CONTEXTUALIZING THE NEWS: NEWSPAPER FRONT PAGES IN THE AGE OF

FACT-CHECKING JOURNALISM

by

Srijan Sen

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in Media Studies

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

December 2018

ABSTRACT

CONTEXTUALIZING THE NEWS: NEWSPAPER FRONT PAGES IN THE AGE OF
FACT-CHECKING JOURNALISM

by

Srijan Sen

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018
Under the Supervision of Professor David S. Allen, PhD

This thesis investigates influences on the selection of stories on the front pages of

newspapers. It investigates whether a daily newspaper that has an in-house, fact-

checking unit (*The Milwaukee* (WI) *Journal Sentinel*) selects front-page stories

differently from a newspaper that does not have an in-house, fact-checking unit (*The

Star Tribune* in Minneapolis, MN). While the study found no direct influence of fact-

checking journalism, it did find that newspaper front pages in 2014 were increasingly

prioritizing contextual stories over conventional stories. It also found a decline in

political/governmental stories on front pages. It is suggested that these changes might

signal a changing role for newspaper journalism within society, shifting away from the

delivery of information and putting more emphasis on the analysis of information.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter I: Introduction

Newspaper content is always undergoing changes in journalistic routines for gathering and presenting information. Professional workers gather, produce, and disseminate news as a part of their job in complex organizations (Tuchman 1980). A relatively recent way of doing journalism is the rise of fact-checking journalism (Graves 2016). Since the establishment of PolitiFact as an independent news organization in 2006 by the *Tampa Bay Times*, the concept of fact-checking journalism has become a ubiquitous part of American news media. After gaining a few years of national recognition, PolitiFact articles began appearing in particular newspapers across the United States. An ethnographic study on the work of fact-checking journalists by Lucas Graves (2016) shows how changes in the routines of reporters can result in a different way for journalists to interact with their audience. Technological advancements, changes in population demographics, and the economy among other factors have forced newspaper workers to redefine their purpose and product to remain competitive in the marketplace (Bridges and Bridges 1997). In some ways, fact-checking journalism's emergence seems to be aligned with the redefinition of American news media. While reporting routines evolve from older communication models, the new fact-checking model's effect on aspects of traditional journalism has yet to be fully understood.

This research focuses on one portion of that question. It examines the rise of fact-checking journalism and its impact on the types of stories that appear on the front pages of newspapers. The method used to collect data replicates the research design of a 2014 study by media scholars Katherine Fink and Michael Schudson who examined the front pages of the *Washington Post, the New York Times, and the Milwaukee Journal*

Sentinel from 1955 to 2003. The authors found that contextualized reporting was on the rise during this period and they also noted a decline in fact-based reporting. However, the Fink-Schudson study examined newspaper reporting prior to the emergence of fact-checking journalism. This project expands the Fink-Schudson study to analyze the impact of fact-checking journalism on the selection of stories on the front-page of newspapers.

Chapter II: Literature Review

To understand the potential impact of fact-checking journalism on news stories and news writing, literature in three related areas will be examined. The first part discusses rise in *contextualized reporting* found by Fink and Schudson (2013) in their study of newspaper front pages. This portion details the various news categories observed by the researchers in their study. The second part discusses prior scholarly literature on the key changes in journalistic routines over time and how journalists perceive objectivity and transparency in covering events. The third section discusses the growing significance of fact-checking journalism in news media. This section is based on the ethnographic research of national fact-checking organizations PolitiFact and Factcheck.org by media scholar Lucas Graves (2016). While touching on the various methods used by fact-checking journalists to report on events, Graves elaborates on the changing nature of journalism.

The primary focus of this research is on the front pages of selected newspapers because the front page is crucial in its conveyance of information and also serves as a communal message board. The front page of any newspaper displays information that editors and publishers deem most important. From a strategic point, there is significance to the content that is published at the front page of a newspaper because such stories set the agenda for discourse and gets the most relevant information across to audiences. The front page also serves as a convenient quick glance into the breaking news of the day for those who are skimming through their news consumption. Scholars researching changes in news on the front pages of American papers describe front-page news as the "tone and spirit" of the newspaper (Bridges and Bridges 1997). Bridge and Bridges note that some newspapers alter coverage to become more reader-oriented

(1997: 827). The authors specifically mentioned Gannett Co. and design innovations associated with the development of *USA Today* as an example of a newspaper company that tailored its front pages for audiences. (Gannett currently owns the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, one of the papers in this study.)

Beyond being a carrier of facts and information, the front page also reflects technological and journalistic changes associated with modernity. Conventionally, in the social sciences, a series of terms like secularism, democracy, technology, the nation-state, citizenship, industrialization, urbanization comes to mind to qualify what one means by modernity (Venn and Featherstone 2006, 459). Media scholars argue that the driving force of the social, industrial, and scientific logics of the modern world would eventually transform the newspaper. Nerone and Barnhurst (2002) called the front page the face of a newspaper. These scholars studied the historical shifts in newspaper front pages and used the metaphor of a storefront to describe the front page in relationship to the newspaper. While technology and competition are usually cited as drivers of change, the scholars suggest that increased professionalism within journalism and among newspaper editors anticipating broader cultural changes from Victorian to modern times are two additional forces for the evolution of the front page (Nerone and Barnhurst 2002, 215). These changes affected the types of stories published. One of the stark changes to a modern newspaper's front page was the reduction in number of stories. "Front pages of 1885 presented a dense jungle of news items and advertisements giving the impression of diversity and randomness" (2002: 215). Gradually, newspapers lost the habit of placing dozens of stories on the front page. The modern front page became structured and less populated. Nerone and Barnhurst note that bylines best reflected the impacts of modernity on papers. Primitive headlines with its multiple

decks stacked vertically above a single column offered an outline of the story while modern bylines tell readers the point of the story (2002: 216). Such changes show how the front page of newspapers experiences constant transformation in form and story types.

Given that importance of the front page of newspapers, the rest of this literature review will focus on developments that might influence the types of stories that appear on those front pages.

The rise in contextualized reporting

The following discusses research by Katherine Fink and Michael Schudson on newspaper front pages between 1955 to 2003. The researchers point out several key changes, but their most significant finding was changes to the types of stories being published on the front page. Fink and Schudson's study, along with their definitions, are central to this research.

As Fink and Schudson note, observers saw the 1960s as a watershed moment for American news coverage as journalists changed their approach on reporting to being more critical of official sources. During the 1960s and 1970s, society opened and news reflected those changes in their coverage of events (Fink and Schudson, 4). While the story of a transformed journalism has been told several times, how that transformation looks in newspapers has received scant attention. Fink and Schudson (2014) credited the change in journalism as a product of three main developments: a change in the culture of journalists who began asserting themselves more aggressively, institutions of government became less secretive and more attuned to the media, and the concept of covering politics was redefined as the federal government expanded its reach (Fink and

Schudson 2014, 4). While all these transformations in journalism and political structure had varying impacts, the researchers noted that a rise in "contextualized reporting" was the most significant change in newspaper front-page reporting.

Fink and Schudson define "contextualized reporting" as explanatory stories focusing on the big-picture while providing context for other news. Sometimes contextual stories appear next to conventional stories complimenting the dry, fact-based nature of the latter (2014: 9). The authors further explain that all contextual stories are not alike, but all usually attempt to provide a better understanding of complicated issues. For example, the authors find that contextualized reporting can appear in the form of trend stories using numerical data that show change over time on matters of public interest. Fink and Schudson have noted that contextualized reporting could also be a product of a "watchdog nature" of the press and its changing relationship to authoritative organizations. Watchdog journalism has been defined as the news media's scrutiny of institutions of power, including government and businesses, by critically reporting in a timely way on "issues of public concern" (Bennett and Serrin 2005, 169).

Fink and Schudson (2014) studied how news selection and writing changed on the front pages of newspapers. They found several important changes during that period. One was that the length of stories grew longer over time. Their findings are echoed by other scholars who also noted a growth in the length of stories (Barnhurst and Mutz 1997). Stepp's research found a decrease in very short stories and increase in very long stories between 1964 and 1999. On the front page, the average length of stories increased from nine inches to 20 inches (Stepp 1999, 75). The increase in story length is a result of more information being delivered by journalists to audiences. The

contextualization of information made it possible for journalists to provide more details about an event in the same article and this change resulted in longer stories.

According to Fink and Schudson, contextualized reporting as a concept has not been comprehensively unpacked. Previously, scholars have called it in-depth reporting, analytical reporting (Forde, 2007: 230), and social-science journalism (Hess, 1981: 57). These definitions point towards a reporting style aimed at providing an audience with more than the raw facts. These stories attempt to put those facts into a context that will help the audience understand what is going on. Steven Clayman and colleagues published a series of papers in which they found that a normative shift in journalistic routines such as initiative, assertiveness, and being adversarial demonstrate a movement away from formulaic-conventional journalism practiced in the 1950s and 1960s (Clayman, *et al.*, 2006, 2010). While the scholars noted these changes regarding political press conferences, such changes also indicate a shift in the larger journalistic relationship to political authority. In newspapers, changes are observed in the way journalists communicate information to their audiences culminating in the rise of contextualized reporting. Fink and Schudson conclude that contextualized journalism has emerged as a "powerful and prevalent companion to conventional reporting" (2014: 18).

Graves' (2016) research concluded that fact-checking journalism is a type of contextual reporting. By comparing fact-checking to contextual-type stories, Graves indicates that contextualization of newsworthy information continues in this emerging type of reporting.

Although Fink and Schudson studied contextualization in the print format, research shows that contextualization of the news has spread to all formats of mass

communication. Pointing to prior literature the researchers point out that television news has become condensed. Such a trend indicates that even television journalists are increasingly mediating news coverage to provide other relevant information to the audience, thereby contextualizing information for a television audience. Ultimately, the research on news shows and contextualization signals a change in the routine of journalists across mediums of publication. The overall content of TV news saw an increase in "horse race" type coverage of events -- a measure of the growing prominence of a "game" or "strategy" orientation in the news. Based on similar findings, Schudson and Fink affirm that over the second half of the 20th century, the convention of news reporting has changed from documenting daily events to providing timely context for important issues (2014: 8-10).

Other than contextualized stories, Fink and Schudson placed stories into four other categories: conventional, investigative, social empathy, and other (Fink and Schudson 2014, 9). To flesh out a definition for contextualized reporting, the authors first identified conventional reporting as stories that inform the public about official activities of the government. Such stories generally occur in the 24 hours following a breaking news story and focuses on one-time actions.

While defining investigative stories, the authors find newspapers clearly playing a watchdog role by investigating corruption and social deviance or by aiding an individual or entity who has been treated unjustly. Although there has been some increase in traditional investigative reporting, the researchers found the change to be minimal. This finding holds true with the nature of investigative work, which requires significant research over a time and costs more than regular reporting. For coding stories, Fink and Schudson considered reporting that reflected use of non-public documents or

incorporated lengthy interviews to be investigative (2014: 11). It is important to outline the difference between contextualized reporting and investigative reporting. While contextualized reporting bears many similarities to investigative reporting, not all contextualized reporting can be considered investigative in nature. Fink and Schudson note that contextual stories can perform similar functions to investigative stories by shedding light on issues that are missing from public discourse. However, fact-checking reporting cannot be considered investigative journalism because it doesn't fit the definition of investigative reporting set by the researchers. The major difference being investigative reporting uncovers information previously non-existent in public knowledge while fact-checking journalism works exclusively with information already in the public record.

The authors briefly discuss social empathy stories as journalistic reporting focused on a group of people not often covered in the media. Such stories include personal experiences of the source to highlight larger social issues. Social empathy stories might closely resemble investigative reporting. But according to the researchers, investigative reporting and social empathy stories are specific brands of contextualized reporting distinct enough to be counted separately (2014: 11). The nature of social empathy stories and their presence in newspaper reporting was used by the authors to reinforce the idea that contextualized reporting has been growing.

Stories that did not fall into the contextual, conventional, investigative, or social empathy categories were classified by Fink and Schudson as "other" stories. Stories that fell into this category were what the authors called "water cooler stories" or "kickers." These are stories that have appeared over the years taking the forms of vignettes that were amusing or shocking (2014: 11).

Based on a content analysis of front-page stories published in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Fink and Schudson found important changes in the types of stories appearing on the front pages over time. *First*, conventional stories saw a sharp decrease over time. The shift from conventional to contextual reporting was rapid between 1955 and 1979 and slowed down in subsequent years (2014: 13). *Second*, the average number of stories published on front pages declined from 13.5 in 1955 to 7.3 by 2003 (2014: 13). While part of the reason for this drop is articles becoming longer (Barnhurst and Mutz 1997; Stepp 1999), Fink and Schudson note that newspapers began devoting more space to non-article items like images and promotional teasers (2014: 13,14). This is a significant observation because images can vary in size and take up a fair portion of the page.

Contemporary newspapers must provide space for advertising as well. The space on the page that became available due to a sharp decrease in conventional stories made possible the inclusion of large images and ads. According to Fink and Schudson, conventional stories in all three newspapers decreased from 85 percent in 1955 to 47 percent by 2003. During that same period, contextual stories in all three newspapers increased from 8 percent to 45 percent (2014: 13). *Third*, the authors found that a decline in journalists deferring solely to authoritative sources also led to a modest increase in investigative reporting (0 percent to 1 percent), but they note that contextual stories perform a similar function as investigative stories by shedding light on matters that need more public attention (2014: 14).

Four, Fink and Schudson note that front pages have grown slightly less centered on government and politics, even though the clear majority of front-page news continues to be about politics and government (2014: 7). For example, in 1955 about 92

percent of the stories appearing on the front page of the *New York Times* was about politics and government. By 2003, that percentage had shrunk to 76 percent. Fink and Schudson found, however, that the share of political news on the front page of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* grew from 77 percent in 1955 to 84 percent in 2003 (2014: 17). The researchers explain this trend as an expansion in understanding what counts as a matter of public significance and political relevance (Fink and Schudson 2014).

To understand the contemporary nature of journalism, prior literature on past changes provides a roadmap leading up to the present moment. Journalism has undergone various structural changes in the routines of journalists doing the work. The next section goes through a few of the key alternations in journalistic practice that took place over the last few decades with specific regard to objectivity, transparency, and the influence of the internet.

Changes in journalistic routine

Daily news is produced, gathered, and disseminated by professional workers performing their jobs in complex organizations (Tuchman 1980). Journalists report on the same theme to generate public knowledge of events. Molotch and Lester (1974: 101) call news reporting as "an account of the unobserved." Journalists deem stories as informational or interesting and record such accounts. This collaborative effort by reporters executing a daily routine is consumed as news by the public. Fishman (1980) explains journalistic creation of knowledge through detection of events because of people doing work and not merely a passive record of perceptions (1980: 14). While several media scholars have theorized about the ways in which journalists create news, Herbert Gans developed a unique approach to his theory of story selection by

journalists. Gans (2004) views information flowing from sources to audiences through journalists acting as a medium.

Although the notion that journalists transmit information from sources to audiences suggests a linear process, the process is circular, complicated further by many feedback loops (Gans 2004, 80).

The audience plays an important role in this loop because an audience is both recipient of news and a source of income for the news firm. Particularly in the Washington, D.C., political circuit, Gans notes sources form an important part of the audience. Sources and journalist coexist in an ecosystem which resembles a tug of war due to tensions within the loop than a functionally inter-related organism. Furthermore, Gans (2004) identified availability and sustainability as two of the crucial processes in story selection. Availability of news relates to journalistic sources while sustainability ties journalists to audiences (2004: 81).

Elaborating on two pre-existing ideas in sociology of work, Tuchman's (1973) research on the production of news through routinization suggests that newsmakers classify events-as-news to decrease variability of raw materials used by news organizations and facilitate greater journalistic routinization (1973: 112). It means that reporters classify news into specific types to maintain a routine where the journalistic output increases at the same time news organizations use fewer resources. A routine is used by news workers as a tool for greater journalistic efficiency. Tuchman identified journalistic classification of news as: hard news, soft news, spot news, developing news, and continuing news (1980: 113). These classifications ensure that reporters record all feasible events of the day. But journalistic routines have experienced constant flux since the 1950s (Fink and Schudson 2014) and this change is particularly noticeable in the

work of reporters doing investigative journalism (Graves 2016). One of the salient

changes to journalistic routine is rooted in technological advancement. Specifically, the

advent of the internet and its integration in the newsroom. The immediacy of sharing

information has greatly accelerated the content production cycles. Research finds that

the low cost of information gathering, replication, and dissemination has increased

publication of news (Boczkowski 2011). This increased frequency in news production

allowed journalists to focus more on the types of news being covered. Hard news stories

particularly reflect this change (2011: 78).

Prior to the internet becoming a widespread utility, public access to news was

mediated through radio, newspaper, and television sources. There is a substantial cost

involved in setting up broadcast stations and newspapers where professional journalists

work to deliver information to the public. But the internet made it possible for

dissemination of information to increase substantially at a fraction of the cost it takes to

setup a news agency. As a result, anyone with a web portal can claim to be a source of

information. Although the economic signs don't signal a demise of traditional media

(Ahlers 2006), data finds nearly half of Americans surveyed consuming news on the

internet (Gottfried and Shearer 2017). A Pew study on emerging patterns of news

consumption concluded that more people are consuming news on the internet as

opposed to buying newspapers (2017). While online news consumers are more likely to

get information from professional outlets than family and friends, they are just as likely

to think each provides relevant news (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2016). The audience discernably

moving to a digital platform has influenced journalistic routines of reporters in

traditional media. An example of changes in routines is the 24-hour news cycle that

dominates much of journalism today. This trend has evolved dramatically in the internet

age as broadcast journalists compete with digital platforms to deliver news with greater immediacy. The 24-hour news cycle emphasizes style over substance and reduces quality of content (Lewis and Cushion 2009).

Studies about online news production have focused on the increased speed of communications in journalistic work. Many scholars propose that online journalism has contributed to the collapse of the twice-a-day news cycle (Boczkowski 2009; García 2008; Lawson-Borders 2006; Williams and Delli Carpini 2000). An accelerated news cycle also increases the risk of errors. Maier (2005) found that more than 60 percent of local news and news-feature stories in a cross-section of American daily newspapers contained errors in reporting. But errors in stories published on a digital platform can be easily rectified. Researchers found that news consumers have strong expectations that news media will correct information and be transparent about such corrections (Karlsson, *et al.*, 2016). In this new media age, driven by the immediacy factory of the internet, transparency has taken on prime importance. The advent of the internet influenced routines of journalists so much that traditional demarcations of journalism don't apply anymore (Domingo and Patterson 2011).

Deuze (2007) proposes that "technology is not an independent factor influencing journalistic work from outside, but must be seen in terms of implementation, and how it extends and amplifies previous ways of doing things" (2007: 153). Scholars have discussed, at length, the journalistic division of labor through the creation of two newsrooms (Molotch and Lester 1974) and its impact on the coverage of events (Domingo and Patterson 2011). Boczkowski (2011) found that the journalistic creation of events on pressing matters have veered towards a softening in reporting. However, the existence of fact-checking journalism might suggest that journalism has refocused on

hard news. Boczkowski discusses the "changing character of editorial work" as the basis

for the co-existence of divergent forms of journalism (2011: 56). This finding is reflected

in the work of fact-checking journalists who routinely operate as interpreters than

observers because the focus of fact-checking reporting is on explanatory journalism.

Such changes indicate a shift in how journalists view their work. According to

Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009), changes in news production are related to shifts in

the professional identity of journalists. The authors identify four aspects of changes in

journalistic practices due to online news production: alteration in newsgathering

processes, acceleration of temporal patterns of content production, convergence of

print, broadcast, and online operations along with modification of editorial workflow

(2009: 568). The authors identify the user as a content producer with the demise of the

gatekeeping role and the combination of user-generated content with journalistic work.

The internet's impact on newsgathering has significantly increased pressure on

journalists to carry out multiple tasks. Constant publication has become an

institutionalized norm as the Web's multimedia potential now requires journalists to

decide whether a story should be published on digital or print medium (Mitchelstein

and Boczkowski 2009). The authors note that journalists are reluctant to decide about

which platform in which to publish their work.

Other changes in newsroom practices now include an evolutionary trend pushing

towards convergence of resources that adds additional responsibilities to the work of

journalists (Dupagne and Garrison 2006). Convergence news companies expect

journalistic staffs to be flexible and fast in terms of adapting to an evolving technological

landscape (Klinenberg 2005). While the impact of convergence on newsgathering

routines fostered a highly efficient way of getting more done in a typical news-day

(Dupagne and Garrison 2006, 251), journalists complain that additional labor demands mandated by convergence has undermined various conditions of news production by reducing time to report, research, write, and reflect on stories (Klinenberg 2005, 60). Nonetheless, studies of investigative reporting found that reporters consider unearthing new information to be of high significance even though its future is seemingly in jeopardy due to the lack of fiscal support (Houston 2010). Since the cost of a single investigative piece can cost up to a few thousand dollars, the bulk of the cost is currently borne by non-profit organizations and a handful of national media organizations (2010: 52). Organizations like ProPublica and PolitiFact, both established in 2007, fit the profile of non-profit journalism outlets invested in various types of news production. The popularity of the internet and a subsequent departure from of the old journalistic model has not altered journalistic interest in investigative reporting (Boczkowski 2011; Houston 2010). Scholars affirm that production and consumption of news has been greatly expanded by the internet (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski 2009). Reporters have adapted to a new form of work where immediacy is the clear choice for digital journalists (Domingo and Patterson 2011) while a transparent truth-telling approach is quickly gaining ground (Karlsson 2011).

Ethnographic research on digital news production has found that journalists overwhelmingly focus on the concept of immediacy while the relationship between print and online newsroom changes as technology evolves (Patterson and Domingo's 2011). Scholars have also found a new transparent journalistic approach to truth-telling gaining ground. Karlsson (2011) discusses the emergence of two different truth-telling strategies: a traditional strategy that relays only the most accurate information in the first effort and the newer method where forthrightness is created through transparency

and discourse. The first relies on journalistic scrutiny and the second on openness and user participation (2011: 283). Transparency has influenced journalism in several ways. Discussing the reason news workers relentlessly pursue transparency, Allen (2008) writes that journalistic outlets have become more transparent due to perceived threats to their autonomy and legitimacy. The emphasis on transparency goes beyond a search for truth and opens up journalists to forms or social and political control that ultimately undermines the power of a transparent media (2008: 329). Furthermore, to confront criticism and jurisdictional challenges from new media, journalists routinely rely on transparency (Allen 2008). The concept of transparency is greatly augmented by the internet as immediacy of information sharing increases while journalists remain susceptible to errors. Scholars have noted an important distinction of online journalism is its reliance on secondary sources and information in the public record (Carpenter 2008; Graves 2016). Such efforts by new media journalists prove that new media reporters also heavily rely on the concept of transparency like their traditional media counterparts. The rapid nature of information sharing on the internet has increased the value of transparency in all forms of journalism.

Alongside transparency, scholars have discussed objectivity as a foundational aspect in journalism (Tuchman 1972; Fox 2013). Mindich (2006) writes that naïve empiricism and fact collecting are key to upholding the ideal of objectivity (13). Despite a lack of clear definition from journalists, objectivity is a staple in journalism textbooks and central to its practice. Explaining the practice of objectivity, Schudson (2001) writes that norms of objectivity guide journalists to separate facts from values and only report the facts (2001: 150). Objective journalism is understood as reporting the news without commenting, slanting it, or shaping its formulation in any way. Objectivity is also used

by journalists as a strategic routine. By claiming objectivity, a reporter can detach from inserting themselves into the story. Reporters assume that deadlines will be met and libel suits avoided if journalists report facts in "a detached and impersonal manner" (Tuchman 1972, 664). Even depictions of journalists in popular media reproduces what Bennett (2016: 241) calls "the myth of a free press" in effort to reinforce journalism's cultural authority (Ehrlich 2006). Such portrayals suggest to audiences that journalists have a unique ability to see the world as it really is and a unique responsibility to tell factual and truthful stories about it. Professional news reporters seem to be arguing that their methods guarantee a fair assessment of occurrences, thereby guaranteeing free speech (Tuchman 1978, 109).

This emphasis on objectivity is closely bound to the model of journalism that developed after the World War II, which assumes that reporters can and should separate truth from falsehood when presenting the news in a meaningful context (Peterson 1963: 93). While asserting objectivity and journalism's unique perspective on human affairs, routinely reporting 'facts' is equated with telling the 'truth.' Journalism claim to truth is the main feature of journalistic discourse and it is also how journalism distinguishes itself from entertainment and political opinion (Broersma 2010). Scholars have found that 100 percent of journalists surveyed identified truth as "getting the facts right" (Gachenga 2010: 53). Tuchman (1972) explains that journalists navigate between libel and absurdity by identifying "objectivity" with "facts" that were observed by a reporter or verified by news workers (664). When "facts" cannot be verified, journalists defer to presentation of supporting evidence, providing conflicting possibilities, judicious use of quotation marks, and structuring information in an appropriate sentence (1972: 669). Use of quotations is an important strategy that allows reporters to

remove themselves from the story and present the information and another's opinion (Tuchman 1980, 96). In structuring information appropriately, journalists routinely present the most important information first while importance of information in subsequently decreases.

Routine emphasis on values such as objectivity and a pursuit of truth through facts presents journalists as truth tellers. Tuchman (1980) found that "identification of facts is grounded in everyday methods of attributing meaning to reality" (1980: 85). This research on social construction of reality through news production shows that routinized reporting developed by reporters has taken on a format so familiar to most consumers that consideration of alternative methods is rare. News presentations sooth the consumer as they reify social forces (1980: 214). By doing so, reporters establish what Tuchman (1980) calls the "web of facticity," in which coverage of events is concretely imbedded in the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the traditional news lead. By routinely reporting facts, claiming objectivity, and making various efforts to appear transparent in their approach to reporting on events, journalists participate in the creation of truth through their work.

However, Herman and Chomsky (2008), prominent critics of a naïve account of objectivity in journalism, contend that propaganda filters built into the process of newsgathering often give the appearance of a rigorous, objective approach to journalism. Journalism's de-facto reliance on official sources to shield reporters from criticisms of bias and libel suits amounts to an ideological control of elites over the institution of journalism (2008: 19). Gans' (2004) research reflects on news reporting being heavily reliant on official sources and reaffirms Herman and Chomsky's criticism of the newsgathering process.

Changes in the routines of journalists have consequences in the types of stories covered by journalists. One noticeable impact on journalistic routines due to the internet is the advent of fact-checking journalism. A relatively recent development in journalism, this form of reporting breaks from traditional news reporting in terms of structuring the narrative and displaying sources within stories. Pointing to changes in journalistic routines, Graves (2016) finds that fact-checking journalists address their audience very differently than traditional journalists. His ethnographic research on the operations of PolitiFact shows how information gathering and dissemination routines of reporters working in fact-checking journalism evolved from traditional journalism but has also developed unique ways of communicating information to audiences. This latest trend in reporter's communication with their audience is a symbiotic relationship between content creators and its audience. Journalists are meeting the public's general demand for greater accountability from public officials through fact-based reporting that focuses exclusively on statements made by public officials. The next section will discuss how journalists working with fact-checking navigate concepts of objectivity, and transparency and impacts journalistic routines.

Growing importance of fact-checking in news

A relatively new change in journalism has been the advent of fact-checking. This form of reporting is growing with most political events being fact-checked in real time. Fact-checking journalism's meteoritic popularity is a response to the rapid spread of misinformation through the internet. About 49 percent of the U.S. population received false breaking news in 2012 through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter (Morejon 2012). Such misinformation challenges the credibility of the internet as a

source for authentic public information and feeds the existence of fact-checking journalism. Wintersiek (2017) analyzed the effect of this format on public perception of political candidates and concluded that fact-checking journalism indeed can change public assessment of a candidate's debate performance (2017: 322). Studies like this show that fact-checking journalism has established a relationship with its audience. Graves (2016) conducted the sole ethnographic research on the work of full-time fact-checking journalists being embedded as a researcher with PolitiFact.org and Factcheck.org newsrooms. This in-depth insight into the world of professional fact-checkers provides a critical understanding of changes in the newsroom regarding technological advancements and shifts in journalistic routine.

Fact-checking began as a traditional editorial routine. Newsrooms have long employed fact-checkers who verified information in articles before it went to print. But professional journalism experienced the real "explosion" fact-checking journalism since 2008 when the practice started gaining more ground amongst mainstream journalists (Graves and Glaisyer 2012). Graves (2016) notes that fact-checking as a genre and fact-checkers as a news organization are finely adapted in contemporary news ecosystem (2016: 9). This rapid acceptance of an emerging practice by major newsrooms is not unusual. Scholars have found new trends spread quickly across journalism and ultimately transforms the field (Graves, *et al.*, 2016, 104). Unlike traditional reporting, fact-checking journalism evaluates "truth" in public statements to provide ratings based on a fixed scale. The impact of fact-checking on traditional media is easily observable as the emerging practice of fact-checking quickly became incorporated into a major newsroom like *The Washington Post*. Graves (2016) argues that fact-checking is distinct because it appeals to the profession's core democratic values while also reflecting

sources from outside influence. As a subfield of U.S. journalism, fact-checking is closely tied to non-profit and academic worlds (2016: 52). The efforts and discourse of fact-checking journalists shows a constant effort to distinguish this form of reporting from their partisan counterparts.

Graves (2016) notes that at the core of fact-checking journalism is a journalistic assumption that all politicians lie. The history of fact-checking journalism can be traced back to the rise of "adwatch" coverage during the 1988 presidential contest between George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis. Scholars have described an ad watch as a "news critique of candidate ads designed to inform the public about claims that are either exaggerated or false" (Pfau and Louden 1994, 326). Journalists claim this genre of reporting was made necessary by emerging trends in political campaigning trends. In the 1992 election, more than half of largest American newspapers were running at least one ad watch report (Graves 2016: 59). This journalistic focus on fact-checking claims in campaign ads work laid the early ground work for the contemporary fact-checking pursued by organizations like Factcheck.org and PolitiFact.com. Research shows indications that ad watches help keeps campaign ads more accurate and more honest about the candidates they support (Meirick, *et al.*, 2017, 13).

During this evolutionary process, Graves (2016: 55) asserts that journalism, through fact-checking, took a decidedly analytical turn towards a more interpretative and critical style of reporting. A recent report concluded the specific mission of political fact-checking is to hold public figures accountable for false and misleading claims (Kessler 2014). Unlike traditional, internal fact-checking designed to correct errors before publication, the new genre publicly challenges political lies and exaggerations (Graves and Glaisyer 2012). On the 2004 campaign beat for *The Washington Post*,

resident fact-checker Michael Dobbs covered several political events that convinced him of the need to "institutionalize" fact checking as a journalistic practice (Graves 2016, 61). Founder of PolitFact.com, Bill Adair, made similar comments about the origins of the organization where he discusses personal experiences as a journalist dealing with misinformation on the campaign trail.

> I had covered political campaigns and felt that I had been a passive co-conspirator in passing along inaccurate information that had not been fact-checked (2016: 61).

Adair's statement on the origins of PolitiFact provides an insight into how journalists chose to tackle falsities in the internet-age. Fact-checkers are responding to a rise in misinformation brought on by the fragmentation and politicization of the news media (Graves and Konieczna 2015, 1968). Beyond setting up media organizations, journalists who specialize in this kind of reporting increasingly have their own conferences, professional networks, mailing lists, and best practices. Such steps taken by professionals to organize around this style of reporting signals a shift in the way fact-checking is perceived within the profession.

Journalists are seeking to reinforce journalistic authority by aiming for transparency in reporting and thereby building credibility. Scholars investigated traditional and technological factors that contribute to credibility perception of online news resources. Their results suggest that online media have diverse levels of credibility which are contingent on the nature of design and format (Chung, *et al*., 2012, 183). This essentially means that all digital content doesn't carry the same levels of credibility. Extensive use of web links, extended access to related topics, controlled flow of additional information, and actively responding to content generates higher credibility

among online news consumers. Robinson (2007: 317) explored the institution of online news and also concluded that "hyperlinks have become the new quotation marks." This has effectively become the new journalistic strategy to project objectivity and provide greater credibility to news coverage by allowing audiences to see the working parts of the newsgathering process in hopes of making the process seem "real," and news more authentic.

Just like traditional journalism's emphasis on objectivity (Tuchman 1972; Fox 2013), fact-checking journalism falls within the longer history of the objectivity norm in journalism. Graves (2016: 78) called fact-checking an evolving tradition in objective journalism. Being more analytical and interpretive is a crucial way in which objectivity is projected by this evolving form of reporting. Graves (2016) explains a shift towards an analytical style of reporting in three ways: first is the profession embracing a sophisticated methodology borrowed from social science, propagated in journalism schools, and attributed to general increase in education levels among reports and reader. Reporting steadily became more scientific, comprehensive, and more critical to cover a complex and interconnected world. Through this change, the profession is responding to criticism issued by Walter Lippmann in 1922 and echoed by the Hutchins Commission 25 years later (2016: 64). A second factor, Graves (2016) notes, is the increasing political disenfranchisement of the American public and reporters since the 1960s. Daniel Hallin argues this "high-modernism" of American journalism was grounded in Cold War politics and in widespread economic prosperity. As these factors began to erode in the 1960s and 1970s, and American life became more fractured and less coherent, as "the interpretive role of the journalist" grew to fill the vacuum (Hallin 1992). Finally, the turn towards a more interpretative style of reporting rather than a

purely stenographic approach can be understood as journalism's continuing quest for public authority and social responsibility (Graves 2016, 65). This research also found a burgeoning interest among fact-checking reporters to practice "accountability journalism" or "explanatory journalism" (2016: 66). These are terms used by professional fact-checkers to self-describe their work (2016: 95). Professional fact-checkers publicly subscribe to what Gans (2010: 29) called "journalistic theory of democracy" and see their core mission as helping citizens make informed choices at the ballot. Reporters produce explanatory journalism by adding context around the event being discussed.

Graves noted a basic feature of the information universe in which fact-checkers operate is that simple, settled questions seem to become more complicated and in dispute on close inspection (Graves 2016, 69). This observation strikes at the core of fact-checking journalism dealing with information that might be considered an established fact by the general audience. Facts available to test any public claim is typically disputed, incomplete, conditional or otherwise uncertain. Graves notes that fact-checking reporting's work is intrinsically tied to the "instability of institutional facts" (Graves 2016, 70). Coined by philosopher John Searle, "institutional facts" refers to concepts of the material world such as money, borders or the unemployment rate that exist, and are given meaning, only by some institutional rule-making apparatus (Searle 1995). The institutional world harbors a great deal of uncertainty. Since the work of fact-checking journalism relies exclusively on information sourced from the institutional world, these reporters operate on "institutional fact" being inherently unreliable. As a result, fact-checking journalism has evolved to focus exclusively on analyzing institutional claims with information in the public record.

Sourcing of information is crucial to objective journalism. Scholars have noted that the U.S. style of interpretive journalism has a few distinct characteristics: it relies heavily on experts, direct quotations, and considerations of pros and cons (Esser and Umbricht 2014, 244). Reporter do so by getting their information from official sources like press conferences, interviews, and press releases. The presence or absence of citizen's voices largely depends on whether journalists find powerful government officials who endorse those viewpoints (Bennett 2016, 15). Because for reporters, the most credible information comes from "the most competent news sources such as bureaucrats or officials recognized as having jurisdiction over an event's credibility" (Fishman 1970). Traditional journalism is tied very closely to an institutional structure. Discussing "bureaucratic phase structure" Bennett (2016) explains a journalist's view of society which is bureaucratically structured and serves as the basis for detection of events by journalists (2016: 57). According to Bennett, such structures are not arbitrary but bureaucratically provided for journalists. Hence, all information about events being covered by journalists comes to them via this bureaucratic structure. Fact-checking journalists particularly rely on this bureaucratic structure to produce work because fact-checking reporters cite heavily from information in the public record.

Fact-checkers are primarily interested in statements made by public officials. Hence, as a matter of journalistic principle, the first step to fact-checking statement is reaching out to the person who made the comment. Journalists at PolitiFact believe that the burden of proof rests on the author of the claim. According to Graves, contacting the author of the claim is a matter of journalistic routine more than fairness (Graves 2016, 117). While briefly discussing what PolitiFact trainees are told about sourcing, Graves notes that contacting the claim's author may also point fact-checkers to relevant

documents, experts, or research. By following a routine that reaches out to the claim's author for comment, fact-checking reporters become deeply connected to the bureaucratic structure. Journalism has long been built on reporting what public officials say and using those statements to tell a story. But fact-checking journalism takes a step back to determine the truthfulness of what officials say. Relying on official, public data is basic to fact-checker's claim to objectivity (2016: 124).

Graves also notes that fact-checking journalism only uses sources that are on the record. This means that anonymous sources are not considered for articles. Elaborating on this routinized effort in maintaining objectivity and transparency in fact-checking journalism, Brooks Jackson of Factcheck.org explained to Graves that anonymous sources are not proof of anything factual. "We think of our pieces as meeting the high standards of academic scholarship," said Jackson. (Graves 2016, 125). Fact-checking articles often present their sources as footnotes or in-text citations. This choice of presenting sources roots out use of information that is publicly unavailable. Furthermore, objectivity in fact-checking reporting is done through employing some method of fact-checking journalists call "triangulating the truth." PolitiFact items often to feature analysis from experts and groups with opposing ideologies (Graves 2016, 128). Fact-checkers identified this approach as triangulating the truth by seeking multiple sources. If an independent source is not available, Graves found that reporters focus on the overlapping information in partisan sources.

Research Questions

The practices identified in this literature review suggest the growth of an analytical turn in American news. "The fact-checking movement reflects and reproduces

the professional culture tied to more analytical journalism" (Graves 2016, 63). Especially after the 1950s, newspaper reports grew longer and more skeptical of official claims (Fink and Schudson 2014).

Prior research shows that journalistic routines evolved with new technology and dramatically after the advent of the internet. Scholars also found that such trends quickly transform the field over time (Graves, *et al.*, 2016). The ethnographic research by Graves (2016) on PolitiFact's operations adds to the understanding about how fact-checking reporting -- a trend in journalism – might influence contemporary journalism. While the Fink-Schudson study on the rise in contextualized reporting found major changes taking place on front pages of newspapers in the types of stories being covered by journalists, the period studied by the researchers ended prior to the development of fact-checking journalism. Given the rise in prominence of fact-checking journalism, this study picks up where the Fink-Schudson study ended. As such, it will be guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the rise of fact-checking journalism have any effect on the types of stories being published on the front pages of newspapers?

RQ2: With the advent of fact-checking journalism, does the rise in contextual story types on the front page of newspapers continue?

Chapter III: Methodology

This study is focused on whether the rise of fact-checking journalism has influenced the types of stories being published on the front pages of newspaper. A content analysis of stories on the front pages of two major American newspapers was conducted to answer the research questions. Of course, there is no certainty that fact-checking journalism was the sole driver of changes observed. Many other changes in journalism were also taking place at the same time. However, during this period, fact-checking journalism was growing in importance and changes to the front pages were also occurring. Several national and regional newspapers began publishing fact-checking content. *The Washington Post* even established an in-house, fact-checking unit publishing content through its Pinocchio blog. Perhaps there is a relationship between the fact-checking and types of stories published on the front page, but it is difficult to know that for sure without more study.

For this research, the focus of analysis will be on *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *The Star Tribune* of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Both newspapers have the largest circulation of newspapers in the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* is significant because this paper was a part of Fink and Schudson's analysis in their study that detailed changes in front-page stories. The authors concluded that *The Journal Sentinel*'s front pages experienced dramatic change over the years included in the study. Since 2010, fact-checking articles are published on the second page of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

While the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* publishes fact-checking in partnership with PolitiFact – Wisconsin, *The Star Tribune* does not publish fact-checking journalism in any form. *The Star Tribune* also does not have an in-house, fact-checking

operation. However, these newspapers are similar in terms of size, circulation, and regional influence. Both papers even share similar challenges to their business model due to print media's declining advertising dollars. By focusing on two similar newspapers, yet different in their approach to fact-checking reporting, the influence of fact-checking journalism on types of stories published on the front-page stories can be tested. While there are undoubtedly differences between the two newspapers (such as ownership), both struggle with changing economic and technological demands. And while it is difficult to isolate the impact of a single variable such as fact-checking journalism on front-page story selection, studying newspapers that are similar except for their emphasis on fact-checking journalism might allow for some interesting comparisons.

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* is Wisconsin's primary and largest newspaper with a daily circulation of about 116,680 and 180,268 on Sunday (Bragstad 2018). This broadsheet began publishing in 1995 following a merger of *The Milwaukee Journal* and the morning *Milwaukee Sentinel* while both papers were owned by the Journal Communications. Currently the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* is owned by the Gannett Company. Coskuntuncel (2014) points to the fact that when faced with severe economic hardships, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* turned towards investigative reporting to increase its audience and to redefine journalism. The paper's data-driven, watchdog approach began investing in long-form journalism as a response to rapidly developing technologies to reinforce the newspaper's dominance in the local news market (Coskuntuncel 2014, 97).

In September 2010 PolitiFact began a regional partnership with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* to publish fact-checking journalism daily on the second page. This

addition to the newspaper reaffirms Coskuntuncel's conclusion about the paper moving towards watchdog journalism with a focus on investigative journalism. While fact-checking might not fall into the investigative reporting category, this form of journalism can certainly be classified as watchdog reporting.

The Star Tribune was chosen specifically because this paper does not publish fact-checking journalism. The *Star Tribune* is a major American newspaper that does not have a partnership with PolitiFact or an established in-house, fact-checking unit. However, the newspaper has been the recipient of three Pulitzers with one being exclusively for investigative reporting. This is an indication of the newspaper's commitment to investigative journalism and similar in terms of journalistic routines to the *Journal Sentinel*. *The Star Tribune* reaches 278,001 readers daily and 551,250 on Sunday (Statista 2018). Since the variable being tested is fact-checking journalism's impact on front-page news selection, the *Star Tribune* serves as a control. Coding stories from a newspaper not engaged in fact-checking ensures that changes observed through this research could be attributed to the influence from fact-checking journalism.

Data collection for this research will focus on the year 2014 covering 52 front pages of each newspaper. Selected days during each month will follow a diagonal pattern. That means that the front pages to be examined for this study will be as follows: Monday of the first week, Tuesday of the second week, Wednesday of the third week, and so on. The study did not include newspapers on Saturday or Sunday. Fink and Schudson employed the same method of data collection in their research.

For this study, 2014 was selected because of national midterm elections. While the national events were timely, Wisconsin and Minnesota were going through

gubernatorial campaigns making local elections newsworthy. Choosing the year 2014 also guarantees that both papers will be focused on regional campaigns. During this time, fact-checking had gained significant national momentum and was also being regularly published on the second page of *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Since fact-checking reporters are generally focused on public officials, 2014 would also be a busy news year for fact-checking journalists.

For the coding process, each story on the selected front page will be coded into discreet categories of conventional, contextual, investigative, social empathy, or other. A definition of each type was outlined by Fink and Schudson (2014) and discussed earlier in this thesis. Stories will be assigned a category based on the lede paragraph and the depth of information provided. For example, a straight-forward story about government's latest policy will be coded as conventional news. But a story about government's latest policy that also discusses impacts on the electorate and provides some information on events leading up to said policy will be coded as a contextual story.

While the definitions of story categories have been clarified by Fink and Schudson, a clear distinction needs to be made between contextual and investigative reporting. While investigative reporting could be classified as a type of contextualized journalism, not all contextual types stories are investigative reports. An investigative report adds new information to the public record by following a detective's approach. Another important distinction needs to be made between investigative reporting and fact-checking journalism. Graves (2016) called fact-checking a kind of contextualized reporting but fact-checking journalism is not the same as investigative reporting. Fact-checking journalism only utilizes information already in the public record while the latter aims to add more to the public record.

Besides the similarities in size and reach of *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *The Star Tribune*, these newspapers were also chosen due to the access to their archives. While all newspapers have locked archives behind paywalls, archives of *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *The Star Tribune* for the year 2014 were available on microfilm at university libraries in Madison, Wisconsin, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Chapter IV: Results and Findings

This study found no evidence to support the idea that fact-checking journalism is a significant influence on the selection of front-page stories. However, the study did find that the rise in the use and prominence of contextual stories, first noted by Fink and Schudson, continued in 2014. And perhaps more importantly, the rise in contextual stories comes at the expense of conventional, routine news stories that have long been a staple of daily newspapers. The following will explain these findings in more depth, drawing connections to the Fink and Schudson findings. In addition, it will be suggested that these findings suggest that daily newspaper journalism might be transitioning from a profession that is devoted to simply providing citizens with the raw information about the daily happenings of political and governmental units to a profession that is more devoted to putting information into context for citizens.

RQ1: Does the rise of fact-checking journalism have any effect on the types of stories being published on the front pages of newspapers?

Data collected for this research indicate no discernable impact of fact-checking journalism on front-page news selection. This study investigated whether the presence of a fact-checking unit in a daily newspaper would lead to more contextual stories being published on the front page. As shown in Table 1, that idea was not supported by the findings for this study. As can be seen, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (with an active fact-checking unit) published 131 contextual stories (about 63.3 percent of all front-page stories) on the front pages studied in 2014, while the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* published 145 contextual stories (about 69.4 percent of all front-page stories). This suggests that the presence or absence of a fact-checking unit in a daily newspaper does not impact front-page story selection, at least in the selection of contextual stories.

Table 1: Percentage of total stories by story type

Story Type	*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*	Percentage share of total stories	*The Star Tribune*	Percentage share of total stories
Conventional	34	16.4%	33	15.8%
Contextual	131	63.3%	145	69.4%
Investigative	15	7.3%	0	0
Social Empathy	5	2.4%	10	4.8%
Other	22	10.6%	21	10%

However, this does not mean that fact-checking journalism does not have an impact on front-page new selection. As noted in the literature review, fact-checking journalism is an important and influential form of contextual reporting that cuts across the entire journalistic field. As a result, it is possible that the rise of fact-checking journalism has influenced news selection even at those newspapers that do not actively engage in fact-checking.

Evidence to support this idea can be found by comparing the findings for the three newspapers studied by Fink and Schudson (see Table 2) to what was found in the current study. From 1955 to 2003, Fink and Schudson found that contextual stories went from 8 percent of the stories on the front page to 45 percent of the stories when looking at all three of the newspapers studied. Fink and Schudson found that contextual stories rose from 6 percent to 41 percent in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in the

period they studied (see Table 3). This study found that the percentage of contextual stories continued to increase in 2014. And while it is impossible to say that fact-checking journalism is solely responsible for the continued increase in contextual stories, there is little reason to doubt that fact-checking journalism might contribute to that rise since fact-checking is an important form of contextualization.

Table 2, Fink-Schudson findings for three newspapers combined

	Conventional	Contextual	Social Empathy	Investigative	Other
1955	85%	8%	1%	0%	7%
1967	79%	15%	2%	0%	4%
1979	60%	28%	5%	1%	6%
1991	51%	41%	6%	3%	0%
2003	47%	45%	6%	1%	0%

Table 3: Fink-Schudson front-page stories in Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

	Conventional	Investigative	Social Empathy	Contextual	Other
1955	77%	0%	1%	6%	16%
1967	76%	0%	3%	9%	11%
1979	54%	0%	6%	24%	16%
1991	52%	3%	5%	41%	0%
2003	53%	1%	4%	41%	0%

RQ2: With the advent of fact-checking journalism, does the rise in contextual story types on the front page of newspapers continue?

As suggested, this study found that the increase in contextual reporting continued in 2014. This research found that by 2014 the number of contextual stories appearing on the front page of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* increased by 22 percent (from 41 percent in 2003 as found by the Fink-Schudson study to about 63 percent in 2014).

While Fink and Schudson did not study the *Star Tribune* from 1955 to 2003, there is little reason to doubt that the *Star Tribune's* use of contextual stories would differ from the newspapers they did study. This study found that about 69.4 percent of the stories on the front pages of the *Star Tribune* in 2014 were contextual stories.

In response to RQ2, this study does find that there has been a significant increase in the use of contextual stories. Drawing connections between the growth of contextual story selection and the growth of fact-checking journalism is difficult to establish, however.

What is clear, however, is that as the amount of news that appears on the front pages of daily newspapers decreases, the percentage of contextual stories increases. On average, each front page of both newspapers contained about 4 stories during the study period in 2014. This finding is significant because data from Fink and Schudson (2014: 13) found an average of 7.3 articles per page in 2003. As a result, a greater percentage of a shrinking news hole is devoted to contextual news in 2014 than in 2003.

Understanding the Rise of Contextual Stories

In addition to the narrow research questions this study attempted to answer, a number of other interesting observations can be made. Perhaps the most important of these observations is what the rise of contextual reporting has meant for the types of

news that appears on the front pages of daily newspapers. While this study did not begin as an investigation of how the rise of contextual stories might influence the selection of other story types, in some ways that unexpected finding is among the most important things found in this study. Looking at the rise of contextual stories in relation to other stories might provide a better understanding about why this is happening and what that rise means for journalistic practice and democracy.

The Decline of Conventional Stories

One of the more interesting findings is that the rise of contextual stories seems to come at the expense of conventional stories. Fink and Schudson (2014) found that conventional stories appearing on the front page of *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* declined from 77 percent in 1955 to 53 percent in 2003. This study found that in 2014, only about 16.4 percent of the stories appearing on the front page of the *Journal Sentinel* were conventional stories –- a decline of about 37 percent from 2003.

For all three newspapers studied by Fink and Schudson, conventional stories declined from 85 percent in 1955 to 47 percent in 2003. And while Fink and Schudson did not study the *Star Tribune*, its use of conventional stories reflects this continual decline. In 2014, this study found that only 15.8 percent of front-page stories appearing in the *Star Tribune* were conventional stories.

The increase in contextual stories and the decline in conventional stories tells us much about the changing role of journalism and newspapers with American society. The rise in contextual stories comes at the expense of conventional stories. This suggests that daily newspaper journalism continues to shift its mission from covering daily, routine news events to one of trying to provide context to daily events. Perhaps daily newspaper journalism is moving away from providing the daily information that

citizens need to know and instead has decided to help citizens try to better *understand* those events. There might be many reasons for this shift in focus. One might be the decline in newspaper staff due to economic constraints. The decline in newspaper staff has made it more difficult for newspapers to cover routine, daily events. It might also be influenced by the increase in competition from digital platforms as daily newspapers struggle to carve out a new role for themselves in democratic life.

Investigative Stories

This study also found that the *Journal Sentinel* published more investigative stories than the *Star Tribune*. Fink and Schudson (2014) found 3 percent of the *Journal Sentinel's* front-page stories in 1991 to be investigative reporting. That number declined to 1 percent by 2003 (see Table 3). This study found that in 2014 about 7 percent of the stories on the front page of the *Journal Sentinel* were investigative. Beyond the investigative stories, *Journal Sentinel* reporters kept the audience updated with frequent follow-up stories about investigative stories from the near past. As seen in Image 1 (see Appendix), two investigative follow-up stories made up a significant part of the front page. This trend on the *The Journal Sentinel's* front pages was found throughout 2014. This interest in investigative reporting affirms the research conclusions of Coskuntuncel (2014) who found that the *Journal Sentinel* was investing more in investigative work to boost subscribers and increase readership.

The findings in the area of investigative reporting are interesting for other reasons. The only significant difference between the *Journal Sentinel* and the *Star Tribune* in front-page story selection was in the area of investigative reporting. *The Star Tribune* did not publish any investigative reports on front pages looked at as part of this study. It is possible that a rare investigative story was missed due to the research design.

However, it appears that the *Journal Sentinel* is more devoted to investigative stories than *The Star Tribune*. It is interesting that this is the only place where significant differences in story genres appeared. Perhaps this suggests that there is a lack of agreement across the profession about the importance of investigative journalism, while there is broad agreement about the importance of contextual reporting.

Social Empathy Stories

According to Fink and Schudson, by 2003 about 4 percent of the stories appearing on the front page of the *Journal Sentinel* were social empathy stories (see Table 3). The figure declined to 2.5 percent in 2014. About 4 percent of the stories appearing on the front page of the *The Star Tribune* in 2014 were social empathy stories (see Table 1).

Fink and Schudson found that in 2003, about 6 percent of the stories appearing in the three newspapers they studied were social empathy stories (see Table 2). The slight decline in social empathy stories is interesting, but it is difficult to determine the reason. Fink and Schudson note that social empathy stories are "specific brands" of contextual journalism that are distinctive enough to be counted separately (2014: 11). They note that social empathy stories also indicate a move away from conventional stories (2014: 11).

"Other" Stories

Stories coded as "other" occupied about 10 percent of the 2014 front-page stories in both the *Journal Sentinel* and *The Star Tribune* (see Table 1). Fink and Schudson (2014) classified "other" as watercooler stories. They found that in 1955 about 16 percent of the stories on the front page of the *Journal Sentinel* fell into the "other" category; by 2003 that percentage had declined to 0 percent (see Table 3). Fink and Schudson note

these types of stories were often intended to entertain (2014: 12). Perhaps the slight

increase in "other" stories reveals something about newspaper's desire to find ways to

attract new audiences.

Political Stories

In an attempt to explain the decline of conventional stories and the rise of

contextual stories, Fink and Schudson also looked at the number of political stories

appearing on the front pages of newspapers (2014: 14). Fink and Schudson suggested

that the decline might just be another way of saying that there is less front-page

coverage of government than there used to be (2014: 15). Fink and Schudson (2014)

discussed the problem with identifying political stories because what constitutes being

political is relatively vague. For this research, a political story is information that relates

to policy, government affairs, legislative battles, and legal affairs in which the state was

involved.

Fink and Schudson found that front-page stories in the *Journal Sentinel* about

politics/government increased from 77 percent in 1955 to 84 percent in 2003 (see Table

4).

Table 4: Fink-Schudson percentage of front-page politics/government stories			
	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	Washington Post	New York Times
1955	77%	83%	92%
1967	83%	91%	86%
1979	81%	89%	83%
1991	89%	90%	75%
2003	84%	83%	76%

This study found a significant decrease in *Journal Sentinel* political stories since 2003 (see Table 5). In 2014, only about 32 percent of the *Journal Sentinel* front-page stories that were studied were political/governmental. In the *Star Tribune*, only about 19 percent of front-page stories looked at in 2014 contained stories about politics/government. The *Star Tribune's* focus was less on government as compared to the *Journal Sentinel* and more oriented towards events in the community such as grassroot organizations, public schools, environmental issues around the Great Lakes, water conservation, and business stories.

Table 5: Total stories about politics/governmental affairs		
	Stories about politics	Percentage share of total stories
The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	67	32.4%
The Star Tribune	39	18.7%

Other Observations

A noticeable difference between the two papers were the banner ads found on the bottom of every front page in the *Journal Sentinel*. In contrast, the *Star Tribune* did not have any advertising on the front pages examined for this study. This observation perhaps speaks to the different fiscal positions of the newspapers.

The Journal Sentinel had a diverse front page with a wide focus on multiple topics. While this study did not directly code images or graphics, it appeared that many of the images or graphics were related to the contextualization of information. Images were often used to put information into context, resulting in a hybrid story consisting of words and pictures. At times, such representations of images resulted in large stories taking up a good chunk of the front page. These hybrid stories with images described events and mapped out possible outcomes. The important aspect of these graphics was its size. Some of the hybrid stories, as seen in Image 3 (see Appendix), took up a clear majority of the front page. The *Star Tribune* often used a similar hybrid approach to front page stories as well (see Image 2, Appendix) The growth of images and graphics is most likely one reason for the reduction in the number of stories on the front pages of daily newspapers.

A major visual difference between the two papers was in layout of stories. Snippets of "top news" stories from other pages were arranged around the outer border on the left side of the front page in the *Star Tribune*. Organized by broad topics like news and sports, this strip gives readers a glance at all the topics covered by the paper on any given day. The *Journal Sentinel's* front page had the stories published on the front page, however a banner on the front page carried the three most important stories from other pages (see Image 2, Appendix).

Fink and Schudson also studied whether the shift from locally written stories to wire stories might contribute to the rise in contextual stories. They generally found that all newspapers increasingly used fewer stories from outside sources on their front pages. For example, in 1955 about 50 percent of *Journal Sentinel* front-page stories were from outside sources; by 2003 that had dropped to 30 percent (see Table 7).

This study found that in 2014 about 8.7 percent of *Journal Sentinel* front-page stories and 12.4 percent of *Star Tribune* front-page stories came from outside sources (see Table 6). *The Journal Sentinel* carried Associated Press and *The New York Times* stories, while *The Star Tribune* mostly carried stories from *The Washington Post* and *New York Times*. Most stories from outside sources were about the federal government or military.

Table 6: Percentage of stories from outside sources				
	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	Percentage share of total stories	*The Star Tribune*	Percentage share of total stories
Stories from outside sources	18	8.7%	26	12.4%

Table 7: Fink-Schudson percentage of front page stories from outside sources.			
	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	Washington Post	New York Times
1955	50%	46%	8%
1967	56%	21%	5%
1979	45%	1%	3%
1991	36%	2%	1%
2003	30%	0%	0%

Chapter V: Conclusion/Discussion

This research found that the contextualization of information is increasingly important in the selection of front-page material on daily newspapers. Both *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *The Star Tribune* had high levels of contextualization on their front pages during the 2014 study period. Contextualization of information is a definitive change in the role newspapers in providing information to society. Fink and Schudson found a steady increase in contextualized reporting over time. But data from this research shows an increase in contextualization in 2014.

This research was based on the question of whether at least some of this increase in contextual stories was due to the growth of fact-checking journalism. In the last year studied by Fink and Schudson, fact-checking journalism had not been founded. To test that idea, this study looked at the front pages of one newspaper that was heavily invested in fact-checking journalism (the *Journal Sentinel*) and one newspaper that was not (the *Star Tribune*). This study found no direct influence by fact-checking journalism. However, it did find an increasing reliance and emphasis on contextualized stories on the front pages of newspapers.

The larger question of what is driving the increasing fascination with contextualized stories remains unanswered. The reason for a drive towards contextualization during this time could be attributed to an evolution in technology directly related to journalism. Broadcast journalism and television news gained significant ground in terms of coverage, popularity, and professionalization of work between 1941 and 1970 (Conway 2014). Television spread dramatically in the United States from a few thousand commercial sets in 1941 to 50 million (91 percent of households in the U.S. at the time) homes by 1963 (2014: 452). Conway noted that by

1963, television news eclipsed newspapers as the most popular source of news in the United States. Perhaps that change prompted newspapers to redefine goals and assert its relationship to audiences in a different way. Since television journalism can deliver information at rapid speed compared to newspapers, broadcast journalists took on the role of conveying conventional information. In his study of New York network-news viewers, Gans (2004: 217) found that 40 percent of respondents chose their network news because of the newscaster, 20 percent by channel preference and time of broadcast, and ten percent by quality of the newscast. Clearly, the influence of broadcast journalism was increasing. As a result, changes in newspaper journalism was imminent.

Newspaper journalism perhaps increasingly sees its role as a context provider. As a result, the role of a newspaper has evolved from simply conveying information to explaining things. For example, court reporting has largely disappeared from the front pages of newspapers. But television journalists routinely cover events at court. Newspaper journalists are paying attention to the daily operations of the judiciary, but only the most significant rulings make it to the front-page. One of the reasons for this change in a decline in newsroom staffing. Crime and has been the staple of news reporting but the decline in journalists doing the work means lesser coverage of such events. A 2018 report by Criminal Justice Journalists finds that immigration issues, the opioid crisis, sexual abuse scandals, and mass shootings received the most intense attention from the media during 2017 (The Crime Report 2018).

The role of a newspaper has evolved from conveying information to explaining things. Through this change of role, journalists are inserting themselves between news and audiences to affect the perception of information. The latest manifestation of information contextualization can be best understood though hybrid stories. In such

types of stories, often found on the front-page, images and words are being fused to provide a carefully crafted message. Image 3 (see Appendix) is a perfect example of how a variety of contextualized stories is filling the space left by conventional stories. Hybrid stories were observed in both newspapers giving the impression that such stories might be the new norm. While conventional stories with their dry facts appear from time-to-time, their presence on the front page is rapidly fading. Journalists are looking to put more context in a story rather than stick to a facts-only approach.

While fact-checking journalism does not seem to be a direct cause of the rise of contextualized stories, it does seem to be an important form of contextual reporting for some newspapers. In *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, on certain front pages, about half the stories were updates from the watchdog investigative unit and a fact-checking story. As a result, the *Journal Sentinel* appears to be aggressively pursuing hard news journalism.

Since contextualized stories have become the norm for newspapers everywhere, pairing investigative journalism with fact-checking reporting optically conveys a newspaper being interested in aggressive, hard-hitting journalism that also upholds the journalistic notion of objectivity. Fact-checking stories as contextual stories compliment investigative reporting, and in some cases, even appear in non-investigative stories as a source. This is perhaps the most significant impact of fact-checking journalism on the front page. This tactic not only provides the readers with supplemental information about a certain event, but it put that information into context for readers. Fact-checking journalism's frequent appearance on the front pages of the *Journal Sentinel* speaks to the newspaper's intention of strengthening the relationship with the audience through objectivity and transparency. By placing fact-checking stories on the same page with

investigative reports, the newspaper wants to interpret information for its audience rather than simply conveying information. This is a defining feature of the changing relationship between newspaper journalists and their audience.

The *Star Tribune* does not publish fact-checking journalism and investigative reports are missing from the 2014 front pages examined for this study. It remains unclear whether *The Star Tribune* prioritizes investigative journalism on a different page, but no investigative stories were published on the front pages studied in 2014. Due to the missing stories about investigative reporting, *The Star Tribune's* front pages look like a newspaper focused on a variety of issues within the community. The goal of this paper is clear with its focus being on local business, the environment, and feature stories on residents of the region. Stories from outside sources in *The Star Tribune* mostly cover the hard-news journalism.

As noted by Fink and Schudson (2014), stories about government and politics experienced a steady decline over time. That trend continues today as stories about politics are also being contextualized. Compared to 2003, newspapers on average are publishing three fewer stories per page. However, the *Journal Sentinel's* method of pairing fact-checking stories with investigative journalism emphasizes politics and government news on the front page. Even though the overall number of stories about politics declined from 84 percent in 2003 to 32.4 percent in 2014, fact-checking stories are usually focused on public officials. Hence, more stories about politics appeared on the front pages of *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* as compared to *The Star Tribune* because the former publishes fact-checking journalism. But this trend is not ubiquitous in all newspapers. Further research is required to find out how coverage of politics has changed in other newspapers also publishing fact-checking stories.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and *The Star Tribune* are examples of two normative newspapers doing different kind of journalistic work. While *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* takes a watchdog approach to its journalism, *The Star Tribune* is focused on localized stories. Both newspapers seem to be taking different approaches to the types of news published on their front pages, but the data from this study reveals the two papers to be quite like each other. This is an important observation because the two papers are operating in different states. They are both owned and operated by separate companies. But according to the results of this study, both papers are publishing similar types of stories on their front pages. The major difference was *the Journal Sentinel* publishing more investigative reports. But in all other categories of stories coded, both papers revealed very similar results. The variance between the two is marginal in most cases. Both papers relied on similar numbers of stories from outside sources. There were more stories about politics in *the Journal Sentinel*, but the marginal difference in political coverage between the two papers is explained by *the Journal Sentinel's* investigative coverage. Most investigative stories were political stories.

Study Limitations

There were several limitations of this study, but a key drawback was the small sample size and lack of diversity among the newspapers studied. Due to the scope and time frame of this research, only two newspapers could be coded for one year. The results do reveal some important changes taking place in the journalistic landscape. But the detailed nature of such change can only be understood with some level of certainty with more research on the subject. The increase of contextualization and decrease of conventional reporting has been found, but what a content analysis cannot reveal is why

that change is taking place. More study is needed to determine why journalists increasingly emphasize contextual stories.

This study also found that increasingly the way information is contextualized is changing. While it studied the stories, future studies need to look at how images and graphics are used to contextualize information. Hybrid stories and fact-checking journalism are two new types of information contextualization to make the front page. With different types of papers in the research sample, the new ways in which information is contextualized could become clearer. By a 2016 count, 29 branded fact-checking organizations we operating in the U.S. (Graves, Nyhan and Reifler 2016, 1). The popularity of the fact-checking genre is growing and its broader influence on journalism should be discernable. This study could not establish a relationship, but future studies could focus on newspapers engaged with fact-checking journalism and their individual relationship to investigative reporting.

A noteworthy obstacle during this study was the access to newspaper archives. While newspaper archives can be found in specific libraries, most newspaper archives are locked behind a paywall. Access to archives was part of the reason behind the two newspapers chosen for this study. Financial limitation of being a graduate student prevented getting paid access to newspaper archives.

Another noteworthy limitation was the coding process of stories published on the front page. For this study, Fink and Schudson's definition of the various story types was used to code articles. While they suffice as a base to build on, future research could also focus on whether those story types have evolved or stayed the same.

Works Cited

Ahlers, D. (2006). News Consumption and the New Electronic Media. Harvard International Journal of Press/Politcs,11(1), 29-52. doi:10.1177/1081180x05284317

Allen, D. S. (2008). The Trouble With Transparency. *Journalism Studies, 9*(3), 323-340. doi:10.1080/14616700801997224

Barnhurst, K.G. & Mutz. D. (1997). American journalism and the decline in event-centered reporting. Journal of Communication 47(4): 27–53.

Bennett, W.L., & Serrin, W. (2005). The watchdog role. In G. Overholser & K.H. Jamieson (Eds.), The press, pp. 169-188. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bennett, W. L. (2016). News: the politics of illusion. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press.

Boczkowski, P. J. (2011). News at work: imitation in an age of information abundance. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Boczkowski, P. J. (2009) 'Rethinking Hard and Soft News Production: From Common Ground to Divergent Paths', Journal of Communication 59(1): 98–116.

Bragstad, T. (2018, March 7). Journal Sentinel circulation declines 20-plus percent. Retrieved from https://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/news/2018/03/07/journal-sentinel-circulation-declines-20-plus.html

Bridges, J. A., & Bridges, L. W. (1997). Changes in news use on the front pages of the American daily newspaper, 1986-1993. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 74(4), 826-838.

Carpenter, S. (2008). How Online Citizen Journalism Publications and Online Newspapers Utilize the Objectivity Standard and Rely on External Sources. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 85(3), 531-548. doi:10.1177/107769900808500304

Clayman, S.E, Elliott M.N, Heritage J, & McDonald L.L. (2006). Historical trends in questioning presidents, 1953–2000. Presidential Studies Quarterly 36: 561–583.

Clayman, S.E, Elliott M.E, Heritage J, & Beckett M.K. (2010). A watershed in White House journal- ism: Explaining the post-1968 rise of aggressive presidential news. Political Communication 27: 229–247.

Chung, C. J., Nam, Y., & Stefanone, M. A. (2012). Exploring Online News Credibility: The Relative Influence of Traditional and Technological Factors. Journal of

Computer-Mediated Communication, 17(2), 171-186. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2011.01565.x

Conway, M. (2014). The Origins of Televisions "Anchor Man": Cronkite, Swayze, and Journalism Boundary Work. American Journalism, 31(4), 445-467. doi:10.1080/08821127.2015.967149

Coskuntuncel, A. (2014). Redefining News in the Face of Economic Crises: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's Transition to a Watchdog Journal. MA thesis. University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee WI.

Domingo, D., & Paterson, C. A. (2011). Making online news. New York: P. Lang.

Deuze, M. (2007) Media Work. Cambridge: Polity.

Dupagne, M., & Garrison, B. (2006). The Meaning And Influence Of Convergence. *Journalism Studies, 7*(2), 237-255. doi:10.1080/14616700500533569

Ehrlich, M. C. (2006). Facts, truth and bad journalists in the movies. Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism, 7(4), 501-519. doi:10.1177/1464884906068364

Esser, F., & Umbricht, A. (2014). The Evolution of Objective and Interpretative Journalism in the Western Press. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 91(2), 229-249. doi:10.1177/1077699014527459

Ettema, J. S., & Glasser, T. L. (1998). Custodians of conscience: investigative journalism and public virtue. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fink, K., & Schudson, M. (2014). The rise of contextual journalism, 1950s–2000s. Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism, 15(1), 3-20. doi:10.1177/1464884913479015

Fishman, M. (1980). Manufacturing the news. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Fox, C. (2013). Public Reason, Objectivity, and Journalism in Liberal Democratic Societies. Res Publica, 19(3), 257-273. doi:10.1007/s11158-013-9226-6

Gachenga, W. E. (2010) 'Seeking the Truth and Reporting It' in Mwita, C., & Franceschi, G. (eds) Media and the Common Good: Perspectives on media, democracy and responsibility. LawAfrica Publishing.

Gans, H. J. (2004). Deciding whats news: a study of "CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time". Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Gans, H. J. (2010). Democracy and the news. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

García, E. P. (2008) 'Print and Online Newsrooms in Argentinean Media: Autonomy

and Professional Identity', in C. A. Paterson and D. Domingo (eds) Making Online News: The Ethnography of New Media Production, pp. 61–75. New York: Peter Lang.

Graves, L., & Glaisyer, T. (2012). The fact-checking universe in Spring 2012. New America

Graves, L., & Konieczna, M. (2015). Sharing the News: Journalistic Collaboration as Field Repair. International Journal of Communication, 9, 1966-1984.

Graves, L. (2016). Deciding whats true: the rise of political fact-checking movement in American journalism. New York: Columbia University Press.

Graves, L., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2016). Understanding Innovations in Journalistic Practice: A Field Experiment Examining Motivations for Fact-Checking. Journal of Communication, 66(1), 102-138. doi:10.1111/jcom.12198

Gottfried, J., & Shearer, E. (2017, September 07). Americans' online news use is closing in on TV news use. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/07/americans-online-news-use-vs-tv-news-use/

Hallin, D. C. (1992). The Passing of the "High Modernism" of American Journalism. Journal of Communication, 42(3), 14-25. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00794.x

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2008). Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media (3rd ed.). London: The Bodley Head.

Houston, B. (2010). The future of investigative journalism. Daedalus, 139(2), 45-56. doi:10.1162/daed.2010.139.2.45

Karlsson M. (2011). The immediacy of online news, the visibility of journalistic processes and a restructuring of journalistic authority. Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism, 12(3), 279-295. doi:10.1177/1464884910388223

Karlsson, M., Clerwall, C., & Nord, L. (2016). Do Not Stand Corrected. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 94(1), 148-167. doi:10.1177/1077699016654680

Kessler, G. (2013, September 11). About The Fact Checker. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/about-the-fact-checker/?utm_term=.907ad4e4e6ba

Kessler, G. (2014, June 13). The global boom in political fact checking. The Washington Post. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2014/06/13/the-global-boom-in- fact-checking

Klinenberg, E. (2005). Convergence: News Production in a Digital Age. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 597(1), 48-64. doi:10.1177/0002716204270346

Lewis, J., & Cushion, S. (2009). The Thirst To Be First. Journalism Practice, 3(3), 304-318. doi:10.1080/17512780902798737

Lawson-Borders, G. (2006) Media Organizations and Convergence: Case Studies of Media Convergence Pioneers. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lowenstein, J. (2017, July 13). The new yardsticks of investigative journalism. Retrieved from https://www.cjr.org/watchdog/investigative-reporting-impact-measurement.php

Maier, S. R. (2005). Accuracy Matters: A Cross-Market Assessment of Newspaper Error and Credibility. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 82(3), 533-551. doi:10.1177/107769900508200304

Meirick, P. C., Nisbett, G. S., Harvell-Bowman, L. A., Harrison, K. J., Jefferson, M. D., Kim, T., & Pfau, M. W. (2017). To Tell the Truth: Ad Watch Coverage, Ad Tone, and the Accuracy of Political Advertising. Political Communication, 1-20. doi:10.1080/10584609.2017.1414089

Mitchelstein, E., & Boczkowski, P. J. (2009). Between tradition and change. Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism, 10(5), 562-586. doi:10.1177/1464884909106533

Mitchell, A., Gottfried, J., Barthel, M., & Shearer, E. (2016, July 7). Pathways to news. Retrieved from http://pewrsr.ch/29x1eQ8

Mindich, D. T. (2006). Just the facts: How "objectivity" came to define American journalism. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Molotch, H., & Lester, M. (1974). News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals. American Sociological Review, 39(1), 101. doi:10.2307/2094279

Morejon, R. (2012, June 28). How social media is replacing traditional journalism as a news source. Social Media Today Report. Retrieved from http://www.socialmediatoday. com/content/how-social-media-replacing-traditional- journalism-news-source-infographic

Nerone, J., & Barnhurst, K. G. (2002). Form of news a history. New York: The Guilford Press.

Peterson, T (1963) 'The Social Responsibility Theory of the Press' in Siebert, F., Peterson, T. and Schramm, W. Four theories of the press. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Pfau, M. W., & Louden, A. (1994). Effectiveness of adwatch formats in deflecting political attack ads.Communication Research,21, 325–341. doi:10.1177/009365094021003005

Robinson, S. (2007). "Someones Gotta Be In Control Here". Journalism Practice, 1(3), 305-321. doi:10.1080/17512780701504856

Schudson, M. (2001). The objectivity norm in American journalism*. Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism, 2(2), 149-170. doi:10.1177/146488490100200201

Searle, J. R. (1995). The Construction of Social Reality. New York: Free Press.

Statista. (2018, June). Readers of the Star Tribune in the U.S. 2018 | Statistic. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/229784/readers-of-the-star-tribune-mn-daily-edition/

Stepp, C.S. (1999). Then and now. American Journalism Review 21(September): 60–75.

The Crime Report (2018, February 15). News Staff Decline Threatens US Justice Coverage: Study. Retrieved from https://thecrimereport.org/2018/02/14/decline-in-news-staffing-threatens-us-justice-coverage-study/

Tuchman, G. (1972). Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity. American Journal of Sociology, 77(4), 660-679. doi:10.1086/225193

Tuchman, G. (1973). Making News by Doing Work: Routinizing the Unexpected. American Journal of Sociology, 79(1), 110-131. doi:10.1086/225510

Tuchman, G. (1978). Professionalism as an Agent of Legitimation. Journal of Communication, 28(2), 106-113. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1978.tb01605.x

Tuchman, G. (1980). Making news: a study in the construction of reality. New York: The free Press.

Venn, C., & Featherstone, M. (2006). Modernity. *Theory, Culture & Society, 23*(2-3), 457-465. doi:10.1177/0263276406064829

Williams, B. A. and M. X. Delli Carpini (2000) 'Unchained Reaction: The Collapse of Media Gatekeeping and the Clinton–Lewinsky Scandal', Journalism 1(1): 61–85.

Wintersieck, A. L. (2017). Debating the Truth. American Politics Research, 45(2), 304-331. doi:10.1177/1532673x16686555

Appendix

Examples of front pages of newspapers studied.

Image 1: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (circa March 2014)

Image 2 - average front-page of The Star Tribune (circa January 2014)

Packers win NFC North, 1st round bye

Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers reacts after throwing a touchdown pass to wide receiver Randall Cobb on Sunday at Lambeau Field. Struggling through a calf injury, Rodgers led the Packers to a 30-20 victory over the Detroit Lions, earning the NFC North title and a first round bye in the playoffs.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Packers earned the No. 2 seed in the NFC playoffs with a first-round bye. They'll face the Arizona Cardinals, Dallas Cowboys or Carolina Panthers in the divisional playoffs round at 12:05 p.m. Jan. 11 in Green Bay.
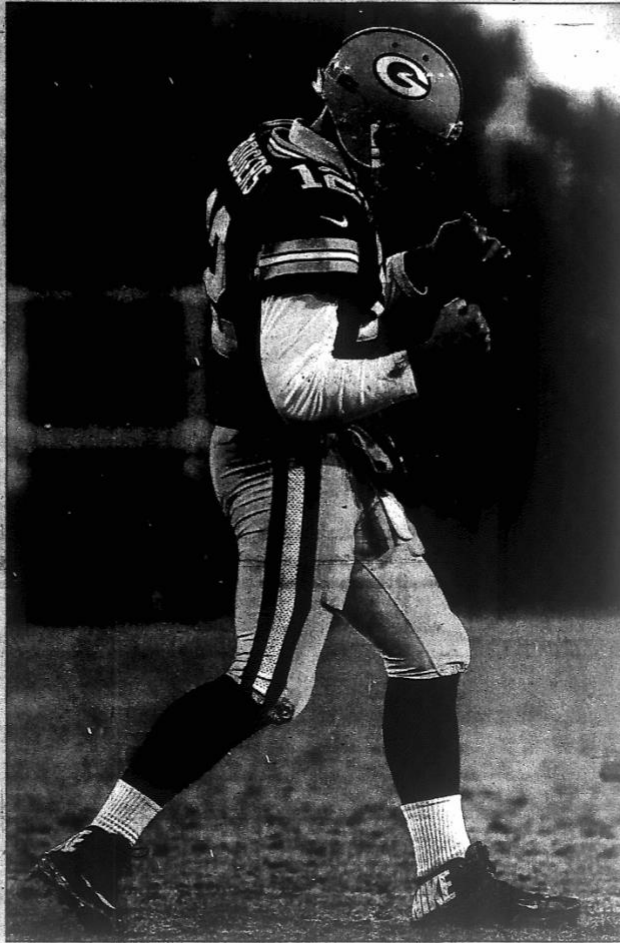
► **Analysis:** Pack reigns supreme over NFC North Division. 1B

► **Preview:** Assessing the different scenarios 5B

► **Rodgers' calf injury:** QB returned to field after brief treatment. 6B

► **Rodgers' two weapons:** Cobb and Nelson are crucial again. 6B

More Packers coverage starting on 2B

MARK HOFFMAN / MHOFFMAN@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM

Police have lead in boy's killing

Family tries to make sense of son's death

By DON WALKER
dwalker@journalsentinel.com

Suabna Xiong sat in a chair in her kitchen Sunday morning, crying and clutching the neatly folded clothes that belonged to her 13-month-old son, Bill Thao, who was shot and died later Saturday night when dozens of gunshots were fired into a northwestside Milwaukee home full of people.

As she and her husband, Somboon Thao, and their extended family tried to cope with the tragedy just days after Christmas, Mayor Tom Barrett and top police officials vowed to use every resource at their disposal to find the killer or killers.

Bill Thao

"We have one very promising potential lead, and it has nothing to do with this family or the residence that was struck last night. That I can say," Capt. Aaron Raap, commander of the Milwaukee Police Department's Metropolitan Investigations Division, said at a news conference near the home Sunday.

Raap said investigators were looking for one or more suspects who fired dozens of shots at the home. More than one gun was involved.

"Last evening, this unsuspecting family in this neighborhood and our community suffered an unspeakable scourge," Raap added. "And I promise you we will utilize all of the resources at our disposal to find and bring the societal vermin responsible to justice."

For the family, however, there was only loss. Somboon Thao tried to make sense of what happened in the home of a relative in the 6400 block of N. 73rd St. The home is just north of the W. Mill Road branch of the state Division of Motor Vehicles.

"The doctors tried to stop the bleeding, but we were told the bullet had severed an artery," Somboon Thao

Please see KILLING, 10A

UWM keeps an eye on the weather

Students, recent grads give businesses tailored forecasts

By KAREN HERZOG
kherzog@journalsentinel.com

When We Energies mobilizes repair crews before an ice storm, or the Milwaukee Brewers close the Miller Park roof in the middle of a game, the decisions are based on up-to-the-minute weather tracking customized to their needs by a team at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

A full-time, experienced meteorologist leads the round-the-clock Innovative Weather team of students and recent graduates of UWM's atmospheric science program. They provide tailored forecasts on a subscription basis to utility, corporate and transportation clients, as well as WUWM-FM (89.7).

Everything from the track of a storm and the time it will hit a specific location, to the type and amount of precipitation, temperature and wind speed.

The goal isn't just to be accurate. It's to reduce risks for businesses that make weather-sensitive decisions.

In the process, potential future meteorologists get hands-on experience in an intensely competitive field; there may be 1,000 applicants for one National

Please see UWM, 6A

Families await word on missing plane

Disappearance is 9 months after Malaysia Airlines jet vanished over Indian Ocean

New York Times, Associated Press

An astonishingly tragic year for air travel in Southeast Asia turned worse when an AirAsia plane carrying 162 people disappeared over stormy Indonesian waters, with no word on its fate Monday despite several hours of searching by air and sea.

The search-and-rescue operation evoked a distressingly familiar mix of grief and mystery nine months after a Malaysia Airlines jetliner disappeared over the Indian Ocean. The Airbus A320-200 that was reported missing Sunday also had Malaysian connections, as it was operated by the Indonesian affiliate of AirAsia, a regional budget carrier based in Malaysia.

Indonesian authorities could not explain why the AirAsia jet disappeared from radar screens about 42 minutes after leaving Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, about 5:30 a.m.

The weather along the path of Flight 8501 to Singapore was cloudy, and a U.S.-based weather monitoring service reported a number of lightning strikes along the way. But the monsoon conditions did not seem insurmountable for a modern airliner.

The route was a well-traveled part of the

Please see PLANE, 12A

LOCAL

Student helps Bhopal victims, 30 years later

Thirty years after the deadly gas leak in Bhopal, India, University School sophomore Megan Dogra has taken up the cause and is turning inspiration into action. 3A

Hopping to the head of the class

Most of the 101 head brewers at Wisconsin craft breweries are men, but three Wisconsin women are defying the industry's stereotypes. 3A

POLITIFACT WISCONSIN

Top 5 checks

Glenn Grothman, Gwen Moore and Barack Obama made claims that made our High-five list of most-read items for December. 2A

WORLD & NATION

Afghan war is formally ended

The war in Afghanistan, fought for 13 bloody years, comes to a formal end with a quiet flag-lowering ceremony in Kabul. 8A

NYC officers scolded

New York City's police commissioner rebukes members of his department who publicly turned their backs on Mayor Bill de Blasio at a funeral for a slain officer. 9A

Image 3 - the Packers story is an example of hybrid stories

ProQuest Number: 13420152

ProQuest 13420152

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346