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**EXPANDING BOUNDARIES, RECALIBRATING CORE VALUES &
CENTERING COMMUNITIES: HOW COLLABORATION
IS CHANGING THE JOURNALISTIC FIELD**

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ABSTRACT

With the traditional commercial model failing, U.S. news organizations are increasingly turning to various types of collaborations in order to produce news content. They are partnering with nonprofits, universities, creative groups, citizen journalists and other entities, many of them non-journalistic in nature. As a result, these diverse groups are increasingly having to negotiate different sets of values and priorities as they establish journalistic processes and create news content. This dissertation explores, first, the question of how the structure and makeup of such diverse collaborations influences the journalistic values and norms by which the effort abides; second, it examines how the processes of collaborations reflect these negotiated norms and values. The project seeks to shed light on the ways traditional journalistic boundaries are being expanded and the journalistic field transformed by new, non-traditional journalistic partners in collaborations. The qualitative study – which utilizes in-person and virtual ethnography, in-depth interviewing, and textual analysis – focuses on two different collaborations: a fledgling partnership called the Dallas Media Collaborative, which involves 14 different journalistic and non-journalistic partners working together to cover the topic of affordable housing in Dallas, Texas; and the Credible Messenger Reporting Project, which pairs professional journalists and community journalists in the coverage of gun violence in Philadelphia. The study finds that these partnerships demonstrate evidence of journalists expanding their traditional boundaries to include new partners in the process of creating news content, showing that collaboration can mark an attempt at field repair. These new partners are helping to re-envision the purpose of the field, with a much greater focus on public service and the goals of effecting social change and empowering

communities; they are also forcing an expansion of the boundaries of what can be considered journalism – especially in terms of creative work and audience engagement. However, journalists often continue to enforce traditional values even amid the presence of non-traditional partners, and the power dynamics of traditional journalism are persistent. As a result, collaborations continue to be a site of constant of contested norms and values, evidenced both in journalistic processes and in the content that they produce.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the evolution of journalism, there has been a developing history of not just single groups creating news, but combinations of different actors collaborating to produce news content. One of the foremost examples of journalistic collaboration in the United States began in 1846 when, following a series of meetings, a group of rival newspapers agreed to work together to more efficiently and cheaply obtain news from the Mexican War – a collaboration that became The Associated Press. In addition to collaborating on news-gathering costs, members of this new coalition agreed to band together to take better advantage of the newly developed telegraph technology, which did not have the capacity to serve all the newspapers at once; this association, which included six founding members, later agreed to expand its cooperative effort to news gathering across the United States (The Associated Press, 2007; Schudson, 1978). This effort had been foreshadowed a few decades before, in the 1820s, when a group of newspapers had shared the cost of operating a boat to get news from ships coming into New York harbor (Schudson, 1978). Those collaborations, and the ones that have come since, also have roots in the earliest newspapers in Europe and the United States, many of which routinely borrowed freely from one another (Slauter & Greer, 2012; Starr, 2004).

Formalized practices of collaboration have evolved over time, especially when journalism has faced times of crisis. The Newspaper Act of 1970 allowed struggling newspapers operating in the same city to collaborate via joint-operating agreements, exempting them from parts of anti-trust law (Baker, 2006; Ryfe, 2012). The 20th century saw the normalization of pool reports as a means for news organizations to share

resources and manage competition (for example, Breed, 1952; Crouse, 1973).

Collaborative efforts have since evolved tremendously in the 21st century. Faced with increasing financial pressures, for example, partnerships between newspapers and TV stations in the same market became more common in the early 2000s (Lowrey, 2005). Furthermore, a massive decline in print advertising revenue encouraged large chains to increasingly share content among their newspapers, essentially creating their own news services (for example, Graham & Smart, 2010; Sjovaag, 2014). Now, with western journalism often characterized as being in a state of “crisis” or “collapse” (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2019, p. 14), this has increased the pressure to find new models. Those models have increasingly led to collaborative efforts.

In the past, traditional news organizations like newspapers have resisted collaborations with other actors amid questions of who was a “journalist” and concerns over whether collaboratively produced news would be reported in a traditional way (Anderson, 2013, pp. 154-166). But, over time, collaborative efforts have grown in number and now involve an increasingly diverse array of both journalistic and non-journalistic actors, from legacy news organizations and digital startups to foundations, nonprofits, advocacy groups and other types of organizations. As this has occurred, it has impacted the boundaries (Gieryn, 1983; Carlson & Lewis, 2015; Carlson & Lewis, 2020) of journalism, the extent to which journalists have worked to defend their field against “incursions from non-journalists” (Carlson & Lewis, 2015, p. 9).

This discussion leads inherently to a question of values and how they impact the journalistic processes and the content produced. Traditional news values and journalistic authority (Carlson, 2017) are sometimes challenged due to the multiple partners involved

in collaborations, especially amid the push for a reinvention of professional journalism under pressure from citizen journalism and increased audience involvement (Waisbord, 2013). They have been challenged through the increasing involvement of foundations (Benson, 2017; Lewis, 2012), collaborations with computer programmers and hackers (Lewis & Usher, 2013; Usher, 2016), the prospect of government involvement (McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Nee, 2013; Pickard, 2015), the potential influence of advocacy groups (Konieczna, 2020) and, of course, increasingly diverse efforts to collaborate with the audience. Values are also challenged in collaborations involving different newsrooms, especially when they involve a wide array of different news organizations, as with the Panama Papers project (Obermaier & Obermayer, 2017) and other large-scale collaborative efforts that involved partners who had varied parameters for news, as well as for newsgathering itself.

Given the increasingly diverse array of actors involved, and the various forms collaborations take, this leads to questions about how these different types of partners impact the norms and values that are followed in their journalistic practice. This project seeks to explore how collaborative partners negotiate issues of boundaries and values in their efforts. What is news? What is not? What is OK to do in reporting and storytelling? What is against the rules? How will different collaborative partners reach agreement on shared values, standards and priorities? Furthermore, what can we learn about the dynamics involved in how collaborative partners make these kinds of decisions? These fundamental questions all revolve around the parameters that determine what the fundamental values of journalism are, as well as the boundaries that regulate who (and what) is inside the boundaries of journalism.

Questions of values and boundaries are central in determining how collaborations are impacting the culture and processes of journalism, as well as in examining how they impact the traditional gatekeeping function (Lewin, 1951; White, 1950) of journalism, the selection and – sometimes – control of what bits of information become news (Vos, 2019). Under the traditional model, those decisions were typically made in individual newsrooms, although the journalists making them were heavily influenced by the power of advertisers in the commercially based U.S. news industry (Hallin, 2005; Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018). With increasingly diverse journalistic collaborations, new and different types of actors now have voices in these decisions, potentially exerting new forms of influence over newsroom content, structure, and practices. These new collaborative partners then have the potential to impact the very definition of what journalism is. Whenever traditional boundaries are redrawn and whenever traditional values are renegotiated, there are some core parts of a field that are preserved, unchanged; but there are also other parts that are jettisoned, as well as new elements that are adopted, all with the power of reshaping the field. Identifying what values are staying, going, or freshly arriving helps us understand how journalism is using new collaborative partners to negotiate its current time of crisis.

In order to fully explore how collaborations are impacting the field's values, the actual content that is produced also needs to be examined along with organizational structures and journalistic practices. The negotiation of boundaries and values occurs in the creation of collaborations, as well as in the establishment of their practices and cultures. But it is also reflected in the news content that is produced through those processes and in those environments. Values are reflected in journalistic processes and

practices, culture, and in the content that is ultimately created. Therefore, examination of all three of those areas can help lead to a greater understanding of how partners negotiate values in journalistic collaborations.

In order to explore these questions, it is important to first define and classify different types of collaborations and the spectrum on which they fall. The next chapter establishes a definition for collaboration and lays out how different types of collaborations can be classified; it discusses how collaboration is defined for the purposes of this study and lays out the particular type of collaborations focused on in this project. Chapter 3 explores the ways collaborations are reshaping journalism; it examines how they take different forms, how power flows through those varied structures, and how some types apply pressure to traditional journalistic boundaries. Chapter 4 then expands upon the traditional values of the journalistic field, setting up how collaborations can challenge some of those values. In Chapter 5, I lay out my research questions and the research methods that are used, along with details of the specific groups and sites used in gathering information for the study. The following sections – Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Chapter 8, Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 – detail the research findings. These chapters are followed by a discussion of those findings in Chapter 11 and, ultimately, a concluding chapter considers the study’s limitations and focuses on what this project shows about the impact collaborations are having on the journalistic field.

CHAPTER 2

COLLABORATIONS

Collaborations exist under an overall umbrella of *influences* in journalism and can be viewed within the framework of the “hierarchy of influences” (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) and the way routines, individuals, organizations, social systems and external (extramedia) factors all shape media content. In this way, collaborations exist as a force of influence on journalism, related to – but unique from – other influences such as media ownership and advertising (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009), public relations (Edwards, 2018), and the affordances of technology (Marwick, 2017). Arguments can be made about whether foundations and other funders can be considered collaborative partners, or whether they are simply external or “extramedia” influences (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016) due to their control of purse strings. Within this hierarchy, collaborations act at the “organization” level of the hierarchy. But, as will be discussed in more detail when I examine questions of boundaries, they can also be viewed as extramedia forces; furthermore, their influence also extends to individuals and routines. With these types of debates in mind, next I seek to clarify the criteria used to define collaborations in this study.

“Collaboration” simply means the idea of working together, something that all humans do at various times for various reasons. This project is interested in specific types of journalistic collaborations and, therefore, classifies them according to similarity of the partners, how deeply these partners are integrated, and over what duration the collaboration is expected to operate. Journalistic collaborations exist on a spectrum, with specific criteria helping to demonstrate and clarify where specific ones fall across a range

of possibilities. At the most general level, collaborations have been defined as “initiatives or projects through which journalists from different news organisations work with one another and with other actors – such as technologists, data scientists, academics and community members to report, produce, and distribute news” (Jenkins & Graves, 2019, p. 7). However, in order to understand them fully, it can be helpful to break them down into specific categories that separate one type from another.

First, they can be classified by whether the partners involved are journalistic (legacy news organizations, digital news start-ups, community blogs) or non-journalistic (tech companies, foundations, advocacy groups) (Stonbely, 2017). Keeping in mind questions of boundaries (for example, Gieryn, 1983; Carlson & Lewis, 2015; Carlson & Lewis, 2020), this question can prove particularly problematic amid the central debate about who is a journalist and what does or does not constitute journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). When considering partners involved in a collaboration, the primary goals of an organization can be evaluated in terms of its own stated aims and in the work that it produces on its own. Does the partner produce content with the goal of informing an audience? To what extent does the content seek to accomplish a goal *other than* informing the audience, such as persuading or advocating?

In this way, collaborative partners can range from highly similar to highly dissimilar, with all points in between possible, as well. In what ways are they similar? In what ways do they differ? Partners in a collaboration have been classified based on whether they are journalistic or non-journalistic actors (Carson, 2020) and whether they are “new” or “legacy” journalistic actors (Konow-Lund, 2019), the latter highlighting how differences in both newsroom culture and distribution mechanisms create a

distinction between “new” (news start-ups, blogs) and “legacy” (newspapers, TV/radio stations) news organizations. Furthermore, criteria can be established to classify journalistic (newspapers, news websites, TV/radio stations) from non-journalistic (philanthropic foundation, government, advocacy groups, researchers and think tanks, universities, creative groups, individual citizens). Traditional journalistic actors have been described as ones that emphasize values such as verification, editorial independence and the overall purpose of providing the public with the information they need to make better, informed decisions while going about their daily lives in society (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Many of these distinctions are based on value-laden judgments that can be up to interpretation. These values, and how they may be challenged by non-journalistic collaborative partners, are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Collaborations come in a wide array of forms, especially when it comes to the types of partners involved. Therefore, the varied types of partners and the different structures in which they operate together in collaborations impacts the ways in different sets of values are imbued in journalistic processes. In terms of partners, collaborations can involve traditional news organizations and start-up news organizations. They can also involve a wide range of partners from foundations and nonprofits (for example, Benson, 2017; Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019; Konieczna, 2018; Lewis, 2012) to computer programmers and hackers (Lewis & Usher, 2013; Usher, 2016) to advocacy groups (for example, Konieczna, 2020). They can involve public entities (Nee, 2013; Pickard, 2015) and community members acting in the role of citizen journalists (Greenwood & Thomas, 2015; Salaudeen, 2021).

Second, collaborations can be classified by the extent to which the partners' operations are integrated, whether they create content separately or cooperatively (Stonbely, 2017). This is a systemic measurement that essentially illustrates the way the operation is designed. When they work together, on one end of the integration spectrum, partners can sometimes operate independently, creating content separately and sharing it with each other. But, on the other, more integrated end of the integration spectrum, they can work together in the design, planning, production and distribution of news content – a fully integrated operation. At the simplest level, there is cross-promotion, where partners promote each other's content, but they don't work together to create it – it is created by the individual partners; at the most complex level, partners integrate their actual processes and structures (special joint editing desks, for example) to create content together (Dailey et al., 2005). This study aims to focus on collaborations in which the end goal is ultimately creating and/or sharing content; when content is created, it provides another window for examining the values and priorities of the collaborators.

The third criteria in this typology involves classifying collaborations into those that are designed to be temporary versus those that are ongoing and longer-term endeavors (Stonbely, 2017). This separates collaborations that are one-offs and focused only on one specific project (for example, Konieczna, 2020) from those that are longer lasting and devoted to overall news coverage. This is a key factor in classifying collaborations, with scholars dividing these types of efforts between those that are “temporary” and those that are “ongoing” (Stonbely, 2017). This is an important factor when categorizing these types of efforts, as it provides an indication of whether the goals are short-term or long-term. This study is less concerned about the distinction between

whether a project is temporary or if it is ongoing because priorities and values need to be negotiated in both models. What is critical in this project is the varying structures of different types of collaborations and how they may impact journalistic processes, as well as – ultimately – the field’s norms and values. However, the distinction between temporary and long-term collaboration remains important because it details the level of commitment that the partners have to the idea of collaboration itself as representing a path forward in the field of journalism. Table 1 gives an overview of this typology.

Table 1: Collaboration Typology

<i>Similarity of Partners</i>		<i>Level of Integration</i>		<i>Commitment</i>	
Variation	Example	Variation	Example	Variation	Example
Highly similar	Two newspapers working on investigative story	High integration	Partners creating a joint editing desk, planning together	Long term	Partners seeking to build a newsroom together to focus on a specific issue
Dissimilar	TV station working with gun violence prevention nonprofit to plan coverage.	Low integration	Partners sharing and promoting each other’s independently produced news content	Short term	Partners working together on a story for several days

Collaborations as a Site of Negotiation of Journalistic Boundaries and Values

As has been established to this point, journalistic collaborations come in a wide array of types and sizes. Since this project is concerned with journalistic boundaries and values, it focuses on certain types of collaborations that are more likely to reflect and

reveal changes and adjustments in those areas – specifically, ones that feature a wide array of different types of partners working together in a highly integrated way. These types of arrangements involve partners having to continually negotiate their definitions of what journalism’s purpose and processes should be. In laying out the parameters of collaborations, it is important to first set some boundaries as to what are not considered collaborations for the purposes of this study.

One key parameter in this study is that it focuses on partners that are working with another group or groups *outside* their own organization. That means it does not incorporate collaborations *within* a given organization’s particular parts. For example, researchers have examined questions of internal collaboration, specifically the extent to which news organizations have been willing to break down the long-established “wall” between their business and editorial departments, a phrase often traced back to Henry Luce, the founder of *Time* and *Life* magazines, and Robert McCormick, a longtime owner of the *Chicago Tribune* (Ward, 2004, pp. 222-223). However, there has been recent evidence that such walls are crumbling at news organizations (Coddington, 2015; Drew & Thomas, 2017) as different parts of their operations increasingly work together. In arguing that the wall has become more of a “curtain,” Coddington (2015) has called for more research to determine when and where *internal* collaboration between the editorial and business departments would be in line with journalistic values. This type of intra-organizational work, however, does not involve two distinct entities working together to create journalism. Likewise, outside the bounds of news organizations, the forces of advertising have diversified, too, influencing journalism through the increasing prevalence of “hybridized content” like advertorials (Zhou, 2012) and sponsored content

or paid interviews (Macnamara, 2016). These types of partnerships bear some of the characteristics of a journalistic collaboration, but, ultimately, they more resemble attempts to influence content, rather than a collaborative partnership involving two or more entities seeking to create journalism together.

Likewise, certain types of technological arrangements can seem at first to be forms of collaboration. A prime example of this arises in the realm of social media. Led by Facebook and Twitter, platforms have grown to play an increasingly influential role in how news is consumed (Nielsen & Ganter, 2017). In this way, news organizations face the dilemma of whether these platforms are partners or competitors. Optimally, news organizations gain more audience reach from utilizing platforms, while the social media companies profit from that added attention. However, as platforms grow more and more influential, they have begun to dominate the relationship in such a way that some argue democracy might benefit if news organizations were discouraged from depending on unregulated platforms for the distribution and consumption of news content (Napoli, 2019). The relationship with platforms also leaves news organizations in a situation where they are subservient to the platforms' use of algorithms, which then take over many of the roles traditionally performed by human journalists (Diakopoulos, 2014; Lerman & Ghosh, 2010; Lewis & Westlund, 2014; Tandoc, 2014). These factors raise questions about how much this relationship is actually collaborative, rather than parasitic.

Other types of partnerships can involve efforts to promote one another, such as where one partner seeks to be quoted by peers (Graves & Konieczna, 2015). This type of partnership is reflective of the increasing role of journalists in marketing not only their own work (Tandoc & Vos, 2016), but also the work of others in a type of basic cross-

promotion (Dailey et al., 2005). These types of arrangements, however, provide less insight into the creation of journalism since they focus more on the idea of marketing and promotion, rather than on the establishment of journalistic processes and the creation of content. Similarly, at a very practical level, other types of partnerships involve the simple sharing of equipment, often in an attempt to save money and news-gathering resources (for example, Anderson, 2013). The main goal there, however, is primarily cost savings alone, not the actual creation of content.

Considering these factors, and the broad umbrella of influences under which collaborations live, this study focuses on specific types of collaboration that are most likely to illuminate negotiations of boundaries and values. This project examines collaborations among dissimilar partners where operations are highly integrated over both short- and long-term periods. It considers how collaborations vary based on how similar the collaborators are, how integrated the operation is, and the length of time and commitment that is planned for the collaboration. Collaborations can take many different forms. In terms of the partners, they can involve similar groups working together (a legacy news organization working with another legacy news organization), or, somewhat similar organizations working together (legacy news organization working with a start-up news organization). They can also include different types of groups working together – for example, a legacy news organization working with an advocacy group, or a start-up news organization working with a non-profit foundation.

This project seeks to study highly integrated collaborations involving partners that are dissimilar, so as to examine how these different actors seek to rectify and negotiate their different value sets when they engage in journalism. Under these parameters, the

study considers how collaborative partners with a given value set impact journalism at various levels of the “hierarchy” of influences – from the organizational level to the individual and routine levels to the “extramedia” level of external factors. Having considered the various structural components of collaboration, the next section addresses the collaborative process and how it impacts journalistic processes and the resulting journalistic content that is produced through those efforts. This section also situates these processes in a theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3

COLLABORATIONS RE-SHAPING JOURNALISM

Given the parameters of collaborations laid out to this point, it is also crucial to examine the different ways power can flow throughout these partnerships. Exploring these dynamics helps set up the core questions of how values are contested and established in that process – and, ultimately, how those values are reflected in the journalistic content that is created. This involves how partners negotiate journalistic boundaries and how those negotiations impact journalistic processes. Collaborations, in this way, complicate the traditional gatekeeping process and, therefore, have a unique impact on the shaping of news content. There are critical negotiations between any collaborative partners, no matter how similar. However, given important questions of journalistic boundaries and the diverse sets of values held by various types of partners, this project aims to focus on partnerships in which the participants are different, so as to be able to best examine how a collaboration's shared values are established.

As news organizations have grown to rely more and more on social media platforms, for example, they have increasingly developed and adopted their Silicon Valley logics (Marwick, 2017; Van Dijck, 2013; Van Dijck & Poell, 2013; Walters, 2021). In that vein, with social media companies and news organizations being *different* types of actors, this project seeks to explore how organizations with different core identities go about negotiating shared priorities, standards and values when they actively enter into partnerships. This could involve news organizations collaborating with citizen journalists, advocacy groups, foundations or nonprofits, or even news organizations partnering with public entities such as universities, libraries or artistic groups. How does

each partner shift (or not shift) to include the other's values? Addressing these questions helps further our understanding of how an increasingly diverse journalistic ecosystem is impacting what actually becomes *news*.

Power and Structure Within Collaborations

When exploring the flow of power in collaborations, and how that influences journalism, it is important to first address questions of purpose and structure. In terms of the purpose behind individual collaborators, there is a well-established tension between economic drives, on one hand, and, on the other hand, the higher-order motivations of public service and a desire for field repair, the attempt to improve journalism from within (Graves & Konieczna, 2015; Konieczna, 2020; Konieczna, 2018). The concepts of power and purpose tie in closely with boundaries in the study of collaborations, which can involve partners ranging from “rogue” actors like WikiLeaks (Coddington, 2012) to public partnerships involving government agencies or citizen groups. They can involve both start-ups looking to experiment with the journalistic model and public corporations looking to make a profit. All of these different types of efforts can fit under the umbrella of journalistic collaboration, but they involve partners with different motivations and varying levels of power. In this context, power means the ability to provide resources and funding needed to produce and distribute information, the capacity to obtain and shape news, and the ability to generate an audience for that information.

As discussed in Chapter 2, collaborations have the potential to complicate the traditional gatekeeping model of the press, the means by which news organizations have traditionally used their power to select and sometimes control what information reaches an audience. In the original gatekeeping model, content flowed into the news desk and a

single person often had authority to determine what bits reached the audience. The digital world has altered this power structure and destabilized the signifiers of “journalist” and “audience,” leading to a more fluid conception of the authority relationship between them (Carlson, 2017, pp. 118-119). Likewise, journalistic collaborations have broadened the definition of “news organization” in that the gatekeeper is often no longer a singular entity but sometimes more of a collective with a broader set of values and ideals behind its decisions. This means that power and influence are distributed in various ways among members of collaborations, rather than with a singular “Mr. Gates” figure (White, 1950), or even an individual organization.

Furthermore, the impact of collaborations is reflected at all levels of the “hierarchy of influences” (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Most simply, at the organization level, collaborations involve an amalgamation of different groups working together, rather than a singular entity. The collective group of partners involved in a collaboration are equivalent to a single news organization in the traditional journalistic model; thus, they act primarily at the organizational level. Gatekeepers, once individual organizational entities like newspapers and TV stations, are increasingly becoming collaborative entities, partnerships made up of actors with a wide range of values and interests that extend far beyond those of one Mr. Gates. Therefore, multiple collaborative partners (rather than a single organization) have the power to influence the hierarchical levels below – including individuals and routines – and impact journalistic processes, as well as the selection and control and content. Furthermore, collaborations are including as organizational partners diverse groups once considered to be

“extramedia” or external forces, giving them more direct, inside influence over journalistic processes and journalistic content.

By themselves, individual news organizations have long shown themselves to be complicated bureaucratic operations with multiple layers of authority in their operations (for example, see Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978). To that end, journalistic collaboration further complicates that hierarchical structure – whether it involves multiple newsrooms, different types of news organizations, or non-journalistic groups. When collaborators agree to work together, they face the challenge of reaching consensus on key values such as how much they will prioritize profit, how much emphasis they will place on providing a public service, and the extent to which they will set their agenda versus how much they will let the audience determine it for them. Collaborators need to discuss what types of information they will prioritize as part of their efforts and what types of information won’t typically be considered valued in their efforts. There is very little in the literature that assesses how different types of organizations come to agreement on these types of macro-level questions, how they are negotiated and at what stage in a collaboration it occurs. These are the types of questions this project seeks to address: Are these types of negotiations taking place mostly at the beginning? Are they continuous? How do these questions of basic values get resolved? What types of value differences are deal-breakers for collaborators and what types can be overcome by agreements in other areas?

Beneath these negotiations over overarching values, at the more granular level, there are the more minute details of how collaborations actually work on a practical level. Existing research on collaborative efforts has explored the varying degrees to which organizations do or do not work together in the planning, creation and distribution of

news coverage (for example, Anderson, 2013; Benson, 2017; Ferrucci et al., 2017; Lewis & Usher, 2014; Lewis & Usher, 2016; Lowery, 2005). Scholars have noted a significant increase in both “one-off” and long-term collaborative efforts over the past decade. That trend has been fueled by the changing workflows enabled by digitization and the resulting strategies that have been developed for organizations working together, as well as by the increasing economic pressure on news organizations (Martinez de la Serna, 2018). As collaborations have grown more common, there is evidence that high-quality investigative journalism, in particular, has become increasingly produced through collaborative arrangements like the Panama Papers (in which organizations largely put traditional competitiveness on hold and shared resources) rather than the “old model” of single-organization efforts like the *Boston Globe*’s “Spotlight” stories (Carson, 2020, pp. 144-148).

In other forms of collaborations, “ancillary” organizations, including professional associations and foundations, also influence news processes through their involvement as external partners (Lowrey et al., 2019). In this area of research, scholars have focused extensively on the role of foundations and institutes in collaborative efforts, as well as the part played by harder-to-define actors such as WikiLeaks. Foundations, especially the Knight Foundation, have grown to have an oversized impact on journalistic collaboration and that has drawn great attention from scholars. There is evidence, for example, that foundations are far more willing to provide seed money for collaborative efforts, rather than funding for ongoing operational support (Benson, 2017). Another study of news start-ups in Germany found that many relied on foundation money for their initial costs, but ultimately found other means of funding, including crowdsourcing, private sponsors

and donations (Heft & Dogruel, 2019) . This highlights the fine line between when an organization or actor is an *influence* and when it actually becomes a collaborative *partner*. This is a key tension in this line of research, hearkening back to one of Janet Malcolm’s central questions in *The Journalist and the Murderer* – whether author Joe McGinniss and convicted murderer Jeffrey MacDonald were journalist and subject or, due to their financial and legal agreements, business partners (Malcolm, 1990, p. 95). Research on collaborations rests on a related question: When does an influence become a collaborator?

Scholars have, for example, found that foundations can have even more influence than their predecessors (commercial advertisers) on news content (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019). Foundations, public entities, tech companies and other private funders all can lead to “media capture,” in which vested interests of various kinds (government, advertisers, corporate entities, technology companies and funders, for example) limit what stories are reported and restrict how they are told (Schiffrin, 2021). There has also been extensive focus on the ways that institutes and centers have evolved in terms of their role in the journalistic ecosystem. The Center for Public Integrity, which won its first Pulitzer prize in 2014, started by describing itself as an “information center” or “quasi-journalistic” group, but has shifted toward characterizing itself as much more *inside* of the journalistic boundaries, more of a journalistic partner (Konieczna, 2018). Through its collaborations with news organizations, the Knight Foundation has become particularly influential in determining what is “news,” but has also worked to give more control to audiences as it seeks to find new models for journalism (Lewis, 2012). Through its partnerships, the Knight Foundation has pushed to expand journalistic boundaries to include traditional

outsiders such as computer programmers in efforts to make journalism more participatory and socially curated – efforts that have led to negotiation of different value systems when approaching news (Lewis & Usher, 2016).

In other set-ups, the roles of collaboration can be less defined or official. There has been a notable emphasis, for example, on how WikiLeaks has established and defined itself in the journalistic field and how “traditional” news organizations have responded to it. When Julian Assange founded WikiLeaks in 2006, its use of new technologies to push for a more open, collaborative informational process forced even the “most mighty news organizations to collaborate with this tiny editorial outfit” (Beckett & Ball, 2012, p. 1). As WikiLeaks emerged as a unique and influential collaborator, however, traditional news organizations responded to it in very different ways, often appearing conflicted about whether the organization was inside or outside journalistic boundaries. One study found that *The New York Times* deemed WikiLeaks to be outside journalistic norms in three different areas – the social structure of the institution of journalism (institutionality), source-based reporting routines and objectivity – while *The Guardian* only found it to be outside those norms on institutionality (Coddington, 2012). Approaches to collaborating with WikiLeaks differed, especially as some stories contained rhetoric that characterized it as a national security threat (Handley, 2013, p. 145). The various approaches to collaborating with it demonstrated a “delicate balancing act” (Coddington, 2012, p. 390). This showed evidence of news organizations struggling to respond to non-traditional actors that emerged as potential collaborators in an increasingly networked news environment. This also highlights ongoing concerns about news values and standards in collaborations. Furthermore, this helps to underscore how –

depending on the parameters of the collaborative arrangements – the line between an actor being an influence and being an actual collaborative partner can be a fine one. To what degree are they participating in the journalistic process? The tension revolves around whether an actor is a “partner” in the collaboration, or if they are an outside influence, such as an advertiser or external actor like WikiLeaks (Coddington 2012), or, as in the early years of the Center for Public Integrity, an information *source* for journalists (Konieczna, 2018).

In the language of the “hierarchy of influences,” this involves research addressing whether the actor is an “extramedia” or external influence, or if they exist at the organizational level and are integrated in the news production process. Empirical research on collaborations has often used the “hierarchy of influences” to help characterize their impact on communication flow on the levels of individuals, routines, organizations, “extramedia” and social structures. For example, one study on a collaboration between two major news organizations in St. Louis (a public radio station and a digitally native news nonprofit) found that collaborating journalists are significantly impacted by the medium that is their background (radio, TV, print, online-only etc.) and that routines are significantly impacted by collaborations, especially those involving different mediums (Ferrucci et al., 2017).

As partners, legacy media organizations have been found to have a disproportionate amount of power and influence when they collaborate with innovators, and they often shape the trajectory of these partnerships (Ostertag & Tuchman, 2012). Despite these complexities, research has shown an increased ability for organizations of different types and purposes to collaborate in producing journalism, a shift since the

“failure to collaborate” observed more than a decade ago (Anderson, 2013, p. 103).

Participants in some collaborations have also reported that the arrangements have allowed them to report on topics they otherwise could not have, or to report on them more comprehensively (Jenkins & Graves, 2019). This touches on one of the biggest gaps in the literature on collaboration – the extent to which it has actually improved (or hasn’t improved) the quality of news coverage, and the extent to which it has filled the void left by a decline in traditional news outlets. This theme, while the ultimate question, is beyond the scope of this project. But questions about values lie at its core in terms of the extent to which collaborative partners seek to serve the public interest – and the specific ways they go about doing that.

As organizations learn to build up trust and work together, structures involving even relatively large groups of collaborators have shown themselves capable of developing sustainable journalistic collaborations and producing high-quality work (Konieczna, 2020). One often held up as a highly successful example of a large-scale journalistic collaboration (for example, Carson, 2020; Konieczna, 2020) is the Panama Papers. The project involved nearly 400 journalists at 90 news organizations in 70 countries, all participating in a collaboration that exposed a massive tax shelter and the powerful people connected to it (Obermaier & Obermayer, 2017). However, the Panama Papers also illustrates a key challenge that is alluded to in the literature, but needs further exploration: how the logistics of collaborations can slow down the journalistic processes due to the number of people involved (Obermaier & Obermayer, 2017, p. 160). In the realm of such networked collaborations, researchers have also examined varied attempts to collaborate with freelance journalists (for example, Hellmueller et al., 2016; Schaffer,

2012). In an industry in which community journalism is empowering more citizen journalists, this is another area of research that could be ripe for additional exploration – the variety of different roles both freelancers and citizen journalists can play in collaborations. Thus, collaborations vary greatly in terms of how closely members work together.

There is also the question of how news organizations’ practices have been impacted by the biggest potential collaborator of them all, one that has dominated research across the field of journalism – “the people formerly known as the audience” (Rosen, 2008). Again, the tension revolves around whether the audience is an influence, or if they are an active collaborator. To that end, research has delved into how different types of organizations treat audience engagement as a means of collaboration, finding that organizations both see and collaborate with that audience in widely varied ways (Nelson, 2021). In deciding whether to grant funding, foundations also often include financial strings tying funding to efforts to promote audience engagement and push for routines that “at least motioned toward giving the audience agenda-setting power” (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019, p. 51). However, when citizen photojournalists engage with legacy news outlets, one study found evidence of a clash of standards, with minimal citizen work being used because journalists said it often did not match professional aesthetic standards (Greenwood & Thomas, 2015). This type of research, on collaboration with the audience, remains one of the strongest threads of collaboration scholarship. Furthermore, it highlights one of the most fundamental questions: What criteria should determine when a given actor (foundations, audience, advertisers, the

audience) transitions from being an *influence* on journalism to an actual collaborative *partner* in news production?

Classifying Types of Collaborations

Up to this point, these two chapters have laid out the key factors that can help classify different types of collaborations. The types of partners, level of integration of the collaboration and the duration of the project (detailed in Table 1 in Chapter 1) can be useful in classifying different types of collaborations and distinguishing one from another. Such a typology seeks to show that collaborations are widely varied and that they exist on a spectrum, from ones where partners largely operate separately and then share content, to ones where collaborators are highly integrated in their processes for reporting, creating and distributing content (Dailey et al., 2005; Jenkins & Graves, 2019; Konieczna, 2020; Stonbely, 2017). It also highlights the importance of the similarity of the partners, as those that are dissimilar often come with different value sets, ones that must be negotiated in a given project. This is central in assessing the goals of a collaboration and evaluating how those goals impact journalistic processes and journalistic content.

Finally, to this point, these first two chapters have sought to situate collaborations as a type of influence on journalism, one that has become increasingly common in the current journalistic ecosystem – in which multiple organizations are now increasingly behind the creation of journalism, which historically had long been produced by singular entities (for example, Carson, 2020; Obermaier & Obermayer, 2017; Stonbely, 2017). This next section builds on the previous analysis of the structure of collaborations and move toward establishing the details of the collaborative process itself, including the

frameworks in which it operates, the forces that influence it and the ways that the process represents the values of the collaborators – whether those partners are within or outside of the “boundaries” of journalism. This then leads into a discussion of traditional journalistic values and, subsequently, the central questions that this project seeks to explore.

Competing Forces at Play in the Collaborative Process

It can be a helpful starting point to view the collaborative process, especially when it involves partners who are different, through the lens of field theory. From this perspective, Pierre Bourdieu describes a field of forces where agents (in this case, collaborative partners) take positions aimed at either preserving or transforming structures and rules in the field – which becomes “the site of internal struggles for the imposition of the dominant principle and division” (Benson & Neveu, 2004, p. 36). This is one framework for research focusing on journalistic collaboration, especially as it involves an increasingly wide variety of actors with varied intentions and goals. In its use of the idea of “habitus,” the structure organizing a set of practices, and “doxa,” the rules that organize actions of the field, field theory provides a helpful starting point for studying collaborations; in particular, thinking of a field as a network of relations between positions (Benson & Neveu, 2004, pp. 3-7) is useful in situating how partners negotiate values in journalistic collaborations.

Field theory focuses on the relations of forces (e.g. economic, political or social) and the ways actors in a given field take actions aimed at either preserving or transforming it (Benson & Neveu, 2004, pp. 30-36). It highlights tensions between the “heteronomous” pole of external forces (as in the impact of circulation revenues and

audience response in journalism) and the “autonomous” pole of internal forces (peer recognition, industry prizes, and other sources of social capital in the industry etc.) (Benson & Neveu, 2004, p. 4). Change in a field can happen when there are outside disruptions, including when new actors enter the field, or when old ones leave it (Vos, 2019, pp. 1-2). In the 21st century, the journalistic field finds itself losing autonomy as the external forces of both the audience and economic pressures have more influence on production (Benson & Neveu, 2004, p. 42). This is highlighted especially in the nature of journalistic collaborations, as they represent starkly how new types of actors are applying pressure to that autonomy and acting to re-shape journalistic processes and content.

In studying collaborations, this perspective helps to further our understanding of how different actors are impacting the journalistic field as its practices continue to evolve. Existing research on collaborative efforts has explored the varying degrees to which organizations do or do not work together in the planning, creation and distribution of news coverage (for example, Anderson, 2013; Benson, 2017; Ferrucci et al., 2017; Lewis & Usher, 2014; Lewis & Usher, 2016; Lowery, 2005). But this project aims to take the next step and focus on the priorities and values imbued in those processes, especially when partners are different. Furthermore, given that existing research has long established the elaborate hierarchical structure of news organizations (for example, Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978), journalistic processes become further complicated with when they involve the differing structures of multiple entities, often with contrasting priorities and motivations. At times, resulting disagreements and differences have prevented collaborations from even taking root (Anderson, 2013). Sometimes, these differences can lead to one partner imposing their standards on another, such as when professional

journalists evaluate the work of citizen journalists based on their own deeply engrained professional values (Greenwood & Thomas, 2015; Salaudeen, 2021). These types of disagreements and contrasting standards can greatly impact the degree to which partners can collaborate with one another.

In this way, collaborating journalists can be seen as facing pressure from activists, as well as through the influence of various different types of funders (Benson & Neveu, 2004, pp. 186-190) when they work together. Similar to the way the term “hybridity” can be used in terms of mediums (Chadwick et al., 2015), field theory can be used to illustrate how the influence of commercial and cultural industries (heteronomous pole) combine with the growth of journalistic professionalism (autonomous pole) to create a “complex hybrid” media logic that determines just what a “good story” is (Hallin, 2004, pp. 234-235). This is a critical framework for understanding the ways that collaborations function and the tensions involved in the negotiations between their partners.

Within this framework, collaborations also highlight the questions of boundaries. Seen in this way, journalistic collaborations are increasingly centered around issues of boundaries, a theoretical framework that originated in the sciences (Gieryn, 1983) and revolves around the expansion of boundaries, the expulsion of certain actors, and the protection of autonomy when exploring whether an actor is deemed *inside* or *outside* of a given field. When applied to journalism, this approach involves scholars addressing questions about who is a journalist and what does or does not constitute journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). When evaluating collaborations, there is an underlying tension about whether a partner is journalistic or non-journalistic (Carson, 2020; Stonbely, 2017).

This tension results from the dynamics of boundaries and how a given participant can be deemed inside or outside the field.

Collaborations involving both traditionally journalistic and non-journalistic partners are theoretically important because of the ways they challenge these boundaries of the field and, ultimately, traditional journalistic authority. Journalistic authority has been defined as “the ability of journalists to promote themselves as authoritative and credible spokespersons of ‘real-life’ events” (Carlson, 2017, pp. 182-183). Questions of boundaries are foundational in the concept of journalistic authority, that essential “right to be listened to” (Zelizer, 1993) of the field: Who counts as a journalist and what counts as journalism? What is considered “appropriate” journalistic behavior? And what behavior is categorized as deviant in the field (Carlson & Lewis, 2015, p. 2)? A deeper understanding of these questions would help demonstrate how collaborations have impacted journalistic boundaries, as well as the ways in which gatekeeping has become more complex since the time of “Mr. Gates” – when one organization with a set array of values made determinations about the selection and control of news content.

This line of research can also provide key insights into professional journalism’s ongoing push for the reinvention in the midst of citizen journalism and increased audience involvement (Waisbord, 2013). Considering the variety of types of partners addressed previously, exploring these issues helps to address how journalistic priorities, processes and content are impacted by the types of actors involved. This can mean exploring how organizations settle on shared standards for sourcing of information – what is expected and acceptable when attributing information. In the realm of factual reporting, these types of questions involve what types of sources are considered reliable.

Similarly, this can mean addressing how collaborators negotiate the standards and expectations of journalists, as well as what role journalists are expected to fill, the behavior expected of them, and the types of skills they are expected or required to have.

Due to the diverse types of organizations involved in collaborations, participants often come to the table with varied types of expertise: writing and editing skills, programming skills, fundraising backgrounds, advocacy experience, technical skills related to audio and video storytelling etc. Understanding the expectations of what is required from participants in collaborations is critical because it helps to define their impact and role in the news ecosystem – and how collaborators establish the processes and procedures for reporting, writing, producing, and distributing news content. Beneath those practices lie specific core values and expectations. Before getting into the specific questions this project seeks to explore, this next chapter examines and elaborates on the traditional core values that have come to define modern journalism in the United States. This section then leads into the central research questions, which focus on the impact collaborations have on those traditional journalistic values.

CHAPTER 4

JOURNALISTIC VALUES

Beginning with the Penny Press in the 1830s, the commercial nature of the news industry and its push for marketability helped establish strong ties with traditional news values such as objectivity, detachment and allegiance to facts (Mindich, 1998; Schudson, 1978). These principles have been deeply wedded to the profit-based, commercial nature of American journalism. Compared to other media systems around the globe, the logics and strategies of U.S. news are deeply entrenched with their commercial imperatives (Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018). But it is the “market failure” of this system (Napoli, 2019; Pickard, 2020; Pickard, 2015) that has left the void that collaborations of various structures (both non-profit and for-profit) are seeking to fill. Today, with journalism being supported and performed by a more diverse array of actors, there is heightened tension between the field’s public service mission and the financial imperatives of the varied funders (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 271). In the current environment, the idea of media capture can be felt through the long-sustained influence of advertisers, as well as from platforms, governments, activists, corporate entities and various kinds of funders all seeking to influence journalistic values and content (Schiffrin, 2021). It is in this context that this chapter lays out what might be considered “traditional” journalistic values, those held for much of the 20th century, and then seeks to identify areas where collaborations may be challenging those values.

Traditional Journalistic Values

For much of the 20th and 21st centuries, news organizations have operated with fairly constant values and standards when it comes to how journalism is produced.

Journalists have prioritized relevance, timeliness, sensationalism, oddity or normative deviance, negativity, conflict, elite status of the subjects and unexpectedness as driving factors of the newsworthiness of a topic or event (Galtung & Rouge, 1965; Chang et al., 1987). In making coverage decisions, journalists typically have relied on a “gut feeling” based in part on explicit news values of relevance, identification, conflict and sensationalism, and exclusivity (Schultz, 2007). In actually covering that news, values of professional distance, perspective, balance, accuracy, objectivity and a separation between news and advertising are deeply embedded in journalistic culture (Friend & Singer, 2007, p. 169-174). With the development of this “objectivity-bias paradigm” (Hackett, 1984, pp. 229-259), the idea of professionalization became more entrenched in the middle of the 20th century. That emphasis on professionalism, especially in the aftermath of the critical findings of the Commission on Freedom of the Press in 1947, led to pervasive self-regulation through the development of journalistic codes of ethics, as “‘responsibility’ became the dominant norm for modern journalism” (Pickard, 2015, p. 187-194).

This cultural shift and these guidelines served to formalize the traditional standards of professional journalism, which became cemented in the 20th century – and into the 21st century (for example, Associated Press, 2017; *The New York Times*, n.d.; the Society of Professional Journalists, n.d). Under the professional paradigm, the standards of high modern journalism have tended to be framed as “dualisms” – neutrality versus engagement, for example, or fact versus interpretation (Ward, 2019, p. 14). Traditional standards in this paradigm are represented as dichotomies positioned in “oppositional ways to each other” such as certainty versus ambivalence, dispassion versus engagement,

impartiality as opposed to perspective and professional standards as an alternative to a cultural mindset (Zelizer, 2017, p. 171). This analysis now turns to these standards and norms, around which the engrained dualisms have been framed.

Objectivity and Transparency

The most entrenched and contested of these values has been the ideal of objectivity, which – by some accounts – traces back as far as the 1830s and has come to define American journalism (Mindich, 1998). By the 1960s, it had become the heart of the country’s journalism, an improvement over the sensationalism of the past (Schudson, 1978, pp. 9-10). This idea of detachment, of not adopting a position, has been routinely touted as a foundation – or even synonym – of American journalism, in both scholarship and professional ethics, upheld as a “primary ideal of journalism implying a truthful and unbiased account of the news” (Cohen & Elliott, 1997, p. 187). The umbrella of “objectivity” has been used to incorporate widespread values, including the separation of facts from opinion, the use of an “emotionally detached” viewpoint, and the goal of seeking fairness and balance (Dennis & Merrill, 1984, p. 111). Critics began raising questions about objectivity as far back as a century ago. Henry Luce, who founded *Time* magazine in the 1920s and largely funded the Commission on Freedom of the Press, called objectivity a myth, saying that complex world events needed explanation and interpretation (Ward, 2004, p. 11). During the coverage of McCarthyism in the 1950s, it was deemed a key weakness (Maras, 2013). It became more divisive during the civil rights movement in the U.S. in the 1960s (Ward, 2004, p. 11; Schudson, 1978, pp. 9-10).

During the public journalism movement in the late 20th century, objectivity would become critically evaluated as the “view from nowhere” (Iggers, 1998, p. 96). That tone

and voice was a key part of what Jay Rosen and others central to the movement were critiquing as public journalism sought to cast the field's overarching purpose as engaging the audience and improving public discourse (Merritt, 1998; Rosen, 1994). Other calls for change have come from a more theoretical perspective, especially ones rooted in feminist epistemology. In that vein, some have endorsed a "strong objectivity" grounded in Standpoint Theory and a movement toward a "more engaged journalistic praxis" that addresses the issues of ideological bias and the alienation of marginalized groups, while shifting away from traditional objectivity and foregrounding accuracy, balance and fairness (Durham, 1998, pp. 118-119). Others have emphasized use of a "view from somewhere," embracing a strong objectivity that incorporates viewpoints and intersectionality (Callison & Young, 2020, pp. 16-17).

In the current news ecosystem, one featuring players "inside" and "outside" the boundaries of journalism, there has been increasing pressure to develop new rules that address "core values of honesty and respect for audience" (Craft, 2017, p. 284). In addition to the challenges posed by the increased participatory role of the audience, the traditional idea of objectivity is challenged by the varied passions and purposes of journalistic actors themselves. This is especially important in the realm of journalistic collaborations and the diversity of groups involved in them. With an eye toward greater diversity, scholar Anya Shiffrin argues that "an independent, diverse media *that are not captured* are essential for promoting and protecting the public good" (Schiffrin, 2021, p. 19).

This classic objective approach to journalism has also been criticized for its neglect of root causes of problems, as well as of solutions for those problems (for

example, McManus & Dorfman, 2002, p. 18). Furthermore, such a “he said/she said” approach often leads to narratives that are heavily weighted toward official sources, especially in stories about politics, war and disasters (Bullock, 2008; Cheung & Wong, 2016). This long-held value of journalism has been challenged by, among others, those who advocate for the perspective of “solutions journalism,” which calls for work in which journalists examine what approach works to fix a given societal problem, rather than just writing about the problem itself (McIntyre et al., 2018, p. 1). This approach draws from the public journalism movement, especially its view that journalists need to help more “with the problem solving, not the blaming” (Rosen, 1999, p. 148).

These types of pushes to redefine the purpose of journalism and to refine core values have faced resistance, however. Some journalistic collaborators have described feeling that the phrase “advocacy journalism” has been used to discredit some journalists, especially those of color (Mosley, 2020). With the growth of solutions journalism, concerns over advocacy have inspired some in the field to try to clarify the boundaries. That includes the view that, while a line separates news and advocacy, “helping solve problems is different from advocacy” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 29). Nevertheless, there is still extensive tension and uncertainty over what should be considered journalism and what should be dubbed advocacy. This tension is likely to be on full display in collaborations that involve both journalistic and non-journalistic partners.

Others have advocated moving away from such dualisms and shifting toward “pragmatic holism” or “pragmatic objectivity” in which a journalist is acknowledged as an actor in the world, one with “passions that seek, rational and ethical goals” (Ward, 2019, pp. 17-27). This can mean making room for engaged journalism, noting a

distinction between those who are doing journalism while being actively engaged in the world versus those who are classified as advocates (Batsell, 2015; Ward, 2019). In contrast to traditional objectivity, Stephen J.A. Ward takes the position that journalists should, indeed, be seen as advocates (Ward, 2019, p. 24). This type of engagement calls for allowing journalists to be advocates for the public they are communicating with, in the holistic sense, rather than advocating for a specific point of view. All these ideas complicate traditional objectivity in such a way that it highlights the increased importance of transparency as a norm in the field.

As traditional objectivity has become complicated, transparency – both with sources and the audience – has become more of an “overarching norm” in the field (Wurff & Schönbach, 2010, p. 417). The idea that news content is not objective does not disqualify it from being considered journalism, especially in a media landscape as diverse as the one that exists today. The reporting of “(n)ews with a point of view” is not disqualified from being journalism, especially if it adheres to values such as truthfulness, commitment to the public, and transparency (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 139). Transparency, while not nearly as engrained in journalistic culture as objectivity, has developed into an ideal in both the scholarly and professional communities of the field (Singer, 2007) and appeared as a key ethical ideal in the Society of Professional Journalists’ guidelines in 2014 (Vos & Craft, 2017). As journalism has evolved, both in its practices and in who practices it, there has been a push for greater emphasis on news organizations acknowledging their processes and correcting their mistakes as part of demystifying the work of journalism (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2018, pp. 1890-91). This can be seen as a particular focal point in journalistic collaborations, where the boundaries of

who is a journalist and what is journalism are often being pushed. At the core of these traditional journalistic values discussed thus far is truth, as well as the trust of the audience, both of which are discussed next.

Trust and Truth

The ideal of trust has been a hallmark of journalistic ethics for generations and has most often been characterized by as the central value in journalistic guidelines (for example, The Associated Press, 2017; *The New York Times*, n.d.; the Society of Professional Journalists Society of Professional Journalists, n.d). With a wider array of participants, and with the pervasiveness of “fake news” and misinformation, the role of trust and truth in journalism has become both more central to the core values of journalism and more contested (for example, Lazer et al., 2018; Tandoc et al., 2018; Valenzuela et al., 2019). Discussions of these issues are based on the idea that news is normatively based on truth (Tandoc et al., 2018) and does not include misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (Wardle 2019).

Truth remains an essential value in journalism, but its definition has become more contested and the questions surrounding it more complex. The journalistic value of speed also becomes highlighted as scholars examine how quickly false news spreads and how it can spread more widely and more quickly than the truth (Vosoughi et al., 2018, p. 5). The rise of fake news and of “deepfake technology” also has helped contribute to an “information apocalypse” in which audience members no longer trust information unless it originated in originated in their social network (Westerlund, 2019, p. 47). In this way, both the nature of technology and the nature of political polarization raise increased questions about the relative nature of truth.

At the more practical level, these questions manifest themselves through how journalists' views on sourcing – what sources of information are considered reliable enough to depend on. These factors often include the source's proximity to the news, its past reputation for accuracy, and the extent to which it lacks a partisan motivation, as well as the journalists' own level of familiarity with the source (Coddington, 2019, pp. 46-51). In this way, journalists have long relied heavily on official news sources such as government spokespeople and police (for example, Cook, 1998; Gans, 2004; Schudson, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). Social media movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have, in part in response to this tendency, pushed to alter the narrative to include other voices. Thus, journalists reflect their values about trust and truth in the sources they choose to rely on for their information. Now, this discussion turns to a final pillar of traditional journalistic values, one central in a field long entrenched with its market-based, commercial imperatives (for example, Myllylahti, 2020; Myllylahti, 2014; Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018; Tandoc & Vos, 2016). That is the tenet of competition.

Competition

The importance of the value of competition can be seen both within the field (competition for prizes) and in relation to forces outside it, including the battle for audience and advertisers (Benson, 2006). It can be seen in the ways news organizations emphasize speed and take pride in being first. Over time, for example, commercial competition has played a key role in news organizations' decisions to use new technologies (Bagdikian, 1971), a tendency that has certainly continued as the social media era has forced journalists to strike a difficult balance between the values of speed and accuracy (Hermida, 2012). There has been a long-held assumption that speed

triumphs over accuracy (Domingo, 2008), although there is evidence that the understanding of a direct oppositional relationship between speed and accuracy may need to be re-assessed (Diekerhof, 2021).

Founded on these commercial imperatives, competition between news organizations has been a long-held feature of the U.S. news industry. This tendency, therefore, has presented a logical obstacle for collaboration. Newspapers have long competed with one another for audience attention in their markets. With the rise of radio in the early 20th century, newspapers first saw the new format as a means of publicizing their content (Hilmes, 1997), but later grew to see radio stations as competitors that were encroaching on their territory (Patnode, 2011). The arrival of television in the 1940s, 1950s and beyond only increased this focus on competition, with newspapers, radio and television all facing what Pierre Bourdieu called a “competition for time – the pressure to get a scoop, to get there first” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 251). More recently, the rise in competition from online news sources in the 1990s (Williams & Carpini, 2000) and the rise of blogs in the early 21st century (Singer, 2005) all caught the attention of news organizations that desired to protect their turf. Blogs challenged the values and norms of traditional news organizations in many ways, from sourcing policies to storytelling approaches to overall presentation (Salmon, 2021). With the rise of collaborations, questions about how the diversity of collaborative partners may be impacting the field’s purpose, practices, and values in new ways.

Collaborations, Traditional Journalistic Values & Questions of Paradigm Shift

Collaboration itself, as discussed previously, is not new to the field of journalism. But, in an era of great crisis in the field, collaborations have become common. By nature,

they often challenge some of the traditional values of journalism – especially those revolving around competition and exclusivity. As noted previously, newspapers and other news organizations also have a long history of sometimes overcoming those competitive instincts and forming various mutually beneficial partnerships. The history of NPR and PBS collaborating with member stations, bolstered by the success of recent projects such as the Panama Papers, provides evidence that the balance between competition and collaboration may be shifting more toward the latter (Konieczna, 2020). Partners in journalistic collaborations sometimes operate in a state of “coopetition,” in which they cooperate and share information on some stories, but remain competitors on others (Dailey et al., 2005, pp. 153-154). This tension is, therefore, critical context when examining such collaborations, many of which involve partners that have traditionally been fierce competitors – and may distrust one another. Considering this, it is important to examine how the varied structures and processes of collaborations impact traditional norms and values.

The variety of types of actors involved in collaborations suggests other values are likely to be challenged, as well. When a group that prioritizes advocating for a cause partners with a profit-minded news organization that prioritizes objectivity, it sets up a situation in which those values need to be negotiated. Collaborations often include non-journalistic partners that may not subscribe to the idea of detachment or objectivity. In its more collaborative form, journalism can become an endeavor whose rules and guidelines are increasingly being negotiated by individuals with differing perspectives, including journalists, their information sources, and the audience. Collaborative partners, for

example, may have different guidelines about what sources are trustworthy, whose views should be incorporated.

Likewise, and perhaps most important of all, partners will likely have diverse ideas about what is *news*, what deserves to be covered – and what that coverage should look like. Similar to traditional commercial forces, for example, foundations can wield significant influence on the reporting and shaping of news content (Benson, 2017; Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019; Gabor, 2021; Lewis, 2012). Research has also found that the rise of news organizations’ collaboration with the audience and citizen journalists has resulted in journalistic authority itself becoming a more collaborative endeavor (Carlson, 2019). Journalistic values have increasingly become a “negotiated performance” (Maras, 2013) that involves the audience. Beyond just the audience, this project aims to explore how collaborative partners of all different types negotiate their shared values and, thus, inevitably shape the path of the field moving forward. These factors could lead to a landscape in which the voice of traditional journalists becomes just one of many, challenging the long-held journalistic paradigm. With this in mind, the next section details the questions this project seeks to answer and the research methods used.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODS

Having established the central theoretical lenses for this project, as well as the values, structures and processes it seeks to examine, this next section lays out the central research questions. After establishing those lines of inquiry, the chapter details the specific research methods, while grounding those choices in the literature and the theoretical framework.

Research Questions

This project aims to explore how collaborations with new types of partners are altering and impacting journalism – the ways these diverse collaborations test journalistic boundaries and the ways values are negotiated in collaborative processes. Given the broad array of forces influencing journalism today, it is important to consider the ways that journalistic collaborations – and their increasingly diverse array of partners – are impacting the field. To do that, we need to gain a greater understanding of the internal dynamics that determine what happens when journalism is created in this way. To that end, given the existing research about collaborations that has been discussed to this point, the project focuses on two main questions as it attempts to advance our scholarly knowledge about how collaborations operate and the ways they are impacting the journalistic ecosystem:

- The first, **RQ1**, asks: How does the structure of a collaboration influence adherence to journalistic norms and values?
- The second, **RQ2**, asks: How does the process of collaboration influence adherence to journalistic norms and values?

These central questions guide this project as it seeks to explore the ways that different types of collaborations – with various types of different partners – impact the standards and values that are reflected in their journalistic processes and journalistic work itself. The next section details the specific types of research methods used in this inquiry, tying these choices into the theoretical framework that has been established to this point, as well as grounding these decisions in existing literature.

Methods

Research Sites

In order to find a means to explore the research questions about journalistic collaboration, I sought out collaborations that involved a wide variety of partners and were in the very early stages. Working with guidance from Temple University's Institutional Review Board, I assembled two separate consent forms – one for in-person research and one for virtual research – to be shared with potential subjects, along with a basic research project description (See APPENDIX A); I also assembled a list of semi-structured interview questions (See APPENDIX B). These materials were shared with the IRB at Temple, along with a formal IRB protocol and application, on April 8, 2021 (See APPENDIX C); the IRB approved the research as exempt and minimal risk on May 14, 2021 (See APPENDIX D) and approved a modification on Aug. 5, 2021

In order to find budding collaborations to be studied, I contacted the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University and the Solutions Journalism Network, as well as individual news organizations (both legacy and start-up), in search of collaborations that would both be in the fetal stages in late spring of 2021 and involve a diverse array of partners. In total, 19 different groups were contacted. A half-dozen

expressed some degree of interest, but logistical issues prevented some from working as research sites for the project. The first collaboration selected for the research was the Dallas Media Collaborative, a project being guided and funded through the Solutions Journalism Network as part of the group's Local Media Project, a five-year initiative supported by the Knight Foundation that is seeking to bolster local news ecosystems. The funding for the project ends at the end of 2023 (A. Maestas, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

The Dallas effort began developing in 2020, but was in its preliminary stages in spring 2021. The stated goal of the project, based on written guidance from the Solutions Journalism Network's Local Media Project, which is providing \$100,000 in annual funding for two years, is to select a "pressing challenge" in the community and report on it through a "solutions journalism" lens (Solutions Journalism Network, September 20, 2020). Solutions journalism has been described as a paradigm that "guides journalists to examine what is working to fix a particular problem instead of solely writing about society's problems" (McIntyre et al., 2018, p. 1). The project aims to develop a sustainable effort that turns into a "permanent news hub" that can address the particular community challenge and become a partner in a network of such hubs sponsored by other SJN efforts (including existing ones in Charlotte, N.C., Philadelphia and locations in New Hampshire, Ohio other U.S. cities). The Dallas collaboration involved 14 partners, including start-up and legacy news organizations, several colleges and universities, a non-profit community group, a choral group, a non-profit seeking to end child poverty, and other members; a full list (accurate as of the start of this research) is included in Table 2 below. This collaborative was selected because it sought diverse types of partners

and because it was in the very early stages of forming in spring 2021 when this research was slated to begin. Since this research began with the early stages of this collaborative, it also includes some observations and interviews involving potential partners that ended up not being involved in the project.

Table 2: Dallas Media Collaborative Partners

<i>Partner</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Advocate magazines</i>	Local magazines (print and online)
<i>Al Dia Dallas</i>	Spanish newspaper language (print and online)
Child Poverty Action Lab	Nonprofit focused on fighting child poverty
<i>D Magazine</i>	Magazine (print and online)
Dallas Doing Good	Nonprofit
<i>Dallas Free Press</i>	Digital journalism startup
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	Daily newspaper (print and online)
<i>Dallas Weekly</i>	Newspaper (print and online)
KERA	Public broadcast station
Southern Methodist University	Private university
<i>Texas Metro News</i>	Newspaper (print and online)
University of North Texas	Public university
University of North Texas at Dallas	Public university
Verdigris Ensemble	Choral arts group

The research also focuses on a second collaboration, the Credible Messenger Reporting Project, which is organized by the Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence

Reporting. The nonprofit center is housed at the Community College of Philadelphia and run by longtime multimedia journalist Jim MacMillan, who worked as a photographer at the *Philadelphia Daily News* and other newspapers for nearly 30 years, and was on a team that won the Pulitzer Prize for breaking news photography in 2005 – work done while he was on special assignment for The Associated Press in Baghdad. The Credible Messenger project, which pairs community journalists with traditional journalists from mainstream news organizations, aims to produce stories that explore root causes of gun violence, and identify potential solutions; the project seeks to produce stories “according to professional practices and to distribute the reports through mainstream and social media channels” (The Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting, November 6, 2020). The pairings produced audio, video and text stories about the impact of gun violence in Philadelphia. These groups had completed most of their reporting at the time this research began; their projects and collaborative processes were analyzed through in-depth interviews and textual analysis. In focusing on these collaborations and addressing these central research questions, this study utilizes ethnographic observation, interviewing and textual analysis. The reasons for using each of these methods together are discussed in detail in this next section, beginning with ethnographic observation.

Ethnographic Observation

In studying journalism, ethnographic methods have been found useful for researchers asking questions about processes or culture. This method has the advantage of being able to *show* researchers what is actually happening as they are trying to understand the sociology of journalism in various contexts (for example, Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2010; Gans, 2004; Konieczna, 2018; Ryfe, 2012; Tuchman, 1978; Usher,

2016). An ethnographer can learn what a system or culture looks like from the inside by watching and listening to interactions, as well as by reading and viewing documents (and the evolution of those documents) along with the informants; these types of observation can take place in virtual, as well as physical, spaces (see Boellstorff et al., 2012). Since this project seeks to answer questions about values and processes, ethnographic methods were selected for their ability to help interpret observable relationships between social practices and systems of meaning (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, p. 174).

Data was collected through attending meetings, joining conference calls and observing online and in-person discussions, as well as observing group work on written goals and policies, and actual journalistic work. This aspect of the research involved face-to-face interaction with informants that occurred in real time in the subject's natural setting when possible (Warren & Karner, 2015, pp. 53-70), but more often through observation of both live and asynchronous interactions of participants in digital or virtual spaces (for example, Bird, 2003; Boellstorff et al., 2012; Murthy, 2008). Due to safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the research subjects were conducting meetings and discussions almost exclusively via email, shared public documents, Slack channels, and Zoom meetings. When doing virtual ethnographic work, I utilized "textual listening" while observing virtual meetings, online chats, email discussions and documents edited and commented on by group members (Boellstorff et al., pp. 92-112, 2012). The research also included a week of intensive in-person ethnographic observations and interviews at the Dallas Media Collaborative's sites in Dallas from Nov. 15, 2021, through Nov. 19, 2021. During this portion of the research, I visited the offices of different partners and observed field reporting – some done by individual members and

some done collaboratively with multiple partners. Some of this reporting took place virtually or over the phone from the partner's offices; I observed other reporting in person at sites in Dallas. I also attended a full collaborative trust-building and brainstorming meeting held at the offices of *D Magazine*, and attended a dress rehearsal of a performance by the Verdigris Ensemble at an arts center. This aspect of the research also included both guided and self-guided tours of neighborhoods throughout the sprawling city of Dallas that illustrated the affordable housing crisis that is the collaborative's stated focus. Therefore, this project utilized both in-person and virtual ethnographic methods as feasible.

During these ethnographic observations, I took field notes that recorded observations and impressions, with some "thick description" of the people and spaces in the interactions (Warren & Karner, 2015, pp. 101-118). The observations drew on both the "emic" lens of the observed and the researcher's "etic" lens, the latter grounded in theory and scholarly literature (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, pp. 122-123). I recorded basic descriptions in field notes, following accepted guidance for such qualitative research (for example, Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, pp. 119-218; Warren & Karner, 2015, pp. 101-118). After recording the field notes, I wrote up detailed memos that included more thick description, in-depth analysis, and thinking about theoretical concepts that emerged in the observations. I used an open coding method to identify the emergent themes, connecting these observations and analyses to existing literature when appropriate (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This process was repeated throughout the research. Any interactions or exchanges referenced in the findings are ones I observed during more than seven months of in-person and virtual observations and recorded in these field notes and memos. This

ethnographic work was further bolstered and contextualized through the use of interviews, which are discussed next.

Interviews

In concert with ethnographic observations, the project utilized qualitative interviews as a means of developing a complete understanding of participants' experiences through their accounts and explanations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, pp. 223-225). The method of semi-structured, in-depth interviews was selected for its value in eliciting detailed narratives and explanations from the subject (Warren & Karner, 2015; Wengraf, 2001). In selecting and utilizing this method, I considered the limitations of interviews as a research tool, especially since subjects' accounts often differ from their actual actions (for example, see Jerolmack & Kahn, 2014). However, this project sought to utilize them in conjunction with ethnographic observation as a means of gaining additional insight on the collaborative process by having participants reflect on their experiences and provide context and deeper meaning for the ethnographic observations made over time. The combination of ethnographic observations and interviews draws on what Nikki Usher has characterized "hybrid ethnography" (Usher, 2016), an approach that can maximize the values of each method in order to help overcome challenges of time and access; in addition to Usher's study of interactive journalists, a hybrid approach has also been used by many other journalism researchers, including Mark Coddington (2019) in his study of news aggregators, Jacob Nelson (2021) in his study of how journalists conceive of their audiences, and Caitlin Petre (2021) in her research on the impact metrics have had on the work of journalists. In this study, the hybrid approach

was also utilized in response to limitations on travel presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In total, I conducted 17 interviews with both organizers and participating members of collaborating organizations. I utilized a semi-structured interview method in which general topics and questions were chosen ahead of time, but related follow-up questions were raised as needed (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pp. 38-39). The questions asked were guided by a set of “theory questions” that are derived from the study’s central research questions; these questions govern the development of the actual interview questions, which sought – in this case – to have participants reflect on their work and their experiences (Wengraf, 2001, pp. 61-64). Interviews were conducted in person, over the phone, or through Zoom, depending on the circumstances, and lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to more than an hour and a half each; most were conducted individually, but some were done with small groups of participants. Many of the interviews were recorded and then transcribed using notes typed during the interviews, or with the aid of an online transcription program; when interviews could not be recorded or typed, I took detailed, handwritten notes and used them to formulate field notes. As with the ethnographic observations, I analyzed the transcripts and notes, using an open coding method to note the development of emergent patterns, elaborating upon them in detailed memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Any direct quotes or paraphrases from these interviews are cited in the text. As with in the ethnographic observations, participants’ names, titles, and institutional affiliations are accurate as of the time the data was collected. In order to assure that nuances were as fully understood and clearly expressed as possible, I also shared a draft of the findings chapters with all the participants and addressed feedback

from them; this involved adding context, making factual corrections and, in some cases, supplementing those chapters with details from their responses.

Textual Analysis

In addition to ethnographic observation and interviews, this project also used textual analysis to help address the central research questions. Textual analysis was useful here because of the ways it allows a researcher to get at rich description of content and helps determine latent meanings (Fürsich, 2009, pp. 240-241). In viewing texts as a “mediated reality,” one in which some facts are permitted and others are silenced (Fürsich, 2009, p. 246), this method served to help address the project’s questions of values and purpose – in planning documents that the collaborative produced, communications that were exchanged, and works of journalism that were created. This approach served to help get at the deeper meaning(s) invested in texts, seeing these documents and artifacts more as research objects in which meaning is negotiated and goes beyond the intent of a text’s producers (Fürsich, 2009, pp. 244-245). In some circumstances, this textual analysis served as a subset of the ethnographic work, specifically when these methods were used to examine the documents that established the policies and procedures of the collaborations. In other circumstances, I used textual analysis to examine journalistic content itself – in the form of text, videos, photos and audio clips. These journalistic texts were examined in concert with the ethnographic work so as to place them in the context of the journalistic processes that produced them.

Given that journalistic processes are complex, and journalistic values often difficult to pin down, this study seeks to examine these questions with multiple research tools – ethnography, interviews and textual analysis – so as to utilize “triangulation” of

different methods in order to increase the confidence of the findings (Singer, 2009). Such multi-pronged approaches have been used to help shed light on journalistic processes (for example, Boczkowski, 2010; Ryfe, 2012). In this way, these different types of qualitative approaches can serve to complement each other, as well as to complement quantitative approaches (Singer 2016). The methodological decisions laid out in this section aim to address the reality that texts themselves result from complicated production processes that are controlled by an array of social and environmental factors (Radway, 1984, p. 19). This study seeks to focus on these three approaches in an effort to provide meaningful insights about how collaborations are impacting the journalistic field. The next chapter begins detailing the findings, starting with an examination of the ways that collaborations are incorporating new types of partners and, therefore, expanding journalistic boundaries.

CHAPTER 6

NEW PARTNERS EXPANDING JOURNALISTIC BOUNDARIES

Up to this point, the first five chapters have established how collaboration is a force that can influence the definition and practice of journalism. These sections have detailed how collaborative arrangements have the potential to re-shape the field when they involve partners that are close to or outside its normative boundaries – those boundaries established by the traditional values discussed in Chapter 4. Journalists have been working together for generations, but collaboration has taken on new purpose amid the field’s current era of economic and social upheaval. Rather than serving only as a practical solution to the daily challenges of newsgathering, increasingly diverse partnerships are now impacting the very core of journalistic professionalism. In this way, this chapter explores how these arrangements – in practice – are working to expand the traditional boundaries of journalism to include a more diverse array of partners actively involved in creating news content. It explores how collaborative approaches involve expanding the guest list of the journalistic party to include a much wider cast of characters than in the past – both new types of journalistic partners and a wide variety of non-journalistic partners from numerous realms outside the field’s traditional boundaries.

Legacy Media Continue to Play Key Roles in Collaboratives

The membership of collaborations includes an increasingly wide variety of both journalistic and non-journalistic partners, giving them tremendous capability to re-shape both what journalism is and how it is done. Over the course of this ethnographic research, the project has examined a wide array of journalistic and non-journalistic collaborative partners – newspapers, magazines, nonprofit startups, public broadcast stations, ethnic

media organizations, universities, arts groups, advocacy organizations, research groups, citizen journalists, and others. Journalists themselves appear to be largely embracing this diversity, showing an increasing willingness not only to accept those outside the field's traditional borders, but to embrace the value that they bring to creating news content and engaging with audiences in new and different ways. News organizations and the journalists who work (or have worked) for them value the perspectives of different types of groups and individuals from both inside and outside the field. That includes an array of different types of members. This next section introduces and describes the participants focused on in this study.

Legacy news organizations continue to be well represented in collaborations, including newspapers and magazines, as well as both public and commercial broadcast stations. These types of partners are represented not only by current employees, but sometimes by journalists who either used to work for them or who freelance for them. These institutions often bring significant resources to partnership, especially in the form of space, technology, research and reporting tools, and a certain degree of clout. Other groups often point to the name recognition of legacy partners as a way to give the larger group more credibility, as a heavier force behind the collective group effort. *The Dallas Morning News*, especially, represented this role, as did partners with experience at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, and The Associated Press. There was a persistent feeling that it was important to have some of these larger, more established news organizations involved in these efforts, particularly because of the resources and legitimacy they could provide.

The collaborations studied here frequently included veteran journalists who either work at or used to work at these stalwart legacy news organizations. All types of partners often touted these organizations' influence and resources, as well as the experience of their staff. However, as is discussed in greater depth in later sections, non-legacy partners also routinely expressed concern about the potential for legacy partners to have a disproportionate voice or too much influence in the group effort. Furthermore, other collaborative partners often emphasized the goal of doing things differently than the mainstream groups, of having an identity unique from them. Matt Goodman, the online editorial director at *D Magazine* epitomized this when talking about his organization's role in the Dallas news ecosystem, as compared to that of the *Dallas Morning News*. "It's not that we don't break news," he said. "But I like to think that we are *of the news*" (M. Goodman, personal communication, September 9, 2021). Nevertheless, participants inside and outside of these legacy groups routinely pointed to these organizations as evidence of their credentials and as a badge of authority for the collaborations. "We have a track record of getting things done," said Tom Huang, a collaborative member who is an assistant managing editor at the *Dallas Morning News* (T. Huang, personal communication, June 17, 2021).

As members of collaboratives, legacy news outlets often hearken back to the time when mainstream media was king. At its downtown headquarters, a former library building to which it moved in 2017, the *Dallas Morning News* showcases framed pictures of its coverage that was awarded Pulitzer Prizes. These include a 1986 Pulitzer for "Separate and Unequal: Subsidized Housing in America" and a 1992 prize for investigations of police, "Abuses of Authority: When Citizens Complain About Police."

The well-decorated lobby also features an interactive display highlighting the newspaper's history. On the wall, there is a giant quote from the newspaper's former publisher, Dallas businessman G.B. Dealey, whose namesake plaza was the site of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963. These words from Dealey had adorned the newspaper's former headquarters: "BUILD THE NEWS UPON THE ROCK OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS(.) CONDUCT IT ALWAYS UPON THE LINES OF FAIRNESS AND INTEGRITY(.) ACKNOWLEDGE THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO GET FROM THE NEWSPAPER BOTH SIDES OF EVERY IMPORTANT QUESTION."

The corporate ethos of the *Dallas Morning News* is also evidenced in signage in the lobby that was preparing to welcome employees back to the office after months of distanced working due to COVID-19 restrictions: "Welcome back co-workers. Our office hasn't been the same without you and we're excited that you're here!" The features of the *Dallas Morning News* lobby reflect the long history of commercially funded news in the United States, the emphasis on traditional news values, and the long history of the public service responsibility of the press. Likewise, *D Magazine* is located in a sleek downtown high rise, with expansive city views and fashionable, modern furniture throughout. On the days I visited, however, both were largely empty of people, as many staff had not returned to in-person work due to COVID-19 restrictions. The walls of the *D Magazine* offices are adorned with the publication's work; the stories highlighted (for example, one cover with the headline "Power in Dallas: Who Holds the Cards" and another titled, "Fall Fashion, Travel") exhibit the balance the publication tries to strike between work geared toward public service and content geared toward commercial appeal. The values and

ethos of legacy news organizations are, therefore, notably represented in collaborative efforts, even as such partnerships seek to approach journalism in ways that challenge the traditional paradigm.

New Types of Partners Bring Fresh Approaches, More Focus on Diversity

Nonprofit organizations, including digital journalism startups, are also vital in collaborations. As referenced previously, sometimes they are involved in the very establishment of these efforts, as were the Solutions Journalism Network and the Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting; both of these organizations were founded and are run, in part, by journalists. A wide variety of both journalistic and non-journalistic nonprofits also play key roles as members of collaboratives, as partners. In characterizing themselves verbally and in text, these groups emphasize doing journalism in ways that are distinctive from those of mainstream journalism. Nonprofit news startups often provide leading voices in the actual creation of collaboratives, especially as they look for ways to gain greater reach for their work in the public sphere. Nonprofit members also include groups that are not necessarily traditional journalism organizations, as some tend to straddle the relatively indistinct boundary between advocacy or promotion, and journalism. A representative example in this study is a group called Dallas Doing Good, which identifies itself as an organization whose goal is “to create and share stories that support good news and good work in North Texas” (Dallas Doing Good, n.d.). This group, which does not identify as a “newsroom partner,” identifies more with the nonprofit sector and emphasizes its frequent use of volunteers in its storytelling work. However, it still prioritizes editorial values comparable to news organizations, including a commitment to being “nonpartisan” and maintaining an

“editorial independence” that prevents outside groups from influencing its coverage (Dallas Doing Good, n.d.). It also provides writers with guidance and professional models on interviewing and story organization, including the traditional “inverted pyramid” structure (M. Martin, personal communication, December 8, 2021). As both partners and organizers, various types of nonprofits are therefore well represented in collaboratives.

This research also demonstrates that collaborations seek to represent diverse communities through their membership. The involvement of *Texas Metro News* (which identifies itself as a member of the Black Press) and *Al Dia Dallas* (which is geared toward the Latino community) represent this focus on diversity. Dallas Media Collaborative partners frequently referenced the importance of reaching Spanish-speaking communities, as well as other under-represented minority groups. *Texas Metro News* and *Al Dia Dallas* also reflect the efforts of mainstream news organizations, via their smaller collaborative efforts, to reach more diverse audiences. *Al Dia* identifies itself as a sister publication of the *Dallas Morning News* and operates out of a section of DMN’s spacious downtown offices. The *Dallas Morning News* also has weekly partnership meetings with *Texas Metro News*, at which I regularly observed the two both collaborating on stories in an integrated way, as well as discussing audience engagement efforts and content sharing of each outlet’s respective stories. In contrast to the massive *Dallas Morning News* offices, *Texas Metro News* operates out of a small suite of offices in a brick office building outside of downtown; throughout the offices, the newspaper also highlights its awards and commemorative pages, as well as photos of famous interviewees such as soul legend James Brown, but in a much more informal way. Other

collaboration members also often spoke of having smaller partnerships with one another, demonstrating that collaborations are often built upon existing relationships.

Citizens also play key roles in collaborative efforts, especially as journalists look for ways to better connect with communities being covered. Instead of being characterized as sources, as they long have been in traditional journalism, citizens (as a variety of non-journalistic partners) are often included as participating journalists who represent a community. While not professional journalists, they sometimes represent active journalistic partners who are *doing* journalism, rather than being used as a source of attribution for a distinct piece of information. They serve in roles as active interviewers, information collectors, videographers, photographers and other roles that contribute to the creation of news content. Traditional journalism, for example, often relies on gun violence victims as sources for quotes; but collaboratively produced news content analyzed in this research showed such victims and their families being included as part of the journalistic enterprise – as reporters and editors. Collaboratives also consult citizens in active “listening” efforts, drawing on the views of people in the community when generating ideas and making decisions on how to approach stories. Members of the Dallas Media Collaborative emphasized this type of community listening during numerous story brainstorming sessions, showing that they prioritized reaching out to the community directly in order to decide what stories to cover. In these capacities, community members take on *active* roles in collaborative efforts. Instead of being characterized as outside sources, their views and skills are often incorporated within the boundaries of the actual collaborations themselves.

Another key area in which these efforts show the expansion of journalistic boundaries is in the involvement of various creative partners, ones who also would not traditionally have been included under the umbrella of journalism. Collaborative members often highlight these groups as examples of what makes their partnership unique. The Dallas Media Collaborative often referenced the involvement of the Verdigris Ensemble, a choral group that is a partner in their effort and refers to itself as a “vocal band of artists pushing the boundaries of art” (Verdigris Ensemble, n.d.). When I observed this group, four singers and a choral director were rehearsing for a performance at an arts center in Dallas’ Oak Cliff neighborhood, in collaboration with a ballet company. In singling out Verdigris during their discussions with themselves and others in the community, other partners (both journalistic and non-journalistic) and members of the Solutions Journalism Network routinely touted Verdigris as an example of the diversity of their effort, of evidence that they were approaching journalism in a fresh, different way. On a reporting trip to a tiny housing project with his Southern Methodist University journalism class, Jake Batsell explained the Dallas Media Collaborative to the project’s organizers, pointing out at one point that, “Even Verdigris, the choral ensemble, is a part.” In a similar way, the Credible Messenger project made a concerted effort to draw on the experience of visual artists and creative writers in telling stories about gun violence impacting their community. These efforts all demonstrate the expansion of journalistic boundaries to include more creative outlets. Furthermore, members tend to showcase the involvement of these groups, seemingly as a demonstration of how they are doing journalism in a different way.

Colleges and universities are also taking on key roles in these types of efforts, with students, faculty and administrators involved in collaborations. Higher education has long valued the teaching of journalism, but current collaborative efforts provide evidence that these learning institutions are becoming more active participants in the journalistic process – the gathering and production of news for the greater public. Their roles are clearly expanding and, with that, they are bringing educational and scholarly values to journalism. That includes involving students in the journalistic process, and placing greater emphasis on bringing more of a teaching hospital approach to journalism – letting students take more responsibility and a greater active role in *professional* journalism. Like legacy news organizations, colleges and universities also offer up resources, including physical space, website hosting, and, of course, the labor of student journalists. At Southern Methodist University, Batsell had his class focusing on learning solutions journalism throughout the fall 2021 semester, with the goal of producing content about affordable housing for the collaborative. This reflects an expansion of the role of universities in the field of journalism.

Along with universities, research partners and policy groups are also increasingly represented in journalistic collaborations. As they have with citizens, journalists have traditionally used these organizations more as sources of information, rather than as partners in creating journalism. However, these findings suggest that these types of groups are more often taking on the role of collaborative partners, rather than information sources, thus reflecting an expansion of journalistic boundaries. Journalists in the Dallas Media Collaborative spoke frequently of having worked on stories “with” the Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL), a nonprofit focused on reducing child poverty that is funded

largely through local philanthropy and grants. In the collaborative, CPAL expanded its role – moving from source of information for journalists to active partner in the journalistic process. As with universities, research groups like CPAL brought along with them an emphasis on the importance of quantifiable data streams, as well as the scholarly preference for scientifically verified, peer-reviewed evidence. “The first responsibility I see is unlocking data that could be helpful for the group ... particularly data that could be harder to come by for journalists,” said Ashley Flores, CPAL’s senior director (A. Flores, personal communication, August 16, 2021).

Those from research- and policy-oriented backgrounds also often prioritize the goal of actually effecting change, rather than simply reporting news. Their institutional structures and approaches also reflect this approach, exhibiting the multitude of ways they are different than traditional journalistic partners. In contrast to the formal newsrooms of journalistic partners, the Child Poverty Action Lab’s 12-member team works out of a high-ceilinged, co-working space in a refurbished industrial building along a highway just southwest of downtown Dallas – across the street from a former turkey processing plant. The staff is only required to be in the office for a scheduled team coffee on Thursday mornings and the building’s public spaces exude a hip café vibe, with communal coffee and relaxing music playing; CPAL’s offices are a scattered array of desks and wall coverings they began assembling right before the COVID-19 pandemic. During my observation, I met with the team around a white table in a high-ceilinged shared space in the building as team members occasionally came and left during the free-flowing conversation. This shows how collaborations are bringing more diverse types of

groups into the journalistic fold, ones that are far different than the smoky newsrooms and grimy printing plants that dominated for much of the 20th century.

The inclusion of such unique groups – the Solutions Journalism Network called CPAL a “data partner” (A. Maestas, personal communication, November 19, 2021) – in collaborative efforts represents an expansion of traditional journalistic boundaries. The Credible Messenger project also reflected this shift through the involvement of citizen journalists, educational partners, and others. Dr. Jessica Beard, a trauma surgeon who serves as director of research for the Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting, also serves as an advisor to the project; this further underscores the expansion of journalistic boundaries to include those who would previously have been considered advocates or sources to journalists. In traditional journalism, Beard might have been quoted as a source. But this research shows experts like her being included in the journalistic process, as a non-journalistic partner both directly and indirectly impacting the creation of news content. This shows how collaborations enable those from outside the field to have more direct influence on both the core definition and processes of journalism, a dynamic that is explored in greater detail in the next two chapters.

A final type of potential collaborative partner remains more contested in the realm of journalistic collaboration – government entities. Journalists continue to show hesitancy in including *some* arms of government in these types of partnerships. And with those public entities that are welcomed, there are unique practical and ideological roadblocks to their participation. A representative of the Dallas Public Library expressed during a preliminary meeting that she had been advised to “tread lightly” in terms of possible involvement in the collaborative; the reasons for that were because whatever subject the

group decided to focus on, it would likely involve the city government, of which the library is a part (M. Giudice, personal communication, August 20, 2021). Ultimately, the library did not sign on to be a member of the Dallas collaborative, although other collaboratives coordinated by the Solutions Journalism Network do involve local libraries. While journalists were supportive of including the library, there was reluctance over the prospect of including in the partnership a representative of the city of Dallas' communications office (K. Mitchell, personal communication, October 13, 2021). This suggests that collaborative efforts are willing to welcome some public partners as members, but journalists still continue to protect boundaries in this area.

One of the most significant impacts that collaborations are having on journalism, therefore, is the expansion of journalistic boundaries. These findings suggest this type of journalistic work involves incorporating a wide array of journalistic and non-journalistic partners in collaboratives. The inclusion of performance groups like Verdigris and research partners like CPAL shows new types of partners being included in collaborative processes of creating journalism and engaging with audiences. This marks a significant expansion of boundaries. It reflects the inclusion of those previously seen as groups or individuals that are interviewed or consulted as *sources* in news production, as well as those previously seen as having minimal connection to journalism at all, such as creative groups and artists. However, it is still journalists who are hosting the party, initiating these efforts. They are, however, now inviting more different types of guests – some journalistic and some non-journalistic. And the unique qualities and personalities of those different types of guests, particularly the non-journalistic ones, are dramatically altering both the conversations and the work that is produced. Given this evidence of expanded

boundaries, the next section explores ways that the core identities of these varied, distinct partners impact their respective roles in these efforts.

CHAPTER 7

IDENTITIES & ROLES IN JOURNALISTIC COLLABORATIONS

Traditional journalistic organizations have long featured newsrooms with complex bureaucratic structures (for example, Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978), with a network of different types of journalists performing distinct roles based on their respective skill sets – reporters, photographers, videographers, editors, designers, cartoonists, managers and others. This chapter explores how collaborative journalistic efforts develop similarly complex dynamics. With the entry of new types of participants, partners continue to take on distinct roles related to their core identities and unique skill sets. In this way, these findings show that partners are not all seen as identical, interchangeable cogs in the process. Instead, an array of factors distinguish different types of collaborators from one another. Those factors, in turn, influence the types of roles and responsibilities that are assigned to that partner, as well as the way that partner approaches the role. The primary and most instrumental distinction involves whether a partner identifies as – and/or is identified as – journalistic or non-journalistic.

Journalistic Versus Non-Journalistic Partners Play Distinct Roles

Collaborative efforts include a broad array of actors from inside and outside the field. But, as part of these efforts, actors maintain their identities with respect to mainstream journalism. The most essential separation made is between who is a journalist and who is not. Partners tend to classify themselves this way, both in interactions with others and in independent interviews. In some instances, partners would self-identify as “not a journalist” or “not a newsroom;” in other instances, partners identified *other* individuals as “not a journalist” or “not a traditional journalist.” This

demonstrates their awareness of a distinction between different types of partners.

Therefore, while boundaries are being expanded to include others, these core identities are not dissolving completely during these collaborative projects. In fact, they are seen as critical in determining roles in the processes of reporting, production, editing, distribution, education and audience engagement.

Partners who identify as journalistic routinely tout their credentials in the field and participate in discussions and journalistic processes in ways that demonstrate this knowledge. Those with this type of background often emphasize this type of experience as an asset, both in themselves and in others. This was evidenced, for example, in how the Dallas Media Collaborative originally prioritized journalism experience in job candidates as they sought someone for the part-time staff position of project manager. Participants routinely emphasize their journalistic background, especially their reporting experience, when working with others both inside and outside the field. Dana DiFilippo, a professional journalist paired with a community journalist in the Credible Messenger project, noted how she saw part of her role as “teaching the ethics of journalism” to someone outside the field (D. DiFilippo, personal communication, October 9, 2021). But, in doing the project, DiFilippo and her community journalist partner decided that some traditional rules of objectivity could be bent because he was deemed outside the traditional boundaries of journalism. “We both felt that this was a little different because he’s not a traditional journalist and that made it OK,” she said (D. DiFilippo, personal communication, October 9, 2021). DiFilippo further elaborated on this distinction, saying they decided that traditional rules of objectivity could be “bent” (as long as they were transparent about his vantage point) because her partner’s experience with gun violence

was central to the story; his personal connection to gun violence was a significant part of why he and other “credible messengers” were selected for the project (D. DiFilippo, personal communication, December 28, 2021). In this way, the idea of someone being a journalist or having journalistic experience remains key, but it is not necessarily seen as an across-the-board positive or negative.

Partners also demonstrate that these individual identities – as a journalist or non-journalist, or a newsroom and non-newsroom partner – influence their approach to collaborative reporting, to how they approach journalism in the field. I observed *Dallas Free Press* reporter Keri Mitchell and Mary Martin, who identifies as a non-newsroom partner with the nonprofit Dallas Doing Good, go on a co-reporting trip to the St. Philips School and Community Center for a story they were working on together about a community land trust. In her questions, Mitchell tended to focus more on nuts-and-bolts logistics, using classic reporting-style follow-up queries. “When did that happen?” she asked at one point. A practiced interviewer in her pacing, Mitchell focused on questions that helped generate specific answers. For example, the staff told her they were going to be building seven housing units valued at \$195,000 to \$245,000; but Mitchell was sure to seek out specifics on things that weren’t clear. “Very quick, on the seven homes, where are they?” she asked. On a separate question, when the staff didn’t know the answer, Mitchell followed up with a standard journalist response that emphasized verification: “We can follow up with you on that.”

In her reporting, alongside Mitchell, Martin demonstrated much more of an identity with the nonprofit sector and support for the center’s mission. “I’m so excited to see you guys expand,” Martin said at the beginning of the interview, noting later that the

founder of Dallas Doing Good was a longtime St. Philips volunteer. While she also sought some specifics, Martin tended to ask more general questions, ones that evidenced her nonprofit background. “Would it be a separate organization from St. Philips?” Martin asked at one point. In this collaborative reporting, Martin also demonstrated a purpose that diverged somewhat from traditional journalism – showing some more promotional tendencies and sometimes identifying more with the nonprofit sector. At one point in the interview, a staffer indicated that Hispanic families were not aware of a certain assistance program because forms had only been printed in English. “WHAT?” Martin responded, clearly aghast. The staff said they’d need to verify if that was still the case; at one point, they seemed a bit concerned at Martin’s reaction before she reassured them: “You know me – I’m not going to knock the nonprofits.” Staff at the center occasionally also described the story in collaborative terms, with one person saying during the interview that she wanted to be careful “about how we publish this.” This reporting excursion shows that sometimes collaborative partners with different backgrounds can take on the same role, but do it in different ways, approaches heavily influenced by their core identities.

Sometimes, however, collaborations designate certain roles to partners depending on whether they are seen as inside or outside journalism. In its early stages, the Dallas Media Collaborative, for example, struggled to define whether one potential member – the Imagining Freedom Institute – was an “advocate” for a cause, something that was discussed as being outside the boundaries of journalism. In a spirited discussion during an early planning meeting, the fledgling collaborative discussed a distinction between such advocates being “advisory” members, rather than “full participants.” This represented an

effort to protect the boundaries between journalism and advocacy, a line that the group and the Solutions Journalism Network, nevertheless, struggled to define. During that Zoom meeting, Tom Huang of the *Dallas Morning News* sought guidance from the Solutions Journalism Network about the “other non-journalism community groups” that had been expressing interest in joining the collaborative. Liza Gross, SJN’s vice president of practice change, said she did “not think of activist groups as full members of the collaborative,” but instead characterized such organizations as “trusted advisors that can help us ... recognize the landscape.” A representative of the Imagining Freedom Institute, whose website characterizes its purpose as helping “organizations develop racial equity frameworks” through trainings and consultation, then sought clarification on the definition of “activist” (Imagining Freedom Institute, n.d.). Gross responded by saying “someone that’s going for political change” and later “organizations that work very specifically to advance a specific mission in a community as opposed to generating stories about that mission.” The exchange led other members to ask if they would be considered advocates as well. Ultimately, the Imagining Freedom Institute did not end up joining the collaborative during the time of this research, although DMC members discussed the possibility that it could become part of the effort in the future.

The exchange, along with others throughout this research, demonstrates that journalists still patrol boundaries within collaborations, even if they sometimes struggle to define them. In follow-up communications, Gross said she has long struggled with the definition of “full members” because of the possible unintended implication that other members are “lesser than;” she wondered whether “full-fledged” might be more accurate, meaning to allow for other members who “participate in some activities but not others”

(L. Gross, personal communication, December 6, 2021). In creating such distinctions, Gross emphasized that she sought to “describe roles and activities,” not to suggest a “hierarchy;” she described “full-fledged” members as those directly involved in generating editorial content, with other members (“partners” or “advisors”) acting as “trusted sources of expertise” who “offer perspective and help distill editorial approaches” (L. Gross, personal communication, December 10, 2021). These types of distinctions seem to revolve more around the role or function a group plays in a collaborative effort, but they also demonstrate the importance of how partners identify themselves and others in the group as either journalistic or non-journalistic.

These semantic challenges further underscore the struggles to define boundaries in collaborations. “We recognize that journalists want to avoid being advocates,” Amy Maestas, a Solutions Journalism Network manager working with the Dallas Media Collaborative, told the group during a training session. Partners also demonstrated a careful patrol of this boundary during the hiring of a project manager. In that instance, journalistic members, in particular, expressed concern about a project manager – whose job description includes being the public face of the collaborative – being involved in advocating for specific causes; ultimately, amid extensive debate, the group decided not to further consider a candidate whose published work had a reputation for advocacy.

Non-journalistic partners often self-identify as being outside the boundaries of journalism, but, again, this doesn’t necessarily manifest itself as a simple positive or negative trait. Those who characterize themselves as being outside the field tend to volunteer that fact, rather than hide it, apologize for it, or treat it as a negative. Throughout this research, respondents routinely used the phrase “not a journalist” in their

interactions with one another and in interviews, characterizing themselves in relation to mainstream journalism. The Dallas Media Collaborative, for example, includes in its membership the choral ensemble group Verdigris. Micaela Bottari, Verdigris' business development manager, noted that she has no journalism experience and comes from "an outside perspective." She acknowledged that "there are certain pillars of journalism that I think to me aren't obvious;" but this outsider status also allowed her a more expansive view of what journalism is, including how she envisions "an artistic component" to it (M. Bottari, personal communication, August 14, 2021). These types of non-journalistic partners often seem to describe themselves as "outside" of journalism, indicating that they have not been part of the profession to this point and want to avoid the assumptions of the traditional paradigm and its parameters.

Later in the collaborative's development, another member of Verdigris, community relations manager Richard Oliver, described a wide-ranging role for the group that may involve being out in the community, cultivating relationships, keeping track of other potential creative partners, and finding ways the collaborative's stories could be translated into choral performances, or other means of artistic expressions (R. Oliver, personal communication, November 24, 2021). But, overall, members of the collaborative expressed widely varied thoughts on the extent to which creative partners like Verdigris may or may not be involved in editorial discussions on a daily and weekly basis. In some ways, its role may involve trying to "stay out of the way a little bit" at the beginning, as the collaborative establishes its infrastructure and goals (R. Oliver, personal communication, November 24, 2021). There is uncertainty in how this will play out from

a planning perspective, demonstrating the logistical complexities of involving non-journalistic partners in collaboratives.

Citizen journalists also often take pains to emphasize themselves as being outside the field, as people who are bringing a fresh perspective to the ways news is produced. This provides additional evidence of how outsider status can be seen as an asset. Collaborators often emphasized this outsider status; they demonstrated how their identity as non-journalists could help them find ways to influence the field in different ways, such as a partner who highlighted how her background as an artist and social worker impacted the design and framing of a video on the effects of gun violence (Laws, A., personal communication, October 5, 2021). When setting up an interview for a story on mass transit, a reporter for the *Dallas Free Press* identified herself as a “community journalist” to the source, illustrating (and emphasizing) an identity apart from mainstream journalism. In these ways, those outside the traditional boundaries of journalism often expressed a desire to change the way journalism is done.

However, collaboratives sometimes struggle to find ways to get non-traditional, non-journalistic partners involved at a practical level. Members of the Verdigris choral ensemble actively participated throughout the development of the Dallas Media Collaborative, for example, providing insights and input on journalistic processes. There was a consistent theme of audience engagement when it came to discussions about their participation in the collaborative; but both members of the ensemble and other partners expressed uncertainty over what their role would actually be. Other non-journalistic partners were sometimes characterized in ways more similar to journalism and, thus, their roles were often clearer. News organizations in Dallas spoke of already having worked on

stories “with” the Child Poverty Action Lab, which does extensive data-based research (using interviews, focus groups and other tools) on issues covered by news organizations. Therefore, since CPAL’s purpose was characterized as closer to the boundaries of journalism, albeit in the traditional “source” role, partners were able to envision its role more easily.

There are other boundaries that journalists appear less willing to cross in collaborations. The most striking example of this involves the role of government and whether public entities can be seen as viable collaborative partners. Journalists were quite willing to welcome public universities as partners, as this was never questioned or posed as even potentially problematic in group discussions. Additionally, Dallas Media Collaborative members raised few concerns about the Dallas Public Library being involved in their collaborative effort. One journalistic partner described how she saw the library as being “neutral” and representing “information,” as opposed to the possibility of including a representative of the city’s public relations office, which she described as being “too much of a conflict of interest” (Mitchell, K., personal communication, October 14, 2021). The city itself had some level of concern of crossing into the boundary of journalism, of taking on a journalistic identity; the library director, Mary Jo “Jo” Giudice, said in an early group discussion that she had been advised to “tread carefully” regarding involvement in the collaborative. In a follow-up interview, she indicated that the concerns revolved around the fact that some of the issues being reported on by the collaborative would inevitably involve the city. “It didn’t occur to me that we may have opposing roles here when the city could be one of the topics that they are investigating,” Giudice said (M. Giudice, personal communication, August 20, 2021).

Ultimately, the library did not sign the memorandum of understanding needed to join the collaborative, demonstrating the challenges and complexities of involving non-journalistic entities – especially public ones. As with debates over the roles of advocates, non-journalistic partners take on (or are asked to take on) roles that take into account their identities as being outside of journalism. The library, for example, expressed a desire to still serve as a gathering space and a resource for the Dallas Media Collaborative, even though it was not able to sign on as a partner (M. Guidice, personal communication, August 20, 2021). As is discussed later in more detail, the nature of this journalist vs. non-journalist identity impacts the roles that partners take on. But the boundaries between those inside and outside the field still prevent or inhibit some types of partners, especially certain public ones, from becoming involved in collaborations.

Legacy Media Bring Unique Complications and Benefits to Collaborations

Even within the journalistic field, there remains tension among different types of partners – between legacy partners and those who identify as startups, nonprofits, or those otherwise outside of the mainstream media sphere. The conflicts in these areas revolve around two related factors: first, the commercially based values and requirements of many legacy media outlets; and, second, the conflict between the traditional news values that those types of profit-minded institutions emphasize and the renovations to the field that non-legacy partners, especially, are trying to make. In looking at these tensions, it is important to first explore the basic tensions and frustrations that manifest themselves when it comes to the commercial imperatives of legacy news outlets.

Partnerships often include large, legacy news organizations, some of which have dominated their respective journalistic ecosystems for generations. Those organizations

are often print-oriented daily newspapers, but also include broadcast stations and magazines. These findings suggest that these organizations prioritize legal and journalistic values that are closely intertwined with their long-held emphasis on profit. *The Dallas Morning News* represented these commercially influenced values while the Dallas partnership was developing its “memorandum of understanding” that established the collaborative. The newspaper’s executives sought wording on liability, indemnification, copyright and clarification on what would happen if a member left the collaborative – whether they would have to reimburse funding that they used, what happened to content if the collaboration ceases to exist, and other scenarios. There was frustration from others involved that these concerns – founded in profit- and competition-based values – were delaying and potentially endangering the collaborative’s success.

A nonprofit member voiced some of the frustrations over this hold-up on the memorandum of understanding in a lengthy email to the group in May. She highlighted the conflict between profit-based, competitive values and the values of collaboration:

First, we need to launch this collaborative with a ‘spirit of generosity,’ as Ju-Don Marshall of WFAE in North Carolina put it so well during this week’s collaborative summit. Let’s be honest – there’s plenty of bad blood between our organizations, and though some of us like each other, we also have various trust issues with each other. We’re going to have to work through that if this collaborative is going to be successful (K. Mitchell, personal communication, May 21, 2021).

These interactions represented the tensions between the priorities of those inside and outside journalism’s commercial sphere. Furthermore, partners made a distinction between the journalists at those commercial organizations and the business side of those organizations. In this way, much of the tension was logistical, frustration over bureaucratic elements of legacy organizations slowing down the process of moving a

collaborative forward. Smaller, non-legacy partners also sometimes expressed concerns about whether large, legacy partners would dominate in the collaborations. These larger groups seemed aware of this concern, too, with a representative of the *Dallas Morning News* emphasizing the importance of “making sure that I’m cognizant of not throwing weight around” (T. Huang, personal communication, June 18, 2021).

The tension between legacy and non-legacy actors is also apparent in terms of the journalistic values they prioritize. Nonprofits, as well as citizen journalists, often appear more likely to focus on effecting change. Legacy outlets often prioritize commercial objectives and the traditional journalistic values associated with them, including transparency, fairness, accuracy and competition, as well as the importance of bringing in subscribers. A community partner involved in the Credible Messenger project, for example, described the importance of letting the subjects of an article tell their stories their own way and largely on their own parameters, so that the audience could make its own interpretation in order to better understand the impact of gun violence (T. Campbell, personal communication, October 1, 2021); the professional partner, however, emphasized the traditional journalistic values: speed, accuracy, verification, avoiding conflicts of interest, and thinking of multiple viewpoints (D. DiFilippo, personal communication, October 8, 2021). This type of tension between the commercial values of legacy partners and the more impact-oriented values of non-legacy partners led a member of one nonprofit to ask: ““Can we be in the middle?’ ... is that possible? Because I feel like there is a gap” (M. Martin, personal communication, June 2, 2021). The tension between the values of legacy and non-legacy partners is evidence of that gap, one they are constantly trying to bridge.

In collaborations, non-journalistic and non-legacy partners are often most likely to be the ones most vocal about (and open to) suggesting ways to challenge traditional journalistic norms. Partners coming from outside of journalism altogether often prioritize the idea of effecting social change, and doing so with fewer caveats. Those partners outside the traditional boundaries of journalism are often most likely to speak up and challenge the field's values, particularly in the disputed tension between journalism and activism. A partner with the Verdigris choral ensemble questioned why the collaborative would be concerned with avoiding advocacy: "To divorce all (the) emotional element of this is a mistake ... If it's not to move the needle on affordable housing justice in Dallas, what is the goal? Is it to get the story to people who get the paper ... Is it just to get a better story?" (M. Bottari, personal communication, August 13, 2021). Those partners from outside journalism (and, to a lesser degree, non-legacy journalistic partners) appear far more likely to question accepted norms and to ask why things are done in a certain way, demonstrating a desire and an ability to alter the priorities of the field.

Partners' Core Identities Impact their Roles in Collaboratives

With collaborations increasingly including a wider variety of members, there is still significant evidence that distinct types of partners contribute in varied ways. Even as collaborations expand the boundaries of inclusion, the classification of a partner as being inside or outside journalism impacts the responsibilities and duties they assume. Within diverse collaborations, therefore, journalists still appear to be patrolling boundaries when it comes to *specific roles*. Furthermore, a journalistic partner's relation to the mainstream news industry also sometimes plays a factor in how they take part in these types of efforts.

The most significant factor impacting a partner's role is whether they identify as a journalistic or a non-journalistic group. Collaborations prioritize journalistic partners in terms of the creation of news content. These groups, sometimes referred to as “newsroom partners,” often take on the bulk of the responsibilities involved directly in the creation of news content. They take the lead when it comes to the specifics of news production processes, including the details of pitching and approving ideas for collaboratively produced news content. They often lead the way when talking about story “pitches,” creating multi-platform content, finding sources, editing and other specifics of the journalistic processes. Journalistic partners more often emphasize the process of reporting, of gathering information – the specific details. During discussions of these types of processes, non-journalistic partners often recede to the background and journalistic partners dominate.

During the Dallas Media Collaborative's first in-person story brainstorming session, these dynamics were on display in varied ways. Tom Huang, of the *Dallas Morning News*, took on a clear leadership role as the group tossed around potential story ideas; as the group eased into coming up with ideas, he moved up to a dry erase board in the conference room and began tracking and listing the ideas in red marker as the group talked. Familiar with the story-pitching process, journalists in the room tended to dominate this discussion, at least at first. Keri Mitchell, of the *Dallas Free Press*, raised the idea of a story on residents who have had to leave their homes because of rising property tax bills. “For people who stayed, how did you stay?” Mitchell suggested. Other journalistic partners also tossed out specific ideas and suggestions about approaching editorial content. At one point, Gabrielle Jones of KERA mentioned ideas surrounding

“gentrification.” “That word ... becomes a catch-all” responded Matt Goodman of *D Magazine*. “Are we talking about displacement?” After the exchange, Jones suggested possibly doing a digital “explainer” piece on some of these things to make them clearer to the audience. In reference to the discussion over “gentrification,” journalists in the group also acknowledge that the debate highlights the importance of wording. “We might need to talk about words we don’t use in our stories, for that reason,” Mitchell said.

The brainstorming process also highlighted the unique roles taken on by non-journalistic or non-newsroom partners. The news organizations, for example, sought out the input and advice of the Child Poverty Action Lab, almost as they would a traditional news source in an interview – as a source of information. At one point, the journalistic partners could not remember what a certain acronym stood for, so Mitchell asked CPAL’s Ashley Flores, who quickly responded. “I can always count on you, Ashley,” Mitchell said. Later in this meeting, the group discussed ideas related to the gap between the value of housing vouchers and the cost of rent. Then, the group pondered solutions-based approaches to this problem, wondering aloud where the solution lies. “Ashley is the solution,” said Mary Martin of Dallas Doing Good, demonstrating how CPAL is seen as a non-journalistic partner. “Why is it happening?” asked Tom Huang of the *Dallas Morning News*. Flores’ response to his question further demonstrated the unique roles and boundaries in collaboration: “That is y’all’s job,” she said. In follow-up comments, Flores clarified that organizations like CPAL *do*, however, focus on trying to analyze root causes and break down “big, complex problems into more manageable, bite-sized components” (A. Flores, personal communication, January 4, 2021). Nevertheless, the findings suggest complex dynamics in which journalistic partners often take on editorial

roles in collaboratives, while non-journalistic collaborative partners can take on the role of an information source.

Likewise, universities and nonprofits seek to carve out their own unique roles in collaborations. University partners see their role as connecting students with journalistic professionals and exposing them to new journalistic practices; they also emphasize their ability to provide students as potential labor, serving as a conduit for collaborative journalism to take on a training role similar to that of a teaching hospital. While on a reporting excursion with his Southern Methodist University students, Jake Batsell exhibited the role of a mentor, advising young student journalists what kinds of questions to ask and preparing them for the way their meeting would be set up. After a student interviewed a resident of a tiny home, Batsell asked her quietly, “You got the spelling of her name, right?” In the story planning meeting, Batsell also mentioned that he had a student working on a story about the eviction process, but, as an experienced educator, cautioned the group: “She’s a younger student. I’m not sure she’s going to be able to pull it off (before the semester ends in a few weeks).” Along the lines of the teaching hospital model, nonprofits seek to find ways to seek to help student journalists, too. During the brainstorming session, Mary Martin of *Dallas Doing Good* – who works often with volunteers – told university partners that, if they had students with incomplete stories at the end of the semester, she would be willing to work with them in order to get them finished. These findings demonstrate how collaborative partners take on roles that are very closely intertwined with their own identities.

Power Differentials and the Roles of Journalistic Partners

As these different types of partners take on distinct roles, however, there remains evidence of the existence of hierarchies and the power differentials associated with collaborative structures. Citizen journalists, for example, come from outside the traditional field of journalism, but they also identify with it in that they aim to perform the work of journalism. Some studied in this project sought to head into the field to conduct interviews, take photographs, or shoot videos. In those cases, however, the collaboratives still often looked to professional journalistic partners to edit the content and assure quality standards, to encourage traditional values. Content produced by the Credible Messenger project reflected these dynamics. The videos showed the touch of professional editing – a careful mixture of overhead shots of the landscape and emotional zooms on the subjects, as well as synchronized audio laid over the visuals. In doing this, these non-journalistic citizen partners described wanting to *do* journalism, but to do it in a way that prioritized the voices of the subjects more than traditional journalism. Similarly, the text content followed standard journalistic approaches to attribution, identification of sources, and narrative structure. But it reflected more emphasis on the voices of the subjects than on any objective, distanced voice of a journalistic narrator.

Collaborations look to legacy media partners to provide legitimacy, structure and resources to their endeavors. They value their credibility and resources, but are sometimes leery of their commercial values. Smaller organizations and citizen journalists describe legacy news outlets as providing name recognition and authority to their efforts, giving the group more credibility and clout with sources and the audience. “We are not a newsroom,” said Mary Martin, of the nonprofit partner Dallas Doing Good. “We’re not

the *Dallas Morning News*. And so for (the Dallas Media Collaborative organizers) to invite us to the table and to be part of this conversation, honestly, that gave us a good dose of credibility ... it helps move us from blog to journalism” (M. Martin, personal communication, June 1, 2021). Many collaborative partners of all kinds indicated that having journalists from those legacy institutions involved helped provide assurances that the effort was likely to abide by accepted ethical standards. Smaller partners often looked to legacy partners for resources, including physical space and staff. Legacy partners often assumed leadership roles in collaborative efforts, as well, leading meetings, seeking volunteers, or calling for the formation of committees, as they did during both virtual and in-person meetings of the Dallas Media Collaborative.

However, there are also concerns about whether legacy partners will wield too much influence in these group endeavors. Organizers showed a wariness of this possibility and there was extensive evidence of the heightened awareness of power dynamics. Liza Gross, of the Solutions Journalism Network, said she gets “hives” when members of emerging collaborations talk about one partner serving as an “anchor” for the group (L. Gross, personal communication, June 4, 2021). This showed an emphasis on the goal of equality of partners in a collaborative and an awareness of the varying level of influence with which partners come to the table. Jim MacMillan, of the Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting, originally had professional journalistic partners in the Credible Messenger project “choose” which community partners they wanted to collaborate with. He changed that process after someone pointed out to him that such a dynamic arrangement did not represent “the best balance of power,” especially since his

goal was to shift power from the newsroom to the community (J. MacMillan, personal communication, September 20, 2021).

Partners expressed uncertainty during the development of the Dallas Media Collaborative about how the power dynamics would play out when the group was up and running – reporting, producing and distributing news content. Some wondered whether the larger groups would ultimately end up getting to do the better, more desirable stories; this reflected some degree of wariness among partners based on power differentials. This possibility was also reflected in how the representatives of some smaller organizations were sometimes hesitant to speak up. Two journalists with *Advocate* magazines, both younger and less experienced than other collaborative members, spoke little during the in-person and virtual meetings of the Dallas Media Collaborative; but they were far more open during one-on-one conversations in less formal settings. Overall, smaller partners express some degree of suspicion of the commercial motivations of larger legacy organizations, as well as the status quo that these organizations sometimes represent.

This dynamic was sometimes evident in the Dallas Media Collaborative, especially surrounding what several partners described as a history of institutional distrust of the *Dallas Morning News* by the city’s Black community. Cheryl Smith of the *Texas Metro News* expressed trust in individual staff members of the *Dallas Morning News*. But she showed evidence of institutional distrust, asking during a weekly partnership call how the *Dallas Morning News* management could expect the editor she was collaborating with to manage the partnership work along with the growing list of other responsibilities she was being assigned. “How can we work together when y’all keep piling it on?” Smith asked, clearly sympathetic of the editor but skeptical of the

organization. After a meeting of the Dallas Media Collaborative, Smith also expressed frustration after feeling that some of her story ideas were not being heard by the group. This suggests that, in collaborations, the tensions created by power dynamics remain potential barriers to success, even when all the partners appear enthusiastic about the overall mission.

Collaborations often seek to protect the smaller partners, with members often characterizing them as being the ones best positioned to help change the journalistic model. One journalistic partner emphasized the importance of this as part of an attempt at field repair, saying the traditional legacy approach is “not working as a business model, which is why we’re doing this collaboration;” therefore, she said that group should “bend toward those (smaller) organizations, not these larger (media) organizations” (K. Mitchell, personal communication, June 16, 2021). Numerous partners discussed institutional distrust of the *Dallas Morning News*; however, as noted previously, smaller groups also emphasized that their trust in certain staff members at such large outlets often assuaged those concerns for them. This was particularly evident in how partners expressed personal trust in *Dallas Morning News* editor Tom Huang, a feeling that pervaded the observations and interviews. Solutions Journalism Network’s Amy Maestas summed this up when she said one of the reasons she felt optimistic about the collaborative’s future was because Huang is a “natural leader” who knows how to keep people focused and when to “take a backseat” (A. Maestas, personal communication, November 19, 2021). Participants in the Credible Messenger project also often emphasized trust in Jim MacMillan and his record of photojournalistic work as a reason they wanted to be involved in that fledgling effort. This suggests that strong personal

relationships can sometimes overcome institutional distrust and the challenges of organizational power differentials in collaborations. This demonstrates a complex relationship between the distinct but related entities of personal trust and institutional trust and how each impacts collaborative dynamics. Institutions can bring both credibility and baggage to partnerships, with both affecting the roles and operation of the group. Furthermore, institutions have a greater connection with the audience, in terms of reputations; but individuals also seek to build on their relationships to maximize trust with people in the community.

The Diverse Roles of Non-Journalistic Partners

Non-journalistic partners often take on key roles in community engagement efforts, as well as in helping to find ways to creatively engage audiences with news content. These groups and individuals often bring an emphasis on creativity and artistry to the creation of news content, both qualities that have not been traditionally associated with journalism. Their impact on both audience engagement and creativity represent some of the most significant ways that non-journalistic partners are changing the field, not only in terms of the daily rituals and practices of journalism but in what can be considered journalistic work. This demonstrates an expansion of journalistic boundaries to include a larger variety of actors (and activities) that would have otherwise been classified as artistic, not journalistic.

With audience engagement, the involvement of the Verdigris choral ensemble in the Dallas Media Collaborative provided a stark example of this. Both representatives of the Solutions Journalism Network and members of the collaborative itself frequently referenced the inclusion of Verdigris when describing the group to themselves and to

others, and the group was always included in written descriptions, including when they worked on their mission statement. In the group's original project proposal, the fledgling collaborative highlighted the involvement of Verdigris, writing: "We have a unique partner in a choral ensemble that connects us to the larger Dallas arts community and will help us engage the public in creative, artistic ways" (Huang et al., n.d.). This theme of engaging this group in participatory efforts was echoed throughout the collaborative's development. Members of the ensemble itself spoke of its role in helping with fundraising and community engagement events, but also in "putting together an actual artistic presentation of this work" (M. Bottari, personal communication, August 13, 2021). With Verdigris' exact role unsolidified, however, some collaborative members described the ongoing challenge of involving non-journalistic groups in practice.

The general role of creative partners centers around the idea of finding new ways to get audiences to engage with news content, as well as *possibly* encouraging journalists to think outside the box in terms of the content they create – to expand the parameters of what news content can be and what it might look like. One community partner in the Credible Messenger project identified as a creative writer and prioritized making his story less stiff and more creative. He worked to construct his story in a series of vignettes that could be interpreted by the audience, rather than have it read with what he described as the voice of traditional journalism: "This is what happened. This is how you have to take it" (T. Campbell personal communication, October 1, 2021). This emphasis on creativity runs through collaborations, as diverse partners seek to alter the approach to news and diversify the forms it takes. Another Credible Messenger partner working on a video project identified as "a therapist by day and an artist every second of my life" (Laws, A.,

personal communication, October 4, 2021). This artistic emphasis was evident in the story, which used close-up shots of subjects, as well as creative juxtaposition of the interviews with mainstream news coverage, mixed in with sound and visual effects. The creative approaches served to have an emotional effect on the viewer. The involvement of partners from outside traditional journalism often provides new ways of looking at content, especially artistic approaches that prioritize victims and the less powerful.

Collaborations also look to other non-journalistic partners to lead the way in areas close to their expertise. When looking at fundraising or otherwise generating revenue, these partnerships often turn to nonprofit partners to guide them. Individuals with these groups routinely speak up when questions of fundraising and sustainability come to the forefront. These are areas in which traditional journalists often feel unfamiliar and have to adjust as they face the constant challenge of having to find new sources of funding (J. MacMillan, personal communication, September 20, 2021). With this dynamic, collaborations often turn to their nonprofit partners for guidance. Mary Martin, managing editor of the nonprofit Dallas Doing Good, routinely took on this role during discussions of the Dallas Media Collaborative. Martin, who founded a communications consulting firm that works with nonprofits, took the lead in meetings and in the writing and editing of shared documents when it came to how to best characterize the collaborative in its mission statement; she also emphasized the importance of fundraising skills during the search for the group's project manager. The group sought her knowledge in these areas, again demonstrating how the core identity of individual partners routinely determines the role that they take on in these increasingly diverse partnerships.

This section has provided evidence that, while collaborations are expanding journalistic boundaries to include more diverse types of partners, the distinct identities of those groups significantly impacts the ways that they contribute to collaborative efforts. Collaboratives do not consist of interchangeable parts. Instead, individual partners serve unique roles in the service of the collaborative mission. These roles do not have hard, impermeable boundaries, but they are nevertheless persistent. This suggests that, while journalists are open to expanding their boundaries to collaborate with more diverse types of partners, there is more rigidity when it comes to the roles each one serves in the group. Journalists are still protecting those boundaries (and their own identities) when it comes to the more granular level of how these partnerships operate. This may be evidence of how deeply engrained some traditional journalistic values are; it also may illuminate how different partners have different priorities and motivations in joining these efforts. With these collaborative dynamics in mind, the next section delves into how these new partners are impacting the core mission of the field.

CHAPTER 8

RECALIBRATING JOURNALISM'S CORE MISSION

As diverse types of partners carve out distinct roles in collaborations, these partnerships feature increasingly complex arrangements that add new levels and nuances to journalistic processes. The different types of groups involved, as discussed in the previous chapter, influence the collective operation in varied ways, ways that are determined largely by their own unique identities. The findings in this study suggest that new, less traditional types of partners especially influence how the goals and priorities of journalism are characterized. This represents perhaps the greatest impact collaborations are having on journalism's purpose, as non-journalistic groups gain greater influence on the field. As a result, these diverse collaborations are fundamentally recalibrating journalism's core mission. They place greater importance on engaging directly with underrepresented communities and on effecting social change – and give much lower priority to competition and incremental news coverage. Collaborations, therefore, represent a largely intentional effort by the journalistic partners to evolve in the ways they do journalism. Together, the groups involved are consciously seeking to do things differently than they have done alone.

Embracing Community-Centered Journalism

These non-journalistic partners, in particular, emphasize the need for journalistic operations to be a part of the community they cover, rather than distanced or separate from it. In the 20th century, newsroom ethnographers found journalists routinely dismissive of their audiences (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978). That has changed somewhat in the 21st century, especially amid the rise of social media and the

heightened attention to metrics that give the audience more influence on the gatekeeping process (for example, Nelson, 2021; Petre, 2021; Tandoc, 2014; Walters, 2021). The research in this project finds evidence of collaborations taking that a step further: Inspired especially by non-journalistic members, they seek to fully embrace the community they cover, to answer to the people in those communities above all, especially those who are underserved by existing media. “I really think this work must be done in partnership with communities, not *to* communities,” said Ashley Flores, a nonprofit member of the Dallas Media Collaborative (A. Flores, personal communication, August 16, 2021). This characterization represents the overarching way that collaborative efforts, in particular, seek to recalibrate the field’s priorities and mission. In doing so, they often lay out very idealistic goals of connecting with the community that connect back to those of the public journalism movement. But, like the question of whether collaborations actually end up improving the quality of news coverage, determining whether they actually lead to stronger connections with the community, is a question for future research.

Those taking part in collaborative partnerships are willing to do so in large part because they wish to place a higher value on the community they are covering. They universally speak of the audience as the end responsibility of their work, rather than as a means for making a profit. Collaborators observed in this project almost never discussed how many clicks or shares a story might get; instead, they spoke of the impact that a story might have on their community and of meeting the community’s needs. They characterized the responsibilities of journalism in terms of engendering the trust of the community and of treating both news subjects and the audience with openness and compassion. In one discussion about their mission statement, members of the Dallas

Media Collaborative hit on this issue when discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the phrase “marginalized communities.” One partner emphasized trying to get at the challenges faced by certain less privileged communities, referring to “what’s been done to them.” In response to those challenges, collaborative partners routinely spoke of wanting to help and empower their audiences and the people they cover. Some individual news organizations have certainly taken this approach as they have worked to re-establish trust with their audiences. However, inspired especially by non-journalistic partners, collaborative efforts show a particular emphasis in this area.

As part of this community-centered approach, collaborations especially prioritize the importance of their work speaking to and representing a diverse community – one featuring people of many different backgrounds and cultures. Some partners spoke of their efforts as a type of corrective to mainstream media in this way – and sought to give the community more agency. During a lunch meeting with a source at an Indian restaurant, I observed Keri Mitchell of the *Dallas Free Press* asking questions for a story, which centered around a museum dedicated to a local civil rights leader who was the second Black woman to serve on Dallas’ city council. But the meeting was as much community listening as it was reporting. “I’m starting to start interviews with, ‘Do you have any questions of me?’” said Mitchell, who later characterized the meeting as a blend of community engagement and reporting. The interview reflected a community-centered approach to journalism, with relaxed body language, laughs and shoulder-shimmies reflecting a conversation between equals. It showed a desire to understand people in the community. “Candace, remind me, did you grow up here?” Mitchell asked. The source answered that she was born in Baylor University hospital, and recounted the struggles of

integration. “I integrated Red Oak before they were ready,” she said. “That was like where all the Black folks lived, where they are allowed to live.” In the interview, Mitchell rarely interrupted and spent most of her time listening, sometimes laughing along. This reflected evidence of a push by collaborations to not only engage *with* the community, but to be more a part *of* the community.

This type of push to be more community-centered, and to highlight underrepresented cultures, was evident throughout the findings. A community journalist involved in the Credible Messenger project described wanting to counter the typical image of Black men in the media in a way that would “invert the image of the mugshot” and show them as part of the fabric of their diverse communities (Campbell, personal communication, October 1, 2021). In a separate context, the Dallas Media Collaborative also demonstrated this type of priority throughout its search for a project manager, continually seeking a more diverse pool of candidates and placing higher value on candidates who were from traditionally marginalized groups. After the group interviewed one candidate, a partner commented in an anonymous Google response form about the advantages of having a female, bilingual person of color in the position: “We have not had a candidate who understands the people we’re trying to reach in the way that (the candidate) seems to,” the person wrote. “I am eager to see the strategies she will drive to reach these readers and eliminate our own blind spots.” These comments were representative of views expressed throughout this research that place primary emphasis on connecting with diverse, underrepresented communities.

Furthermore, as is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, collaboratives embrace this community-centered approach by broadening the scope of what constitutes

journalism. They emphasize that the very idea of audience engagement, in all its various forms, is not just a means to attract more readers, viewers, listeners or subscribers. It is a function of journalists' responsibility to be involved in the fabric of a community, to connect with citizens, and work with them in the search for solutions to societal problems – be that gun violence, the need for more affordable housing, or other social plagues. These groups characterized such audience engagement as being part of journalism in and of itself. In doing this, they prioritized what scholar Jacob Nelson has dubbed the “production-oriented” variety of engagement, in which the audience is brought into journalistic processes; that stands in contrast with the “reception-oriented” engagement, which measures how the audience interacts with content (Nelson, 2021, pp. 32-33). All types of groups involved in the partnerships studied here gave top priority to this civic responsibility in their characterization of the mission of journalism. The collaborations reflected this in concrete ways that show both the expansion of traditional boundaries and a fresh look at journalism's core responsibilities; these involved round table discussions, community listening, empowering citizen journalists, and even via creative performances that sought to engage citizens in fresh, emotionally impactful ways.

Revamping Journalism's Public Service Role, Seeking to Effect Social Change

Beyond recharacterizing the journalist-community relationship, the collaborations studied here also reflect evidence of a revamping of the very notion of the public service function of the press. One way that duty has long been characterized is as providing the public with the information they need to make decisions in their daily lives (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Collaborative members described their responsibility as not just informing the audience about what is going on in society, but, more importantly,

exploring and interrogating potential solutions to community problems. In both observations and individual interviews, journalistic and non-journalistic partners alike consistently prioritized the goal of not only engaging with their audiences and focusing on solutions, but of *effecting meaningful change* that improves those communities they cover.

In discussing and developing its mission statement, which they edited collectively on a Google document, Dallas Media Collaborative partners emphasized the goals of encouraging civic engagement and civil discourse and “amplifying excluded voices,” as well as the goal of “investigating potential solutions and effective responses” to social problems, specifically the issue of affordable housing. Amy Maestas, of the Solutions Journalism Network, reinforced this end-goal focus in required training sessions and in collaborative meetings, by emphasizing SJN’s four “pillars” that need to be included in a solutions journalism story; these include a focus on the response to a problem, and how that response has or hasn’t worked; insight on that response that makes it relevant to others; evidence on the effectiveness of the response; and emphasis on the limitations of the response in the reporting itself (The Solutions Journalism Network, December 9, 2020). This solutions-based focus of the collaborative reflected its ultimate goal of leading to change.

Journalistic and non-journalistic partners alike consistently characterized the goal of their collaborative effort as effecting change. In a *Dallas Morning News* story on the collaborative, partners described its goal as having a big “impact,” “solving those problems” related to affordable housing, and serving as a “constant drumbeat” that draws attention to systemic issues in Dallas (Moreno, 2021). These characterizations were

echoed in individual interviews and in observations during this research, demonstrating evidence that collaborative efforts often place greater emphasis on solving problems, rather than just explaining them. This presents a fascinating paradox: Journalists are in some ways advocating for change while still actively patrolling the boundaries between their work and the work of activists – as discussed in Chapter 7. Dallas Media Collaborative members, for example, responded positively to a project manager candidate who spoke in her interview of how solutions journalism can be a “space (that) ... can be so powerful” when it comes to promoting equity work in the community, of addressing inequality. In another instance that illustrates the paradox, a non-journalistic partner wondered how the group could possibly write about the crisis of affordable housing *without* seeking solutions and pushing for better policies as a result: “I wonder how you write about affordable housing if you are not coming at it from a stance of housing justice” (M. Bottari, personal communication, August 13, 2021).

Collaborations often prioritize a focus on specific tools to address the root causes of social ills – including poverty, addiction and policies and socioeconomic factors that make life more difficult for people of color. As examples, partners emphasized voting rights, redlining, urban planning policy, government funding priorities, mental health issues, problems with conflict resolution, and inadequate education and health care policies, as being factors that their work needed help change. In discussing this, collaborative partners routinely emphasized the goal of having a measurable impact on these things, using phrases such as a desire to “move the needle.” They emphasize this continually and seek to identify problems and solutions to those problems in their communities. On a 90-minute driving tour of residential neighborhoods in West Dallas, *D*

Magazine's Matt Goodman noted how interstates, transit infrastructure and zoning policies had significant impacts on whether an area thrived, as well as whether it was accessible to people of different incomes. The challenges were evident in the yards of homes, too, where competing "Vote in Favor of Zoning Changes" and "Stop Zoning Changes" signs popped up on many blocks. In a different neighborhood, which had shifted more upscale in recent years and featured trendy restaurants and bars, Goodman identified the challenge as: "My family grew up here. I can't afford to live here." Goodman's approach toward identifying problems *and* potential solutions was emblematic of collaboratives' tendency toward trying to identify the root causes of social ills, as well as ways to address them. As another Dallas Media Collaborative member stated, "It's not enough to admire the problem" (A. Flores, personal communication, November 18, 2021).

These types of social goals drive collaborative efforts, as they seek to prioritize positive changes in the community over the traditional goal of profit. The content produced by the Credible Messenger project demonstrated this in a tangible way. The consistent emphasis on treating gun violence as a public health crisis was emblematic of this solutions-based approach, of prioritizing the goal of not just giving voice to victims, but inspiring change. In the video and audio stories produced by the project, partners challenged journalistic conventions in how they worked to highlight root causes and possible solutions, rather than just detailing the problem. An interviewee in one video pointed out, for example, that his database of unsolved crimes was eventually copied by the city of Philadelphia, something about which he was very proud. Another participant described the need for the content to be "alarming" in an effort to raise awareness of the

crisis (A. Laws, personal communication, October 4, 2021). At first, this intent does not appear unique since traditional news coverage often seeks to be alarming in the interest of earning viewers and, therefore, profits. However, collaborative partners – especially non-journalistic ones – spoke of this desired emotional effect in the context of raising awareness and inspiring changes in policies and attitudes. Their coverage frequently addressed potential solutions aimed at addressing root causes.

In concert with this, while prioritizing the goal of effecting change, the collaborations studied here reflect an effort to *de-emphasize* competition and incremental news coverage. They placed little emphasis on covering the details or daily news events that would be covered by the partners individually. Instead, they characterized their collaborative efforts as being geared toward the partners doing “together what each can’t do alone because of budget constraints and massive changes in how the news industry is funded” (Huang et al., n.d.). The collaborations in this study emphasized providing big-picture coverage that is lacking in their news ecosystems. As a corollary, they seek to leave the minutiae and day-to-day coverage to individual media outlets. This shows a collaborative approach prioritizing news coverage that takes a step back to examine a problem more deeply, an approach that subsequently works to move away from smaller, turn-of-the-screw developments in order to focus on work that leads to solutions and change.

Re-Imagining Journalism’s Core Mission as an Educational One

A final way that collaborations are seeking to recalibrate journalism’s responsibilities and goals involves education. This was reflected in two ways. First, these partnerships seek to more closely align journalism’s core mission with that of education.

This primarily centers around the role of educating the public by providing quality information. But it also involves educating current and future journalists about the best practices and approaches for doing that. Both journalistic and non-journalistic partners prioritize informing their audiences with the goal of helping to improve civic discourse. In crafting its mission statement, the Dallas Media Collaborative used language often associated with the social responsibility of education – such as “encourage civil discourse that leads to civic engagement.” Members also often spoke of educating the audience on policies, programs and laws, suggesting a heightened focus on this role of the press.

However, non-journalistic partners, in particular, emphasized how the press itself needs to be better informed in order to be able to provide this more educational content to the public. The Child Poverty Action Lab’s Ashley Flores reflects these educational priorities: She holds a master’s degree in educational policy and management, spent four years working for the Dallas school district, and spent two years with Teach For America. Flores routinely mentioned the importance of housing stories that have “more nuance,” ones produced by journalists with a fuller understanding of the affordable housing issues. At their morning coffee meeting, CPAL staff discussed wanting to see more “good eviction stories,” which they defined as “ones that highlight the challenges.” CPAL also emphasized the importance of democratizing data, making it more readily available to the public, so that citizens could more easily educate themselves on topics such as evictions. As an example, CPAL staff discussed how they have worked to make daily eviction records publicly available, information that one organization was going to charge \$200,000 to provide. This provides evidence of how collaborations, led by new types of non-journalistic partners, emphasize the press’ role in education of the public.

Second, on a more practical level, the partnerships studied here show how collaborations seek to involve students in the journalistic process. These group efforts reflect a move toward a teaching hospital approach to journalism – where members often seek to involve students in the creation of news content. This sometimes came with uncertainty, as members debated what roles they were willing to entrust to students, as well as the degree to which student work would need additional vetting. At one Dallas Media Collaborative meeting, non-university partners expressed concern about letting students have too much responsibility, especially when it came to the idea of them being involved with the collaborative’s website or its social media channels. One journalistic partner argued that students “cannot be in charge of social media.” These collaborative efforts show a desire to get students involved, but non-university partners express concerns about giving students too much responsibility. Nevertheless, these collaborations reflect an effort to more closely align journalism’s mission with that of education – both in practice and in values. The greater emphasis on journalism’s educational role also ties in with increased focus on different means of engaging with the audiences collaborations are trying to inform. Non-journalistic partners, especially university and creative partners, play a critical role in this, as is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

As new partners enter the journalistic fold, they are having both macro- and micro-level impacts on the field. Previous chapters have showed how diverse collaborations are impacting both who is involved in performing journalism, as well as the specific roles of those involved. Subsequently, this chapter demonstrates how these diverse groups are changing and recalibrating the mission of journalism, led or inspired

by the new groups that are now being brought into the journalistic fold. These findings show that, rather than completely alter this mission, collaborations are recalibrating the priorities in a way that places greater focus on end goals such as connecting more deeply with communities, especially those underserved by existing news organizations; in doing this, collaborations highlight a movement toward seeing community engagement as an act of journalism itself, not just a way of reaching new eyes and ears for content. Finally, these findings show how these collaborations envision the ultimate goal of journalism as improving communities by effecting social change, including through education. This is evidence of how increasingly diverse collaborations are playing a key role in field repair. The next chapter seeks to build on this by considering the ways collaborations strive to diversify both the information sources and journalistic processes involved in pursuing journalism's practical mission of creating news content, with the goal of connecting with audiences of a wide variety of backgrounds.

CHAPTER 9

DIVERSIFYING SOURCES, AUDIENCES & STORIES

The findings in the previous chapter show how, at a macro level, collaborations are influencing the very purpose of journalism, altering the field's overarching values in terms of its responsibility to the community. Partnerships made up of diverse members are recharacterizing journalism's overall goals in a way that is more community focused and that prioritizes social change. This chapter aims to build on those findings by zooming in and moving "down" the hierarchy of influences to show how collaborations are influencing journalistic practice at a more granular level. To do this, it examines specific editorial approaches and routines that influence both the gathering of information and the subsequent creation of journalistic content, as well as the ways these partnerships engage with their audiences.

Partners Seek to Amplify New Voices, Find Fresh Ways to Connect with Communities

In practice, the collaborations studied here work to incorporate a broader array of sources and audiences in their journalistic processes, especially those whose voices they see as underrepresented in traditional news coverage. Furthermore, they seek to give more authority to community voices and let them have more control and influence over journalistic narratives. In a field long criticized for heavily relying on official sources (for example, Gans, 2004; Schudson, 1978; Tuchman, 1978), these collaborative efforts are seeking to serve as a corrective. The collaborative members, particularly non-journalistic ones and non-legacy media, value diversifying the information sources in their stories, seeking to amplify voices that are often unheard. Credible Messenger participant Tyler Campbell noted how police "get enough lip service as it is" in mainstream news coverage

of gun violence; what is missing, Campbell said, is the community members impacted by gun violence – “the people that I interviewed ... They don’t have a platform” (T. Campbell, personal communication, October 1, 2021). Another Credible Messenger team utilized student voices from the Community College of Philadelphia, seeking unvarnished impressions of gun violence in the city. These collaborations emphasize using voices from the community, especially people from underrepresented socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Collaborative partners often draw on each other’s resources in order to find these types of sources representing different communities in their regions. They work to draw on each other’s respective organizational identities to get connected with sources and subjects of various backgrounds. A *Dallas Morning News* reporter working on a story about a hospital system’s effort to improve medical services in underserved areas was looking for more community sources and brought up the piece in a small group meeting; the *Texas Metro News*’ Cheryl Smith then volunteered to send her a list of “some folks who have been there a while.” In the meeting, Smith emphasized the importance of finding people who have deep roots in the community, not just community leaders. “We definitely want to run your story when you get it,” Smith then told the reporter, providing evidence of the symbiotic relationship.

Likewise, while on a site visit to a tiny housing project in southern Dallas, student journalists in Jake Batsell’s Southern Methodist University journalism class sought to highlight the voice of a resident who was benefitting from the housing. After scheduling the class reporting excursion with the nonprofit CitySquare, Batsell guided his students in their reporting and sought to help them possibly interview some residents. After getting

to the site and asking permission, two student journalists interviewed a resident on her porch, a conversation that illustrated the collaborative's focus on amplifying lesser-heard voices. One student with a notepad interviewed the resident, taking notes in a notebook as she talked; the second student videoed the interview. In response to the student's questions, the woman detailed years of struggles to find housing – a “series of mishaps” after a divorce in 2000, how she was displaced for a time, was “in and out of shelters” and how she experienced “psychological trauma.” The way these students and their professor prioritized getting the story of a resident and finding the causes of her struggles to find housing illustrates the ways collaborations often emphasize amplifying unheard voices; this instance also shows the attention paid to identifying the root causes of social problems. In seeking to achieve these goals, these collaborations utilize the social capital and connections of different types of partners in order to find a broader array of subjects in their communities. As a result, the subjects of stories and the sources in them are both more diverse than what they might be in work produced by a legacy news outlet working alone.

In addition to focusing on more diverse sources, the collaborations in this study – led by the influence of new types of non-journalistic partners – sometimes value giving those subjects much more control over the narrative. This means imposing less of a traditional, detached journalistic voice in the story. The work produced by the partnerships studied here was often less filtered, with the sources having more control over the tone and direction of the story. In audio and video stories produced by the Credible Messenger partners, it was often difficult to tell who was a subject and who was a journalist. The stories almost always placed victims' voices in the foreground,

reflecting an intentional effort to background and sometimes actually *remove* the journalistic voice. When a journalist's voice was present, it reflected a compassionate tone, one there to encourage or facilitate the subject's telling of the story. One Credible Messenger video, titled "The Lasting Impact," showed an interview with a man who had lost a friend to gun violence. At one point, he starts to break down. "Are you OK?" the interviewer inquires, asking if he wants to take a break. "Yeah, I'm OK," he responds, before continuing. "It's part of the healing process," the interviewer tells him. These projects often showed the journalist playing the role of guide, rather than narrator. This reflects a prioritization on community voices, with journalists' role being to raise or amplify them – not to direct them.

The collaborations studied here also emphasize the importance of asking the community when looking for ideas about what to cover. They seek out ideas about what issues and topics should be the focus of stories. As part of this, collaborative members spoke frequently of the importance of community "listening." Members did this by sharing with one another how people in their circles were reacting to individual stories. But they also spoke of plans for active "listening" in the community, efforts to reach underserved groups – especially people of color and low-income residents – and hear their concerns and ideas. Keri Mitchell, of the *Dallas Free Press*, described these underserved groups as "the community we are most responsible to, in a sense" and spoke of the listening to them as a key part of the effort to "make sure that this is a story for them" and not just about them (K. Mitchell, personal communication, October 13, 2021). In doing this, both journalistic and non-journalistic partners prioritize work that suggests solutions, rather than simply describing problems. During group interviews for the Dallas

Media Collaborative project manager, *Al Dia*'s Alfredo Carbajal emphasized how the group's mission is to "empower people" and try to connect with underserved communities, to try to address the lack of trust in media. These journalists appear to be granting community members more gatekeeping authority in terms of what types of topics, ideas and approaches they focus their efforts on.

Along with this heightened emphasis on listening to communities, these collaborations prioritize the importance of actively engaging with more diverse and underserved audiences. They universally characterize this type of engagement as part of journalism's social responsibility, as opposed to a means to the commercial end of gaining a bigger audience. However, there is sometimes a lack of clarity in terms of what such engagement means and partners sometimes differ on the exact way to do it. Universities and creative groups present unique opportunities for this type of engagement, but sometimes there is uncertainty over how it will work in practice. The Verdigris Ensemble characterized itself as an educational entity, one that could be involved in having artists teach after-school workshops in communities and in organizing other "ground level, trust building activities in the community" (M. Bottari, personal communication, August 13, 2021). However, the collaborative's discussions often lacked specifics in terms of how such non-journalistic partners would be involved in engagement. One journalistic partner acknowledged that it may be more difficult for a group like Verdigris to get involved at the beginning. "They are going to have to listen for a while," Keri Mitchell said. "They are going to have to observe, to listen and learn" (K. Mitchell, personal communication, October 13, 2021).

Collaboratives envision how such creative endeavors have the potential to connect with audiences in ways that traditional journalism simply cannot. The Verdigris ensemble provided a glimpse of how this could occur during a rehearsal for the “Take Flight” show, a collaborative performance with a contemporary dance company, at an arts center in Dallas’ Oak Cliff neighborhood. Eight singers, four male and four female, practiced in a basement room before the rehearsal, under the guidance of artistic director Sam Brukhman. As they begin to sing, the music at first sounded like powerful humming, with the singers entering at different points in the composition, some swaying gently during their parts. “Let’s find our chord and use our ears,” Brukhman gently exhorted. “Can you find more balance in the tone?” he asked. “Our tone is still not quite aligned.” As they worked through sections of the song, the emotional impact of the rich sound could be felt in the otherwise silent room. After several stops and starts, in a variety of ranges, Brukhman declared, “There it is.” Then, as they pushed forward, he called for another adjustment: “Tenors, can we find a little more of a sectional sound? With the same curvature.” Under traditional standards, this type of performance does not seem remotely journalistic. However, this type of work exhibited the desire of creative partners to redefine those standards around how stories are told and what is considered journalism. It showed how these non-journalistic partners seek to infuse journalism with the ability to connect more emotionally with the audience. In the process, they seek to influence and redefine what journalism *is*.

The involvement of creative partners in collaborations serves to expand the very meaning of journalism and of audience engagement’s role in it. In its collaborative rehearsal with a ballet company, the Verdigris performers provided further evidence of

the still-undefined potential of creative partners to provide a more participatory, creative component to journalism. After practicing in the basement for about 45 minutes, the eight singers set up on the ground-floor stage in the arts center, as four ballerinas stretched and practiced on the floor in front. There was almost no communication between the singers and dancers, and minimal exchanges between Brukhman and the choreographer. As they began to practice, the dancers flitted across the room, their light feet landing with gentle thuds, as the singers stopped and started. “What’s our cue?” a dancer asked at one point, as the groups attempted to get their timing coordinated. As they worked through their coordinated performance, the rehearsal provided a stark metaphor for the challenges and benefits of collaboration. The two groups – from totally different artistic realms – sometimes struggled to get in sync with one another, occasionally expressing mild frustration. But when they did, the result was graceful, beautiful and emotionally powerful.

In a very different way, university partners also see themselves as key to this kind of public engagement, volunteering to send student journalists out into the community and also inviting collaborative members to speak to their classes. The goals of education and community engagement often converge. Partners regularly describe sharing information with students – education – as a type of audience engagement. By sending student journalists into the community, in addition to helping create news content, universities are engaging with the community on behalf of the collaborative. That engagement goes both ways, such as when a Southern Methodist University student in one of Jake Batsell’s classes spoke briefly at one collaborative meeting about her reporting on tiny houses. Non-journalistic partners, therefore, bring fresh perspectives to

collaborations on the different forms community engagement can take in journalism. However, sometimes there are subtle boundary tensions with journalistic partners, especially when it comes to questions of whether the types of engagement they are offering are actually journalism at all – such as how much responsibility to entrust to students or whether a choral performance can be seen as a form of journalism. These tensions are sometimes resolved in concrete ways, such as through how roles are assigned. In other ways, they are negotiated at the individual level by partners working together, as in the editing of a story. But resolution is often less defined, as when one partner may characterize an artistic performance as simply a new form of audience engagement while another sees it as a fresh kind of journalistic work.

Viewing Collaboration as a Way to Build Upon Partners' Incremental Coverage

In terms of creating content, partners also view collaboration as a means to expand and build upon the more basic coverage of individual journalistic partners. They seek to use the group effort as a means to go beyond the work they have already done, sometimes deliberately highlighting the previous work of individual members as possible starting points for collaborative projects. This demonstrates how these group efforts are attempting to use their combined resources to be able to delve more deeply into topics that impact their communities. In doing this, they also show a willingness to prioritize collaboration and sharing over competition, therefore placing lower value on the incremental coverage that fills much of their daily news cycles.

The Dallas Media Collaborative demonstrated this in how they prioritized scheduling times for different journalistic partners to share their previous coverage on affordable housing with the rest of the group. The first to do that, Matt Goodman at *D*

Magazine, shared a variety of the magazine’s previous housing coverage – including stories on a study on poverty in Dallas, a story on the city’s housing shortage, and coverage that focused on transportation issues. In presenting this work to the group, Goodman was quick to reference the pillars of solutions journalism, noting stories that “were not going that far” and, therefore, not representing true solutions journalism. Showing another story on evictions, he suggested that a solutions journalism approach would go beyond “just saying that this is a report and this is what it says. ... Take the next step.” While showing another story, he noted the importance of transportation issues and said they could represent “an opportunity for us (the collaborative) to dig into.” In leading this discussion, Goodman routinely consulted the expertise of other members, both journalistic and non-journalistic, in attempting to answer bigger questions, consistently referencing the goal of impact on the community, the desire to “move the needle.” The presentation focused on the goal of utilizing the collaborative’s resources to move beyond what individual journalistic partners have been able to achieve in their incremental coverage.

As they seek to maximize their collective resources, collaborative partners work to emphasize this spirit of collaboration in place of the traditional focus on competition. However, when they operate in the same news ecosystem, there is still noticeable evidence of long-held competitive tensions among journalistic partners. Dallas Media Collaborative members repeatedly referenced a history of “bad blood” between news organizations that had built up over time, even though that was sometimes written off as conflicts between “the chiefs and the businesspeople” rather than the “reporters” (K. Mitchell, personal communication, October 13, 2021). The frequency with which these

tensions were mentioned represents how thoroughly engrained these types of conflicts can be. Journalistic partners (especially smaller ones) were sometimes hesitant to share too much of their coverage plans, even if they were willing to discuss some individual stories. During a group discussion of what program to use for story planning, one member asked a nonprofit partner if she would mind showing on the screen how she used Trello for story planning. She sounded open to the idea, but was clearly resistant to sharing them all with the group, demonstrating that competitive instincts still exist among partners. For non-journalistic partners, however, these types of competitive issues are mostly a foreign concept; in this way, they help to lead the push toward a more collaborative approach.

Journalistic and non-journalistic groups working together in collaborations seek to do together what they feel they can increasingly not do alone. In doing so, they are also expanding the definition of what is considered journalistic work and modifying traditional understandings of journalism. They aim to use their collective resources to build upon their own incremental coverage, with the goal of diversifying the types of sources journalistic partners are accustomed to using and the types of stories they have typically produced. These collaborations also work to capitalize on their members' distinct abilities to reach and engage with new audiences in different ways, although journalistic and non-journalistic partners are not always in agreement about the best ways to do that. This type of collaborative approach reflects the uncertainty of the journalistic field and provides evidence of the attempts to change it in ways that re-establish the lost connection with the audience. The negotiations among different types of partners over how to do this shows that new voices are being allowed into this discussion; but they also

show that traditional approaches and definitions are remarkably persistent in terms of what news content is, what voices are privileged, and how journalistic processes work. The collaborations in this study clearly exhibited the push-pull nature of these types of negotiations and provide another window into the great flux in which the field finds itself. When brought into collaborations, non-journalistic partners help to encourage the re-assessment of some of the field's long-standing assumptions and practices – as well as a re-thinking of what new types of work can be considered *journalism*. With the tensions, priorities and goals discussed thus far in mind, the next section turns to the thorny question of how these partnerships decide what marks success for their collaborative endeavors – and the varied ways they decide if those yardsticks have been met.

CHAPTER 10

ENVISIONING & MEASURING SUCCESS

News organizations have measured success in a wide variety of ways over time. In the commercially dominated U.S. news industry, such efforts have long been driven primarily by market-based logics. Metrics have traditionally included circulation figures, numbers of subscriptions, or tallies of viewers or readers. More recently, success has been gauged in terms of audience response, especially in the number of clicks or page views a piece of content gets. Journalists also value industry awards or policy changes resulting from their coverage. With diverse collaborations, measuring success is made more complicated due to the wide array of partners – including organizers and funders, as well as both journalistic and non-journalistic entities. Each can have discrete parameters for determining whether an effort has met its goals. But, at the broadest level, collaborative journalistic efforts center their overall mission and goals around a single, overarching concept: impact.

Envisioning Success: Choosing Topics That Can Lead to Community Impact

The collaborations studied here uniformly prioritize the goal of improving communities and creating change. The first way they focus on this is in deciding what topics they intend to focus their group efforts on in the first place. Collaborators collectively seek to focus on areas in which their work will be able to effect meaningful change in their communities, areas where there is a noticeable and urgent need. That is, rather than targeting commercial success, they primarily seek an area in which there is a societal need and where journalistic efforts can conceivably help lead to social change. Journalists sometimes draw upon their own reporting experiences in making these

decisions. Prior to founding the Philadelphia Center for Gun Violence Reporting, Jim MacMillan worked as a multimedia journalist for more than 30 years, including 17 years as a photographer and videographer at the *Philadelphia Daily News*. Based on this experience, he saw the need for a more community-centered approach to covering the city's pervasive gun violence problem; this helped inspire the creation of the Credible Messenger project to help improve coverage of gun violence (J. MacMillan, personal communication, September 20, 2021).

In addition to their own experiences, journalists consult experts and advocates in the community to identify areas where their collaborative efforts can have an impact. In an early meeting on topic selection, the Dallas Media Collaborative partners directly asked the Child Poverty Action Lab's Ashley Flores – with whom numerous partners had worked in the past – what areas she felt needed more and better news coverage in the Dallas area. Tom Huang of the *Dallas Morning News* asked Flores to detail CPAL's top priorities and identify ones where the “power of a media collaborative” might be best able to help “move the needle.” This shows the willingness of collaboratives to look to non-journalistic partners when deciding what issues to focus on in order to meet the community's needs and achieve the greatest impact.

It was also clear that journalistic partners sought to get past their traditional commercial imperatives of what types of stories would get the most clicks; they appeared to be looking specifically to the nonprofit CPAL to help them determine an area for them to focus on, one where they could make a difference. In a presentation at the topic-selection meeting, Flores identified some of CPAL's key priorities – including general areas such as nutrition, maternal health, child care, housing, incarceration, trauma

prevention and public safety; the idea, Flores said in follow-up comments, was to share data CPAL had access to that might be of interest to the collaborative (A. Flores, personal communication, January 4, 2022). Since Flores' particular area of interest is housing, this especially reflects the influence (directly or indirectly) that non-journalistic partners can have on the subjects collaboratives choose to cover. Furthermore, these interactions show that collaborations sometimes look for guidance from those outside the journalistic sphere – including research nonprofits, medical doctors, and others – when trying to decide where to invest their efforts. In doing so, they prioritize finding ways to improve people's lives, rather than just inform the public about existing problems.

In assessing the motivations of collaborations, therefore, the unifying theme is selecting subjects and utilizing methods that enable them to have an impact on their community. The ideal described is a situation in which the journalistic work produced by the group directly leads to positive social change in the community, change that is tangible and can be measured. They seek for their work to do more than just describe a problem, but rather to help facilitate or identify potential solutions. This is a stark contrast to the traditional economic motivations of legacy media, in which impact has long been measured primarily by how many subscribers, readers, listeners or viewers it reaches. Collaboratives tend to focus more on what their work causes the audience to do and whether it leads them to create change. This leads to the next question: What measures do these groups seek to use to determine and measure this impact?

Evaluating and Measuring Success in Collaborative Efforts

Another way participants in collaboratives are unique is in how they measure whether their effort has met its goals. Different types of partners use different criteria for

evaluating whether their work was, in fact, impactful. Their respective criteria or measures are greatly determined by their unique identity or background. While the overall vision of success discussed previously is more universal, the ways different entities measure whether goals have been achieved – whether the work has had an impact – differ in many ways. Specifically, those involved in collaboratives prioritize different measures when assessing whether these projects are having an impact, or, especially in earlier stages, whether they are progressing toward a situation in which they will ultimately have an impact. These are discussed next, looking first at the coordinators and funders of collaborative efforts, and then at both journalistic and non-journalistic collaborative partners.

Funders and Collaborative Organizers

The primary coordinators of collaborative efforts, even if they are not directly funders, often characterize success as the collaborative’s sustainability and the extent to which material produced by the partnership supports the coordinators’ stated goals and values. Representatives of the Solutions Journalism Network, the nonprofit whose Local Media Project is supported by Knight Foundation funding, frequently characterized success as when one of its collaboratives completed the two years of funded work, “graduated,” and found a way to sustain itself on its own. Permanence, supported by external means of sustainable funding, was characterized as the ultimate indicator of success. SJN invited representatives of other, more established collaboratives to speak to the Dallas Media Collaborative and share “best practices.” Funders prioritize integrated collaboration as a goal in and of itself. “We want to see them working together,” SJN’s Amy Maestas said. “Reporting and working together” (A. Maestas, personal

communication, September 13, 2021). It was partly with this goal in mind that Maestas emphasized the importance of first doing some trust-building exercises at the collaborative's in-person meeting, even though the partners were anxious to get down to the more practical work of talking about story ideas (A. Maestas, personal communication, November 19, 2021).

Funders also prioritize impact as something they want to be able to evaluate and measure. They describe it as taking the form of demonstrable consequences that can be shown, ones that can be backed by scientific criteria. This can include “quantitative or qualitative evidence” (A. Maestas, personal communication, September 13, 2021) that the collaborative's work increased audience trust, heightened engagement, or impacted policies and attitudes in the community. But these can be value-based assessments and people organizing collaborations sometimes worry about what their funders will think of the work produced by their efforts (J. MacMillan, personal communication, September 20, 2021).

In order to assure high-quality results that can lead to impact, organizers seek to hold up examples of collaborative work and best practices as measuring sticks. While this is often done in a training context, these rubrics and examples are used as models to demonstrate what success *looks like*, so that it can be replicated. The Solutions Journalism Network required all individuals participating in the Dallas Media Collaborative to attend a solutions journalism training session and tracked who had or hadn't attended. At these training sessions, SJN staff led activities in which they shared examples of solutions journalism stories; they had participants use a simple rubric to critique the stories in terms of how well they met the criteria of solutions journalism.

With the Credible Messenger project, coordinator Jim MacMillan described how he selected professional journalism partners whose values and work he trusted, so that they could help assure the creation of high-quality content (J. MacMillan, personal communication, September 20, 2021). These varied measures show the attempts made by those organizing collaborations to make sure that the work meets a certain level of expectations – their expectations. The collaborative work was, in some ways, measured against these journalistic ideals.

Lastly, these findings suggest those organizing and funding collaborations often emphasize metrics as indicators of whether their efforts are successful. They prioritize reports that track the content, online traffic and audience engagement efforts of collaboratives. They work with collaborative partners to set specific metrics related to their content output and the impact that it has on the community. At the Dallas Collaborative’s initial topic selection meeting, Solutions Journalism Network’s Liza Gross encouraged the group to choose four or five metrics that “will really give you a clue as to whether you are changing the conversation.” “We encourage you to look at the metrics that are important to you,” Gross told the group. At a later meeting, Gross emphasized this again, encouraging the group to be selective: “Don’t pick 55 metrics,” she advised. “Think of three.” Backers, therefore, appear to give flexibility to collaborations in terms of what they want to measure and achieve; but they clearly place an importance on being able to measure the work’s impact.

Those supporting collaboratives also focus on metrics that simply quantify the group’s output, much as has been done with quotas in commercial journalism. The Dallas Media Collaborative’s memorandum of understanding notes the expectation that partners

send the project manager “reports about traffic and engagement time on digital pages, and participate in staff and audience surveys.” During subsequent discussions about story tracking, SJN’s Amy Maestas regularly reminded partners that they would need to track the number of stories produced by the collaborative, noting what percentage of those meet SJN’s parameters for “solutions journalism.” The collaborative’s MOU reflects this emphasis on tracking, explaining that partners need to designate what stories are “collaborative stories” that used SJN resources. The Solutions Journalism Network representatives regularly referenced their efforts to track and record solutions journalism stories produced by other collaboratives; they used these groups’ stories as models for fledgling collaboratives. At the Dallas collaborative’s first in-person meeting, Maestas again reminded them that they should focus on selecting three or four metrics of success at the beginning, ones they choose to determine if they are successful. She also mentioned measuring not just the number of stories (the group set a goal of 50 for the first year) and the number of solutions stories, but the number of stories that were done with partners. All of these were floated as tangible measurements of success. Given that many of the organizers came from journalism, it is notable that these parameters reflect some – but certainly not all – of the ethos of corporate, legacy media.

Journalistic and Non-Journalistic Partners

Newsroom partners themselves also emphasize the importance of measuring success, but they do it in different ways. At one level, the groups studied here described success as being able to use collaboration to create strong connections among a diverse number of partners, relationships that enable them to produce high-quality journalism in a more networked way. Tom Huang of the *Dallas Morning News* emphasized how success

could be partly evaluated in terms of whether the partners could “keep building relationships” (T. Huang, personal communication, November 16, 2021). This shows how success is partly measured by the extent to which diverse collaborative memberships are developed and sustained over time. This priority was also visible in the way that Huang took on a host-like role at the Dallas Media Collaborative’s post-meeting dinner, ordering the wine and making sure everyone had glasses; Keri Mitchell also demonstrated the importance of this as she helped take on the role of making sure the pizzas ordered at the restaurant met everyone’s dietary needs and tastes.

As part of relationships, the collaborations studied here measure success through the extent to which they are able to build trust among each other and with diverse communities. This is evident in the broader purpose behind collaborations, large and small. The *Dallas Morning News*’ partnership with the *Texas Metro News*, for example, came about at least in part due to the lack of trust the Black community had in the DMN, which has also done partnerships with “trusted messengers” in the Latino community (T. Huang, personal communication, November 16, 2021). But the challenge of developing such trusting relationships was evident in the way that partners sometimes referenced a feeling that their views and ideas were not heard. This can become a problem particularly when partners in different positions of power are involved – specifically in terms of their institutional, demographic and sociocultural identities. Cheryl Smith of the *Texas Metro News* described a “weight” she felt to represent the Black community in the Dallas Media Collaborative; she recalled wondering at one point, “Is this another organization where I have to be the NAACP of this thing?” (C. Smith, personal communication, November 16, 2021). While difficult to measure, collaboratives see the creation of trusting relationships

among diverse partners and with diverse communities as key evidence of success. At the broader level of purpose, both journalistic and non-journalistic partners place emphasis on the desired result of improved news coverage that fills in existing “blind spots,” especially in terms of reaching underserved communities. They also seek to demonstrate that the effort has helped them reach new audiences.

As a unique subset of non-journalistic partners, universities involved in these collaborations often measure success in entirely different ways. They gauge it largely based on how involved their students are, and the extent of the practical journalism experience collaborations can provide those students. In both the Dallas Media Collaborative and the Credible Messenger Project, colleges and universities made efforts to get students involved, usually as participants but sometimes also as subjects or sources. University partners regularly offered up their students as labor to help the collaboratives and also sought out internship possibilities for them. In this way, success for university partners highlighted student involvement as an end in and of itself – whether via reporting, website or social media management, or other means. A student in one of Jake Batsell’s Southern Methodist University classes exhibited this success when she spoke about her reporting on tiny houses during one collaborative meeting, prompting another member to respond in the chat: “... you’re on your way to an A!” To university partners, getting students involved and seeing them produce journalism represented concrete success in their educational mission. They described it not just as a goal, but as a clear metric of their success. During a trust-building exercise at the collaborative’s in-person meeting, Batsell clearly illustrated this when he described a successful effort as one

having a “constant pipeline of students involved, not just in coverage but in community engagement.”

As referenced above, at the grandest level, these collaborations seek to measure success in terms of whether they have effected change – an area that participants acknowledge is difficult to evaluate. Within the Dallas Media Collaborative, this was often described as any evidence that housing becomes more accessible to middle- and lower-income people of diverse backgrounds, or through the implementation of policies that helped make that more likely. Credible Messenger participants often defined success as fewer victims being shot, with fewer deaths and fewer visits to emergency rooms, or in the form of new legislation that helped make such outcomes more likely. Non-journalistic partners are often more likely to emphasize social scientific metrics in terms of evaluating success. In the Dallas Media Collaborative, the nonprofit Child Poverty Action Lab referenced success in terms of data and metrics related to real estate transactions and property values, numbers of building permits, numbers of evictions and other city data that reflect the state of affordable housing. In its reports, CPAL emphasized goals and time frames for achieving those goals; at one meeting, CPAL representatives discussed the goal of reducing the number of “involuntary moves” of city residents by designated amounts, with target dates for those goals. This demonstrated the idea of measurable success in effecting social change. During the trust-building exercise, CPAL’s Ashley Flores indicated how her measure of success was “less about what gets published ... more about the public response.” This shows clearly how different types of journalistic and non-journalistic partners may evaluate success on different terms. With its focus on solutions, the Dallas Media Collaborative held up as the ultimate success any

results that addressed the crisis of affordable housing. On the driving tour of Dallas neighborhoods, *D Magazine*'s Matt Goodman pointed to some houses that were run down and emphasized that the city needed to find better ways to help such owners fix up their homes. He also identified one of the greatest housing challenges in Dallas as "How do you create a mixed-income neighborhood?" Implied in that observation is the idea that such a neighborhood, if the collaborative could help facilitate it, would mark a successful result.

Collaborative partners routinely characterized success based on whether their work effected change and produced results in tangible ways. "If I can save one person ... my job has been done," said Kimberly Kamara, a community journalist who interviewed city residents impacted by gun violence for a *Credible Messenger* video. "I felt I wanted to be as real, as authentic, as I possibly can be to get the point across – this violence is outrageous" (K. Kamara, personal communication, September 29, 2021). Non-journalistic partners, in particular, routinely characterized success as being more than just raising awareness; by itself, one partner said, a goal of "raising awareness" was something of a "lame action item" (M. Bottari, personal communication, August 13, 2021). Instead, these partners lead the way in describing success as producing journalism that incorporates new voices, tells stories in new ways, and leads to measurable change in their communities.

Both journalistic and non-journalistic partners, however, also sought to evaluate success in a more abstract way: the extent to which they were able to change the way journalism was done, in part to give the community more agency. In some ways, this seems a vague and abstract goal. But they described this in a measurable way: the extent

to which the collaborative journalism they created ultimately incorporated new voices and told stories in different ways. Jim MacMillan spoke of how the Credible Messenger project succeeded when community journalists were able to achieve a “depth of intimacy and truth ... and real ground-level authority that’s pretty damn unusual in standard reporting” (J. MacMillan, personal communication, September 20, 2021). Community journalists involved in the Credible Messenger project characterized success in terms of the extent to which they were able to highlight voices unheard in mainstream journalism. “I wanted it to be like ... for us, by us,” said community partner Tyler Campbell. “I still see those people that I interviewed. ... I really care about these people outside of just (trying to) write that story” (T. Campbell, personal communication, October 1, 2021). Collaborators describe an ideal world in which voices in the community are at the center of news coverage and help drive it – rather than stories where the direction comes solely from newsrooms. Keri Mitchell of the *Dallas Free Press* characterized success as when collaboratives “upend” journalists’ traditional “we know best approach” and take guidance from the community (K. Mitchell, personal communication, June 17, 2021).

These findings, therefore, reflect evidence that collaborations seek to alter the journalistic field and their communities in both concrete and less tangible ways. In setting goals, they sometimes prioritize measurable benchmarks and metrics that reflect what they are doing and how it is impacting the community. These measures are particularly important to funders and those organizing collaboratives. But partners themselves value these measures as a means of showing that their work is having some sort of impact – reaching new audiences, drawing from new sources, and telling new kinds of stories. These partnerships face greater challenges, however, in terms of gauging whether they

are impacting and changing the field. Collaborators point to specific stories and how they meet the criteria of solutions journalism, or how they prioritize certain voices.

Furthermore, they see their efforts' own sustainability as evidence that they are having success changing the way journalism is done. They even try to model themselves as examples to other fledgling partnerships, as a means to encourage more success.

However, they face long-term challenges in terms of being able to truly assess whether their efforts have increased trust and improved lives in the community. These findings have shown how collaboratives are increasingly including new types of non-journalistic members and how those members are taking on distinct roles that are transforming journalistic processes and news content. These new partners are re-envisioning the field's public service responsibilities and providing fresh insights on its traditional core values, all while helping to incorporate new types of sources and reach new audiences. Finally, these findings have demonstrated how collaboratives place significant emphasis on evaluating their success in terms of public service and community engagement – not based on commercial imperatives. But, in doing so, the unique core identities of the diverse partners help to determine how each one defines and measures what success looks like. Considering this, the next section begins the analysis of what light these findings shed on how these diverse collaborations are changing the field, how their structures and processes are influencing its norms and values.

CHAPTER 11

DISCUSSION

Much has changed in journalism since C.W. Anderson (2013) observed evidence of a “failure to collaborate” in the first decade of the 21st century. Collaboration has become a veritable buzzword in the industry as journalists seek new economic models and fresh ways of embracing both the challenges and benefits of the networked information ecosystem. This section moves to the broader questions regarding the implications of collaboration on the traditional norms and values of the journalistic field – especially its influence on journalistic boundaries, its impact on journalistic processes, and, ultimately, the ways this approach is serving to re-imagine the core purposes of the profession. It also explores what these findings show about what we can expect when journalism is produced by groups composed of a wide array of journalistic and non-journalistic participants. These findings identify several key themes.

First, this research shows that, by inviting new types of partners into collaborations, journalists are expanding the field’s boundaries and changing the overall conversation about what journalism *is* and what its goals should be. This expansion has dramatically altered journalistic structures and processes, and – ultimately – broadened the definition of what can be considered journalistic work. However, in expanding these boundaries, journalists are still imposing certain limits on membership, decisions based on the traditional values of independence and objectivity. Furthermore, since the collaborations studied here were initiated by journalistic rather than non-journalistic partners, this suggests journalists still seek to maintain their hold on the field, not upend the journalistic paradigm altogether. These findings do, however, provide evidence that

diverse collaborations can lead to a fundamental recalibration of journalism’s core values, placing much greater emphasis on amplifying less-heard voices and engaging the audience in a way that is intended to effect social change – and less value on speed and competition. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate the complexities that collaborations face when trying to determine whether their efforts were successful, as different entities evaluate “success” in different ways – and the commonly agreed upon metric of “impact” is often difficult to quantify. In sum, the work of collaboration can be viewed as part of journalists’ effort to re-envision journalism’s democratic role as the profession seeks to retake its place in society.

Journalists Seek Partners to Help Them Re-Connect with Citizens, Re-Define Mission

Amid times of great cultural and technological change, journalists are desperately trying to make a case to the audience that their work still matters (Zelizer et al., 2021). They realize they need to re-envision the field’s mission, re-connect with citizens and re-establish journalistic authority and *legitimacy* with their publics (Carlson, 2017; Nelson, 2021; Ryfe, 2017). They are increasingly realizing, however, that they can’t do this alone. Therefore, they are not only banding together with one another but bringing in non-journalistic entities as partners. Journalists are re-defining the field’s membership boundaries in the hope that this will bolster its standing in society.

Journalistic partners highlight the *inclusion* of non-journalistic partners as evidence that they are doing things differently. This inclusion moves non-journalistic entities from their usual position as external forces to a position *within* journalistic partnerships. As such, collaboration can be seen as an effort to “repair” the journalistic field by expanding its membership — working with nonprofits, citizen journalists,

universities, think tanks, health professionals, creative groups and others outside journalism's traditional sphere. This research suggests a key reason for this change in membership is that journalists seek to become more connected with communities and amplify the voices of underrepresented groups.

Beyond the simple fact of membership, this field repair also involves getting new kinds of gatekeepers involved – some with priorities that contrast with the traditional journalistic goal of “objective” or dispassionate storytelling. It involves making different people and groups in the community more involved in actually producing the news. This expansion marks an effort by journalists to re-establish not only trust with their audience, but the journalistic authority rooted in that trust. Taken together, these changes in structure and process amount to a shift in journalism's core values that takes a step back from objectivity and traditional gatekeeping in order to embrace connecting with communities.

Connecting with communities requires a heightened focus on cultural diversity in a field that has long struggled to serve and represent non-white and other disadvantaged communities (Usher, 2021). Scholars have argued that an attempt to repair this disconnect must go beyond diversifying newsrooms and move toward shifting the culture and norms involved in communication (Saha, 2018). This study suggests that journalists see collaboration with diverse partners as a way to truly connect with all parts of their audiences. They seek not only to amplify the voices of those in underrepresented communities, but to actively include them in their structures and involve them in journalistic processes.

Collaborative partners also report that they are experimenting with variety when it comes to the end products of their work. Journalists seek to partner with creative groups not only to find new ways to tell stories, but also to find fresh ways to connect with all kinds of communities in an emotional way. With increasingly diverse collaboratives, the product of journalistic processes goes beyond written, designed, or broadcast content. Journalistic work can include artistic texts, be they in the written word, still images, or videos. It can come in the form of a creative performance, such as through dance or song or a game that tells stories of the community. It can take the form of a panel discussion that addresses solutions to a difficult problem in the community, or “listening” events in which community members voice their ideas to journalists. This further demonstrates a shift in purpose toward one that characterizes audience engagement as part of journalism’s work, not as a measurement of its reach. It involves seeing the idea of an emotional connection with the audience as part of journalism’s ultimate mission.

Scholars have long noted the ways journalists value and emphasize the public service provided by their work (for example Beam et al., 2009; Jenkins & Nielsen, 2020; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Mari, 2015). These findings advance this understanding by demonstrating evidence of collaborations seeking to re-define that public service role as the goal of empowering citizens with information to help them find solutions and effect change – rather than simply helping them make informed decisions. The collaborations studied here show journalists placing this solutions-oriented public service above all other goals. As part of this, they seek to align their mission much more closely with that of education. Journalism has long been considered to have an educational mission, going back to the idea of its role in an informed public. However, these collaborations seek to

make the connection between journalism and education much more direct by prioritizing societal outcomes. They seek to emphasize how journalism and education share an overarching democratic goal: providing citizens with tools that ultimately help them better society. News organizations have long considered their duties fulfilled once information has been provided to the audience. But the collaborators in this study indicated they would only be satisfied if that information leads to change.

For generations, journalists were routinely dismissive of the audience (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978) and engagement efforts were primarily geared toward attracting news subscribers. That has changed in the social media era, with increasing evidence that audiences are having more influence on the gatekeeping process (for example, Batsell, 2015; Tandoc 2014; Walters, 2021). But these findings suggest that non-journalistic partners may help lead collaborations to place an even more heightened focus on community engagement. Using Jacob Nelson's terminology, they are far more likely to see "engagement" from a "production-oriented" standpoint that involves welcoming community members into the journalistic processes, rather than the simple "reception-oriented" approach that measures how the audience interacts with content (Nelson, 2021). In doing this, they appear more likely to follow the lead of many digital start-ups and non-journalistic partners in welcoming audience members into the story selection and creation processes and giving them more agency. But they consider this a central purpose of their work, rather than a profit-oriented goal that is sought merely as a necessary means of survival.

Previous corrective efforts, including the public journalism movement, have also focused on the problematic nature of journalism's commercial orientation. More recently,

Nip (2008) characterized engagement as an effort to connect with the audience as citizens rather than as subscribers or customers. This study finds evidence suggesting that collaborations characterize engagement as journalism in and of itself, whether that is a panel discussion, an interactive data project, or a piece of creative work. The collaborative approach, therefore, has strong roots in the public journalism movement. But there are two main differences. The first is that it reflects a broader view of what constitutes journalistic work. The second involves the social and economic circumstances of the industry in the current moment. The current shift toward a more collaborative approach comes at a time of desperation in the industry, whereas the public journalism movement occurred in a period of much greater stability. This suggests that the collaborative approach may have more potential to effect lasting change on the field. But these efforts come with challenges.

Journalists Struggle to Establish a Line for Whom to Include in Collaborations

The journalists observed here have determined that collaboration with non-journalistic partners is a viable and desirable means of connecting with communities. Even so, this study finds that journalists often struggle to decide who should be included in a collaboration. As they seek new types of partners, journalists face critical decisions over what types of groups or individuals to collaborate with – and what types to exclude. This study found that journalistic partners are most comfortable collaborating with other journalists, even though their competitive histories sometimes pose challenges. They also tend to see universities, citizen journalists and many nonprofits as logical collaborators with a similar mission and, therefore, compatible values. Journalists showed greater

uncertainty in working with creative groups and entities with a mission more oriented toward advocacy.

Journalists are interested in finding ways to partner with creative groups, but see these groups as highly different from themselves. These differences in mind-set mean journalists sometimes struggle to find common ground with creative partners and to get them actively involved. They have such different goals that journalists seemed to feel creative partners spoke in a different language. This presents practical challenges for working together. With universities, journalists can easily envision students performing the functions and roles of news work. With non-profits, journalists see kindred spirits whose motivations are clearly interwoven with informational aspects of public service. However, journalists sometimes have trouble seeing how creative partners can become involved in editorial processes. They see logical ways for these groups to help with audience engagement, but have a harder time envisioning how creative groups can work with them in producing news content.

If journalists are merely confused by groups whose output doesn't look like their own, they are deeply uncomfortable with partners they view as threatening their independence. Most notably, journalists remain protective against incursion by groups whose purpose is to advocate for a specific cause. They see this as counter to their journalistic mission, something of a conflict of interest. This view stands in conflict with journalists' desire to effect social change, and journalists sometimes struggle to define the type of advocacy that is problematic for them. Journalistic partners remain concerned with being represented publicly by those with a history of speaking out on or pushing for specific causes, demonstrating a desire to maintain at least the appearance of

independence. Because many non-profits have both informational and advocacy roles (e.g. holding public meetings but also lobbying) journalists find themselves in the position of drawing boundary lines that actually bisect individual organizations. The desire to maintain independence also prevents journalists from collaborating with government. As with the boundary excluding advocacy, these findings add to previous research suggesting the government boundary is often ill-defined (Nee, 2013). Even if the line isn't clear, journalists appear to have such a strong aversion to crossing it that even seemingly non-threatening entities like libraries present challenges. Involving a public library presents concerns for both journalists and government. On one side, journalists are wary because they value their independence from government. On the other side, government is concerned because it is often the subject of news stories or the target of change efforts. These concerns provide a strong incentive for journalistic collaborations to exclude public entities and thereby avoid conflicts of interest.

These findings suggest, therefore, that there are still notable limits on these expanded boundaries when journalists look to welcome new partners into the collaborative fold. The expansion includes non-profit, educational, and creative groups as journalistic partners while excluding advocacy and governmental entities — a distinction that feels foreign to non-journalistic partners who often work with governments or engage in advocacy themselves. This is a critical point in looking toward the future of collaborations, as journalists may consider partnering with a wider and wider array of non-journalistic groups. As they collaborate with these different types of partners, it not only reshapes the mission and values of journalism but also complicates the flow of power.

Collaborations Complicate and Sometimes Upend Journalistic Power Structures

By incorporating outside actors into collaborations, journalists are ceding some of their traditional power over news content. As noted previously, they are inviting these non-journalistic partners, in part, because they need help re-connecting with the audience and re-establishing legitimacy. This study finds that journalists want their partners' input on what stories are newsworthy and how they can best be told. They want to provide citizens, especially those whose voices have traditionally been less heard, with more power to control narratives. They are looking to creative partners to help tell stories and engage with communities in new ways. They are turning to students for help in doing journalistic work. Journalists are also seeking to partner with research groups and others whom they have traditionally relied upon as *sources* in their stories.

In making these types of shifts, journalists are ceding some of their gatekeeping authority – that power to select and shape what news gets to the audience. They are expanding their boundaries and giving “outsiders” a voice in journalistic decisions over what is news and what forms journalism takes. They view this as a calculated investment in the community that is expected to return dividends in the form of trust. However, the changes in power flow are not entirely that simple. Journalists still have reservations about allowing non-professionals, like students, to make editorial decisions on their own. They also often strive to have a professional journalist involved in editing content to assure professional standards are met. In this way, journalists still seek to hold on to some of their gatekeeping authority in collaborations.

Collaborations also illuminate changes in how power flows through the hierarchy of influences – from social systems and “extramedia” factors, down to organizations,

individuals and routines. The traditional model (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016) characterized routines in which journalists selected sources they saw as authoritative and included them as voices in their stories. Now, in collaborations, some of the sources from those stories are being invited in as *collaborative partners*. This effectively means actors that had been in the role of an “extramedia” influence are now sometimes being included at the organizational level – as part of the collaborative itself, on par with news organizations. In the traditional model, this would be equivalent to having an expert source join a newspaper’s editorial board. This can put those types of actors in a different position of power. Collaborative partners have the potential for more direct influence on news content when they act at the organizational level, a step of the hierarchy that exhibits increased agency in today’s media ecosystem (Ferrucci & Kuhn, 2022). However, there is tension here in diverse collaborations; when non-journalistic partners are not fully incorporated into decision-making and editorial processes, they remain more on the outside, acting like extramedia influences. From the perspective of field theory, collaborations sometimes can enable actors once considered heteronomous forces – like citizens, think tanks and researchers – to impact the field from *inside* as autonomous forces. This demonstrates a fluidity that complicates traditional understandings of field theory. It also means, however, that the direction power flows can depend greatly on what authority the journalists give to these non-journalistic partners.

In adding more voices, with different backgrounds and motivations, diverse collaborations develop more complex routines, communication pathways and power structures. This adds another degree of structural complexity in a field in which news organizations have long been complicated bureaucracies. Even among journalistic

partners, the differences between legacy and non-legacy news organizations complicates the power structures of collaborations. Legacy media partners are beholden not just to traditional values like objectivity and independence, but to the commercial goal of gaining subscribers. Smaller journalistic partners and non-journalistic partners tend to be more dismissive of those priorities, with motivations centering around finding fresh ways to engage communities. These differences complicate short-term and long-term decision-making in a collaborative by making its goals unclear or contested, effectively slowing down editorial processes.

These shifts in power greatly influence the way values are negotiated in collaborations. These findings suggest journalists remain the ones initiating collaborations, the hosts who are inviting more guests to the party. They assert authority by determining which responsibilities and roles new partners take on in those efforts. Journalists also exert authority by setting the tone for the collaboration, emphasizing truth, transparency and objectivity in their work, even though objectivity, in particular, seems foreign to non-journalistic partners. Traditional journalistic partners still do not want to be seen as advocating for a cause, but they and non-journalistic partners both seek to effect positive change in the community. These positions may seem paradoxical. But they can also be viewed as a recalibration of key values – one in which the goal of effecting positive change sometimes supersedes the need to be dispassionate or objective. These theoretical findings also have significant practical impacts and questions for journalists and others taking part in collaborations.

Journalists Face Key Choices, Challenges in Collaborative Approaches

At the most practical level, one of the biggest challenges of collaborations is the ways they further complicate decision-making processes. This study found that even with like-minded partners, decision-making can be complex and time consuming. Expanding the field in this way can make the production processes more difficult. That means journalists and non-journalists alike need to continually refine how they talk to one another, so that they are seeing eye to eye. Additionally, it means they need to find ways for partners of all kinds to have buy-in and feel respected, so that they are more likely to participate fully in the collaborative process. The starting point involves journalists more clearly delineating the types of partners they do and do not want to work with.

Collaborations lose precious time trying to figure out who is allowed into their partnerships. They also risk alienating potential partners while debating whether someone is an advocate or not. If collaboratives are opposed to including advocates, they will function best if they have clear parameters for how they determine who is an advocate: Is it based on where the group puts its money, whether it lobbies other groups? Is it based on the language of their mission statement? Does it depend upon whether they are actively partisan? Or, are there other factors? Laying out these parameters is crucial in order for these types of partnerships to develop more efficiently, especially in their early stages. The same applies when determining whether to work with government or other public entities. These findings suggest that it would behoove collaborations and their funders to agree on criteria that determine whether and how it is acceptable for them to collaborate with different types of public bodies.

Collaboratives operate best when partners are granted equal status in the partnership, rather than when there are different power levels among members. There will always be inherent power differences among partners, but collaborations are likely to operate more smoothly when members are granted equal influence in the collective operation. There is a caveat to this, however, that must be addressed. Collaboratives face a critical choice when deciding what types of decisions will be made by a majority, what types will be made by consensus, and what types are determined by the funders or organizers. When the organizers or funders of collaboratives make choices, it lays down what the key values are; therefore, this helps set the mission. However, in the day-to-day operation of collaborations, partners must determine what kinds of decisions will be made by majority and what kinds will be made via consensus. Having all decisions made by majority could alienate certain members. On the other hand, making all decisions by consensus could prove paralyzing and stall the effort entirely.

In the end, the extent to which a collaborative can help repair the field and restore the connection with the audience depends upon whether these diverse voices are heard in all elements of journalistic processes. If certain partners lead the way with content, while others are responsible mostly for audience engagement, that weakens the effort and takes away from the potential to truly alter the field. The way for collaborations to have the biggest impact involves all different kinds of partners participating in all parts of the process, rather than partners working in separate silos connected to their respective identities. Collaboratives need diverse voices going into their editorial processes, their creative work, and their varied audience engagement efforts.

Finally, if collaboratives are to achieve their greatest impact, it will involve legacy partners finding ways to let go of – or at least ease up on – some of their commercial imperatives. This is likely easier said than done. But it is in the best interests of both legacy and non-legacy partners to try. Work done by collaboratives may not *necessarily* be the most profitable, at least in the short term. But it has the potential to boost the reputations of all involved. These partnerships will be most effective if legacy partners are willing to take on some risk, even if it means giving up a bit of the ability to claim work as theirs alone, or sharing resources in a way that doesn't immediately benefit their balance sheet.

If legacy members and non-legacy members agree on the ultimate priority of effecting social change, some of the other differences can effectively fade to the background. In order for collaborations to succeed on a large scale, it will involve legacy news outlets permanently altering their mind-set and seeing cooperation (rather than competition) as the key tool to help them not only survive, but thrive in the new media ecosystem. The ultimate success will be if journalistic (both legacy and non-legacy entities) and non-journalistic partners can find new ways to tell stories, keep citizens informed, and open up journalistic processes to people and communities that have long been disenfranchised from mainstream journalism.

Conclusions

When newspapers decided to form The Associated Press in 1846, the resulting cooperative consisted of like partners with similar values facing common challenges. Today, with the internet and social media having upended the news industry's advertising-based economic model, journalists are seeking to re-establish their connection

with the audience by working with a wide array of journalistic and non-journalistic actors with varying value sets. Especially with the news industry in crisis, journalists have shown a growing willingness to not only accept but embrace non-traditional partners. The very composition of these partnerships demonstrates how collaboratives are broadening the definition of who or what can be considered part of a journalistic operation; this is all in an effort to re-invigorate journalism itself. However, it is still journalists initiating these partnerships and imposing their values when deciding who can and cannot participate.

The extent to which other different types of partners become involved in journalistic collaborations may determine how much this approach ends up transforming the field. To illustrate this point, consider a brief list of other types of partners that *could* be invited: private businesses, counseling centers, hospitals and health centers, elementary and high schools, local governments and tech companies, just to name a few. Likewise, consider the wide array of content or work that could conceivably be considered journalism in efforts led by such groups – classes, various types of community events, a wide array of creative work, or different types of products produced by business or government. One of the biggest questions for the future of collaborations centers around who initiates them and who they invite to take part. The change that such efforts effect on the field may be limited if journalists are the primary ones initiating them.

Collaborations are helping to change the field not by dynamiting all of its long-held values and assumptions, or by completely re-writing its core principles. Rather, they are doing so by expanding boundaries and definitions that have long posed restrictions on who can participate and on what they can produce as “journalism.” The extent to which

collaborative efforts are positioned to change and improve the field moving forward depends largely on how inclusive they are and how well they connect with and serve disenfranchised communities. If collaborations can do this, the findings presented here suggest they may prove to be a sustainable and effective means for re-defining the meaning of news and how it is produced. In doing so, this model may also offer the best opportunity for re-imagining journalism's democratic purpose in society.

Limitations and Future Research

This qualitative study sought to gain rich insight on collaborative processes and the work they produce. To do that, it utilized methods suitable for those goals – ethnographic observation, in-depth interviewing and textual analysis. This multi-pronged approach provided detailed insight on the research questions. However, as a qualitative study, these findings are not suitable for broad generalization. These findings demonstrate rich evidence of what can be learned from these collaborations and can, therefore, shed light on other collaborative work. But they do not claim to make predictions or generalize about the behavior of collaboratives overall. Furthermore, the study would have been bolstered with a larger number of collaborations studied, especially ones outside of the United States. Exploring a broader array of partnerships across the United States and in different countries would provide richer insight into how these patterns do or do not manifest themselves in other settings.

The project also would have benefitted from having more journalistic content to study and analyze. Due to the fledgling nature of the Dallas Media Collaborative, there was very little content to analyze during the time period covered by this study. Future research will focus more on the content that is produced by these collaboratives over

time, so as to further assess the values that are evidenced in this work. The practical challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic also posed some limitations for this project, even while they added some advantages due to most of the work being conducted online. These circumstances, and the changes they imposed on the collaborative processes, allowed me to be observe this work on a regular basis even when participants were hundreds of miles away. Nevertheless, both practical and financial constraints limited the amount of time I could spend doing in-person observations, particularly in terms of observing reporting and news production.

Future research in this area will need to focus in more depth on how collaborative processes evolve over time, and the ways that the content produced reflects the negotiated values of the partnerships. Such longitudinal work will help further the understanding of how these values are manifested in the work produced by collaborations. This work should benefit from not only additional ethnographic, in-depth interviewing and textual analysis, but also content analyses of collaborative work and surveys of collaboration participants. Drawing from the inductive approach of this study, such future research would allow researchers to make clear hypotheses about the effect of diverse collaborations on journalistic values. By carefully operationalizing key variables that reflect specific values, researchers using such techniques could shed more light on how these values are manifested both in the content produced and in the editorial processes as they evolve over time.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

Research Description for Potential Participants

Patrick Walters

**Temple University Media & Communication Ph.D. Program
Dissertation Research Query**

Contact: patrick.walters@temple.edu or 856-981-3156

Background:

I am a professor of journalism at Kutztown University in eastern Pennsylvania by "day" and a third-year doctoral student in Temple University's Media & Communication Ph.D. program by "night." After spending 14 years in newsrooms at two newspapers and at The Associated Press in Philadelphia, I shifted into academia full time in 2014. Since then, my research has focused on journalistic processes, journalistic ethics and the continuing changes to how news is reported, produced, supported and distributed.

Project:

As I near the end of the third year of the Ph.D. program, I am currently working on the proposal for my dissertation. It will focus on questions revolving around how news organizations negotiate their journalistic values and priorities when they collaborate with other organizations - both journalistic and non-journalistic groups - to produce news content. I am looking to explore various types of collaborations with a range of different types of partners, including legacy news organizations, digital start-ups, community groups, foundations, advocacy groups, tech companies, and public entities. I want to look at how partners decide what their priorities and standards are when they work together.

Query:

As part of the research, I'm looking for different types of collaborations that I could incorporate in this research, which will involve various types of ethnographic methods. I am seeking partnerships in which I would be able to attend virtual and in-person meetings, review various types of correspondence between partners, and observe discussions involved in this process. It would also involve individual interviews, which would be scheduled as needed with those involved. These interviews would involve questions primarily focused on how partners work together in the various stages of planning and execution of any collaborative effort. If possible, this would also involve observation of parts of the reporting and production processes. Lastly, the project would involve analysis of the news content that is created as part of the partnership. The exact parameters of this access would, of course, be up to the collaborators, but this would be general aim of the project.

Timeline:

I would be aiming to start the research in late May or early June of this year.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title of research: Negotiating Values in Journalistic Collaborations

Interview Guide: These are the semi-structured interview questions that will be asked as part of the interviews in this research.

1. How long have you worked in journalism (or, other profession such as education, fundraising, advocacy, library science etc.)?
2. What are your primary responsibilities as part of this effort?
3. How would you describe your primary purpose and goals in being involved in this collaboration?
4. What values and priorities are most important to you when producing journalistic work?
5. Can you describe how you work to emphasize those values and priorities when you and other collaborative partners determine what types of stories to report and produce?
6. Can you describe how you work to emphasize those values and priorities when you and other collaborative partners work together to report, produce, edit and distribute news content?
7. Can you describe how the collaboration works to establish its standards on things like sourcing and attribution of information?
8. Do you and other members of the collaboration seek to reach consensus on editorial questions that occur throughout the planning and reporting process? How is that done?
9. What do you find to be some of the biggest challenges of working with other organizations in producing journalism collaboratively?
10. What do you find to be some of the greatest benefits of working with other organizations in producing journalism collaboratively?

APPENDIX C
IRB APPLICATION

IRB Protocol:

1) Abstract of the study

This study seeks to examine how journalistic collaborations – those involving both news organizations non-journalistic groups – are impacting the way that journalism is done and what kinds of information becomes news. It seeks to explore the ways that journalism’s goal and purpose changing as the result of negotiations with new types of partners such as advocacy groups, nonprofits and journalism startups. It will also explore the ways that those collaborative partners negotiate their priorities and values when they work together to produce journalism. In order to do this, the project aims to focus on a particular journalistic collaboration, using ethnographic research methods – in-person and virtual observation, document review, interviewing (in person, over the phone and over Zoom) – and textual analysis. As its central focus, the project aims to study the Dallas Media Collaborative, a fledgling effort that involves the Dallas Free Press, several other news organizations, an arts group, a library and other partners. The study will examine the ways that these different partners work together to establish their values and priorities, a goal that will help us understand the ways that the field of journalism is changing. Finally, the study will analyze the news content produced by the collaboration to see how it reflects the values and priorities of the group. This will help advance the understanding of how collaborative efforts are changing the field of journalism.

2) Protocol Title

Negotiating Values in Journalistic Collaborations.

3) Sponsor / Funding

This project has no sponsor and has received no funding.

4) IRB Review History

N/A.

5) Investigators

Dr. Magda Konieczna, assistant professor.
Media & Communication Ph.D. student Patrick Walters. This project is for Walters’ dissertation. Konieczna is his Ph.D. advisor and dissertation committee chair.

6) Objectives

This inductive, qualitative project will seek to explore how collaborations with new types of partners are altering and impacting journalism. These questions often center around journalistic boundaries, the matter of who is and who isn't considered a journalist. But they also center around the central tensions of field theory, as the presence of new journalistic actors accentuates the struggles over dominant principles in the field. To that end, this study will focus on two main questions about journalistic collaborations. The overarching question around which this project will revolve is **RQ1**: How is journalism's goal and purpose changing as the result of negotiations with new types of partners (i.e. advocacy groups, nonprofits etc.)? Beneath that question, this project will seek to answer a related and more specific question involving the ways that collaborative partners work together, **RQ2**: How do different types of collaborative partners negotiate their priorities and values when they work together to produce journalism?

7) Background

The existing research on collaborative efforts has explored the varying degrees to which organizations do or do not work together in the planning, creation and distribution of news coverage (for example, Anderson, 2013; Benson, 2017; Ferrucci et al., 2017; Lewis & Usher, 2014; Lewis & Usher, 2016; Lowery, 2005). After reviewing this literature, what needs further research is the ways in which these partners establish their procedures and guiding principles when they work together. Given that existing research has long established the hierarchical structure of news organizations (for example, Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978), questions of values and authority involve complicated negotiation even within *one* entity, let alone when multiple different actors work together. At times, such disagreements and differences have prevented collaborations from taking root (Anderson, 2013). When evaluating citizen journalism, journalists also critically evaluate it based on their own deeply engrained professional values (Greenwood & Thomas, 2015; Salaudeen, 2021). Therefore, when examining collaborations, it is important to develop a better understanding of how partners work to establish their overall priorities and standards.

As partners, legacy media organizations have been found to have a disproportionate amount of power and influence when they collaborate with innovators, and they often shape the trajectory of these partnerships (Ostertag & Tuchman, 2012). Despite these complexities, current research has shown an increased ability for organizations of different types and purposes to collaborate in producing journalism, a shift since the "failure to collaborate" observed more than a decade ago (Anderson, 2013, p. 103). Participants in some collaborations have also reported that the arrangements have allowed them to report on topics they otherwise could not have, or to report on them more comprehensively (Jenkins & Graves, 2019).

This literature on collaborations has involved both ethnographic work and textual analysis. The human subject work has involved audience studies, newsroom ethnographies, interviews and surveys. Much of the existing research so far has emphasized the *processes and procedures* of collaborations. This study will advance

this research by exploring the ways that the participants in journalistic collaborations come to consensus (or don't come to consensus) on their shared values and priorities.

8) Setting of the Human Research

The research project aims to focus on a specific journalistic collaboration or set of collaborations that are ongoing. I am planning to meet with collaboratives in the United States. The potential subjects are the Dallas Media Collaborative in Texas, which involves the Dallas Free Press, several other news organizations, a library, other nonprofits and several universities; the News and Information Community Exchange (N.I.C.E.) collaboration led by WHYY, a public television and radio station in Philadelphia; and Floodlight, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that collaborates with news organizations around the world on environmental stories.

The primary setting of the ethnographic observations will be online, including attending Zoom calls and other virtual discussion forums. Most interviews will be conducted via telephone, Zoom or other videoconferencing platforms.

The research will also take place in person in the newsrooms of the various collaborative partners, or in hotel conference rooms or other public places where the collaborative partners are meeting. In-person interviews will take place, following social distancing guidelines, in newsrooms or other public areas being utilized by the collaborative partners.

Resources Available to Conduct the Human Research

I will primarily utilize my home office and personal computer for conducting this research. For travel, I will seek funding from the Media & Communication program at Temple, as well as from my department, college and dean's office at Kutztown University, where I am employed as an associate professor of English.

9) Prior Approvals

N/A.

10) Study Design

a) Recruitment Methods

I sought out potential collaborations through the Stefanie Murray at the Center for Collaborative Media at Montclair State University and through Liza Gross at the Solutions Journalism Network. As I learned of potential collaborations in this way, I sent out a research query, the wording of which is attached with this protocol. I plan to email and contact members of the various collaboratives involved.

b) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

I will only be working with adults and the main criteria is that they are involved with a journalistic collaboration. I am targeting journalists and other professionals (editors, photographers, publishers, librarians, fundraisers, political advocates and others) that I know in advance are going to be eligible for my study.

c) Local Number of Subjects

The number of subjects will depend on the number of organizations that are ultimately a part of the collaboration under study.

For the site study in Houston, I anticipate including fewer than 50 participants.

For the site in Philadelphia, I anticipate including between 15 and 20 participants.

For the site in Washington, I anticipate including between 15 and 20 participants.

d) Study-Wide Number of Subjects

Overall, I anticipate speaking with 60 to 90 journalists and other professionals over the course of this study.

e) Study Timelines

April 2021: Submit dissertation proposal to committee

April 2021: IRB application submission

Late April 2021: Dissertation proposal defense

May 2021-October 2021: Data collection. I anticipate visiting the sites in person at respective dates TBD in July and August.

Fall 2021: Data analysis

November 2021-February 2022: Writing

March 1, 2022: Have dissertation approved by advisor, submitted to committee

Early April 2022: Oral defense of dissertation

Before April 18, 2022: Submit dissertation to graduate school.

f) Study Endpoints

I plan to be done collecting data by October 2021, after which I will begin analyzing the data. As this is for a dissertation, I anticipate the research project (involving data collection, analysis and writing) being complete by April 2022, per the above timeline. I plan to defend it in April 2022.

g) Procedures Involved in the Human Research

Since this project seeks to answer questions about values and processes, ethnographic research – attending meetings, joining conference calls and observing online and in-person discussions, as well as journalistic work in progress – will help interpret observable relationships between social practices and systems of meaning (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, p. 174). In addressing the central research questions, this study will primarily use a combination of ethnographic observation and interviewing – both taking place in virtual spaces and over the telephone or Zoom. I am going to be observing these journalists and other professionals doing journalistic work – planning their projects and discussing how the reporting, writing, editing and production of news content will work. I will be following up with interviews on questions about those observations.

In the in-person aspect of the research, I will be observing the collaborators in their work reporting, writing, editing and producing news content. In this component of the research, I plan to follow all cautions and requirements that the IRB provided in its July 13, 2020 memo on the resumption of human subject research. I will be following social distancing and mask protocols when engaging in person with subjects. As noted above, I will seek to minimize the direct, in-person component of the research by utilizing virtual research techniques, including videoconferencing and telephone interviews. The two sites noted above are already holding most of their meetings and discussions virtually due to COVID-19. Finally, I have received the first dose of Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine and am scheduled to receive the second dose in early May, well before I would conduct in-person research.

h) Data and Specimen Banking

My observations, interview notes and transcripts will be saved on the hard drive of a password-protected computer to which only the researcher (Ph.D. student Patrick Walters) has access. Physical copies of observations and interview notes will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office.

i) Data Management

Only the researcher (Ph.D. student Patrick Walters) will have access to the data. The data will be stored as noted above.

j) Provisions to Monitor the Data to Ensure the Safety of subjects

N/A

k) Withdrawal of Subjects

Subjects will be able to withdraw from the research at any time. I do not anticipate circumstances in which I would withdraw them without their consent.

11) Risks to Subjects

The risks subjects face while participating in this study are no greater than the risks they may encounter in everyday life.

12) Potential Benefits to Subjects

The data gathered in this study may help participants understand the way collaborations contribute to the journalistic enterprise.

13) Privacy and Confidentiality

I plan to address much of the research I collect in the aggregate. In some instances, I plan to ask participants if I can use their name, title and name of organization. If they decline, I will not use the name or identifying information about them, so that data cannot be traced back to the specific individual involved; in these instances, I may store their information by number, with a spreadsheet that matches each number, so that the researcher can track who is who in conducting the analysis.

14) Compensation for Research-Related Injury

N/A.

15) Economic Burden to Subjects

N/A.

16) Subject Compensation

Subjects in the study will not receive any compensation.

17) Consent Process

I will be reaching out to subjects (the journalistic collaborations) via email. I am including, along with this protocol, the initial recruitment email that is being sent out to potential participants. I am also including copies of two consent forms – one for my virtual and telephone data collection and another for my in-person data collection. I am also including initial responses from preliminary queries to potential participants.

For virtual and telephone data collection, I will provide subjects with the consent form ahead of time and seek verbal consent on the call or meeting.

For the in-person data collection, I will collect signed agreements from participants, including a box indicating whether they are willing to be identified and quoted by name in the research.

18) Drugs or Devices

N/A.

19) Multi-Site Human Research

N/A.

20) Sharing of Results or Incidental Findings with Subjects

I plan to answer subjects' questions about the research while it is ongoing and provide them access to the final project.

21) Research Conducted in a Foreign Country

N/A.

22) Community-Based Participatory Research

The research is focused on exploring how journalistic collaborations are impacting the information system in individual communities. Therefore, it is inherently seeking ways to better understand how journalism can keep communities informed and educated.

APPENDIX D
IRB APPROVAL



Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu



Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects Research that is Approved as Exempt

Date: 14-May-2021

Protocol Number: 28325
PI: KONIECZNA, MAGDALENA
Review Type: EXEMPT
Approved On: 14-May-2021
Risk: Minimal risk
Committee: A1
Sponsor: NO EXTERNAL SPONSOR
Project Title: Negotiating Values in Journalistic Collaborations

The IRB approved the protocol 28325.

The study was approved under Exempt review. The IRB determined that the research does not require a continuing review, consequently there is not an IRB approval period.

As this research was approved as Exempt, the IRB will not stamp the consent or assent form(s).

Note that all applicable Institutional approvals must also be secured before study implementation. These approvals include, but are not limited to, Medical Radiation Committee ("MRC"); Radiation Safety Committee ("RSC"); Institutional Biosafety Committee ("IBC"); and Temple University Survey Coordinating Committee ("TUSCC"). Please visit these Committees' websites for further information.

Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit the following:

- **Modifications** - Any changes to the research that may change the Exempt status of this study must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Examples of such changes are: including new, sensitive questions to a survey or interview, changing data collection such that de-identified data will now be identifiable, including an intervention in the methods, changing variables to be collected from medical charts, decreasing confidentiality measures, including minors or adults lacking capacity to consent as subjects when previously only adults with capacity to consent were to be enrolled, no longer collecting signed HIPAA Authorization, etc. Please reach out to the IRB Staff with any questions about if a change to the study warrants a Modification.
- **Reportable New Information** - Using the Reportable New Information e-form, report new information items such as those described in HRP-071 Policy - Prompt Reporting Requirements to the IRB **within 5 days**.
- **Closure report** - Using a closure e-form, submit when the study is permanently closed to enrollment; all subjects have completed all protocol related interventions and interactions; collection of private identifiable information is complete; and analysis of private identifiable information is complete.

For the complete list of investigator responsibilities, please see the HRP-070 Policy – Investigator Obligations,