

Investigative Journalism:
Resolving the Current Challenges Facing the Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study demonstrates the importance of investigative journalism and the current challenges it is facing. This study looks at the history of investigative journalism, the characteristics that define investigative journalism, the effects investigative journalism has had on the public, the current challenges investigative journalism is facing and ways to resolve those challenges. It analyzes what the literature states on this subject and takes a closer look at what three journalism professionals have to say on the matter.

Investigative journalism has had a long and rich history in the United States, but has been negatively affected over the years by downsizing at news organizations and the overall time and cost it takes to produce investigative pieces. This study not only explores the current challenges facing investigative journalism, but it also provides insight into how to successfully overcome those challenges.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The combination of declining newsroom employment coupled with more journalists switching to public relations and the high cost of conducting investigative reports has led to an overall decline in investigative journalism. This study will examine the importance of investigative journalism and the challenges it is currently facing and try to provide solutions to those challenges.

A study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) from 1990 to 2016 found that the digital and information age greatly affected newspapers and other publishing industries. In June 1990, there were 458,000 people employed in the newspaper publishing industry and by March 2016 that figure had fallen to 183,000 people, a decline of almost 60 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Meanwhile the public relations field has greatly expanded over the last decade with public relations specialists outnumbering journalists by almost 5 to 1 (Williams, 2014). These are just some of the factors that have led to a decline in investigative journalism.

Background of the Problem

Investigative journalism has been extremely popular since the term ‘muckraker’ was first coined at the beginning of the 20th century (Feldstein, 2006, p.3). The halcyon days of investigative journalism exposed many social injustices and acted as a checks and balances to establishments which prompted changes from people, institutions and agencies (“Global”, n.d.

p.2). For instance, the Federal Food and Drug Administration was the direct result of an investigative report on the appalling working conditions of Chicago slaughterhouses written by Upton Sinclair (“Constitutional”, 2008).

However, in recent times investigative reporting has come to be seen as time-consuming, costly and inefficient (“Global”, n.d. p.2). Exacerbating the issue is a decline in newsroom employment. In 2018, research conducted by Pew Research Center found that newsroom employment across the United States continued to decline, driven primarily by job losses at newspapers (Grieco, 2018). The decline in newsroom employment has led many journalists to switch to public relations causing another challenge for investigative journalism. According to BLS data analyzed by the Pew Research Center, the public relations field is outpacing journalism in both job and salary growth (Williams, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the importance of investigative journalism, determine the current challenges facing investigative journalism and find solutions to address those challenges.

Setting of the Study

This study will be done as part of the data collection for a Senior Project at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. Phone interviews will be conducted with three journalism professionals including two professors in the journalism department at California State University, Northridge and the President of the Society of Professional Journalists, Los

Angeles Pro Chapter. The respondents will all be asked the same questions relating to investigative journalism. The questions are designed to answer the research questions and gain insight into the state of investigative journalism

Research Questions

The following research questions were formed from articles, studies and electronic sources to explore and demonstrate the importance of investigative journalism.

1. What is the history of investigative journalism?
2. What are the characteristics of investigative journalism?
3. Why is investigative journalism important?
4. What are examples of investigative journalism that have affected the public?
5. What are the current challenges facing investigative journalism?
6. How can these challenges be resolved?

Definition of Terms

Data Journalism: journalism done with data, data can be the source of data journalism or it can be the tool with which the story is told or it can be both (Bradshaw, n.d.).

Documentary: a film, television or radio program that gives information about a subject and is based on facts.

Investigative Journalism: reporting and presenting news to the public about something someone is trying to hide (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). It has to include systematic, in-depth and original

research and reporting. The practice will often include use of public records and data with a focus on social justice and accountability (Kaplan 2013).

Muckraker: a term coined by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 to describe journalists who were critical of the power of big business (Piascik, 2017).

Nonprofit Newsroom: is the practice of journalism as a non-profit organization instead of a for-profit business.

Podcast: A digital audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer or mobile device, typically available as a series, new instalments of which can be received by subscribers automatically.

Organization of the Study

The study will be organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 will include information on the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, setting for the study as well as the research questions and definition of terms that might be helpful to the reader. Chapter 2 will focus on the current literature available regarding the state of investigative journalism. Chapter 3 will present the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 will summarize the findings from the literature review and respondent interviews and lastly, Chapter 5 will include a summary of the study and provide recommendations for journalists regarding investigative journalism.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The review of literature focuses on the existing literature on investigative journalism. The review will explore the history of investigative journalism, what characterizes investigative journalism, the effects it has had on the public, the importance of investigative journalism, the current challenges facing investigative journalism and how to resolve those challenges.

History of Investigative Journalism

It was on March 17, 1906 that President Theodore Roosevelt coined the term “muckraker” in reference to Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, Lincoln Steffens and other journalists who were critical about the incredible power of big business (Piascik, 2017). However, the concept of investigative reporting was quite popular even before then. According to Feldstein (2006), in the years leading to the American Revolution, newspapers and pamphlets frequently challenged British colonial rule by exposing their transgressions, however it was not done in an objective, journalistic fashion (Feldstein, 2006, p.3). By the later part of the nineteenth century most newspapers had become more commercialized. Technological improvements such as the telegraph, illustration and mass production helped increase demand while decreasing the cost of production (Feldstein, 2006, p.4). At the same time, publishers began replacing, “a more narrow partisan outlook with a broader concept of social responsibility to the community at large” (Feldstein, 2006 pp. 4-5). The shift towards socially responsible journalism was led by famous muckrakers, Ida Tarbell and Upton Sinclair. When Tarbell went to work for McClure’s Magazine she undertook her most famous work, her expose of John D. Rockefeller’s Standard

Oil Company. Her story on one of the world's largest monopolies took many years to complete and McClure's published it in 19 installments. As a result of Tarbell's work, the Supreme Court found Standard Oil in violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1911 and ordered Standard Oil to be broken down into 34 separate companies (Piascik, 2017). An equally important piece of investigative reporting was by Upton Sinclair, who wrote *The Jungle* to expose the appalling working conditions in the meat-packing industry. His description of the diseased and contaminated meat shocked the public and led to new federal and safety laws ("Constitutional", 2008). *The Jungle* was first published in 1905 by the socialist newspaper, *The Appeal to Reason* and then as a book in 1906 ("Constitutional", 2008). After reading *The Jungle*, President Roosevelt appointed a special commission to investigate the slaughterhouses of Chicago. The report confirmed all of Sinclair's findings and the president enacted the Meat Inspection Act of 1906 ("Constitutional", 2008). During this time, the Pure Food and Drug act was also signed into law which led to the formation of the federal Food and Drug Administration ("Constitutional", 2008). According to Feldstein, early scholarly interpretations of investigative journalism during this period were mostly positive and led to important Progressive Era reforms such as child labor laws, federal income taxes, and the direct election of senators among others (Feldstein, 2006, p.7). The politics of the 1960s caused another resurgence of investigative journalism and this time journalists tackled segregation, the Vietnam War, and political and corporate corruption (Feldstein, 2006, p.7). According to Feldstein, the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act and pro-media rulings by the Supreme Court allowed for more aggressive investigative reporting (Feldstein, 2006, p.7). Investigative reporting was not just confined to newspapers, during this era, magazines also began featuring more articles with an emphasis on investigation and 60

Minutes debuted in 1968 which featured reporter-centered investigations (Feldstein, 2006, p.7). Feldstein believed that the investigative journalists of the 1960s shared many similarities with earlier muckrakers including distrust of business, politics and bureaucracy but the newer crop of investigative journalists focused more on government misconduct rather than corporations (Feldstein, 2006, p.7).

Defining Investigative Journalism

There are many ways to define investigative journalism. David Kaplan, Director of the Global Investigative Journalism Network, believes that it's easier to explain what investigative journalism is by first explaining what it is not (Looney, 2013). It is not “leak journalism” – a reporter cannot just receive a document from a high-ranking official and transcribe it and call it investigative reporting (Looney, 2013). Investigative journalism is also not beat reporting – while both types of reporting share some of the same techniques, investigative journalism requires more in-depth reporting and examination (Looney, 2013). An investigative piece can take months or even years to produce so while it covers critical matters it is not critical reporting. Lastly, investigative journalism cannot just be contained to crime and corruption reporting, investigative pieces can address education, abuses of power etc., by referring to it as crime and corruption reporting would just be limiting its scope (Looney, 2013). In *Investigative Journalism: Defining the Craft* (2013) Kaplan further defines investigative journalism. Kaplan believes that it has to include systematic, in-depth and original research and reporting. The practice will often include use of public records and data with a focus on social justice and accountability (Kaplan 2013). Kaplan writes that some journalists might claim that all

reporting is investigative, but true investigative journalism is a set of methodologies that takes certain expertise and might take years to master (Kaplan 2013). He concludes that the best investigative journalism requires in-depth original research and reporting that uses the scientific method in its approach – there is a hypothesis that is formed and tested along with extensive fact-checking with a focus on social justice and uses public records and data (Looney 2013). A more technical approach to investigative reporting is presented by the *News Manual*:

Introduction to Investigative Journalism (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). The manual defines investigative journalism as reporting and presenting news to the public about something someone is trying to hide (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). Investigative reporting is usually done to keep entities accountable to society; this can be the government, companies and/or criminals (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). An investigative story will require news value, facts, connecting the facts together, fact-checking and evidence to support those facts (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). Evidence to support facts is especially critical if there is ever a time a story will need to be defended in court. Investigative reporters will often use confidential sources; they may also face threats and should always work within the law and in an ethical manner (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). A more practical application of how news organizations define investigative journalism comes from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). The ICIJ is a nonprofit news organization that investigates important stories in the world. Before the ICIJ decides to investigate a story, it asks three questions: is it an issue of global concern, is the system designed to protect people, broken and is it likely to get a result (Ryle, 2012). The ICIJ chooses stories that will positively affect people and prompt change (Ryle, 2012). They find that the best stories expose government misdeeds or failings from public and private organizations – especially if the public has certain expectations

of those organizations (Ryle, 2012). As an example, the ICIJ used their investigation on thalidomide. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, pregnant women from 46 countries were prescribed thalidomide for morning sickness, but the medication caused severe deformities once they gave birth. After the story ran, manufacturers were ordered to compensate victims and the government tightened drug testing systems (Ryle, 2012). Their story encompassed all the elements of investigative reporting: an issue that an organization tried to hide, it required original, in-depth research and reporting with a focus on social justice that prompted change.

Importance of Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism has an impact. It acts as a watchdog for institutions, and it provides a checks and balance to establishments and prompts change from people, agencies and institutions (“Global”, n.d. p.2). In 2018, Waldman and Sennott wrote an op-ed piece for the *Washington Post* explaining all the challenges facing journalism at this time including a declining trust in the press and many Americans turning to partisan sources for information (Waldman & Sennott, 2018a). They believed that communities should view journalism as essential as the local libraries, hospitals and museums (Waldman & Sennott, 2018a). While most people agree that investigative journalism is important, it is difficult to prove that (“Global”, n.d. p.2). The Global Investigative Journalism Network attempted to quantify the impact investigative stories have on society by evaluating 10 case studies from around the world. As news organizations struggle to stay afloat, investigative units are often the first to go because the work is often seen as time-consuming, costly and inefficient (“Global”, n.d. p.2). Most news organizations prefer to focus on turning out as many stories as fast as they can to compete with

instant news and the internet (“Global”, n.d. p.2). However, this report found that the importance of investigative reporting is substantial and every dollar spent on a story can usually generate hundreds of dollars in benefits (“Global”, n.d. p.2). For instance, *Losing Track: North Carolina’s Troubled Probation System* written in 2008 by *The News and Observer* was about the failed probation system in North Carolina. After the story ran, the state passed 31 new laws which saved North Carolina \$62 million in the long term (Sabados, 2018). At the time, the newspaper was cutting back on staff but pushed to expand its investigative team because they believed investigative stories positively impacted the public. The story took six months and cost \$200,000 (Sabados, 2018). Another example was *The Prodigal Daughter* undertaken by the *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project* in 2015. This investigation looked into the Uzbekistani president’s daughter, Gulnara Karimova and found evidence of extortion, money laundering and bribes. They discovered that Russian and Scandinavian companies paid \$1 billion to Karimova in exchange for her influence in the country’s telecommunications industry (Sabados, 2018). The U.S. Department of Justice seized \$850 million linked to deals organized by Karimova and the involved companies also had to pay fines of \$965 million and \$795 million to the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and to Dutch and Swiss regulators (Sabados, 2018). In Britain, two journalists from the *Guardian* investigated a network of alleged global bribery by arms company, BAE Systems over seven years (Sabados, 2018). The investigation implicated officials in the Middle East, Europe and Africa and showed involvement by the British government. Due to the story, a new bribery law was enacted and BAE Systems paid \$400 million in fines in the U.S. and \$30 million to the U.K. to settle allegations of corruption (Sabados, 2018). Most recently, the *Panama Papers* represented one of

the biggest acts of journalism in history involving 2.6 terabytes of data, more than 370 journalists from 80 countries and covering 100 leading news media organizations (“Panama Papers”, n.d.). In 2016, more than a hundred media outlets around the world coordinated by the ICIJ, released stories on the *Panama Papers*, a collection of over 11.5 million leaked documents exposing a widespread system of global tax evasion (Greenberg, 2016). In order to facilitate communication between the whistleblower and all involved journalists, the ICIJ’s developers built a two-factor-authentication-protected search engine for the leaked documents which they shared via encrypted email with news outlets including the *BBC*, and dozens of foreign-language media outlets (Greenberg, 2016). As a result of the story, government officials and ministers were either dismissed or resigned including the prime ministers of Iceland and Pakistan and authorities have already begun investigating the allegations and recouped tens of millions of dollars in tax revenue (Sabados, 2018). The report from the Global Investigative Journalism Network concludes that the impact of investigative journalism can be gauged and its influence is far out of proportion to its cost (“Global”, n.d. p.3). However, they do caution that a recognizable impact might not happen right away and it might not happen with every story, but it is still a worthwhile endeavor (“Global”, n.d. pp. 29-30). In fact, they believe that not only does investigative journalism have economic benefits but it has also exposed abuses of power, tamed corruption, fostered transparency and accountability and has strengthened our democracy (“Global”, n.d. p.3).

Effects Investigative Journalism has on the Public

There are many examples of investigative journalism stories that have affected the public. One of the earliest examples is the *Pentagon Papers*. In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg, a senior research

associate at MIT's Center for International Studies turned over the *Pentagon Papers* without authorization to the *New York Times*. The *Pentagon Papers* contained a history of the U.S. role in Indochina from World War II until May 1968 and was commissioned by U.S. Secretary, Robert S. McNamara ("Pentagon Papers", n.d.). The *Times* began publishing a series of articles based on the study beginning on June 13, 1971 after the third installment appeared in the *Times*; the U.S. Department of Justice obtained a temporary restraining order against further publication of classified material ("Pentagon Papers", n.d.). The *Times* and the *Washington Post*, which was also in possession of the documents, fought the order through the courts for the next 15 days ("Pentagon Papers", n.d.). In *New York Times Co. v. the United States* the Supreme Court established that the government must meet a high bar to stop the press from publishing based on the First Amendment's freedom of the press (Fisher, 2018). The decision strengthened the concept that the government could not interfere with the press through prior restraint, a form of censorship in which the government could review and decide what a news organization published (Fisher, 2018). According to Fisher, the decision reinforced the media's role, under the First Amendment, to serve as a watchdog and publish information, even critical or embarrassing reports about government officials and their actions and on June 30, 1971 the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the newspapers to resume publishing the material (Fisher, 2018). One of the most famous examples of investigative journalism also occurred during the 1970s. Two reporters at the *Washington Post*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein began to investigate a break in at the Democratic National Committee offices at the Watergate Complexes after discovering that one of the burglars was on the payroll of President Nixon's reelection committee (Perlstein, n.d.). Woodward and Bernstein uncovered a series of crimes that lead back to the White House. Their

reporting led to indictment of 40 administration officials and the eventual resignation of President Nixon (Perlstein, n.d.). In 1992, Florence Graves began investigating a series of sexual misconduct allegations from ten women against Senator Bob Packwood for the *Washington Post*. The story caused the Senate Ethics Committee to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct for the first time and it was also the first time the committee voted to expel a senator (“Schuster”, n.d.). Packwood eventually resigned and Grave’s story helped the passage of the Congressional Accountability Act, which held Congress to the same discrimination laws as the rest of the nation (“Schuster”, n.d.). Investigative journalism does not just hold the government accountable; it also helps spur changes in industries to protect the public. In 1996, the *Chicago Tribune* published “*Cardiac Arrest at 37,000 Feet*” the story focused on U.S. airlines and the lack of life-saving equipment and medicine available on board flights (Crewdson, 1996). The story found that although the U.S. provided the cheapest and safest air service it did not carry many of the drugs and tools available in a hospital emergency room including portable defibrillators that many European and Asian airlines carried (Crewdson, 1996).. Through research and analysis, Crewdson discovered that raising the U.S. in-flight medical care to international standards would add just two cents to the price of each ticket (“Code: Blue”, 1996). After the article was published airlines began installing defibrillators on planes and airports and other public spaces. Newspaper articles are not the only forms of investigative journalism to have affected the public. In 2002, the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) produced an investigative piece detailing the involvement of multinational tobacco companies in the smuggling of cigarettes into Columbia (“Our History”, n.d.). The investigation directly inspired new but ultimately unsuccessful federal legislation, the Tobacco Smuggling Eradication Act (“Our History”, n.d.).

In 2005, *'No Place to Hide'* also produced by CIR, aired as an *ABC News* documentary the story explained how the government was teaming up with the data mining industry to monitor Americans as part of the war on terror. The investigation resulted in a book and Congress held two hearings on privacy, specifically citing CIR's reporting ("Our History", n.d.).

Current Challenges Facing Investigative Journalism

Some of the challenges facing investigative journalism include a decline in employment, more journalists switching to public relations, the cost to fund stories and corporate ownership. In 2002, Just, Levine and Regan (2002) conducted a survey which revealed that although 75 percent of newsrooms said they did investigative reporting, the percentage of stations with full-time investigative units was only 25 percent. Only 2 percent of those stories were labeled as investigative by the stations and only 1 percent of those stories were original station-initiated investigations (Just, Levine & Regan, 2002). News directors that were surveyed said that one of the reasons investigative work had declined was the resources and time it took to produce that kind of work (Just et al., 2002). Newsrooms also faced pressures from advertisers such as discouraging them from pursuing stories that might be damaging to them or pressured to cover stories about them (Just et al., 2002). The survey concluded that the majority believed investigative reporting to be too crucial to a local news station's franchise to be abandoned (Just et al., 2002). Corporate ownership has also affected the ability to conduct investigative reporting. According to Carlson (2006), most newspapers are now owned by a few large corporations to the detriment of journalism. In order to maximize profits, corporations have to cut costs. In 2005 that resulted in a loss of 2,100 journalism jobs and that trend continues to this day (Carlson, 2006). A

study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) from 1990 through 2016 found that the digital and information age greatly affected newspapers and other publishing industries. In June 1990, there were 458,000 people employed in the newspaper publishing industry and by March 2016 that figure had fallen to 183,000 people, a decline of almost 60 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016). Another survey conducted by the BLS (2017) found that from January 2001 to September 2016, the newspaper publishers industry lost over half of its employment, from 412,000 to 174,000. The number of business establishments in the newspaper publishing industry also decreased by 18.1 percent (BLS, 2017). In 2018, research conducted by Pew Research Center found that newsroom employment across the United States continued to decline, driven primarily by job losses at newspapers (Grieco, 2018). From 2003 to 2017, newsroom employment dropped by 23 percent and newspaper newsroom employees dropped by 45 percent over that period from 71,000 workers in 2008 to 39,000 in 2017 (Grieco, 2018). Those losses of jobs mean that the newspaper industry now accounts for a smaller portion of overall newsroom employment across the five sectors (newspaper publishers, television, radio, cable and digital-native) (Grieco, 2018). The decline in newsroom employment has led many journalists to switch to public relations. According to BLS data analyzed by the Pew Research Center, the public relations field is outpacing journalism in both job and salary growth (Williams, 2014). In 2013 the median annual income for public relations specialists was \$54,940 while journalists only earned \$35,600 (Williams, 2014). The public relations field has also expanded over the past decade, with public relations specialists outnumbering journalists by almost 5 to 1 (Williams, 2014). The number of reporters has also decreased by 17 percent while the number of public relations has increased by 22 percent (Williams, 2014). According to

Williams, one reason behind the increase in public relations job has been digital technology. Companies are able to reach out to consumers in a variety of ways and are hiring public relations specialists to help them do so (Williams, 2014). Although it's helpful for the public to have information more readily available it does create issues with reporters. As newsroom staff shrinks, reporters have a harder time to question and counter the claims found in press releases (Williams, 2014). The lack of reporters in the newspaper industry has far reaching consequences according to Williams (2016). With fewer journalists working, reporters are becoming concentrated in coastal cities, investigative journalism and local reporting is declining and the ratio of journalists to public relations specialists is widening (Williams, 2016). Since 2005, there's been a substantial decrease in the ratio of newspaper journalists to public relations specialists. In 2005, for every one digital-only journalist there were 20 newspaper journalists but due to severe cutbacks at newspapers that ratio has decreased and in 2015, for every one-digital-only journalist there were only four newspaper journalists (Williams, 2016). In 2015, there were 51,980 journalists working in both fields versus 69,900 that were employed in 2005 – a decline of 26 percent (Williams, 2016). Williams believes this loss is important for a few key reasons. Job losses have not been evenly distributed, citizens outside of coastal cities have fewer reporters acting as local watchdogs and the media system is becoming concentrated in coastal cities (Williams, 2016). With fewer journalists but financial pressure to adapt to low advertising rates, paper and digital outlets are focused on shorter articles that cost less time and money to produce (Williams, 2016). Coverage of local politics is likely worsening and there are fewer reporters objectively writing about politics to counter “spin” from public relations (Williams, 2016). Trade associations hire PR firms to craft messages when they are facing public scrutiny

and regulations as reporters try to investigate and explain the merits of these proposals to citizens they are being outnumbered and outspent by the public relations industry (Williams, 2016). In addition, the pay gap between journalists and public relations specialists is widening forcing many journalists to consider changing careers. Another challenge is the high cost of investigative reporting. The *New York Times* once estimated it cost \$10,000 a day to have a reporter in Baghdad (“Crippling”, 2018). An investigative piece on the dangers of acetaminophen by ProPublica took two years and cost \$750,000 (Osnos, 2013). The cost of investigative reporting is one of the main reasons news organizations decide not to pursue them in addition to stories being time consuming and risky (“Crippling”, 2018). Depending on the story, organizations may have to potentially defend them in court which makes them risky (“Crippling”, 2018). Another issue that hinders investigative journalism is the lack of reporters. Less reporters means more stories can be missed, new reporters also feel pressure to write as many stories as possible while not being able to properly fact check them (“Crippling”, 2018)

Resolving Challenges Facing Investigative Journalism

In order to resolve some of the challenges facing investigative journalism the industry will have to focus on funding, new formats and resources. According to a survey by Pew Research, mobile devices are rapidly becoming one of the most common ways for Americans to get news (Bialik & Matsu, 2017). The survey found that the gap between television and online news consumption is narrowing, use of mobile devices for news continues to grow, older adults are driving the growth in mobile news use, and two-thirds of Americans get at least some news on social media (Bialik & Matsu, 2017). In a separate survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2017, 43 percent of Americans got their news online, while 50 percent got their news on

television (Pew Research Center, 2017). When the survey was conducted a year before, the gap between online news viewing and television was almost twice as large at 19 points – so the amount of Americans who get their news from television is decreasing, while those who get their news online is increasing (Pew Research Center, 2017). The decline in television news occurs across all three types of TV news – local, network and cable but it is greatest for local television news (Pew Research Center, 2017). The two oldest age groups, 65 and older and those aged 50 to 64 saw considerable increase in online news use, according to the survey this pattern is in line with previous findings that show that recent growth in mobile news was driven by the oldest age groups (Pew Research Center, 2017). Since more Americans are getting their news online, it would make sense for investigative journalists to explore this as a new medium for their stories, beginning with podcasts. According to Dalton (2017) podcasts are the newest way to experience investigative reporting. The writers and producers of these podcasts conduct the same in-depth and original research as that of traditional print and TV reporters (Dalton, 2017). The best of these podcasts have managed to create an investigative hybrid that combines long form print reporting with the entertainment qualities listeners like about podcasts (O’Donoghue, 2018). However, podcasts have their own set of unique challenges such as making sure there aren’t too many voices in a story so as not to confuse the listener (Dalton, 2017). Podcasts also have to be more creative when presenting data - in print and film, the reporter is able to break down data and research with visual cues which podcasts can’t do (Dalton, 2017). Investigative podcasts still face similar challenges as traditional investigative journalists; the format is expensive, time-consuming and difficult to make but it does offer a promising path for reporters who want to tell long form stories that make a difference and attract a large enough audience to be

sustainable (O'Donoghue, 2018). The popularity of podcasts is supported by research conducted by Pew Research Center. In 2018, Pew Research Center issued its annual report on the audio news sector split by modes of delivery: traditional terrestrial (AM/FM) radio and digital formats such as online and podcasting (Pew Research Center, 2018). According to the study, terrestrial radio reached almost the entire U.S. population and remained steady in its revenue; online radio and podcasting have continued to grow over the past decade (Pew Research Center, 2018). Over the past year, 64 percent of Americans aged 12 and older had listened to online radio in the past month and 57 percent had listened in the past week (Pew Research Center, 2018). In the past decade, podcast listeners have also substantially increased. In 2018, 44 percent of Americans aged 12 or older had listened to a podcast and 26 percent had listened to a podcast in the last month (Pew Research Center, 2018). Another potential avenue for investigative reporting could be documentaries.

According to an article by Cross (2018) he believes that whatever the medium, reporters gather and synthesize facts, choose quotes, decide what context is most relevant and unfold a story to create meaning. As an example, he used *Harvest of Shame*. In 1955, *Life* photographer Robert Drew along with Richard Leacock developed a portable camera that could record picture separately from audio (Cross, 2018). At CBS, producers of Edward Murrow's show, *See It Now* took advantage of the new technology to make *Harvest of Shame* about migrant workers in Florida (Cross, 2018). The *Harvest of Shame* documentary has long been considered a benchmark of investigative journalism and proved that documentaries are able to influence audiences in ways print journalism cannot (Cross, 2018). But not everyone considers documentaries to be journalism. Hornaday (2018) does not think documentaries should be

considered journalism because most documentaries are biased. Although they share some similarities with journalism – concern with facts, accuracy, fairness, clarity and brevity – these films also use music to spark specific feelings in the audience, selective framing and editing and in some cases even reenactments of specific events (Hornaday, 2018). While Hornaday concedes that journalism is not completely objective, reporters still have to make choices about what to leave in and keep out but most try to leave their personal view out of it. If investigative reporting is to survive, it also has to find innovative ways to use resources. Communication scholar, James Hamilton estimated that it can cost newsrooms up to \$300,000 and six months of a reporter’s time to do an investigative piece and many newsrooms do not have the resources to cover those costs (DeWitte, 2018). However, data journalism could change that. The Stanford Journalism and Democracy Initiative (JDI) hopes to develop technological and data driven tools that will help journalists do high-quality public affairs reporting (DeWitte, 2018). Stanford students will work with local newsrooms to collect data such as government records; the students will then transform that information into datasets that journalists can analyze (DeWitte, 2018). The datasets will be gathered and made available through the Stanford Libraries’ Digital Repository with guides that can show journalists how to read the data (DeWitte, 2018). According to the Data Journalism Handbook, data journalism puts to use the enormous digital information now available (Bradshaw, n.d.). There are already news organizations that are using this technological advancement, for instance the *Telegraph* was able to use data journalism to find connections between hundreds of thousands of documents to track MP’s expenses (Bradshaw, n.d.). Hans Rosling used infographics to help the public visualize world poverty and the *BBC* and *Financial Times* use data journalism to help with their budget interactives (Bradshaw, n.d.). Bradshaw

believes that, “data can be the source of data journalism or it can be the tool with which the story is told or it can be both.” Lastly, investigative journalism should look towards nonprofit newsrooms as a new source of funding. According to Waldman and Sennott (2018b), an entirely commercial approach will not save journalism, nonprofits and philanthropy must take a greater role if it is to survive. Nonprofits news organizations have the ability to be powerful and lasting institutions, as an example, they cite that 59 percent of hospitals are private nonprofits, 90 percent of college students study at nonprofit or public institutions and in the information world, there’s Wikipedia, NPR and ProPublica (Waldman & Sennott, 2018b). Journalism provides a valuable service and it has far-reaching social benefits so then it should require broad philanthropic support (Waldman & Sennott, 2018b). Nonprofits also have to constantly prove the impact of their work to attract donors so this creates an innovative environment while a similar environment at a local news world would not produce similar results in fact; competition will usually drive the media towards greater sensationalism not greater quality (Waldman & Sennott, 2018b). Finally, the combined net worth of millionaires and billionaires is \$2.4 trillion – local journalism can be fixed with an investment of somewhere between \$300 million to \$500 million annually, if philanthropists can see local news differently, then they are in a position to save it (Waldman & Sennott, 2018b). While there are many benefits to nonprofit news organizations there are some setbacks. Bill Birnbauer, author of *The Rise of Nonprofit Investigative Journalism in the United States* (2018) argues that journalists have to become comfortable with collaboration and asking for donations (as cited in Edmonds, 2019). Birnbauer believes that the rise of digital publishing has made it easier to focus resources on writing good stories rather than on printing plants, delivery trucks and ad sales (as cited in Edmonds, 2019). However, nonprofit news

organizations do have to struggle with sustainability issues – most have to find creative ways to sustain themselves beyond the initial startup phase (as cited in Edmonds, 2019). As an example, he mentions events, sponsorships and memberships as alternative revenue sources (as cited in Edmonds, 2019). Another issue is the potential for conflict of interests between donors and possible stories. Birnbauer sees the potential for conflict, but considers this a necessary compromise; he believes it's better to know where the money is coming from and do the work, then not work at all (as cited in Edmonds, 2019). As the amount of online news use continues to rise, nonprofit news organizations might be a viable option for investigative journalism.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter explains the process of finding sources and determining their credibility as well as the limitations.

The purpose of this research paper was to show the importance of investigative journalism to the public and different ways investigative journalism can evolve in order to secure its continuing presence in society.

Data Sources

The varying opinions gathered in this paper are the result of careful examination and analysis of relevant material. The research done was primarily web-based, which included popular search engines as well as online news sources such as the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Washington Post*. In order to show a quantitative aspect of how investigative journalism has declined over the last decade, statistics were gathered from the *Bureau of Labor Statistics* as well as *Pew Research Center*. In addition to web-based research, three interviews were conducted with three journalism professionals to get their opinion on the state of investigative journalism.

Participants

David Blumenkrantz, a journalism professor at California State University, Northridge. Sally Turner, a journalism professor at California State University, Northridge and adviser to

student-run *On Point*, a 30-minute news and public affairs show and Stephanie Bluestein, president of the Society of Professional Journalists, Los Angeles Pro Chapter.

Interview Design

The following questions were asked of each of the journalists and served as data sources for the study:

1. Why is investigative journalism important?
2. What are the current challenges facing investigative journalism?
3. What can be done to resolve those challenges?
4. Do you consider documentaries and/or podcasts journalism?

Data Collection

The method of data collection for this study was to do an interview with each journalism professional. The interviews were conducted during May 2019 and lasted approximately 15 minutes each. During the interviews, the professionals were asked to answer questions based on the original research questions of this senior project and to see how it relates to the literature gathered in Chapter 2.

Data Presentation

The data collected during each interview was documented through audio recordings using a digital voice recorder as well as written notes during the interviews, the interviews were then transcribed for assured clarification and included in this project as Appendix A, B and C.

Limitations

There were some limitations encountered while conducting research for this paper. One of the limitations was the sheer amount of information available on investigative journalism and sorting through it to find the most relevant data. Another was finding adequate quantitative statistics to support the thesis as well as determining the credibility of the sources used. Finally, the inclusion of the interviews from journalism professionals is qualitative and opinion-based which means they cannot be generalized.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 will provide descriptions of the journalism professionals interviewed in the study as well as summarize the respondent's answers to the research questions. Since the data was collected through recorded phone interviews lasting approximately 15 minutes, it will be presented in the form of direct quotations or paraphrased responses. The answers will then be analyzed and compared to the existing literature on the state of investigative journalism as reviewed in Chapter 2.

Description of Interview Participants

Professor of Journalism at California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

David Blumenkrantz has been a journalism professor at CSUN since 2003. His professional experience includes eight years of NGO, documentary and photojournalism work in East and Central Africa documenting issues such as urban poverty, street children, civil war and refugees among others. Blumenkrantz's photography of Africa has been displayed around the world including at the Watts Towers Art Center in Los Angeles and has also been featured in academic journals, textbooks, magazines and newspapers.

Professor of Journalism at California State University, Northridge (CSUN)

Sally Turner has been a journalism professor at CSUN since 1989; she is also the faculty adviser for *On Point*, a 30-minute, student run, public affairs show. Before CSUN, Turner

worked as a print and TV journalist for ten years, mostly as a producer for *CNN* in New York and Los Angeles.

President of the Society of Professional Journalists, Los Angeles Pro Chapter

Stephanie Bluestein has more than 18 years of professional journalism experience including working as a contributing reporter for the *Los Angeles Business Journal* and as a staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Daily News* and *The Enterprise* in Simi Valley. Dr. Bluestein began teaching for the journalism department at CSUN in 2010.

Interview Questions

Each journalism professional was asked to answer the following questions regarding investigative journalism.

1. Why is investigative journalism important?

Question #1 was asked to gain insight as to why investigative journalism is important and to establish the impact it has on the public.

- David Blumenkrantz: “Oh, it’s incredibly important, you know journalism is considered the 4th rail, it’s like they’re the watchdog, they’re the ones that are supposed to speak truth to power, you know point out things, point out injustices and inequities and things like that and if it wasn’t for a free press, a robust free press that has the ability to investigate and report on things, things can be kept in the dark and that can have all kinds of ramifications for society” (Appendix A).

- Sally Turner: “I think investigative journalism is important because in our system of checks and balances and in a democracy, number one, it’s extremely important for voters to be informed and journalists play a big role in informing voters and consumers and citizens so that they can play their part. It’s all also part of the checks and balances system that’s pretty clearly laid out in the Constitution. Reporters are the fourth estate; they’re one of the branches of government and their ability to provide oversight into what the government is doing is crucial” (Appendix B).
- Stephanie Bluestein: “Because there is a lot of corruption that can and does go on in government and in for-profit business, but especially government and unless there are reporters who are keeping their eyes and ears open there’s a lot of illegal and immoral things that will happen with tax payers money, with investors money if it’s a for profit business, taxpayer money if it’s government, if it’s a government agency” (Appendix C).

2. What are the current challenges facing investigative journalism?

Question #2 was asked to understand the challenges facing investigative journalism from the perspective of journalism professionals.

- David Blumenkrantz: “Well, one of the things is a lack of...if it’s not considered to be profitable, then a lot of sort of mainstream press outlets will not want to invest the time and energy and resources the way they used to maybe invest them. So, sometimes certain organizations don’t do

as in-depth investigations that satisfy and do superficial stories, easy stories, things like that, that's one of the problems facing it and the other thing of course, is lack of transparency from government officials. You can easily point to the current administration's sort of war on the media, has been fake news and all of that so it kind of erodes the public's confidence and the accuracy of the reporting, so those are two pretty big factors right there" (Appendix A).

- Sally Turner: "A few, one thing that's happened and it's certainly happened before in history but the technology of how information is delivered to the audience has changed so much and so quickly in the past decade and we haven't really worked the kinks out of that system. Because we're a capitalist system and a market driven system... media have to make a profit and online journalism hasn't quite figured that equation out yet. So right now we're in this situation where people in the audience aren't necessarily willing to pay for a free press and I think they will again, I think that it's starting to change, I think we're figuring out this new technology but right at this particular moment, I think we're suffering a bit. It's not the first time that something like this has happened but we are in a situation where investigative journalism isn't necessarily profitable and the audience isn't necessarily willing to do the work or pay the money to get the depth of information that investigative journalists provide" (Appendix B).

- Stephanie Bluestein: “Shrinking newsrooms and newspapers that are...for the most part newspapers, have, historically, carried their weight of investigative journalism. TV and radio stations, they don’t typically do very much investigative journalism. What they report on is the investigative journalism why’s and something that most likely was reported by a newspaper journalist. When I say newspaper - I mean a publication that’s in print but it’s online also. So as these newsrooms are shrinking in size, meaning there’s fewer reporters, there’s just is not enough bodies to go around to do the level of investigative journalism that used to be done 10, 20, 30 years ago. Investigative journalism takes a lot of time and time is money. If you want to cut a reporter loose for two to three weeks to work on an investigation then everything else that they’re supposed to be normally reporting on either won’t get covered or other reporters will have to pick up the slack and in some newspapers there’s just barely enough people to even put the newspaper out every day”
(Appendix C).

3. What can be done to resolve those challenges?

Question #3 was asked to understand different types of solutions journalism professionals had for investigative journalism as well as to see if there were any similarities in their answers.

- David Blumenkrantz: “Well, there are all kinds of organizations out there that are doing investigative reporting that’s not in the mainstream. So if somebody wants to read about what’s really going on, about a particular issue whether it’s Flint, Michigan or Donald Trump’s tax return, there are places to go and seek it out, it’s just that it’s not necessarily in the front page of the local paper and it’s not on the 11’ o’clock news, but there’s a lot of good investigative reporting being done but it’s sort of become a niche thing, where they’re sort of preaching to the choir if you will and people who want to read those stories know where to find them but it’s not all out there in the mainstream public. As far as mitigating it, in terms of making it more popular, I think we live in a very fast paced society and there’s just a lot of media, people have a lot of choices. One thing I would say is don’t underestimate the power of some of these late night talk shows and sort of the comedy, the so-called comedy news reports, like the John Oliver show on HBO, they’ll do something like a 20-minute investigative report on some issue that you wouldn’t even think would be on a comedy show and he really goes into great depth, they do a great job of reporting it, but they just sort of cloak it in humor, like a ‘spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down’. So there is good investigative reporting out there and that’s one way people have access to it, but that’s not what you would hope would be the ideal scenario in a flourishing democracy, you wouldn’t think you would have to look at the comedy

shows. There's a lot of good investigative reporting still going on, I don't know how many people are paying attention to it because there's so much media and people are easily distracted by the shiny objects and the Kardashians and all this other stuff that's going on" (Appendix A).

- Sally Turner: "Well, there are a lot of things you can say about that. I think one trend you certainly see is citizen journalism, the idea that anyone with a cellphone can be an investigative reporter in a sense. There are, of course, dangers to that because you don't necessarily have credibility or the authority or the background to provide the context that you should, but I do think that's a really interesting idea. I also think, though, that digital journalism should make good investigative journalism more available to more people. It's just that the issue that we're facing now is how to pay for it, first of all, and how to give it the depth and the context that it should have to be credible, to have staying power" (Appendix B).
- Stephanie Bluestein: "I'm personally a big believer in nonprofit journalism. I would like to see more efforts made to create more nonprofit journalism outlets so that there can be more reporters doing investigative journalism and the one that comes to mind, you've probably read about it, is ProPublica. To me, you don't have to be making money off of the news as long as...you can pay the people a decent salary, the employees, and keep the lights running. You don't even need to print anymore, it can be totally online and you don't need to worry about advertisers. You get

money from grants from donors – donors who hopefully aren't going to want their biases, their influences on the stories. I believe there are a lot of people who do care deeply about journalism from regular people to wealthy people who would be willing to contribute money to start more nonprofit outlets. That's what I would like to see happen" (Appendix C).

4. Do you consider podcasts and/or documentaries investigative journalism?

Question #4 was asked to see if professional journalists consider podcasts and/or documentaries as investigative journalism.

- David Blumenkrantz: "Well, yeah absolutely. Documentary films tend to be, often times, a form of investigative reporting because they have the depth of reporting. As opposed to when I teach a regular photojournalism class, we teach them how to go out and cover city hall or go out and cover a local sports event, but documentaries we only work on one topic for the entire semester so it is a visual investigation of a topic it could be on homelessness, which is what we do a lot in my classes or urban poverty or any number of issues...immigration, things like that. Some stories lend themselves to visual representation, some stories don't, but I think the strongest presentation is to sort of have a combination of pictures and words" (Appendix A).
- Sally Turner: "Oh, absolutely. I think there are so many great ones and there's so much of that being done now because there's so much content

available. I think you really have to evaluate every piece of journalism, sort of on its own merit. It just becomes so important for the audience to be able to sift through and to know whether or not something has the sources, the context and the research that it needs to have. There's so much disinformation being done now and we move into this era of people talking about 'deep state'. There are so many ways that people are going to be able to be manipulated" (Appendix B).

- Stephanie Bluestein: ""Yeah, it definitely can, both of those are just multimedia forms of investigative journalism. So its investigative journalism being presented audio or being presented as video and actually a lot of investigative journalism should have all four components. It should have text and not just short captions it should have a fair amount of text that people can read. It could have podcasts as like sidebars, if you're familiar with that term, like a side story that relates to it. You could have a documentary that relates to that investigation and then you could also have still photos...I don't think you need one or the other" (Appendix C).

Research Questions

For this study, six research questions were created to show the importance of investigative journalism, the current challenges facing it and what are some possible solutions to those challenges.

Research Question #1: What is the history of investigative journalism?

- It was on March 17, 1906 that President Theodore Roosevelt coined the term “muckraker” in reference to Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, Lincoln Steffens and other journalists who were critical about the incredible power of big business (Piascik, 2017).
- The concept of investigative reporting was quite popular even before then. According to Feldstein (2006), in the years leading to the American Revolution, newspapers and pamphlets frequently challenged British colonial rule by exposing their transgressions, however it was not done in an objective, journalistic fashion (Feldstein, 2006, p.3),.
- By the later part of the nineteenth century most newspapers had become more commercialized. Technological improvements such as the telegraph, illustration and mass production helped increase demand while decreasing the cost of production (Feldstein, 2006, p.4). At the same time, publishers began replacing, “a more narrow partisan outlook with a broader concept of social responsibility to the community at large” (Feldstein, 2006 pp. 4-5). The shift towards socially responsible journalism was led by famous muckrakers, Ida Tarbell and Upton Sinclair.
- The politics of the 1960s caused another resurgence of investigative journalism and this time journalists tackled segregation, the Vietnam War, and political and corporate corruption (Feldstein, 2006, p.7). According to Feldstein, the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act and pro-media

rulings by the Supreme Court allowed for more aggressive investigative reporting (Feldstein, 2006, p.7).

Research Question #2: What are the characteristics of investigative journalism?

- In *Investigative Journalism: Defining the Craft* (2013) Kaplan believes that investigative journalism has to include systematic, in-depth and original research and reporting. The practice will often include use of public records and data with a focus on social justice and accountability (Kaplan 2013).
- The *News Manual: Introduction to investigative journalism* manual defines investigative journalism as reporting and presenting news to the public about something someone is trying to hide (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). Investigative reporting is usually done to keep entities accountable to society; this can be the government, companies and/or criminals (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). An investigative story will require news value, facts, connecting the facts together, fact-checking and evidence to support those facts (“Chapter 39”, n.d.).
- Investigative reporters will often use confidential sources; they may also face threats and should always work within the law and in an ethical manner (“Chapter 39”, n.d.).

Research Question #3: Why is investigative journalism important?

- It acts as a watchdog for institutions, and it provides a checks and balance to establishments and prompts change from people, agencies and institutions (“Global”, n.d. p.2).
- A report from the Global Investigative Journalism Network found that the importance of investigative reporting is substantial and every dollar spent on a story can usually generate hundreds of dollars in benefits (“Global”, n.d. p.2).
- For instance, *Losing Track: North Carolina’s Troubled Probation System* written in 2008 by *The News and Observer* was about the failed probation system in North Carolina. After the story ran, the state passed 31 new laws which saved North Carolina \$62 million in the long term (Sabados, 2018).
- In Britain, two journalists from the *Guardian* investigated a network of alleged global bribery by arms company, BAE Systems over seven years (Sabados, 2018). The investigation implicated officials in the Middle East, Europe and Africa and showed involvement by the British government. Due to the story, a new bribery law was enacted and BAE Systems paid \$400 million in fines in the U.S. and \$30 million to the U.K. to settle allegations of corruption (Sabados, 2018).
- The report from the Global Investigative Journalism Network concludes that the impact of investigative journalism can be gauged and its influence is far out of proportion to its cost (“Global”, n.d. p.3). In fact, they believe that not only does investigative journalism have economic benefits but it

has also exposed abuses of power, tamed corruption, fostered transparency and accountability and has strengthened our democracy (“Global”, n.d. p.3).

Research Question #4: What are examples of investigative journalism that have affected the public?

- One of the most famous examples of investigative journalism occurred during the 1970s. Two reporters at the *Washington Post*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein began to investigate a break in at the Democratic National Committee offices at the Watergate Complexes after discovering that one of the burglars was on the payroll of President Nixon’s reelection committee (Perlstein, n.d.). Woodward and Bernstein uncovered a series of crimes that lead back to the White House. Their reporting led to indictment of 40 administration officials and the eventual resignation of President Nixon (Perlstein, n.d.).
- In 1992, Florence Graves began investigating a series of sexual misconduct allegations from ten women against Senator Bob Packwood for the *Washington Post*. The story caused the Senate Ethics Committee to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct for the first time and it was also the first time the committee voted to expel a senator (“Schuster”, n.d.). Packwood eventually resigned and Grave’s story helped the passage of the Congressional Accountability Act, which held Congress to the same discrimination laws as the rest of the nation (“Schuster”, n.d.).

- In 1996, the *Chicago Tribune* published “*Cardiac Arrest at 37,000 Feet*” the story focused on U.S. airlines and the lack of life-saving equipment and medicine available on board flights (Crewdson, 1996). The story found that although the U.S. provided the cheapest and safest air service it did not carry many of the drugs and tools available in a hospital emergency room including portable defibrillators that many European and Asian airlines carried (Crewdson, 1996). Through research and analysis, Crewdson discovered that raising the U.S. in-flight medical care to international standards would add just two cents to the price of each ticket (“Code: Blue”, 1996). After the article was published airlines began installing defibrillators on planes and airports and other public spaces.
- In 2005, ‘*No Place to Hide*’ also produced by CIR, aired as an *ABC News* documentary the story explained how the government was teaming up with the data mining industry to monitor Americans as part of the war on terror. The investigation resulted in a book and Congress held two hearings on privacy, specifically citing CIR’s reporting (“Our History”, n.d.).

Research Question #5: What are the current challenges facing investigative journalism?

- Corporate ownership has affected the ability to conduct investigative reporting. According to Carlson (2006), most newspapers are now owned by a few large corporations to the detriment of journalism. In order to maximize profits, corporations have to cut costs. In 2005 that resulted in a

loss of 2,100 journalism jobs and that trend continues to this day (Carlson, 2006).

- A study conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) from 1990 through 2016 found that the digital and information age greatly affected newspapers and other publishing industries. In June 1990, there were 458,000 people employed in the newspaper publishing industry and by March 2016 that figure had fallen to 183,000 people, a decline of almost 60 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2016).
- In 2018, research conducted by Pew Research Center found that newsroom employment across the United States continued to decline, driven primarily by job losses at newspapers (Grieco, 2018). From 2003 to 2017, newsroom employment dropped by 23 percent and newspaper newsroom employees dropped by 45 percent over that period from 71,000 workers in 2008 to 39,000 in 2017 (Grieco, 2018).
- The decline in newsroom employment has led many journalists to switch to public relations. According to BLS data analyzed by the Pew Research Center, the public relations field is outpacing journalism in both job and salary growth (Williams, 2014). In 2013 the median annual income for public relations specialists was \$54,940 while journalists only earned \$35,600 (Williams, 2014). The public relations field has also expanded over the past decade, with public relations specialists outnumbering journalists by almost 5 to 1 (Williams, 2014).

- The lack of reporters in the newspaper industry has far reaching consequences according to Williams (2016). With fewer journalists working, reporters are becoming concentrated in coastal cities, investigative journalism and local reporting is declining and the ratio of journalists to public relations specialists is widening (Williams, 2016).
- With fewer journalists but financial pressure to adapt to low advertising rates, paper and digital outlets are focused on shorter articles that cost less time and money to produce (Williams, 2016). Coverage of local politics is likely worsening and there are fewer reporters objectively writing about politics to counter “spin” from public relations (Williams, 2016).
- Another challenge is the high cost of investigative reporting. The *New York Times* once estimated it cost \$10,000 a day to have a reporter in Baghdad (“Crippling”, 2018). An investigative piece on the dangers of acetaminophen by ProPublica took two years and cost \$750,000 (Osnos, 2013). The cost of investigative reporting is one of the main reasons news organizations decide not to pursue them in addition to stories being time consuming and risky (“Crippling”, 2018).

Research Question #6: How can these challenges be resolved?

- In a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2017, 43 percent of Americans got their news online, while 50 percent got their news on television (Pew Research Center, 2017). When the survey was conducted a year before, the gap between online news viewing and television was almost twice as large at 19 points – so the amount of

Americans who get their news from television is decreasing, while those who get their news online is increasing (Pew Research Center, 2017).

- According to Dalton (2017) podcasts are the newest way to experience investigative reporting. The writers and producers of these podcasts conduct the same in-depth and original research as that of traditional print and TV reporters (Dalton, 2017). The best of these podcasts have managed to create an investigative hybrid that combines long form print reporting with the entertainment qualities listeners like about podcasts (O'Donoghue, 2018).
- According to an article by Cross (2018) he believes that whatever the medium, reporters gather and synthesize facts, choose quotes, decide what context is most relevant and unfold a story to create meaning. As an example, he used *Harvest of Shame*. In 1955, *Life* photographer Robert Drew along with Richard Leacock developed a portable camera that could record picture separately from audio (Cross, 2018). At CBS, producers of Edward Murrow's show, *See It Now* took advantage of the new technology to make *Harvest of Shame* about migrant workers in Florida (Cross, 2018). The documentary has long been considered a benchmark of investigative journalism and proved that documentaries are able to influence audiences in ways print journalism cannot (Cross, 2018).
- The Stanford Journalism and Democracy Initiative (JDI) hopes to develop technological and data driven tools that will help journalists do high-quality public affairs reporting (DeWitte, 2018). Stanford students will work with local newsrooms to collect data such as government records; the students will then transform that information into datasets that journalists can analyze (DeWitte, 2018).

- According to the Data Journalism Handbook, data journalism puts to use the enormous digital information now available (Bradshaw, n.d.). There are already news organizations that are using this technological advancement, for instance the *Telegraph* was able to use data journalism to find connections between hundreds of thousands of documents to track MP's expenses (Bradshaw, n.d.).
- According to Waldman and Sennott (2018b), an entirely commercial approach will not save journalism, nonprofits and philanthropy must take a greater role if it is to survive. Nonprofits news organizations have the ability to be powerful and lasting institutions, as an example, they cite that 59 percent of hospitals are private nonprofits, 90 percent of college students study at nonprofit or public institutions and in the information world, there's Wikipedia, NPR and ProPublica (Waldman & Sennott, 2018b).

Research Data Presentation

For this study it was important to see what journalism professionals had to say about the importance of investigative journalism, what they believe the current challenges are and possible solutions to those challenges. In order to acquire this data, David Blumenkrantz, a journalism professor at CSUN, Sally Turner, a journalism professor at CSUN and Stephanie Bluestein, president of the Society of Professional Journalists, Los Angeles Pro Chapter were interviewed for the study. They were asked identical questions relating back to the original research questions in an individual interview setting. Although this study posed six research questions, the journalism professionals were only asked about three of them, the author did not ask the

respondent's about the history of investigative journalism, the characteristics of investigative journalism or to give examples of investigative journalism that have affected the public.

Research Question #1: What is the importance of investigative journalism?

This question was studied to show the importance of investigative journalism in our society. In all the literature reviewed it was well-established that investigative journalism performs a vital task in our democracy. According to the Global Investigative Journalism Network, investigative journalism acts as a watchdog for institutions, and it provides a checks and balance to establishments and prompts change from people, agencies and institutions (“Global”, n.d. p.2). This was also the case for all three of the respondent's responses– they all believed that investigative journalism keeps government and businesses from hiding things from the public and acts as a system of checks and balances. If it were not for investigative journalism, then there would a lot more illegal and corrupt things happening in our society.

Research Question #2: What are the current challenges facing investigative journalism?

This question was studied to try and show why investigative journalism has been declining over the last few decades. Based on the literature, some challenges currently facing investigative reporting include an overall decline in newsroom employment, the cost of investigative reporting, more journalists switching to public relations and corporate ownership. When the respondents answered this question, they all had different answers, but they all coincided with the literature reviewed. For instance, in 2018, research conducted by Pew Research Center found that newsroom employment across the United States continued to decline, driven primarily by job losses at newspapers (Grieco, 2018). From 2003 to 2017,

newsroom employment dropped by 23 percent and newspaper newsroom employees dropped by 45 percent over that period from 71,000 workers in 2008 to 39,000 in 2017 (Grieco, 2018). Bluestein agreed that part of the challenge facing investigative journalism is the lack of reporters, “so as these newsrooms are shrinking in size, meaning there’s fewer reporters, there’s just is not enough bodies to go around to do the level of investigative journalism that used to be done 10, 20, 30 years ago” (Appendix C). The cost of investigative reporting is one of the main reasons news organizations decide not to pursue them in addition to stories being time consuming and risky (“Crippling”, 2018). Blumenkrantz also believed that cost is an issue for investigative reporting, “...then a lot of sort of mainstream press outlets will not want to invest the time and energy and resources the way they used to maybe invest them. So, sometimes certain organizations don’t do as in-depth investigations that satisfy and do superficial stories, easy stories...” (Appendix A). For Turner, the challenge is in the way that audiences are now consuming news stories, with the advent of technology most readers get their news online. In a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2017, 43 percent of Americans got their news online, while 50 percent got their news on television (Pew Research Center, 2017). Turner believed this caused an issue where “the audience isn’t necessarily willing to do the work or pay the money to get the depth of information that investigative journalists provide” (Appendix B).

Research Question #3: How can these challenges be resolved?

This research question was studied because it was important to know what kind of solutions professional journalists had to the challenges facing investigative journalism. The literature reviewed put forth a few options for resolving the challenges including a focus on funding, new formats and resources. The respondent’s answers did match some of the solutions

found in the literature, for example nonprofit newsrooms. According to Waldman and Sennott (2018b), an entirely commercial approach will not save journalism, nonprofits and philanthropy must take a greater role if it is to survive. Nonprofits news organizations have the ability to be powerful and lasting institutions, as an example, they cite that 59 percent of hospitals are private nonprofits, 90 percent of college students study at nonprofit or public institutions and in the information world, there's Wikipedia, NPR and ProPublica (Waldman & Sennott, 2018b).

Bluestein would like to see more nonprofit newsrooms:

To me, you don't have to be making money off of the news as long as...you can pay the people a decent salary, the employees, and keep the lights running. You don't even need to print anymore, it can be totally online and you don't need to worry about advertisers. You get money from grants from donors – donors who hopefully aren't going to want their biases, their influences on the stories. I believe there are a lot of people who do care deeply about journalism from regular people to wealthy people who would be willing to contribute money to start more nonprofit outlets (Appendix C).

The other respondents had different solutions that were not discussed in the literature, which deserve further study. Blumenkrantz mentioned late night comedy shows as a way for investigative journalism to reach a wider audience (Appendix A). Turner stated a trend towards citizen journalism, but cautions that regular citizens do not have the same authority or credibility that investigative journalists have (Appendix B).

Research Question #4: Do you consider podcasts and/or documentaries investigative journalism?

This question was studied to get the opinion of professional journalists as to whether podcasts and/or documentaries were a viable option for investigative journalism. All respondents agreed that podcasts and documentaries could be considered investigative journalism. Blumenkrantz said, “documentary films tend to be, often times, a form of investigative reporting because they have the depth of reporting” (Appendix A). Bluestein also agreed, “...both of those are just multimedia forms of investigative journalism. So its investigative journalism being presented audio or being presented as video...” (Appendix C) and Turner had similar thoughts, “oh, absolutely. I think there are so many great ones and there’s so much of that being done now because there’s so much content available” however, she does caution that documentaries and podcasts have a greater chance of manipulating audiences so listeners should make sure those forms of media have adequate sources and research (Appendix B). The respondent’s answers mirrored what the literature said as well. In the past decade, podcast listeners have substantially increased. In 2018, 44 percent of Americans aged 12 or older had listened to a podcast and 26 percent had listened to a podcast in the last month (Pew Research Center, 2018). In regards to documentaries, there are some who believe it can be considered investigative journalism, according to an article by Cross (2018) he believes that whatever the medium, reporters gather and synthesize facts, choose quotes, decide what context is most relevant and unfold a story to create meaning (Cross, 2018). There are those who disagree and believe that although they may share similarities documentaries are inherently biased. Hornaday (2018) wrote that although they share some similarities with journalism – concern with facts, accuracy, fairness, clarity and briefness – these films also use music to spark specific feelings in the audience, selective framing and editing and in some cases even reenactments of specific events (Hornaday, 2018).

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

This study was conducted in order to gain a better understanding as to why investigative journalism is important, the challenges it is currently facing and creative ways to resolve those challenges. As news organizations across the country continue to decline, their investigative reporting units are usually the first to go. However, investigative journalism is an essential part of our democracy so it was essential to get collect data from journalism professionals regarding their opinions on investigative journalism and how to resolve the current challenges facing it.

To find out more information on investigative journalism, its importance and the challenges that currently exist, three journalism professionals were interviewed. Two were journalism professors at California State University, Northridge and the third was a member of a professional journalism organization in Los Angeles. Each professional was interviewed based on the following four questions:

1. Why is investigative journalism important?
2. What are the current challenges facing investigative journalism?
3. What can be done to resolve those challenges?
4. Do you consider documentaries and/or podcasts investigative journalism?

Although this study posed six questions, the journalism professionals were only asked to answer the above four. The interviews elicited a variety of responses that correlate to the literature on investigative journalism.

Discussion

It is possible to draw conclusions regarding the original research questions by analyzing the data collected from Chapter 4, making connections between the experts' responses provided by the interview process and by reviewing the existing literature collected in Chapter 2.

Research Question #1: What is the history of investigative journalism?

The journalist professionals interviewed for this study were not asked to give the history of investigative journalism, but the literature does reveal that investigative journalism has a long and rich history in the United States. Although the term 'muckraker' was first used by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, the concept of investigative journalism was popular even before then (Piasek, 2017). According to Feldstein (2006), in the years leading to the American Revolution, newspapers and pamphlets frequently challenged British colonial rule by exposing their transgressions, however it was not done in an objective, journalistic fashion (Feldstein, 2006, p.3). By the later part of the nineteenth century most newspapers had become more commercialized. Technological improvements such as the telegraph, illustration and mass production helped increase demand while decreasing the cost of production (Feldstein, 2006, p.4). At the same time, publishers began replacing, "a more narrow partisan outlook with a broader concept of social responsibility to the community at large" (Feldstein, 2006 pp. 4-5). The shift towards socially responsible journalism was led by famous muckrakers, Ida Tarbell and

Upton Sinclair. The politics of the 1960s caused another resurgence of investigative journalism and this time journalists tackled segregation, the Vietnam War, and political and corporate corruption (Feldstein, 2006, p.7). According to Feldstein, the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act and pro-media rulings by the Supreme Court allowed for more aggressive investigative reporting (Feldstein, 2006, p.7).

By understanding the literature surrounding the history of investigative journalism, this study was able to establish how essential investigative journalism is to American democracy.

Research Question #2: What are the characteristics of investigative journalism?

In order to better understand investigative journalism and what sets it apart from other forms of journalism, it is important to define its characteristics. The *News Manual: Introduction to Investigative Journalism* defines investigative journalism as reporting and presenting news to the public about something someone is trying to hide (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). Investigative reporting is usually done to keep entities accountable to society; this can be the government, companies and/or criminals (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). An investigative story will require news value, facts, connecting the facts together, fact-checking and evidence to support those facts (“Chapter 39”, n.d.). Evidence to support facts is especially critical if there is ever a time a story will need to be defended in court. Investigative reporters will often use confidential sources; they may also face threats and should always work within the law and in an ethical manner (“Chapter 39”, n.d.).

All three of the journalism professionals that were interviewed did mention that investigative journalism does serve a purpose to uncover maleficence in government and other

entities as part of their answer as to why investigative journalism is important. In that sense, it can be concluded that their answers as to why investigative journalism is important also includes one of its defining characteristics as presented in the literature review.

Research Question #3: Why is investigative journalism important?

When the journalism professionals were asked to answer this question, everyone had similar responses. They all agreed that investigative journalism is important because it provides a system of checks and balances for government and corporations, without investigative journalism there would be more opportunities for these entities to hide things from the public.

The literature reflects similar responses to the research question that the journalism professionals had. According to the Global Investigative Journalism Network, investigative journalism has an impact. It acts as a watchdog for institutions, and it provides a checks and balance to establishments and prompts change from people, agencies and institutions (“Global”, n.d. p.2). In a report commissioned by the network, they were able to determine that the importance of investigative reporting is substantial and every dollar spent on a story can usually generate hundreds of dollars in benefits (“Global”, n.d. p.2). For instance, *Losing Track: North Carolina’s Troubled Probation System* written in 2008 by *The News and Observer* was about the failed probation system in North Carolina. After the story ran, the state passed 31 new laws which saved North Carolina \$62 million in the long term (Sabados, 2018).

Overall it can be concluded from the professionals interviewed and the literature presented that investigative journalism is important because it acts as a safeguard in our society.

Investigative journalism is able to incite change from people, government and businesses and there are even examples that are able to quantify its impact on society.

Research Question #4: What are examples of investigative journalism that have affected the public?

There are many examples available that show the impact of investigative journalism on the public. An early example of investigative reporting presented in the literature was the *Pentagon Papers*. In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg, a senior research associate at MIT's Center for International Studies turned over the *Pentagon Papers* without authorization to the *New York Times*. The *Pentagon Papers* contained a history of the U.S. role in Indochina from World War II until May 1968 and was commissioned by U.S. Secretary, Robert S. McNamara ("Pentagon Papers", n.d.). The *Times* began publishing a series of articles based on the study beginning on June 13, 1971 after the third installment appeared in the *Times*; the U.S. Department of Justice obtained a temporary restraining order against further publication of classified material ("Pentagon Papers", n.d.). The *Times* and the *Washington Post*, which was also in possession of the documents, fought the order through the courts for the next 15 days ("Pentagon Papers", n.d.). In *New York Times Co. v. the United States* the Supreme Court established that the government must meet a high bar to stop the press from publishing based on the First Amendment's freedom of the press (Fisher, 2018). The decision strengthened the concept that the government could not interfere with the press through prior restraint, a form of censorship in which the government could review and decide what a news organization published (Fisher, 2018). According to Fisher, the decision reinforced the media's role, under the First Amendment, to serve as a watchdog and publish information, even critical or embarrassing reports about

government officials and their actions and on June 30, 1971 the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the newspapers to resume publishing the material (Fisher, 2018).

It can be concluded from the examples provided in the literature that investigative journalism has a great impact on the public. From discovering corruption in the government to installing defibrillators on airplanes, the public benefits from investigative journalism.

Research Question #5: What are the current challenges facing investigative journalism?

The question as to what are the current challenges facing investigative journalism generated varying responses from the journalism professionals, but it all coincided with the literature reviewed. For Bluestein, a roadblock to investigative journalism was the overall lack of reporters, for Blumenkrantz it was the cost of investigative reporting and Turner believed it was the way in which audiences are now receiving their news online that has created a challenge for investigative reporting.

The literature supports all three statements as challenges that investigative journalism is currently facing. In 2018, research conducted by Pew Research Center found that newsroom employment across the United States continued to decline, driven primarily by job losses at newspapers (Grieco, 2018). From 2003 to 2017, newsroom employment dropped by 23 percent and newspaper newsroom employees dropped by 45 percent over that period from 71,000 workers in 2008 to 39,000 in 2017 (Grieco, 2018). Those losses of jobs mean that the newspaper industry now accounts for a smaller portion of overall newsroom employment across the five sectors (newspaper publishers, television, radio, cable and digital-native) (Grieco, 2018). Another challenge is the high cost of investigative reporting. The *New York Times* once

estimated it cost \$10,000 a day to have a reporter in Baghdad (“Crippling”, 2018). An investigative piece on the dangers of acetaminophen by ProPublica took two years and cost \$750,000 (Osnos, 2013). The cost of investigative reporting is one of the main reasons news organizations decide not to pursue them and more people are getting their news online. In a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2017, 43 percent of Americans got their news online, while 50 percent got their news on television (Pew Research Center, 2017).

The respondent’s answers to the research question matched the literature that was reviewed. Overall, it can be concluded that the high cost of investigative reporting, the declining employment among news organizations and the digital and information age have created challenges for investigative journalism that it has to overcome.

Research Question #6: How can these challenges be resolved?

This study proposed three things that investigative journalism can focus on in order to resolve some of the challenges it is experiencing. The first was to focus on funding, such as nonprofit newsrooms, the second was looking at documentaries and podcasts as another approach to investigative journalism and lastly, to utilize resources such as data journalism to make investigative reporting easier. The journalism professionals were asked the same question and each had different responses and some even offered new ideas that were not presented in the literature reviewed.

Bluestein for example agreed with the literature regarding the need to explore nonprofit newsrooms as a new way to fund investigative journalism. According to Waldman and Sennott (2018b), an entirely commercial approach will not save journalism, nonprofits and philanthropy

must take a greater role if it is to survive. The other respondents had different solutions that were not discussed in the literature, which deserve further study. Blumenkrantz mentioned late night comedy shows as a way for investigative journalism to reach a wider audience (Appendix A). Turner stated a trend towards citizen journalism, but cautions that regular citizens do not have the same authority or credibility that investigative journalists have (Appendix B).

The journalism professionals were also asked an additional question to provide further insight into solutions for investigative journalism. They were all asked if they considered documentaries and/or podcasts as forms of investigative journalism and they all agreed that both mediums can be considered investigative journalism. The respondent's answers mirrored what was presented in the literature. In the past decade, podcast listeners have substantially increased. In 2018, 44 percent of Americans aged 12 or older had listened to a podcast and 26 percent had listened to a podcast in the last month (Pew Research Center, 2018). In regards to documentaries, there are some who believe it can be considered investigative journalism, according to an article by Cross (2018) he believes that whatever the medium, reporters gather and synthesize facts, choose quotes, decide what context is most relevant and unfold a story to create meaning (Cross, 2018). There are those who disagree and believe that although they may share similarities, documentaries are inherently biased Hornaday (2018).

It is possible to conclude that there are many solutions that can be explored in regards to resolving the challenges faced by investigative journalism. This study puts forth three options, some of which the journalism professionals agreed with such as nonprofit newsrooms, but they also provided other options that deserve further study.

Recommendations for Practice

After completion of this study, a significant amount of information has been collected and analyzed on the subject of investigative journalism and the challenges it is currently facing. Given the data, it is important to highlight the key findings from this research and present it for future journalism graduates and industry professionals. Some recommendations for practice include focusing on news ways to fund investigative journalism, consider different mediums other than print for investigatory pieces and utilize new resources such as data journalism.

Nonprofit Newsrooms

Investigative journalism is expensive to fund. The *New York Times* once estimated it cost \$10,000 a day to have a reporter in Baghdad (“Crippling”, 2018). An investigative piece on the dangers of acetaminophen by ProPublica took two years and cost \$750,000 (Osno, 2013). The cost of investigative reporting is one of the main reasons news organizations decide not to pursue them (“Crippling”, 2018). In addition to cost and time, investigative reporting also faces difficulties from corporate owners. Media owners want bigger profits and as a result, cut back on newsroom staff. With fewer journalists but financial pressure to adapt to low advertising rates, paper and digital outlets are focused on shorter articles that cost less time and money to produce (Williams, 2016). If there were more nonprofit newsrooms, then many of those challenges could be alleviated. According to Waldman and Sennott (2018b), an entirely commercial approach will not save journalism, nonprofits and philanthropy must take a greater role if it is to survive. Nonprofits news organizations have the ability to be powerful and lasting institutions, as an example, they cite that 59 percent of hospitals are private nonprofits, 90 percent of college

students study at nonprofit or public institutions and in the information world, there's Wikipedia, NPR and ProPublica (Waldman & Sennott, 2018b). Nonprofit newsrooms would make it easier to focus on writing good stories rather than on printing plants, delivery trucks and ad sales (as cited in Edmonds, 2019).

Documentaries and/or Podcasts as Investigative Journalism

Documentaries and podcasts can be new mediums to explore for investigative journalism. According to Dalton (2017) podcasts are the newest way to experience investigative reporting. The writers and producers of these podcasts conduct the same in-depth and original research as that of traditional print and TV reporters (Dalton, 2017). The best of these podcasts have managed to create an investigative hybrid that combines long form print reporting with the entertainment qualities listeners like about podcasts (O'Donoghue, 2018). The popularity of podcasts is supported by research conducted by Pew Research Center. In the past decade, podcast listeners have also substantially increased. In 2018, 44 percent of Americans aged 12 or older had listened to a podcast and 26 percent had listened to a podcast in the last month (Pew Research Center, 2018). Another potential avenue for investigative reporting could be documentaries. According to an article by Cross (2018) he believes that whatever the medium, reporters gather and synthesize facts, choose quotes, decide what context is most relevant and unfold a story to create meaning. All the journalism professionals that were interviewed for this study also agreed that documentaries and podcasts could be considered investigative journalism. If investigative journalism is declining in print, then other mediums should be explored as potential sources for investigatory stories.

Data Journalism

If investigative reporting is to survive, it also has to find innovative ways to use resources such as data journalism. According to the Data Journalism Handbook, data journalism puts to use the enormous digital information now available (Bradshaw, n.d.). There are already news organizations that are using this technological advancement, for instance Hans Rosling used infographics to help the public visualize world poverty and the *BBC* and *Financial Times* use data journalism to help with their budget interactives (Bradshaw, n.d.). Bradshaw believes that, “data can be the source of data journalism or it can be the tool with which the story is told or it can be both.” Data journalism can help reporters collect data such as government records, analyze that data and find links to create stories, potentially saving some time.

Study Conclusion

In conclusion, given the general findings of the study, there should be qualitative research done regularly on the challenges investigative journalism is facing. Routine data collection and interviews should be conducted based on the rapid changes of the subject area. Overall, the study presented the collective opinions of three journalism professionals and a review of literature on the topic. However, given the nature of the subject there could be many viable options on the challenges facing investigative journalism, this study just focused on the potential of three of them. This study can serve as an educational tool for journalism students, graduates and industry professionals to understand the importance of investigative journalism, how it affects our society and why there should be more emphasis placed on protecting it for our democracy.

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Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: David Blumenkrantz

The following interview was conducted to get an opinion on the state of investigative journalism from someone with a journalistic background.

Interviewer: Veronica Juarez

Respondent: Professor of Journalism, California State University, Northridge
(David Blumenkrantz)

Date of Interview: 5/13/2019

Interview Transcription:

Veronica Juarez: “Why is investigative journalism important?”

David Blumenkrantz: “Oh, it’s incredibly important, you know journalism is considered the 4th rail, it’s like they’re the watchdog, they’re the ones that are supposed to speak truth to power, you know point out things, point out injustices and inequities and things like that and if it wasn’t for a free press, a robust free press that has the ability to investigate and report on things, things can be kept in the dark and that can have all kinds of ramifications for society.”

VJ: “Right, and what do you think are some of the current challenges facing investigative journalism?”

DB: “Well, one of the things is a lack of...if it’s not considered to be profitable, then a lot of sort of mainstream press outlets will not want to invest the time and energy and resources the way they used to maybe invest them. So, sometimes certain organizations don’t do as in-depth investigations that satisfy and do superficial stories, easy stories, things like that, that’s one of the problems facing it and the other thing of course, is lack of transparency from government officials. You can easily point to the current administration’s sort of war on the media, has been fake news and all of that so it kind of erodes the public’s confidence and the accuracy of the reporting, so those are two pretty big factors right there.”

VJ: “Do you think that there’s anything we can do to mitigate those challenges?”

DB: “Well, there are all kinds of organizations out there that are doing investigative reporting that’s not in the mainstream. So if somebody wants to read about what’s really going on, about a particular issue whether it’s Flint, Michigan or Donald Trump’s tax return, there are places to go and seek it out, it’s just that it’s not necessarily in the front page of the local paper and it’s not on the 11’ o’clock news, but there’s a lot of good investigative reporting being done but it’s sort of become a niche thing, where they’re sort of preaching to the choir if you will and people who

want to read those stories know where to find them but it's not all out there in the mainstream public. As far as mitigating it, in terms of making it more popular, I think we live in a very fast paced society and there's just a lot of media, people have a lot of choices. One thing I would say is don't underestimate the power of some of these late night talk shows and sort of the comedy, the so-called comedy news reports, like the John Oliver show on HBO, they'll do something like a 20-minute investigative report on some issue that you wouldn't even think would be on a comedy show and he really goes into great depth, they do a great job of reporting it, but they just sort of cloak it in humor, like a 'spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down'. So there is good investigative reporting out there and that's one way people have access to it, but that's not what you would hope would be the ideal scenario in a flourishing democracy, you wouldn't think you would have to look at the comedy shows. There's a lot of good investigative reporting still going on, I don't know how many people are paying attention to it because there's so much media and people are easily distracted by the shiny objects and the Kardashians and all this other stuff that's going on."

VJ: "Would a documentary be an option for investigative journalism?"

DB: "Well, yeah absolutely. Documentary films tend to be, often times, a form of investigative reporting because they have the depth of reporting. As opposed to when I teach a regular photojournalism class, we teach them how to go out and cover city hall or go out and cover a local sports event, but documentaries we only work on one topic for the entire semester so it is a visual investigation of a topic it could be on homelessness, which is what we do a lot in my classes or urban poverty or any number of issues...immigration, things like that. Some stories lend themselves to visual representation, some stories don't, but I think the strongest presentation is to sort of have a combination of pictures and words."

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts: Sally Turner

The following interview was conducted to get an opinion on the state of investigative journalism from someone with a journalistic background.

Interviewer: Veronica Juarez

Respondent: Professor of Journalism, California State University, Northridge
(Sally Turner)

Date of Interview: 5/13/2019

Interview Transcription:

Veronica Juarez: “Why is investigative journalism important?”

Sally Turner: “I think investigative journalism is important because in our system of checks and balances and in a democracy, number one, it’s extremely important for voters to be informed and journalists play a big role in informing voters and consumers and citizens so that they can play their part. It’s all also part of the checks and balances system that’s pretty clearly laid out in the Constitution. Reporters are the fourth estate; they’re one of the branches of government and their ability to provide oversight into what the government is doing is crucial.”

VJ: “Do you think there are any challenges facing investigative journalism right now?”

ST: “A few, one thing that’s happened and it’s certainly happened before in history but the technology of how information is delivered to the audience has changed so much and so quickly in the past decade and we haven’t really worked the kinks out of that system. Because we’re a capitalist system and a market driven system...media have to make a profit and online journalism hasn’t quite figured that equation out yet. So right now we’re in this situation where people in the audience aren’t necessarily willing to pay for a free press and I think they will again, I think that it’s starting to change, I think we’re figuring out this new technology but right at this particular moment, I think we’re suffering a bit. It’s not the first time that something like this has happened but we are in a situation where investigative journalism isn’t necessarily profitable and the audience isn’t necessarily willing to do the work or pay the money to get the depth of information that investigative journalists provide.”

VJ: “You mentioned online news sources, what do you think are the digital tools that we can use to help investigative journalism?”

ST: “Well, there are a lot of things you can say about that. I think one trend you certainly see is citizen journalism, the idea that anyone with a cellphone can be an investigative reporter in a

sense. There are, of course, dangers to that because you don't necessarily have credibility or the authority or the background to provide the context that you should, but I do think that's a really interesting idea. I also think, though, that digital journalism should make good investigative journalism more available to more people. It's just that the issue that we're facing now is how to pay for it, first of all, and how to give it the depth and the context that it should have to be credible, to have staying power."

VJ: "What do you think about nonprofit newsrooms?"

ST: "Oh I think it's a really interesting idea and I'd like to see where that goes. You have to pay people though, and how is it going to work. Is it going to come from the audience, is it going to come from a university, is it going to come from a billionaire who's got an agenda, is it going to come from a particular ideological group. Again, there are some tricky things about it, and I'm very interested to see how it will develop obviously there have been some successes like ProPublica."

VJ: "You were a producer for CNN?"

ST: "Yes, I was many years ago."

VJ: "What are the differences between investigative journalism in the different mediums such as writing, TV, and radio?"

ST: "When I think of what I said in the past few minutes, I think I was thinking about print journalism. I think investigative journalism in print, for me, and for people my age and in my lifetime has perhaps had greater impact, however that may be changing. I don't know, I guess it depends on what you mean by investigative journalism. Do you mean the exposition of something that the government or that corporate America is doing? There certainly have been important stories that have been done through television news in the 60s and 70s and on digital platforms in the past ten years that have been video driven. Certainly, video journalists have played a role in exposing a lot of stories. I guess I also think of investigative journalism as having depth and research and context, all those things that make it more credible and I hope that print journalism isn't going to disappear entirely."

VJ: "What would you say are some characteristics of good investigative journalism, not just for print but also for someone producing a story on TV?"

ST: "That's an interesting question. I think what can be great about video is that it shows an audience that needs to be shown and so undercover video journalism, there's been such great work in recent years in that aspect. That thing that always worries me about video is the way it can be manipulated and that some of the platforms now use non-traditional ways of telling a story, music for example or re-enactments and they can be very powerful, I get that but in terms of pure journalism, they scare someone like me a little bit because it can be manipulative but maybe manipulation is necessary sometimes."

VJ: "So, would you consider documentaries as something that is journalistic?"

ST: “Oh, absolutely. I think there are so many great ones and there’s so much of that being done now because there’s so much content available. I think you really have to evaluate every piece of journalism, sort of on its own merit. It just becomes so important for the audience to be able to sift through and to know whether or not something has the sources, the context and the research that it needs to have. There’s so much disinformation being done now and we move into this era of people talking about ‘deep state’. There are so many ways that people are going to be able to be manipulated.”

VJ: “This is why we need journalists now more than ever.”

ST: “Yes and more credible journalists, I don’t know, it’s an interesting time but a worrisome one.”

VJ: “You’re right about citizen journalists, but they don’t necessarily follow any code of ethics.”

ST: “It can, it can be so important; you think of those videos of police exceeding their authority...just change wouldn’t happen without those citizen journalists. But on the other hand, it can be dangerous in the hands of people who don’t have the ethical training. So again, I think everything has to be evaluated on its own merit and I think the audience has to be more educated in a way.”

VJ: “How do you think we can educate audiences?”

ST: “That’s a good point, better leadership, maybe? I don’t know, I guess we have to do some of the educating but it would also be nice if our leaders didn’t make journalists the enemy...there is definitely an erosion taking place.”

Appendix C

Interview Transcripts: Stephanie Bluestein

The following interview was conducted to get an opinion on the state of investigative journalism from someone with a journalistic background.

Interviewer: Veronica Juarez

Respondent: Society of Professional Journalists, Los Angeles Pro Chapter, President
(Stephanie Bluestein)

Date of Interview: 5/13/2019

Interview Transcription:

Veronica Juarez: “Why is investigative journalism important?”

Stephanie Bluestein: “Because there is a lot of corruption that can and does go on in government and in for-profit business, but especially government and unless there are reporters who are keeping their eyes and ears open there’s a lot of illegal and immoral things that will happen with tax payers money, with investors money if it’s a for profit business, taxpayer money if it’s government, if it’s a government agency.”

VJ: “What do you think are some of the current challenges facing investigative journalism?”

SB: “Shrinking newsrooms and newspapers that are...for the most part newspapers, have, historically, carried their weight of investigative journalism. TV and radio stations, they don’t typically do very much investigative journalism. What they report on is the investigative journalism why’s and something that most likely was reported by a newspaper journalist. When I say newspaper - I mean a publication that’s in print but it’s online also. So as these newsrooms are shrinking in size, meaning there’s fewer reporters, there’s just is not enough bodies to go around to do the level of investigative journalism that used to be done 10, 20, 30 years ago. Investigative journalism takes a lot of time and time is money. If you want to cut a reporter loose for two to three weeks to work on an investigation then everything else that they’re supposed to be normally reporting on either won’t get covered or other reporters will have to pick up the slack and in some newspapers there’s just barely enough people to even put the newspaper out every day.”

VJ: “Knowing some of the challenges that investigative journalists are facing, what do you think we can do to resolve these challenges?”

SB: “I’m personally a big believer in nonprofit journalism. I would like to see more efforts made to create more nonprofit journalism outlets so that there can be more reporters doing

investigative journalism and the one that comes to mind, you've probably read about it, is ProPublica. To me, you don't have to be making money off of the news as long as...you can pay the people a decent salary, the employees, and keep the lights running. You don't even need to print anymore, it can be totally online and you don't need to worry about advertisers. You get money from grants from donors – donors who hopefully aren't going to want their biases, their influences on the stories. I believe there are a lot of people who do care deeply about journalism from regular people to wealthy people who would be willing to contribute money to start more nonprofit outlets. That's what I would like to see happen."

VJ: "Corporate owners of newspapers can also influence stories."

SB: "That's true and maybe the people who donate to start up a new nonprofit outlet they're told upfront 'you are not going to have any influence'...the reporters will not know who the donors are, I'm not sure how to do that to try to decrease their wanting to influence the news and I don't think all donors want to, maybe I'm naïve, but I think some donors just really want the truth told and they don't necessarily care if their company or themselves as individuals are promoted or not."

VJ: "As we move into a digital era, what do you think of podcasts and documentaries as investigative journalism?"

SB: "Yeah, it definitely can, both of those are just multimedia forms of investigative journalism. So its investigative journalism being presented audio or being presented as video and actually a lot of investigative journalism should have all four components. It should have text and not just short captions it should have a fair amount of text that people can read. It could have podcasts as like sidebars, if you're familiar with that term, like a side story that relates to it. You could have a documentary that relates to that investigation and then you could also have still photos...I don't think you need one or the other."

VJ: "What do you think are characteristics of investigative journalism?"

SB: "Well, public records, number one. A deep dive into public records, you need reporters who understand about public records act in their particular state and the Freedom of Information Act for Federal government agencies. Public records are so important and what's really neat is now that we have the internet available you can show those documents to readers and that's really exciting. There wasn't too much of that going on when newspapers were first being printed, they might show a little bit of a document but they're not going print a 20-page document or 100-page lawsuit, forget it, but now with the internet you can do that. So there's a lot of exciting possibilities for investigative journalism as far as how readers will consume it."

VJ: “Similar to the ‘Panama Papers’ which a nonprofit newsroom organization first broke that story.”

SB: “Journalism as far as jobs, are contracting, but journalism is not dying it’s just changing. I think we’re going to see a lot more change in the years to come. But regular people need to be educated about the importance of investigative journalism and that there is so much corruption that can and will happen unless reporters are paying attention. There’s city council that nobody even covers them, certain ones, there are hardly anybody, maybe a student are all that comes to their meeting and 20 years ago there used to be one or two newspaper reporters covering them and that’s frightening.”