

The Effects of Social Media on Public Consumption of News, Journalism and Relationship
Building in Public Relations

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ABSTRACT

This study presents information regarding the effects social media has had thus far on the consumption and understanding of news and current events in today's society. It analyzes how social media has altered traditional news media and what literature predictions are for the future of the journalism profession. This study also presents information regarding how social media has affected public relations and the formation of relationships with stakeholders and publics. It analyzes what literature states on the subjects and takes a closer look at how technology has impacted journalism and public relations curriculum as well. Journalists are facing challenges because social media has made it possible for every user to access the news they want to see online, as well as post and share content. News consumers also face challenges because news they choose to access is primarily on Facebook, where there is no fact-checking function. Therefore, fact-checking and misinformation are also addressed in detail, as well as how much the public trusts the accuracy of news today.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Social media and the introduction of social networking sites have impacted the way people consume and react to news and current events in today's world. Public relations models are changing and evolving along side journalism, as it sheds it's new skin for the continuation of the Digital Age. Further technology advances have pushed traditional journalism platforms for news media, and political climate to new, complicated and multidimensional places for the public and journalists themselves. We are now our own editors, finding information and sharing news we care about and what matters to us, choosing what's important, what angle to take and which opinions are right (Williams, 2017).

With the rise of the Internet as a main source of information and news content, how can all of it be accurate and factual? Quattrociocchi (2016) stated that the result of this unlimited amount of information, "is that everyone can produce or find information consistent with their own belief system. An environment full of unchecked information maximizes the tendency to select content by confirmation bias" (para. 6). Misinformation is becoming a big problem because when people get news from social networking sites it is subjected to previous engagement on the site and preferences pertaining to certain topics.

Bode and Vraga (2015) stated:

What we see on social media is not just a function of the friends we select or what those friends post, but also of complex algorithms that govern content exposure. These algorithms are often opaque in how they select information, encompassing predictions of relevance based on past behaviors, content type, interactions, and, of course, commercial goals (p. 620).

Fact checking sites have become increasingly popular as the political sphere is being shaped by new, online media outlets as well. Graber and Dunaway (2014) state, "for those unin-

terested in politics, the expansion of choice actually decreases their likelihood of encountering political information and becoming more informed.” Cohen, Tsfati and Sheaffer (2008) explain, “political actors adapt their behavior to the requirements of the news media, in order to achieve coverage” (p. 333). Media has been an influence in political campaigns and elections for quite sometime, it sets the agenda for public discussion and performs a watchdog function.

Political news is now a staple on most SNS and affects people’s perceptions on current issues. Graber and Dunaway (2014) state, “for those uninterested in politics, the expansion of choice actually decreases their likelihood of encountering political information and becoming more informed.”

Another challenge that comes with this influx of misinformation is how the public can critically analyze and disseminate information that is true from false. Hefland (2016) pointed out that, “with the proliferation of electronic communication devices and services— from tablets to smartphones and from social media sites to e-mail— we are now creating 2.5 quintillion bytes of new data every day” (p. 2). The education of journalism is being forced to evolve as well and teaching media literacy as far down as junior college is becoming a trend.

De Abreu (2010) stated:

As the world is changing quickly due to the technological advances, educators are looking at ways in which to empower their students' learning with digital platforms. Media literacy education is key for how this can happen in the 21st century classroom which seeks to promote learning without censoring the learner.

Curriculum for higher education is changing as well.

Lynch (n.d.) asked Don Heider, Dean of the Journalism School at Loyola University, what skills he thought journalists should have, “writing, reporting, copy editing, photography, video shooting and editing, gathering and synthesizing information, verifying facts, communicating ethically, using social media to find and disseminate stories, coding, Web design, page layout, headline writing, search engine optimization. That’s a start” (p.3).

Lastly, with journalism and public relations traditional platforms changing, the future for these professions shows they will be more intertwined. Not everyone is on board with this however.

Macnamara (2014) also stated:

Senior practitioners in both PR and journalism support independent media and reject notions of symbiosis between journalism and PR, instead arguing that, even though the two interact, the fields of practice operate independently of each other in many cases and have distinctly different roles, which should not be blurred or converged. However despite expressed good intentions, a number of factors point to a worsening lack of transparency and increasing convergence of journalism and PR (p.747).

Background of the Problem

Rapid advances in technology and the relatively recent inclusion of news and current events on SNS has affected how the public consumes and perceives news. Social media and SNS are also affecting how news is consumed and how news can be viewed. Van Dijck (2013) stated that, “social media platforms, rather than being finished products, are dynamic objects that are tweaked in response to their users needs and owner’s objectives” (p. 7). Social media also affects how political news is spread and evaluated. Candidates can respond to opposition on Twitter or Facebook and interact with voters more than ever before. Cohen, Tsfati and Sheafer (2008) explain, “political actors adapt their behavior to the requirements of the news media, in order to achieve coverage” (p. 333).

Purpose of the Study

With social media and SNS continuing to work their way into our lives in more and more ways, research in this study will provide insight into how news platforms are affecting the ways in which public consumes and trusts news. Another purpose of the study is to further understand how journalism education is and will continue change in the future with technology becoming such an influential part of the journalist and public relations profession. Integration of

public relations and journalism has already begun and the study intends to provide insight in what is working as the two professions adapt to the new age.

Setting of the Study

This study will take place as a data collection and research driven effort for a senior project at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. In person interviews will be done with Dr. Dan Eller, a public relations professor at Cal Poly and Mary Glick, Journalism Department Chair. A potential interview with Greenlight Media and Marketing president Dominic Sandifer. An online survey to measure student reaction and trust to fake news seen on social media sites will also be administered. Interviews and surveys will provide further insight into what the future of journalism and public relations education may look like as well as project what types of new media are performing well in the new age.

Research Questions

This study is based on research questions created from studies, articles and electronic sources found discussing the evolving role social media has in news, politics, education and relationships formed in public relations.

The study will focus on the research questions below as a foundation for the following chapters:

1. What is a brief history of social media and its involvement with news?
2. What is the current state of traditional news media?
3. How do social media platforms influence political atmosphere?
4. How often do news organizations fact check and how many people trust the accuracy of their news sources?
5. How does misinformation spread?
6. What has changed about how journalism is being taught?
7. How does social media influence relationships in public relations?
8. What is the future of the journalism profession and its effects on the public?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to assist the reader and provide context to the study.

SNS: Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Organization of the Study

The study will be organized into five chapters to help guide the reader through information on the implications and effects social media has on the profession of journalism and the education behind it, as well as research to provide insight into the effects news has on the public today. Further studies will allow the reader to critically analyze how social media affects the way news is perceived and how it is incorporated into the public relations profession. Chapter One is a statement of the problem and provides further details for the study. Chapter Two is a literature review providing an overview of what current scholastic articles and research studies are saying about the issues. Chapter Three explains the methodology used during data collection and interviewing. Chapter Four includes the research questions as a platform for the structure of the paper as they are compared to expert responses and survey questions. Lastly, Chapter Five concludes the research and evaluates the hypothesis presented.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Social Networking to Digital Journalism

Social media sites became popular because they allowed for connections to be made between people at anytime, anywhere. We became addicted to connectivity and the ability to share. According to Van Dijck (2013), “online services shifted from offering channels for networked communication to becoming an interactive, two way vehicle for networked sociality” (p. 5). Now, with countless social media sites connecting people all over the world, their opinions and interests are being shared too.

Van Dijck (2013) stated that, “social media platforms, rather than being finished products, are dynamic objects that are tweaked in response to their users needs and owner’s objectives” (p.7). As technology continues to advance, almost all aspects of people’s lives are made easier by the Internet. We can check the weather without turning on the local news, we can answer almost any question with Google. Most importantly, we can get all of our news and current events online.

Holcomb and Lu (2016) stated, “As digital audiences expand and move beyond news websites to social media, mobile apps, podcasting and even email newsletters, news publishers are making an effort to be in those places as well” (para. 1).

Almgren and Ollson (2016) explain that “social plugins for sharing news through Facebook and Twitter have become increasingly salient features on news sites. Together with the user comment feature, social plugins are the most common way for users to contribute” (p. 67). Now, news can be engaged with and shared instantly. We are now our own editors, finding information and sharing news we care about and what matters to us, choosing what’s important, what angle to take and which opinions are right (Williams, 2017).

Traditional News Platforms Forced to Go Digital

As major technology advances have been made in the last 10 years, traditional news platforms have been forced to evolve. Newspapers have been suffering since the Great Recession and the online shift is underway. Adding momentum, news organizations have been experimenting with new digital approaches including metered paywalls and embracing video and multimedia components (Barthel, 2016, para. 22).

Despite print newspaper organization efforts to attract readers, Barthel (2016) stated:

A January 2016 Pew Research Center survey found that just 5% of U.S. adults who had learned about the presidential election in the past week named print newspapers as their “most helpful” source – trailing nearly every other category by wide margins, including cable, local and national TV, radio, social media and news websites (para. 4).

Some newspapers have made the shift to only be available online. Network news programs and cable news are seeing a steady number of viewers and revenue increases, however these organizations are also integrating social sites into their programs. Barthel (2016) found that, “networks continue to invest in digital, as more young people turn to digital platforms for their news. In August 2015, for instance, NBCUniversal formed partnerships with Vox Media and BuzzFeed in an attempt to reach younger audiences” (para. 10). Not only are traditional news platforms losing to digital advances, Breitbart Tech (2016) stated:

As newspapers’ financial woes deepen, most revenue from online news in the United States is going to five big tech companies, a Pew Research Center survey released in June found. The poll underscored a changing relationship between readers and the news: unlike traditional newspapers where editors determine the most important stories, social platforms are “crowdsourcing” feeds based on how often their users click on stories (para. 6).

Google, Facebook, Apple, Twitter and Snapchat have become the top five tech companies that are taking over the most recent evolution of news sourcing over the web. News organiza-

tions are encouraged by these companies to post through their interfaces (Breitbart Tech, 2016, para. 4).

Media Shapes Political Climate to Encourage Opinion and Participation Bias

Political races and climate have been increasingly evolving with news media ever since the introduction of live television broadcasts of speeches and debates. Mass media affects voter turnout and the reach of a political campaign, as a few examples.

Graber and Dunaway (2014) quoted political journalist Theodore White:

The power of the press in America is a primordial one. It sets the agenda of public discussion; and this sweeping political power is unrestrained by any law. It determines what people will talk about and think about— an authority that in other nations is reserved for tyrants, priests, and parties.

Media has shaped how the public receives news about political candidates as well as how politicians act and make decisions. Cohen, Tsfati and Sheafer (2008) explain, “political actors adapt their behavior to the requirements of the news media, in order to achieve coverage” (p. 333). Now that mass media involves a high amount of online content and on social networking sites, people can share videos and incidents involving policy change or protest marches instantly in today’s world. They can comment on speeches and appearances of presidential candidates and share their Twitter posts. Cohen, Tsfati and Sheafer (2008) stated that, “legislators are increasingly recognizing that media coverage has become a part of the policymaking process within legislative institutions” (p. 333). For example, protests over the Dakota Access Pipeline starting in early spring of 2016 exploded with support as videos, Facebook events and photos began to spread throughout social networking site.

The Internet has also opened a wide door in terms of choice of opinion. Graber and Dunaway (2014) state, “for those uninterested in politics, the expansion of choice actually decreases their likelihood of encountering political information and becoming more informed.” The

amount of political information that people see is dependant on what source the consumer is most loyal to. The expanding outlets featured online highly increases the amount of political information the public gets, however it may affirm their own viewpoints and opinions only.

Graber and Dunaway (2014) found that, “the expanding number of outlets and distribution mechanisms has created economic incentives for media organizations to isolate markets and provide special interest programming.” People who engage on social networking sites are more likely to share an article or post that they associate with because of the source’s selected content.

Graber and Dunaway (2014) also found that “people report avoiding political information on social networking sites by blocking, unfriending or hiding those who post counterattitudinal information. Citizen gravitation is toward like-minded information.” Social networking sites also allow for likeminded individuals to group themselves together because of similar ideology or a favored news source. Flaxman, Goel and Rao (2016) found that “the vast majority of online news consumption is accounted for by individuals simply visiting the home pages of their favorite, typically mainstream, news outlets, tempering the consequences--both positive and negative--of recent technological changes.”

However, the use of social networking sites does encourage civic participation. Zhang, Seltzer and Bichard (2009) stated that “40% of those who connect to social networking sites use them to engage in some political activity from getting information or signing up as a friend of the candidate to discovering a friend’s political interests or affiliations” (p. 75). A correlation between civic participation and political participation has been suggested by Zhang, Seltzer and Bichard (2016), who define civic participation as “activities that address community concerns through non-governmental or non-electoral means, such as volunteering for building a homeless shelter or working on a community project” (p. 76).

Zhang, Seltzer and Bichard (2016) found:

Variations in content exert different influences on civic and political participation. For instance, although viewing TV programs that provide diversion from mundane daily life such as science fictions and reality shows has been found to be negatively related to civic

participation, long hours of exposure and attention to public affairs programs on television have actually been found to enhance political participation (p. 77).

Likewise, the same study finds that the effect of the Internet on civic participation is contingent upon how individuals use the Internet.

Fact Checking is Essential in Newsrooms as Public Trust Continues to Decrease

With social media sites now taking over for the editorial roles in some news organizations, there is now an overwhelming amount of news and information flowing through the interwebs for the public to consume as they choose. Hefland (2016) pointed out that, “with the proliferation of electronic communication devices and services— from tablets to smartphones and from social media sites to e-mail— we are now creating 2.5 quintillion bytes of new data every day” (p. 2). Fact checking has become largely popular with this large influx of data Hefland referred to.

Rosenstiel, Yaeger, Elizabeth, Ivancin, Loker, Lacy, and Sonderman (2015) stated:

The fact-checking movement in journalism dates back more than 25 years, to the early 1990s, with its roots in the policing of TV advertising rhetoric and so-called “ad boxes.” The movement gained new momentum with the launch in 2007 of PolitiFact, probably the most recognizable of political fact-checking brands, which now operates in eight states (para. 9).

The genre of fact checking focuses largely on political news and candidates. Journalists are catching onto this trend and popular political fact checking website, PolitiFact sets high standards for their journalists, Spivak (2010) noted, “when a media outlet buys into PolitiFact, editors and reporters receive about three days of training that includes explaining the formula for writing a PolitiFact story (p. 42). With the uprising of social media featuring news content, an article featured on Poynter claimed that a large amount of outlets are fact checking and a new trend includes routine news stories including a sentence or two indicating when a statement is inaccurate (Adair, 2016, para. 4).

Adair (2016) stated:

More than 100 outlets now check the statements of politicians, which is up more than 50 percent in the past year. Fact-checkers are posting their work faster than ever, often minutes after a politician makes a claim. CNN has even used the chyron headlines at the bottom of the screen for parenthetical fact-checking (para. 3).

A report published by The American Press Institute claimed that fact checking and accountability are popular and effective, yet misunderstood. Looking further into the study, Rosenstiel and Sonderman (2015) stated that “the fact that so many, even in journalism, are unsure if their own organizations do fact-checking indicates some element of confusion — among journalists and media consumers alike — about the definition of fact-checking journalism” (p. 8). The study found that a total of 17 percent of those who work in journalism say their organizations have a dedicated fact-checking feature. Sixty-one percent said their organization doesn’t typically do this kind of branded or dedicated journalism — and interestingly, nearly 1 in 5 (22 percent) said they didn’t know (Rosenstiel and Sonderman, 2015, para. 5).

This leads to the question of how much trust the public has in news and media sources. According to a study performed by Kioussis (2001):

At least three referents are germane to people’s perceptions of news: the journalists delivering the content, the news outlet they represent, and the medium through which the information is being relayed. Thus, in some cases, people’s impressions of channel credibility may drive their opinions about source credibility, but in other situations, opinions about source credibility may drive impressions of channel credibility (p. 388).

Different demographics will have different opinions on the accuracy of news media, for example some may trust newspapers a substantially higher amount over the news shared over the web. Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel and Shearer (2016) found that about four-in-ten Americans get news online often. 57% of those surveyed use TV and 38% access news online. Media platforms are evolving and 60% of people who prefer to read news have shifted to online sources (p. 3). Trust and accuracy of the public varies substantially among adults and young adults.

Among adults surveyed, only about two-in-ten Americans trust the information they get from local news organizations, online or offline. The results are even narrower when it comes to social media, with only about 4% reporting that they trusted information they found through social platforms (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, Shearer, 2016, p.3).

When it comes to young adults Mitchell (et al. 2016), they follow news less closely and have negative attitudes toward news media but are more likely to get news online than their elders. Only 10% surveyed trust the information they get from national media, however 34% get news from websites/apps and 32% from social networking sites. In conclusion, young adults are notified about current news from all online sources, however trust is too low for the demographic to be informed, especially with opinions that may counter their own.

Echochamber Formation and Algorithmic Control of News Feeds

With the introduction of social networking sites came unlimited sources for news consumers to read, and trust? Quattrociocchi (2016) stated, “the result is that everyone can produce or find information consistent with their own belief system. An environment full of unchecked information maximizes the tendency to select content by confirmation bias” (para. 6).

Bode and Vraga (2015) stated:

What we see on social media is not just a function of the friends we select or what those friends post, but also of complex algorithms that govern content exposure. These algorithms are often opaque in how they select information, encompassing predictions of relevance based on past behaviors, content type, interactions, and, of course, commercial goals (p. 620).

Misinformation thus spreads through social networking site’s specific algorithmic patterns based on consumer information and the fact that the algorithms do not have a fact checking function.

Bode and Vraga (2015) also stated:

The prevalence and persistence of misinformation is often linked to motivated reasoning, which enables individuals to protect pre-existing attitudes. As a result, people find information that agrees with prior-held beliefs to be more credible and reliable than disconfirming information (p. 621)

Based on previous research findings, social networking sites allow for users with similar interests, viewpoints and regions to connect and share information. Quattrociocchi (2016) stated that “recent studies that focus on misinformation online pointed out that the selective exposure to specific content leads to "echo chambers" in which users tend to shape and reinforce their beliefs” (para. 7).

Quattrociocchi (2016) defined an echo chamber as:

An isolated space on the web, where the ideas being exchanged essentially just confirm one another. It can be a space of likeminded people sharing similar political views, or a page about a specific conspiracy theory. Once inside one of these spaces, users are sharing information that is all very similar, basically "echoing" each other (para. 8).

Humans naturally select information that they associate with or connect with.

Southwell and Thorson (2015) stated that, “misinformation is thus challenging to remedy not only because of how humans process information but also because of the complexity of audience reach in contemporary society (p. 590).

Journalism Education Involves Tech Integration and Media Literacy

Digital technology has become a large facet of today’s journalism education programs due to the fact that the Internet has negated a high amount of revenue for traditional news platforms.

Gottfried and Shearer (2016) found that, “as of early 2016, just two-in-ten U.S. adults often get news from print newspapers. This has fallen from 27% in 2013” (par. 1). Journalism education has constantly been evolving in order to satisfy the changing news climate.

Ludke (2017) stated, “we can no longer train print journalists, or radio or TV journalists, or photojournalists; today, these are all pieces of a larger pie we call multimedia journalism. Now, in every class students are forced to think-- and perform across a variety of platforms” (p. 7).

Harper (2010) interviewed Dean Sarah Bartlett of CUNY:

Beyond the application of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to news and information, the degree is designed to “recast journalism as a service that helps communities meet their goals and solve problems, using a wide range of new tools and skills involving relationship-building, data, social media, and business” (p. 3).

Lynch (n.d.) asked Don Heider, Dean of the Journalism School at Loyola University, what skills he thought journalists should have, “writing, reporting, copy editing, photography, video shooting and editing, gathering and synthesizing information, verifying facts, communicating ethically, using social media to find and disseminate stories, coding, Web design, page layout, headline writing, search engine optimization. That’s a start” (p.3).

Amid the downsizing of newsrooms now going on, even veteran journalists are finding it essential to learn new skills (Ludke, 2017, p.7).

Harper (2010) explained that “companies such as Automated Insights, Narrative Science and Palantir are developing and refining algorithms already capable of automating the production of basic journalistic narratives out of raw data. This kind of “robo-journalism” has been greeted with derision and anxiety by the journalism profession (p. 2).

According to previous research, algorithms are constantly working to deliver online news consumers information that is based on previous engagement through the internet. These algorithms do not have a transparency function, or any way to determine what is factual.

De Abreu (2010) stated:

As the world is changing quickly due to the technological advances, educators are looking at ways in which to empower their students' learning with digital platforms. Media literacy education is key for how this can happen in the 21st century classroom which seeks to promote learning without censoring the learner.

Jenkins (2009) explained:

Educators must work together to ensure that all young americans have access to the skills and experiences needed to become full participants, can articulate their understanding of how media shapes perceptions, and are socialized into the emerging ethical standards that should shape their practices as media makers and participants in online communities.

Ludke (2017) stated:

The central purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need in order to make informed judgements in a self-governing society. as former “Nightline” producer Tom Bettag so aptly stated, “credibility is so valuable today because it is so scarce (p. 9).

Public Relations Renaissance

Technology and digital advancement has obviously affected how society operates on a daily basis. People can form and maintain relationships from across the world and see each other every day over Facetime or Skype. A core element of public relations is forming and maintaining relationships with key publics and stakeholders. Social media has proven capable of strengthening and hatching new relationships on a daily basis, so how does it affect the relationship component of public relations?

James (2007) stated:

Much of the academic literature has an overall tone of lament that practitioners were simply transferring traditional approaches and models of public relations practice to the

web and were not evolving their practice. With past evidence suggesting that public relations practitioners were open to using new tech, it seems incongruous that even a traditional mainstay of public relations practice like media relations is not taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the web (p. 138).

Solis and Breakenridge (2009) claimed, despite their overall opportunistic approach to new media, “others, unfortunately are underestimating it and applying the same old-school approach of “marketing at” people instead of engaging conversations that will enhance the brand and customer relationships (p. xxvi). Despite the misuse, Valentini (2015) explained, “the dominant discourse in public relations is that using social media is “good”, because social media can help organizations in developing dialogues and relationships with publics and in engaging with them.”

Solis and Breakenridge (2009) stated that, “social media is empowering people to become the new influences, and it is forcing PR and marketing professionals to recognize and include these powerful tools in their advertising and marketing communications strategies” (p. xvii).

Wright and Hinson (2008) claimed:

Social media have provided an opportunity to truly put the public back into public relations by providing a mechanism for organizations to engage in real-time, one-to-one conversations with stakeholders. Additionally, they serve as a focus group of thousands, allowing offline communications to be more relevant (p.19).

Soils and Breakenridge stated “suddenly public relations is no longer just about audiences. It’s about people. And with social media gaining mainstream acceptance, it will only expose those weak in public relations and force our industry to improve” (p. 34)

The profession of public relations is evolving as young professionals bring in new skills featuring building and maintaining relationships in person (and online), creating websites and press re-

leases through social networking sites and introducing new ways of reaching new publics by using video and multimedia approaches.

Further Tying of Journalism and Public Relations

As the evolution of technology over the last 10 years has caused massive changes in the way journalism and public relations operate in the modern day, it leads to the question: how will these professions look 10 years from now?

Picard (2015) worked closely with Reuters Institute to conduct a survey about the future of journalism:

The respondents generally think that journalists will have to think more about personal branding via, for example, social media, and be more entrepreneurial, as the ability to count on stable employment, full-time journalism work, and life-long careers in journalism are seen as threatened (p. 5).

Franklin (2011)

But more significant has been the corporate and monopoly ownership and control of the journalism industries which has persistently foregrounded the drive for profit at the cost of neglecting the democratic functions of journalism (p.5)

However, this just scratches the surface of changes to come.

Picard (2015) stated “in the environment the journalists envision, news organizations and journalists will need to create new employment and contractual arrangements that recognise the increasing importance of non-employee journalists working as freelancers, stringers, correspondents, and journalism cooperatives (p. 5). Of course, opinions of the future do vary. Franklin (2011) Predictions oscillate wildly between despair at the demise of traditional big media journalism, on the one hand, and eulogies welcoming a new pluralistic, citizen or participatory journalism, on the other (p. 5)

The role of the journalist is changing and involves being able to adjust to changes and crossovers between industries as well. With the popularity of social media, elements of public relations are incorporated into elements of journalism.

Macnamara (2014) explained:

While journalists themselves are increasingly embracing social media, they are sensitive to the increased autonomy and power that have been handed to PR practitioners by the internet and are concerned about being bypassed, leading to misinformation and propaganda corrupting the public sphere. Social media are thus an expanded site of journalism-pr tension (p.746).

Macnamara (2014) also stated:

Senior practitioners in both PR and journalism support independent media and reject notions of symbiosis between journalism and PR, instead arguing that, even though the two interact, the fields of practice operate independently of each other in many cases and have distinctly different roles, which should not be blurred or converged. However despite expressed good intentions, a number of factors point to a worsening lack of transparency and increasing convergence of journalism and PR (p.747).

Chapter Three

Methodology

In this chapter we will discuss the methodology used to collect data for this study. Data will be collected using in person interviews of subject matter experts in three different realms of the journalism profession and by a survey administered to the student body of California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo, California.

Data Sources

The data collection for this study came from four different subjects. One is a journalism professor at California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo. The second is a public relations professor at the same university. The third is the Vice President & Executive Editor at The Tribune in San Luis Obispo, California. The fourth is the Marketing and PR Specialist for the Verdin Marketing Firm in San Luis Obispo, California. The interview questions were designed separately for each subject in regards to their career field. Each set of questions were assembled to shed light on the implications of technology and its impact on their field of expertise.

Participants

The participants of the study are recognized as subject matter experts in their respective positions. Participants include Dan Eller, Stephanie Goodwin and Sandra Duerr. Dan Eller is also an Assistant Professor in the journalism department at California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo, California. Dr. Eller received his Doctorate of Education from University of California Santa Barbara in 2010 and has twenty-five years of industry experience in Public Relations in the public sector with the State of California. Dr. Eller teaches Public Relations courses in the journalism department. Stephanie Goodwin is a Marketing and PR Specialist at Verdin Marketing in San Luis Obispo, California. She has over 8 years of media, marketing and public relations experience.

Interview Design

The following questions were given to both Dan Eller and Stephanie Goodwin, with exceptions and additions based on each subject's specialty. The questions here were focused around the Public Relations profession and how technology/social media has affected the practice and opinions on the intertwining of PR and journalism. The answers will provide further insight about what the future of PR may be like and how the practice will continue to evolve along with technological advances.

1. Within my research, I've found that PR and journalism are becoming more intertwined and are inclined to do so as we move forward. PR professionals are not necessarily okay with this concept, why would you say?
2. Social media and networking sites, moreover technology in general, has really affected the way PR professionals can reach audiences and advertise/promote. Tech also encourages networking and relationship building (which is key to PR). Do you think it has been a positive transition and change for the field or is it proving to be more inhibiting?
3. Research stated that journalists are sensitive to the increased autonomy and power that have been handed to PR practitioners by the internet and are concerned about being bypassed, leading to misinformation and propaganda corrupting the public sphere. Is that really a PR group adding to the misinformation and propaganda.

Lastly, the set of following questions were given to Sandra Duerr and are designed to provide information about how technology and social media have specifically affected the traditional news industry. Insight may be found about what trends news consumers are following in terms of online news and how they access it.

1. We've seen a huge change from traditional print-based media to more online content and features. How have you seen news consumption change with the introduction of online news?
2. Are news consumers engaging in specific types of news more than others now that the Tribune is online?

3. News can be produced and shared by anyone these days, does the Tribune fact check sources before publishing?
4. With a lot of these up and coming social sites like BuzzFeed becoming more popular, have you seen the editing process lose its importance with online news platforms today?
5. And with all of these news organizations now fully online and reaching out for subscribers and new ways of revenue, what is working?

Survey Question Design

The data collected during the questionnaire distributed online to the general public were documented online through Google Surveys. This method of data collection was used to gain insight into how the public consumes news and opinions on how news affects general knowledge of current events. Response options were a mix of scale-based answers to multiple choice. Scoring protocol was interpreted for this study through descriptive analysis. This data can be seen to provide further explanation for research questions asked.

1. How old are you?
2. How do you stay updated on current events?
3. If you answered social media or social media sites as your primary news source, which of the following do you use the most?
4. How often would you say you trust stories online?
5. How much news do you see online that you disagree with?
6. How often do you fact check articles you are skeptical about?
7. Where do you get the majority of your political news?
8. Do you think mainstream news organizations tend to favor one side?
9. Do you think political candidates interacting on Twitter and social media is beneficial to the political process?
10. Do you think social media technology creates a more informed citizen?

Data Collection

The data collection methodology for this study will be three separate interviews and an online survey administered through Google Surveys. Two interviews will take place face to face at the work location of each participant. The third will be answered via email. The interviews will ask questions about the interviewee's profession and their perspective on the different effects social media and technology have had on their industry. The interviews will also ask for any personal insight as to what the future of journalism and public relations may look like, as well as the future of education in these industries. Survey questions were designed to gain public opinion on media sources and social media technology's effects on news consumption.

Data Presentation

Communication will take place in person unless additional follow up questions are required. Any follow up questions will be communicated via email or by phone conversation. The interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed after the interviews to thoroughly document the communication. Survey results and statistics will be recorded and displayed visually through digitally made graphs and charts. This method of data collection and presentation ensures that the information will be presented in the most complete and objective way possible.

Limitations

There are some boundaries in the study that are out of control of study criterion. The first being that this study fit within an eight-week academic quarter. Due to this constraint, only the three interviews planned fit within the allotted time of this quarter. Similarly, results from the online survey were collected with the same time constraints.

Delimitations

One of the delimitations was that the survey was taken mostly via Facebook, so the majority of the data gathered is from the college-aged demographic. Due to the eight week time constraint, the survey size is as ideal as it could've been with more time to gather responses. Another delimitation is the fact that one of the interviews had to be done via email, due to the business of

the experts schedule. Therefore, there are some potential limitations in responses based on the interview channel used.

CHAPTER 4

Data Analysis

This chapter will provide descriptions of the experts interviewed in the study and will summarize the interviewees' answers to the research questionnaire. The data was collected through a survey administered online, recorded in-person interviews and one respondent via email. The interviews will be presented in the form of direct quotes or paraphrased responses. The expert and survey responses will then be analyzed and compared to the research questions and the existing written works on the effects social media and technology have on journalism, public relations and the education of these professions.

Description of Participating Experts in Related Fields

Public Relations Professor

Dan Eller is the public relations professor and practitioner interviewed for this study. Eller has been a public relations professor for the past thirteen years at California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo, California. Eller received a doctorate in education from UC Santa Barbara in 2010 and has over 25 years of experience in the public relations sector. Eller has twenty-five years of industry experience in Public Relations in the public sector with the State of California working as the public relations director for Hearst Castle. He currently teaches introductory public relations classes as well as senior level classes, one of which is Central Coast PRspectives that involves working with real clients.

Marketing/PR Specialist

Stephanie Goodwin is one of the marketing/PR specialists at Verdin Marketing in San Luis Obispo, California for the last three years. Goodwin has experience working as an event coordinator for Dylan's Candy Bars in New York City and also served as the Marketing and Events Manager in New York . She graduated in 2006 from Northwestern University with a degree in journalism and moved to California in 2012.

Executive Editor

Sandra Duerr is the Executive Editor at The Tribune and has held the position for more than 20 years. Duerr graduated from the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism with a degree in journalism and urban studies in 1975. She also holds a masters degree in journalism from the same institution.

Interview Question Distribution

The method of data collection for this study consisted of individual interviews with subject matter experts and an online questionnaire surveying the general public, as well as a review of key points in the literature relating to the original research questions. Each expert was asked to respond to different sets of questions relating to their field of expertise. The first section of questions were designed for the public relations experts, the second to the traditional news expert and the third to data journalism professor. A ten question survey was also administered through Google

Participating Experts: Public Relations

Question #1 asked: Within my research, I've found that PR and journalism are becoming more intertwined and are inclined to do so as we move forward. PR professionals are not necessarily okay with this concept, why would you say?

Question #1 was asked to gain insight from a public relations practitioner about how advances in technology affect the way journalism and public relations fields interact and work with one another and how this interaction corresponds with the effectiveness of public relations.

- Dan Eller: "There is a separation between journalism and public relations in terms of the editorial process. I am going to speak in terms of representing clients. I'm not saying that there's a solid wall these days but, there used to be a solid wall between public relations and editorial. One reason is because the editorial folks wanted to keep it clean in terms of unbiased reporting. In terms of public relations, I want that. My fear here with converged media is and always will be for my client. There must always be a communication gap between the PR practitioner plus the client, and the PR practitioner plus the editori-

al. I want editorial to understand, yes we can still work with you first before going to the news organization. PR wants to be part of that converged environment, but we have our own concentration to foster. True PR includes editorial as a tactic, but it's not editorial as a discipline. I am not a journalist and don't need to be."

- Stephanie Goodwin: I can see, my first thought is that journalists are going to have to adapt or die. That's really where my first thought goes to. And it's really interesting because I can understand the journalists. I have a journalism degree and worked in the media in New York for a while. I understand where they're coming from, there's like a set journalism ethics and that they're totally unbiased and you're not bought into anything. A public relations person's job is essentially to sell the journalist on something so that the journalist can sell something for them right? The third party recommendation is huge. I think I saw upwards of 74 to 75 percent of purchases from millennials come from third party recommendations, so they're really looking toward influencers, they're looking at journalists, their friends and they get those from online too, so they're really heavily influenced on you know, what other people are saying in those recommendations. A lot of millennials are savvy to advertising, they are less likely to believe what an ad is telling them and are more likely to believe what is in theory, an unbiased third party opinion. But, if journalists are being influenced by PR people then is it really unbiased? I don't know. So, I think that's where the concern is in journalism. But, I don't know if this is good or bad, but the thing about intertwining journalism and PR is that it really is the technology and the access PR people have to journalists and access to audiences so easily. Journalists can't really function without public relations people.

Question #2 asked: Social media and networking sites, moreover technology in general, has really affected the way PR professionals can reach audiences and advertise/promote. Tech also encourages networking and relationship building (which is key to PR). Do you think it has been a positive transition and change for the field or is it proving to be more inhibiting?

Question #2 was asked to gain insight on if social media and technology are affecting public relations and the way relationships are formed and maintained between publics and companies.

- Dan Eller: The people in the Public Relations Society of America, the people who are accredited in public relations, who teach public relations, um research and our publications these days are talking to the practitioner in terms of what the essence of PR really is all about. But, it's really easy for people out there to get caught up in what they need to do to sell widgets, to get people to attend something, to get people to recognize something. Social media has really helped the field in terms of channeling, it's probably the strongest, broad channel out there. It also can be kind of a quick fix for people to think *oh, I can just put something up there*. And really looking at how societal values, your client values...how that balance exists to where the conflict might reside in the middle of that and then ultimately, how the relationship comes out of it. That's two-way symmetrical, I think if we go back to those Hunting-Grunig models we learned in Journalism 312, the two-way model is a model that is so easy to work with in terms of social media. In terms of data collection in what people are saying, how they feel.
- Stephanie Goodwin: That's a whole other tangent about how technology and social media are changing the landscape because it holds companies accountable and there's this transparency that's needed now. That direct consumer relationship is so key and huge in social media. If you're lucky you can have public relations professionals guide you and if you don't have that and you are a crappy company, you're totally screwed. People can just see through that and you don't have that buffer anymore of that guy in a suit who serves as your publicist to help sell the image that you want. Anyway, so that's a whole different tangent. The most effective tool for PR is personal relationships and that can be built so much more easily now. Being able to contact people with the click of the mouse or a simple press release, is from what I've seen anywhere from 50-75% effective.

Question #3 asked: Research stated that journalists are sensitive to the increased autonomy and power that have been handed to PR practitioners by the internet and are concerned about being bypassed, leading to misinformation and propaganda corrupting the public sphere. Is that really a PR group adding to the misinformation and propaganda?

Question #3 was asked to gain insight about the way public relations professionals in the field today are advertising/branding and if strategic planning is a step that may be overlooked.

- Dan Eller: In the beginnings of PR, Edward Bernays and the early 20th century public relations profession, were based on propaganda. They were hacks and spin doctors. Here's the deal: those of us who really know PR and the ethics of PR are focused on transparency, truth and wanting to work two-way with their clients. Getting feedback, resolving conflict, gaining trust and having it be value based. If we look at that ethical form of PR, and truly what it should be. Not only would I agree that journalists should blame PR. Guess what, I blame public relations. I think maybe one percent of those doing PR really knows what PR is all about. It is relationship building. We love to use advertising and strengthen our brand, know the product and logos. PR doesn't live in what we're about and how we do it, it lives in intercore of why we're doing what we're doing. You must reach the heart of people. We change behavior in PR, we aren't just informing people. We live in the feeling world in PR and want to change people's values and attitudes. Its more powerful than marketing and advertising, in fact I would argue the true essence of PR is one of the most powerful things a company or individual can use to benefit their constituencies.

Question #4 asked: Sponsored content seems to be a type of media that is a good example of the intertwining between journalism and public relations, how successful do you think it has been in your field?

Question #4 was asked specifically to this respondent because of her position working at a professional public relations and marketing firm. The question was asked to gain insight about sponsored content and if it is a successful merging of journalism and public relations.

- Stephanie Goodwin: A sponsorship is an advertorial, it's an ad with editorial built into it. So, it's not really a new concept it's just a new way of delivering the concept because advertorials have been around a pretty long time. One thing I think is really interesting and me personally, I don't mind sponsored posts from bloggers that I like. I feel really dedicated to the bloggers I follow on social media. The things to think about are transparency and the integrity. You can always tell if a blogger is just pocketing some money and doesn't care about a product. You can see that from a mile away and can see what it is, it's an ad. But if the blogger/writer is savvy enough, they will only work with companies they believe in and only promote products they can use in their personal life anyway, that comes out in their writing. So, is that not really a third party endorsement? That is free of ad and free of incentive? That's debatable. But they really do put that transparency up, reputable bloggers will say, "Hey this is a sponsored post or ad, or I only work with companies I really believe in and do those companies justice." So I think those are hugely effective and I buy things through blogging because somebody has taken great photos and had this endorsement of these products. I have trusted and believed everything they've told me before. As someone even in the business, it works on me and I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing.

Participating Expert: Journalism

Question #1 asked: We've seen a huge change from traditional print-based media to more online content and features. How have you seen news consumption change with the introduction of online news?

Question #1 was asked to gain further insight into how technology has changed the newspaper and its readership patterns.

- Sandra Duerr: Clearly, an increasing number of people are reading us online, many learning about our news and features coverage through Facebook and Twitter, to a far less extent. This is true for all news organizations nationwide. Our readership is up con-

siderably, even though print circulation continues to decline. In January, for example, we had nearly 6 million page views.

Question #2 asked: Are news consumers engaging in specific types of news more than others now that the Tribune is online?

Question #2 was asked to gain insight on what types of news stories they may be accessing online specifically and if they are correlated with popularity.

- SD: As expected, stories that directly affect them -- whether it's a new direct flight to Denver or Seattle, or a new restaurant, winery or brewery -- get many page views and shares on social media. Watchdog stories that have engaged readers -- such as the former police dog in Grover Beach who killed a man who rushed to save an elderly woman the dog was attacking -- have also done well; we broke a great deal of news on that subject through public records requests. Shark sightings and attacks also do quite well. Our challenge is to ensure that we are covering both breaking news and stories trending in local social media circles, as well as the investigative, watchdog stories that hold officials accountable and shed light on key issues.

Question #3 asked: News can be produced and shared by anyone these days, does the Tribune fact check sources before publishing?

Question #3 was asked to gain insight about fact checking and if it is a common practice among newspaper organizations.

- SD: We always strive to make sure that we report correct information/data, as well as put it in the proper context. We make sure that we use sources who are reliable and in a position to know the information we are seeking. I hope this answers your question!

Question #4 asked: With a lot of these up and coming social sites like BuzzFeed becoming more popular, have you seen the editing process lose its importance with online news platforms today?

Question #4 was asked to gain insight into the plethora of "news" websites and articles released onto the internet and if these sites are adding to a world of misinformation.

- SD: Every writer needs an editor! So, no, editing remains critical to our news operation. If we have a breaking news story late at night or on a weekend when there is no editor in the newsroom, the information is posted and immediately sent to an editor at home for his/her review. These are usually an accident, or a fire, etc. Any major breaking news involves an editor from the start.

Question #5 asked: And with all of these news organizations now fully online and reaching out for subscribers and new ways of revenue, what is working?

Question #5 was asked to gain insight into what is working in order for newspapers to increase revenue to compete with the growing online/mobile news market.

- SD: Our advertising department has transformed into a full-service digital agency, meaning that it can sell ads nationwide on any platform; it is working with companies and others to make sure that they understand this change. And as the news staff breaks more news, compelling video and photos and drives both readership and engagement online, this increases our advertising department's ability to sell more ads because our reach is deep and broad. In addition, we produce niche magazines such as Vintages, which is more than 100 pages focusing on wine, spirits and breweries, as well as food trends in SLO County. This is published twice a year. We also publish four business magazines a year, called Biz Buzz EXTRA, which focus on local companies, executives and trends in our region. Plus the advertising department has special magazines too.

Research Questions

For this study, six research questions were created to determine how technology and social media has impacted the public relation and journalism fields.

Research Question #1: What is the brief history of social media and it's involvement with news?

- Social media has now become part of society and because the internet is accessible through handheld devices and computers, it makes our everyday lives much easier. Social media got it's start in the early 1990's, with the introduction of Internet Relay Chats.

“The first recognizable social media site, Six Degrees, was created in 1997. It enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. In 1999, the first blogging sites became popular, creating a social media sensation that’s still popular today.” (Complete History of Social Media: Then and Now, 2013).

- Social media sites became popular because they allowed for connections to be made between people at anytime, anywhere. We became addicted to connectivity and the ability to share. According to Van Dijck (2013), “online services shifted from offering channels for networked communication to becoming an interactive, two way vehicle for networked sociality” (p. 5).
- Almgren and Ollson (2016) explain that “social plugins for sharing news through Facebook and Twitter have become increasingly salient features on news sites. Together with the user comment feature, social plugins are the most common way for users to contribute” (p. 67). Now, news can be engaged with and shared instantly.

Research Question #2: What is the current state of traditional news media?

- The online shift of news has been well underway, as newspapers continue to lose revenue. A January 2016 Pew Research Center survey found that just 5% of U.S. adults who had learned about the presidential election in the past week named print newspapers as their “most helpful” source – trailing nearly every other category by wide margins, including cable, local and national TV, radio, social media and news websites (para. 4).
- Breitbart Tech (2016) stated: As newspapers’ financial woes deepen, most revenue from online news in the United States is going to five big tech companies, a Pew Research Center survey released in June found. The poll underscored a changing relationship between readers and the news: unlike traditional newspapers where editors determine the most important stories, social platforms are “crowdsourcing” feeds based on how often their users click on stories (para. 6).

Research Question #3: How often do news organizations fact check and how many people trust the accuracy of their news sources?

- Major news organizations have not forgotten how important fact checking is. However, with technology making the sharing of information instant, the demand for news as it is happening can cause mistakes in reporting accurately. “Honestly, when you're turning stories around that hastily without doing the background work, you don't have time to think clearly about them. I see this in myself when I'm writing something frantically on deadline. My thought process isn't as deep and substantive” (Tenore, 2011, para. 15).
- Tenore (2011) also found that, “Some news organizations and news consumers have been experimenting with correction tracking software. MediaBugs, an open-source, correction-tracking service that launched in April, lets users report and discuss errors they see in San Francisco Bay Area news stories.”
- “The fact checking movement also gained momentum with the launch in 2007 of PolitiFact, probably the most recognizable of political fact-checking brands, which now operates in eight states (para. 9).
- Among adults surveyed, only about two-in-ten Americans trust the information they get from local news organizations, online or offline. The results are even narrower when it comes to social media, with only about 4% reporting that they trusted information they found through social platforms (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, Shearer, 2016, p.3).

Research Question #4: How does misinformation spread?

- The introduction of social media and networking sites has caused an influx of information and sources for news. Not only can accurate and trustworthy news stories spread, so can false ones. Quattrociocchi (2016) stated that “recent studies that focus on misinformation online pointed out that the selective exposure to specific content leads to "echo chambers" in which users tend to shape and reinforce their beliefs” (para. 7).
- Social media sites like Facebook are creating algorithms that are designed to show you stories and features that are similar to things you have engaged with in the past. Bode and Vraga (2015) stated that, “what we see on social media is not just a function of the friends we select or what those friends post, but also of complex algorithms that govern

content exposure. These algorithms are often opaque in how they select information, encompassing predictions of relevance based on past behaviors, content type, interactions, and, of course, commercial goals” (p. 620).

- Humans naturally select information that they associate with or connect with. Defense for what they believe in is highly behavioral in nature. Southwell and Thorson (2015) stated that, “misinformation is thus challenging to remedy not only because of how humans process information but also because of the complexity of audience reach in contemporary society (p. 590).

Research Question #5: How does social media influence relationships in public relations?

- Social media has proven capable of strengthening and hatching new relationships on a daily basis, so how does it affect the relationship component of public relations? With past evidence suggesting that public relations practitioners were open to using new tech, it seems incongruous that even a traditional mainstay of public relations practice like media relations is not taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the web (James, 2007,p. 138).
- Although social media and technological advances have benefitted the public relations sphere tremendously, it can allow professionals in the field to skip essential strategic planning efforts. Solis and Breakenridge (2009) claimed, despite their overall opportunistic approach to new media, “others, unfortunately are underestimating it and applying the same old-school approach of “marketing at” people instead of engaging conversations that will enhance the brand and customer relationships (p. xxvi).
- Public relations overall has taken very well to social media and networking sites. Wright and Hinson (2008) claimed that, “social media have provided an opportunity to truly put the public back into public relations by providing a mechanism for organizations to engage in real-time, one-to-one conversations with stakeholders. Additionally, they serve

as a focus group of thousands, allowing offline communications to be more relevant (p. 19).

Research Question #6: What does the future of journalism and public relations look like?

- PR professionals and journalists especially think about how their professions will change with the continued advancement of technology. Picard (2015) worked closely with Reuters Institute to conduct a survey about the future of journalism and the respondents, “generally think that journalists will have to think more about personal branding via, for example, social media, and be more entrepreneurial, as the ability to count on stable employment, full-time journalism work, and life-long careers in journalism are seen as threatened” (p. 5).
- While journalists themselves are increasingly embracing social media, they are sensitive to the increased autonomy and power that have been handed to PR practitioners by the internet and are concerned about being bypassed, leading to misinformation and propaganda corrupting the public sphere. Social media are thus an expanded site of journalism-PR tension (Macnamara, 2014, p.746).
- Social media and technology have caused elements of journalism and public relations to mesh together. Research shows that this intertwining isn’t preferred. Macnamara (2014) also stated that, “Senior practitioners in both PR and journalism support independent media and reject notions of symbiosis between journalism and PR, instead arguing that, even though the two interact, the fields of practice operate independently of each other in many cases and have distinctly different roles, which should not be blurred or converged. however despite expressed good intentions, a number of factors point to a worsening lack of transparency and increasing convergence of journalism and PR (p.747).

Research Data Presentation

For this study it was important to find out what experts in the fields of public relations and journalism would say when asked how social media technology has affected their individual professions, as well as what they predict the future will look like for them both. In order to acquire this insight, Dan Eller, a professor at California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo, Stephanie Goodwin, a marketing/PR specialist in San Luis Obispo and Sandra Duerr, the executive editor at The Tribune were interviewed for the study.

Only one of the interview questions was asked to the two public relations experts, all other questions were asked to individual experts. Expert responses will be compared to the research questions in the first section. All survey questions will be displayed and analyzed based on research questions they apply to in the following section and compared, when applicable, to expert responses. It was deemed important to distribute a survey to people ages 18-23 to understand where this age bracket receives the majority of their news and how informed they are. Research states this demographic is the most uninterested in news and the majority accesses it through social media and news applications. In order to acquire this data, a survey was created and distributed through Google Survey and administered publicly through Facebook.

Section I

Research Question #1: What is the brief history of social media and it's involvement with news?

This question was studied in response to the current literature that exists detailing the history of social media and how it has evolved to replace the function of print-based media like newspapers and magazines. There are countless social media sites connecting people all over the world and opinions and interests can be shared instantly. Van Dijck (2013) stated that, "social media platforms, rather than being finished products, are dynamic objects that are tweaked in response to their users needs and owner's objectives" (p.7). Holcomb and Lu (2016) stated, "As digital audiences expand and move beyond news websites to social media, mobile apps, podcasting and even email newsletters, news publishers are making an effort to be in those places as well" (para. 1).

This question was studied to gain insight from public relations professionals who have worked or are still currently working in the field as well as from a long time editor and journalist about how social media has merged its way into their professions. The information was important to demonstrate how social media has evolved so rapidly and the ways it has changed the journalism industry.

Table 1 summarizes the answers to this question and shows that both industries for the most part, have successfully evolved along with the advancement of social networking sites. Public relations professionals have found that social media greatly enhances the ways brands can reach a broad range of demographics. Journalism, specifically newspapers, have adapted and added a full-service digital agency that helps ads sell in order to gain revenue.

Table 1

Digital Networking to Fully Online News

Respondent	PR Practitioner/Journalist	Professions using SM effectively?
Dan Eller	PR Practitioner	Mixed; if practicing true PR, strategic planning should be included
Stephanie Goodwin	PR Practitioner	Yes; SM used effectively in PR. Especially blogging
Sandra Duerr	News Editor	Yes; newspapers are implementing digital strategies through social media

Research Question #2: What is the current state of traditional news media?

This question was studied in response to current literature that has analyzed the current state of traditional news media outlets. It is public knowledge that print newspapers are fading out from daily consumption and organizations are moving towards online formats, some are now fully online. It was necessary to research this question to establish what the current state of traditional news media is and how social media has affected it thus far.

A study conducted by Barthel (2016) found that, “networks continue to invest in digital, as more young people turn to digital platforms for their news. In August 2015, for instance, NBCUniversal formed partnerships with Vox Media and BuzzFeed in an attempt to reach younger audiences” (para. 10). Traditional news consumption has been changing since the introduction of web-based news, and a study by the Pew Research Center found that, “just 5% of U.S. adults who had learned about the presidential election in the past week named print newspapers as their “most helpful” source – trailing nearly every other category by wide margins, including cable, local and national TV, radio, social media and news websites” (para. 4).

This question was studied to find out what experiences and insight the experts in the field have had with the changing format and uses traditional news media. Dr. Dan Eller and Sandra Duerr gave responses relevant to this research question.

- Dan Eller: “When I was on Cal Poly campus thirteen years ago, the newspaper racks were empty, they were gone because the students grabbed the paper during the daytime. I might see a copy left at the gym or a few in front of the Avenue. Nowadays they sit there until the next edition comes out. Then they’re pulled out and those editions are put in smaller quantities because they know people obviously aren’t going to take them. Well of course! People are going online to consume that news because of the fact that your demographic is consuming electronic forms of that media.”
- Sandra Duerr: “Clearly, an increasing number of people are reading us online, many learning about our news and features coverage through Facebook and Twitter, to a far less extent. This is true for all news organizations nationwide. Our readership is up considerably, even though print circulation continues to decline. In January, for example, we had nearly 6 million page views.”

Responses showed that social media has affected the way people are consuming and accessing news. It is interesting to note that although the college-aged demographic is accessing news online, the online readership for the Tribune is quite high which signifies that different age demographics are now accessing news online.

Research Question #3: How often do news organizations fact check and how many people trust the accuracy of their news sources?

This question was studied to find out how often news organizations are fact checking information before publication. With so many online news websites in today's market, it is essential to find out which ones can be trusted and consumed knowing that you are getting accurate information. A report published by The American Press Institute claimed that fact checking and accountability are popular and effective, yet misunderstood. Looking further into the study, Rosenstiel and Sonderman (2015) stated that "the fact that so many, even in journalism, are unsure if their own organizations do fact-checking indicates some element of confusion — among journalists and media consumers alike — about the definition of fact-checking journalism" (p. 8). The editorial process is no longer as essential as Breitbart Tech (2016) stated, "Unlike traditional newspapers where editors determine the most important stories, social platforms are "crowdsourcing" feeds based on how often their users click on stories" (para. 6).

The following question was designed to find out if newspapers who have a strong online presence fact check information before publishing, as well as to determine if editing has lost importance. Sandra Duerr provided insight to this research question.

- Sandra Duerr: "We always strive to make sure that we report correct information/data, as well as put it in the proper context. We make sure that we use sources who are reliable and in a position to know the information we are seeking.
- Every writer needs an editor! So, no, editing remains critical to our news operation. If we have a breaking news story late at night or on a weekend when there is no editor in the newsroom, the information is posted and immediately sent to an editor at home for his/her review. These are usually an accident, or a fire, etc. Any major breaking news involves an editor from the start."

As for trust in online content, Sandra Duerr responded:

- If the sites are run and staffed by real journalists who don't represent a point of view and who uphold traditional standards of ethics and accuracy, then I think you can trust the sites. That said, FB is filled with information that is not true.

Most, if not all traditional print based newspapers who follow traditional standards of ethics and who do not report on a specific point of view, fact check information. Editing remains essential for traditional news based organizations, however that does not speak for the plethora of news sites that have emerged from the information age today.

Research Question #4: What has changed about how journalism is being taught?

This question was studied to gain insight into how journalism and public relations programs at the college level are changing in order to include social media and technology. Since traditional news media and editing positions are changing in their functionality, the education for these positions must also keep up with the advancement of technology and digital journalism. Ludke (2017) stated, “we can no longer train print journalists, or radio or TV journalists, or photojournalists; today, these are all pieces of a larger pie we call multimedia journalism. Now, in every class students are forced to think-- and perform across a variety of platforms” (p.7).

Journalism is becoming more than just broadcast and editing, and many programs are combining elements of public relations into curriculum. The integration of public relations and journalism is becoming more common. An interview by Harper (2010) interviewed the Dean of CUNY Sarah Bartlett: “The degree here is to recast journalism as a service that helps communities meet their goals and solve problems, using a wide range of new tools and skills involving relationship-building, data, social media, and business” (p. 3).

This question was answered by PR practitioner Dan Eller, who gave insight specifically on how Cal Poly is changing the curriculum within the journalism department to merge public relations and journalism together.

- Dan Eller: “With the curriculum in the journalism department, public relations has been a very popular concentration. Over the last seven years there has been more of an inclusion of public relations into the journalism curriculum in terms of strengthening journal-

ism. The digital first for journalists and the technology and electronics, multimedia...all of the things that they are doing, have really strengthened that side of the program. But they're looking to draw upon public relations for that context because the consumption of their media has been an issue."

- "I feel that they do have an understanding about how public relations can help. But a lot of the things that have been done were right at the tactics level but not really strong strategic planning. And that's the essence of what we do, public relations is counseling management and strategic planning...doing the research and creating a strong plan before ever implementing anything."

Integration of public relations and journalism in higher education can be very beneficial to both programs, however public relations can be perceived to serve different purposes.

Research Question #5: How does social media influence relationship elements in public relations?

This question was researched in order to establish how social media has influenced forming and maintaining relationships with clients and the general public, when applied to the corporate level. Relationships are a keystone in public relations and social media now allows people to form and maintain relationships in a whole new way. Wright and Hinson (2008) stated that, "social media have provided an opportunity to truly put the public back into public relations by providing a mechanism for organizations to engage in real-time, one-to-one conversations with stakeholders. Additionally, they serve as a focus group of thousands, allowing offline communications to be more relevant" (p.19).

Not only does social media assist public relations professionals maintain relationships with stakeholders, it also allows for consumers to directly interact with companies and their products or services. Valentini (2015) explained, "the dominant discourse in public relations is that using social media is "good", because social media can help organizations in developing dialogues and relationships with publics and in engaging with them."

This question was studied to gain insight from the public relations experts about their experiences with relationship building and maintenance while working with a client or company and how social media has affected the profession.

- Dan Eller: “It’s really easy for people out there to get caught up in what they need to do to sell widgets, to get people to attend something, to get people to recognize something. Social media has really helped the field in terms of channeling, it’s probably the strongest, most broad channel out there. The two-way model is a model that is so easy to work with in terms of social media. In terms of data collection in what people are saying, how they feel. It also can be kind of a quick fix for people to think *oh, I can just put something up there*. They don’t think about creating that relationship and touching people emotionally.”
- Stephanie Goodwin: “A lot of millennials are savvy to advertising, like they are less likely to believe what an ad is telling them and are more likely to believe what is in theory, an unbiased third party opinion, like a blogger. The most effective tool for PR is personal relationships and that can be built so much more easily now. If I am researching a specific demographic that my client would like to reach, and I want a writer to feature an article highlighting what my client offers in a magazine that certain demographic reads, I can so easily go Google that person’s name, see what they’ve written and really learn a lot about that person or blogger (a lot of times now it’s a blogger).”

Overall, expert responses confirm that social media technology is beneficial to the public relations profession, especially when it comes to building relationships. Technology makes it easier to research and target specific demographics, as well as create new channels for reaching potential buyers that are not general advertisements. It is interesting to note that one respondent believes social media can allow public relations professionals to misuse or completely skip the relationship forming step, while Stephanie Goodwin believes social media, especially blogging and other third party endorsements, enhance elements of public relations.

Research Question #6: What is the future of journalism and the public relations profession?

This question was researched to provide insight into what experts and other researchers have said about the future of the journalism and public relations profession, and may look like with continued advancements in technology. Journalism and public relations have always been lumped together, as each profession benefits the other. Picard (2015) worked closely with Reuters Institute to conduct a survey about the future of journalism and found that, “respondents generally think journalists will have to think more about personal branding via, for example, social media, and be more entrepreneurial” (p. 5).

Some journalists are concerned that mergers and monopolies of big time news organizations will continue to increase as many companies find it difficult to keep up. It is concerning that corporate and monopoly ownership and control of the journalism industries has persistently foregrounded the drive for profit at the cost of neglecting the democratic functions of journalism” (Franklin, 2011, p.5). Most journalists interviewed in literature researched see the future of journalism with, “arrangements that recognise the increasing importance of non-employee journalists working as freelancers, stringers, correspondents, and journalism cooperatives (Picard, 2015, p. 5). Another concern for journalists and PR professionals alike is the continued merging of the two professions.

Macnamara (2014) explained, “While journalists themselves are increasingly embracing social media, they are sensitive to the increased autonomy and power that have been handed to PR practitioners by the internet and are concerned about being bypassed, leading to misinformation and propaganda” (p. 746). Social media has been described as causing more tension between the two industries. Public relations and journalism do have distinctly different roles.

This question was researched in order to gain expert insight from both the public relations and journalistic viewpoints about the intertwining of the professions. This question also asks experts what they see the future of the two fields looking like. Table 2 summarizes the experts responses and shows that public relations and journalism rely on each other for imple-

mentation for certain strategies and goals. It also shows that experts do agree social media is blurring the lines in terms of what each profession’s responsibilities are in their individual fields of expertise.

Table 2
Further Tying of Journalism and Public Relations

Respondent	Intertwining of PR/Journalism Good or bad?	Future of the profession(s)?
Dan Eller work	Good, if journalists and PR professionals truly understand what each profession does at it’s core.	The two will continue to together, there will always be some tension.
Stephanie Goodwin	Good. A public relations person’s job is essentially to sell the journalist on something so that the journalist can sell something for them right?	Blogging, sponsored content, and other third-party endorsements will become even more common.
Sandra Duerr	Good. Advertising and finding new ways to gain readers is always important.	I strongly believe that journalism will remain -- that journalists will continue to be a government watchdog. It’s how the news is delivered that continues to change. Newspapers will continue to get thinner, and I suspect that more of them will begin publishing only certain days of the week, until our customers are purely digital.

Section II

The following will include the ten questions asked on the online survey that was distributed through Facebook to the California Polytechnic University Class of 2017 page, as well as posted on the News Feed feature to gain a more diverse sample population. From the survey, 103 responses were recorded. Some questions differed in response totals and will be noted in appendices. Data results for each question will be presented and analyzed. Results will be displayed through explanation and charts.

Survey Questions and Answers

How old are you?

Age	Responses
18	2
19	4
20	8
21	43
22	31
23	7
Other	5

Table 1

“Other” Age Demographic

This survey was primarily targeting the college-aged demographic. The majority of respondents were in this age bracket, 18-23. However, five of the 103 responses categorized themselves as “other”. These ages range from 24-62.

How do you stay updated on current events?

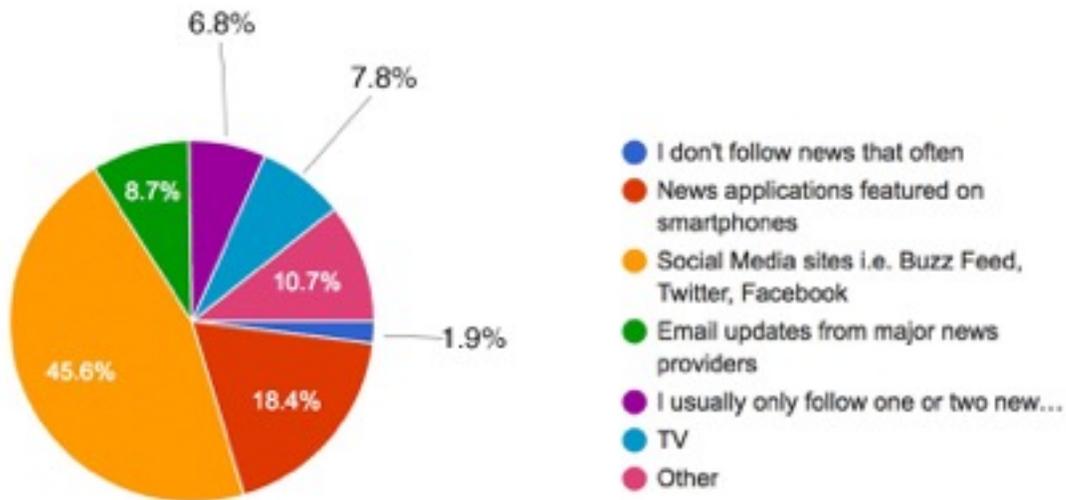


Figure 1

Of the responses collected, almost half (45.6%) claimed they consume the most news via social media sites. It was important to find out how this age demographic most commonly accesses news. The next highest percentage of respondents (18.4%) answered that they access news from applications featured on their smartphones. From the “other” category, the most common channel these respondents used was radio.

If you answered social media or social media sites as your primary news source, which of the following do you use the most?

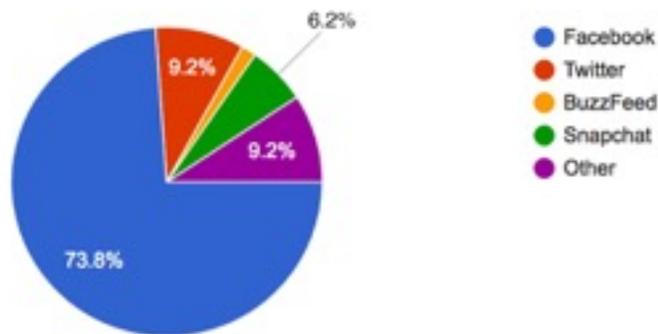


Figure 2

If respondents answered that they access news through social media sites and news applications, it was important to find out which specific networking sites they primarily went to for news. An overwhelming amount of respondents (73.8%) logged onto Facebook to receive news updates on current events. The 9.2% that claimed they access news through “other” commonly answered that they use Reddit or get news by word of mouth.

How often would you say you trust news stories online?

Scale (1-5)	Responses
1: I don't trust anything I see online	4 (3.9%)
2	27 (26.2%)
3	56 (54.4%)
4	15 (14.6%)
5: I trust all news stories I see online	1 (1%)

Table 2

Of the 103 people that responded to this survey question, over half (54.4%) claimed that they moderately trust news sources and stories they read online. Results are distributed more heavily on the non-trusting side of the scale, with 26.2% claiming they don't trust the majority of what they see online despite results showing that well over half of the respondents access news online.

How much news on social media do you disagree with?

Scale (1-5)	Responses
1: All of the news articles I see support my opinions/beliefs	0
2	13 (12.7%)
3	43 (42.2%)
4	38 (37.3%)
5: I strongly disagree with most news I see on social media	8 (7.8%)

Table 3

Of the 103 respondents, 102 responded to this question. The majority of responses reveal that over half of the respondents (87.3%) moderately to strongly disagree with the news they see on

social media. This proves that most, if not all news respondents see on social media contradicts with the opinions and beliefs they value.

How often do you fact check news articles you are skeptical about?

Scale (1-5)	Responses
1: I don't feel the need to fact check anything	11 (10.8%)
2	22 (21.6%)
3	20 (19.6%)
4	41 (40.2%)
5: I fact check every story I read online	8 (7.8%)

Table 4

From the total number of respondents, 102 answered this question. Almost half (40.2%) fact check the majority of the news stories they read online. Facebook's algorithm prioritizes "engagement" – and a reliable way to get readers to engage is by making up outrageous nonsense about politicians they don't like, or hot news topics (Lee, 2016, para. 2). It is important to note that the respondents are fact checking news stories, despite well over half access their news from Facebook.

Where do you get the majority of your political news?

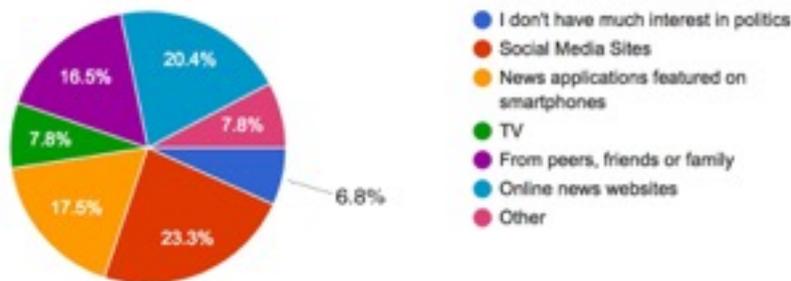


Figure 3

All 103 respondents recorded answering this question. The highest percentage (23.3%) of the answers access political news through social media, following 20.4% receiving political news from online news websites. The third most popular (17.5%) accessing news through their smart-phone applications. The “other” most commonly reported was a mix of two to three of the options, including receiving political news from peers, friends and family, accessing multiple news websites and TV. It is interesting to note that this question showed that respondents are accessing political information through a variety of different channels, including methods that do not involve social media technology.

Do you think mainstream news organizations tend to favor one side?

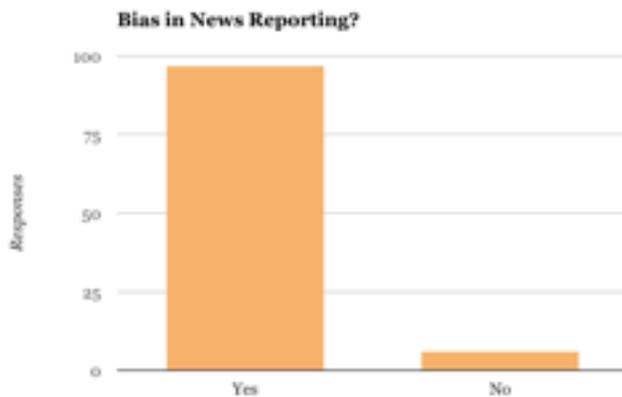


Figure 4

All 103 respondents answered this question, with 94.2% responding that news organizations favor one side. It is important to note that this bias in news has existed for some time and the public is well aware of the pulls to certain sides of issues. Carney (2015) stated, “Many prevailing biases exist in the U.S. news media. All news outlets are biased toward an eye-catching narrative. The Washington news media is biased toward Washington-based solutions. And the political press in the U.S. has an overwhelming leftward tilt, mostly on social issues, but also on economic matters” (para. 2).

Do you think political candidates interacting on Twitter and social media is beneficial to the political process?

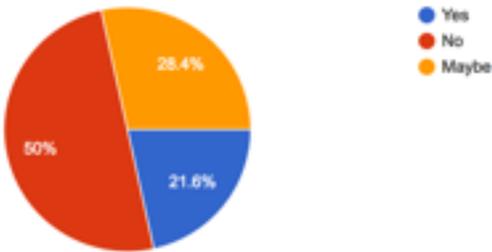


Figure 5

With technology and social media sites now becoming a new channel for people to voice their opinions about current issues, politicians have started using social media. Cohen, Tsfati and Sheafer (2008) stated that, “legislators are increasingly recognizing that media coverage has become a part of the policymaking process within legislative institutions” (p. 333). 102 survey takers responded to the question, with exactly half (50%) stating that political candidates interacting on popular social media sites does not benefit political processes.

Do you think social media creates a more informed citizen?

Scale (1-5)	Responses
1: I think social media technology does the opposite of above statement	20 (19.6%)
2	24 (23.5%)
3	24 (23.5%)
4	31 (30.4%)
5: Yes people are more knowledgeable because of it	3 (2.9%)

Table 5

102 responses were collected for this question and shows that respondent answers were varied throughout the scale provided. 30.4% of those surveyed think that social media creates a more informed citizen with 23.5% split between somewhat (2) and moderately (3) increasing the

amount a citizen can be well informed through social media. It is interesting to note the fact that the responses are so varied, and could suggest that social media creates a more informed citizen based on how it is used and what social media sites news consumers primarily are accessing to gain information.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion & Recommendations

Summary

This study was performed in response to an interest in finding out how social media and technology are affecting the professions of journalism and public relations. It was also of interest to research social media and its affects on public consumption and understanding of news. Advancements in social media technologies have morphed many elements of day to day life, including ways we access and understand information about current events and how we form relationships. The majority of the literature discussing social media and public relations cited that social media has been beneficial for the profession and for the most part, practitioners are taking advantage of new tools available to them through the web. The biggest concern the literature stated was that social media is converging journalism and public relations together. It was essential to collect data from experts in both the public relations and journalism fields regarding their opinions on the subject. Journalism, as the public is well aware, has been forced to evolve quite rapidly because of social media and advancements made in technology. The literature revealed that news organizations are now more at risk to become monopolized, and the major concern is the future of the profession.

To find out more information on these challenges, three experts were interviewed and a ten question survey was administered online. The experts represented three different points of view, whereas the survey specifically targeted the college-aged demographic. One expert worked in the public relations field for twenty plus years and currently teaches the subject at California Polytechnic University, another currently works at Verdin Marketing, a public relations and marketing firm in San Luis Obispo and the third holds the executive editing position at The Tribune newspaper in San Luis Obispo. Each expert was interviewed based on individually designed questions designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How is social media applied in journalism and public relations?

2. What is the current state of traditional news media?
3. How often do news organizations fact check and how many people trust the accuracy of their news sources?
4. What has changed about how journalism is being taught?
5. How does social media influence relationships in public relations?
6. What is the future of the journalism and public relations profession?

Research questions were slightly altered to create more applicable questions for interviews with each respondent. The research questions prompted a variety of responses that correlate to the literature studied on the effects social media technology has had on journalism and public relations, as well as how the consumption and understanding of news has been altered because of technological advances.

Discussion

By analyzing the data collected from Chapter 4, comparing respondents answers to interview questions, and the existing literature found in Chapter 2, it is possible to draw conclusions in connection with the research questions, as well as compare them to selected survey questions.

Research Question #1: How is social media applied in journalism and public relations?

All three of the experts agreed that for the most part, social media is being used effectively in journalism and public relations professions. Goodwin mentioned the fact that social media makes researching for clients much easier and creates new channels for third party endorsement. Goodwin explained that reputable bloggers are a very successful mode for third party endorsement, especially when trying to reach the millennial demographic. Eller stated that social media has been beneficial to PR in terms of forming relationships, however it can allow professionals to miss the point of social media and how to successfully implement it into strategic planning. Duerr praised social media and said social media has been a helpful channel to gain access to potential subscribers by using it to market different types of feature magazines.

The literature reflects similar viewpoints in conjunction with comments made by Eller and Goodwin. Social media has provided public relations practitioners with new channels to create and form relationships with the public. Solis & Breakenridge (2009) stated that, “social media is empowering people to become the new influences, and it is forcing PR and marketing professionals to recognize and include these powerful tools in their advertising and marketing communications strategies” (p. xvii). Literature also coincides with statements made by Eller. Solis & Breakenridge (2009) claimed that, “Some companies just don’t get social media. May executives still view blogs as random musings, and social networking as places where people can troll for friends” (p. xvii). Blogging has become extremely popular, as Goodwin explained. Alejandro (2010) stated, “We are witnessing the emergence of powerful new voices and networks which can act independently of the traditional media. Highly networked individuals (helped by new platforms like social networking and messaging) can move across, undermine and go beyond the boundaries of existing institutions” (p. 13).

The literature compared to Duerr’s statements reflects a slightly similar perspective, and explains that news organizations must work with handful of different channels. Duerr stated that The Tribune expanded their advertising department into a full-service digital agency. Alejandro explained, “For media organizations, convergence is the common strategy. There is a growing realisation that you can’t do everything on your own. One media outlet cannot service all the rivers of information in the social media sphere” (p. 15).

It is possible to conclude that social media is applied in public relations by creating new types of third party endorsement, like blogging. Solis & Breakenridge (2009) found that, “a new layer of influencers is present, as is an entirely new ecosystem for supporting the socialization of information, and these networks are facilitating conversations that can start locally but have global impact” (p. xxi). It also possible to conclude that media organizations are evolving to create effective ways of reaching audiences through social media and the internet.

Research Question #2: What is the current state of traditional news media?

Two of the three experts, Eller and Duerr discussed changes in traditional news media and its consumption. They agreed that news was now being accessed online much more than through newspaper or radio. Many users are going fully online for all news consumption, especially younger generations.

The literature clearly matches expert responses. Consumption for nearly every other mode of news has decreased. Barthel (2016) found in a January 2016 Pew Research Center survey that just 5% of U.S. adults who had learned about the presidential election in the past week named print newspapers as their “most helpful” source – trailing nearly every other category by wide margins, including cable, local and national TV, radio, social media and news websites (para. 4). As for younger generations, general interest in news is low even though social media is their primary source for consuming news. Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel and Shearer (2016) found that, “about a third often get news from social networking sites (32%) and from news websites and apps (34%). Their use of social networking sites for news is higher than among any other age group, while their use of news websites/apps is higher than that of those ages 50 and older.”

Social media has also affected the way political news is reported and consumed by the public. Graber and Dunaway (2014) stated in relation to social media and political news, “For those uninterested in politics, the expansion of choice actually decreases their likelihood of encountering political information and becoming more informed.” 23.3% of respondents from the survey administered for this study stated they get political news from social media sites and another 20.4% access it through online news websites.

Political figures are now also interacting on Twitter and other social media sites. Cohen, Tsfati and Sheafer (2008) stated that, “Legislators are increasingly recognizing that media coverage has become a part of the policymaking process within legislative institutions” (p. 333). From the survey distributed, exactly half (50%) answered that political candidates interacting on Twitter is not beneficial to the political process, with another 28.4% claiming “Maybe”.

Overall, it is possible to conclude that the transition from traditional print based news is phasing out very quickly. The majority of the population accesses news online and that number will continue to increase as media organizations move to online formats in order to increase revenue and compete with social media sites. As Duerr said, “Our readership is up considerably, even though print circulation continues to decline. In January, for example, we had nearly 6 million page views.” It is interesting to note that the survey elicited responses that suggest readers are accessing political information through the most popular social media site, Facebook, that is most likely reaffirming their beliefs instead of introducing them to new political ideologies, as Graber and Dunaway stated.

Research Question #3: Do news organizations fact check and how many people trust the accuracy of their news sources?

Sandra Duerr’s responses are applicable to this research question. Duerr explained that her news organization strives to report correct information, as well as put it in the proper context. She claimed that her organization makes sure they use sources who are reliable and in a position to know the information being sought after and believes that the public will generally trust sources that they are familiar with.

The literature corresponds with Duerr’s response about fact checking, however her response does not conclude that fact checking occurs in every news organization. Interestingly, a study done by the American Press Institute reveals results that prove quite the opposite. “A total of 17 percent of those who work in journalism say their organizations have a dedicated fact-checking feature. Sixty-one percent said their organization doesn’t typically do this kind of branded or dedicated journalism — and interestingly, nearly 1 in 5 (22 percent) said they didn’t know” (Elizabeth, Rosenstiel, Ivanch, Loker, Lacy, Sonderman, Yaeger, 2015). This gives a rather gloom insight into the internal newsroom in terms of how often fact checking occurs.

As for public trust and accuracy of news sources, a little over half (54.4%) of those who participated in the administered survey claimed they moderately trust what they see online. The scale was 1, being *I don’t trust anything I see online* and a 5, being *I trust all news stories I see*

online. Findings in research correspond with survey results received. In the same study performed by the Pew Research Center, “Social media is trusted by a slim minority – only 4% of web-using adults have a lot of trust in the information they find on social media. And that rises to only 7% among those who get news on these sites” (Elizabeth, Rosenstiel, et al.)

It can be concluded that fact checking is an important function that news organizations, little or small, must complete. However, literature shows that many news organizations and journalists do not know if their organization fact checks at all. This is concerning, considering most news consumers today receive their news through the internet. Helfand (2016) noted that, “Roughly 90% of all of the information that exists in the world today was created in the past two years. Not much time for editing, testing and serious reflection” (p. 2). Despite consumers revealing they moderately trust what they see online, they access social media for news more than any other channel. It is possible to conclude that despite consumers only slightly trusting information they see online, they continue to access it through the internet the most because it is the most convenient way to do so.

Research Question #4: What has changed about how journalism is being taught?

When Eller was asked how journalism curriculum has changed due to the evolution of social media to include news functions, his answers coincided with literature quite accurately. Eller explained that journalism curriculum at California Polytechnic University has updated its classes to include multimedia journalism skills. It has also merged public relations more into journalism curriculum. Eller stated that, “Over the last seven years there has been more of an inclusion of public relations into the journalism curriculum in order to strengthen journalism. The digital first for journalists and the technology and electronics, multimedia...all of the things that they are doing, have really strengthened that side of the program.”

The literature on the changing journalism curriculum stated similar findings. Lynch (n.d.) asked Don Heider, Dean of the Journalism School at Loyola University, what skills he thought journalists should have, “Writing, reporting, copy editing, photography, video shooting and editing, gathering and synthesizing information, verifying facts, communicating ethically,

using social media to find and disseminate stories, coding, Web design, page layout, headline writing, search engine optimization. That's a start" (p.3). To say that print and radio aren't important in today's newsroom would be false, however, as Ludke (2017) stated, "We can no longer train print journalists, or radio or TV journalists, or photojournalists; today, these are all pieces of a larger pie we call multimedia journalism. Now, in every class students are forced to think--and perform across a variety of platforms" (p.7).

In terms of the inclusion of public relations into journalism curriculum, the literature fails to draw the same conclusions that Eller responded with. As Goodwin stated, "Journalists can't really function without public relations."

It is possible to conclude from expert responses and the literature that journalism curriculum is becoming much more focused on the computer screen, although traditional editing and formatting skills are still essential to the curriculum. Journalists in today's media landscape will come out of college with a packaged set of skills including coding, writing, broadcast, graphic design and editing video and photos.

Research Question #5: How does social media influence relationships in public relations?

The two public relations experts approached this question from different perspectives due to their expertise within the public relations sphere. Therefore, they had some variances in responses. Eller stated that social media has helped the field in terms of channeling, and agreed that it is the strongest channel out there in order to reach publics. However, he thinks it can also be a quick fix for people who think *oh, I can just put something up there*. Goodwin agrees that social media has helped the public relations profession considerably because it allows for more third party endorsement, namely blogging. She did not make any references to negative effects social media has on the profession. The experts also agreed that social media allows for the ideal two-way communication model to flourish, in terms of data collection detailing what people are saying and how they feel.

The literature reflects very similar perspectives. Public relations experts agree that social media is helping the profession to connect to specific and desired publics, and form relationships. Wright and Hinson (2008) stated that, “Social media have provided an opportunity to truly put the public back into public relations by providing a mechanism for organizations to engage in real-time, one-to-one conversations with stakeholders” (p. 19). They also found that blogging has become very influential. Steve Crescenzo, writing in The Ragan Report says employee blogs have “massive, almost unlimited potential to share knowledge, foster dialogue, market goods and services, and open up two-way channels of communication” (p. 4).

Overall it is possible to conclude that social media has greatly benefitted public relations and allowed for new channels of reaching publics and making emotional connections. Professions affected by social media technology must learn how to use and apply it effectively to their practices or else it will be difficult to keep up with those who have already mastered in doing so. It is important to note that Eller’s insight about some PR practitioners using social media as a “quick fix” is a prominent issue because it blurs the importance of strategic planning and forming true connections.

Research Question #6: What is the future of the journalism and public relations profession?

All three experts see their professions prospering along with social media technologies. Eller voiced his concern over the intertwining of journalism and public relations whereas Goodwin stated that one could not survive without the other. Goodwin had highly favorable opinions toward third party endorsement, especially blogging and it’s promising future as a helpful tool for public relations practitioners. As for journalism, Duerr strongly believes it will remain and become a fully online platform when it’s consumers make the switch as well. She also stated that journalism will continue to serve as the government watchdog.

The literature detailing the future of public relations corresponds with both Eller and Goodwin’s insight. Macnamara (2014) found that, “Even though the two interact, the fields of practice operate independently of each other in many cases and have distinctly different roles,

which should not be blurred or converged” (p. 747). Eller, when discussing the intertwining of the two professions stated strongly, “I’m not a journalist! And I don’t need to be and I don’t profess to be a journalist. I’m a public relations person.” As for blogging, Wright and Hinson (2008) found that, “Blogs bypass traditional news media and, as such, throw a major wrench in the suggestion that these traditional news media set any agenda for public thought” (p. 7).

Literature discussing the future of journalism parallel Duerr’s statement about the profession moving fully online eventually. Harper (2010) explained that “Companies are developing and refining algorithms already capable of automating the production of basic journalistic narratives out of raw data” (p. 2). This is a huge advancement for the profession and technological advances such as this will continue the forced evolution of journalism. Citizen journalists were also stated to become more popular moving forward. Franklin (2011) stated that, “Predictions for a new pluralistic, citizen or participatory journalism has been discussed along with the demise of traditional news media” (p. 7)

It is possible to conclude that public relations will continue to inform people and create strong emotional connections with companies and what they represent in society. Social media, overall, will do nothing but further the key components that make public relations so important. Journalism will continue to be forced to quickly transition in order to serve the public’s preferred methods for consuming news. New methods of receiving news from citizen journalists and fully online news platforms will continue to grow and morph the media’s watchdog function in doing so.

Recommendations for Practice

After completion of the study, substantial data has been collected and analyzed on the topic of social media’s effects on public relations and the way news is consumed and understood by the public. Given the information, it is important to highlight the most insightful content and present it in order to establish how social media is currently affecting these professions and what the future may look like as the indefinite evolution of social media continues. Public relations has been affected more positively than journalism and news will soon become fully digital.

The curriculum in college is working to combine multimedia journalism and public relations together as they are becoming intertwined in the professional sphere because of social media.

Social Media More Beneficial to Public Relations than to Journalism

Relationships and third party endorsements are enhanced through social media technologies in the public relations profession. Public relations experts interviewed agreed that for the most part, social media has proven to be the best channel for practitioners to reach their publics. Wright and Hinson (2008) found that, “There is considerable agreement suggesting blogs and social media have enhanced public relations practice. Two-thirds of the study’s respondents (66%) believe social media have enhanced public relations and 60 percent feel the same way about blogs” (p. 10). The future of journalism and its relationship with social media is much more uncertain. Duerr believes journalism will remain, as it has through many transitional periods. However, there are many kinks that must be worked out as it transitions to a fully digital practice, including the spread of misinformation. Lavrusik (2010) stated, “All media as we know it today will become social, and feature a social component to one extent or another. After all, much of the web experience, particularly in the way we consume content, is becoming social and personalized.”

Fact Checking Will Become Increasingly Important

Duerr claimed that The Tribune fact checks information and strives to seek information from credible sources. However, with literature predicting journalism becoming a fully digital practice, the spread of misinformation will continue. Especially if people are accessing news through social media sites like Facebook. Misinformation spreads through social networking site’s specific algorithmic patterns based on consumer information and the fact that the algorithms do not have a fact checking function. Bode and Vraga (2015) “People find information that agrees with prior-held beliefs to be more credible and reliable than disconfirming information (p. 621). With 73.8% of survey respondents claiming Facebook as their primary source for news, fact checking is essential in order to trust the majority of articles. These major social me-

dia sites must develop a way to disseminate false news from being spread in order for people to actually be informed.

Curriculum Intertwining Public Relations and Journalism

Eller explained that curriculum over the last seven years at California Polytechnic University has continually integrated multimedia technology and public relations into the journalism program. The two programs are commonly associated with the other. Harper (2010) stated that, “Journalism must serve community goals and problems using a wide range of new tools and skills involving relationship-building, data, social media, and business” (p. 3). However, Eller voiced his concern for the crossing of the two because the true essence of public relations may be lost when combined too extensively with journalism.

Paralleled with the intertwining of the two professions at the college level, social media is pulling the two closer together in the professional sphere as well. It is agreed, “that the fields of practice have a significant level of interdependency, senior PR practitioners as well as editors and journalists see each field having a distinctly different role and even go as far as arguing that a tension between them is necessary and a sign of health in the media ecosystem” (Macnamara, 2014). As Goodwin stated, one cannot survive without the other. The future for these professions will continue to push and pull them closer together as social media evolves.

The fact that journalism may become fully online creates uncertainty about the knowledge a citizen is receiving from online news sources. How informed is an individual who accesses news through social media? Results from the survey show that 30.4% of respondents think that social media is creating a more informed citizen, with 47% claiming it is moderately informing people. It is possible to say the results are due to the fact that people think it is better than not reading any news at all.

Study Conclusion

In conclusion, given the general findings of the study, qualitative research should be done quite often on how social media is affecting the ways people are consuming and retaining news media. It is important to understand the positive and negative impacts social media can

have on the journalism and public relations industry. Data collection and interviews should be conducted based on up and coming trends within the two professions. The study presented the collective opinions of two public relations professionals and a long-time executive editor. The regional location of the study performed creates unique and specific results. Therefore, the study and overall conclusions may not be applicable to every individual. However, the study serves as an educational tool and a predictor for the future of these professions. Social media affects everyone in some way and so do newsworthy events. Of this study's purposes, creating awareness into the effects social media has and will have on how informed society is, is exceedingly important.

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Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: Dan Eller

The following interview was conducted to get an expert opinion from a public relations practitioner and professor as to how social media has affected the profession and curriculum.

Interviewer: Heather Fissel

Respondent: Public Relations Professor at California Polytechnic University Dan Eller

Date of Interview: 2/27/17

Interview Transcription

Heather Fissel: “So, I know I’ve talked to you about how PR and journalism are kind of becoming more intertwined as we move forward, and PR professionals aren’t necessarily okay with this from the research I’ve found. It makes them feel like people won’t be able to distinguish from PR and journalism anymore because they are very different. I know curriculum here at Cal Poly is starting to work towards that by eliminating the senior project option and solely having a senior class with PR elements. What are your thoughts on this crossing and if it will be beneficial to PR? Or if the intertwining is letting some core PR goals kind of get washed out with journalism, if that makes sense.”

Dan Eller: “It does make sense, in fact, I have some things to say about that. To begin with, there is a separation between public relations and journalism in terms of the editorial process. And I am going to speak in terms of representing clients. Um, I’m not saying there’s a solid wall these days but there used to be a solid wall between public relations and editorial. One reason is that the editorial folks wanted to keep it clean in terms of unbiased reporting and certainly as a public relations professional I respect that and I want that unbiased, accurate reporting of the news. But, by the same token on my end, I need to think about advocating for my client though I do want to work with the editorial process. But, when working with a client I also want to think about control of communications in terms of content and timing. And that’s not always possible with, um, a true...let’s say, converged environment where now I am with the editorial people on a 24/7 365 basis. Back in my days of working in government communications, we might call an editorial board meeting with a newspaper, let’s say McClatchy and meet with the editorial board members, meet with the reporters that cover that particular interest area. Let’s say resource management in the context of state parks. But when sitting down to talk to them we were hoping to gain editorial, we had all of our ducks in a row, we were coming in (not that we weren’t transparent). But, we were telling our story in the context and timing in which we wanted to tell our story. My fear here with converged media is and always will be for my clients. In other words, let’s say with CCPR. I want them to understand yes we are working with Mustang News, but we can still um work with you first before going to Mustang News. Let’s say I was working with a client that had a sensitive issue. Now, with the curriculum in the journalism department, public relations has been a very popular concentration. And I remember back when our previous dean was here, there was discussion about where journalism was going in terms of the department, with the advisory board and with faculty, that would’ve been fall 2010. Since that time, over the last seven years there has been more of an inclusion of public relations into the journalism curriculum in terms of strengthening journalism. The digital first for journalists and the um, technology and electronics, multimedia...all of the things that they are doing, have really strength-

ened that side of the program. But they're looking to draw upon public relations for that context because the consumption of their media has been an issue. I am not saying young people are consuming any less news than us older people back in the day! But let's face it, when I came to campus here for lecture thirteen years ago for 4 o'clock and 7 o'clock classes, the Mustang Daily was not available on campus. The newspaper racks were empty, they were gone because the students grabbed the paper during the daytime. I might see a copy left at the gym or a few in front of the Avenue. Nowadays they sit there until the next edition comes out. Then they're pulled out and those editions are put in smaller quantities because they know people obviously aren't going to take them. Well of course! People are going online to consume that news because of the fact that your demographic is consuming electronic forms of that media. So Mustang News looked at public relations to create a stronger relationship with their publics. I think they've done an okay job for the past couple years that they've been doing this, and I feel that they do have an understanding about how public relations can help. But a lot of the things that have been done were right at the tactics level but not really strong strategic planning. And that's the essence of what we do, public relations is counseling management and strategic planning...doing the research and creating a strong plan before ever implementing anything. Well now, two years later there's a little bit more emphasis done on the strategic planning. Why? Because we've been able to counsel more through CCPR. But also the efforts weren't as fruitful as they could've been. So, we're happy to help and back to your question at hand, we want to be part of that converged environment but, we have our own, um, not to be siloed, but we have our own concentration to foster. True public relations includes editorial as a tactic, but it's not editorial as discipline."

HF: "Right. As like a journalism core."

DE: "It's not, that's not what it does. In fact, I'm not a journalist! And I don't need to be and I don't profess to be a journalist. I'm a public relations person. Now was I a media contact for the state for 20 years? You better believe it. Um, did I have integrated marketing communications? Yes, my partner in my office was the director of marketing. We worked with an outside advertising firm that also used integrated marketing communications. Believe me, with marketing and advertising, I will take editorial over that seven days a week and twice on Sundays. There is nothing better than local media and third party endorsement through the editorial process. But does that make me a journalist? No. It's a channel. I don't want to say that's all it is, but that's what it is. And if you look at the essence of the communications plan, channeling is way after doing the research. Constructing your messaging then looking at the receiver and the feedback. The media aspect is about in the middle of the loop. That's why, um, we're not solely journalistic discipline."

HF: "I've also done a lot of research on how technology has made it so easy to advertise and represent brands online and a huge concern for both journalists and public relations practitioners is that public relations is kind of being blamed for all of those ads that are in your face and all of the marketing, like you were saying, doesn't really have a strategic plan behind it that will last for a long period of time. People think that misinformation and propaganda are because of public relations, which is a misunderstanding I think."

DE: "Let me just start by saying that Ivy League Leadbetter Edward Bernays, the early 20th century public relations and through the mid to late 20th century was based on propaganda. I'll be the first to say, I mean they were hacks, spin doctors...propagandists. But here's the deal: those

of us who really know public relations, now though the Public Relations Society of America, and the ethics of PR...something I am proud to say our chapter of PRSSA here at Cal Poly has won awards in the area of ethics...are focused on transparency (which back in the old days was called honesty) truth and wanting to work two way with their clients. Getting the feedback, resolving conflict, building trust, having it values based. If we look at that ethical form of public relations and truly what public relations should be, with what I said earlier involving strategic planning...not only would I agree that the journalists could blame PR and the advertising people could blame PR. Because guess what? I blame public relations, I'll tell you why: I think maybe one percent of those doing public relations really know what public relations is all about. See, the thing is Heather, people who are in the field practicing "PR" don't understand. It's relationship building, okay? Like I said earlier, we love to use advertising and we want to get our brand out there and strengthen our brand. Identity is important, we want you to know our product, know the logos, know the names of our companies and know what we're about. But public relations doesn't live in what we're about and how we do it, it lives in an intercore of why we're doing what we're doing. And when companies go beyond what they're doing and how they're doing it, we make a great automobile--that's what. How? We offer great gas mileage, leather interior and all the technology with the computer system in the car. But why are we doing it? It's environmentally conscious, it's an automobile that will reduce the carbon footprint and we're a company here involved in environmental issues. That's public relations because now you're reaching the heart of people. See, we change behavior here in PR. We aren't just informing people, I can read a news story and certainly it can go on from cognitive to affective issues, it can go from knowing something to feeling about something. But we live in the feeling world in PR. We really want to change people's values, attitudes and ultimately their behavior. And if you think about that, it's more powerful than advertising or marketing. In fact, I would argue the true essence of public relations is one of the most powerful things that a company or an individual can use to either be to the benefit of their constituencies or the opposite. Let's say going back to the thirties with the true father of public relations, Edward Bernays and his work with the American tobacco industry. To promote tobacco use to women and to change society's value system, that it was okay for women to smoke in public. By changing the context of how people felt about something. It was a lot easier to market something, and what he was marketing lowered the incidence and prevalence of health, it increased mortality rates. So it can be very powerful either way."

HF: "Yeah, positively and negatively. Well, that was really inspiring. I don't know, I think a lot of people don't understand public relations even while going to school for it."

DE: "See, and that's why I'm not going to point my fingers at the journalists out there, or the advertisers or the marketers. I'm going to point it first and foremost to the PR people and say, *do you understand, really, what you're doing?* The people in the Public Relations Society of America, the people who are accredited in public relations, who teach public relations, um research and our publications these days are talking to the practitioner in terms of what the essence of PR really is all about. But, it's really easy for people out there to get caught up in what they need to do to sell widgets, to get people to attend something, to get people to recognize something. Social media has really helped the field in terms of channeling, it's probably the strongest, most broad channel out there. It also can be kind of a quick fix for people to think *oh, I can just put something up there.*"

HF: "And not really think about creating that relationship and touching people emotionally."

DE: “And really looking at how societal values, your client values...how that balance exists to where the conflict might reside in the middle of that and then ultimately, how the relationship comes out of it. That’s two-way symmetrical, I think if we go back to those Hunting-Grunig models we learned in Journalism 312, the two-way model is a model that is so easy to work with in terms of social media. In terms of data collection in what people are saying, how they feel. Are companies using that, or is it still make a bunch of money and then maybe give back...because that’s the old way in business is make a bunch of money and do something philanthropic to make good on it. But along the way are we doing things that aren’t in line with people’s values. Let’s say you’re making dyes for the fabric industry and you’re contracting through dye makers in Pakistan, but you know that environmentally the rules and regulations over there allow you to do things you can’t do here. Then you’re very successful and you get money back to the public some way as a philanthropic effort, are you really doing the right thing? So, anyway.”

HF: “That was great and exactly what I was looking for to kind of start my base of questioning. I really appreciate it. Very insightful and inspiring.”

Appendix B

Interview Transcript: Stephanie Goodwin

The following interview was conducted to get an expert opinion from a practicing public relations and marketing consultant about how social media has impacted the profession and what ways she has seen journalism and public relations work together.

Interviewer: Heather Fissel

Respondent: Public Relations and Marketing Consultant at Verdin Marketing Stephanie Goodwin

Date of Interview: 3/1/17

Interview Transcription:

Heather Fissel: “A lot of the research I’ve found states that PR and journalism are becoming more intertwined, and just at Cal Poly they’re doing a lot more work with trying to introduce students to PR, and some PR professionals aren’t really comfortable with that concept of the convergence. What are your thoughts coming from this company and your experiences with editorial etc and the convergence of the two.”

Stephanie Goodwin: “Yeah. So there is a lot to talk about in that question. So, I’ll try to break it down. I can see, my first thought is that journalists are going to have to adapt or die. That’s really where my first thought goes to. And it’s really interesting because I can understand the journalists. I have a journalism degree and worked in the media in New York for a while. I understand where they’re coming from, there’s like a set journalism ethics and that they’re totally, um, unbiased and you’re not bought into anything. A public relations person’s job is essentially to sell the journalist on something so that the journalist can sell something for them right? The third party recommendation is huge. I think I saw upwards of 74 to 75 percent of purchases from millennials come from third party recommendations, so they’re really looking toward influencers, they’re looking at journalists, their friends and they get those from online too, so they’re really heavily influenced on you know, what other people are saying in those recommendations. A lot of millennials are savvy to advertising, like they are less likely to believe what an ad is telling them and are more likely to believe what is in theory, an unbiased third party opinion. But, if journalists are being influenced by PR people then is it really unbiased? I don’t know. So, I think that’s where the concern is in journalism. But, um the thing, and I don’t know if this is good or bad, but the thing about intertwining journalism and PR is that it really is the technology and the access to...um PR people have access to journalists and access to audiences so easily and journalists can’t really function without public relations people because if they’re writing a story they need help sourcing and they need ideas. They are always looking for those leads, um I feel like I have too many tangents in my head to like..”

HF: “Yeah it is a broad statement.”

SG: “Yeah it’s a broad statement and a broad question, so I hope I am doing it justice. And maybe be we can talk about more specific examples or something like that but some that are really...I forgot where I was going with that, but the lines of communication are so much more open now. Back in the day, let’s say Mad Men era, there were these public relations professionals in New York and you have a new product that’s coming out and you want a writer in New York

Times to review it, not even that far...you want them to use it and be aware of it. So, you send out a press release. Keep in mind it's typed up by your secretary, and it's perfectly written and printed then hand delivered/mailed to that journalist. That's such a huge degree of separation. But now with technology, press releases aren't dying and I definitely wouldn't say that to my clients because they are a great source and we use them often."

HF: "That's interesting because, we learn how to use them and format them and everything.."

SG: "Yeah because you feel like it's useless! It's not, it's not useless. I would say you would get a good fifteen to twenty percent response that week. Journalists do open them, they do use them. If they are interested they'll reach out to you. But the most effective tool for PR is personal relationships and that can be built so much more easily now. So, what I do when I am pitching something: I have a new product, oh for example, we have a client here who has a new online flower delivery service. They grow the flowers in California, so they're hand picked to order basically. They have a huge farm in Nipomo and a couple others in California, they deliver in twenty four hours and all online so it's ethical, the flowers aren't coming from South America. They have a great pitch, so what I do is write a press release. Send out a press release and then I go and really do my research and figure out who has written about flower companies, so, according to our PR strategy we think that women between 27 and 45 will want to buy these flowers. These types of women read these magazines and from these magazines and publications these are the people that write about that beat. I can so easily go Google that person's name, see what they've written and really learn a lot about that person or blogger (a lot of times now it's a blogger). I can say, "Hey I saw that you work with blah blah blah and you had a story about this, do you have any stories coming up about giving flowers on Valentines Day" or whatever and go that way. That success rate I would say is anywhere from 50-75% effective."

HF: "Yeah, especially when it's so much easier just to make that first initial contact than it used to be I feel like, which helps a lot. One example we could focus on is sponsored content because it is a good example of a crossing between PR and journalism."

SG: "Absolutely."

HF: "It's really successful I feel like, in today's world and my professor was just talking about things that are working and are successful in terms of this convergence. I thought that sponsored content is one thing that is coming to light through all of this evolution of social media and technology. They're branding and making people aware of the brand but also raising the importance of an issue with a really well written piece on with whatever sponsorship they're working with."

SG: "I mean a sponsorship is an advertorial, it's an ad with editorial built into it. So, it's not really a new concept it's just a new way of delivering the concept because advertorials have been around a pretty long time. One thing I think is really interesting and me personally, I don't mind sponsored posts from bloggers that I like. I feel really dedicated to the bloggers I follow on social media and read their blog, I am more likely to follow them. The things to think about are transparency and um, I am looking for a word and blanking on it...not the passion, but the credibility, the honesty that they really believe in a product. The integrity, that's the word I'm looking for. You can always tell if a blogger is just pocketing some money and doesn't care about a product. You can see that from a mile away and can see what it is, it's an ad. But if the blogger/writer is

savvy enough, they will only work with companies they believe in and only promote products they can use in their personal life anyway, that comes out in their writing. So, is that not really a third party endorsement? That is free of ad and free of incentive? That's debatable. But they really do put that transparency up, reputable bloggers will say, "Hey this is a sponsored post or ad, or I only work with companies I really believe in and do those companies justice." So I think those are hugely effective and I buy things through blogging because somebody has taken great photos and had this endorsement of these products. I have trusted and believed everything they've told me before. As someone even in the business, it works on me and I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing."

HF: "I don't think so either. Even I didn't really think about that as a third party endorsement, because you just think it's all these people on the web just posting out content for whatever they may have an interest in. So, that's really another pathway I can go down in terms of what might be working and upcoming in terms of getting a brand name out there or getting people to try a new product/service."

SG: "I was just reading something about that the other day too, two industries that work really well with that are fashion and travel. I actually work a lot with travel clients and I personally love to travel so I tend to follow those people who are like-minded and have my travel style. I booked my entire honeymoon from a blogger, from her photos on Instagram. So, she and her husband went to Bali and Indonesia. She took these incredible photos and the things she wrote about it...I don't know if any of it was sponsored or it was gifted to her (those things happen). That's an interesting segment of sponsored posts that's not blatantly sponsored. We just provide accommodations for bloggers, they may say, "this is courtesy of whatever". But anyway, she had real experiences but they were slightly staged by some public relations professional on the back wings. So I decided to plunk down \$10,000 for three weeks to go with my husband. It was amazing and a great way to do it. It's super effective that way. Fashion blogging is another huge industry too and not only getting comp samples of clothing but if you're big enough, getting paid to do it."

HF: "Especially on Instagram, even people are starting to do that."

SG: "Yes! And they can also monetize it with apps like Get to Know It or I think Our Style is something that tracks your traffic too. So, say you're like Nordstrom and you want to increase your sales in denim. So you do a whole pitch to bloggers who you think will drive traffic and purchases. So the blogger you're working with, you can either pay them or give them samples...whatever you have arranged. They'll do a story and can link it to Get to Know It or Our Style, and Nordstrom's can see those direct sales coming from those bloggers. It's a really funny line between is that straight up advertising or is that editorial."

HF: "I never even knew that was possible."

SG: "Yeah, Nordstrom will see huge success in this blogger and want to work with them again and again. Nordstrom does do that a lot."

HF: "Yeah, Nordstrom is pretty savvy with that kind of stuff I feel like. One last question before you have to go though. Dr. Eller, who I previously interviewed, was talking a lot about how a lot

of public relations professionals working in the field may not have an idea of what public relations truly is. Do you think that is true with a lot of people coming out, even being educated in public relations and not really understand the relationship forming and maintaining essence of PR?”

SG: “You mean college students or the general public?”

HF: “More the new demographic coming out into the professional field.”

SG: “Probably not. And I would say that’s the case for most any industry for college students, unless you do internships. You don’t know until you get out there. I think you just really learn a ton when you start working. Starting from the bottom, and it’s funny because you leave college thinking you know so much because you studied it and you can recite everything you just learned. But, you haven’t been able to put it into practice and you go into a job and realise how little you know. Going through the ranks and getting your hands dirty is so eye opening. I think that’s true of every industry and I think the biggest misconception of the public relations industry is that we’re a bunch of liars and we’re just trying to make our clients look good. That’s a whole other tangent about how technology and social media are changing the landscape because it holds companies accountable and there’s this transparency that’s needed now. That direct consumer relationship is so key and huge in social media. If you’re lucky you can have public relations professionals guide you and if you don’t have that and you are a crappy company, you’re totally screwed. People can just see through that and you don’t have that buffer anymore of that guy in a suit who serves as your publicist to help sell the image that you want. Anyway, so that’s a whole different tangent. PR people are always trying to help grow the company and it has to start from within, it always has to. We won’t work with people and be brand ambassadors for them if we don’t believe in them. It would be really hard to take a job where you didn’t believe in the product. In the past I’ve had to be a public ambassador for things that I really didn’t believe in. You start out with a client and just think, “They are asking for the moon and I can see that this just isn’t going to go anywhere. But sometimes you have to and just see the results. Setting up a strategy with clear communication and clear goals/objectives with a client to begin with is so important. Because you can just get into a mess later.”

HF: “Yeah I have found a lot of research, well not a lot but, people who are in PR just skip all of those steps so it’s just dismissing the point of even working with public relations.”

SG: “Totally. It has to start from within and be on the same page. The messaging has to ring clear inside your organization to ring clear forward consumer facing for the organization. That’s where PR professionals get the bad reputation, is they’re trying to...I feel so bad for a publicist for like a celebrity or for Volkswagen and this whole emissions scandal. I don’t think their PR people could have known about it or anyone in the company really. Those PR people will get blamed for something that had happened internally. Then they have to go clean up that mess and try to put it in a good light. Putting it in a good light feels deceptive even though it might not be deceptive. Transparency and relationship building are my pillars for my PR and what I would hammer to anyone. Whether that be a student or client, even me personally.”

HF: “Yeah just great life advice in general. I need to follow up on that Volkswagen story! I haven’t checked up on it recently!”

Appendix C
Interview Transcript: Sandra Duerr

The following interview questions and answers were exchanged via email due to the inability to schedule a time to meet in person. Questions were designed to answer questions about the current state of traditional news media, what is working in terms of new media, as well as what predictions for the future of news may consist of.

Interviewer: Heather Fissel

Respondent: Executive Editor for The Tribune Sandra Duerr

Questions sent: 2/17/17

Answers received: 3/7/17

Heather Fissel: We've seen a huge change from traditional print-based media to more online content and features. How have you seen news consumption change with the introduction of online news?

Sandra Duerr: Clearly, an increasing number of people are reading us online, many learning about our news and features coverage through Facebook and Twitter, to a far less extent. This is true for all news organizations nationwide. Our readership is up considerably, even though print circulation continues to decline. In January, for example, we had nearly 6 million page views.

HF: Are news consumers engaging in specific types of news more than others now that the Tribune is online?

SD: As expected, stories that directly affect them -- whether it's a new direct flight to Denver or Seattle, or a new restaurant, winery or brewery -- get many page views and shares on social media. Watchdog stories that have engaged readers -- such as the former police dog in Grover Beach who killed a man who rushed to save an elderly woman the dog was attacking -- have also done well; we broke a great deal of news on that subject through public records requests. Shark sightings and attacks also do quite well. Our challenge is to ensure that we are covering both breaking news and stories trending in local social media circles, as well as the investigative, watchdog stories that hold officials accountable and shed light on key issues.

HF: News can be produced and shared by anyone these days, does the Tribune fact check sources before publishing?

SD: We always strive to make sure that we report correct information/data, as well as put it in the proper context. We make sure that we use sources who are reliable and in a position to know the information we are seeking. I hope this answers your question!

HF: With a lot of these up and coming social sites like BuzzFeed becoming more popular, have you seen the editing process lose its importance with online news platforms today?

SD: Every writer needs an editor! So, no, editing remains critical to our news operation. If we have a breaking news story late at night or on a weekend when there is no editor in the newsroom, the information is posted and immediately sent to an editor at home for his/her review.

These are usually an accident, or a fire, etc. Any major breaking news involves an editor from the start.

HF: And with all of these news organizations now fully online and reaching out for subscribers and new ways of revenue, what is working?

SD: Our advertising department has transformed into a full-service digital agency, meaning that it can sell ads nationwide on any platform; it is working with companies and others to make sure that they understand this change. And as the news staff breaks more news, compelling video and photos and drives both readership and engagement online, this increases our advertising department's ability to sell more ads because our reach is deep and broad. In addition, we produce niche magazines such as Vintages, which is more than 100 pages focusing on wine, spirits and breweries, as well as food trends in SLO County. This is published twice a year. We also publish four business magazines a year, called Biz Buzz EXTRA, which focus on local companies, executives and trends in our region. Plus the advertising department has special magazines too.

HF: Do you think other online based news sites that people may follow, say through Facebook, are sites that people trust or do you think these types of sites help spread misinformation?

SD: It depends on what sites you are referencing. If the sites are run and staffed by real journalists who don't represent a point of view and who uphold traditional standards of ethics and accuracy, then I think you can trust the sites. Again, it depends on what sites you are referencing.

HF: What do you see journalism looking like in the future?

SD: I strongly believe that journalism will remain -- that journalists will continue to be a government watchdog. It's how the news is delivered that continues to change. Newspapers will continue to get thinner, and I suspect that more of them will begin publishing only certain days of the week, until our customers are purely digital. At this point, I think some niche magazines that resonate with readers will continue.

HF: Do you think social media and it's news features create a more informed citizen or is social media doing more of the opposite?

SD: Most of our online readers come to us through Facebook. We are reaching our readers through social media because that is where they are. That said, FB is filled with information that is not true.

