Theorizing Journalism Education, Citizenship, and New Media Technologies in a Global Media Age

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Abstract

This essay details the results of fifty-four open-ended interview questionnaires with university-level communication students from eleven countries, exploring the opportunities and challenges for journalism and news in participatory democracy. The study participants were enrolled in a three-week summer global media literacy program, at the end of which they were asked to complete an open-ended survey questionnaire, asking about the role digital media technologies and social media platforms have on journalism and its role in a participatory democracy. Results highlight a general negativity toward the growing influence of new media technologies in journalism with regard to objectivity, autonomy, balance, and depth, juxtaposed with the embrace of the same technologies in contributing to greater citizen participation, voice, and inclusion in journalism and news flow. This divide raises questions around the relationship between journalism, journalism education, and technology in the context of participatory citizenship. The study concludes by recommending a more integrative model for journalism education than presently followed that addresses the disjuncture evidenced in this study between professional notions of journalism and participatory citizenship in the digital age.

Key words: News literacy, journalism education, global, digital media, citizenship.

Introduction: New Relationships between Journalists, Technology, and Citizenship

At the heart of this investigation is the confluence of journalism education, technology, and the perceptions future journalists have of the linkages between

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citizenship and media. Indeed, tomorrow's communicators are on the forefront of tremendous technological advances. Increasing Internet penetration worldwide and the growing influence of transnational, converged, and globally interconnected media industries have fundamentally altered how information is processed, distributed, and received. Further, new mobile technologies have created an information exchange no longer restricted by physical boundaries. As a result, formerly insurmountable economic and political barriers to communication technologies have fractured traditional mass communication models of one-to-many into myriad new alternatives. Many in the media and news industries continue to explore new economic models for news and information. In the meantime, the current state of flux calls for a reexamination of the core relationships among journalism, participatory democracy, and technological innovation.

An ideological spectrum of approaches to gauging the relationship between mass media and modern democracies has developed since modern theorizations of this relationship first emerged over a century ago. On one end of this spectrum, there is the embrace of a communitarian, deliberative democratic conceptualization of media and democracy, one that makes the case for a constant and evolving dialogue between the press and public. This argument was first articulated by John Dewey[1] and further theorized by Jurgen Habermas[2] as an essential component of representative democracies. On the other side of this spectrum are more monitorial views of the informed citizen espoused early on by Walter Lippman,[3] and later by John Zaller,[4] Michael Schudson,[5] and Doris Graber,[6] among many others. The latter views contend that citizens cannot remain abreast of all available information at all times. Instead, they tend to seek only the information that they feel necessary on a day-to-day basis—in this case, a "burglar alarm" model of the press, as envisioned by Zaller,[7] is the most efficient one for a functioning democracy. This is an ongoing debate that has been argued at length for more than a century.

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[1] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Chicago: Gateway Books [Original version published in 1927], 1947).

[2] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

[3] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 16th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1957).

[4] John Zaller, "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen," *Political Communication* 20 (2003): 109-130.

[5] Michael Schudson, *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2009); Michael Schudson, "Good Citizens and Bad History: Today's Political Ideals in Historical Perspective," paper presented at conference on The Transformation of Civic Life, Middle Tennessee State University, November 12-13, 1999, http://www.mtsu.edu/~seig/paper_m_schudson.html (accessed October 18, 2007).

[6] Doris A. Graber, "The Rocky Road to New Paradigms: Modernizing News and Citizenship Standards," *Public Communication* 20 (2003): 145-148.

[7] Zaller, "A New Standard of News Quality," 117.

With the development of multiple new avenues for citizens to monitor their information environment and actively participate in the production and distribution of news in ways that were historically the domain of mainstream media, the debate outlined above is now confronted with a new media environment. As digital information, social media networks, and mobile technologies fuel the growth of new models of journalism practice, education programs are being forced to reexamine how they prepare future reporters in digital environments. Specifically, educators still need to do the normative and ethical intellectual work to conceptualize the relationship between professional reporters and their interactions with citizens, who are now armed with the tools for inserting themselves squarely into the news cycle. Our findings suggest that these citizens have outpaced the ethical approaches and underlying normative frameworks of journalism education as they reshape professional notions of journalism and traditional models of civic engagement and participatory democracy, causing unease and disjuncture in a group of journalism students from across the globe.

This study was built around a unique gathering of journalism students to explore how future media practitioners see news and information in the twenty-first century. Specifically, the study asked a global cohort of fifty-four university-level journalism students about the role of digital technologies in journalism, new avenues for citizen participation in news flow, and the implications of mobile media technologies for democracies worldwide. The study's main aim was to explore how a diverse and international group of aspiring journalists saw the future of information production, dissemination, and consumption and their implications for democracy. The exploration revealed that this particular group of students anticipated a future in which journalists must embrace the increasing involvement of citizens in work traditionally reserved for professional communicators, while at the same time cultivate forms of storytelling that put new technologies and multimedia platforms to full use. It is within this context that there emerges a "digital-civic divide," growing out of the developing tension between increasingly varied forms of participation in news production and the core information needs of a functioning participatory democracy. This tension is theorized here as resulting from the disjuncture between the forms giving cultural authority to traditional "professional" notions of journalism (objectivity, verification, and autonomy in the search for a fact-based truth) and the notions of participation and deliberation in theories of participatory democracy that give cultural authority to incorporating citizens' voices in the mediascape. Students in the study believed that the growing influence of digital media technologies enhances the possibilities of citizens to participate more directly in democratic processes, but at the same time perceived this development as eroding the cultural authority based on verification and public (versus private or particular) interest that is central to journalism. This essay builds on the concept of this divide by outlining and analyzing the results of an interview questionnaire, and recommends new integrative approaches to

preparing both journalists and citizens for democratic participation in digital and global contexts.

Despite the fact that students participating in the study originated from countries with widely varying histories of governance, the results of a grounded-theory analysis of the questionnaire data showed striking similarities among the students' conceptualizations of the function of news and information in democratic societies. The emergence of these patterns across a wide variation of historical and institutional contexts bolsters arguments for the emergence of more globalized conceptualizations of core democratic information values. If this is the case, a more widespread embrace of these values, which ultimately rest on ideas of free expression, proactive citizenship, transparent governance, and a vigorous public sphere populated by multiple and diverse perspectives, may ultimately open new avenues for imagining forms of journalism better suited for twenty-first century contexts.

Connections between Journalism and Citizenship

The history of journalism has been closely connected to technological innovations and advances since the profession first emerged,[8] while arguments about the need for a fully informed and active citizenry as essential to the functioning of modern liberal democracies date back to the Enlightenment and before.[9] How and to what extent journalism and media institutions can and should contribute to the strengthening of democracy and the maintenance of a public sphere[10] has been at the center of both normative and empirical research surrounding the profession for decades.[11] Within these larger frameworks have emerged discussions regarding the sociology of media and journalism as part of efforts to understand more clearly the political, social, cultural, and structural forces that influence the production of media, its content, and the producers who are responsible for its final form.[12]

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[8] Hanno Hardt, "Newsworkers, Technology, and Journalism History," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7, no. 4 (1990): 346-365, and John Pavlik, "The Impact of Technology on Journalism," *Journalism Studies* 1, no. 2 (2000): 229-237.

[9] Brian Mcnair, "Journalism and Democracy," in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York: Routledge, 2009), 237, and Denis Mcquail, *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

[10] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

[11] Beate Josephi, "Journalism in the Global Age: Between Normative and Empirical," *Gazette* 67, no. 6 (2005): 575-590.

[12] Rodney Benson, "Bringing the Sociology of Media Back In," *Political Communication* 21, no. 3 (2004): 275-292; Michael Schudson, "The Sociology of News Production," *Media Culture Society* 11, no. 3 (1989): 263-282; and Max Weber, "Towards a Sociology of the Press," *Journal of Communication* 26, no. 3 (1976): 96-101.

In the past two decades—with the emergence of the Internet, the widespread adoption of new media and communication technologies, and increasing connectivity—conceptualizations for understanding the relationship among journalism, citizenship, and technology have once again been reimagined. Previous debates that dealt with these spheres tended to maintain them within three separate silos, however much they may have overlapped at different points. However, we now see an increasing blurring of boundaries between producers of media and consumers;[13] rapid changes in access to communication technologies and their effects on journalism;[14] challenges to traditional ideas of engaged citizenship based solely on access to information;[15] as well as new and transformative definitions of what it means to be a journalist in a period of rapid globalization.[16] Within these new landscapes, debates continue to center around how journalism, technology, and civic participation will serve information societies (defined as societies in which the character and abundance of information has transformed the way people live[17]) in the twenty-first century,[18] and how, working within this complex information environment, journalists can continue to develop avenues toward "more effective means of representation."[19] On the one hand, technological developments have allowed the social spaces that journalism and civic participation occupy to overlap,

[13] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2006); Howard Rheingold, "Using Participatory Media and Public Voice to Encourage Civic Engagement," in *Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth*, ed. W. Lance Bennett (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 97; Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York: Penguin, 2009); and David Thornburn and Henry Jenkins, introduction to *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thornburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 1.

[14] Charlie Beckett and Robin Mansell, "Crossing Boundaries: New Media and Networked Journalism," *Communication, Culture, and Critique* 1, no. 1 (2008): 92-104, and Alex Jones, *Losing the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[15] W. L. Bennett, *Civic Life Online*, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008); David Buckingham, "Digital Media Literacies: Rethinking Media Education in the Age of the Internet," *Research in Comparative and International Education* 2, no. 1 (2007): 43-55; Peter Dahlgren, "Reconfiguring Civic Culture in the New Media Milieu," in *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity, and Cynicism*, ed. John Corner and Dick Pels (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 151.

[16] Mark Deuze, "Journalism Studies beyond Media: On Ideology and Identity," *Ecquid Novi* 25, no. 2 (2004): 275-293; id., "What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered," *Journalism* 6, no. 4 (2005): 442-464; Josephi, "Journalism in the Global Age"; and Stephen D. Reese, "Understanding the Global Journalist: A Hierarchy-of-Influences Approach," *Journalism Studies* 2, no. 2 (2001): 173-187.

[17] Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society*, 3rd ed. (Oxon, England: Routledge, 2006).

[18] Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen, *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives* (London: Peter Lang Publishers, 2009).

[19] Herbet Gans, *Democracy and the News* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

creating new dynamics of reporting and dialogue with audiences.[20] This has resulted in more collaborative and interactive forms of journalism,[21] more digital and mobile spaces for large-scale dialog, and a higher dependence on mediated platforms for civic participation.[22] On the other hand, fast-paced technological change has complicated how new forms of journalism will fulfill the traditional role of watchdog of public institutions, as corporate business models, organizations, and the idea of who is a "journalist" transform. Further, shifts in content have also blurred the boundaries between news and entertainment housed on online platforms. The result is a skeptical and somewhat pessimistic view of the future of the profession, and hence of the democratic functions of journalism, such as the fostering of an informed electorate, the uncovering of official abuses and institutional corruption, and contributions to open and inclusive dialogue around matters of public concern that it supports.[23]

Normative dimensions emerge when considering the state of journalism and the growing influence of technology on both journalists and citizens, as ethical issues and concerns raised by the growing interconnectivity of all three reflect internal tensions and contradictions. Recent discussions have focused on the changing state of the "ideology of journalism,"[24] which in the past rested on ideas of core values defining professionalism among journalists: autonomy, reporting built on fact-based truths, an ethical base of norms, and, above all, objectivity.[25] In today's information-rich media environment, the idea of professional journalists as gatekeepers of information is in question,[26] while ethical concerns surrounding journalists' ability and duty to use fairness

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[20] Zizi Papacharissi, ed., *Journalism and Citizenship: New Agendas in Communication* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[21] Elizabeth S. Bird, "The Future of Journalism in the Digital Environment," *Journalism* 10, no. 3 (2009). 293-295.

[22] Eric Gordon and Adriana De Souza e Silva, *Net Locality: Why Location Matters in a Networked World* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[23] Suzana Barbosa, Elias Machado, Luciana Mielniczuk, Marcos Palacios, and Beatriz Ribas, "Promises Unfulfilled? 'Journalism 2.0', User Participation and Editorial Policy on Newspaper Websites," *Brazilian Journalism Research* 2, no. 1 (2006): 117-139.

[24] Deuze, "Journalism Studies beyond Media," and id.,"What is Journalism?"

[25] Thomas E. Patterson and Wolfgang Dosnbach, "News Decisions: Journalists as Partisan Actors," *Political Communication* 13, no. 4 (1996): 455-468; Stephen D. Reese, "The News Paradigm and the Ideology of Objectivity: A Socialist at The Wall Street Journal," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7, no. 4 (1990): 390-409; and Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (1972): 660-679.

[26] Jane B. Singer, "Still Guarding the Gate? The Newspaper Journalist's Role in an On-Line World," *Convergence* 3, no. 1 (1997): 72-89, and Bruce A. Williams and Michael X. Delli Carpini, "Monica and Bill All the Time and Everywhere: The Collapse of Gatekeeping and Agenda Setting in the New Media Environment," *American Behavioral Scientist* 47, no. 9 (2004): 1208-1230.

and balance in order to present an "objective" version of events are also undergoing serious reevaluation.[27] New media technologies have provided an arena for information flow that is more collaborative, immediate, and open than ever before.[28] The result has been an information revolution in which mobile tools, social media platforms, and collaborative online spaces have changed basic habits of information production, dissemination, and reception. These shared networks have fundamentally shifted how individuals understand participation, expression, sharing, and community. Convergence of all media into one platform has also created integrated landscapes for citizens around the world.[29]

Within this new landscape, the challenges to traditional definitions of journalism as an expert activity separate from users are growing. The combination of audience engagement and influence on the production of news and information and the speed with which social media platforms spread content far and wide have made it difficult for journalists to balance depth, accuracy, and investigation with timeliness, proximity, and credibility. The fast-evolving technology environment has placed extra burdens on journalists to learn, implement, and effectively utilize new tools for reporting. Furthermore, the number of tools has become vast, which further muddles the choice of technology for journalism.

However, new research exploring how social media tools can enhance real-time reporting, expand audiences, and produce engaged dialog around public issues[30] has reenergized the debate over the necessity of journalism in a democracy. As aspiring media practitioners begin to shape what it means to be a journalist in the twenty-first century, the rapid changes currently taking place in the field and the wider implications that these changes hold for the future of participatory democracies and their citizenries are increasingly defining

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[27] Beckett and Mansell, "Crossing Boundaries"; Deuze, "Journalism Studies beyond Media"; id., "What is Journalism?"; and Herman Wasserman and Shakuntala Rao, "The Glocalization of Journalism Ethics," *Journalism* 9, no. 2 (2008): 163-181.

[28] Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Networks Transform Markets and Freedom* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: Norton, 2010); Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity* (New York: Penguin, 2005); Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age* (New York: Penguin, 2010); Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*; and David Weinberger, *Everything Is Miscellaneous: The Power of the New Digital Disorder* (New York: Holt, 2008).

[29] Dahlgren, "Reconfiguring Civic Culture in the New Media Milieu"; Henry Jenkins, Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Katie Clinton, and Alice J. Robinson, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, A Report for the MacArthur Foundation (Boston: MIT Press, 2009); and Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.

[30] Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*; Paul Mihailidis, "Beyond Cynicism: Media Education and Civic Learning Outcomes in the University," *International Journal of Media and Learning* 1, no. 3 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); and Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*.

classroom discussions on the future of journalism.

How will journalism education respond to an environment where technological change and civic dialog both outpace and outreach the traditional ethical and normative tenets of reporting, such as verification, objectivity, and autonomy? How will future journalists leverage new social platforms for reporting? And how will the blurred boundaries between public dialog and journalistic reporting change the fundamental roles of journalists in participatory democracies?

The research and discussion that follow provide some insights into how one group of aspiring journalists, having participated in an annual three-week intensive course that grapples with the issues outlined above, sees the future of journalism and citizenship. The results of the study make the case for a model of journalism that harnesses the potential for new participatory forms of reporting that both leverage the use of digital media and technologies to encourage greater citizen engagement, and at the same time do not discard the fundamental connections between journalism and representative democracies or the need for a strong, independent media sector as an integral component of open, effective governance. This effort must start in the classroom to better prepare journalists normatively and in practice to embrace the technologies that can lead to more active, diverse, and participatory citizenries in the twenty-first century.

Methods

In order to understand how future journalists view the rapidly changing relationships among journalism, journalism education, and citizenship in the digital age, and to offer new contributions to theory-building on the connections between information and engagement in a participatory democracy, this study explored the following research questions centered on journalism, technology, and citizenship:

> RQ1: Is journalism being redefined in an age of expanding digital and mobile media technologies? If so, how?

> RQ2: What challenges do journalists face in reporting the information needed to cultivate active and engaged citizenship in participatory democracies as they are being shaped by digital technologies?

> RQ3: What skills do aspiring journalists need to navigate an increasingly complex digital information landscape?

To approach these questions, this study employed an open-ended questionnaire to a convenience sample of fifty-four students of journalism and media. The subjects were at the end of their participation in the Salzburg

Academy on Media and Global Change, an annual three-week global media program that in 2009 convened more than fifty students and a dozen faculty representing fifteen universities worldwide in Salzburg, Austria, to explore media's role in global citizenship and civil society.[31] Students and faculty engage in dialogue, debate, and critical inquiry into how media set agendas, construct cultural identities, and promote and protect ideologies worldwide. Students must overcome long-held assumptions about other cultures and ethnicities in order to approach new dispositions toward journalism that reflect global information flows, aided by greater potential for inter-regional connectivity across a wider swath of developed and developing regions.

Sample and Survey Instrument
The fifty-four study participants, aged twenty-one to forty-eight, represented universities in eleven countries worldwide.[32] Of the fifty-four student participants, forty-eight were enrolled in undergraduate and post-graduate degree programs in journalism colleges, schools, or departments. The other six were enrolled in other degree programs outside the communication field, but held a journalism-related concentration. As the academy is geared specifically toward journalism, the participants were all pursuing careers in journalism-related fields. The students' interests in journalism varied in terms of specific forms of distribution (radio, TV, online) and domains of content (politics, sports, entertainment, science), allowing for an interesting range of responses regarding how journalism is changing in the face of new technologies. The sample included fourteen males and forty females.

The questionnaire consisted of brief demographic data and six open-ended questions that explored the perceptions of future communication practitioners toward the challenges they anticipate as they enter the media industry. The students were asked about digital technologies, social media and civic participation, and the relationship among journalism, democracy, and citizenship in international contexts. Participants took up to sixty minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The survey was not meant to address any specific point or produce statistical findings about how journalism students think about the future. Rather, the study intended to identify trends, ideas, and themes about how future media practitioners perceive media to be evolving, with the introduction

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[31] For information on the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, please see www.salzburg.umd.edu.

[32] The students who participated in the survey were from the following universities and countries: Pontificia Universidad Catolica (Argentina, Colombia), Pontificia Universidad Catolica (Chile), Tsinghua University (China), Bournemouth University (United Kingdom), Amman.net (Jordan), Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico), National Institute of Higher Education (Slovakia), Makerere University (Uganda), the University of Maryland (United States), Hofstra University (United States), the University of Miami (United States, Canada), and the University of Texas (United States).

of new digital technologies, and how new models of journalism could affect democratic societies. To this end, in considering the responses, the researchers chose not to separate the data based on country or region, but instead to locate common themes around how a global contingent of future media practitioners sees the transformation of its chosen profession. This is a potentially problematic effort, as many scholars have noted the large gaps in conceptualizations of professional journalism that still exist within different national contexts around the globe.[33] However, at the same time, there is growing evidence that globalization is influencing journalistic norms, as well as the development of journalism education and curricula, worldwide.[34] While not claiming to have uncovered new universal truths regarding the homogenization of journalism's professional practices, norms, or education worldwide, given the wide array of historical and institutional contexts for journalism and journalism education experienced by academy participants, similarities in responses suggest cross-national trends in that direction.

Once the data were collected, coders, using a constructivist, grounded-theory approach, analyzed and categorized the participant responses based on a general level of organizational categories (technology, education, citizenship, participation, social media, objectivity, and fairness), and then grouped the answers within each category into themes. This analysis was conducted following open-coding methods widely used by qualitative researchers,[35] in which the researchers engage in a dialogic, back and forth exchange with the data, developing new themes and collapsing others as the analysis progresses. The two researchers worked independently as a form of crosschecking, resolving any differences through further development of the emergent themes and grounded theory. The final themes were then used alongside the categorized responses to provide a detailed theory of how the study participants perceive changes in the journalism field, and what they believe to be the biggest challenges to journalism and citizenship in the twenty-first century.

Role of the Researchers
The researchers were part of a larger faculty cohort consisting of full- and part-time instructors. While actively part of the program, the researchers had

[33] Josephi, "Journalism in the Global Age"; John C. Merrill, "Professionalization: Fusion of Media Freedom and Responsibility," *Global Media Journal* 4, no. 6 (2010): 1-10; and Reese, "Understanding the Global Journalist."

[34] Mark Deuze, "Global Journalism Education: A Conceptual Approach," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 1 (2006): 19-34, and Wasserman and Rao, "The Globalization of Journalism Ethics."

[35] Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007); Judith A. Holton, "The Coding Process and Its Challenges," in *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*, ed. Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 265; and David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2005).

little direct influence over the entire academy. Rather, they were peripherally involved in overseeing certain projects dealing with multimedia production and comparative news analyses.

The material in the questionnaire was closely related to broader topics that had been the center of multiple and wide-ranging discussions that had taken place during the previous three weeks. However, the interview questionnaires were not directly preceded by any group discussions nor were the participants in any way primed to suit the expectations of the researchers. The questionnaire was not distributed by the researchers, but by program assistants, and the researchers did not preface the questionnaire with any specific instructions. Further, the participants were not enticed with any specific motivation to complete the questionnaire in any way that would suit the researchers' goals.

Sample and Study Limitations

In dealing with such an international participant base, certain limitations hinder the generalizability of the results. First, because the students came from such different parts of the world, their educational backgrounds all greatly differed. These differences made it difficult to find a solid baseline from which to discuss journalism; however, across the responses, the majority of the participants seemed to generally agree on the fundamental connections between journalism and civic democracy. Second, the study participants had widely varying levels of journalistic expertise and technological prowess. This restricted how much general understanding existed of the influence new technologies and digital media spaces have on journalism. Further, different parts of the world are being influenced by different technologies in different ways. While a general consensus on technological influence was reached, personal differences in technological experience and knowledge may have influenced the results in ways that would have been difficult to uncover in the analysis of participant responses. Third, the students' specific interests in journalism varied. Some were interested in sports, while others in politics, business, global affairs, and so on. A few mentioned public relations as a possible area of pursuit. Such differences may have led to different ideas about citizenship, journalism, and technology among the cohort's members.

As referenced in the introduction, a final caveat must be addressed concerning the different countries of origin among the students that made up the study sample and the potential influence this may have had on individual conceptualizations of the proper functioning of a representative democracy. Clearly, the historical experiences with democratic development (or lack thereof) and the normative view of journalists and journalism in society differed among participants from differing countries, for example, from Chile or Mexico, versus from either the United States or the United Kingdom. However, despite these varying contexts, there were clear patterns that emerged from the responses to all of the questions in the questionnaires, as uncovered through the open-coding and resulting analysis conducted during the research. This in part may

be due to the intensive nature of the three-week academy that all participants had just completed; yet, it is hard to imagine that concepts such as freedom of speech and the press, the meaning and importance of core democratic values, and the proper functioning of news and information in modern democratic societies could have all been learned and their meanings narrowed in such a short period of time. Instead, the participants appeared to have internalized fairly complex concepts, such as the relationship between journalistic values and the importance of a well-informed citizenry. This finding points more clearly toward the growing universality of meaning for concepts such as civic engagement, press freedom, and representative, open government. It is within this context that the findings of this study should be viewed.

Despite the limitations outlined above, the study's main aim was to explore how a diverse and international group of aspiring journalists saw the future of information production, dissemination, and consumption and their implications for democracy. As the findings show, the participants in the sample saw the traditional lines between the journalist and the citizen as increasingly blurred, which caused apprehension toward the influence of new media technologies on journalism, while at the same time fostering an appreciation for the growing need for a civic voice in reporting.

Findings

"Don't Hate the Media, Be the Media," Says an Academy Student from Chile

A predominant concern among a majority of the participants was how to maintain credibility, integrity, and the cultural authority traditionally accorded to journalism, in a field faced with an onslaught of new technologies and the increasing inclusion of the public voice in the mainstream press. While there was no question directly related to defining professional journalism, the answers pointed to a widely held belief by the group that, among the core values journalists are expected to maintain in electoral democracies, are objectivity, autonomy, credibility, and ethical standards. "Traditional journalism is facing a hard time," said one participant from Slovakia, "so how do we preserve the in-depth, thoughtful reporting and quality writing in journalism today?" Echoed a participant from the United States, "It has become increasingly difficulty to ensure that journalists are being able to cover relevant news." Such responses were common, and reflect a not entirely surprising trepidation by the students toward journalism models in flux.

More important, however, was a divide that began to emerge within the responses. The participants were circumspect in their appraisal of the role and impact of new media technologies for journalism, citing their promotion of a lack of depth, credibility, and oversight for reporting in the digital age. At the same time, they praised the growth of citizen voices in society, pointing to increased diversity, participation, and shared dialog among communities as

positive outcomes. The students rarely acknowledged the fact that increasing citizen participation in information sharing is mostly due to the accessibility of new social media technologies that allow for such dialog.[36] As the results will detail, this divide exposes a gap in preparing future media practitioners for reporting in a digital age.

The themes outlined below are built upon an analysis that uses the divide defined above to identify the relationships among the students' responses and to connect the responses in an integrated framework that deepens the meaning that can be drawn from the students' ideas and provides important context for understanding their implications. Thus, our goal here is not simply to provide an accounting and organization of responses, but rather to fit the pieces together into a larger picture of how future journalists are conceptualizing the interactions between journalism and digital technologies that should spur us to redefine notions of deliberative democracies and the shape they will take during the coming century.

Challenges to Journalism in a Digital Age: Adopting New Technologies and Best Practices

"The biggest challenge is keeping up with new technologies as well as maintaining the traditional ethics of reporting," wrote an American student in response to a question about how future journalists will face a changing industry.[37] A Chilean student echoed this sentiment: "I think one of the biggest challenges today is learning how to work within new media while maintaining the traditions of reporting. We need to find a way to survive in this environment of *everything is free*" [emphasis added]. The responses illuminated a general concern that new media have challenged the rigor and reputation of "traditional" journalism. Wrote a student from China, "New media are expanding in such a quick way, journalists need to be ready to assume any new challenges being presented. At the same time, they need to fight for their credibility and respect (which are in many cases diminished)."

The students almost uniformly believed that with increased emphasis on new techniques for multimedia journalism, the credibility of reporting was at risk. In their responses to a question about the challenges to journalism in digital environments,[38] most respondents mentioned ethics and objectivity, and as a result, credibility, as being compromised. Wrote an Argentinean student, "[We should] not be so dazzled with technology that we forget that it's always the message that counts." Echoed an American student, "[journalists need] to make good use of the new technologies, but not lose quality in the process."

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[36] Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*.

[37] Students responded to the question: How will journalism change as the digital age develops?

[38] Students responded to the question: What are the biggest challenges for journalism/media in the present day?

Reflecting concerns that new technology may lead to ethical shortcomings that arise from a lack of in-person, concrete verification, another student wrote, "New developments in technology help make gathering news more efficient, but as a result we lost something. Technology has enabled journalists to stay in their office to gather news...we need to ensure technology doesn't mean losing face-to-face interaction."

It is interesting to note that a large majority of the responses about technology's influence on journalists carried a cautionary tone about the loss of credible, reliable information in a digital environment. As a student from Uganda wrote, "The credibility of sources will be jeopardized. With the rise of citizen journalism, sources will be able to digitally manipulate more information than before." According to the students, civic participation has a place in journalism. In their responses to a similar question about the influence of new technologies on journalism, students bundled together negative influences on traditional elite journalism with more optimistic statements about technologies as specifically enabling citizen journalism. Their statements included discussions of citizen journalism, a civic voice, civic participation, and diversity as positive influences on journalism in a digital age. This dichotomy in responses may reflect the yet-unrealized role for technology in journalism. As one student from Mexico wrote, the challenge is to "imagine new business models that incorporate citizen journalism into our news packages and yet differentiate them from non-professional sources."

Students appeared reluctant to fully embrace technology's new role in journalism, which is perhaps a reflection of a wider concern about how students regard reporting in an age of hyper-connectivity and constantly changing modes of information exchange. This may be due to a general resistance to new digital platforms in journalism by those training the future practitioners, who were formed as journalists in an era when older technologies were dominant, or simply to the fact that the boundaries for how technology will either enable or constrain journalism have yet to be clearly defined. Despite a lack of concrete answers for the perceived caution about the increasing influence of technology on journalistic practice, this finding clearly corresponds with an industry-wide lack of clarity about the changing nature of the profession and the implications brought on by the rapid pace of technological innovation. These concerns regarding the future of the profession naturally carry over into educational settings, which tend to follow industry's lead.

A Civic Voice

In contrast to their caution regarding the role of new media technologies in journalism, the academy students spoke positively about increasing civic participation in the news environment. All but a few of the responses to a question about changes to journalism in the twenty-first century were coded as positively disposed toward increased civic dialog and information-sharing in the news process. They highlighted terms such as civic involvement, greater

dialogue, more active citizens, mobile reporting, diversity in storytelling, and so on. The responses led to an interesting question: Why are the technologies that are supposedly hindering journalism also beneficial for the field in a different way?

The answer seems to underscore the idea that, while professional considerations may vary over time as the marketplace changes and the information needs of audiences evolve, belief in the important connections between journalism and citizenship and in the benefits of increasing monitorial abilities among the population at large as a way of keeping powerful forces in check, remain steadfast. "As the digital age develops journalism will be impacted by citizens acting as journalists," wrote one student. "We will be exposed to stories that we may have never known about, captured by cell phones and accessed on the Internet and Tweeted or Facebooked rapidly." One American participant mentioned a "revolution in (citizen-produced) fact-checking, and an increase of constant reporting and citizen journalism," while another from the United Kingdom wrote, "The participation of the audience in creating content will increase...and media will become more representative of the public." Responses such as these were commonplace. Participants mentioned "greater perspectives," "healthy for society," "more diverse voices," "citizens will be reporters," "more dynamic journalism," and "greater access to information," as general trends for journalism. The participants almost unanimously pointed to a greater public role in news creation and dissemination. One participant from Mexico wrote a line indicative of the general mindset of the global group: "Civic journalism will be looked to more, which will hopefully inspire a bigger responsibility among both citizen and professional journalists."

The students' embrace of more civic participation in journalism, coupled with their apprehension toward the technologies that enable this new dynamic, exposed a divide in their collective views on the influence of technology and more civic dialogue on the production, delivery, and consumption of news. This emerging conflict partly mirrors the uncertainty about future directions within the journalism field generally, but it also speaks to the educational choices that younger students of journalism and media are making in regard to the profession they hope to enter. The students, while clearly understanding the changes and challenges that lie ahead, described a profession that in their eyes seems to need fewer trained practitioners than previously. This begs the question: Why enter a field that you deem less and less of a "profession"?

The next section builds on this question by addressing the perceived outcomes of a vibrant journalism located within a functioning civil society—the mutually reinforcing dynamics of an active, engaged, participatory citizenry armed with diverse, independent, and credible information.

Challenges to Active and Engaged Citizenship in a Digital Media Age
After initial questions about journalism and technology, the participants were asked about the challenges to maintaining a functioning participatory

democracy in information societies.[39] The students mentioned the need for diverse voices, shared perspectives, greater media education, and reduced apathy toward government, democracy, and the media. Again, they saw the civic voice as the key to citizenship moving forward, with a majority of the participants mentioning citizenship in their responses to the question, highlighting the prerogatives of the individual over those of any governing or public body. How should future journalists respond to citizenry? "Knowing the limits and perils of [civic] participation," wrote one student from Mexico, "[and] adjusting our political models to fit cultural contexts." "To continue working for democracy...," wrote a student from the United Kingdom, "this is the only way to have an informed and free citizenry, because it's the basis for building debate and feedback into society." It is crucial to put these particular reflections, with their emphasis on the importance of engaged citizens for democracies, within a global and historical context, given the varied national backgrounds of the participants. Plenty of work has been done examining media systems across national contexts, from the seminal, and often criticized, *Four Theories of the Press*, by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm,[40] to the more recent work of Hallin and Mancini,[41] deBeer and Merrill,[42] and Hachten and Scotton,[43] to name just a few. While varied in their theoretical and methodological approaches, all of these authors recognize that the media, and particularly the press, play much different roles within different national contexts in terms of how they interact with both the state and public, the levels of control exerted by ruling institutions, and the impact this has on political structures and access to open, accurate information and public dialogue.

Students highlighted the need to avoid disengagement from the audience, especially where the barriers to participation are diminishing. Within the answers to this question, a clear pattern emerged in which students perceived the need for citizens to have active engagement with media and political processes. "To listen to them!" wrote one Argentinean participant about engaging citizens. "A belief that it [journalism] will help people and make lives better," wrote a student from Chile. And further, "people need to get something for their efforts in participation," wrote an American student. As a result, enabling more dialog

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[39] Students responded to the question: What are the biggest challenges for cultivating an engaged and active global citizenry?

[40] Fred Seaton Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press: The Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility, and Soviet Communist Concepts of What the Press Should Be and Do* (Chicago: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1956).

[41] Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[42] Arnold S. DeBeer and John C. Merrill, *Global Journalism: Topical Issues and Media Systems*, 4th ed. (Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon, 2006).

[43] William A. Hachten and James F Scotton, *The World News Prism: Global Information in a Satellite Age*, 7th ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

and civic participation in media production can help to "overcome apathy. People are so bombarded with information and messages, they just give up."

Again, participants generally saw the primary avenue for a more engaged public as taking shape through participation, largely in forms typically reserved for journalism. They mentioned that the public should be involved, contribute to civic dialogue, provide feedback, and report alongside journalists. Wrote one participant from the United States, "[people must] figure out how to use the new tools and how to connect in an ultra-busy landscape...the entire news process must become more fluid for important information to flow." While it is vital for citizens to adapt to the new tools and technologies that increase news flow, these are the same technologies that in previous responses were thought to have diminished the relevance of journalism—further support for a digital-civic divide, as it was unclear whether participants were able to identify this relationship or its inherent contradictions.

A final question asked how greater engagement could be incorporated into a citizen's everyday life.[44] The students saw a need for individuals to have the necessary training and motivation to be informed and critical thinkers. Student responses mentioned a combination of education, critical thinking, and awareness as key tools for civic involvement in information societies. As one student from the United Kingdom wrote, "We live in a mediated world. Without understanding media and the way media work, we will not be able to understand our world—and be critical of it." Another student saw the path to civic engagement through "giving [citizens] tools, both intellectual and technological, to enhance participation and critical thinking." In this way, "citizens can help to supervise the journalism industry," wrote one participant from Jordan, "to build a higher moral standard [for journalists]."

Citizen penetration into the journalism landscape has been well documented. Individuals are entering the public communicative sphere by reporting more breaking news, contributing vast amounts of diverse information to issues, and becoming more active in critiquing and monitoring public officials and institutions worldwide.[45] The study participants saw little problem in encouraging civic participation in reporting news. A Chilean student remarked, "Citizens need to be encouraged to create their own information through new multimedia platforms." While research and scholarly writing has shown the potential for citizen participation in the media, an area in which our participants

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[44] Students were asked: How can media literacy be incorporated into a journalist's work? And a citizen's life?

[45] Mark Briggs, *Journalism Next: A Practical Guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009); Dan Gillmor, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2004); Dan Gillmor, *Mediactive* (Raleigh, NC: Lulu.com Press, 2010); and Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus*.

showed little disagreement, less work has been done questioning what all of this means for traditional forms of journalism, an area in which our participants clearly had misgivings about potential repercussions.

The responses to questions about civic engagement through media and news suggest a belief in the civic potential of media in the twenty-first century. While the recognition of the importance of the incorporation of citizen voices is not a new evolution in journalism and media, the responses here reveal the need for new parameters in the conceptualization of journalism and its sources of authority for future communicators working within digital media environments. Without new approaches to journalism focused on how media technologies enhance the diversity of dialogue and voice, the contradictions apparent in the participants' responses will remain, creating an irreconcilable identity crisis for journalism in the media age.

Discussion: Collapsing Boundaries and the Digital-Age Journalist

> I think if we've learned one thing here it's that we don't exactly know—but with a willingness to explore new possibilities of media, these changes can be good and not destructive.
> —Academy Student

The results of this study show two previously distinct social realities—that of professional journalists and that of an informed, engaged citizenry—converging through practice, without the bases of their authority being reconciled through a synthesis of the Dewey-Lippman debate, outlined in the introduction. Journalism can be both factual and autonomous from outside influences, while housing new forms based upon notions of participatory citizenship and communitarian dialogue. While this trend is not new, the consequences of this study hold considerable weight for the need to explore new normative models for journalism that reflect how future media practitioners can reconcile their roles and the roles of journalism in a digital age. As Alex Jones wrote in *Losing the News*,

> A case can be made that the core [of the news industry] will not only survive, but grow more weighty through new forms of news media...traditional media are trying to find new ways to report news that will appeal to a younger, Web-savvy audience, and creating new publications and Web sites in response to reader tastes.[46]

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[46] Jones, *Losing the News*, 21.

It seems logical that future journalists are excited about sheer peer-to-peer dialogue, connectivity, and collaboration that digital platforms can provide to journalism—for these are on-line habits with which they engage skillfully in their everyday lives. At the same time, however, the unanswered question seems to be how they see such technologies in a more purposive light (i.e., how they can be used to enhance the core functions of journalistic practice, instead of simply seeing the ways in which they have eroded traditional reporting practices and journalism techniques). This means that future journalists have to reconceptualize journalism, beginning with examining more closely, and honestly, its bases of authority, conceived through autonomy, credibility, objectivity, professionalism, and so on, and understanding how these foundational elements can be preserved without creating divisions that will exclude new and democratically oriented possibilities created by new technologies and citizen engagement. As these questions are raised, they also translate into potential changes in democratic outcomes for citizens, as a rapidly evolving industry leads to shifts in how citizens stay informed and what is expected of journalists. This study has identified two key trends that may help shed light on the future of journalism and news in civic society, in view of the disconnect evidenced in this study.

The first trend is the students' acknowledgment of the increasing penetration of the civic voice into the journalistic field, a finding that is in line with other recent research into journalism and journalistic practices.[47] Recent political uprisings in the Middle East and natural disasters in Japan, Haiti, and Chile have shown just how vital the dialogue created by individuals on social media platforms is to journalists, who often are hampered by space, time, and safety concerns. That a majority of the participants in this study mentioned civic participation in journalism as a positive movement in the field is encouraging for the future of the field in global and digital contexts.

The second trend emerging from this study is the reluctance on the part of the students to embrace new media technologies as increasingly integral components of journalism, while at the same time, encouraging the adoption of such technologies by citizens. If students are excited about the new possibilities that civic voices bring to the media field, and at the same time are hesitant in their embrace of the very technologies that enable such new dynamics, it seems that there is a gap in both how they see the profession and how they are being trained to work in the profession. This gap in the bases of authority for traditional journalism and the multiple uses and alternative bases of authority involved in citizen journalism has exposed a need to reconceptualize journalism to encompass both notions of participatory citizenship and expert-produced, autonomous, and verified factual journalism.

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[47] Allan and Thorsen, *Citizen Journalism*.

To overcome the inherent contradiction in the results of this study, educational bodies in the field of journalism must keep up with the fast-paced change and evolution of media technologies and incorporate more integrated and collaborative platforms into their practice and education. This type of implementation need not only come from former or practicing journalists, who do very well to teach the foundational principles of their field, and provide insight from years of training and practice. Rather, the students' inability to reconcile the potential for civic participation offered by digital media with education based upon the ethical conceptualizations of professional journalism, point to an urgent need to integrate ideas about the empowering potential of digital technology and participatory democracy within a theoretical framework of journalism that encompasses both professional journalism and civic participation by acknowledging the cultural authority of both. As the students said, and some research on civic journalism and civil society has shown, the two functions can be mutually reinforcing. How might that look?

Theoretically, the approach calls for reconsidering the idea that journalism, and the media more widely, serves as a single entity functioning within participatory democracies. If digital information and technologies are expanding the notions of what it means to be a journalist, it is a natural next step to consider how these new forms might co-exist and even complement traditional forms, while at the same time not signaling the end of those older forms or their continued relevance moving forward. As Curran writes in his argument for rethinking liberal theories of media and democracy, the first step is to "break free from the assumption that the media are a single institution with a common democratic purpose. Instead, different media should be viewed as having different functions within the democratic system, calling for different kinds of structure and styles of journalism."[48]

In practice, we are already seeing innovation. Certain organizations and institutions have recently begun to take active steps to integrate new interactive media technologies and social media platforms into their everyday practices. From *Al Jazeera's* integration of Twitter into its Web platform as social media to help shape the Arab Spring to Columbia University's development of a dual-degree in journalism and computer science, the incorporation of mobile technologies and social networks into traditional journalistic formats and educational venues is growing. Such new thinking may repurpose journalism in the context of digital technology and new ways to reach core audiences to reinforce the vital role journalism must continue to have in civic democracies worldwide. In this way, journalists, rather than being fearful or apprehensive about the encroachment of the civic voice into a public sphere which they traditionally dominated, can leverage these voices into even stronger, more

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[48] James Curran, "Rethinking Media and Democracy," in *Mass Media and Society*, 3rd ed. (London: Arnold, 2000), 130.

engaged forms of reporting that bolster and strengthen democratic values and processes.

Students in this study, for the most part, seemed to believe in the importance of reporting with independence, a diversity of voices, credibility, and depth. They recognized the rapid and large changes taking place in the journalism world, and the uncertain future of the field. At the same time, they also realized the need, perhaps now more than ever, for the important stories of our time to be told. It is the telling of these stories in a contextualized, engaging format and across multiple media platforms that will enable and uphold participatory democracy in the information-based societies in the digital era. By embracing new forms of reporting emerging from the participation of citizens and non-journalists, while at the same time working to uphold the standards that have helped define the key contributions of journalism in democratic contexts for nearly a century, future practitioners can work to leverage these new voices to better meet these goals.

It is time for theory to catch up with practice so that practice may flourish and journalists throw off the identity crisis caused by the disjuncture between professional notions of journalism and participatory citizenship in the digital age. If the academy students are in any way representative, students in elite journalism schools will embrace this synthesis and thrive.