive research observing how children develop and learn, leading him to posit two stages of moral development as children reach adulthood. Piaget studied adolescent moral development stages through observing game play in both girls and boys (Piaget, 1932/1960).

Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg was fascinated by Piaget's findings and methods, and in his study of morality, he considered children to be more like moral philosophers, and so he researched their moral reasoning skills by describing moral dilemmas to them and then observing how they reasoned through the dilemma. Kohlberg was not concerned with the type of answer the children arrived at, but more how they reasoned through it. After his research with children about moral reasoning, Kohlberg expanded Piaget's two stages of moral development to six stages (Kohlberg, 1958/1963). The works of both Piaget and Kohlberg contributed to foundational psychology theories on moral reasoning, but not without criticisms (Fleming, 2006).

Kohlberg's work especially prioritized the cognitive components of moral understanding, and his stages of growth do not account for other influences on moral judgment, such as emotion. Additionally, just because someone has attained a higher level of cognitive moral development, it does not always mean that they will act according to that level of moral reasoning. "Social psychologists have come to

understand the tremendous power of the situation in determining the course of behavior, as opposed to belief in abstract principles of morality," (Fleming, 2006, p. 7-12). Kohlberg also believed his principles were universal statements of moral development, researchers have found differences in Kohlberg's stage orderings and importances in collectivist societies versus individualistic societies (Tietjen & Walker, 1985; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995).

An additional criticism of Kohlberg's work is a lack of examining potential gender differences in moral reasoning. Carol Gilligan (1982) challenged psychology's overwhelmingly sexist data, which nearly always studied only males and then applied those findings to both genders. Furthermore, Gilligan offered her own theories that men and women differ in their moral understandings by asserting that women are morally motivated by care and compassion, versus justice and rules. "Gilligan assumed that Kohlberg's scale systematically discriminated against women by generally placing them lower on his morality scale," (Fleming, 2006, p. 7-16). Kohlberg stated that in his opinion, women tend to get stuck at his third level of moral development, which is primarily concerned with maintaining relationships, where men will move onto more abstract and higher levels of moral reasoning (Waller, 2005).

Gilligan's ethics of care scale differs with Kohlberg's moral development scale in that it does not prioritize justice as the highest level of moral development, but instead prioritizes how people should respond to situations based on their relationships and a sense of benevolence (Gilligan, 2008, p. 469). Subsequent studies have not supported Gilligan's theories, as Gilligan's work was primarily case-study based and largely informed by common sense (see Jafee & Hyde, 2000 and Turiel, 2006); however, her discussion of care further challenged the moral hierarchies of reasoning as suggested by

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both Piaget and Kohlberg. One level of agreement stressed by Piaget, Kohlberg and Gilligan was that children are "active agents in their own development, including their understanding of morality," (Fleming, 2006, p. 7-21). This is in stark contrast to a Freudian point of view, which sees the internalized conscience as the propellant to moral behavior. The field of moral psychology continues to parse out the importances of different types of moral reasoning and development to this day, especially through the development and implementation of empirical instruments to study these questions.

One validated measurement of moral development and an assessment of higher-level moral reasoning is Rest's Defining Issues Test (1979), a tool developed by James Rest and based on Kohlberg's theories. The DIT measures how much time people spend applying universal reasoning to moral dilemmas. To do so, Rest combined Kohlberg's stages of development with schema theory by testing to what extent people use schemas to respond to ethical problems in unfamiliar situations (Rest et. al, 1999). He postulated that people would activate moral situations learned in their past as a cognitive resource to process unfamiliar scenarios. In their extensive research using the DIT, Coleman and Wilkins (2009) found that if a person had previously acquired a schema for ethical reasoning, "statements at that stage on the DIT will activate those schemas; otherwise lower stage schemas are used," (Coleman & Wilkins, p. 320, 2009). After analyzing the results of one hundred studies utilizing DIT, Rest described moral development as closely related to age and social development. The process of moral reasoning was also determined to be primarily cognitive and "related to conceptual comprehension of moral judgment, to intelligence and other cognitive variables," (Rest, 1979, p. xii).

In media applications, journalists (Coleman & Wilkins, 2004), advertising professionals (Cunningham, 2005) and Public Relations professionals (Coleman &

Wilkins, 2009) have all exuded higher-level moral reasoning when administered the DIT. A recent experiment reported higher DIT scores for advertising professionals than previously reported, and the authors argued for media ethics to consider "how the complexity of professional identities in concert with gender and professional training, among other variables, interact to affect moral reasoning," (Schauster, Ferrucci, Tandoc & Walker, 2020). Essentially, the current and future work of media ethics is to consider how individual moral psychology correlates are situated within the myriad of moral ecology factors that exist within media organizations and professions.

CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This study was largely inspired by traditions in sociology of examining structure and power in the big American newsrooms of the 1960s and 1970s (i.e. Gans, 1979 and Tuchman, 1978). During this time, the community consensus of many different researchers helped to explain the major elements of news production, such as how news organizations deal with conflicting interests and how production structures created logic (and limitations) for how news was generated and framed. These researchers engaged in "interviews, direct observations of newsrooms, and ethnography" (Tumber, 2014, p. 67) and looked at news production from several different vantages, such as "cultural viewpoints, anthropological studies and observation of tasks and spatial distribution of teams in newsrooms, structural analysis of news organizations, and analysis of norms and values according to systemic perspectives" (Tumber, 2014, p. 67). These research tactics offer a path to "scrutinize the radical transformations of the news profession embedded as it is within an institution vulnerable to all kinds of forces, from cultural to economic, political to organizational" (Robinson and Metzler, 2016, p. 447).

Similar studies are hard to replicate in modern times, as media conglomerates form, and as the content creation for large website news aggregators falls more and more to freelancers (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015). The "globalization of, and increasing connectivity among, people and organizations have brought new dynamics and actors into news production" (Tumber, 2014, p. 68). Such changes only raise new (and needed) challenges for media sociology to tackle. While quantitative studies measuring how the internet is shifting journalism abound (Boczowski, 2002; Domingo, 2005; Kopper et al.,

2000), the holistic qualitative strengths offered by media sociology are only more recently (re)gaining traction (Robinson and Metzler, 2016). Ferrucci et. al (2017) noted a brief history of how newsroom communication routines have been both sustained and disrupted by digital tools, and that deciphering routines is essential to understanding news work overall. Then, one could argue, understanding news routines would greatly contribute to how we also understand digital newsroom ethical decision making.

In addition to media sociology techniques, this dissertation integrated scales and instruments from moral psychology, many of which help measure individual moral expression and worldviews, especially when considering individual empowerment for journalistic autonomy in the workplace (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Victor & Cullen, 1988; Ryff et al., 1989). Cutting-edge media organizations are charting new territory when it comes to investigating and packaging the news (Kaye & Quinn, 2010). Capturing how these organizations work and how they are responding to challenges offers a rich contextual understanding of the modern digital newsroom. This dissertation looked for relationships between individual moral psychology factors and organizational structures to gain such a rich and contextualized understanding of how modern digital news is made.

To address my research questions, I completed a three-phase triangulation mixed-method study (Creswell & Plano, 2007), under the guidance of my dissertation committee, to explore the potential correlations between organizational structure and the moral psychology profiles of individuals in a digital news organization. Triangulation mixed-method study designs "obtain different but complementary data on the same topic" (Morse, 1991, p. 122). Particularly, triangulation mixed-method study designs use qualitative results to validate and widen quantitative findings (Creswell &

Plano, 2007). My overall design included: an initial participant-observation phase (qualitative work to help inform the creation of the moral psychology survey and situate me, the researcher, within the work environment); administration of a moral psychology-driven survey (quantitative work); and follow-up interviews about the aggregate data from the survey work (qualitative work to explore the quantitative findings) (See table 1 below).

Table 1: Three-phase triangulation mixed-method study design

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Qualitative Participant Observation: - One week - Searching for cultural artifacts (visible and "feelable" structures and processes (Schein, 2010) - Framed by variables of socialization, structure, power, resource use and leadership	*Quantitative Moral Psychology Survey:* - Administered in-person - Searching for espoused beliefs, goals and realizations (Schein, 2010) - Measuring self-reports of autonomy, self-determination and workplace ethical climate	*Qualitative Interviewing:* - Exploring aggregate survey data - Questions prompted and informed by phases one and two - Searching for underlying assumptions – taken for granted beliefs and values of the group (Schein, 2010)

As my research subjects operated within a unique organizational culture, it was imperative for me to contextually evaluate both the organizational structures and organizational climate as I measured self-reported expressions of journalistic autonomy, moral autonomy, and workplace ethical climate. During my first phase, I collected both group and individual perspectives on the culture of The Golden Gate. My survey and my interview phases were all focused on each individual's perspective of both themselves and their workplace. My rationale for this approach was that I wanted to look at the

individual-level of digital news workers from a moral psychology perspective. But, because the individual can only act with so much autonomy within organizational constraints, the workplace culture as a whole needed to be examined. Additionally, Schein (2010) recommended several steps to deciphering an organization from the outside (p. 178, see figure 2 below). I followed each of these steps at different times in my research process. I began with visits and observations, and during this time I identified artifacts (both in-person and digitally) to capture their organization during that place and time. I then identified the artifacts that were puzzling to me, and through interviews during my visits and after, I asked many questions about the whys behind many of their work processes. I observed a great deal about how The Golden Gate spent their time. Then I factored those observations into the survey questions I asked and also into how I shaped each in-depth interview during my wrap-up phrase. I also asked questions about inconsistencies in their business model, schedule, and team culture. These questions happened during both informal interviews and at the interview stage. In my conclusions from all three phases, I assessed the deeper assumptions I thought were determining the behaviors of the staff.

My study design was also guided by deciphering the three levels of culture within an organization (Schein, 2010). The first level concerns artifacts, which are surface-level observations I made with my senses. As detailed in my literature review, these included observed behaviors, thinking about the layout and resource allocation of the workspace, any stated group goals, etc. The second level of culture concerns espoused beliefs and goals, which I answered primarily through the survey portion of my study design, where I asked each person about their levels of both moral autonomy and journalistic autonomy, how they view themselves as situated within their organization, and their

perceived view of their organization's ethical climate. The third level of culture concerns understanding the basic underlying assumptions of the group, and these assumptions are "unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values" which help "determine behavior, perception, thought and feeling" (Schein, 2010, p. 24). My third phase of semi-structured interviewing helped me discover and better work out basic underlying group assumptions to help bring context to the artifacts and espoused beliefs collected during my first two phases. My three-phase mixed-methods approach offered triangulation support through: my observations as a researcher; participant self-report on organizational ethical climate and both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy; and what each of the workers said when asked semi-structured interview questions at both the participant observation phase and in post-survey follow-up interviews.

Sampling

I received a generous grant from the Don W. Davis Program in Ethical Leadership from the Bellisario College of Communications at Pennsylvania State University to enable my travel to work with one digital hyperlocal news organization, The Golden Gate. This organization was representative of a digital newsroom, as they were "born on the web" and they published (and aggregated) all content virtually. During the time of my research, the on-site staff consisted of a managing editor, a weekend editor/reporter-curator, two additional reporter-curators, and an advertising/ PR position. They also worked with a small pool of freelancers who produced written content, videos, and photos for the organization. I included more details of how the organization began in Chapter VI. During my initial contact, all five of the then-current staff members signed an IRB-approved agreement to participate (and they were aware

of any potential risks, as well as their option to discontinue participation at any time). I was also in contact with the owners of the company.

The Golden Gate was also only one site in a network of four other city sites. For my study, I only pursued the staff on location at the website headquarters. All but the advertising manager finished out the remainder of the data collection period. The staff members I interviewed ranged in ages 20-35. All identified as white (n=4) and three out of the four participants were women. The staff held regular office hours in a common office space, so I was able to conduct a full, in-person participant observation. The staff produced one daily email newsletter (delivered every morning to an email subscription list), posted all of their stories on a central website, and maintained robust social media accounts on both Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, they hosted several in-person events around town as a way to garner local audience engagement (during my participant observation period, I attended several of their events and spoke with the team before and after). An example of the type of events they held was a member's only local cidery tour where The Golden Gate staff went on the tour with attendees, and then ended the evening with a happy hour where they mingled with the business staff and the guests.

Instrumentation and How the Data was Collected

Phase 1 - Participant Observation. Participant observation is a useful method for generating understanding and knowledge about a particular setting or population through a designated time period of watching, interacting (at appropriate times), gathering any relevant artifacts, and then reflecting daily on each experience (Lofland & Lofland, 1995 and Tracy, 2013). Another name for a participant observation

is "fieldwork" (Kawulich, 2005). The observation experience is meant to engage all of the senses through "active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed field notes, and perhaps most importantly, patience" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p.vii). Participant observations can improve data collection quality, and also inspire new research questions (Kawulich, 2005). Additionally, when taking on an observer role, it is vitally important for the research to come to the observation space with "well-defined specific research questions, well-thought-out theoretical and conceptual frameworks and ideas about social structure, social systems, power relations, networks, etc. Even before entering the field, researchers have thought carefully about what kinds of individuals they will seek out," (DeWalt & DeWalt, p. 80, 2011). DeWalt and DeWalt also recommend participant observers look for the following elements as they enter an observational time and space:

- Observe the activity and study the "story line"
- Identify the component segments of action
- Try to sort out the regular, nonvarying components from the more variable items
- Look for variations in the "story line" that reflect differences in SES, education, ethnicity, seasonality, etc.
- Look for "exceptions" (e.g. "mistakes," "poor manners," "insults") (DeWalt & Dewalt, p. 90, 2011).

My first in-person interaction with the staff of The Golden Gate began with a participant observation period. I observed the daily routines of the workspace for two workweeks, split into one-week trips that were one month apart. The Golden Gate holds regular office hours from 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Monday through Friday, with one editor

working the weekend shift (typically a full Saturday, but with Sunday hours as needed per news events happening in the city).

As the researcher entering into The Golden Gate's workspace, I became the tool for collecting primary data. As such, I needed to have a sense of objectivity, and to manage my impressions and inclinations toward deceptions. I accomplished this by entering the community enough to blend in, but then removing myself afterward to objectively assess the themes I found. The data I collected flowed from conversations, light interviewing, good listening, an open attitude and my willingness to learn (Bernard, 1994). My first step in attuning to the field was conducting a self-identity audit, a reflexive exercise that helped me consider how my identities as a researcher, a former journalist, and an outsider would be perceived by the workspace (Tracy, 2013). Ethical considerations of reflexivity also helped me determine the validity of my participant observation time period. Reflexivity in the observational context is the acknowledgment of how my presence affected The Golden Gate's organizational culture and their socially constructed reality (Ferrucci, 2017). As I became aware of who I am and what biases I brought with me into the digital newsroom's culture, I paid close attention to how my presence affects the newsroom, and I also actively worked to disregard my previously held ideals and experiences of news organizations.

Then, I entered the field in the "participant as observer" stance. I participated in group activities as opportunities arose, but I did not act like I was an employee of The Golden Gate (Gold, 1958 and Kawulich, 2005). Additionally, the employees knew who I was and why I was there. My stance as a "participant as observer" fit my study design, in that I was looking to come into The Golden Gate's work environment with a goal of searching for structured variables, getting to know the company's culture first hand, and

also conducting a few initial interviews (Tracy, 2013). My first four research questions were tested (either in full or partially) through the participant observation phase:

RQ1: What are the routines of digital news production?

RQ2: What are the beliefs and assumptions held by each media worker regarding the routines of digital news production?

RQ3: What is the leadership structure of the digital newsroom?

RQ4: How are the digital newsworkers socialized to this structure?

Recording the Participant Observation Period. Field notes are the complete transcript that emerged from my participant observation. They offered an opportunity to create a consistent story as I interpreted my actions and observations in the field, and they straddled the line of methodological assessments and creative and playful interpretations of the experiences (Tracy, 2013). My field notes began with jottings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), which were condensed notes and shorthand of my experiences and observations. These notes happened throughout the day in as unobtrusive of a way as possible. Also as Tracy (2013) suggests, I began my time by asking for a tour of the workplace, as this can be a time of getting to know the employees on their own turf. During this time, I drew up a map of the office, and began recording my thoughts on how their social structures relate to the physical spaces (Kutsche, 1998). As reflected in my literature review, a few of the variables from organizational culture and organizational moral learning are salient to the purposes of my study. These include leadership, structure, socialization, and autonomy.

Throughout my daily observations, I was systematically mindful of my surroundings, making notes of the profound, mundane, and everything in-between. I respectfully requested access to meetings and endeavored to learn, "particularly through analyzing three fundamental aspects of human experience: (a) what people do (cultural

behavior); (b) what people know (cultural knowledge); and (c) what things people make and use (cultural artifacts) (Spradley, 1980 in Tracy, 2013, p. 65). I began the participant observation with a wide-open funnel of information observations and note-taking. As the days progressed, I refined how I observed the field. Additionally, I followed Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte's (1999) advice for taking field notes: extracting exact quotes as often as possible, using pseudonyms, recording activities chronologically, making note of background information to help place the events, including my own thoughts and assumptions, and also recording the time, date, and place of each observation session.

Shortly after each trip, I created formal field notes, which are documents that are "heavy with descriptions – rich, thick, and detailed" (Tracy, 2013, p. 116). These allowed me to enter back into my observations at The Golden Gate at future dates. The formal field notes include times, dates, places, and main activities of the time period when the raw notes were crafted into formal fieldnotes. I also included an organizational strategy to the statements (such as high points, or chronological events, etc). Additionally, I created an ongoing character file with in-depth characteristics of each participant which developed overtime (Tracy, 2013).

I also endeavored to "show" the scene with rich details, instead of telling readers how to interpret my perspective or notes. This means I included snippets of common sayings and phrases that stuck out to me. As a qualitative researcher, I also worked to capture my own reactions by exploring "whys", as well as what I was feeling and when. Tracy (2013) recommended doing this by recording and responding to my insecurities, how I perceive others are engaging with me and my research, as well as my initial

theories and my gut reactions. I also constantly considered how what I was observing related to my variables and research questions.

Phase 2 - Moral Psychology Survey. The purpose of a survey phase in this project was to gather self-report data on moral psychology attributes and ethical work climate, and then use those trends as a way to supplement and inform both the observational and interview processes. While the survey was conducted with a small number of participants, it offered a secondary perspective on the culture of The Golden Gate and confirmations for trends that have been observed. This survey work also provided indications to help inform other researchers of the constructs of moral autonomy and journalistic autonomy in digital newsrooms, as a way to spur on future research from the paradigm of combined organizational and moral psychology dimensions. As Shein (2010) discussed, surveys do not function as the sole barometer of culture; however, they do provide an important follow up to observational work, and my survey helped me understand both how the organization was perceived in that moment of time, and also how each person would like the organization to look in the future. The survey provided information to help decipher both the organizational culture and how each individual expresses journalistic and moral autonomy (or not).

My survey design took a cue from Plaisance's (2015) moral psychology survey design which integrated four different domains of subject response about personality, ethical frameworks, perceived workplace ethical climate, and moral reasoning skills. Similarly, Huff and Barnard's (2009) work with computer science exemplars integrated multiple domains of moral psychology inquiry in order to research the myriad factors involved in the level to which computer science workers exuded virtuous work.

For my dissertation, I explored the dimensions of how digital organizations shape

both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy through: psychological well-being of employees, the individual-level decision making of employees, indications of journalistic autonomy within the workspace, and perceived workplace ethical climate. These dimensions flowed from three of my research questions, and while these questions were partially answered by all of the research phases, the survey responses contributed the most to informing the answers to RQ5-RQ7:

RQ5: What role, if any, does organizational structure play in shaping both the journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy of digital news workers?

RQ6: To what level will digital news workers exhibit both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy within their digital news organization?

RQ7: What is the relationship between perceptions of organizational ethical climate and manifestations of autonomy?

There are several scales from moral psychology for deciphering psychological well-being, autonomy, and workplace climate. I included the following instruments in my moral psychology survey; the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) (Victor & Cullen, 1988), the Psychological Well-being domains instrument (Ryff et al.,1989), the Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ) (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004), and questions from Forsyth's Ethics Position Questionnaire (Forsyth, 1980) as adapted in the Worlds of Journalism Project (Worlds of Journalism Project, 2011).

The ECQ captured my dimension of perceived workplace ethical climate. The primary purpose of the ECQ was to "identify normative systems that guide organizational decision-making and the systemic responses to ethical dilemmas" (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 123). Additionally, the authors of the ECQ posit that an "organization's ethical climate helps to determine how employees at all levels make ethical decisions" (Cullen, Victor & Stephens, 1989, p. 50). The ECQ determines the

ethical climate by combining "the constructs of cognitive moral development, ethical theory, and locus of analysis" (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999, p.1) to measure how organization members will report on the practices and procedures they perceive to exist in their organization. Also, the ECQ measures individual, local, and cosmopolitan types of organizational ethical climates (Cullen, Victor & Stephens, 1989), and organizational climates "are known to influence behaviors of organizational actors to a great degree" (Simha & Cullen, 2012, p. 20). The ECQ has been validated through many different contexts, such as: the ethical effects of organizational commitment (Cullen, Parboteeah & Victor, 2003); measuring personal organizational fit and job attitudes (Ambrose, Arnaud & Schminke, 2008); and the nonprofit context (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999).

Looking at systemic responses to ethical climate contributed to my understanding of the moral atmosphere of The Golden Gate, this part of the survey helped me measure the "prevailing norms of the group and not the individual's level of moral development" (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 103). I also used this data to pair with my participant observation of the organizational structure of The Golden Gate to help answer how workers within the digital newsroom feel either constrained or empowered by their workspace to complete their jobs. I analyzed the ECQ data through descriptive statistics and demographic data. Additionally, I compared this data to the results from the autonomy scales described below regarding individual expressions of autonomy.

The "Psychological Well-Being Inventory" (Ryff, 1989) is an instrument developed to look at how humans grow in positive functioning, with a goal to answer the question, "what constitutes essential features of well-being?" (2014). Psychological work on well-being in the late 1960s often focused on how work and educational advances or macro-level social changes shifted well-being (or, how do living difficulties shift well-

being?) (Bradburn, 1969). Bradburn and his colleagues later found that " positive and negative affect are distinct dimensions of well-being and that the balance between them serves as an index of happiness" (Ryff, 1989, p. 1070). Other psychologists have defined well-being as self-actualization (Maslow, 1968), formulation of individuation (Von Franz, 1964), and Buhler's life tendencies that contribute to fulfillment (1935), and many others. Psychological well-being has also been operationalized as life satisfaction (e.g. the Life Satisfaction Index by Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961). Primarily, though, up until Ryff's assessment of psychological well-being, there were no empirical studies to explore these ideas.

The tool considers many domains of psychological well-being, including the ability to navigate the myriad demands found in daily life. It also measures moral autonomy, which Ryff defines as whether people "viewed themselves to be living in accord with their own personal convictions," (2014). Ryff and Singer (2006) emphasized how well-being is essential to helping humans effectively function during times of stress and adversity. The tool was included in this dissertation's survey design to help assess moral autonomy as employees navigate stressful work situations. The criteria from the scale include: self-acceptance (a core feature of mental health and optimal psychological functioning); positive relations with others (the ability to love is considered a central representation of mental health); moral autonomy (defined here as independence, evaluating of the self from personal standards, and the self-regulation of behavior from within); environmental mastery (or the ability to create environments that support a healthy psyche); purpose in life (intentionality, sense of direction, goals); and personal growth (or the continual development of one's potential). These measures were developed by Ryff for the Psychological Well-Being Scale, and are well tested through

many different contexts.

Since Ryff first published the tool in 1989, it has been applied to over 350 publications and in a wide range of populations and focuses such as; development and aging, personality correlates, family experiences, and work (among others) (Ryff, 2014). Kállay and Rus (2013) used the Psychological Well-Being Inventory to assess levels of well-being in Romanian workers. An exploration of Ryff's tool was also applied to explore Spanish culture (van Dierendonck et. al, 2008). Many researches have used the scale to look at well-being and aging (Ryff, 1989a; Triadó et. al, 2007; Villar, Triadó & Celdrán, 2010; Tomás et. al, 2012). Van Dierendonck (2005) extended Ryff's instrument to include spiritual well-being, as did Greenfield, Vaillant, and Marks (2009). Studies that use Ryff's scale to look at well-being at work tend to focus on total work-load and well being (Lindfors, Berntsson and Lundberg, 2006) and how psychological well-being relates to work personality and vocational identity (Strauser, Lustig, and Ciftci, 2008). This instrument helped answer my dimension of psychological well-being, as well as my dimension of individual expressions of moral autonomy. I evaluated the results by averaging the individual item scores.

The Work Climate Questionnaire (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004) is a measurement that considers how employees rate the support of their three innate human needs; competence, workplace autonomy, and relatedness as posited by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). From their perspective, workplace autonomy represents how much workers experience choice and the extent to which they feel they can initiate their own actions (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004). The WCQ was later developed into a sports climate questionnaire and is now a research method resource offered by the Center for Self-Determination Theory (Center for Self Determination

Theory, n.d.). I used the WCQ on my survey to help me understand how the employees at The Golden Gate reported their perceptions of their managers and supervisors. Gathering these perceptions was key, as according to self-determination theory, workplace autonomy (and competence) are both determined primarily by social environments (Ryan, William, Patrick, & Deci, 2009). Also, a worker's tendency toward workplace autonomy orientation will contribute to their "tendency to be self-regulating and to orient toward the interest value of the environment and contextual supports of self-initiation" (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004, p. 2048). So, when the workplace social environment is supportive of workplace autonomy, an intrinsic need is met in employees, providing a better foundation for the employee to "facilitate self-motivation and effective functioning" (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004, p. 2047). I evaluated the WCQ data by averaging the individual item scores.

The Ethics Position Questionnaire (Forsyth, 1980) measures dimensions of relativism and idealism in individuals. This tool has been implemented in business settings (Davis, Andersen, and Curtis, 2001; Redfern, 2004); international and cross-cultural settings (MacNab et. al, 2010; Malagueño et al, 2019); education (Plaisance, 2006; Gerçek et. al, 2015) and, of course, media (Pratt, 1990; Treise et. al, 1994; Hanitzsch et. al, 2011; Koch and Obermaier, 2014). In the original scale, respondents indicate degree of agreement with both relativistic and idealistic statements (Forsyth, 1980). It is also important to note the term 'moral autonomy' means more than simply 'following one's convictions.' In moral psychology and ethics, moral autonomy also conveys a choice that individuals have to make in the context of their various duties and obligations that they have accepted as their role. I used pieces of the Forsyth scale as adapted by the Worlds of Journalism project (Worlds of Journalism, 2011), a

questionnaire administered to hundreds of journalists across the globe, to help decipher how individuals at The Golden Gate make decisions in the context of their duties and obligations. I used questions that helped identify both relativistic thinking and idealistic thinking in journalists, as well as questions on professional journalistic autonomy, potential sources of influence on their work, and the state of journalism today. I evaluated the WOJ questions through descriptive statistics analysis. The full survey is included in Appendix B.

Phase 3 - Semi-Structured Respondent Interviews. Interviews offer a structured "interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2). Interviews contribute great value to understanding individual and cultural viewpoints. Also, interviews have the potential to open up a new understanding of complex phenomena and act as an experience of co-creating meaning with each interviewee. My interviews also offered a space for each participant in the study to reflect on their involvement at The Golden Gate and in my study, while offering their opinions and descriptions of their experiences.

When I decided to conclude my study with in-depth interviewing, I looked to Schein's (2010) guidance for how to decipher an organization from the outside including on-site interviewing, participation and observation, and follow-up questions after each of the two one-week observation trips. My extensive notes and memos from the participant observation phase were used to craft not just the focus of my survey, but also a semi-structured respondent interview guide. This guide consisted of pre-constructed questions that followed themes from the participant observation analysis that I wanted to further explore within the interview time (Fink, 2000). The semi-structured interview protocol I developed is included in Appendix D.

The interviews were conducted a few months after the participant observation period and also the administration of the digital survey. On average, the interviews lasted 59 minutes and ranged from 44 to 96 minutes. During the transcription process, all identifying information was removed. The transcription process resulted in 90 pages of single-spaced text. For the sake of protecting the identity of The Golden Gate digital news organization, and for the protection of all of the people working there, the names of the organization, the names of the news events this staff experienced, and the names of all of the employees were changed in the transcript.

My intention with these interviews was to include rich, triangulated, and self-reported data to my participant observation and survey. I processed the interview data as part of an iterative process, guided by thematic analysis practices (Braun and Clark, 2006). I began by simply trying to discern themes and categories of interview responses. Then in the next readings, I returned to my research questions as guides to find what connections and answers were suggested from the interview data. While all of my research questions were part of guiding my analysis, I remained open to themes and concepts that arose from the data outside of my predetermined research questions. The resulting report from the interviews offers "a social construction in which the author's choice of writing style and literary devices provide a specific view on the subjects' lived world." (Kvale, 1996, p.253).

Treatment of the data

Participant Observation Analysis. After my participant observation weeks in-person with The Golden Gate staff, I completed an iterative process of reading through my notes, participant observation interview transcripts, and collected artifacts to decipher concepts, themes, and questions. I then developed memos where I drew upon definitions of my key variables from the literature review and searched for evidence of those definitions with the participant observation data (see Appendix A). I also used the memos to show how my survey items would align with my variables.

Survey Data Analysis. I conducted a primarily descriptive analysis of the survey data, as my sample was not large enough to test the correlations of variables. I focused on understanding group means, and then used these group means to help shape the questions I asked in the interview process. From the survey data, I looked at how people feel enabled to voice their opinions and their confidence of self within the demands of the workplace. I looked at how empowered each person felt to construct their own routines and responsibilities, and how they viewed their workplace climate. Looking at trends from these variables helped to supplement my theoretical and observed findings about journalistic autonomy in the workplace, organizational structure, and the socially constructed reality of The Golden Gate.

Semi-Structured Respondent Interviews. To answer the research questions for this dissertation, I completed a thematic analysis in the tradition of Braun and Clark (2006) to determine the themes of the interview data. Braun and Clark's (2006) steps include: (1) getting familiar with the data by reading over the data several times; (2) systematically generating codes from interesting features of the data; (3) looking for relationships among codes to find themes and subthemes; (4) reviewing

themes by checking to see if they fit with the coded extracts; (5) defining and naming themes; (6) producing a rich and vivid analysis. The familiarity criteria were met by reading through the data set several times over a period of one month. As salient features of the data emerged, I denoted initial coding categories and created a list of potential themes. The themes were then re-considered and rearranged into larger (and sometimes smaller) categories as I searched for repeatable and recognizable patterns in the data. Once there was no overlap between how the codes were organized, the themes and subthemes were named and exemplars were chosen to richly demonstrate each theme.

To verify the themes found in the interview transcripts, I practiced both referential adequacy and confirmability (see Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Referential adequacy was completed by splitting the corpus in half and coding for the themes, and then repeating the coding and search for themes in the second half of the data separately. No new themes were found when the second half of the corpus was analyzed. Confirmability was detailed by keeping an extensive note audit trail for each of the six steps of the thematic analysis process. These notes systematically demonstrated links between the data and the findings.

CHAPTER 5 – PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Drawing upon mixed methods of research from both media sociology and media ethics, I used three methods to look at both individual and organizational factors in the development of the Golden Gate work culture: a participant observation, a survey, and semi-structured respondent interviews. This section tells the story of my participant observation experience.

Participant Observation Analysis

I began by gaining access to The Golden Gate organization and establishing my protocol with my university's IRB. After the parent company agreed, the staff at The Golden Gate also gave consent to participate, and they were made aware of all of the components of my project, their expected involvement, and their freedom to withdraw from my work with the organization at any time. I had an initial phone call with the editor of The Golden Gate, Rene, explaining my visit procedures, as I was planning to travel to their location for two different weeks to observe the newsroom.

Trip 1, Day 1. I prepared a notebook to write down observations, as well as a Google Doc. I jotted down a few notes about my goals and variables, but for the most part, I just wanted to take in what I saw with very little prompting or priming. When I arrived at the office for my first day with the staff, the editor Rene handed me a coffee mug. There was free coffee nearly all day from a local coffee shop that had a back serving window in the lobby of the co-working space. The staff loved this aspect, so their first priority was to make sure I could drink the coffee, too. Then the editor Rene took me on a tour of their space, a downtown coworking building where the staff was renting a

table. They also could rent private conference rooms and other amenities as needed. The staff chose a large conference table next to a window. They talked about the weather a lot, as the city was often covered by clouds year round. When the weather was sunny, they often all worked outside together on picnic tables.

As the first day began, the staff slowly trickled into the room, laptops in tow. The scrum (a daily meeting with the purpose of quickly stating what they had all worked on in the last day or so, what they were working on next, and any questions for help or requests for collaboration) kicked off around 10 a.m. As that first day progressed, I felt out the flow of their time; sometimes by just watching and observing, other times by asking questions. There was a relaxed energy of everyone always working on their personal computers, checking in on all of their social platforms, and writing stories. That morning they were also looking at how the spring membership drive had boosted membership numbers. There were no cultural faux paus about typing and checking phones during meetings. After the scrum meeting, the staff flowed in and out of the room, but most often they would come back to the office in between reporting work and other meetings.

When staff members were on the phone, they would often step away and grab another table at the co-working space to conduct their interviews. By the late afternoon, Rene and the managing editor Melissa focused on getting the newsletter final draft together. The reporters had often returned and were involved by this point in the day. By 4:30 or 5 p.m., they were all together, conversing both in-person around the table and over Slack and email about the newsletter.

I was intrigued by how much time they spent at that central, in-person location. I realized that one of my assumptions going into the project was that digital news

organizations primarily worked remotely. But at the time, The Golden Gate prioritized a highly collaborative and in-person atmosphere. Reporters (and sometimes the editor) did go out to cover stories, but a lot of their work was done over the phone or in curating the city through social media platforms and other news sites, while they all sat at their central location. The two reporters, Seth and Nora, sat across from Rene for most of the day. They would both ask questions as thoughts came up, and they would talk through angles together in little pieces as the day went on. There was never a formal designation of when to talk about what beyond the 10 a.m. scrum. The conversation and collaboration were free-flowing. The focus of the news and work conversations was almost always the city; national news would come into their conversations and curating approach if it directly affected their city. For the most part, though, the conversations around that conference table (and the subsequent reporting) focused on hyper-local stories for the city. At the time of my observation work, Rene told me that their daily email newsletter had over 8500 subscribers. There was also a lot of personal banter and internet trend talk scattered throughout the day, including when the whole staff followed the Twitter saga of a raccoon that was trapped for several hours on the top of a skyrise building in a neighboring city.

The staff used a number of ways to communicate beyond in-person table time. They used G-Suite to set up several types of publishing and workflow calendars. They used Slack to communicate in more immediate time rhythms, with multiple channels of conversation organized by topic. They would email if something was very important and more formal. They also had a group text going, which seemed to be for both professional and personal conversations between the staff. They also had many shared Google Docs going with different ideas and story drafts, and they would comment on those drafts to

collaborate and edit before releasing the stories onto the website. The staff also scaffolded the website and newsletter through an original content management system created by the parent company. They relied on programs like: Native Uploader and Tweet Deck to schedule social media posts; Mailchimp for the daily newsletter list management; and then Eventbrite to sell tickets (or just register people) for events.

In addition to reporting and editing, each of the staff members took 1-2 days a week each to run the socials (in addition to their other duties). The expectation for the socials shift was about a 70/30 split, with 30 percent of the time devoted to socials that day. The socials person usually started around 6-7 a.m. from home by checking in and beginning to curate ideas for social media posts for the day, and then also contribute ideas for the next day's newsletters. This information often went into a Slack channel where all staff members would collaborate throughout the day; but ultimately, the socials person was responsible for crafting and scheduling posts for that day. In the morning, the socials person's goal was to figure out the city's conversation that day. They also responded to Tweets, Facebook comments, and Facebook messenger pings.

The staff would wrap up between 6-7 p.m., depending on if there was breaking news happening. On event nights, they would leave the editing table around 5:30 or 6 p.m. to join the advertising director at the location of the event to help her finish setting up. Then, the person on socials duty would end the day by watching the evening news to make sure no new tweaks were needed for the next morning's newsletter. Managing editor Melissa mentioned that when she was on the social desk, it was hard to turn The Golden Gate off from her brain. "On my days on social media, I am still checking out my notifications even after hours," she said. "But as a staff, we all do try to have work/life balance."

Rene expressed that The Golden Gate's social media strategy was constantly evolving. They would have retrospective strategy meetings every six months where they would really dig in and look at metrics and interactions for their social media platforms. Rene said their goal with their social media platforms was to curate the city.

> The way that we think about that is, what have people been talking about today? And that doesn't necessarily have to be the news. So that allows us to curate things like a local celebrity who has a Youtube channel that we are all obsessed with. We are looking at the vibe of the city on this platform. Twitter is this rabid beast that you can always feed but it is still hungry. Facebook… we can put some meaningful pieces on there, but no one understands their algorithms.

Because the organization was so small, they had to make sure someone was covering the newsroom all of the time, and that could be quite a challenge for a staff of five. They did this by continually sweeping social media and following local and national outlets. Each of the reporters and editors also had an area of reporting expertise; but I wouldn't call them beat reporters in the traditional sense, because they all often had to write many different types of news stories as well as curate the social media content. Seth often focused on government and the city. Nora focused on tech, women, and politics. Melissa's main focus was food, culture, and editing on the weekends. The whole staff was also involved in helping to plan events, both in strategizing what their audience would like to attend and what would support editorial and news goals. At these events, the staff was expected to host and mingle and meet the community. The entire staff was also often involved in financial meetings, invited to contribute ideas around revenue, and asked to help with endeavors such as membership drives.

The Newsletter. The newsletter process took up a lot of the day, and each person contributed to it in some way nearly daily. Rene expressed that the goal of the newsletter was to include about ⅛ original content, and then link out the curated conversation of the city. They did this by not just adding in links, but also providing context for why they thought these links were an important part of the city that day. Their goal was to create useful information that spanned concerns for the entire city.

The newsletter wording began with a personal report from one of the reporters or editors, often written in a funny or snarky tone. The staff worked for months to develop their tone, keeping their targeted Direct Market Audience (DMA) of 18-40-year-olds in mind, a specific subset of the multiple-county region in and right around the city. Next, the newsletter would lead with one major story, the most important topic of the day, from the staff's opinion. There was also a "We Made This For You" section that emphasized the original reporting produced by the staff. There was also a more informal "In Our Group Text" section that mentioned the talk around the newsroom table that day. The newsletter ended with an events calendar or audience promotion, such as a bracket to determine the best ice cream in the city. There was also a partner banner space that was clearly marked as paid advertising at the bottom. With the newsletter, their goal was to "tell the story of the city in a day," Rene said, and offer an inside perspective of the city (including what people are talking about online) for both locals and new transplants. Rene said some audience members would report continuing to read the newsletter even after they moved away, for a taste of home. "We are the smart friend who can explain to you where to find an apartment, how the city works, but also all of the fun stuff," she said.

Trip 1, Days 2-4. Beginning day two, I started to pick up a focus that often came up for The Golden Gate staff: transparency. They had recently launched a live corrections page, and they made sure it was in an accessible place on the website. The reporters and the editors would challenge each other around fact-checking, thoroughness, and framing. Since they did not focus on quickly churning out news updates, they would often hold back on publishing stories until one of the editors at least could fact check with the reporter. This fact-checking practice often happened in live time and around the conference table. They also partnered with Politifact, and one of the reporters (usually Seth) worked with the organization to fact-check state level politicians, rumors, and laws.

I also began to notice different working rhythms for the reporters. Seth, for instance, tended to push right up to deadlines for stories, but he was also often covering evolving and breaking news stories around the city. Part of The Golden Gate's coverage strategy was to write about the stories that a lot of other organizations wouldn't cover -- barring major events and breaking news -- like a street artist who created local-issue focused murals.

I observed that Rene had an intense balancing act in her multiple job demands. Yes, she was the editor in charge, but also throughout the day she also had to go back and forth between advertising and operational concerns, as well as connecting with the parent company and other publications. She often flipped back and forth between those roles over the course of 15 minutes. Her job hats included: event planning, advertising, social media flow and presence, reporting, and editing. Of her job roles, Rene said

> I design my entire day based on that 10 a.m. meeting based on what fire drill I
> have to respond to immediately. Everyone on staff is respectful and

understanding of the fact that I wear many hats. So last night for example: it was a long day. I went home around 7, walked the dog and had dinner, and then logged back on around 8:30 to work with Paula [Carl's wife] and then I was wrapping up the newsletter after I watched the 11 p.m. news. And then I had to edit a story by Seth, but I realized that I couldn't edit at that time. And I let Seth know, and he was gracious about it. I guess my equivalent function in the newsroom would be the local news editor. I would have responsibility to the copy desk. And in a normal newspaper, the reporters wouldn't be asked to plan events or curate social. It was hard in the first six months with our launch. I didn't sleep. I didn't go to the gym. I had leadership experience, but I had never launched anything like that before. How do you turn on a website and turn it into a media machine overnight? I didn't take a day off for 6 months and I would wake up in the middle of the night and double-check the newsletter. That got better as the staff fell together.

Coming and going places, Rene was almost always on the phone. She also considered herself the guardian between the newsroom and the advertising side of the operation, even though she herself had to work in both spheres extensively. She expressed that their number one product and focus, though, was journalism. Whenever she would go into advertising or money-based meetings, she had a feeling that she held the trump card with Carl (the owner of the company). "I have never felt like our editorial integrity was under fire," Rene said. "I have never had to go to bat for it. I feel like Carl has my back, and the advertising supports the journalism, not the other way around."

The owner of the parent company, Carl, stopped by for 24-hours or so to work with the crew (he lives out of state). He came in and out of the co-working space during that time, and the conversations definitely stopped and re-oriented more around Carl's lead when he would enter the room. He sat right at the conference table with them all, plugged in his laptop to the same shared outlets, and started typing and chatting away. He even sometimes got pulled into the staff-wide conversations about headlines and story shaping. I asked Carl about how he viewed the roles of his reporters, and about how the staff is required to be very active on social media and in the community. He expressed that he wanted them involved in the community, living normal lives.

Reporters and editors need to show that they are human beings, not a lofty reporter above society. Don't be an ass hole, but go ahead and interact and have a real life. Now that consumers are paying most of the bill, and not advertisers, everyone needs to be human. We have to be with people, putting ourselves out there, not journalists that sit above. A lot of these things just come up as we go as a new startup. We probably should have an official social media policy

On day three, I watched for the first time as the staff had to complete the normal work of the day, yet also prepare for an event that was happening that evening. The staff moved much more in and out of the office throughout the day. The advertising manager, Leslie, was around the office a lot more that day, finalizing details and assigning jobs to the staff members (her role was much more than advertising manager; she also planned and ran the events). Rene was also editing ahead to get ready for the event, and for the weekend, too.

Managing editor Melissa was most definitely a connector, both for the newsroom and as a brand ambassador, and for the staff. She took time each day to check in with

each person on both personal and professional levels. In the afternoons, Seth really seemed to hone in on his work; he often put in headphones and powered through stories and editing to help hit Rene's 3:30 p.m.-ish story deadlines. Nora also often live-edited with Rene in the afternoons, both on current and up-and-coming stories. They would all chime in often to help each other as a story was evolving. It was fascinating how they all were involved in nearly every process of the stories. They often co-created layouts, took their own photos, and discussed headlines, framing, wording, and fact checking. They often talked about the balance and length of stories.

Today the discussion also came around to the local media competition. As the team was surfing online throughout the day, looking for content to curate, they often critiqued together (either out loud or over Slack) what these outlets were doing. This talk also included other people they knew in the industry, and gossip around who was quitting or moving or breaking up. People usually brought their lunches in and worked through lunch. Once and awhile the staff would go out together, but for the most part, they continually worked throughout the day. There were many coffee and walk breaks as well. When one of them would leave, they would often ask the whole room "anyone need anything?" They spent much of the day hunched over computers, intent faces leaning in to work and surf online. Then they would sporadically lean back from their monitors and burst into lively conversations.

Around 5 p.m., the group closed up shop to head over to the event together. The Golden Gate newsroom aimed to have at least one event a month. These events were often open to the public, but some of them were reserved just for members (those who voluntarily paid a monthly amount to the organization). The newsletter and the website did not have a paywall. The event that evening was a member's only tour of a local cidery

followed by a mixer. About 30 people showed up, and the staff mingled and chatted informally with the group.

On day four, I attended a planning meeting. Rene reserved a conference room at the co-working space. The whole staff negotiated what stories were ready and what should be published, and when, for the next two weeks, as well as quarterly. They also brainstormed sources together, and also talked about their limited resources. Should they send a reporter to cover city council meetings? How was their coverage aligning with their goals? What was going well with the audience? How were they sharing this information on socials as well as their website?

The staff also worked together on a monthly competition that featured different industry professionals, and the public would vote on their top recommendations from that industry. An example of this was when they featured the top 25 educational professionals who were under the age of 40 and working in the city. The winners of each monthly competition were honored with an awards happy hour, and the public could purchase tickets to mingle with that month's industry leaders as well as The Golden Gate staff.

I stepped out at 1:20 p.m. to grab a sandwich, and when I walked back in 15 minutes later, the staff was simultaneously on a company-wide conference call and covering a breaking news story. They all sat with headphones on, quietly listening to the meeting, while also working together on the breaking news story. Rene and Seth would periodically mute their phones and talk back and forth. They were keeping up on the chatter on Twitter in real-time, as they often used Twitter in this way to identify key actors and pursue potential sourcing for their coverage. Rene repeatedly checked in with Seth and kept saying to him "Let's get out whatever you have." After the company-wide

phone call, the whole staff stepped in. They live-edited and hard-saved and all worked together quickly. They used Slack and Google Docs and their content management system simultaneously. In 30-minutes, they turned out a well-rounded and well-quoted breaking news piece. Then they all started talking about how to collect further formal statements and who to call. The story was then continually updated throughout the afternoon as additional quotes came in.

"Without tools, we couldn't do something like this effectively," Seth said. "Around the table, we were all firing on all cylinders. Even if someone is away, we can make it all work through our tools like Slack, etc. We often do full blast coverage like this with not all of us in person."

Trip 2 (Two Working Days). I returned to visit The Golden Gate about a month after my first trip. Rene had just returned from a two-week vacation, and at the scrum she expressed how she was unburying herself from emails as well as her plan for jumping back into the flow of the newsroom. Seth wore a ballcap for his favorite baseball team. Rene and Melissa talked about how they were on a membership strategy call yesterday. They roped me into a light-hearted debate over the use of soda vs. pop, as they have one lively reader who responded often on social media to "fact check" their stories, and this was a recent issue for the reader. Everyone talked about straws a lot. Straws (or the desired absence of them) were the rage all across the nation that summer, and a local artist in the city was collecting them to turn the discarded plastic into an art piece. "We have reached peak anti-straw season," Rene said. "We have a lot of really good stories [about straws] going on right now."

After the scrum wrapped up, and everyone settled into a quieter working rhythm for a bit, Rene piped up and asked if anyone had ideas for stories that were potentially

sponsor-worthy, a request from the company co-owner, Paula. Rene talked about how she learned to use a website called Canva to create a few in-house ads about an upcoming event the newsroom is putting on. About ten minutes later, the staff broke into conversation about how they follow or unfollow people on social media. Melissa talked about how she doesn't get rid of any contacts from the area she grew up in, even the people she doesn't like anymore, because any of them could be charged with anything at any time. For me, it was so great to walk in and feel comfortable with knowing everyone a little bit. I sat down in my "normal" spot at the conference table, plugged all of my devices in, said hi, and joked that I had just been on a very long vacation and that I was happy to be back. A little after noon, Seth started talking about how he was working with the local police department on a story that involved strip club laws. The table also debated the different emojis they could use for the newsletter. They kept a record of rotating lists of what they have used, so they started slacking the new emoji options to each other. The afternoon unfolded like the afternoons I witnessed on my first trip: friendly banter, periods of intense quiet and writing, live-time editing over online platforms, and many in person conversations. They also haggled over finishing up the next day's newsletter.

One con to the co-working space I really noticed during my second trip was the ebb and flow of how busy the tables around The Golden Gate staff could be. A sports marketing company one table over would have fairly boisterous meetings at seemingly random times during the day; although The Golden Gate staff would also take the time to converse with them regularly and chat over potential connections and projects to work on together.

Day two started with the normal scrum meeting, but also a reminder that there would be a pitch meeting later in the day. Leslie was also there that day. The team had reached 91 percent of their sales goals for the month, and there were several new business connections she would be checking into for the day.

The pitch meeting later in the day kicked off with a reminder about The Golden Gate's Direct Market Audience target, unique readers between the ages of 18-40. The company was working on how to increase readership by re-upping old content, and getting out Facebook promotion and social videos. The staff needed to have a social media plan for this quarter, so they planned to meet about it the following Wednesday. Then they talked about upcoming stories, such as one that rated food at a local upcoming food festival. "I am very into the Seth vs. Food thing we have created here," Rene said. Apparently, Seth was a central and humorous barometer for food reviews in the area, and their main reviewer for such topics. The staff also talked about an evolving investigative piece on food deserts, a growing problem in the urban parts of the region.

"I kind of want to cover the UFO festival, but I don't know if there's a story there," Melissa said.

"Oh there's a trillion stories there" Seth said.

"We might table this for now, but the area has quite a bit of paranormal lore and Indian burial grounds," Rene said. "Maybe something for the fall. Also, I will not be editing that story. One of my worst fears is aliens and dying in outer space." I added in my assent. Floating away in space with no hope of rescue is also one of my main phobias.

The team continued the pitch meeting by digging through their highest performing stories and picking apart why those stories did well, with the hopes of

applying those successes to future coverage. They gave Leslie the last 15 minutes of the meeting to forecast events and advertising ideas she had, and suggest how coverage could help with those projects. Even though there was a lot of planning going on, this work day (a Friday) felt like a much more relaxed day than other days I have been at the office so far.

Then the staff moved into a voting meeting for the next round of their young industry leader competition, young professional food service industry exemplars working in the city. The process started with reader nominations, and then the staff sat down together to narrow the list down to 10-15 top candidates. Those candidates were then notified, and the staff compiled short biographies for a story on them all.

About 1:50, we all went out together to a local food truck event that happened weekly over the summer right outside the co-working space. We got into light conversations, mainly about food reviewing, and how the Wall Street Journal's food reviewer gets a very large food budget and a personal trainer. Then the afternoon slowly wound down as people finished up stories. I sat in with Rene on a meeting with one of the company's web designers, Charlotte. The two were deciding on some new categories for the content bar on The Golden Gate's homepage. These categories would also serve as ways to describe and cluster content for the site. They discussed in great detail the implications of each name category possibility, and how each category represented the mission of The Golden Gate and may or may not appeal to their Direct Market Audience. Then Rene came back and shared the conversation with the whole staff. Around 5:40 p.m., the team wrapped up their last stories and scheduling conversations, and said goodbye to me, as I would be flying out the next morning.

Creating a Participant Observation Memo

After my two observation trips, I looped back through my notes several times in an iterative process. I looked for emerging concepts and started grouping them together for potential themes. Then I came back around to my ideas drawn from literature, such as Reese and Shoemaker's (2016) levels of culture in an organization: individual, routine, and organizational. I considered how individuals were shaped by the structure of the newsroom, and what behavioral norms were present. I asked questions about how the staff was socialized, and how employees perceived their fit with the company culture. I also considered the organizational structure at The Golden Gate, from the managerial organization charts to the resources available to the staff to the time constraints faced by the organization. In considering Schein's (2010) levels of culture, I collected artifacts (photos, screenshots of online work, and links to stories). I also observed with my senses, and I asked insiders many questions about why things were done in a certain way. I looked for espoused beliefs and goals, as well as basic group underlying assumptions.

I found evidence of several concepts during my iterative analysis of my participation observation, such as: resource use; routines; autonomy; structure; socialization; organizational decision making; power; and leadership. The strongest themes I found in my participant observation were autonomy, organizational culture, and structure. I created an in-depth autonomy memo from the participant observation notes (see Appendix A), and then I used this memo to direct the choice of the survey tools.

Chapter VI - Findings

A mixed-methods approach yields a fuller account of a person's (and an organization's) story by deciphering patterns and connections across multiple types of data. The quantitative analysis of the moral reasoning of the Golden Gate's editorial team was just one component of this project; both the participant observation and the interviews more precisely revealed patterns of growth, journalistic and moral autonomy, professionalism, and structure than the survey data alone. Taken together, the readings of the participant observation notes, interviews, and the statistical analyses resulted in a vibrant portrait of both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy in one newsroom on the digital news frontier.

This findings chapter is organized by themes. The first set of themes cover examples of organizational structure and routine. The second set of themes concern journalistic and moral autonomy. See Table 1 on pg. 83 for an overview of the themes I found. The third section of this chapter connects the two theme categories together, and the last section explores what is shaping the future of digital journalism.

Themes of Organizational Structure and Culture

The first set of themes I found addressed the structures and routines of The Golden Gate. Across the data, I found evidence of how the staff intentionally built their vision and purpose. Their espoused beliefs of passion for local digital journalism greatly influenced their routines and story choices, an echo of focus also found in the leadership of the company. This set of themes also revealed an extreme focus of the staff on audience needs, as well as a collaborative structure built on friendship, experimentation

Table 2. Overview of themes and data support

Theme	Description	Exemplar Quote	Research Question	Survey Item
Company Culture: Vision & Purpose	Inspire people 18-40 to support hyper-local news and care more about their city	Nora – p. 82	RQ 2	ECQ – Social Responsibility
Company Culture: Audience-first focus	Focus on audience engagement by reaching them where they are and meeting their needs	Melissa – p. 85	RQ2 and RQ4	WOJ – Influence of audience on journalism
Company Culture: Democratic Idea Sharing	Co-creating a work culture of empowered sharing and implementation of ideas	Seth – p. 88	RQ3 and RQ4	WOJ – Autonomy as work freedom of choice
Company Culture: Lean, tight, nimble and exp.	Move fast, try new ideas, "be okay" with failing – repeat	Rene – p. 91	RQ1 and RQ2	No survey item
Company Culture: Critiquing	Holding high self, staff, and professional standards	Seth – p. 93	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3	WOJ – Influences on Journalism
Routine and Workflow: Time	Daily rhythms of the staff; time constraints on production	Seth – p. 98	RQ1 and RQ4	WOJ – Potential sources of influence
Routine and Workflow: Staff demands	How the editorial department balanced multiple job roles and made workflow choices	Rene – p. 99	RQ1 and RQ4	No survey item
Routine and Workflow: Expectations	Navigating competing job expectations and priorities	Rene – p. 102	RQ4	No survey item
Routine and Workflow: Team dynamics	How the team functioned out of friendship	Rene – p. 105	RQ4 and RQ5	WCQ – Employees supported by manager; ECQ – Friendship and self-interest
Routine and Workflow: Equal Collaboration	How the staff collaborated on nearly every aspect of curating the city	Seth – p. 108	RQ1	No survey item
Routine and Workflow: Interruptions	How the staff functioned when news demands unexpectedly shifted	Rene – p. 109	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3	No survey item
Individual Autonomy	How individuals were empowered to make decisions and their personal level of autonomy expression	Seth – p. 112	RQ6	WCQ, WOJ – Sources of influence, RYFF
Individual processes of growth	Key elements of personal and moral growth	No quotes	RQ6	RYFF, ECQ – Moral, WOJ – influences
Autonomy – profit demands	How did the staff balance autonomy with profit demands?	Seth – p. 112	RQ6	ECQ - Profit
Organizational Autonomy: Self-Sufficiency	How did the staff strategize for self-sufficiency?	Seth – p. 122	RQ5	No survey item
Organizational Autonomy: Navigating Tensions	How did the staff navigate philosophical and practical tensions as they balanced work roles?	Melissa – p. 125	RQ 5 and RQ6	No survey item
Professional Autonomy	Allegiance to professional journalism ethics	No quote	RQ 5 and RQ6	ECQ – Professionalism; WOJ - Influences

fast-paced work, and democratic-idea sharing. The first set of themes I found addressed the structures and routines of The Golden Gate. Across the data, I found evidence of how the staff intentionally built their vision and purpose. Their espoused beliefs of passion for local digital journalism greatly influenced their routines and story choices, an echo of focus also found in the leadership of the company. This set of themes also revealed an extreme focus of the staff on audience needs, as well as a collaborative structure built on friendship, experimentation, fast-paced work, and democratic-idea sharing. Themes of constraint that emerged included lean staffing, multiple job role expectations and demands, as well as a constant lack of time to complete the work as the staff really desired. The themes of organizational structure and routine greatly helped to answer RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4:

RQ1: What are the routines of digital news production?

RQ2: What are the beliefs and assumptions held by each media worker regarding the routines of digital news production?

RQ3: What is the leadership structure of the digital newsroom?

RQ4: How are the digital newsworkers socialized to this structure?

Company Culture. Organizational structure deeply contributes to how employees function in the workplace. Beginning with the definitions of the company's culture, and continuing with how that culture is implemented, structure shapes both team and individual efforts. When The Golden Gate was founded, Carl, Paula (and others from corporate), Rene, Nora, and Carrie (who no longer worked at The Golden Gate when this data was collected) spent a lot of time before the launch of the news site building the company's brand, voice, and desired audience reach. The point of the

startup was to prove that local journalism isn't dead; it just needs a "new model" for engaging unreached audience segments and for reaching financial sustainability. Those conversations resulted in an intentional work culture of democratic idea-sharing through simple communication chains, lean and tight staffing, a heavy emphasis on nimble experimentation, and an audience-first focus.

The portion of the survey that measured the ethical climate of The Golden Gate (the Ethical Climate Questionnaire, or ECQ) spoke to what overarching organizational factors influenced ethical behavior in the workplace, and also offered a glimpse into the company culture overall. The distinct ethical work climates I measured included self-interest, company profit and efficiency, friendship and team interest, social responsibility, personal morality, and rules, laws, and professional codes (Cullen, Victor, and Bronson, 1993). Each one of these climate alignments directly influences organizational outcomes and behaviors in different ways (Teresi et. al, 2019). When people in an organization learn about the contours of their organizational climate, they can either address issues or keep empowering that climate to support their organizational goals. The ethical climate survey is a big instrument built to do factor analysis. Victor and Cullen (1988) provided a confirmatory factor analysis (and validation) of their five broad types of climate. But, because my sample size was too small to perform my own factor analysis, I mapped an average of the respondents onto each of the five previously established climate types. Respondents answered each question on a scale of 1-6 ranging from "completely false" to "completely true." For the full results, see the full ECQ table in Appendix C.

The strongest alignment of The Golden Gate staff with the ECQ was the social responsibility climate. This factor had the most items with the highest averages among

the staff. Under the social responsibility climate, the editorial staff agreed it was mostly true that the good of customers and the public were high priorities for their company (N=3, M=5.33, SD=.58). They also felt a deep responsibility to consider the effects of company decisions on these groups (N=3, M=5.67, SD=.58). The staff also found it to be completely true that people in their company had a strong sense of responsibility to the outside community (N=3, M=6, SD=0). These ECQ survey results confirmed themes from the interview data—a company vision and purpose of reaching a specific audience and reviving hyper-local news in their area; and an audience-first focus.

Company Vision and Purpose. This theme conveys how The Golden Gate built the company culture from a founding vision of inspiring their unreached direct market audience to support hyper-local news and care more about their city. Rene, Nora, and Carrie worked for about six months before the news website even went live, refining voicing, vision, and approaches to how they wanted to tackle local news. Their intended audience flowed from a recognition that the area's legacy media were not reaching a generation of young people in a way that Carl and The Golden Gate staff felt media should. They wanted to help young consumers connect better and deeper with their city. "It was a vision and a mission that I believed in," Rene said. "Being able to start The Golden Gate was just like this professional whirlwind, and was incredibly exciting and daunting and overwhelming at times, but I would say that for a long time, I was riding on pure excitement."

Nora also felt deeply connected to the company's goals.

You get into journalism because you believe in it but in this case, it was like, we got into this startup because we wanted to make this startup happen and we were

passionate about local news and we were passionate about saying we're going to try something different and see if it works and we want to find a path forward for local news.

Seth also expressed he knew that Carl's goal for the company was not to be an extremely profit-driven, money-making machine, but an experiment to prove that journalism is still necessary to our society and can sustain itself. "Let's prove everybody who thinks local journalism's dead [wrong]," Seth said. "Let's prove a point. Let's try to take a crack at this."

The vision for the team itself was to move like a cohesive unit in the city. This cohesiveness didn't always extend to the entire parent company, but Rene's leadership goal was to establish that kind of work culture at her The Golden Gate jurisdiction.

At least with my people and in our newsroom and sitting around our table, I knew that we all had each other's back and we were all rolling in the same direction and we all understood why we were working so hard. I don't necessarily think that's always the case in traditional media. I think it's really easy to sit at your desk, and come in at nine and leave at five, and not feel like you are part of a bigger picture. But that was never the case for us ... we're all at least generally aware of what our direction and vision and mission is. So, that makes decision-making easier.

The theme of company vision and purpose helps answer RQ2 by showing how the Golden Gate editorial staff deeply believed in the value, mission, and need of local journalism. They crafted their routines of engaging their direct market audience around this belief.

Audience-First Focus. The audience-first theme details how The Golden Gate content zeroed in on their audience. They focused on audience engagement by reaching their Direct Market Audience (DMA) of 18-40 year olds in their city, and then working to meet that audience's wants and needs. This focus was cast on a broader level in the vision of reaching an untapped market of young people and connecting them to their city, but it also played out in the minute, day-to-day details. Melissa talked about how when stories were pitched, their discussions around that story mainly concerned what would resonate with readers, rather than what would make the publisher or a government department happy. "We were very focused on what our readers actually want[ed] to read, and that is a difficult question to answer, but we tried our best to sort of use the data that we had to determine what readers might like to see," Melissa said.

A few survey questions from the Worlds of Journalism project also spoke to the audience-first focus firmly established at The Golden Gate. When asked to consider how different influences on journalism have decreased or increased in the past five years (on a scale of 1-5, ranging from "weakened a lot," to "strengthened a lot"), the staff acknowledged that their audience held a lot of power. The influence of their feedback and their involvement in the news production process had strengthened (N=3, M=4.67, SD=1.16). The staff also felt strongly that journalism had strengthened a lot in educating audiences, telling stories about the world, and providing the information people need to make political decisions (N=3, M=5, SD=0). They also felt a stronger pressure to promote tolerance and diversity (N=3, M=4.67, SD=1.16). However, they felt that the journalistic tenant of advocating for social change had somewhat weakened (N=3, M=2, SD=0).

The staff's multi-layered strategy of events, social media engagement, and

eventually membership subscriptions were key to engaging their audience. "Millennials get a bad rep, but we want to feel like we're a part of something, we want to contribute," Rene said. "We value experiences more than things. Nobody wants a newspaper on their doorstep, but everybody wants to have the newsletter in their inbox every day that everybody's talking about, right?" According to the survey demographic data, two of The Golden Gate editorial staff members ranged in age from 25-34, and the other two ranged in age from 35-44, placing the staff in a millennial age range.

Nora took audience engagement as a personal motivational goal. She felt early on the weight and exhilaration of getting to make a new name for the company.

The reputation of The Golden Gate was on us which is sort of terrifying to say and I don't know if I really thought about it in that terrifying way but I enjoyed the freedom of saying "Oh? The Golden Gate, you don't know about us?" Winning people over instead of having to say "I'm sorry you have a bad view of this newspaper but unfortunately...it's a hundred and something year [old] organization." I'm not going to be able to change their mind as easily as I can about a new media organization.

Nora was there through multiple iterations and experiments with audience engagement. One example was when, for the daily newsletter, they moved the language to a more personal introduction and sign-off. So whenever she was in charge of the newsletter for the day, she would craft her own personalized introduction of the chatter of the city, and then sign off with "Nora at The Golden Gate." After they made this change, the staff got a lot of feedback that people felt like they knew each of the staff

members and related to them on a personal level. Also with the newsletter, the staff wanted to convey to their audience that their goal was to listen and work on the stories that the audience most cared about. "That was really cool to create that somewhat personal relationship with the community in a way that more traditional newsrooms [couldn't]," Nora said. "I think [traditional newsrooms] sort of still see themselves as a watchdog, gatekeepers, ivory tower-esque." Nora's experience here helps to answer RQ4, "How are the digital newsworkers socialized to this structure?". Nora recognized that The Golden Gate's approach to journalism required her to be more personal in her journalism approach and to go with the flow as the company evolved in how they created and sustained relationships with their audience.

One event that represented the fruit of The Golden Gate's audience engagement experiments to Rene was the organization's first-anniversary party. She felt a combination of shock that the startup had come so far (she said most news startups don't last longer than six months) and gratitude to have the owners, and city council members, and the audience in attendance.

> It wasn't like the launch party, which was mostly just friends and family and the people that you could con into coming because they were a former source. It wasn't me raiding my Rolodex as much as it was us having done something meaningful and people wanting to be in the room with us. I feel like in journalism, so infrequently do you get to have that experience where you are one-to-one with your readers in the same room for the sole purpose of loving the product ... I felt unstoppable in that moment. I think that we all rode that wave for a while. That's a powerful thing to have something so motivating like that.

In the interviews, the editorial staff often came back to the importance of serving their audience. They often asked themselves what their audience both wanted and needed. Rene expressed awe in how, even with such a small staff, they were able to step in and provide coverage for local elections, both the nights of local elections and in preparing the community before election days.

> Honestly, what more can you ask for as a journalist, to know that people are literally clamoring for our [procrastinator's] election guide … knowing that we were that crucial to people's ability to do the most important thing that they can do in a democratic republic, in the city that you believe in and love and have lived in forever, that's a really powerful thing to experience. I think that people generally understand that newspapers are good and digital outlets are good and are important, but are they useful? We built things that were useful and accessible to people. As a journalist, there isn't a greater outcome that I could have.

Clearly, The Golden Gate staff strongly believed in focusing all of their efforts on what their audience wanted and needed, a direct answer to RQ2. In the end, Rene said that even though their coverage area was relatively small, she felt like The Golden Gate was responsible for making a group of the public more passionate about their city by helping their audience understand the issues affecting their city.

Democratic Idea-Sharing. The theme of democratic idea-sharing speaks to how the editorial staff at The Golden Gate felt empowered to share and implement their ideas into their work, and even co-create content and platforms. This theme also supports a high-level of support for journalistic autonomy at The Golden Gate (a theme

further explored later in this chapter). A unique part of The Golden Gate's company culture was that, right away, all employees were expected to take ownership and be a part of conversations that affected the growth of the product. "I feel that there was a lot more emphasis on what I thought at The Golden Gate, as opposed to other papers, where it's really top-down," Seth said. He said there was still a content manager and people at the top who would make the final decision on the direction of the company and the content, but Seth felt like there were many opportunities for him to pitch stories and explain why he wanted to take on certain elements of the news. "And if you pitched it well enough, you got to do it," Seth said. "It was just a slightly more democratic process. I'm not saying that never happened at the more traditional outlets I worked for, but it was every day here."

Seth also expressed that when staff members were hired, they were immediately put into decision-making roles, like participating on boards and committees to help decide how the company would orchestrate its homepage and events. It was something he had never experienced at any other outlet before. "I think, in some ways ... I was more self-sufficient at The Golden Gate than I was at some of the other places that I've worked," Seth said.

Nora's experience also echoed that there were fewer layers of bureaucracy in The Golden Gate's company culture.

> Any time we had an idea we just sort of ran with it. I would be like, "Hey Rene, what do you think about this?" And we either talked it out and decided to do it or not. I mean we had so many ideas that we just didn't have time to act for whereas in previous, more traditional newsrooms, it's like, well you gotta ask

this editor and you got to ask that editor and even if it's a good idea we don't

know if we have the time.

Autonomy measures will be explored in depth later in this chapter, but there's a definite connection between the autonomy data from the survey and the editorial staff's interview descriptions of their democratic idea-sharing work culture. The Worlds of Measures concerning journalistic autonomy explored freedom of choice in the workplace. The respondents rated questions on a five-point scale, ranging from "no freedom at all" to "complete freedom", that they did have a great deal of freedom in selecting what news stories to work on, as well as what aspects of a story should be emphasized (N=3, M=4, SD=0). When asked to evaluate if different influences on journalism have become weaker or stronger in the last five years, the staff ranked these different types of potential influences on a scale of 1-5, ranging from "weakened a lot" to "strengthened a lot". The staff expressed that they had somewhat strengthened freedom to make editorial decisions (N=3, M=4, SD=0) and much more influence on getting to report things "as they are" (N=3, M=4.33, SD=.58).

From the top-down, a clear value of the leadership team at The Golden Gate was to empower their employees to have deep buy-in for co-creating the news organization. This company culture element supports evidence that the leadership structure of The Golden Gate leaned toward high levels of journalistic autonomy for their employees, honoring their professional experiences and skills, and giving each employee the space they needed to create the news for their new audience. To help answer RQ3, the democratic idea-sharing theme supports that the leadership culture at The Golden Gate was highly democratic in nature. This theme also helps answer RQ4, when the staff mentioned how they were socialized to their democratic work culture by immediately

(and continuously) being asked to serve in leadership roles in different areas of the company.

Lean, Tight, Nimble, and Experimental. This theme considers how the leadership at The Golden Gate intentionally established a work culture of moving fast, trying new ideas, being okay with failing, and then repeating the cycle. Flowing from the original vision of experimenting and breaking old news models to find a path forward for news, Rene pushed the staff to branch out and try new ideas, collaborate, and be ready to pivot when a direction was not working like they thought it would. "It was lean and there weren't a ton of intermediaries. Like I sat three feet from Rene, who had a direct line to the CEO," Seth said. "It was a pretty simple chain-of-command there. And running something up the flagpole was a relatively effortless process. I think they communicated their expectations really well."

The fundraising part of the job was one place where the editorial staff was expected (and trained in) finding new ways to generate revenue. So sometimes they would have an indirect role fundraising process. But they most certainly had a deep role in monitoring page view data and expanding their DMA reach. The editorial staff was given clear roles, and they were also often asked to make their own goals. "So, we, in some respects, we were creating our own benchmarks and goals, and then the ones that we got from the company were pretty clearly communicated to me through Rene," Seth said.

Seth also expressed that The Golden Gate's model was reflective of shifts in the news industry as a whole. "Nowadays, everything's lean and everything's tight and everyone has to pitch in and be concerned with the bottom line a little bit," Seth said. "So, I don't think that's ever going away." Rene felt like an important difference of The

Golden Gate's business model from other media competitors in town was how nimble they were.

> More and more, I'm coming to believe that the key to real growth as a newsroom and the way to attract a new audience is absolutely to follow the somewhat horrible Silicon Valley expression of "move fast and break shit." I would say that there's a group of product developers out there now who say instead, the adage should be "move fast and build things," and I think we did that. So, that nimble ability to design and iterate, and build and tear down. We were constantly evolving, and in big newsrooms and traditional newsrooms, it is so much harder to do that.

Rene's thoughts here provide evidence for RQ1 that a major routine of The Golden Gate newsroom was to passionately pour into building their product, but also for the editorial staff to be willing to pivot and nimbly respond to market or audience changes. They also believed in creating and sustaining an experimental journalism environment (part of the answer to RQ2).

Nora saw the editorial team's approach to social media as one place where they were always able to experiment and chase down what would work for audience engagement. People in the community were often shocked at how small of a team they were, and how much work they could get done. As the team sat around the table, they could quickly communicate to each other how to cover breaking news, multiple stories at once, and more. "More people can kind of complicate things sometimes so I think we were really able to use that nimbleness to our advantage," Nora said.

This focus on nimbleness is something Rene knew she would carry with her in her career. She knew that in order to succeed, she had to help create a culture where reporters were willing to move fast, build things, try things, and take chances. In Rene's eyes, the nimble culture of The Golden Gate was a huge advantage for them.

[We] had an impact on our market. [We] definitely improved the lives of the people who lived in the cities that we ... were working in ... we had positive impacts in our communities and elevated the journalism from all of the other outlets that were there too. I think that that's not something that can be understated. Because as we were moving fast and breaking things and building things, other news outlets suddenly had to keep up with us. That's fascinating too, to see whole new beats pop up in other news organizations that are clearly designed just to match the thing that you're doing ... [We] elevated the journalism for young people who are trying to understand their cities better and establish news consumption habits in a really meaningful way. That's cool.

Critiquing. The theme of critiquing emerged as to how the staff held high standards for themselves, and for the media around them. Although critiquing was not a major percentage of the time spent in a typical workday at The Golden Gate, I noticed in my participant observation phase especially that critiquing was part of their work culture. They would critique each other, they would critique other media, and they were often very reflective of their own work. They took very seriously having an easily accessible corrections page on the website, and they were diligent to keep that updated. Seth attributed a lot of this culture to Rene's rigid belief on the role of journalism as the fourth estate, and that this duty greatly shaped how their journalism should be

conducted. "We all view ourselves as media critics," Seth said. "We were always sort of

self-assessing and assessing others, which, by proxy, informed how we thought

journalism should be done." Seth felt like the staff put daily significant thought into

what makes good journalism (and what makes bad journalism), as well as the role of

journalism in the United States. "I feel like we're exceedingly aware of those notions now

because it's all talked about so much, but certainly within media, it's talked about a lot

too," Seth said. "We talked about a lot around that table."

This critiquing culture also showed up in the survey data, in the Worlds of

Journalism survey portion (for full results of the survey, see Appendix C). When asked

to evaluate if different influences on journalism have become weaker or stronger in the

last five years, the staff ranked these differences on a scale of 1-5, ranging from

"weakened a lot" to "strengthened a lot". In talking shop about the day-to-day pressures

the staff faces in creating the news, the influence of competition (N=3, M=4.33,

SD=.58), profit-making pressures (N=3, M=4.67, SD=.58), and audience research (N=3,

M=4.33, SD=.58) had strengthened. Advertising considerations (N=3, M=4, SD=1) and

public relations considerations (N=3, M=4.67, SD=.58) were also ranked as somewhat

strengthened influences. These WOJ survey items spoke to the critiquing theme found

in The Golden Gate's work culture by offering evidence of how influential competition

and audience research was to the staff. All levels of critiquing displayed by the staff

concerned how to create a better product that would both beat the competition and

serve their audience.

The theme of critiquing also helped to answer RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. Critiquing

was a daily ritual at The Golden Gate, ranging from individual critiques to evaluating the

media messages and practices around the staff. These rituals stemmed from beliefs in

upholding the integrity and roles of journalism as "the fourth estate," as well as working

to beat relevant competition. Additionally, critiquing was a major role of the leadership

at The Golden Gate. Rene was actively involved in daily critiquing the stories and

messages crafted by her team, and Carl often dipped into the evaluation of both smaller

and larger-level work.

Themes of Routine and Workflow

The workflow themes encompass how employees structured their days,

highlighted by the flexibility to respond to unforeseen circumstances (such as a breaking

news story or a community tragedy). The workflow theme also considered how

employee expectations were established and then evolved to shape the work culture of

The Golden Gate. Additionally, the workflow theme explored how each employee played

multiple roles in the workspace. Sub-themes of time, finding balance in staffing

demands, and organizational expectations also greatly shaped routines and workflow.

This theme overall also helped answer the following research questions:

> **RQ1:** What are the routines of digital news production?
>
> **RQ2:** What are the beliefs and assumptions held by each media worker regarding the routines of digital news production?
>
> **RQ3:** What is the leadership structure of the digital newsroom?
>
> **RQ4**: How are the digital newsworkers socialized to this structure?

Time. The theme of time encompasses both the daily rhythms of the staff as well

as how time constrained the capabilities, growth, and financial viability of The Golden

Gate. When I observed The Golden Gate, they had a somewhat predictable day-to-day

rhythm. As a team, as much as possible, The Golden Gate team prioritized meeting in

person and spending as much time as possible working around a community table. They also communicated extensively online, as I explored in-depth in my participation observation section. Just like any startup, time was a premium. Managing editor Melissa said the staff struggled to keep the reporting work that needed to be done between their hours of 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Monday-Friday. Melissa also managed the weekend newsletters and any breaking news that would happen over the weekend, pulling the staff in as needed. When the reporters were on their social media desk shift, they would often start the day at 7 a.m. and then continue checking in on news updates late into the night. And then on event days, the entire staff had to try and wrap up the next day's newsletter by 4-5 p.m. so that they could get to the event to help set up and then interact with the community. Seth also felt the strain of balancing his role as a reporter-curator, but he didn't feel like the events encroached on his reporting duties.

> So, we did events, most of the time, like once a month. Sometimes, it got more frequent, like once a week … It was never something that I felt like took away from the reporting. Most of these events were after hours. But it's definitely different. Most reporters aren't accustomed to … being brand ambassadors and public figures. That was unusual and that was something that I certainly had to get used to.

Melissa, Seth, and Nora all expressed that there were many instances where they all wanted more time to work on stories, but they also acknowledged that the reporting time crunch was not unique to their organization. Seth said,

I don't think anywhere in the industry is anyone really getting as much time as

they probably want ... There are fewer reporters. There are higher expectations

for those that remain reporters. I've grown accustomed to it. I don't think this is

specific to The Golden Gate. As long as I've been working in journalism, which is

a better part of a decade, it's been pretty, more often than not, it was...speed was

prioritized over thoroughness maybe.

Rene was the first employee hired by the owners, Carl and Paula, to kick The

Golden Gate into gear. She signed on knowing that she would pour a lot of time into the

organization, and she said that it was about 14 months before she had her first Saturday

completely off, a day where she didn't open her computer or check Slack. This project

was her life.

It was incredibly grueling and taxing... I think personally, I made a lot of

sacrifices for The Golden Gate that I don't think I would have made if I had been

in a more traditional newsroom... I don't regret it, I just ... would not have made

that kind of personal sacrifice had we not been building something. That comes

back to believing in the mission and the vision, and also knowing what I signed

up for, of course.

The survey data also confirmed time as an influential factor in The Golden Gate's

work culture. From the Worlds of Journalism survey, potential sources of influence were

measured on a scale of 1-5, ranging from "not influential" to "extremely influential."

Audience research data, availability of newsgathering resources, and information access

were all very influential to The Golden Gate staff (N=3, M=4, SD=1), with time limits

edging more toward extremely influential to their work (N=3, M=4.67, SD=.58). When asked to evaluate if different influences on journalism have become weaker or stronger in the last five years, they ranked these different types of potential influences on a scale of 1-5, ranging from "strengthened a lot" to "weakened a lot," and they reported weakened time available to research stories (N=3, M=2.33, SD=.58).

Across the interview data, time constrained the capabilities, growth and financial viability of The Golden Gate organization as the owners and the staff worked to strike a delicate balance between staffing needs, audience needs, and attaining financial sustainability. The time theme contributed to answering both RQ1 and RQ4. Rene, as the first official employee, was socialized to the startup with a sense of urgency, and the subsequent hirees came in under the same expectation. Time also very much constrained the amount of original stories that could be produced each week, especially as the staff had to balance multiple job roles.

Staffing Demands. The staffing demands theme considers how the editorial department at The Golden Gate balanced multiple job roles and how they made their workflow choices. The staff was intensely committed to local journalism, and they all signed up for their jobs knowing they would need to expand their skill sets to work at an experimental local news project like The Golden Gate. Early on, the newsroom staff had to lean into both defined expectations as well as the portions of their jobs that were constantly evolving. As a leader, Rene pushed for constant adaptability in her staff. Rene also acted as a general manager, as she was deeply involved in the financial aspects of the company as they tried different funding models, especially a membership campaign beginning close to the second year of the company. Melissa, Seth, and Nora were part of those conversations often, but for the most part, Rene shouldered the responsibilities of

interfacing more with the advertising and membership components of The Golden Gate. She felt deeply invested in the brand she had worked to found and build, and she also acted as a gatekeeper between editorial and advertising, although these lines were often blurred more than in a traditional newsroom structure.

Melissa, Seth, and Nora were not only expected to assume a regular list of duties, but also to understand how each facet of the newsroom worked, and be able to step in as needed. So instead of entrenched beats or very defined roles, the staff focused on collaboration to help each other build content to run on all of their online platforms. From her perspective as the editor, Rene said

> I have to imagine that all of the times that our team was moving best on a day-to-day basis were the times that I didn't even know it was happening, because I tried to build a room and a culture where people wanted to help each other … I don't think anyone helped anyone else in a way that outperformed their assistance to anyone else. I think that everyone helped everyone equally. For me, when you're that small, that was such a key marker of us being a team.

A consistent sub-theme of workflow, as expressed by the company members, was the need to balance multiple job roles every day, or "wear lots of hats." Nora talked about this dynamic as she remembered what it was like her first few months at work. She was given a title, reporter-curator, but the job roles that fell under that title shifted often. She knew her position was "going to be constantly evolving as we figure[d] out what we are because our end goal is to make The Golden Gate," Nora said. Seth also

experienced the high demands of multitasking as a reporter-curator at The Golden Gate, and the struggle they all faced to get everything done.

It gets harder when you have a lot of other hats to wear and the reporter feels like a piece of a larger puzzle, instead of the whole puzzle … There's a whole other conversation to have about how multitasking affects reporting, and then there's a whole other conversation on top of that to have about what kind of reporting we were trying to do, whether we were trying to do breaking or not-breaking and more in-depth. We were toying with all of that constantly … I've had those discussions with myself countless times and I know we were all sort of constantly evaluating it. But yeah, it's tough. It's really hard when you just wanna be a reporter and you wanna focus on that and do it the best you can.

Seth described the difficulty in balancing all of their roles. "It felt sometimes like you were kinda squeezing in reporting around some of the other stuff that we had to do, which was kinda hard for me to reconcile. I never really got my head around it—I just tried my best to adapt," he said. But Seth also acknowledged that this issue is something all newsrooms are facing. Reporters all over the world are being asked to take on additional job roles like social media management, event planning, video production, photography, and podcasting. The entire industry's workload has increased drastically.

The theme of staffing demands contributes to answering RQ1 and RQ4. Nora mentioned stepping into her role of reporter-curator, but understanding from the get-go that her job roles within that title would be dynamic. She was socialized to a structure of flexibility. There was also a routine of expecting the unexpected and collaboration at The Golden Gate. Everyone knew the tasks they needed to do to meet daily, weekly, and

monthly goals, but they were also ready to pivot to help each other as news demands appeared.

Expectations. The theme of expectations emerged as the staff talked about how they navigated competing job expectations to know what to prioritize each day. They felt overall their job expectations were clear, but also that they needed to grow in efficiency overtime with each component of their positions. Additionally, collaboration trumped individual tasks the majority of the time. As Seth learned to tackle all of the work expectations for his position, he acknowledged that sometimes, the reporting was getting harder and harder to fit in among his other duties.

> I mean, it was a pretty challenging juggling act. I'll be honest about that. Part of that was the volume was high … It was a lot day-to-day … There are pieces like the social. We had very specific expectations, like we need this many posts at these times of the day. All that stuff was fairly immutable and so it felt sometimes like you were kinda squeezing in reporting around some of the other stuff that we had to do.

The pressures of time and juggling multiple roles both highlight how even though The Golden Gate's work culture supported freedom of choice and employee empowerment to make decisions, the sheer amount of tasks greatly constrained what ideas could be pursued or not.

Nora expressed that, while there were so many moving parts to her job from the beginning, the expectations of her time and work were clear. As one of the first hires at The Golden Gate, she said it was a little unnerving at first to move from a traditional newsroom with clearly defined beats and roles, but that as the momentum of the work culture got moving more, she was able to find her footing. Additionally, the work was

very self-directed, and she enjoyed getting to write about what she wanted to write about. Melissa also expressed that the expectations around her work were clear, but she never had a formal performance review. She got a lot of real-time feedback, and as a team, they would workshop headlines and stories together. But she also recognized that the lack of a formal evaluation process stemmed from the constraints of time found in a small startup company environment. Work expectations clearly shaped the organizational structure of The Golden Gate's company culture; chief among them were flexibility and each staff knowing the ins-and-outs of how the entire newsroom worked. These expectations greatly shaped how the staff was socialized to the newsroom, helping answer RQ4: How are the digital newsworkers socialized to this structure?

The Golden Gate's work culture expectation of collaboration and role sharing proved its mettle when their city experienced a horrendous mass shooting. From Rene's perspective, the team was able to aggressively cover the story and support their city for many months.

> When a story like the community center shooting [happened], we all knew how to help each other through that. We all knew how to perform outside of our assigned job tasks and roles … We had built this structure where we all trusted each other and relied on each other and knew how to do each other's work and work outside of our comfort zone. It was absolutely horrific, and it was one of the worst days of my entire life, but the team worked together.

Rene also expressed that outsiders were often impressed by the reach of The Golden Gate and that they were able to give other outlets in the city a run for their money, including a traditional 100-year-old newspaper that started new beats to match how The Golden Gate was covering their city. In an attempt to reach their intended

audience of younger citizens, The Golden Gate business model prioritized social media

interactions, which in turn strained reporting resources. When each employee has to

split their time between reporting, social media, and public relations functions, that

workflow is inevitably going to constrain journalistic work. However, when the

community needed it, The Golden Gate would pivot and then use all of their resources to

serve their journalistic duties in that time of crisis.

Team Dynamics. The theme of team dynamics examines how the staff built

their team from a culture of "friends that functioned like family;" they looked out for

each other and functioned from a headspace of collaborating to reach goals together.

The team dynamics at The Golden Gate were constantly evolving. Nora expressed that,

in the beginning, building The Golden Gate's team felt like journalism camp or college

again, as everyone started looking out for each other. They knew their specific roles, but

they also shared in and helped each other in those roles. "It was constantly sort of that

team approach," she said. "We all had the same goal and we were willing to work to that

goal together while also making sure everyone got out on time." She also felt that the

team dynamic was very important to their company culture.

> I just can't imagine if we didn't have a good team dynamic and we had to sit
>
> there around the table together every day, I think that The Golden Gate would
>
> have suffered. If we didn't have a good dynamic … there was too much at risk
>
> just because there were only five of us that it had to have had a good tight team
>
> … we didn't have other people on the periphery, in the newsroom to interact
>
> with.

The Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ) portion of the survey considered how employees felt about the management styles they were under (see the table in Appendix C for the full results of the WCQ portion of the survey). The WCQ measured how employees felt their managers supported their journalistic autonomy to complete their jobs confidently and well, both key components to team dynamics. The survey asked respondents to rank their agreement on a six-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

On average, the staff of The Golden Gate agreed they felt understood by their manager (N=4; M=4.75; SD=1.89) and that they could be open with their manager at work (N=4; M=4.75; SD=1.25). The staff also agreed that they felt a lot of trust in their manager (N=4; M=4.75; SD=1.89) and that their manager listened to how they would like to do things (N=4; M=4.75; SD=1.89). This WCQ data supports conversations from the interviews about how the reporting team worked under Rene; that there was give and take, role sharing, and support for each other.

One subtheme of team dynamics that came up was the description of the work team as friendship-based, and sometimes even family-based. When asked about the importance of the friendship component to the success of their team, Seth felt like it was hugely important to their success.

> I've never worked with a group of people that I liked as much as the people at The Golden Gate. I legitimately consider them family members at this point. Part of that is because they're genuinely lovely people, but part of that is we worked in this really tight, really fast high-pressure environment that can either turn people against each other or if it's the right mix of personalities, can just bond them for life. And it's kinda that crucible effect really happened with me and these people

at The Golden Gate because it was never anybody who was like, "Well, that's not my job. I'm not gonna do it. I don't know why you're asking me for help." You just never got that. It was literally like, "Yeah, you need something? What can I do?" They're at the ready, always willing, never complaining. Just getting it done.

Seth felt this level of friendship and commitment to helping each other stemmed from working with that particular group of good people, but also the company structure. Their goals were clear, Rene organized them well and understood what she needed from them, and also conveyed what she hoped the team would do. "Nobody had to guess and stumble in the dark," Seth said. "I think that we liked each other and I think that made it all easier to swallow the fact that you're working 10-hour days fairly regularly and stuff like that."

Melissa also felt like friendship was key to helping the staff navigate very long and hectic days. "At some point during the day, we would all take a few minutes to kind of like catch up as friends … that, I think, definitely strengthened our bond," she said. Once and a while the staff would spend time together outside of work, but Melissa said that for the most part, they needed weekends apart after working so hard together during the week. She felt like this dynamic made their friendships stronger.

Rene recognized the friendship element that evolved as well, even in a very high-pressure and high-stakes environment.

I really think everyone on our team loved each other. It was really a special group of people. It was the right people, in the right place, at the right time, and I think some of that was, again, common mission, common enemy. It was kind of us against the world, which whenever you get too big, it's much harder to replicate that … Knowing everyone's partner and knowing their kids and honestly knowing

... I met everyone's parents at some point, which is an incredibly weird thing to

do as an adult, right?

Rene also expressed that being friends with her colleagues made her a more

empathetic boss, although she kept in the back of her mind the strain that any of her

employees might feel if she inserted herself into their lives too much. So she would

balance all invites from her team with the gravity of her management position. On the

flip side, she said that friendship helped her learn how to relate to her team, even in

moments of low performance.

I struggled at times with how to be harder on people. It wasn't necessarily that I

needed to be harder on people, but at one point I was having an issue with a

reporter not producing enough ... it's hard to point to one thing ... because that

person was also picking up a lot of slack in other places. I think [friendship]

probably softened my eye a little bit toward those things. It seems possible that I

would have been harder on people when they were in moments of low

performance. I say moments of low performance because no one at any point

overall was a low performer. It was just everybody has ebbs and flows, and that's

the nature of life and work, and especially journalism, I think.

The second highest ranking of averages on the ethical climate questionnaire from

the survey was team interest. For the ECQ, the staff answered each question on a scale

of 1-6 ranging from "completely false" to "completely true." For the friendship and team

interest ethical orientation questions, on average the editorial staff felt it was somewhat

true: that the good of all employees of the company was the main priority (N=3,

M=4.33, SD=1.16); that the company culture was one of concern for the other person

(N=3, M=4.33, SD=1.53); and that a major consideration of the company was what was

best for everyone (N=3, M=4.33, SD=.58). On average it was mostly true that individuals were cared for when decisions were made at The Golden Gate (N=3, M=5.33, SD=.58). The team unanimously agreed that team spirit was important to their company (N=3, M=5.33, SD=0). So, although social responsibility garnered a higher average of support in the ECQ, the friendship and team category was also a strong contender.

Further support for the friendship and team dynamic at The Golden Gate was also found in how the staff responded to the self-interest portion of the ECQ. The staff strongly disagreed with statements of the presence of self-interest in their company culture. They agreed nearly unanimously that, in their company, people were not out for themselves, that people did not protect their own interests at all costs, and that people were not very concerned with what was best for themselves alone (N=3, M=4.33, SD=.58). They were in complete agreement that at The Golden Gate, people would look out for each other's good (N=4; M=5; SD=0).

Both the interview data and the research data from the theme of team dynamics help to answer RQ3 and RQ4. As a leader, Rene prioritized a culture of friendship and help. From even the very beginning of the work day at the scrum meeting, each person was expected to report on where they were with stories and ask for specific help as needed, and space was given for other employees to chime in with the resources they knew about. Ultimately, how and when stories were published was Rene's call, but she often had multiple conversations with each story author around those decisions and why, inviting collaboration into the editing process. And while Rene would distance herself at some junctures, she also opened herself up for friendship connections with each of the staff members. The camaraderie of the editorial team was palpable. From the

beginning, the staff was socialized to friendship and connection as the basis for work collaboration.

Equal Collaboration. The theme of equal collaboration considers how the staff worked together to reach their daily goal of curating the city by collaborating on nearly every aspect of the products made by The Golden Gate. The reporters often ran with their own story ideas, but sometimes those ideas would turn into double byline pieces. Editing was often a collaborative process between Rene and each of the writers everyday. "My favorite parts of the job are editing and working with the reporters. The days when I don't work with them… when we don't get to talk about audience engagement, or the next political story, the less happy I am," Rene said.

Seth expressed that collaboration was important to the success of their team for multiple reasons. The team was working hard to create a consistent voice and to establish an institutional brand that represented them all. They were also deliberate in collaborating at times.

> Maybe it's a trend now in journalism, but it was just important to us [to] collaborate with each other every day, but also other outlets, if we could. I remember, we always had this model, which was like, "With small newsrooms in this ecosystem, they all need to huddle together for warmth." So, we liked to partner with people when we could and we try a lot to do that, but also with each other. Because I always think, I trusted all of them and their judgment implicitly, but also I think, four brains are always better than my one brain.

Melissa talked about how the collaborative nature of the team was vital to their success. She expressed that the team would help her find holes in her stories. They were constantly bouncing ideas off of each other. They would read through and talk through each other's work, trying to consider how their audience would see it. They would all help each other point out what might come across as inflammatory, what voices may or may not be missing, and when they might be leaning toward a more negative writing tone. They worked together to try and be representative of the community. "That was, I think, crucial for us," Rene said. To help answer RQ1, collaboration greatly shaped the routines of news production at The Golden Gate.

Interruptions. The theme of interruptions considered how the editorial staff functioned when news demands quickly and unexpectadly shifted. Several times during my research period, The Golden Gate team reported through a major crisis in their community. Their team dynamics through these times were flexible and extremely collaborative. Like in the instance of the community center shooting, half of the team was out leading a historical walking tour of a local cemetery, and the other half of the team was three blocks away from where the shooting happened. Because Rene had been a former crime reporter in the area, she immediately started calling her contacts and got over to the area where the active shooter situation was still unfolding. "I didn't feel comfortable asking anyone else to go into a situation that I wouldn't go into," Rene said. At the cemetery Nora and the ad director stayed with the group, but they got out all of their laptops and phones and started working to help the team cover the unfolding events from that location. Melissa became the desk editor and was assigning tasks. Rene and Seth were reporting. And Nora and the ad director tore down the event and made sure that attendees were able to get home safe. Seth started making phone calls

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from home. Rene described how the staff quickly adjusted to a new workflow as they covered the community center shooting.

> I don't know if there's a better example of the group coming together, and all digitally too, right? This is a Saturday, I'm in the field, Seth's at home, Melissa is at home. We didn't see each other all day. All of our coverage was all done completely remotely through Slack and texts and calls. That's adding another layer of stress on top of the team. To be producing a major news event and to not be in the same room together is extremely hard. That's a very micro and macro look at, I think, how our team's dynamics played out on a day-to-day basis.

The team worked nearly around the clock for over eight days, covering the shooting itself, and then all of the funerals between them, including former employee Carrie who came in to help for the week. There was a funeral that hit too close to home for Nora, but when she spoke up about it, Rene quickly assigned a different person to that particular one. "We went to all the funerals and yeah it was just, it was awful," Nora said. "It was awful but I could not have done it without them."

Interruptions were one of the routines at The Golden Gate. The staff would lean into their friendship and working knowledge of all of the roles of the newsroom to help each other support community needs. To help answer RQ1, this ability of the staff to shift gears and respond greatly shaped how the news was produced at The Golden Gate. The staff believed in flexibility (RQ2), and Rene often led the charge in this flexibility by stepping in to fulfill whatever role made the most sense at the moment (RQ3).

Themes of Autonomy

The themes of autonomy reflect both organizational-level and individual-level journalistic autonomy, and expressions of individual moral autonomy. For example, journalistic autonomy showed up in how The Golden Gate staff strove for self-sufficiency at both organizational and individual levels. Moral autonomy considerations emerged in how the staff would navigate the tensions found in balancing multiple job demands, and in how they made decisions around profit goals and quotas. The staff also showed a high allegiance to tenants of professional-level journalistic and moral autonomy. The themes of autonomy greatly helped to answer RQ5 and RQ6:

RQ5: What role, if any, does organizational structure play in shaping both the journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy of digital news workers?

RQ6: To what level will digital news workers exhibit both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy within their digital news organization?

Individual Autonomy. The theme of individual autonomy considers the degree to which individual employees felt they were allowed to make both small and big decisions at The Golden Gate (journalistic autonomy), as well as the presence of key elements of personal and moral growth (moral autonomy). As I mentioned before, upon employment, new staff members were immediately asked to take on leadership roles within the company, such as serving on boards and committees for the business. From this allowance, Seth felt highly empowered to contribute his ideas. Nora expressed that her work was primarily self-directed. Similarly, Seth felt that through the company's emphasis on self-sufficiency and less management oversight, he experienced high levels of journalistic autonomy in completing all aspects of his reporting work.

It all felt very grassroots... I would write up a draft. I would decide who the sources needed to be. I would present the draft. Rene would say, "Why don't you reach out to one or two more people? How about these people?" We would take another look at it. She'd be like, "Yeah, I think that ties it up nicely." And then that would basically be it, but between me and her, I always felt that I had the lion's share of control in the reporting process. I never felt stifled or undermined in any of that.

Also on an individual level, Melissa expressed that she was never told to pursue certain sources or angles for stories, and she was given the freedom to create her own journalistic rhythms. "Autonomy was huge for us," she said. "I generally chose my own stories. Rarely, stories were assigned to me. I chose my own angles, sourcing, all of that."

In the Work Climate Questionnaire portion of the survey, the staff was asked to rank their agreement with workplace autonomy statements on a six-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The staff agreed that their manager gave them choices and options (N=4; M=5; SD=1.41) and that their manager conveyed confidence in their ability to do their job (N=4; M=5.25; SD=.96). These survey results support patterns of high journalistic autonomy in the workplace (also found in the participant observation and the interviews).

The staff also expressed that while they navigated tensions around their personal moral viewpoints, they never felt like the company put them in a position to violate those individual and journalistic standards, especially around fairness and objectivity. Melissa said that the editorial staff daily challenged each other around quote accuracy

and fact checking. Nora found that journalism ideals helped the staff navigate what kind of coverage they should pursue, as well as an emphasis on fairness.

> I think we used our ideals maybe more on a daily basis, it was maybe more omnipresent on a daily basis than it would have been in a traditional newsroom ... but this was constantly "we are doing this because we believe in local news. How can we do this better because local news is important?" ... And to me the biggest compliment any source can give us is that a story was fair. Nobody was going to compromise their journalistic ideals to make someone like them.

The staff's allegiance to tenants of ethical journalism was supported by survey findings in questions from the Worlds of Journalism project. Potential sources of influence on ethical decisions were measured on a scale of 1-5, ranging from "not influential" to "extremely influential." The staff was in complete alignment that journalism ethics were extremely influential to them (N=3, M=5, SD=0). Censorship was also rated as only a little influential (N=3, M=1.67, SD=.58). Additionally, when considering source and society pressures on them, the staff rated the following people groups as either not influential, or only a little influential: government officials (N=3, M=1.33, SD=.58), politicians (N=3, M=1.33, SD=.58), pressure groups (N=3, M=1.33, SD=.58), business people (N=3, M=1.33, SD=.58), public relations (N=3, M=2.67, SD=.58), and the police (N=3, M=1.33, SD=.58).

Another component of the survey, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Inventory, explored moral autonomy by looking at if people feel free to express their ideas, and how people determine what is important in their lives. For the full results from Ryff's survey, see my table in Appendix C. From Ryff's (1989) definitions of her theory-guided dimensions of well-being, a lower score in autonomy means a person leans toward being

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"concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways" (p. 1072). The staff answered the following questions on a six-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

On average, the staff disagreed with the idea that they might be afraid to voice their opinions, even when those opinions are in opposition to the opinions of most people (N=4, M=2, SD=.816). They somewhat disagreed that their decisions were not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing (N=4, M=3, SD=.816). The staff disagreed that they tended to be influenced by people with strong opinions (N=4, M=2, SD=.816). Conversely, the staff strongly disagreed with the idea of having confidence in their own opinions, even if those opinions were contrary to the general consensus (N=4, M=1.75, SD=.5). They also disagreed that they judge themselves by what they think is important (versus the values of what others think is important) (N=4, M=2, SD=.816).

As mentioned earlier, the staff's responses to the Worlds of Journalism workplace autonomy questions also conveyed that the staff felt a lot of freedom when it came to their news work. The respondents rated on a five-point scale, ranging from "complete freedom" to "no freedom at all," that they did have a great deal of freedom in selecting what news stories to work on, as well as what aspects of a story should be emphasized (N=3, M=2, SD=0). So, while the staff expressed high levels of professional journalistic autonomy and freedom to make choices in their work, overall my results showed that on an individual level, the staff had lower confidence in their personal moral autonomy to judge what is important to themselves as individuals, especially when those matters of importance go against the general consensus around them.

Organizational structure played a big role in shaping the journalistic autonomy of the digital newsworkers at The Golden Gate (RQ5). Even though the staff showed lower confidence in their personal expressions of moral autonomy, the collaborative and idea-sharing nature of the culture of The Golden Gate guided the staff in taking ownership of their own work positions. They felt confident they were supported in ethical journalism practices, and free to spur each other on in practicing responsible journalism. The staff overall showed a high level of journalistic autonomy within their digital news organization (RQ6).

Individual Processes of Growth. The theme of individual processes of growth relates to some of the different psychological components that create a more morally autonomous individual: environmental mastery, self-acceptance, a sense of purpose, a desire to keep learning, personal morality, and where each person lands on scales of relativism and idealism. One of the ways I explored the staff's feelings on their sense of place in life was through Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Inventory (see the full results from Ryff's Inventory in Appendix C). Respondents answered these questions on a six point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Concerning environmental mastery, on average, the respondents felt in charge of the situations where they lived (N=4; M=4.75; SD=.5), and they felt positive about how well they were able to manage the responsibilities of their daily lives (N=4; M=4.75; SD=.957). On average, the Golden Gate staff agreed that they would often feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities (N=4; M=4; SD=1.4).

Concerning self-acceptance, the staff slightly agreed that they were happy with the story of their lives and how things had turned out (N=4; M=4.75; SD=.96). They also, on average, agreed that they felt positive and confident about themselves (N=4;

M=5; SD=.816), although on average they slightly disagreed with the idea of feeling good about who they were when they would compare themselves to their friends (N=4; M=3.25; SD=.96). Concerning a sense of purpose, the staff on average agreed that they did not wander aimlessly through life (N=4; M=5; SD=.82). In one question on personal growth, the staff agreed that on average, they felt their lives had so far been a process of learning, changing, and growth (N=4; M=5; SD=.82).

The Worlds of Journalism project adapted parts of Forsyth's Ethics Position Questionnaire, which considers where people land on a scale ranging from highly idealistic to highly relativistic (Forsyth, 1980). In line with findings from others, including Plaisance, Skewes, and Hanitzsch (2012), the editorial staff at The Golden Gate exhibited both idealistic and relativistic thinking when asked about their approaches to journalism.

On a four-point scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," the staff unanimously "strongly agreed" that journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context (N=3, M=1, SD=0), an example of idealistic thinking. In contrast, when asked if they thought that what is ethical in journalism depends on a situation (a relativistic statement), they all either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed (N=3, M=1.67, SD=.58). This finding is notable because it suggests high relativism levels among a generally young staff, which is what Forsyth's research showed earlier.

The Worlds of Journalism survey components also asked the staff to justify the following ideas on a three point scale (where their options were "always justified," "justified on occasion," and "would not approve under any circumstance.") The staff did lean toward justifying the use of confidential business or government documents

without authorization (N=3, M=1.67, SD=.57), but not the use of personal documents without permission (N=3, M=2.33, SD=.58). The staff strongly agreed that it is never justifiable to pay people for confident information (N=3, M=3, SD=0). They also leaned more toward justifying journalistic tactics such as claiming to be someone else or exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story (N=3, M=2.67, SD=.58). They also felt it was mostly not appropriate to use information gathering tactics such as being employed inside of an organization to gain inside information (N=3, M=2.33, SD=.58), and using hidden microphones (N=3, M=2.67, SD=.58). They also completely agreed that it is never justifiable to publish stories with unverified content, accept money from sources, or alter/fabricate quotes (N=3, M=3, SD=0).

When I looked closer at the responses for these questions, two of the staff members displayed more idealistic thinking around these ethical scenarios, as their responses were primarily "strongly disagree" with all of the ethical scenarios listed above. The third staff member showed slightly more relativistic thinking regarding the same ethical scenarios, as their responses for each of the questions ranged closer to "slightly agree."

The Ethical Climate Questionnaire portion of my survey addressed ideas of how each individual perceived how their workplace supported organizational ethical considerations. Respondents answered each question on a scale of 1-6 ranging from "completely false" to "completely true." Overall, the staff felt supported by their company in their personal moral beliefs. They felt it was mostly true that people were expected to follow their own moral beliefs and be guided by their own personal ethics (N=3, M=5, SD=1), and they unanimously disagreed with the idea that there was no

room for their individual morals and ethics in their work culture (N=3, M=1, SD=0). But when it came to statements such as each person within the company getting to decide what was right or wrong, each employee person answered differently.

To help answer RQ6, the staff repeatedly exhibited high levels of individual journalistic autonomy within their organization. Staff members often expressed how they felt empowered to make the bulk of their own decisions where their personal journalistic work was concerned. Concerning personal and moral growth, while the staff sometimes showed stress around not having enough time or resources, overall the staff showed a mastery of their trade. They all carried a sense of purpose, a desire to learn, and a fierce love for local journalism, and they felt empowered to practice ethical journalism. Also, The Golden Gate editorial team's responses to Forsyth's Ethics Position Questionnaire indicated both idealistic and relativistic thinking in the staff. High scores on both scales are not surprising outcomes.

Organizational Autonomy. Organizational autonomy manifested in several ways: how the staff navigated profit demands, how the staff worked toward self-sufficiency, and how the staff navigated organizational tensions. Broadly concerning organizational autonomy, both Nora and Seth acknowledged that while having a lean staff can strain time and resources, it also allows for greater autonomous freedoms as everyone on the team has to own and complete their own work with very little help (or micro-management). Rene also expressed that from the top down, she felt like Carl always had her back. If she was in an ethical quandary, trying to balance multiple parties of interest, she would often seek his advice and he would give her a bird's eye view perspective; but next, he would leave the actual decision making in her hands.

Concerning company culture, Rene expressed how well The Golden Gate team moved like a cohesive unit in covering the city. All of the staff under Rene expressed that it was easy to move ideas up the communication chain. As they often sat around the table, they could ask questions, and Rene could quickly get a hold of either of the owners. The team often functioned in real time for problem solving, and there was very little concern of people staying within their rank or management level when it came to innovating their digital news product.

Seth recollected how at his previous position with a different regional news outlet, the lack of people in their newsroom actually increased journalistic autonomy, "because there are fewer editors scrutinizing everything a reporter does … you literally wrote your story, edited it yourself, and put it on the web for the world to see, which is kinda crazy," he said. Seth also felt like it became more and more incumbent upon reporters to do what is right and figure out their work themselves. "Autonomy is actually growing as newsrooms get stripped of managerial roles," he said. "… I feel autonomy, especially at The Golden Gate, was high … But I think I'm seeing it's high at a lot of other outlets too nowadays."

Profit Demands. The theme of profit demands concerns how the staff worked to balance demands of journalistic autonomy with demands to build the money base of the business. One major stresspoint for any startup is navigating funding. The Golden Gate began with the backing of a parent company and an aggressive plan to amp up revenue streams in different ways over time. The business plan pitch was to breathe life into local journalism, and to do so by connecting with the city's community in every way possible. From a constant social media presence, to building community connections through in-person events (both serious and light-hearted in nature), the entire team was

expected to actively participate in the money generation plan. About a year and a half after the start of The Golden Gate, they also launched a membership campaign with perks for members, but the newsletter and access to the website remained free. They also sold online ads and sponsored content spots. And while some events were free, others cost money. Eventually membership perks included access to events for free, or even members-only events.

The staff was pulled into leadership roles with different components of building revenue streams, from helping to plan and host events to personalizing content for membership campaigns. Even though money was often on their minds, Seth felt that the parent company was less concerned about revenue than other places he had worked at, and he felt like this attitude came from "this place of ideological purity, which is like, 'We're not gonna let revenue drive our content. We're gonna do honest, unadulterated local journalism and the market will respond to that and love it and then because of that, it will be able to maintain itself financially.'" He also felt like generating massive financial dividends was never the focus of the owners. Their goal was to create a steadily growing journalism business that could sustain itself without non-profit money. The focus was on joining the free market, and finding an audience to sustain their work.

Survey items from the Ethical Climate Questionnaire supported Seth's thoughts on the financial culture of The Golden Gate. Respondents answered each question on a scale of 1-6 ranging from "completely false" to "completely true." On average the staff completely disagreed with the idea that decisions in the company were always viewed in terms of contribution to profit (N=3, M=1.67, SD=.58). The team did not feel it was their responsibility to prioritize efficiency as the main focus of their work days (N=3, M=2.67, SD=1.55), and they unanimously agreed that efficiency was not always the right way

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(N=3, M=2, SD=0). They also completely disagreed with the idea that they would be expected to do anything to further the company's interest (N=3, M=1.67, SD=1.16). However, they all felt it was somewhat true that on an individual level, they were expected to work very efficiently (N=3, M=4, SD=0). So, while profit demands were often part of the work day, The Golden Gate culture was not so fixated on dollar signs that they had to push every other priority aside to generate those dollars.

These findings overall help answer RQ 5, by speaking to how profit demands shaped the journalistic autonomy of The Golden Gate editorial staff. While financial profits were not a central daily conversation for the staff, a concern and pressure for generating money was very present for each individual. Yet, at the same time, the hope of The Golden Gate's business model was that if reporters are free to do their job and create a hyper-local media platform that meets audience wants and needs, the money would flow in a sustainable way.

Self-Sufficiency. The theme of self-sufficiency concerns how the staff constantly strategized to obtain self-sufficiency. The team stepped closer and closer to this self-sustaining place overtime. The owner, Carl, had a few basic rules: curate the news and have a daily newsletter. But beyond that, The Golden Gate got to take their own shot at growing their company and fulfilling their mission. They were also in a multi-city network. "So, all of the sites operated very differently and had very different rules and standards, which I think is both good and bad," Rene said. "Good, in that we were able to feel like the city that we lived in, bad, in that I feel like at times we were reinventing the wheel. The flip side of this business building autonomy, though, was that Carl would sometimes set hard and fast targets for all of the cities to meet, and sometimes Rene did not feel supported in how to reach those goals, and some of the

goals felt unattainable.

Seth acknowledged that there wasn't a big bankroll to start the company with; so they started small and then they stayed small. He also talked about how funding in journalism is all a crapshoot.

Nobody really knows how to do this. All the big media outlets, they're all underwater too. They just have trust funds and a lot more money to pull on, but none of them are getting rich either. They have margin for error and we just didn't have as much, so I think that's what it comes down to.

Around profit pressures, Seth said they all were hyper-aware of money discussions in the company.

It was very front of mind and we were very lean, and everyone knew we had to have a dog in that fight, otherwise the company would essentially cease to exist ... I just don't know that, in the end, it's the best thing for journalism for reporters to be concerned with that. But, in a way, I think it's good that they're aware of it because it's a business at the end of the day and it's certainly better to be a reporter who understands that business than someone who doesn't. But, it would be nice to just- and maybe this is a little sort of Pollyanna-ish, but it would be nice to go back to a time when reporters could just be reporters.

When the membership component launched, Rene was surprised at how rewarding that process became for her. Initially she pushed back and said that the sales and events team needed to figure out membership on their own, because in her mind, it wasn't worth the company's money for the most senior tenured employee to spend her time in that way. But after some training by an outside guide who helps news

organizations launch membership campaigns, Carl convinced Rene to help spearhead the campaign. During big membership pushes, her job would swing to 60% membership and 40% editorial. But ultimately Rene felt those efforts paid off as more reliable money streams started to trickle in.

Memberships are absolutely one of the key parts of building a sustainable newsroom, and that's because you are encouraging people to support the journalism because they believe in it. So, at the core, membership is asking people to have an emotional response to the work that you do. I don't think that membership or subscription; it is not the only way, but it has to be a part of the way. At least, it has to be a bigger part of the way than we are right now.

Even after a few membership campaigns, the parent company did end up selling each of the individual city news sites to different owners, including The Golden Gate. As Seth processed the sale, he felt that he could see membership paying off in the future, but that it was a component that they should have started at the beginning, as it is a slower growth model. The membership program was growing at a pace where the newsroom could have reached self-sufficiency within a few years, but there weren't enough baselines funds for the current iteration of The Golden Gate to keep experimenting. Larger media companies with more money backing were better poised to absorb the costs of a slower growth model, he felt.

The organizational pressure for self-sufficiency certainly shaped the journalistic autonomy of the digital news workers at The Golden Gate. At times the workers would need to shift away from reporting work and into writing messages around membership growth for the newsletter or campaigning for people to commit to pay monthly amounts to support their work. In a traditional journalistic business, there would be complete

separation of editorial teams from money concerns, but as Seth acknowledged, at nearly every modern news organization, all team members are having to step up to the plate and help with issues of self-sufficiency.

Navigating Tensions. As The Golden Gate grew and continued to experiment with financial sustainability models, the editorial team wrestled with many different practical and philosophical tensions around how to both report for their city and promote the brand of the organization simultaneously. The navigating tensions sub-theme captures these moments as described by the staff.

As the newsroom gained footing in the community, The Golden Gate staff began to navigate tensions, such as balancing editorial work and marketing demands. As the main gatekeeper between the two business demands, Rene initially tried to maintain a strict "church vs. state" (as Seth described it) stance for the editorial staff on how involved the editorial team should be with advertising. When they were initially asked to proofread the advertising copy, they declined, Melissa said. She also expressed that they worked hard to maintain journalistic integrity when it came to working with sponsors. If a sponsor was in the news, especially in a good light, the team worked diligently to verify their facts and create a concrete paper trail for the story. "I feel like it's really the appearance of a conflict that has to be really guarded against, and it comes down to protecting the brand. Yeah, so it's tricky," Melissa said. The Golden Gate staff also tried to create journalistic justifications for their events, making sure the events had newsworthy elements that supported the community.

Rene knew from the get-go that her position would be more of a general manager position and helping to deal with financial aspects of the company. She was excited by this prospect, as it would give her the opportunity to grow skill sets and have a say in the

future of the company. She processed how in a more traditional media setting, and being a reporter coming to work everyday, one can feel a little helpless because the only thing they can contribute to helping the institution is to keep writing stories. But at The Golden Gate, she saw first hand how impactful her words and campaigning could be. "I was writing membership columns and literally watching people respond in real time through a Slack channel," Rene said. "There was a very one-to-one thing happening where I would do work, and people would support The Golden Gate."

Rene felt tension in her job description, though. Up until the membership campaign, her role was to be a gatekeeper for the brand, as she described it. She would push back on the sales and events team when she felt like they had ideas that could be perceived as unethical. Her role in this scenario was to suggest new ideas that would better fit the mission of the organization. "It was an interesting dynamic of trying to defend the brand that I felt that I had built," Rene said. As the managing editor, Melissa felt the tension between journalistic and sales responsibilities. Because they didn't have a marketing staff, it was never formally sorted out who would be responsible for marketing components of events. The editorial team often questioned their roles with events; was it okay for editorial to be involved with so many sponsors? Or should sales do it? Melissa described the dance between editorial and marketing.

> But then you, again, fall into the same trap of tone. The way that the newsroom might write a tweet or a Facebook post is likely very different than someone in sales might write a Facebook post or a tweet … I think one of the challenges is really owning the brand and owning the message. For example, Rene would write things in a certain voice that she developed as The Golden Gate's voice.

Right? Then, the sales and events team might write something that just didn't really match up with what ... the vibe that she had imagined, the tone that she had imagined for the brand ... I feel like that was a big struggle for us, and I don't think we ever figured that out. I don't know what the answer is, but we struggled there a lot.

Nora felt friction points around events at different times. The editorial side would be very excited about an idea, but then from a business point of view, no one would want to buy it. The sales team would try to pitch it to advertisers and businesses in the area, or try to sell tickets, and then no one would buy. She expressed that it took a little while to get used to the disappointment around planning for so long, and then events not taking off (although other times, events would go really well). From Nora's perspective, one of the biggest elements of event planning that the editorial team had to learn was how important it was to plan in advance. Pop-up events were fiscally difficult, and then people didn't usually show up.

Seth also talked about learning to accept the new demands on reporting.

I guess, the overlap was, for any reporter, at least an older-school reporter, I think there's always the question, "Well, should I be involved in money-making ends of this? Is that appropriate?" But I know... Rene was really careful about keeping the church and the state separate in terms of reporters at events. It always seemed to work. I never had an issue with it.

As the staff navigated tensions between job practicalities and professional philosophies, the fluctuating business model most certainly influenced the journalistic autonomy of each editorial staff member (RQ5). Balancing audience wants and needs, tenants of journalism, and profit margins proved to be an intricate dance between

competing ethical demands for the staff.

  Analytics. The idea of analytics came up slightly during the interviews and in two survey questions. Ultimately the business mission of The Golden Gate was to grow their reach and their direct market audience. While some newsrooms use their site analytics to set a broad tone for what stories were popular overall, at The Golden Gate, each individual could access analytical tools and think through how their stories were performing, and then extrapolate knowledge for how to approach their next topics. Nora felt like they learned how to use analytics in a smarter way to engage their audience. They would try to mimic what had worked before, and also to critically gauge how new types of content were working.

> We were constantly trying to get stories that we thought our readers were going
>
> to like and that were going to have sort of legs … impact … lasting sort of impact.
>
> I was just always excited when I cracked that … we were always trying to do
>
> things smarter because the point was not just leaner but actually smarter.

  I also asked a few original questions about the influence of analytics on the survey, on a six-point scale ranging from "not influential" to "extremely influential." The responses showed no consensus. When I asked "how influential would you say your company's analytics are on shaping your story writing processes?," one person responded "not influential", one person responded "somewhat influential" and another person responded "extremely influential." The staff's responses were similar when I asked how influential they felt analytics were to their story editing processes. I would attribute this spread of response to needing to re-word my questions, and use additional scales to explore and explain the role of analytics at The Golden Gate.

Professional Autonomy. A theme of allegiance to professional journalism ethics came up in many different ways across the data, themes that have already been explored in this chapter. The Ethical Climate Questionnaire portion of the survey also explored the power of rules, standards, procedures, laws, and professional codes on the work climate. Overall, the staff did not feel that going by the book or strictly following company rules was important to their company culture. From the ECQ laws and professional codes ethical orientation, the staff used a scale of 1-6 ranging from "completely false" to "completely true," to agree that they were expected to strictly follow legal and professional standards (N=3, M=5.33, SD=1.16).

The Worlds of Journalism survey also probed potential sources of influence on the editorial team's journalism practices. Potential sources of influence were measured on a scale of 1-5, ranging from "not influential" to "extremely influential". In considering more personal types of influence, there was no consensus that personal values and beliefs were an influence on their journalistic work. Religious considerations were ranked as not very influential (N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.16), and also friends and acquaintances (N=3, M=2, SD=1). Colleagues in other media were somewhat influential to the group (N=3, M=3.67, SD=.58). Peers on the staff were considered very influential (N=3, M=4.33, SD=1.15), as well as editorial supervisors (N=3, M=4, SD=1). The managers of the news organization (N=3, M=3, SD=1.73) and the owners of the news organization (N=3, M=3, SD=1) were considered less influential. The editorial policy was considered very influential (N=3, M=4.3, SD=1.53).

How organizational culture and routine shape autonomy

My data revealed patterns of how organizational culture and routine affect and are affected by journalistic autonomy. Each of the research questions from this study were answered through multiple themes.

RQ1: What are the routines of digital news production?

This broader research question left the doors wide open for me to consider from the ground up how The Golden Gate produced their news. Yes, I was informed by several rich media sociology studies before me that offered guidance on a few patterns to look for as I observed this organization, but I also wanted to remain open to their unique take on the digital news business.

Time stood out as the greatest contributor to the routines of digital news production at The Golden Gate. As in any organization, time constrained how much work could be produced, and also the precarious balance the staff continually experienced of raising enough sustaining money flow to justify hiring for more positions to help with meeting the needs of their growing audience. As the staff attempted to properly proportion time for their competing job roles, they had to constantly re-prioritize what task or interaction needed attention and when. Time was often a fluctuating principle for the staff, and they would attempt to hit weekly percentages of time spent in different ways, but often tasks would take longer than planned, and many of them worked more than forty hours a week consistently. Another major routine of The Golden Gate newsroom was to passionately pour into building their product, but also for the editorial staff to be willing to pivot and nimbally respond to market or audience changes.

Even as the staff worked to balance their different roles, they also cultivated highly collaborative partnerships with each other. Their goal was to be truly representative of the community, so making the time to collaborate and keep each other accountable to their journalistic goals was given high priority. Making space for collaboration greatly shaped how time was spent at The Golden Gate. The theme of critiquing played into this idea as well. There was not a highly critical atmosphere at The Golden Gate, but the staff did devote time nearly daily to observing the media around them and then critiquing both their own work and each other's work. This critiquing priority definitely shaped daily and weekly routines for the staff. Another time routine of The Golden Gate was a consistent preparedness to embrace the interruptions of breaking news. The collaborative and friendship-based culture of the staff enabled them to efficiently shift their time priorities and smoothly cover these breaking news moments.

RQ2: What are the beliefs and assumptions held by each media worker regarding the routines of digital news production?

A specific vision and purpose were foundational to the DNA of culture of The Golden Gate. This culture was then translated into beliefs and assumptions about how the company should operate, and the types of news they should produce. The staff showed a remarkable buy-in to the company vision and purpose, as each staff member expressed deep beliefs in the value, mission, and need of local journalism, and how their digital newsroom was meeting those needs. These beliefs highly influenced the focus of their days; from when each staff member would have to serve on the social media desk at least one day a week, to reporting and editing times, to membership campaigns and

events. One of the biggest core beliefs of the staff was an underlying audience-first focus to their work. They endeavored to serve their audience by creating and sustaining an experimental journalism environment that would pivot as needed to meet those audience needs. The staff also believed in flexibility, and Rene often led the charge in this flexibility by stepping in to fulfill whatever role made the most sense at the moment.

RQ3: What is the leadership structure of the digital newsroom?

The broader questions about leadership also left room for me to understand the leadership structure of The Golden Gate without preconceived notions. The theme of democratic idea sharing greatly supported that the leadership culture at The Golden Gate was highly democratic in nature. All levels of staff members expressed that they often felt seen and heard by their managers, and they were empowered to suggest and then complete their own projects. Collaborative conversations were also supported by the leadership, as from the top-down, the management would leave decisions up to the staff, but also encourage conversations around pain points.

As a leader, Rene prioritized a culture of friendship and help for her employees. From even the very beginning of the work day at the scrum meeting, each person was expected to report on where they were with stories and ask for specific help as needed, and space was given for other employees to chime in with the resources they knew about. Ultimately, how and when stories were published was Rene's call, but she often had multiple conversations with each story author around those decisions and why, inviting collaboration into the editing process.

Critiquing emerged as a strong element of the leadership structure at The Golden Gate. There were consistent check-ins from Carl and Rene about how the staff was using

their time, and also around evaluating the work being produced by the staff. However, this critiquing often went two ways, as the reporter-curators were also often involved in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of both journalistic and PR-related messaging across all of their platforms.

RQ4: How are the digital newsworkers socialized to this structure?

This research question considered how Rene and Carl originally built the culture of The Golden Gate, and how subsequent staff members were socialized to that culture. Rene, as the first official employee, was socialized to the startup with a sense of urgency, and the subsequent hirees came in under the same expectation of how to spend their time. Around staffing demands, Nora mentioned that as she stepped into her role of reporter-curator, she also understood from the get-go that her job roles within that title would be dynamic. She (and then later Seth and Melissa) was socialized to a structure of flexibility. Work expectations also clearly shaped the organizational structure of The Golden Gate's company culture—chief among them was flexibility and each staff knowing the ins-and-outs of how the entire newsroom worked. Each staff member was socialized to The Golden Gate through an understanding that they would need to know how every aspect of the newsroom functioned. Concerning team dynamics, the camaraderie of the editorial team was palpable. From the beginning, the staff was socialized to friendship and connection as the basis for their work collaboration.

RQ5: What role, if any, does organizational structure play in shaping both the journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy of digital news workers?

Organizational structure contributed greatly to the journalistic autonomy of the digital news workers at The Golden Gate. The staff showed from both interviews and

survey items that they highly valued peer and professional standards to evaluate how they crafted their journalistic work. The collaborative and idea-sharing nature of the culture of The Golden Gate guided the staff in taking ownership of their own positions. They felt confident that they were supported in ethical journalism practices, and free to spur each other on in practicing responsible journalism.

Concerning the structure of profit demands at The Golden Gate, while financial profits were not a central daily conversation for the staff, a pressure for generating money was very present for each individual. Yet, at the same time, the hope of The Golden Gate's business model was that if reporters were free to do their job of creating a hyper-local media platform that met the audience's wants and needs, the money would flow in a sustainable way. This was the tension each worker wrestled with.

RQ6: To what level will digital news workers exhibit both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy within their digital news organization?

The staff repeatedly exhibited high levels of individual journalistic autonomy within their organization, often expressing how they felt empowered to make the bulk of their own decisions where their personal journalistic work was concerned. Concerning personal and moral growth, while the staff sometimes showed stress around not having enough time or resources, overall the staff showed a mastery of their trade. They all carried a sense of purpose, a desire to learn, and a fierce love for local journalism. The staff slowed a strong allegiance to professional journalistic ethics (such as outlined, but not limited only to, the SPJ Code of ethics (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014)).

Additionally, as the staff navigated tensions between job practicalities and professional philosophies, the fluctuating business model most certainly influenced the journalistic autonomy of each editorial staff member. Balancing audience wants and

needs, tenants of journalism, and profit margins proved to be an intricate dance

between competing ethical demands for the staff. The staff readily acknowledged those

demands, showing an awareness around the ethical decision making required of them

nearly everyday.

RQ7: What is the relationship between perceptions of organizational ethical climate and manifestations of autonomy?

This last research question brings together all of the themes to help understand

how the ethical climate was shaped at The Golden Gate. The Ethical Climate

Questionnaire results for the staff as a whole most strongly aligned with the social

responsibility climate (SR). The SR climate conveys an importance of serving the good

of both customers and the public, and to consider the effects of company decisions on

these groups. The main responsibility the staff felt was to the outside community. It is

no surprise that the SR climate emerged as the top ethical alignment for the staff. The

very founding vision of The Golden Gate was to create passion for local news in an

underserved market audience, and to provide true value for that audience. The

leadership culture of both empowering each worker, yet also critiquing each worker,

supported both the journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy needed for the staff to

prioritize work practices that served their audience and the greater public.

The second highest ranking of averages on the ethical climate questionnaire from

the survey was team interest. The team interest ethical orientation from the ECQ

considered how friendship and teamwork played into the work culture at The Golden

Gate. Overall the staff expressed they felt like the company was concerned with the good

of all employees, and that employees were also encouraged to show concern for each

other. The team also unanimously agreed that team spirit was important to their

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company.

Further support for the friendship and team dynamic at The Golden Gate was also found in how the staff responded to the self-interest portion of the ECQ. The staff strongly disagreed with statements of the presence of self-interest in their company culture. They were in complete agreement that at The Golden Gate, people would look out for each other's good. The theme of team spirit and friendship consistently came out of both the participant observation and interview data.

There is a positive relationship between how the employees at The Golden Gate perceived the ethical climate of their organization and how they manifested high levels of both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy. Their perceived ethical-orientations of focus on others (from individual relationships to their perceptions of journalistic ethical duties to their audience) conveys purpose, mission, and buy-in to hyper-local news.

The state of the industry and the future of digital journalism

Additional themes that were not particularly relevant to my formal research questions emerged. Throughout my time with The Golden Gate staff, our conversations often turned to the future of journalism. These conversations dovetailed with comments on the current state of the industry, as well as their perceptions of what makes excellent digital journalism. Many of the staff members wrapped up our 1.5 year long conversation with a theme of thanks.

State of the Industry. As the staff surveyed the media systems around them, both locally and nationally, they were often processing the future of the institution of journalism as well as their livelihoods. The conversations revolved around the current

state of the industry and how legacy news compares to new journalism. As many editorial positions expand to include new roles, editorial teams are experiencing tension from learning curves, increased required hours, and more. "The hours were nuts," Seth said, including the amount of things the staff would do on a given day.

> It used to be a reporter was just a reporter and you would just - that's what you had to worry about. What you had in the story queue was what you had to worry about. But now, reporters are like social media managers and we're like event planners. It's just- it's a lot at one time … how do you keep maintaining the autonomy in that? I think there was a lot of faith in us early on that we knew what we were doing.

While there would be big features they would spend weeks on, most of the work on an average day at The Golden Gate saw very little edits from anybody but the writer. Seth described modern journalism as a bit of a "Lord of the Flies" experience where reporters could say "Hey, I want to do this story" and the response from leadership would be "Okay, can you get it done by 2 p.m.?" and then the reporter would be turned loose. "That's the environment that I've grown accustomed to and come up in with journalism … one of just far less micromanaging," Seth said. "I feel like nowadays, reporters have to be more self-sufficient just by virtue of there being so fewer positions within newsrooms."

Melissa also wrestled with the fast turn around of digital journalism. She would look back at an article she wrote one year ago, and think about how she could have written in a snappier or more engaging tone. But she also arms herself with the reality of her work world which was that she often had to turn stories around in 30 minutes. "I

think that's a struggle across digital journalism in general, because the deadline is all the time and never-ending," she said.

In regard to his new role of participating in company sponsored events, overall Seth felt like that responsibility didn't take away from his reporting work, as the events most often happened after reporting shifts. He recognized most reporters aren't accustomed to functioning as a public face for their outlet, especially print reporters who are usually not brand ambassadors or public figures. It was an unusual aspect of the job he had to get used to. Seth also talked about how he would hear from reporters at other outlets that they weren't being required to do social media for the company or event plan, but there were higher expectations around producing videos, getting photos and uploading content. "Everybody's workload in this industry has increased exponentially," he said.

Also similar to other media outlets, the reporters would always want more time on a story, or at least the space to sit on it for a while. Seth found there are fewer reporters out there, with higher expectations placed on those who remain reporters.

I don't think this is specific to The Golden Gate. As long as I've been working in journalism, which is a better part of a decade, it's been pretty, more often than not, it was speed was prioritized over thoroughness maybe. But, there are ways. You get better at balancing that. It's tough with all these other things, with all the other expectations and responsibilities, to do journalism as in-depth and as thoroughly as I would like to do it every day. But, there are days that I got as close as I'm probably gonna come ... I'm okay with the trade-off

The Worlds of Journalism survey components also assessed influences on the

profession of journalism. The staff was asked to consider how influences on journalism may have changed over time by ranking if these influences have become weaker or stronger in the last five years. The staff evaluated each influence on a scale of 1-5, ranging from "weakened a lot" to "strengthened a lot." The staff ranked journalism education as somewhat strengthened (N=3, M=4.33, SD=.58), but that ethical standards have not changed (N=3, M= 3.33, SD=1.16). They also felt the relativism of journalism to society has strengthened (N=3, M=4.33, SD=.58), but the credibility of journalists has somewhat weakened (N=3, M=2.33, SD=.58).

The staff also had a lot to say about content coverage. When considering politics and covering the government, the staff felt journalism has strengthened in analysis of current affairs (N=3, M=4.33, SD-1.16), the monitoring and scrutiny of political leaders (N=3, M=4.33, SD=.58), and in being an adversary of the government (N=3, M=4.67, SD=.58). The staff agreed unanimously that pressures in journalism toward supporting national development, conveying positive political leadership, and supporting government policy had weakened a lot (N=3, M=1, SD=0). They also felt the industry faces somewhat strengthened pressure toward sensational news (N=3, M=3.33, SD=.58). They found pressure from business leaders has strengthened a lot (N=3, M=4.33, SD=.58). They also felt a somewhat strengthened influence to provide entertaining and relaxing content (N=3, M=3.67, SD=.58).

The Future of Digital Journalism. For Rene, the future of digital journalism centered around serving audiences. While people may hold a perception that newspapers are good, that won't really translate into audiences accessing and using media products anymore. From Rene's perspective, one of the big keys to journalism is

usefulness, or building things that were useful and accessible to people. "I think at this point, excellence in digital journalism is, at the local level, creating a useful, meaningful, and essential product for your community, and also an ethical support system, financially, to give journalists the room to do the work that, again, proves ... essential value to the community."

Rene held the future of digital journalism with optimism, especially if more digital newsrooms are fast-moving, willing to try new things, and willing to support their employees in their experimental endeavors.

No one has figured this out yet. So, any of us could be the ones who figure it out at any moment. How do you create a culture where, again, people can move fast, they can build things, they can experiment, and they want to come to work, and they want to put that kind of effort forward? Asking people to build an experiment is emotionally taxing because you're asking people to be vulnerable and you're asking people to present ideas that are going to be wrong and that are going to fail and that are going to not end up the way you want them to. But, if you can create a culture where people feel safe doing that, I think that you have a better shot at creating a sustainable newsroom.

Rene also hoped for the continuation of membership models for support in journalism, likening paying for a hyper-local news subscription to paying monthly for a streaming platform in the entertainment industry.

If a subscription is delivering goods for a payment that is going to hit your credit card once a month, membership is about feeling a commitment to the journalism and to the newsroom and to the city. So I wish that we could reimagine the

language that we use around membership and subscriptions too. As in, we would never call paying our Netflix bill hitting a paywall, would we?

Seth also leaned toward supporting the membership model for journalism, as it by-passes funding from individuals, share holders, or corporations. Will digital journalism end up relying on wealthy owners like legacy journalism always did? Or is there a way to "crack it" and get audiences to pay for journalism without there being a paywall? With all of its challenges and the efforts required, Seth still believed in a membership model for success.

I think that's a much purer way of doing this, at the end of the day. I know we tried and we had some real good success with our membership program. I think that allows readers to be invested. I just worry that it only culls the most invested readers and you lose a lot of people in the process, so I don't know how you mainstream news membership programs. I don't imagine most people will ever pay to be a member of a news organization. I don't imagine most people will pay for news, period. But I think membership is a good way of doing this. The problem is, if it's profit-driven, membership will never make a lot of money. So, that's the question for me. Will it ever be financially feasible to be more widely adopted? But I hope that a membership model is the future of digital journalism.

Rene also expressed frustration that a lot of news models stem from rich families or funders so there can be an influx of money. Maybe that funding model is the future, she wondered. "But my dream is a world where the journalism can support itself on its merits because if not, then it continues to be … there continues to be uncertainty," she said. Rene hoped that someday, students who are graduating from journalism school would be able to say again with confidence that they could retire from their hometown

news outlet, print or otherwise. "So, how do we get all of these newsrooms to a place where they're sustainable?" she said.

Melissa felt like she was beginning to see the tides change in terms of people starting to pay for and value digital journalism. From her perspective, local journalism was crucial to communities, and as newspapers close, she worried about there not being a newspaper of record where people could access information about their own towns; from their city councils to their zoning commissions to their politicians. She grew up in her career writing those types of articles and experiencing the value people placed in that work. "I hope that digital journalism can fill those voids, but I'm also concerned about it, because if people aren't paying money, it's just not going to happen," she said.

Excellence in Digital Journalism. Melissa resonated with the core goal of The Golden Gate of plugging in the gaps of what was not being covered in their city. Their goal was to really get into their communities. "Excellence, for us, looks like telling untold stories … and then number two would be helping people navigate the city," she said. To Seth, excellent digital journalism was smart, digestible, and accessible. It was adaptable, but always centered on good storytelling. And digital journalism should be a product that appeals to readers on a number of fronts, he explained, like videos and highlights in addition to written pieces. He felt like the best tool for a digital journalist to have is an understanding of the breadth of their audience and to cater to certain subgroups within that audience, like if people preferred to see stories on video, or even on a Twitter thread.

On the subject of Twitter reporting, Melissa passionately iterated that what's really needed in the type of reporting that pulls in "tweeted conversations" is helpful explanations as to why those conversations mattered. To her, providing context for

audiences goes back to Journalism 101. "I think it's on our plates as journalists to be

conveners and explainers, and it's our job to kind of do a book report on whatever is

happening in the news that day and really explain it in a way that's engaging," she said.

And those explanations don't have to be 5,000 words long; just relevant to the audience.

Seth also felt one of the main strengths of digital journalism was its ability to

reach people where they are. Someone on a train is not going to read a 9,000 word

story. So give them a newsletter breaking the news down into bullet points, or a video.

"Just be adaptable," Seth said. "I think if our goal is to inform people, we have more

means of informing them than ever before and I think good digital journalism deploys

those, not to excess, but when necessary and when appropriate."

Seth also found freedom in being able to think outside the box as a digital

journalist. He used to have to justify a story and follow strict lines because someone was

paying for the ink and the pressmen to print the product.

Now, we have these websites that are already built, just waiting for stuff to go up.

You could literally publish stuff all day long. So, within that, journalism that takes

a really unusual and clever angle on a story that's potentially been done a

hundred times before. That, to me, is good digital journalism. Something that's

outside the box, something that's well-presented, something that incorporates a

number of tools and multimedia resources and whatever it may be.

For Nora, the standards of digital journalism excellence are the same as all other

journalism platforms. She saw the future of these outlets as much more than a website

that is a catch-all space for a media company to haphazardly dump stories. Instead,

there is an opportunity for media companies to create a multi-faceted online news

experience. Bringing in photos, and video, and other interactive elements, are really

where digital journalism can shine.

Theme of Thanks. At different times, each of the editorial team members expressed thankfulness for their time at The Golden Gate. Even through the stresses of working for a start-up (the long hours, job expectations, and the fast pacing), each person experienced new freedoms in how they approached telling the story of their city. While the iteration of The Golden Gate I experienced when I conducted this research project does not currently exist, the news site has still continued with two of the original team members. The other members have found employment at other media outlets.

Nora expressed gratefulness for the experiment she was so deeply a part of, and that even though it didn't continue under Carl's company, the organization landed with another company with a similar vision. "I am hopeful and heartened by the fact that people are willing to take risks on [local journalism]," she said. "I think that there are people out there doing good things and you just got to just sort of cling to that and hope that we can all figure this out together."

Rene expressed that it would be easy to speculate about the original funding model and why Carl sold the business just shy of the three year anniversary of the website launching. Ultimately, though, she was grateful to Carl and Paula for their personal sacrifices to launch digital newsrooms in three cities across the country. "If I talk about my personal sacrifice that I've put forward for The Golden Gate, they did that threefold with a really noble goal of creating a sustainable, local, digital network," Rene said. "In the end, it didn't work, but holy hell, to have the bravery to try?"

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The digital frontier continues to offer opportunities and challenges for media organizations. News editorial teams especially face many oppositions in gaining audience support for their work, both in digital and print realms. Even more than analyzing audiences and media products, this dissertation sought to look at if and how the processes of journalism have shifted as news organizations rise to meet digital demands. I decided to look at this question from the specific perspective of journalistic autonomy. Drawing on both qualitative and empirical methods, and examining both organizational and individual-level processes and structures, I built an ethical profile of the autonomy expressed by media workers within digital newsrooms, as situated within the organizational culture and structure of a digital news space. I sought to answer questions such as: What is the impact of evolving media digital spaces on the ethical decision-making of media practitioners? And, how has the new media environment affected the manifestations of both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy at both the organizational and the individual level?

An overarching perspective I gained during this study was that the experimental hyper-local journalism model enacted by The Golden Gate digital news organization represented a new wave of digital journalism. From my perspective, this new wave supports digital journalists who are returning to practices of deeply integrating audience preferences and input into their work and business models. This new wave approach seeks to meet audiences members right where they are, giving the content to them how and when they want to receive it. The Golden Gate staff members showed their thinking

along these lines when they talked about what makes excellent digital journalism: finding the untold stories; helping people navigate their city; crafting smart, digestible, and accessible content; catering to specific subgroups of your audience in specific ways; creating from a multi-media perspective; and always providing context.

The older way of thinking about digital news products placed news websites or platforms as merely online dumping grounds for stories (in deference to the work being put in on a superior print product; see Usher, 2018). In contrast, the Golden Gate's digital product was a carefully curated newsletter representing a richer take on conveying not just their original reporting, but the story of the city. They didn't just share links to stories on their social media feeds; they worked hard to convey context and care in what they shared. The whole staff was involved in this curating process, and it was very time consuming. While some news organizations view their website as simply a repository, The Golden Gate considered their online space a digital experience. I highlight more differences that I found between legacy news and The Golden Gate later in this chapter.

An additional overarching perspective I gained during my research process was seeing the strength of how the moral psychology components informed the media sociological considerations of my research site. The moral psychology survey components teased out the ethical climate of the organization. The highest ranking ethical climate (according to the Ethical Climate Questionnaire results) for The Golden Gate was the social responsibility climate, a climate that speaks to journalistic professional norms of serving the public good. The second highest ranked ECQ was the teamwork climate. These ethical orientations stemmed in part from the company's structuring vision of an audience-first focus, but they also flowed from the staff's strong

allegiance to professional journalistic norms, as deciphered from the moral psychology components of my survey. From a methodology perspective, observing the staff helped create entry into, and artifacts of The Golden Gate work culture; but it was the individual-level survey work that took me deeper into the values and beliefs of the staff. Next, the interviewing phase gave me room to push deeper into the staff's espoused beliefs and values to better understand the basic underlying assumptions that drove the staff's behavior, perceptions, thoughts and feelings (see "The Three Levels of Culture" in Schein, 2010).

In this conclusion, I overviewed my findings, including support for my variables. I highlighted my unique contributions to media sociology, media ethics, and moral psychology. I considered this study's strengths and limitations. I also offered recommendations for professional practice and pedagogy. My future research section considered a path forward for media sociologists and media ethicists seeking to examine news cultures from a moral ecology perspective.

Overview of variables and key variable findings

Through my literature review, I deciphered important components of how to study the digital frontier: leadership, structure, individual cultures, organizational culture, and degrees of both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy. While individual factors provide a modest influence on journalistic decisions (Flegel & Chaffee, 1971; Kepplinger, Brosius, & Staab, 1991; Patterson & Donsbach, 1996; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Berkowitz, Limor, & Singer, 2004), organizational influence has been shown to supercede individual values in newsrooms (Beam, 1990; Donohue, Olien, & Tichenor, 1985; Voakes, 1997; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986; Zhu, Weaver, Lo, Chen, & Wu., 1997). Using the "Worlds of

Journalism" project data, Plaisance, Skewes, and Hanitzsch found a strong pattern for the relation of "journalist's ethical outlooks" to "the larger structural system in which they operate. Ideological, cultural and societal factors outlined in hierarchy-of-influence theories are critical, and sometimes, dominant, influences on the way journalists around the globe approach ethical dilemmas" (Plaisance, Skewes, and Hanitzsch, 2012, p. 654). In my own data, a similar pattern emerged. The editorial staff at The Golden Gate expressed strong allegiances to the institution of journalism, citing those allegiances as their motivation and boundaries for the stories they produced.

Variable: Org structure and routine. When I examined my data on the variable of The Golden Gate's organizational structure and routines, I found that in some ways, the company practiced traditional news culture. They exemplified high levels of independence in their reporting processes. The routine of the staff needing to divide their time between traditional reporting and public relations roles, however, was where the culture of the organization shifted significantly. They also exemplified a highly collaborative and role sharing work ethic.

Variable: Leadership. When I evaluated the leadership structure at The Golden Gate, I found a culture where each staff member was expected to take complete ownership of their role in the company. From the top down, everyone pitched in as needed, and they were all asked to actively participate in money and workflow committees as part of their regular duties.

Variable: Journalistic Autonomy. The Golden Gate staff exemplified high levels of journalistic autonomy in nearly every area of their work. Even in collaborative moments, the staff members each contributed their unique strengths and perspectives to get stories out. The staff also expressed a high level of freedom from top-level

oversight as they shaped the voicing and coverage of their city. The staff did convey, however, a tension of the audience-first focus as a major driver of what stories they would work on. The often singular focus of the staff on serving their audience would determine how they planned future news coverage as well.

Variable: Moral Autonomy. When considering how The Golden Gate staff lived in accord with their own personal convictions, the self-report survey data did support high levels of individual moral autonomy. Overall, individuals felt confident in their abilities to support their responsibilities, and exhibited signs of solid well-being. In the interviews several staff members mentioned that they felt free to form their own opinions and make their own choices, and that their organization was not dictating personal ethical orientations to them.

The Golden Gate's organizational structure and routines

Structural considerations are concerned with "how the mediated symbolic environment gets constructed – by individuals within a social, occupational, institutional, and cultural context" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 2). Structure is also a way to "emphasize the patterned character of human action and to thus create categories that group together various patterns," (Benson, 2014, p. 26). One of the best ways to look at structure in an organization is to examine "how individual micro-practices serve to uphold and disrupt larger structures of power in work, play, and relationships" (Tracy, 2013, p. 60). By tracing relationships, resources, daily routines, and disruptions, I pieced together a picture of how structure both enabled and constrained the operations of The Golden Gate. Drawing from Benson's (2014) definition of structure as a way of examining patterned human action, I looked for

patterns (and themes) that could be used to decipher how a person (or group) is supported by their organization. Agarwal and Barthel (2015) found that most traditional news organizations create and enforce organizational practices, and these usually reflect industry-wide standards.

In some ways, The Golden Gate work culture practiced traditional news culture, such as in their commitments to reporting for the community and a culture of independence. They also worked hard to create a division of "church and state" between editorial and advertising, but those lines would blur at times when they had to work closely with advertising to plan and staff events, essentially acting as a public relations arm for the news organization. Editor and general manager Rene expressed that she saw herself as the gatekeeper between the two sides of the business. And although the editorial team was expected to contribute ideas to the company's financial viability, this component of their work mainly showed up in how they honed their audience reach, including helping with membership drives, building branding voice for the media organization and also running events that involved the community.

In other ways, the heart of The Golden Gate work culture challenged media industry standards. All members of the editorial team repeatedly expressed that the intentional culture of The Golden Gate (collaborative, self-sufficient, empowering, leadership roles for all members, and more democratized idea sharing) was something they had never experienced in the news industry before. This new culture enabled them all to enter the competitive media market of their region and carve out their own audience reach. The daily organizational routines and conversations heard in the newsroom helped each individual operate from a structure that functioned by both "constraining action while also enabling it" (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p. 7).

Following Gidden's structuration theory (1979; 1984), I found that the staff at The Golden Gate both looked to company vision and expectations often for guidance, and that they also helped to reproduce those expectations (and subsequent rules) (Tracy, 2013). The team members reproduced structure (Schauster, 2012) as they carried out the vision, tone, and mission of serving their audience. One micro-practice that enacted the vision of The Golden Gate was how the editorial staff lived comfortably both online and in-person. Even just considering how they seamlessly continued conversations both online and offline, whether they were in person or not, spoke to how the staff was leaning their work style (and their work products) into pursuing their direct marked audience where that audience is usually found: online. Because their main vision was to "curate the city," they were free to cover more than breaking news, or to be chained to spending all of their time on breaking news. They could dip into more lifestyle explorations, including online-only happenings that resonated with the city's culture. The structure of thinking outside of the four walls of a traditional newsroom fit well with a staff that could work wherever they were, but also prioritized intentional connection with each other throughout the day.

I also saw several tensions surface, both in previous studies and in my own data. The demands on digital journalists and editors have increased significantly in contemporary journalism business models. Digital news organizations often have very small staff numbers (and thus many different job titles and skill demands placed on their work week); very fast story turnaround deadlines; a need to establish a social media presence; a need to interact with the public more; and an expectation to be intricately involved in business and money conversations for their organization.

The strains I saw The Golden Gate experience bear some similarities to Usher's (2018) findings when she studied breaking news productions processes in US metropolitan papers. She found that these newsrooms felt forced to respond to breaking-news pressures, and that they would run stories online with daily incremental updates, but that sometimes these digital stories would never even appear in the print version of the news later in the week. These newspapers were putting more and more of their time into breaking news stories that would drive traffic to their websites. "Longer, enterprise stories weren't showing any response, and the newsroom was tilting their coverage in favor of breaking news in order to improve traffic" (Usher, 2018, p. 29). While website analytics did not emerge as a daily driving force for The Golden Gate (as Usher found in her work), the social media shifts provided a similar strain on reporting resources.

The Golden Gate's very active social media component provided the team with a sense of relevance to their community and also a sense of immediacy and taking the daily pulse of the city, but it did take up a large chunk of their very limited staff time. The time spent on socials definitely took away from the time that could have been spent on more reporting work. Conversely, though, The Golden Gate's primary focus was not to try and always win at the breaking news game; rather, they worked to curate the city, and then provide original reporting that was not present in other outlets. They repeatedly talked about how they wanted to "fill in the gaps" left by other news organizations by offering angles and coverage that the other outlets were not running.

The Golden Gate's leadership structure

The dialectic of control, also a component of structuration theory, looks at how the people in an organization support authority structures (Tracy, 2013). At the Golden Gate, although the culture was extremely collaborative, both Rene and Carl had the ultimate say (and responsibility for) carrying out the mission and business of the news organization. The micro-practices of workflow, role sharing, and collaboration, were mentioned by all levels of workers at The Golden Gate. And even in the face of major disruptions, like a mass shooting, the team effectively acted out of their newsroom structure and upheld the vision and mission of the news organization.

One way the editor, Rene, upheld her authority was by participating in all areas of the new organization at one time or another. She especially showed this value during crisis situations when she would take on whatever role was needed. Sometimes she would be out in the field doing the reporting work and hand editorial control over to another staff member. Sometimes she would be the one out in the city getting the raw footage and images to send back to the news team.

Both Carl and Rene's management style was to ask their employees to take ownership of their time and work. This was seen in how Carl would provide advice to Rene, but rarely ever tell her directly what to do. Rene, for the most part, felt supported and comfortable enough to come to Carl with ethical (as well as practical) dilemmas. In turn, The Golden Gate reporting staff was given ample opportunities to pursue the stories they felt were important. Pitch meetings involved the writers defending why they wanted to do what they wanted to do; they would present justifications around local news values, as well as briefly bring up website metrics and evidence of audience support. Ownership was also present in the microflows of how the staff built their

stories; there were many verbal check-ins as stories were coming together, collaborative Google Doc-style online editing versions of stories, and Rene often included herself in this editing process too.

Autonomy findings

Autonomy, and navigating ethical tensions, showed up as major themes across the data. Autonomy concerns ideals of self-governance and self-determination (Chirkov, 2011), as well as the freedom to follow one's own convictions (Plaisance, 2016). The Golden Gate staff exhibited high levels of freedom of choice in their workflow (McDevitt, 2003; McQuail, 1992; Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013; Agarwal & Barthel, 2015; Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska & Anikina, 2015). All roles on the editorial side of the newsroom practiced freedom in shaping their own work (Scholl & Weischenberg, 1999) as they drove their own story selection, as well as how they would write those stories (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013). The company practiced high levels of independent decision making for their work at all levels of authority (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015). At the individual level, each member of the editorial staff expressed satisfaction in working with their team (Reinardy, 2014) and in how they felt free to determine their workflow (McDevitt, 2002) and operate in a watchdog capacity for the city (Hanitzsch, 2011).

One major influence on the journalistic autonomy of the staff to choose their stories was in regard to the often singular focus of the staff on serving their audience, or an "audience-first" focus. The staff mentioned many times throughout the different research phases how if a story was not well read, that factor would often determine if the staff would pursue similar stories in the future. However, when the staff felt like a story needed to run regardless of popularity, such as when a crisis or community need overshadowed audience choice, the staff would pursue those stories. The lean staff

numbers, and the hours they had to offer, both played greatly into the balance their coverage had to strike between pleasing their audience, but also operating as a fourth-estate focused hyper local newsroom. This tension also played out in the survey data, when the staff would express that they never felt like they had enough time to finish stories as they desired. The survey data also confirmed the staff's high consideration of audience preference, an acknowledgement of focus that they deemed as industry-wide.

After considering the constraints of staffing, time, and audience demands on journalistic autonomy, my data strongly confirmed a high level of professional workplace autonomy in The Golden Gate staff. The writers felt highly supported by their managers to freely choose story ideas, story sources, and story angles, and they considered interacting with their audiences a central tenant of the viability of their organization. They enacted practices of listening to their community, and then responded with coverage to represent their city by filling in the gaps of coverage that they felt were left by other media organizations in the region.

Strengths and Limitations

The biggest limitation of this study was the low number of participants. The Golden Gate was a very small start-up. This factor meant that I could not make claims from my survey data beyond descriptive statistics. But, because I pulled in previously established survey measures, I could draw deeper inferences than if I had been attempting to use the data from this project alone. One of the greatest strengths of this dissertation was the implementation of three different methods to triangulate the data. The benefit of observing company structure and culture during my participant observation trip shaped how I chose survey questions, and also the types of interview questions I decided to ask. One big benefit of a study such as this one is establishing

rapport and then having an open door to connect back with the staff multiple times. I was in contact with the staff for the course of a year and a half during this study, and each time I was able to dive deeper into salient issues and loop back around to gain a fuller perspective of the experiences the editorial staff had while working at The Golden Gate.

One important element to note in the story of The Golden Gate organization is that between collecting the survey data and scheduling the participant interviews, the company was sold to a new parent company. Two of the staff members left, and two remained, when I completed my interviews. I prefaced each interview time by having each person catch me up on their story and what they had done since the sale of the company, and then I asked them to answer the interview questions primarily based on their time when they all worked together. The interviews happened about two months after the sale. The Golden Gate still exists today, although the staff is much smaller and they have shifted their focus quite a bit. Another complicating factor to this research was the 2020 COViD-19 pandemic. I collected all of this data before the pandemic spread across the United States, but I do know that many of my organizational observations would be difficult to capture in current times. Since so many editorial teams work remotely now, I do wonder how this shift in time and space affects the underpinnings of digital news; resources, capabilities to move around, further reduced staff numbers, and more are continuing to shape the news. Was what I witnessed at The Golden Gate just a sliver in time? Will a hybrid model built on growing an audience though both physical presence (such as community events) as well as aggressive social media use exist again in the digital news model? I think The Golden Gate digital news organization represents a new wave of digital journalism that curates a digital experience and recognizes the

value that both in-person and virtual connections can provide. When an organization doesn't have to pour resources into primarily producing a print, radio, or air-wave product, they can experiment and fashion a multi-platform news space that serves their audience in a variety of ways. In an organizational structure like the iteration of The Golden Gate that I witnessed, the online presence is the pinnacle representation of the news, instead of the dumping ground where content is placed hap-hazardly because the news organization feels like they need to have an online presence.

Research Implications

Implications for Moral Psychology. From a moral psychology perspective, one of the main goals of this project was to move closer to individual-level moral psychology correlates to help discern broader group patterns and behaviors (Plaisance, 2016). Moral psychology examines how moral identities develop, and how people make moral decisions. The ethical profile of moral autonomy that emerged from the moral psychology survey data revealed a picture of seasoned journalists who embraced both traditional and new professional norms to engage a new media audience and create a hyper-local news hub for their city.

In parts of my survey data, the staff showed slightly low levels of personal moral autonomy. The staff on average did not feel comfortable expressing their own opinions; but I would argue that the professional journalistic norm of objectivity as well as The Golden Gate's organizational expectations of neutrality in writing and public participation are highly probable factors in reducing a journalist's desire to readily share their opinion or bring to the forefront of their work what they think is important. The environmental mastery findings from Ryff's Psychological Well-Being scale considered

different aspects of personal moral autonomy than just opinion influences. While the staff on average reported feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities at times, they also felt confident in managing their daily lives and their living situations. The staff also expressed a high sense of purpose, a love of learning, and desires to keep growing and expanding in their lives. In the midst of juggling new job roles, such as more interfacing with audiences both virtually and out in the community, the staff at The Golden Gate was empowered to help shape the entire organization. They each expressed awe and excitement about the vision they helped create and sustain, as well as the emphasis on collaborative work and the empowerment of each individual to bring their strengths and perspectives to the table each day. High levels of both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy in the staff clearly played a key role in The Golden Gate's experimental new media environment, factors confirmed at the individual level from the moral psychology data.

My work here contributes to the field of moral psychology by showing the strength of situating moral psychology measures of both journalistic autonomy and moral autonomy within a deeper context of both personal and organizational stories. Instead of parachuting in and surveying the staff about their autonomy in one snapshot, I was able to look more fully at different aspects of how autonomy manifested at The Golden Gate. Conversely, I would not have accessed such an individual-level understanding of how autonomy was operating at The Golden Gate without pairing such measures with observational work and the interviews.

Implications For media sociology. In his synthesis of the sociology of news, Schudson (2011) stated that "journalists not only report reality but also create it...through the process of selecting, highlighting, framing, shading and shaping what

they report, they create an impression that real people...take to be real and to which they respond in their lives" (p. xiv). Media sociology is a research tradition with a rich history of questioning power and structure. Drawing on this strength, I used media sociology methods to help discern how organizational factors (like structure, routines, and hierarchies) affect individual moral reasoning, and vice-versa. While my study did not lean into measuring morally-motivated self-identity correlates as much as Plaisance did in his 2015 media exemplar study (the study from which I drew much of my methodology design), my observational work especially helped me round out my understanding of the staff's daily rhythms and self-report information. My media sociology-based data brought to light both similarities and differences between legacy media and digital media spaces.

Gaye Tuchman's seminal work, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, encompassed a decade of observing various news and press rooms, and interviewing all levels of newsworkers, from smaller metropolitan organizations to New York media giants and even the AP press. Her study emphasized "the ways in which professionalism and decisions flowing from professionalism are a result of organizational needs" and it explored "the processes by which news is socially constructed, how occurrences in the everyday world are rendered into stories occupying time and space in the world called news" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 2). Her main interests were to examine the constraints of newsworkers and the resources available to them, as well as recognizing news workers as professionals operating within complex institutions. She considered how reporters focused on "particulars embedded in strips of ongoing activity" (1978, p. 5) and how some types of knowledge are not expressed as news because they are taken for granted as normal in the social world, or perhaps the

knowledge is absorbed in the hierarchy of leadership, and how professionalism can create knowledge incapacity.

Tuchman's first theme from her research found that the "act of making news is the act of constructing reality itself rather than a picture of reality," (1978, p. 12). In my experience, The Golden Gate newsroom actively worked to create a trendy hub for their city, constructing a reality of wanting to help their audience engage with local and civic life in new ways. The Golden Gate staff meticulously planned their tone of writing, and worked to engage that audience where they could be found - primarily through social media realities. Tuchman's second theme in her study of what makes the news considered how news draws on aspects of everyday life to tell stories, and it also considered how those stories present "us to ourselves" (1978, p. 12). The Golden Gate would constantly tweak their reality hub based on trends, news values, and how their audiences were responding to the stories they published. The Golden Gate staff worked to capture everyday life around the city, especially by attempting to fill in the gaps where other outlets were not telling stories, and to work on stories answering reader questions. As The Golden Gate wove together the conversation of the day in their city, bringing together online and in-person happenings to one hub spot, they created a reality for their audience, a vibrant daily representation of the city.

Tuchman's work also considered how her themes of reality construction were bound by time, placement, resources, authority structures, and how the newsrooms she observed winnowed and weeded their information (1978, p. 13). She also examined the flexibility reporters experience within time constraints, and the negotiating that goes into creating news (including how facts are positioned or dismissed entirely). Time

emerged as a major factor in how The Golden Gate was positioned to report on their city. Consistent with other findings in recent studies looking at journalism, as well as in Tuchman's observations, time and resources greatly constrained the production of news. However, the lean and tight Golden Gate editorial team experienced a greater freedom in authority structure than Tuchman saw in her studies. While every worker at The Golden Gate was required to wear many different hats and switch between different skill sets throughout the day, they were also given more freedom to craft and publish their work, and more buy-in for leadership decisions than a traditional legacy newsroom authority structure would supply.

My work shows evidence for shifts in media authority at the organizational level of digital newsrooms. The fairly simplistic gatekeeping model Tuchman experienced in her work has given way to a more scattered authority model, with the load of responsibility shared by entire staffs and not just editors, publishers, or owners. Seth recollected how in his previous position with a different regional news outlet, he experienced greatly increased journalistic autonomy. There were fewer editors, and a lot of the time he would write his story, edit it on his own, and then upload it to the news website on his own. He felt journalistic autonomy is growing in newsrooms because of the lack of employees, a great difference between modern digital journalism and legacy newsrooms.

Social media continues to greatly challenge a traditional gatekeeping culture as well, and The Golden Gate often used the crowd wisdom of their social media networks to draw out story ideas, detect events as they were starting to unfold, and to network for sources. And in their newsroom, there were times when stories (and especially social media posts) were published with only one person viewing and editing them. The

implications of disseminated authority pose implications for media sociology research and most certainly need further exploration.

In his seminal work "Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time," Herbert J. Gans created a sociological analysis of how "national news organizations, journalists, sources, audiences, and all other participants in the national news making process decide what is news and how it is to be reported" (Gans, 2004, ix). The study sites were the CBS Evening News, the NBC Nightly News for television representations of national news and Newsweek and Time for print representations of national news. Gans conducted participant-observation methods for each of these four journalistic communities for several months between 1965-1969 and then some interview updates in 1978.

Gans' significant considerations from the study spanned the systemic, institutional, organizational and individual factors that go into news judgment. From his perspective, the biggest factor shaping domestic stories was sourcing. Organizational considerations also shape stories, as official sources are given much credence by editors and reporters alike. Additionally he found that "every story requires a judgment about the availability and sustainability of sources, story importance or interest, as well as novelty, quality, and other product criteria" (Gans, 1979, p. 280). In commenting on Gans' journalism ideologies, Shoemaker and Reese (2014) found that journalists construct "the normal" by "pointing out instances in which people disrupt the social order or act contrary to established social values, journalists help define what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior" (p. 221). Additionally, these journalists hold their own ideological outlooks, and so adhere to the journalistic values to varying degrees, and these values can be found in how news is constructed (Gans, 1979). In an

update to his work 25 years later, Gans found that while events, societies, and histories may be new, the methods for choosing and reporting on stories have not changed. (Gans, 2004, in Gans, 1979).

A lot has shifted in the news world since 2004. While stalwart news values can be found in modern media products, highlighting the needs and culture of everyday people is a trend that is growing, especially through smaller alternative media outlets. One way journalists are engaging with their audiences is through engaged journalism, or "making sure your work matters to your audience," (Guzmán, 2016) and making the information needs of a community the most important aspect of media work, including creating and sustaining trust between journalists and the public, and creating "collaborative space for the audience in all aspects of the journalistic process" (Green-Barber & Garcia McKinley, 2019). The NiemanLab predicted that engaged journalism would increasingly become a part of media work, especially when the organization is membership or subscription-based (Brown, 2019). The focus of how stories are selected seems to be changing, and The Golden Gate demonstrated that they were following engaged journalism practices in some of their reporting and story choices. For example, the staff received a Hearken grant to help fund audience-centric stories, or pieces where the audience would vote on or request to be covered. Hearken works to help organizations (media or otherwise) facilitate more connections with audiences (We Are Hearken, 2020). More research is needed to understand how engagement journalism will or will not become a deeper part of media work, including how stories are selected and how media workers respond to their audiences.

Another focus of many modern news outlets is the use of online chatter to build stories. Some of these news stories will be based entirely on Tweets as the primary

source; other journalists will use those Tweets as a way to find sources to interview for original work; other pieces will combine the two methods. Regardless of how those tweets are used, journalists do turn frequently to Twitter and other social media sites to include both elite and non-elite sources in their articles, and recent research is showing that including tweets from the public (especially ordinary people) influences how news consumers perceive issues (Dumitrescu & R N Ross, 2020). A strength of online journalism is the opportunity to capture (and capitalize) on the immediacy of online news and gossip to sift out newsworthy and relevant stories. Keeping a pulse of the online community (nationally, but especially locally) comprised a large part of the time spent by The Golden Gate. The typical way they used social media information was to catch stories as they were breaking, and then pursue those sources for official interviews. During my participant observation period, I watched the staff cover a story in this particular fashion; a local political cartoonist was fired from a different legacy news organization in the city. The Golden Gate staff had been tracking rumblings of this decision on Twitter, and cataloging some of the comments on it from the cartoonist himself and also other industry leaders and locals. So, when the word finally came that the cartoonist had been let go, potentially because of a free speech disagreement, The Golden Gate staff jumped on the opportunity to reach out for phone interviews. The resulting story integrated both the Twitter chatter they had collected for a few days and the official interview quotes. This example and growing trend indicates that there is a need in media sociology to update our understanding of how the media decides "what is the news."

Media sociology and democracy. Much of sociology stems from democratic values (Turner, 2007), and concurrently, a core cultural code to journalism is working as

a watchdog to that democracy (Giles and Marder, 2001). Schudson's (2014) analysis of the history of democracy in America from the post-1945 period to today yields a term he calls trans-legislative democracy; this term recognizes democracy as "dependent still on legislatures but cinching [it] into a system where [people] operate with respect to competing and constraining representative forms" (p. 50). From this trans-legislative democracy, American society expects the media to operate with "accountability journalism" or with a watchdog role over government and powerful institutions:

> [We] expect the media to offer a model of reasoned discourse about public affairs; we expect the media to be model citizens of the "If you see something, say something" breed...and we expect the media to provide a representation of and a tolerance for various legitimate viewpoints... A media sociology appropriate to our day must conceive itself in relation to the democratic norms that are not confined to electing representatives (Schudson, p. 50-51, 2014).

The Golden Gate staff was very passionate about their role as watchdogs of democracy. In this way, they exemplified a long-held legacy media value of advocating for the public's role in democracy. Each voting season they would publish a much sought after "procrastinator's guide to voting." They also were a part of the PolitiFact network and received some funding for their reporters to pursue fact-checking stories on local and state politics. The staff would also attend political rallies, order court documents, and submit FOIA records releases as needed

Implications for media ethics. A holistic approach to media sociology examines structure, culture and agency in a particular situation (Butsch, 2014). From a practitioner stand point, pairing survey work such as the Ethical Climate Questionnaire and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Instrument with site visits and interviewing

processes offered a broader picture to how media practitioners actually act out the ethical decision making standards they profess to have via surveys and interviews. Clearly, these decisions are made in a complex environment of organizational, cultural, economical, professional, biological, and psychological influences. I saw firsthand how media practitioners access and use their ideologies in the day-to-day operations of their work. Media ethics research must continue to look at the layers of influence on ethical decision making.

Implications for Professional Practice. As more and more newsrooms (digital or otherwise) find themselves needing to use their editorial staff for more than just the production of news, my study offers some guidance for practical applications. The Golden Gate staff constantly tweaked their flow of how many work hours they would use around reporting vs. promotion. During some seasons, such as a membership drive, the entire staff would devote more time to shaping those messages and growing their audience. But, while their roles could have some flexibility, editor and general manager Rene fought hard to keep editorial outside of advertising realms. Instead, the staff functioned as a partial public relations team, and they would plan events around newsworthiness (never crafting a pseudo-event). An example of this is when The Golden Gate staff planned a cemetary tour after many readers had sent in questions about a local cemetery. The editorial staff first wrote about the history and current issues of the cemetery, and then later planned an event as a tour to bring those news stories to life.

As acknowledged earlier in this paper, the current study represents data from only one news organization, and as such, I posed my research curiosities as research questions. Replicating the same methods with similar digital news organizations would

help to confirm the findings from my thematic analysis here. However, a deep dive into one organization offers a different perspective than a mass survey or many singular interviews conducted with different organizations across the world. My study offers an in-depth glimpse into the ever changing digital news-scape; a look at how investors, innovators and journalists are passionately seeking a path forward for local journalism. The Golden Gate hyperlocal news experiment represents an entire industry that is seeking new funding models for serving the audiences that need good journalism more than ever before.

Implications for Business Model Sustainability and Leadership Style. As demonstrated in the data, strong themes of friendship, teamwork, autonomy, individualized ownership, and supported creativity emerged from the work patterns of The Golden Gate staff. When considering the implications of their work flow, the question of whether or not this type of leadership synergy and workflow is repeatable emerged. Could the leadership and cultural successes of The Golden Gate staff be translated to other newsrooms and media organizations?

The business model for The Golden gate was an experimental thought lab for finding a successful way forward for local journalism. The parent company developed a virtual infrastructure to support the website for The Golden Gate, communication between the team, and also to help organize their intensive social media presence. Carl works now as a consultant, bringing the virtual infrastructure that The Golden Gate used to newsrooms around the world. Helping small local newsrooms streamline the practicalities of their work, and also reduce overhead costs, offers one sustainable path forward for local news.

From a human leadership perspective, there were hints and moments across the data of this dissertation that transformational leadership practices were at work in the staff at The Golden Gate. In his seminal work biographically analyzing the traits and actions of great world leaders across history, Burns approached leadership analysis by seeking to understand how humans change. "Every human change begins with someone having an intention, taking an initiative," (Burns, 2003, p. 17). Burns posited that leadership is the primary causation of human change, and that transformational leadership represents a form of leadership that mobilizes people to intentionally participate in that change. Transformational leadership encourages "a sense of collective identity and collective efficacy, which in turn brings stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy... by pursuing transformational change, people can transform themselves," (Burns, 2003, p. 25-26). Transactional leadership, on the other hand, represents a leadership style concerned primarily with give-and-take. "The transactional leader functioned as a broker and, eventually when the stakes were low, his role could be relatively minor, even automatic (Burns, 2003, p. 24). In contrast to transactional leadership, transformational leaders enable their followers to work for bigger goals than just menial and/or narrow tasks.

In different ways, both Rene and Carl demonstrated elements of transformational leadership. Several of the employees (including Rene) often mentioned how they had bought into the vision of shepherding hyper-local news in their city, and experimenting with this new business model. Instead of completing strings of menial tasks as advised by a manager or boss, the staff at The Golden Gate most often operated from a standpoint of co-piloting the strategies and growth of the organization. Additionally,

each person was expected to take on a leadership role of some form or another. They also were flexible and able to step into each other's roles, including editorial and high-level decision making roles at times.

Several key practical ideas emerged from my data that speak to how transformational leadership can shape the culture and structure of a newsroom or media company. The first is intentionally casting a vision for the organization. From the get-go, The Golden Gate vision set high expectations for each position, and these expectations flowed from a passion outside of the business numbers: reviving and sustaining local news by engaging new audiences and experimenting with voicing and new platforms for conveying that news. From interviews to orientation weeks, this vision showed up in the conversations with the staff as they were hired on, and then came up regularly in staff meetings.

As Rene expressed in her interviews, a successful digital newsroom will have a vision of moving fast and trying new things, yet also creating a culture of support for employee experiments. In this cultural model, the managerial role helps bring guidance to experimental boundaries, but also boundaries, such as knowing when it might be time to move on. From Rene's perspective, an experimental work structure seeks to strike a balance between creativity and risk, but also knowing when it is time to move on and try a new strategy.

Another practical application from this study is to consider how to build a collaborative (and more role-sharing driven) work environment. For The Golden Gate editorial team, this culture actually fostered more journalistic autonomy, as each person

was expected to daily bring their needs and questions to the whole newsdesk and offer to support each other, but then also thoroughly complete their own work. When seasons of intense workflow happened, they knew the ins-and-outs of each other's jobs and were able to function at a high level of reporting the news, even with a very lean staff. These role sharing dynamics were also anchored by serving The Golden Gate's audience; every decision and story flowed from this audience-first vision.

Implications for Pedagogy. There are several ways my research offers implications for teaching journalism practices. On a broad scale, my research supports the growing trend of an audience-first (or empathetic) approach to journalism. In an effort to create a more sustainable media model, engaged journalism language is even popping up in more journalism job descriptions across the U.S. and the Online Journalism Awards even has a category for engaged journalism now (Brown, 2019). Terms like "solidarity journalism," "community journalism," and "equity journalism" fit with the engaged journalism and audience-centric model of media messaging (The Engaged Journalism Lab, 2020). Community-first work encourages both professionals and students to pursue stories that provide value and resonate with all aspects of their audience, not just the majority.

> Engaged journalism puts the people first who are most affected by or interested in the issues that are being covered. It reflects the principles of human-centered design, which aims to build products that are actually serving the needs of the people they're for. If we want communities to engage with our journalism, we need to first find out what their information and interaction needs are (Flueckiger, 2019)

Teaching engaged journalism means we as educators guide our students in understanding how to build relationships with the communities around them by practicing listening, learning what the needs of those communities are, and then meeting those needs.

An additional confirmation of my study with The Golden Gate is that editorial positions require professionals to be flexible "jacks for all trades" types of workers. Clearly, no one can survive the media business anymore by just writing or editing alone. Video, audio, social media understanding, podcasting are all must-have skills, and I would argue that event planning, grant writing skills, and marketing skills will also climb the ranks in the job descriptions of media organizations in the near future. So our journalism programs need to touch base on all of these elements, and we need to encourage our students to have both "clippings" and multimedia examples to prove that they are multi-faceted and also committed to learning new media skills. These examples should come from both in-classroom work, and internship real-world pieces.

Also considering the continued importance of social media on newswork, it is imperative that we help our students start and build a personal online presence, as well as an understanding of how to find and build communities online. The networking component of journalism is a very valuable skill for all editorial positions. We need to keep teaching our students how to find those sources and build relationships within their communities, both online and offline.

Future Research

A salient historical moment, such as the COViD-19 pandemic, provides many questions to consider for research as the news industry shifts yet again. From a structure

perspective, looking at organizational culture and socialization factors might prove more difficult in such a scattered workplace environment. When I observed The Golden Gate, I caught a lot of what was going on by sitting around the table with the staff, sharing temporality and space. However, I remember thinking at that time how I was missing part of the work culture experience. The staff often communicated on Slack, email, and text, while simultaneously talking outloud. But observing a newsroom in 2020 (and potentially beyond for an undetermined amount of time) would require granted access to many small streams of communication in order to decipher how the organization's work flows. And of course, no researcher would ever expect to have access to every private and minute conversation (happening in person or digitally), but I imagine it would be more difficult to enact the traditional practices of media sociology work through digital means.

There's a gathering of a newer academic discipline called digital sociology. It is informed by "the conviction that the digital makes possible new ways of conducting and knowing social life" (Marres, 2017, p. 11). Digital Sociology primarily considers how the analysis and manipulation of data and more fully integrated computed realities affect and pose challenges to how we know society. To my knowledge, though, the methodology of this work has not yet included enacting the actual methods virtually. I have yet to see a newsroom observed solely over Zoom (or another meeting platform) and backchannel chat conversation spaces. But if that is how our newsrooms will be operating for the foreseeable future, such a shift is needed to understand how digital news will adapt to the health and safety precautions prescribed during a pandemic season.

Future studies could continue a similar flow to the research outlined here (but

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with new organizations) to keep examining the emerging digital news models, all to help us better understand how journalistic ideas and ethical obligations are being shaped by disrupted media business models. I would also like to look more at how news is being disseminated more and more in a newsletter format. A content analysis of these newsletters could look at writing tone, and also how (and if) the newsletters blend public relations-oriented writing with news writing; essentially, a look at how organizations using the newsletter format are "curating the day" for their audiences.

Analytics. News organizations all over the world are increasing their use of analytics, or the use of either original or gathered quantitative data on audience behavior to help increase audience engagement and evaluate newswork flow and resources (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016). The gathering and use of this data is heavily influencing the news construction process in many news organizations (Tandoc & Thomas, 2015). In my research with The Golden Gate, analytics were a part of many of the team's conversations, but analytics were also not central to how the editorial staff measured the success of their days. Analytics came up the most often during scheduled docket meetings, where the reporters would talk with Rene about their perceived value of continuing a story, usually based on how audiences responded or not. At other times, the team would write stories even when their audience was not responding favorably, like when there was a police shooting of an under-aged black minor in the community. The team expressed frustration that while the stories about the minor were well read immediately around the timing of the incident, their followup reporting work to look at the story from different angles overtime was not well read. But the team decided to push forward and complete the reporting anyway. Observing analytics as a structure in

modern news organizations - as an element that can greatly sway resource use in newsrooms - is an essential element of modern news that we must consider. An area that needs more research along these lines especially is in examining how an editorial staff ethically deliberates about how and when analytics should determine and/or influence their story selection. For example, when should a newsroom choose to cover an important issue, even when the analytics don't "support" spending time on that issue? And when is it okay to chase stories of levity that might just add to the personality and the tone of the newsroom, even if a traditional news value is not promoted from that content? An example of this is The Washington Post's promotion of reporter Dave Jorgenson on TikTok. While he is a serious reporter in other avenues, his TikTok work is all about fun audience engagement and a campaign to increase the "like-ability" of The Washington Post (Nover, 2019). How are editorial staffs balancing these types of news message decisions? How are authority structures dictating the balance of analytical choices?

Upholding democracy: A continued concern for Media Sociology and Media Ethics research. In addition to the previously mentioned implications for media sociology, continued efforts to examine how the press is upholding and sustaining democracy are needed. This dissertation work contributed to an understanding of how the digital frontier is affecting journalistic autonomy, a key professional element to the press existing as a watch-dog component in the United States political system. I found that while journalists are asked to spend their time on more skills and tasks than ever before, they also benefit from smaller staffs and less bureaucracy when it comes to choosing stories, conducting interviews, and publishing. These digital journalists leaned into audience feedback, and practiced engaged journalism techniques of working to

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meet community information needs. But there is certainly more work to do in continuing to understand how journalists are attempting to do the work of sustaining democracy in the modern digital era.

Schudson (2014) found that media sociology has tried to understand the internal workings of news organizations without acknowledging how the world and democracy have shifted. Citizens seek to influence the government, but not through the voting booth. "An understanding of the role of the production and circulation of news in democracy has to acknowledge and incorporate this into future work," (Schudson, 2014, p. 62). In light of these concerns, a sociological approach to studying media must consider how the public and the media now approach democracy. Schudson advocated that while newsrooms remain vital to shaping the news, serious study of issues such as the new role of the FOIA federal laws and the state freedom-of-information policies and how those laws are playing out into daily practices of building the news is needed (Schudson, 2014). Do journalists take advantage of freedom of information laws? How has the consolidation of news industries (and the lessening of multiple news voices in the same regions) impacted reporter and editorial staff abilities to seek out such information? A site study could greatly benefit from looking at the democratic workings of modern digital journalism.

Future Moral Psychology Research Directions. In this dissertation, at the interview level especially, I was able to hone in and ask deeper questions about the staff's collaborative nature, leadership structures, pain points, and their constraints. The interviewing and participant observation work greatly enhanced what the survey data alone could provide. The method described in this study provides a valuable map for future moral psychology work by helping researchers to differentiate more clearly

between the individual and organizational factors affecting moral decision-making behaviors. The method I used here would also easily extend outside of media organizations and to other realms of work.

 Future Media Ethics Research Directions. Considering the effects of organizational culture on individual ethical decision-making (and vice-versa) is a long term conversation in media ethics, and one that in a lot of ways is just getting started. The field of media ethics has traditionally relied on case studies and removed examples from philosophy to influence both professionals and students of the field. Media ethics work in the last decade has expanded to include mixed-methods approaches to media ethics concerns, such as integrating moral psychology tools with qualitative methods (Plaisance, 2015; Schauster, 2015; Schauster & Neill, 2017; Ferrucci, P., Tandoc, E.C. & Schauster, E. E., 2020; and Schauster, Ferrucci, Tandoc, & Walker, 2020). Continuing with deeper work at how individuals are situated within media organizations will provide us with a barometer for how new media organizations are navigating both internal and external changes. Media ethics must continue to explore how practitioners can best navigate the ethical quandaries they face from competing news values and principles (Plaisance, 2009). That exploration must be multidimensional in approach, considering individual-attributes from a quantitative perspective (such as integrating moral psychology tools (Plaisance, 2016) and considering media ecology implications (Plaisance, 2018)) as well as the additional layers of culture that can be deciphered from media sociology work (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016). Research questions from this intersection of quantitative and qualitative inquiry should include ideas such as: How transparent should journalists be about the use of audience analytics in choosing stories? What are the ethical considerations of the role of audience response in shaping

digital news? What is the obligation of modern journalists to respond to veils of ignorance, or to step into more advocacy roles for issues of public concern? How should journalists function as individuals on social media who also simultaneously represent their organization in those virtual public spheres? As we lose more editorial positions, how much reporter independence is too much independence as reporters take on more responsibility for shaping news narratives? And in a journalism world increasingly focused on community engagement, how do journalists balance the demands of their journalistic autonomy with interacting in those communities?

An additional strong theme that came up during my study was the idea of friendship as a major factor of creating and sustaining the work culture of The Golden Gate. From what I observed and also gathered through interviews, there was a sense of friendship that was deeper than congeniality or camaraderie. Future research could explore evidence of a friendship factor from an Aristotelian virtue perspective. Is this friendship deeper than camaraderie in a newsroom? Can these traits be intentionally fostered by leadership, or are they dependent on a specific group of people working together for a specific amount of time? What would it mean and look like to foster friendship as a transformative leadership tool?

Journalistic traditions continue with rich vibrancy across the U.S. Even as some areas experience a lack of local voices, there are pockets of journalism working to solve issues of funding and get back to the basics of local news engagement. We need these professionals who will be there to help tell the stories of their communities. As social issues unfold, economies ebb and flow, and political seasons sharply change the contours of our nation, autonomous journalists are vital to telling the stories of how our

nation is changing. We as audiences need the community voices these journalists bring to the table to help us live more connected and aware lives.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION MEMOS

Autonomy Memo

Before I walked into my participant observation space, I used journalistic literature about autonomy to craft the following definitions of autonomy in a journalistic setting:

Autonomy - Editorial Independence
1. Moral Autonomy - Following one's convictions and recognizing the choices I have in the context of various duties & obligations I've accepted in my role.
2. Degree of freedom journalists have to shape their own work regardless of internal and external powers - The extent to which journalists are free to decide on the stories they cover or edit, story angles, sources and narrative frames
3. Constraints - political, economic, organizational, technological, sociological
4. Individuality - Work satisfaction, discretionary judgement in workflow; marketing pressure constraints; watchdog capacities
5. Organizational - Freedom from commercial and political entities
6. Societal - Freedom to responsibly sustain a free press
7. Digital autonomy - How digital journalists operate within the demands of traffic quota; how workers function in micro-word flow demands for collaborative content production; how autonomy is negotiated for freelance and crowdfunded scenarios

<u>Autonomy Definitions Observed</u>

I saw many of these definitions playing out during my time in observing the publication staff, and many of these variable definitions will shape the formation of both my survey and my interview protocol.

Autonomy Definition 1: Following one's convictions and recognizing the choices I have in the context of various duties & obligations I've accepted in my role

After my first observation trip, I connected with the publication's managing editor over the phone to follow up about a few observations I had made. The team was just emerging from working nearly around the clock to cover a breaking news story in their community about a shooting. The entire editorial and reporting staff dropped as many other obligations as possible and focused on group writing and editing the story as it unfolded in real time. In regard to the group writing process, the managing editor said

"Mostly it has just been us listening to what other people have been saying. All of us have read every single word that has been written about this story, and we have been doing our own reporting." The staff felt a clear moral obligation to follow the story and provide the contextual gaps that other media outlets in the city were missing, from law background to the mood of protestors and the city. The staff demonstrated a commitment to the publication's conviction of pursuing original deep local coverage around the event as well as providing one curated place for the public to turn to and hear from all major media outlet across the city about the unfolding shooting events and aftermath. The staff compiled all of this original and curated reporting onto one landing page on their website that has continued to be updated even a few months later. The publication's editor demonstrated her autonomy in directing staff hours toward this endeavor in a deep and meaningful way and this coverage demonstrates an organizational dimension of autonomy as following one's convictions to pursue a story (as well as freedom in how to pursue and shape work).

Corresponding survey(s): The Psychological Well-Being Inventory (Ryff, 1989); The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire

From the Ryfe, 1989 Psychological Well-Being Inventory: (Strongly disagree, strongly agree on a scale of 1-6)

1. I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people (SD, SA, 1-6)
2. In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live (SD, SA, 1-6)

7. My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing (SD, SA, 1-6)

8. The demands of everyday life often get me down (SD, SA, 1-6)

19. I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions (SD, SA, 1-6)

25. I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus (SD, SA, 1-6)

37. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important (SD, SA, 1-6)

From the Worlds of Journalism Project:

- ***Moral Autonomy*** - Following one's convictions
    - C13 - The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.
        - A. Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context.

- B. What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation.
- C. What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment. 5
- D. It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it.
    - C 14 - Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances? 1 means it is always justified, 2 means it is justified on occasion, and 3 means you would not approve under any circumstances.
        - A. Paying people for confidential information
        - B. Using confidential business or government documents without authorization
        - C. Claiming to be somebody else
        - D. Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story
        - E. Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission
        - F. Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information
        - G. Using hidden microphones or cameras
        - H. Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors
        - J. Publishing stories with unverified content
        - K. Accepting money from sources
        - L. Altering or fabricating quotes from sources
        - M. Altering photos

Autonomy Definition 2: Degree of freedom journalists have to shape their own work regardless of internal and external powers

On the first day of my first observational trip, I watched carefully how the reporters interacted and worked with the editorial staff. Near the end of the day, around 5:30 p.m., one of the reporters finished his latest fact-checking story (the staff aims to release 1-2 political fact checking stories a week that are then deliberated by an editorial board and then released in conjunction with non-profit Politifact). The reporter and the managing editor pulled up a Google Doc of the story and talked in real time about any needed adjustments. While the managing editor has the ultimate authority about how and if a story will run, she also heavily weighs publication scheduling and story angle decisions according to the reporter's communications about the piece. The staff works to maintain open lines of communication, and there is a lot of give and take around story deadlines when necessary. This stands out to me as a fairly stark contrast to a traditional

media setting. In a traditional newsprint publication there are hard print deadlines, and more often than not reporters will file a story and then not get to converse about it with the editor before it publishes. It seems like this digital publication's staff has created a more collaborative and open mode of editing and co-writing than many of their traditional print counterparts. I also witnessed this "haggling collaboration" dance during the first day of my second observational trip. The reporter and the managing editor spent a good half hour working through the final draft of his story, and ultimately what the reporter suggested as timing for publication was the direction that the managing editor decided to take.

On day three of my first trip, I talked with the sales and event manager in a solo interview. She expressed her enjoyment of the freedom offered her to get work done and experiment with funding and event models. "One of my favorite things about this job, and the flexibility of our newsroom, is that we have the freedom to experiment. We have 3 labs in 3 cities. We have [another city] saying, member events work. But if it doesn't work for us, we don't have to do it again. If I am correct that this is a bit of an older crowd, they might want to have a panel. We need to figure out who these people are and where they live and then tailor these events to them." Over the two years since its inception, the publication has experimented with many different types of events, and while the corporate office works closely with each location on shaping these events, they also leave them a lot of autonomy in how and when to implement each public interaction.

On day four of my first trip, at 11 a.m. the staff moved into one of the co-working space conference rooms to conduct a monthly pitch meeting. During this hour-long meeting, the entire staff was present and each person negotiated what stories should be written for the month and then also what should be published during the upcoming two weeks. They also talked about possible sourcing, and each person seemed free to approach each story/source as they wanted to, mainly with non-obligatory suggestions from other staff members. During this meeting the weekend editor also brought up a story she wanted to do about urban food deserts, and she asked for advice on sourcing. Each person was free to bring new stories to the table, and while the managing editor did veto a few based on what she felt was ultimately important for the publication's coverage over the next month, she was very open to and included many of the new story ideas. The meeting demonstrated to me that while the managing editor is ultimately in charge, she is working to foster a collaborative environment and believes in the skills and judgments of the people she has hired. She seems to rarely step in on story angles or sourcing requirements, and more often than not makes space for the reporters to pursue the stories they have suggested.

During the afternoon of my fourth day of my first observational trip, a breaking news story emerged and I witnessed the team in action first hand. An editorial cartoonist had been fired from a local traditional newspaper, and the staff had been talking about the rumblings of this possibility for the few days prior to the actual event,

and one of the reporters had written one piece that week about the tensions this cartoonist was facing. The staff had just come off of a big monthly pitch meeting where they get together and talk through what stories should be published when over the upcoming month. Everyone quickly grabbed some lunch and plugged in their headphone to virtually attend a weekly company-wide meeting when the news dropped on Twitter that this cartoonist had been fired. Immediately the whole editorial and reporting staff began multitasking by scouring the internet for reactions. One reporter put a message into the cartoonist himself. They all in real time began writing and updating the publications original and curated coverage on the story. They talked in live time about how to approach the story; should they send people down to the business that had fired the cartoonist in person to see if they could catch any employees walking out and get some comments? Meanwhile every person started leaving voicemails for potential sourcing for the evolving story. As the calls started coming back in, one of the reporters and the managing editor started co-writing and editing together in live time, communicating both in-person and over a google doc. Among many other elements, the staff's collaborative real-time coverage of this local breaking news demonstrated the organization's strong freedom to shape their own agenda under the mission of the publication to help readers better understand current issues from multiple perspectives.

Corresponding Survey(s) - Work Climate Questionnaire (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004); The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire

Work Climate Questionnaire potential questions for Autonomy Definition 2:
1. I feel my manager provides me choices and options (SD, SA, 1-7)
2. I feel understood by my manager (SD, SA, 1-7)
3. I am able to be open with my manager at work (SD, SA, 1-7)
4. My manager conveyed confidence in my ability to do well at my job.
5. I feel that my manager accepts me.
6. My manager made sure I really understood the goals of my job and what I need to do.
7. My manager encouraged me to ask questions.
8. I feel a lot of trust in my manager.
9. My manager answers my questions fully and carefully.
10. My manager listens to how I would like to do things.
11. My manager handles people's emotions very well.
12. I feel that my manager cares about me as a person.
13. I don't feel very good about the way my manager talks to me.
14. My manager tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.
15. I feel able to share my feeling with my manager.

Worlds of Journalism potential questions for Autonomy Definition 2:

- C9 - Thinking of your work overall, how much freedom do you personally have in selecting news stories you work on? 5 means complete freedom, 4 means a great deal of freedom, 3 means some freedom, 2 means little freedom, and 1 means no freedom at all.
- C10 - How much freedom do you personally have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized? Again, 5 means complete freedom, 4 means a great deal of freedom, 3 means some freedom, 2 means little freedom, and 1 means no freedom at all.
- C-16 - Here is another list. Again, please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how influential each of the following is in your work.
    - A Your friends, acquaintances and family
    - B Colleagues in other media
    - C Feedback from the audience
    - D Competing news organizations
    - E Media laws and regulation
    - F Information access
    - G Censorship
    - H Government officials
    - J Politicians
    - K Pressure groups
    - L Business people
    - M Public relations
    - N Relationships with news sources
    - O The military, police and state security

Autonomy Definition 3: Constraints - political, economic, organizational, technological and sociological

During my phone interview with the managing editor after my first trip, she and I talked about how she balances organizational constraints by having to be heavily involved with both the advertising and editorial components of her publication. She clearly stated that from her perspective, the organization supports local journalism, and that there are very few organizational constraints about what they can write about.

"My favorite parts of the job are editing and working with the reporter. The days when I don't work with them… when we don't get to talk about audience engagement, or the next political story… the less happy I am. I am the keeper of editorial. When I am working with [the sales and event staff] , I just really want to make sure that our [editorial] integrity isn't being drawn under fire or under pressure … our number one product and focus is journalism. Whenever I go into these [event and marketing] meetings, I have the feeling that I hold the trump card … I never felt like our editorial

integrity was under fire. I have never had to go to back for it. I feel like [the owner] has my back, and that the advertising supports the journalism, not the other way around."

One element of the staff and organization that each person mentioned something about are the time and understaffing realities of working for a digital startup. While no one outright said they felt this reality constrained the reporting, I would like to delve more into how resource allocation and time do constrain a staff that is also expected to interact on social media with the public and also participate actively in the publication's live events and in raising money/support for the organization. I hope to explore through my survey and in-depth interviewing more about how these time and staffing constraints impact the time the reporters and editorial staff have to choose and build stories.

Corresponding Survey: The Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Victor & Cullen, 1988); *The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire*

Potential questions from the Ethical Climate Questionnaire for definition #3:

The questions from this inventory ask "to what extent are the following statements true about your company?" These questions correspond to hypothesized ethical climates from individual, local and cosmopolitan aspects.
- Survey respondents are asked to rank each statement according to these numbers: 1 = Mostly false; 2 = Somewhat false; 3 = Somewhat true; 4 = Mostly true; 5 = Completely true

1. In this company, people are mostly out for themselves
2. The major responsibility for people in this company is to consider efficiency first
3. In this company, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs
4. People are expected to do anything to further the company's interests
5. In this company, people look out for each other's good
6. There is no room for one's own personal morals or ethics in this company
7. It is very important to follow strictly the company's rules and procedures here.
8. Work is considered substandard only when it hurts the company's interests.
9. Each person in the company decides for himself/herself what is right and wrong.
10. In this company, people protect their own interest above other considerations
11. The most important consideration in this company is each person's sense of right and wrong.
12. The most important concern is the good of all the people in the company.
13. The first consideration is whether a decision violates any law.
14. People are expected to comply with the law and professional standards over and above other considerations.

15. Everyone is expected to stick by company rules and procedures.
16. In this company, our major concern is always what is best for the other person.
17. Successful people in this company go by the book.
18. The most efficient way is always the right way, in this company.
19. In this company, people are expected to strictly follow legal or professional standards.
20. Our major consideration is what is best for everyone in the company.
21. In this company, people are guided by their own personal ethics.
22. Successful people in this company strictly obey company policies.
23. In this company, the law or ethical code of theft profession is the major consideration.
24. In this company, each person is expected, above all, to work efficiently.
25. It is expected that you will always do what is right for the customer and public.
26. People in this company view team spirit as important.
27. People in this company have a strong sense of responsibility to the outside community.
28. Decisions here are primarily viewed in terms of contribution to profit.
29. People in this company are actively concerned about the customer's, and the public's, interest.
30. People are very concerned about what is generally best for employees in the company.
31. What is best for each individual is a primary concern in this organization.
32. People in this company are very concerned about what is best for themselves.
33. The effect of decisions on the customer and the public are a primary concern for this company.
34. Is is expected that each individual is cared for when making decisions here.
35. Efficient solutions to problems are always sought here.

Potential questions from the Worlds of Journalism Questionnaire for definition #3:
- ***Constraints*** - political, economic, organizational, technological, sociological
  - C 11 - How often do you participate in editorial and newsroom coordination, such as attending editorial meetings or assigning reporters? 5 means always, 4 means very often, 3 means sometimes, 2 means rarely, and 1 means almost never.
  - C 15 - Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential. If a source is not relevant to your work, please choose 8.
    - A Your personal values and beliefs

- B Your peers on the staff
- C Your editorial supervisors and higher editors
- D The managers of your news organization
- E The owners of your news organization
- F Editorial policy
- G Advertising considerations
- H Profit expectations
- J Audience research and data
- K Availability of news-gathering resources
- L Time limits
- M Journalism ethics
- N Religious considerations
- C 18 - The importance of some influences on journalism may have changed over time. Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in [add country]. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.
  - A Journalism education
  - B Ethical standards
  - C Competition
  - D Advertising considerations
  - E Profit making pressures
  - F Public relations
  - G Audience research
  - H User-generated contents, such as blogs
  - J Social media, such as [add 1 or 2 examples]
  - K Audience involvement in news production
  - L Audience feedback
  - M Pressure toward sensational news
  - O Western ways of practicing journalism
- C 19 - Journalism is in a state of change. Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in [add country]. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.
  - A Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions
  - B Average working hours of journalists
  - C Time available for researching stories

- D Interactions of journalists with their audiences
- E The importance of technical skills
- F The use of search engines
- G The importance of having a university degree
- H The importance of having a degree in journalism or a related field
- J The credibility of journalism
- K The relevance of journalism for society

Autonomy Definition 4: Individual level - Work satisfaction, discretionary judgement in workflow; marketing pressure constraints; watchdog capacities

One the first day of my first trip, I immediately noticed how there was quite a bit of scheduling freedom for each person to get their work done. The entire staff does participate in a daily morning scrum meeting, a short meeting that covers: "What did you do since the last time we met? What are you working on today? What issues or questions do you have?". The managing editor then shapes her day based on the flow of this meeting. At the same time, the reporters do need to meet deadlines for turning stories over to editorial (although these times are often flexible as the newsletter is evolving throughout the evening, and these deadlines were often negotiated in real time as I was observing). The staff seems to arrive to the office at different times and on different days, between 9-10 a.m. They tend to wrap up work around 6 or 7 p.m. based on the state of breaking news. Additionally, each staff member takes at least one (if not two) social shifts, which begin at 6:30 a.m. at home. The person on social is still required to work on stories, but they are also in charge of keeping all of the social media platforms up to date throughout the day with through curated local stories and "chatter across the internet", a term I heard most staff members say during my observational time. The social person is also in charge of pre-drafting the next day's newsletter, which hits e-mail inboxes around 4 a.m. each morning. That social person usually stays up to catch the evening news to make sure no breaking news needs to be additionally included in the newsletter/social media postings overnight. The social position demonstrates unfettered autonomy of workflow; the person that day has no oversight or editing (unless another staff member happens to catch an already published error). There is a social slack channel that the staff can contribute to throughout the day, but those tips and suggestions are not mandatory for the social person. In this position especially, the worker of the day has discretionary judgment in how they manage their workflow.

Corresponding survey(s): The Psychological Well-Being Inventory (Ryff, 1989); The General Causality Orientations Scale (GCOS) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; selfdetermination.org, n.d.b.); The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire

Potential questions from the Psychological Well-Being Inventory for definition #4: The questions from this inventory ask people to indicate a degree of level of agreement (using a score ranging from 1-6). Several of these questions examine dimensions of satisfaction. I addressed these from the perspective of work satisfaction.

2. In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live (SD, SA, 1-6)

6. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out (SD, SA, 1-6)

11. I have a sense of direction and purpose in life (SD, SA, 1-6)

12. In general, I feel confident and positive about myself (SD, SA, 1-6)

13. I tend to worry about what other people think of me (SD, SA, 1-6)

14. I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me (SD, SA, 1-6)

17. My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me (SD, SA, 1-6)

20. I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life (SD, SA, 1-6)

26. I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities (SD, SA, 1-6)

27. I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things (SD, SA, 1-6)

32. I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to my (SD, SA, 1-6)

33. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth (SD, SA, 1-6)

35. Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them (SD, SA, 1-6)

36. My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves (SD, SA, 1-6)

41. I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life (SD, SA, 1-6)

42. When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am (SD, SA, 1-6)

Potential questions from the Worlds of Journalism project for definition #4:

- C10 - How much freedom do you personally have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized? Again, 5 means complete freedom, 4 means a great deal of freedom, 3 means some freedom, 2 means little freedom, and 1 means no freedom at all.

Autonomy Definition 5: Organizational level - Freedom from commercial and political entities

There is an interesting tension here for the staff of the publication. On the commercial level, they do get to act as a small business independent media outlet. The parent company has no buy-ins from other larger media conglomerates or sponsorships from commercial entities. They do have grants from Harkin to produce local community building coverage, and also a report for America sponsored reporter split between two of the digital news sites. The main commercial influences seem to happen when there is co-sponsorship of some feature content, and also for events. However, the news coverage remains independent, with the editorial staff fiercely guarding their right to report on what and when they feel is pertinent and needed for the city.

Corresponding survey(s): *The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire*

Potential questions from the Worlds of Journalism project for definition #5:

- ***Organizational -*** Freedom from commercial and political entities
    - C 15 - Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential. If a source is not relevant to your work, please choose 8.
        - A Your personal values and beliefs
        - B Your peers on the staff
        - C Your editorial supervisors and higher editors
        - D The managers of your news organization
        - E The owners of your news organization
        - F Editorial policy
        - G Advertising considerations
        - H Profit expectations
        - J Audience research and data
        - K Availability of news-gathering resources
        - L Time limits
        - M Journalism ethics
        - N Religious considerations

Autonomy Definition 6: Societal - Freedom to responsibly sustain a free press

This dimension of autonomy was not immediately apparent in my participant observation phase, but definitely something to explore with survey work and follow-up interviews. This societal level can manifest as undue pressures, trying to write stories with integrity and hand in stories and different types of issues as responsibly as possible. This is the parallel language I will look for.

Corresponding Survey(s): The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire

- C8 - Please tell me, in your own words, what should be the three most important roles of journalists in the United States?
- C12 - Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.
    - A. Be a detached observer.
    - B. Report things as they are.
    - C. Provide analysis of current affairs.
    - D. Monitor and scrutinize political leaders.
    - E. Monitor and scrutinize business.
    - F. Set the political agenda.
    - G. Influence public opinion.
    - H. Advocate for social change.
    - J. Be an adversary of the government.
    - K. Support national development.
    - L. Convey a positive image of political leadership.
    - M. Support government policy.
    - O. Provide entertainment and relaxation.
    - P. Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience.
    - R. Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life.
    - S. Provide information people need to make political decisions.
    - T. Motivate people to participate in political activity.
    - U. Let people express their views.
    - W. Educate the audience.
    - X. Tell stories about the world.
    - Z. Promote tolerance and cultural diversity.
- O4 - Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means have you some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.

- B The government [add name]
- C Political parties
- D Politicians in general
- E The judiciary/the courts
- F The police
- G The military
- H Trade unions
- J Religious leaders
- K The news media

Autonomy Definition 7: Digital autonomy - How digital journalists operate within the demands of traffic quota; how workers function in micro-word flow demands for collaborative content production; how autonomy is negotiated for freelance and crowdfunded scenarios

As I mentioned above about the social position at this digital news organization, this group of digital journalists carefully shares the load of digital micro-word flow by providing autonomy to the person in charge of shaping online content. Additionally the staff exhibited many times a collaborative spirit in regard to how to write and angle stories and when to publish them. When the owner of the company stopped by during my first visit, he mentioned that he intentionally did not want to set up employee pay scale or advancement based on a traditional click through quota as seen in many other digital news organizations. The model of this particular organization is to pursue funding through membership growth and community building.

Corresponding Survey(s): The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire

Potential questions from the Worlds of Journalism survey for answering definition #7:
- C 15 - Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential. If a source is not relevant to your work, please choose 8.
  - A Your personal values and beliefs
  - B Your peers on the staff
  - C Your editorial supervisors and higher editors
  - D The managers of your news organization
  - E The owners of your news organization
  - F Editorial policy
  - G Advertising considerations
  - H Profit expectations

- J Audience research and data
- K Availability of news-gathering resources
- L Time limits
- M Journalism ethics
- N Religious considerations

Survey Tools for Measuring Autonomy

- **The Psychological Well-Being Inventory (Ryff, 1989)** - This instrument considers the domains of psychological well-being, including the ability to navigate the myriad of demands found in daily life, and also contains a measurement of autonomy. This instrument will help answer my dimension of psychological well-being, as well as my dimension of individual expressions of autonomy (Proposal, 45).
  - *Moral Autonomy* - Following one's convictions
    - The questions from this inventory asks people to indicate a degree of level of agreement (using a score ranging from 1-6). Several of these questions examine dimensions of moral autonomy

From the Ryfe, 1989 Psychological Well-Being Inventory: (Strongly disagree, strongly agree on a scale of 1-6)
3. I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people (SD, SA, 1-6)
4. In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live (SD, SA, 1-6)
7. My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing (SD, SA, 1-6)
8. The demands of everyday life often get me down (SD, SA, 1-6)
19. I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions (SD, SA, 1-6)
25. I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus (SD, SA, 1-6)
37. I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important (SD, SA, 1-6)

- *Individually* - Work satisfaction, discretionary judgement in workflow; marketing pressure constraints; watchdog capacities
  - The questions from this inventory ask people to indicate a degree of level of agreement (using a score ranging from 1-6). Several of these questions examine dimensions of satisfaction.

2. In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live (SD, SA, 1-6)
6. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out (SD, SA, 1-6)

11. I have a sense of direction and purpose in life (SD, SA, 1-6)

12. In general, I feel confident and positive about myself (SD, SA, 1-6)

13. I tend to worry about what other people think of me (SD, SA, 1-6)

14. I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me (SD, SA, 1-6)

17. My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me (SD, SA, 1-6)

20. I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life (SD, SA, 1-6)

26. I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities (SD, SA, 1-6)

27. I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things (SD, SA, 1-6)

32. I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me (SD, SA, 1-6)

33. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth (SD, SA, 1-6)

35. Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them (SD, SA, 1-6)

36. My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves (SD, SA, 1-6)

41. I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life (SD, SA, 1-6)

42. When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am (SD, SA, 1-6)

- **The Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Victor & Cullen, 1988)** - The primary purpose of the ECQ is to "identify normative systems that guide organizational decision-making and the systemic responses to ethical dilemmas" (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 123). Questions within this questionnaire explore how employees perceive that they make ethical decisions within the ethical climate of their work organization.
    - *Constraints* (political, economic, organizational, technological, sociological) and *Organizational* (Freedom from commercial and political entities)
    - The questions from this inventory ask "to what extent are the following statements true about your company?" These questions correspond to hypothesized ethical climates from individual, local and cosmopolitan aspects.
    - Survey respondents are asked to rank each statement according to these numbers: 1 = Mostly false; 2 = Somewhat false; 3 = Somewhat true; 4 = Mostly true; 5 = Completely true

36. In this company, people are mostly out for themselves

37. The major responsibility for people in this company is to consider efficiency first
38. In this company, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs
39. People are expected to do anything to further the company's interests
40. In this company, people look out for each other's good
41. There is no room for one's own personal morals or ethics in this company
42. It is very important to follow strictly the company's rules and procedures here.
43. Work is considered sub-standard only when it hurts the company's interests.
44. Each person in the company decides for himself/herself what is right and wrong.
45. In this company, people protect their own interest above other considerations
46. The most important consideration in this company is each person's sense of right and wrong.
47. The most important concern is the good of all the people in the company.
48. The first consideration is whether a decision violates any law.
49. People are expected to comply with the law and professional standards over and above other considerations.
50. Everyone is expected to stick by company rules and procedures.
51. In this company, our major concern is always what is best for the other person.
52. People are concerned with the company's interests
53. Successful people in this company go by the book.
54. The most efficient way is always the right way, in this company.
55. In this company, people are expected to strictly follow legal or professional standards.
56. Our major consideration is what is best for everyone in the company.
57. In this company, people are guided by their own personal ethics.
58. Successful people in this company strictly obey company policies.
59. In this company, the law or ethical code of theft profession is the major consideration.
60. In this company, each person is expected, above all, to work efficiently.
61. It is expected that you will always do what is right for the customer and public.
62. People in this company view team spirit as important.
63. People in this company have a strong sense of responsibility to the outside community.
64. Decisions here are primarily viewed in terms of contribution to profit.
65. People in this company are actively concerned about the customer's, and the public's, interest.
66. People are very concerned about what is generally best for employees in the company.
67. What is best for each individual is a primary concern in this organization.
68. People in this company are very concerned about what is best for themselves.

69. The effect of decisions on the customer and the public are a primary concern for this company.
70. Is is expected that each individual is cared for when making decisions here.
71. Efficient solutions to problems are always sought here.

- **Work Climate Questionnaire (Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004) -** To further examine the dimension of autonomy as situated within the workspace, I would like to use the Work Climate Questionnaire (WCQ), which looks at autonomy support from within a work organization (selfdetermination.org, n.d.a; Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004).
    - Degree of freedom journalists have to shape their own work regardless of internal and external powers
    - Survey respondents are asked to rank each statement from strongly disagree to strongly agree (1-7, 4 is neutral)

16. I feel my manager provides me choices and options (SD, SA, 1-7)
17. I feel understood by my manager (SD, SA, 1-7)
18. I am able to be open with my manager at work (SD, SA, 1-7)
19. My manager conveyed confidence in my ability to do well at my job.
20. I feel that my manager accepts me.
21. My manager made sure I really understood the goals of my job and what I need to do.
22. My manager encouraged me to ask questions.
23. I feel a lot of trust in my manager.
24. My manager answers my questions fully and carefully.
25. My manager listens to how I would like to do things.
26. My manager handles people's emotions very well.
27. I feel that my manager cares about me as a person.
28. I don't feel very good about the way my manager talks to me.
29. My manager tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.
30. I feel able to share my feeling with my manager.

The Worlds of Journalism Study Master Questionnaire
This questionnaire explores many of the autonomy definitions I have derived from my literature review.
- *Moral Autonomy* - Following one's convictions
    - C13 - The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree,

3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.
- A. Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context.
- B. What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation.
- C. What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment. 5
- D. It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it.
- C 14 - Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances? 1 means it is always justified, 2 means it is justified on occasion, and 3 means you would not approve under any circumstances.
  - A. Paying people for confidential information
  - B. Using confidential business or government documents without authorization
  - C. Claiming to be somebody else
  - D. Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story
  - E. Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission
  - F. Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information
  - G. Using hidden microphones or cameras
  - H. Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors
  - J. Publishing stories with unverified content
  - K. Accepting money from sources
  - L. Altering or fabricating quotes from sources
  - M. Altering photos
- ***Degree of freedom journalists have to shape their own work regardless of internal and external powers -*** The extent to which journalists are free to decide on the stories they cover or edit, story angles, sources and narrative frames
  - C9 - Thinking of your work overall, how much freedom do you personally have in selecting news stories you work on? 5 means complete freedom, 4 means a great deal of freedom, 3 means some freedom, 2 means little freedom, and 1 means no freedom at all.
  - C10 - How much freedom do you personally have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized? Again, 5 means complete

freedom, 4 means a great deal of freedom, 3 means some freedom, 2 means little freedom, and 1 means no freedom at all.

- C-16 - Here is another list. Again, please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how influential each of the following is in your work.
    - A Your friends, acquaintances and family
    - B Colleagues in other media
    - C Feedback from the audience
    - D Competing news organizations
    - E Media laws and regulation
    - F Information access
    - G Censorship
    - H Government officials
    - J Politicians
    - K Pressure groups
    - L Business people
    - M Public relations
    - N Relationships with news sources
    - O The military, police and state security
- **Constraints** - political, economic, organizational, technological, sociological
    - C 11 - How often do you participate in editorial and newsroom coordination, such as attending editorial meetings or assigning reporters? 5 means always, 4 means very often, 3 means sometimes, 2 means rarely, and 1 means almost never.
    - C 15 - Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential. If a source is not relevant to your work, please choose 8.
        - A Your personal values and beliefs
        - B Your peers on the staff
        - C Your editorial supervisors and higher editors
        - D The managers of your news organization
        - E The owners of your news organization
        - F Editorial policy
        - G Advertising considerations
        - H Profit expectations
        - J Audience research and data
        - K Availability of news-gathering resources
        - L Time limits
        - M Journalism ethics

- N Religious considerations
- C 18 - The importance of some influences on journalism may have changed over time. Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in [add country]. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.
  - A Journalism education
  - B Ethical standards
  - C Competition
  - D Advertising considerations
  - E Profit making pressures
  - F Public relations
  - G Audience research
  - H User-generated contents, such as blogs
  - J Social media, such as [add 1 or 2 examples]
  - K Audience involvement in news production
  - L Audience feedback
  - M Pressure toward sensational news
  - O Western ways of practicing journalism
- C 19 - Journalism is in a state of change. Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in [add country]. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.
  - A Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions
  - B Average working hours of journalists
  - C Time available for researching stories
  - D Interactions of journalists with their audiences
  - E The importance of technical skills
  - F The use of search engines
  - G The importance of having a university degree
  - H The importance of having a degree in journalism or a related field
  - J The credibility of journalism
  - K The relevance of journalism for society

- ***Individually*** - Work satisfaction, discretionary judgement in workflow; marketing pressure constraints; watchdog capacities

- C10 - How much freedom do you personally have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized? Again, 5 means complete freedom, 4 means a great deal of freedom, 3 means some freedom, 2 means little freedom, and 1 means no freedom at all.
- ***Organizational -*** Freedom from commercial and political entities
  - C 15 - Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential. If a source is not relevant to your work, please choose 8.
    - A Your personal values and beliefs
    - B Your peers on the staff
    - C Your editorial supervisors and higher editors
    - D The managers of your news organization
    - E The owners of your news organization
    - F Editorial policy
    - G Advertising considerations
    - H Profit expectations
    - J Audience research and data
    - K Availability of news-gathering resources
    - L Time limits
    - M Journalism ethics
    - N Religious considerations
- ***Societal -*** Freedom to responsibly sustain a free press
  - C8 - Please tell me, in your own words, what should be the three most important roles of journalists in the United States?
  - C12 - Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.
    - A. Be a detached observer.
    - B. Report things as they are.
    - C. Provide analysis of current affairs.
    - D. Monitor and scrutinize political leaders.
    - E. Monitor and scrutinize business.
    - F. Set the political agenda.
    - G. Influence public opinion.
    - H. Advocate for social change.
    - J. Be an adversary of the government.
    - K. Support national development.
    - L. Convey a positive image of political leadership.

- M. Support government policy.
- O. Provide entertainment and relaxation.
- P. Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience.
- R. Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life.
- S. Provide information people need to make political decisions.
- T. Motivate people to participate in political activity.
- U. Let people express their views.
- W. Educate the audience.
- X. Tell stories about the world.
- Z. Promote tolerance and cultural diversity.
    - O4 - Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means have you some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.
        - B The government [add name]
        - C Political parties
        - D Politicians in general
        - E The judiciary/the courts
        - F The police
        - G The military
        - H Trade unions
        - J Religious leaders
        - K The news media
- ***Digital autonomy -*** How digital journalists operate within the demands of traffic quota; how workers function in micro-word flow demands for collaborative content production; how autonomy is negotiated for freelance and crowdfunded scenarios
    - C 15 - Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential. If a source is not relevant to your work, please choose 8.
        - A Your personal values and beliefs
        - B Your peers on the staff
        - C Your editorial supervisors and higher editors
        - D The managers of your news organization
        - E The owners of your news organization
        - F Editorial policy
        - G Advertising considerations

- H Profit expectations
- J Audience research and data
- K Availability of news-gathering resources
- L Time limits
- M Journalism ethics
- N Religious considerations

Digital Media: Personal, Work Place & Professional Experiences Survey

iQ Score: Fair   ● Published

▼ Demographic Information   Block Options ∨

Q31

In this survey, I will ask you questions about your personal, workplace and professional experiences. I want to know how you feel about each of these environments. As a reminder, this survey is completely voluntary and your answers will be held completely anonymous. Please take this survey on a laptop or desktop device, as it will be easier for you to read through all of your options.

To which gender do you most identify?

○ Female

○ Male

○ Other

○ Prefer not to say

Q32

What is your age?

○ Under 18

○ 18 - 24

○ 25 - 34

○ 35 - 44

○ 45 - 54

○ 55 - 64

○ 65 - 74

○ 75 - 84

○ 85 or older

Q33

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you're currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.)

○ Less than a high school diploma

○ High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)

○ Some college, no degree

○ Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)

○ Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)

○ Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)

○ Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)

○ Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

▼ Personal Experiences   Block Options ⌄

Q2   Please indicate your degree of agreement to the following sentences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people	O	O	O	O	O	O
In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizon	O	O	O	O	O	O
My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q35   Please indicate your degree of agreement to the following sentences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly agree
The demands of everyday life often get me down	O	O	O	O	O	O
I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus	O	O	O	O	O	O
I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q3   Please indicate your degree of agreement to the following sentences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live	O	O	O	O	O	O
When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have a sense of direction and purpose in life	O	O	O	O	O	O
In general, I feel confident and positive about myself	O	O	O	O	O	O

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Q36

Please indicate your degree of agreement to the following sentences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I tend to worry about what other people think of me	O	O	O	O	O	O
I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me	O	O	O	O	O	O
My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me	O	O	O	O	O	O
I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q4

Please indicate your degree of agreement to the following sentences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities	O	O	O	O	O	O
I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things	O	O	O	O	O	O
I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me	O	O	O	O	O	O
For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q37

Please indicate your degree of agreement to the following sentences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them	O	O	O	O	O	O
My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves	O	O	O	O	O	O
I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life	O	O	O	O	O	O
When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am	O	O	O	O	O	O

▼ Workplace Experiences   Block Options ∨

☐ Q5   This part of the survey contains items that are related to your experience with the manager who
⚙   is your most immediate supervisor. Managers have different styles in dealing with employees,
        and we would like to know more about how you have felt about your encounters with your
iQ   manager. Your responses are confidential. Please be honest and candid.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel my manager provides me choices and options	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel understood by my manager	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am able to be open with my manager at work	○	○	○	○	○	○
My manager conveyed confidence in my ability to do well at my job.	○	○	○	○	○	○

☐
Q38   This part of the survey contains items that are related to your experience with the manager who
        is your most immediate supervisor. Managers have different styles in dealing with employees,
⚙   and we would like to know more about how you have felt about your encounters with your
iQ   manager. Your responses are confidential. Please be honest and candid.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel that my manager accepts me.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My manager made sure I really understood the goals of my job and what I need to do.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My manager encouraged me to ask questions.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a lot of trust in my manager.	○	○	○	○	○	○

☐ Q6   This part of the survey contains items that are related to your experience with the manager who
⚙   is your most immediate supervisor. Managers have different styles in dealing with employees,
        and we would like to know more about how you have felt about your encounters with your
iQ   manager. Your responses are confidential. Please be honest and candid.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
My manager answers my questions fully and carefully.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My manager listens to how I would like to do things.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My manager handles people's emotions very well.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that my manager cares about me as a person.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q39

This part of the survey contains items that are related to your experience with the manager who is your most immediate supervisor. Managers have different styles in dealing with employees, and we would like to know more about how you have felt about your encounters with your manager. Your responses are confidential. Please be honest and candid.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I don't feel very good about the way my manager talks to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My manager tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel able to share my feeling with my manager.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Add Block

▼ Workplace Climate   Block Options ∨

Q7

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
In this company, people are mostly out for themselves	○	○	○	○	○	○
The major responsibility for people in this company is to consider efficiency first	○	○	○	○	○	○
In this company, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs	○	○	○	○	○	○
People are expected to do anything to further the company's interests	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Q40

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
In this company, people look out for each other's good	O	O	O	O	O	O
There is no room for one's own personal morals or ethics in this company	O	O	O	O	O	O
It is very important to follow strictly the company's rules and procedures here.	O	O	O	O	O	O
Work is considered sub-standard only when it hurts the company's interests.	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q8

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
Each person in the company decides for himself/herself what is right and wrong.	O	O	O	O	O	O
In this company, people protect their own interest above other considerations	O	O	O	O	O	O
The most important consideration in this company is each person's sense of right and wrong.	O	O	O	O	O	O
The most important concern is the good of all the people in the company.	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q41

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
The first consideration is whether a decision violates any law.	○	○	○	○	○	○
People are expected to comply with the law and professional standards over and above other considerations.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Everyone is expected to stick by company rules and procedures.	○	○	○	○	○	○
In this company, our major concern is always what is best for the other person.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q9

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
People are primarily concerned with the company's interests	○	○	○	○	○	○
Successful people in this company go by the book.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The most efficient way is always the right way, in this company.	○	○	○	○	○	○
In this company, people are expected to strictly follow legal or professional standards.	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Q42

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
Our major consideration is what is best for everyone in the company.	O	O	O	O	O	O
In this company, people are guided by their own personal ethics.	O	O	O	O	O	O
Successful people in this company strictly obey company policies.	O	O	O	O	O	O
In this company, the law or ethical code of theft profession is the major consideration.	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q10

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
In this company, each person is expected, above all, to work efficiently.	O	O	O	O	O	O
It is expected that you will always do what is right for the customer and public.	O	O	O	O	O	O
People in this company view team spirit as important.	O	O	O	O	O	O
People in this company have a strong sense of responsibility to the outside community.	O	O	O	O	O	O

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Q43

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
Decisions here are primarily viewed in terms of contribution to profit.	O	O	O	O	O	O
People in this company are actively concerned about the customer's, and the public's, interest.	O	O	O	O	O	O
People are very concerned about what is generally best for employees in the company.	O	O	O	O	O	O
What is best for each individual is a primary concern in this organization.	O	O	O	O	O	O

Q44

I would like to ask you some questions about the general climate in your company. Please answer the following in terms of how it really is in your company, not how you would prefer it to be. Please be as candid as possible; remember, all your responses will remain strictly anonymous. Please indicate whether you agree with each of the following statements about your company.

	Completely False	Mostly False	Somewhat False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Completely True
People in this company are very concerned about what is best for themselves.	O	O	O	O	O	O
The effect of decisions on the customer and the public are a primary concern for this company.	O	O	O	O	O	O
Is is expected that each individual is cared for when making decisions here.	O	O	O	O	O	O
Efficient solutions to problems are always sought here.	O	O	O	O	O	O

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Q11 The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context.	O	O	O	O
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation.	O	O	O	O
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment.	O	O	O	O
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it.	O	O	O	O

Q12 Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified (either always or on occasion) and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

	Always Justified	Justified on Occasion	Would Not Approve Under Any Circumstances
Paying people for confidential information	O	O	O
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	O	O	O
Claiming to be somebody else	O	O	O
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	O	O	O
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	O	O	O
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	O	O	O

Q45 Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified (either always or on occasion) and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

	Always Justified	Justified on Occasion	Would Not Approve Under Any Circumstances
Using hidden microphones or cameras	O	O	O
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	O	O	O
Publishing stories with unverified content	O	O	O
Accepting money from sources	O	O	O
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	O	O	O
Altering photos	O	O	O

Q13 Thinking of your work overall, how much freedom do you personally have in selecting news stories you work on?

- O Complete Freedom
- O A Great Deal of Freedom
- O Some Freedom
- O Little Freedom
- O No Freedom at All

Q14 How much freedom do you personally have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized?

- O Complete Freedom
- O A Great Deal of Freedom
- O Some Freedom
- O Little Freedom
- O No Freedom At All

Q15 Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work.

	Extremely Influential	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential	A Little Influential	Not Influential
Your personal values and beliefs	O	O	O	O	O
Your peers on the staff	O	O	O	O	O
Your editorial supervisors and higher editors	O	O	O	O	O
The managers of your news organization	O	O	O	O	O
The owners of your news organization	O	O	O	O	O

Q46

Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work.

	Extremely Influential	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential	A Little Influential	Not Influential
Editorial policy	O	O	O	O	O
Advertising considerations	O	O	O	O	O
Profit expectations	O	O	O	O	O
Audience research and data	O	O	O	O	O
Availability of news-gathering resources	O	O	O	O	O
Time limits	O	O	O	O	O
Journalism ethics	O	O	O	O	O
Religious considerations	O	O	O	O	O

Q16

Here is another list. Again, please tell me how influential each of the following is in your work.

	Extremely Influential	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential	A Little Influential	Not Influential
Your friends, acquaintances and family	O	O	O	O	O
Colleagues in other media	O	O	O	O	O
Feedback from the audience	O	O	O	O	O
Competing news organizations	O	O	O	O	O
Media laws and regulation	O	O	O	O	O
Information access	O	O	O	O	O
Censorship	O	O	O	O	O

Q47

Here is another list. Again, please tell me how influential each of the following is in your work.

	Extremely Influential	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential	A Little Influential	Not Influential
Government officials	O	O	O	O	O
Politicians	O	O	O	O	O
Pressure groups	O	O	O	O	O
Business people	O	O	O	O	O
Public relations	O	O	O	O	O
Relationships with news sources	O	O	O	O	O
The military, police and state security	O	O	O	O	O

Q17

How often do you participate in editorial and newsroom coordination, such as attending editorial meetings or assigning reporters?

- ○ Always
- ○ Very Often
- ○ Sometimes
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Almost Never

Q30

On average, how many news items do you produce and/or edit in a usual week?

Q18

The importance of some influences on journalism may have changed over time. Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in America.

	They have strengthened a lot	They have somewhat strengthened	They did not change	They have somewhat weakened	They have weakened a lot
Journalism education	○	○	○	○	○
Ethical standards	○	○	○	○	○
Competition	○	○	○	○	○
Advertising considerations	○	○	○	○	○
Profit making pressures	○	○	○	○	○
Public relations	○	○	○	○	○
Audience research	○	○	○	○	○
User-generated contents, such as blogs	○	○	○	○	○

Q48

The importance of some influences on journalism may have changed over time. Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in America.

	They have strengthened a lot	They have somewhat strengthened	They did not change	They have somewhat weakened	They have weakened a lot
Social media, such as Twitter or Facebook	○	○	○	○	○
Audience involvement in news production	○	○	○	○	○
Audience feedback	○	○	○	○	○
Pressure toward sensational news	○	○	○	○	○
Western ways of practicing journalism	○	○	○	○	○

Q19

Journalism is in a state of change. Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of media work in America.

	They have increased a lot	They have somewhat increased	There has been no change	They have somewhat decreased	They have decreased a lot
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	O	O	O	O	O
Average working hours of journalists	O	O	O	O	O
Time available for researching stories	O	O	O	O	O
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	O	O	O	O	O
The importance of technical skills	O	O	O	O	O

Q49

Journalism is in a state of change. Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of media work in America.

	They have increased a lot	They have somewhat increased	There has been no change	They have somewhat decreased	They have decreased a lot
The use of search engines	O	O	O	O	O
The importance of having a university degree	O	O	O	O	O
The importance of having a degree in journalism or a related field	O	O	O	O	O
The credibility of journalism	O	O	O	O	O
The relevance of journalism for society	O	O	O	O	O

Q21

Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work.

	Extremely important	Very important	Somewhat Important	A little Important	Unimportant
Be a detached observer	O	O	O	O	O
Report things as they are	O	O	O	O	O
Provide analysis of current affairs	O	O	O	O	O
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	O	O	O	O	O
Monitor and scrutinize business	O	O	O	O	O
Influence public opinion	O	O	O	O	O
Advocate for social change	O	O	O	O	O

Q50

Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work.

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	A Little Important	Unimportant
Be an adversary of the government	○	○	○	○	○
Support national development	○	○	○	○	○
Convey a positive image of political leadership	○	○	○	○	○
Support government policy	○	○	○	○	○
Provide entertainment and relaxation	○	○	○	○	○
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	○	○	○	○	○
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	○	○	○	○	○

Q51

Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work.

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	A Little Important	Unimportant
Provide information people need to make political decisions	○	○	○	○	○
Motivate people to participate in political activity	○	○	○	○	○
Let people express their views	○	○	○	○	○
Educate the audience	○	○	○	○	○
Tell stories about the world	○	○	○	○	○
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	○	○	○	○	○

Q52

How influential would you say your company's analytics are on shaping your story writing processes?

○ Extremely Influential

○ Very Influential

○ Somewhat Influential

○ A Little Influential

○ Not Influential

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Q53 How influential would you say your company's analytics are on shaping your story editing processes?

○ Extremely Influential

○ Very Influential

○ Somewhat Influential

○ A Little Influential

○ Not Influential

Add Block

End of Survey   Survey Termination Options...

Table 3. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Results

Question	Construct	Mean and SD**
I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people	Autonomy*	N=4, M=2, SD=.816
In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live	Environmental Mastery*	N=4, M=2.25, SD=.5
I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizon	Personal Growth	N=4, M=1, SD=0
My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing	Autonomy*	N=4, M=3, SD=.816
The demands of everyday life often get me down	Environmental Mastery	N=4, M=3, SD=1.41
I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions	Autonomy	N=4, M=2, SD=.816
I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus	Autonomy*	N=4, M=1.75, SD=.5
I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important	Autonomy*	N=4, M=2, SD=.816
When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out	Self-Acceptance*	N=4, M=2.25, SD=.957
I have a sense of direction and purpose in life	Purpose in Life*	N=4, M=1.75, SD=.5
In general, I feel confident and positive about myself	Self-Acceptance*	N=4, M=2, SD=.816
I tend to worry about what other people think of me	Autonomy	N=4, M=3, SD=1.155
I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me	Environmental Mastery	N=4, M=1.5, SD=.577
My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me	Purpose in Life	N=4, M=1.75, SD=.5
I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life	Environmental Mastery*	N=4, M=2.25, SD=.957
I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities	Environmental Mastery	N=4, M=4, SD=1.414
I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things	Personal Growth	N=4, M=2.5, SD=.577
I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me	Environmental Mastery	N=4, SD=2.75, SD=.957
For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth	Personal Growth*	N=4, M=2, SD=.816
Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them	Purpose in Life*	N=4, M=2, SD=.816
My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves	Self-Acceptance	N=4, M=2.5, SD=1.291
I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life	Purpose in Life	N=4, SD=1.75, SD=.5
When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am	Self-Acceptance*	N=4, SD=3.75, SD=.967
*These constructs were reverse coded in the results section ****The scale of analysis was a six-point scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"**		

Table 4. Work Climate Questionnaire

Questions	Construct	Mean and SD*
I feel my manager provides me choices and options	Autonomy perceptions	N=4, M=5, SD=1.414
I feel understood by my manager	Relationship	N=4, M=4.75, SD=1.893
I am able to be open with my manager at work	Communication	N=4, M=4.75, SD=1.258
My manager conveyed confidence in my ability to do well at my job.	Autonomy perceptions	N=4, M=5.25, SD=.957
I feel that my manager accepts me.	Relationship	N=4, M=5, SD=1.414
My manager made sure I really understood the goals of my job and what I need to do.	Communication	N=4, M=5, SD=1.414
My manager encouraged me to ask questions.	Communication	N=4, M=5.50, SD=.577
My manager answers my questions fully and carefully.	Communication	N=4, M=4.75 SD= 1.893
My manager listens to how I would like to do things.	Communication	N=4, M=4.75 SD= 1.893
My manager handles people's emotions very well.	Relationship	N=4, M=4.75 SD= 1.893
I feel that my manager cares about me as a person.	Relationship	N=4, M=5, SD=1.414
I don't feel very good about the way my manager talks to me.	Relationship	N=4, M=5, SD=2
My manager tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.	Communication	N=4, M=4.5, SD=1.732
I feel able to share my feeling with my manager.	Relationship	N=4, M=4.75, SD=1.258
*Questions were answered on a 6-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree"		

Table 5. Ethical Climate Survey

Question	Construct	Mean and SD*
In this company, people are mostly out for themselves	Self Interest EC	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
The major responsibility for people in this company is to consider efficiency first	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, M=2.67, SD=1.155
In this company, people are expected to follow their own personal and moral beliefs	Personal Morality EC	N=3, M=5, SD=1
People are expected to do anything to further the company's interests	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, M=1.67, SD=1.155
In this company, people look out for each other's good	Self Interest EC	N=3, M=2.67, SD=2.887
There is no room for one's own personal morals or ethics in this company	Personal Morality EC	N=3, M=1, SD=0
It is very important to follow strictly the company's rules and procedures here.	Rules, Standards, and Procedures EC	N=3, M=3.33, SD=1.528
Work is considered sub-standard only when it hurts the company's interests.	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, M=1.67, SD=.577
Each person in the company decides for himself/herself what is right and wrong.	Personal Morality EC	N=3, M=4, SD=1.732
In this company, people protect their own interest above other considerations	Self Interest EC	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
The most important consideration in this company is each person's sense of right and wrong.	Personal Morality EC	N=3, M=3.33, SD=1.528
The most important concern is the good of all the people in the company.	Friendship and Team Interest EC	N=3, M=4.33, SD=1.155
The first consideration is whether a decision violates any law.	Laws and Professional Codes EC	N=3, M=3.67, SD=2.082
People are expected to comply with the law and professional standards over and above other considerations.	Laws and Professional Codes EC	N=3, M=4.67, SD=2.309
Everyone is expected to stick by company rules and procedures.	Rules, Standards, and Procedures EC	N=3, M=4.67, SD=1.155
In this company, our major concern is always what is best for the other person.	Friendship and Team Interest EC	N=3, M=4.33, SD=1.528
People are primarily concerned with the company's interest	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, M=3, SD=1
Successful people in this company go by the book.	Rules, Standards, and Procedures EC	N=3, M=2.33, SD=.577
The most efficient way is always the right way, in this company.	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, M=2, SD=0
In this company, people are expected to strictly follow legal or professional standards.	Laws and Professional Codes EC	N=3, M=5.33, SD=1.155
Our major consideration is what is best for everyone in the company.	Friendship and Team Interest EC	N=3, M=4.33, SD=.577
In this company, people are guided by their own personal ethics.	Personal Morality EC	N=3, M=5, SD=0
Successful people in this company strictly obey company policies.	Rules, Standards, and Procedures EC	N=3, M=3.67, SD=1.528
In this company, the law or ethical code of the profession is the major consideration.	Laws and Professional Codes EC	N=3, M=5, SD=1.732
In this company, each person is expected, above all, to work efficiently.	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, M=4, SD=0

Ethical Climate Survey Cont.

Question	Construct	Mean and SD*
It is expected that you will always do what is right for the customer and public.	Social Responsibility EC	N=3, M=5.33, SD=.577
People in this company view team spirit as important.	Friendship and Team Interest EC	N=3, M=6, SD=0
People in this company have a strong sense of responsibility to the outside community.	Social Responsibility EC	N=3, M=6, SD=0
Decisions here are primarily viewed in terms of contribution to profit.	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, M=1.67, SD=.577
People in this company are actively concerned about the customer's, and the public's, interest.	Social Responsibility EC	N=3, M=5.33, SD=.577
People are very concerned about what is generally best for employees in the company.	Friendship and Team Interest EC	N=3, M=4.67, SD=.577
What is best for each individual is a primary concern in this organization.	Friendship and Team Interest EC	N=3, SD=4.33, SD=.577
People in this company are very concerned about what is best for themselves.	Self-Interest EC	N=3, SD=1.33, SD=.577
The effect of decisions on the customer and the public are a primary concern for this company.	Social Responsibility EC	N=3, SD=5.67, SD=.577
It is expected that each individual is cared for when making decisions here.	Friendship and Team Interest EC	N=3, SD=5.33, SD=.577
Efficient solutions to problems are always sought here.	Company Profit and Efficiency EC	N=3, SD=5, SD=1
*Questions were answered on a 6-point scale ranging from "Completely False" to "Completely True"		

Table 6. Worlds of Journalism Survey Responses

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	Relativistic/Idealistic Thinking	N=3, M=1, SD=0
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	Relativistic/Idealistic Thinking	N=3, M=1.67, SD=.577
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	Relativistic/Idealistic Thinking	N=3, M=3.33, SD=1.16
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	Relativistic/Idealistic Thinking	N=3, M=3.33, SD=1.16

Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified (either always or on occasion) and which would you not approve under any circumstances?

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Paying people for confidential information	Professional ethics	N=3, M=3, SD=0
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	Professional ethics	N=3, M=1.67, SD=.577
Claiming to be somebody else	Professional ethics	N=3, M=2.67, SD=.577
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	Professional ethics	N=3, M=2.67, SD=.577
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	Professional ethics	N=3, M=2.67, SD=.577
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	Professional ethics	N=3, M=2.33, SD=.577
Using hidden microphones or cameras	Professional ethics	N=3, M=2.67, SD=.577
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	Professional ethics	N=3, M=2.67, SD=.577
Publishing stories with unverified content	Professional ethics	N=3, M=3, SD=0
Accepting money from sources	Professional ethics	N=3, M=3, SD=0
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	Professional ethics	N=3, M=3, SD=0
Altering photos	Professional ethics	N=3, M=2.67, Sd=.577

Questions concerning freedom in the story process

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Thinking of your work overall, how much freedom do you personally have in selecting news stories you work on?	Freedom in story selection	N=3, M=2, SD=0
How much freedom do you personally have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized?	Freedom in story construction	N=3, M=2, SD=0

Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Your personal values and beliefs	Individual influences	N=3, M=2.67, SD=2.08
Your peers on the staff	Individual influences	N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.16
Your editorial supervisors and higher editors	Individual influences	N=3, M=2, SD=1
The managers of your news organization	Individual influences	N=3, M=3, SD=1.732
The owners of your news organization	Individual influences	N=3, M=4, SD=1
Editorial Policy	Individual influences	N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.53
Advertising Considerations	Individual influences	N=3, M=4.67, SD=.577
Profit Expectations	Individual influences	N=3, M=4.33, SD=1.16
Audience research and data	Individual influences	N=3, M=2, SD=1
Availability of news-gathering resources	Individual influences	N=3, M=2, SD=1

Worlds of Journalism Survey Responses, Cont.

Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Time limits	Individual influences	N=3, M=1.67, SD=.577
Journalism ethics	Individual influences	N=3, M=1, SD=0
Religious Considerations	Individual influences	N=3, M=4.33, SD=1.16
Your friends, acquaintances, and family	Individual influences	N=3, M=4, SD=1
Colleagues in Other Media	Individual influences	N=3, M=3.67, SD=.577
Feedback from Audience	Individual influences	N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.53
Competing New Organizations	Individual influences	N=3, M=3, SD=2
Media Law and Organizations	Individual influences	N=3, M=2.67, SD=2.08
Information Access	Individual influences	N=3, M=2, SD=1
Censorship	Individual influences	N=3, M=4.67, SD=.577
Government and Politicians	Individual influences	N=3, M=4.67, SD=.577
Pressure Groups	Individual influences	N=3, M=5, SD=0
Business People	Individual influences	N=3, M=4.67, SD=.577
Public Relations	Individual influences	N=3, M=4.67, SD=.577
Relationships with news sources	Individual influences	N=3, M=4, SD=1
The military, police and state security	Individual influences	N=3, M=5, SD=0

The importance of some influences on journalism may have changed over time. Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in America

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Journalism education	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=2.33, SD=.577
Ethical standards	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=3.33, SD=1.16
Competition	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
Advertising considerations	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=2, SD=0
Profit making pressures	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=1.67, SD=.577
Public relations	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=2.67, SD=.577
Audience research	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
User-generated contents, such as blogs	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
Social media, such as Twitter or Facebook	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
Audience involvement in news production	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=1.67, SD=1.16
Audience feedback	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=1.67, SD=1.16
Pressure toward sensational news	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=2.33, SD=.577
Western ways of practicing journalism	Influence on journalism	N=3, M=2.67, SD=1.53

Journalism is in a state of change. Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of the following aspects of media work in America.

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	Professional Practice	N=3, M=2, SD=0
Average working hours of journalists	Professional Practice	N=3, M=2, SD=1.73
Time available for researching stories	Professional Practice	N=3, M=4.33, SD=.577
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	Professional Practice	N=3, M=2, SD=1.73
The importance of technical skills	Professional Practice	N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.53
The use of search engines	Professional Practice	N=3, M=1.67, SD=1.155
The importance of having a university degree	Professional Practice	N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.16
The importance of having a degree in journalism or a related field	Professional Practice	N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.16
The credibility of journalism	Professional Practice	N=3, M=4.33, SD=.577
The relevance of journalism for society	Professional Practice	N=3, M=1.67, SD=1.16

Worlds of Journalism Survey Responses, Cont.

<u>Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work</u>

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
Be a detatched observer	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
Report things as they are	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
Provide an analysis of current affairs	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=2.33, SD=1.16
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
Monitor and scrutinize business	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1.33, SD=.577
Influence public opinion	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=3.67, SD=.577
Advocate for social change	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=4, SD=1
Be an adversary of the government	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1.67, SD=.577
Support national development	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=5, SD=0
Convey a positive image of political leadership	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=5, SD=0
Support government policy	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=5, SD=0
Provide entertainment and relaxations	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=2.57, SD=.577
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=2.67, SD=1.53
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=3.33, SD=1.53
Provide information people need to make political decisions	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1, SD=0
Motivate people to participate in political activity	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1, SD=0
Let people express their views	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=2, SD=1
Educate the audience	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1, SD=0
Tell stories about the world	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1, SD=0
Promote tolerance and diversity	Institutional Roles	N=3, M=1.67 SD=1.16

<u>Concerning the use of editorial decisions and analytics</u>

Question	Construct	Mean and SD
How influential would you say your company's analytics are on shaping your story writing processes?	Use of analytics	N=3, M=3, SD=2
How influential would you say your company's analytics are on shaping your story editing processes?	Use of analytics	N=3, M=3.33 SD=2.08
How often do you participate in editorial and newsroom coordination, such as attending editorial meetings or assigning reporters?	Editorial Decisions	N=3, M=1, SD=0

APPENDIX D – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me your full name and your title with The Golden Gate
2. What was it like to come to work in this organization?
3. What is one of the most vivid moments you have had while covering your beat (or position) with The Golden Gate?
4. (If they have had previous experience in a traditional newsroom) How does your experience of working at The Golden Gate compare to your work in a traditional newsroom?
5. How do your bosses/managers communicate work expectations?

I had you take a survey a few weeks ago. In it I asked you to answer questions about the ethical climate of The Golden Gate, and also about how free you feel to express your identity and do your job within the constraints of your workplace. The next few questions will expand on these ideas.

6. During your time at The Golden Gate, how would you say friendship ties to other staff members influenced the work you produced?

7. Tell me a bit about team dynamics at The Golden Gate. How often do you team up with other staff members to produce content or edit stories? How important is this team perspective to your work? What is one example you remember of how you have functioned with your staff as a team?

8. In your line of work, there can be a great amount of autonomy in how you accomplish covering the city. During your time at The Golden Gate, how did you work to balance journalistic codes such as autonomy with the demands for efficient content production?

9. Has your workplace supported you to uphold the professional duties of journalism? Why or why not?

10. In a startup environment, company profit expectations can deeply impact how staff time is directed. The unique model of The Golden Gate represents an interesting experimental blend between traditional journalistic coverage, advertising-driven and event-driven endeavors. Overall, how would you say these constraints affect your workflow?

11. How is your work shaped by profit demands?

12. How is your time shaped by profit demands?

13. So when we talk about branding and planning events and building content, what are the typical kinds of friction points in those conversations? What are the issues that come up? Is everyone always on the same page with those plans?

14. On a personal level, do you feel like your workplace enables your expression of self? Why or why not?

15. Do you feel like your workplace enables you to accomplish your work to the level you desire to?

16. Does your company support your personal moral viewpoints? Why or why not?

17. From your perspective as someone deeply involved in digital journalism, what do you see as the future of the field? What do you see as excellence in the field?

18. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

19. Do you have a preferred pseudonym?