

Emotion and digital journalism

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Introduction

The era of digital journalism represents a shift in the forms of knowing – or epistemology – of journalism. This shift, I argue, has opened up new spaces for more emotional and personalized forms of expression in public discourse. In referring to digital journalism, I am interested in tracing the consequences of a particular set of developments that have occurred as a result of the “digital disruption” (Jones and Salter, 2011) engendered by the emergence of online journalism and convergence. These processes have been ongoing since the 1990s (e.g. Scott, 2005) but remain profoundly destabilizing and transformative. The changes to journalism practice that have resulted from these processes are multifarious and far-reaching, involving fundamental challenges to everything from the business model of journalism to journalism’s self-understanding and its relationships to audience. As Franklin (2013: 2) argued in an editorial to the first issue of the journal, *Digital Journalism*:

Digital journalism is complex, expansive and, even in these early days, constitutes a massive and ill-defined communications terrain which is constantly in flux. Digital journalism engages different types of journalistic organizations and individuals, embraces distinctive content formats and styles, and involves contributors with divergent editorial ambitions, professional backgrounds, and educational experiences and achievements, who strive to reach diverse audiences.

Franklin's description of the complexities of the digital journalism landscape highlights how this new era has challenged conventional understandings of *who* journalists are and *what* journalism is, involving an ever-wider range of groups and individuals, as well as genres and platforms. This chapter focuses on a particular cluster of developments which have brought to the forefront challenges to the conventional "objective" story-telling style of journalism, and brought about more emotional and personalized forms of narrative. It addresses how the increased prominence of user-generated content, citizen journalism and social media is ushering in new conventions of journalistic story-telling and hence new forms of truth claims. This should be understood against the backdrop of broader cultural transformations which have also impacted on the journalistic field. First of all, there is a growing recognition that rather than necessarily undermining the rationality of the public sphere, emotional expression may be a vital positive force in enabling new forms of engagement. Secondly, the rise of "subjective and confessional journalism" (Coward, 2013) has been a growing trend in journalistic expression over the past few decades. This, in turn, has been accelerated and underwritten by the emergence of digital journalism and social media. The blurring of conventional boundaries between "journalists" and "audiences" has contributed to challenging epistemologies of journalism, away from ways of knowing which privilege objectivity and distancing, and towards a central place for emotionally inflected narratives of witnessing and personal experience (see also Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014, 2015).

I should note that I am here using the term "emotion" rather than the widely circulated – and often interchangeably used – phrase "affect." It is useful to clarify this choice of terminology from the outset. Massumi (2002) has argued that even if the two terms are often used interchangeably, there are important conceptual

reasons to distinguish between the two. As he sees it, affect is best understood as a bodily sensation, a reaction to stimuli characterized by intensity and energy, but without a conscious orientation and interpretation. By contrast, an emotion “is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized” (Massumi, 2002: 28). Though Massumi describes emotional reactions as *personal* first and foremost, his distinction has also become an important resource for sociologists and political scientists interested in *collective* behavior, insofar as it is premised on emotion as both interpretation and narrativization of affect, or its placement in the nexus of social relations. As such, it enables us to understand emotion as *articulated* and *expressed* affect. Emotion is thus exemplified, amongst other things, by journalistic narratives that collectively narrativize and make public affect. Papacharissi (2014), in her recent book *Affective Publicism* prefers the term “affect” over “emotion,” “understanding it as extending “beyond feelings as a general way of sense-making....Affect informs our sensibilities, theorized both in sense-making processes of the human body and in relation to the sense-making technologies that are affective driven...Affect precedes emotions and drives the intensity with which emotions are felt” (Papacharissi, 2014: Kindle location 357-371). Here, my interest is precisely in what happens *after* affect – what happens as a consequence of the moment when affect is narrated as a conscious state of emotion (Clough, 2007: 2) in public through journalistic discourse, and hence becomes collective and potentially political.

Journalism and Emotion: A troubled marriage?

The relationship between journalism and emotion is a particularly fraught one because professional journalism has historically been closely aligned with ideals of objectivity (e.g. Schudson, 1978). Journalism, coming of age around the turn of the 20th century alongside the rise of beliefs in positivist science and a commitment to the rationality of the modernist project, has been normatively invested in objectivity, understood in terms of the exclusion of values from the journalistic narrative (see also Maras, 2013). Objectivity has tended to be understood – in the field of journalism and elsewhere – as the polar opposite of emotion. For example, Dennis and Merrill (1984: 111) suggested that objectivity in journalism is tied to the aim of presenting “an emotionally detached view of the news,” while Schudson argued that objectivity “guides journalists to separate facts from values and report only the facts” using a “cool, rather than emotional” tone (2001: 150, cited in Maras, 2013: 8). Objectivity is characterized by a depersonalized narrative style, which erases the subjectivity of the journalist (Maras, 2013: 8). As Edward Epstein (1973) memorably put it, the norm of objectivity generates detached “news from nowhere.”

Objective journalism is normatively aligned with a view of journalism as a key institution in the public sphere (Habermas, 1989). It is understood as the site for impartial, rational-critical discussion of matters of common concern. Subjectivity – and thus emotional expression and personal histories – is viewed as irrelevant and outside the scope of acceptable topics. Emotion has tended to represent a “bad object” for journalism practitioners and scholars, understood in terms of its deviance from ideals of the public sphere (cf. Coward, 2013; Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle, 2011). As Pantti (2010) argued, “emotionality typically represents a decline in

the standards of journalism and a deviance from journalism's proper social role; while 'quality' journalism informs and educates citizens by appealing to reason, other kinds of journalism focus on pleasing their audiences by appealing to the emotions" (Pantti, 2010: 169). These types of arguments are evidenced, among other things, in the concern over the sensationalist excesses of tabloid journalism. What gives rise to the moral panic associated with tabloid journalism is the very idea that it appeals to our *sensations* and represents a preoccupation with the bodily and the emotional (Sparks, 2000) as opposed to our *reason*. Such concerns mirror anxieties over the transgressive nature of other popular culture genres such as television talk shows, which, through their emphasis on "therapy talk" – openly discussing and expressing emotions and personal experience in public - challenge conventional understandings of emotional management in public discourse:

To experience the virtual realities of television talk shows is to confront a crisis in the social construction of reality. Television talk shows create audiences by breaking cultural rules, by managed shocks, by shifting our conceptions of what is acceptable, by transforming our ideas about what is possible, by undermining the bases for cultural judgment, by redefining deviance and appropriate reactions to it, by eroding social barriers, inhibitions and cultural distinctions. (Abt and Seesholtz, 1994: 171)

Such a position seeks to police the boundaries around acceptable public discourse. Its warnings about the dangers of contagion and the transgression of boundaries reflect broader anxieties about the perils of emotional public discourse. In expressing concern about "shifting our conceptions of what is acceptable," "transforming our ideas about what is possible" and "eroding social barriers,

inhibitions and cultural distinctions,” it highlights worries about the need to carefully regulate the tone and content of emotional expression public discourse.

Preoccupation with the ways in which emotions are managed and expressed in public discourse is, however, not confined to popular cultural forms such as tabloids and television talk shows, but extends to well-established and prestigious journalistic forms that draw on emotional story-telling. For example, Stephanie Shapiro (2006) has criticized the “emotional journalism” characterizing Pulitzer Prize winners, resulting in a “sob sister” style of writing:

Newspapers can't resist the urge to go long when it comes to tales of fatal illnesses, disfiguring ailments and accidents, particularly when they strike children. In recent decades, the drama underlying these anguishing accounts has led to the creation of a subgenre of narrative journalism that often vies with hard news for A1 recognition in the country's most prestigious newspapers.

Such human interest stories, molded by the techniques of fiction, put a face on the bewildering universe of medical ethics, risky procedures and end-of-life choices. Like the harrowing tales that yellow journalism's Nellie Bly and her sob sister descendants became known for, they also are calculated to snag readers by the emotions and not let them go until they burst, on cue, into tears.

To Shapiro and other critics, such “emotional journalism” risks descending into voyeurism, oversimplification and pathos – similar to the charges levelled at other forms of emotionalized public discourse. By contrast, any more ‘positive’

assessments of the role of emotion in journalism have tended to receive less attention (Pantti, 2010).

In recent years, however, media and journalism scholars are beginning to take an interest in emotion (e.g. Pantti, 2010; Peters, 2011; Richards and Rees, 2011; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, 2013b). This emerging body of work could be seen as a late addition to a larger “affective turn” (Clough and Halley, 2007) across humanities and social sciences disciplines which challenges us to take body and mind, as well as reason and passion into equal consideration (Hardt, 2007: ix). The “affective turn” reflects an increasing interest in how emotional engagements make a difference to social and political life (e.g. Goodwin et al., 2001; Staiger et al., 2010). This affective turn has been particularly prominent in disciplines such as cognitive psychology and sociology. One field which is particularly useful to examine here is that of social movement studies because it has raised central issues around the role of emotion in political discourse and forms of collective action. Social movement scholars are interested in how emotions both energize and shape the activities of activists, suggesting that emotional engagement cannot be overlooked as a powerful – and positive – motivating factor in getting people involved in political life (e.g. Gould, 2010; Dahlgren, 2009: 83-86). Scholars thus reflect on the rise of “passionate politics” and “the politics of affect,” (e.g. Goodwin et al., 2001) to mention just a few labels affixed to this set of practices.

Some of the impetus towards an “affective turn” comes from scholars studying the increasingly close relationship between politics and popular culture (e.g. van Zoonen, 2005), as well as those who discern the emergence of “emotional public sphere” (e.g. Lunt and Stenner, 2005; Lunt and Pantti, 2007). What unites these

approaches is a fundamental questioning of the polar opposition of rationality and objectivity to emotion in light of the view that emotional expression may actually be integral, rather than destructive, to a healthy public life.

The interest in the relationship between journalism and emotion has emerged in close dialogue with this body of work, and has taken a variety of forms, from broader attempts at theorizing the relationship between emotionality and objectivity (Peters, 2011) and the rise of a “subjective journalism” which privileges personal voice (Coward, 2013), to tracing the place of emotional and personalized story-telling in award-winning journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a, 2013b), and developing tools for discerning an emotional stance in supposedly “objective” news agency reporting (Stenvall, 2008, 2014). Scholars have examined journalists’ views of the appropriate use of emotion in reporting (Pantti, 2010) and their experiences of trauma (Richards and Rees, 2011). Research which focuses on accessing the perspectives of journalists has shown that journalists themselves are highly aware of the emotional impact of their work on their audiences, and this is increasingly acknowledged by scholars. For example, Gürsel’s (2010) ethnographic work on photojournalism at an American news magazine demonstrates that to journalists, the anticipation of audience emotional reactions to stories informs deliberations over everything from photo selection to layout. She argued that the purpose of “wielding emotions” is to ‘bring the story closer’ and educate the reader (Gürsel, 2010: 40-41). The idea of “bringing the story” closer through the elicitation of emotion is also central to a set of well-documented journalistic practices around the reporting of distant suffering, as highlighted in the case of humanitarian disasters (e.g. Joye, 2009, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2006). Finally, as will be discussed in more detail below, the distinctive – and more emotional - practices of citizen journalists in the digital era are receiving increasing

attention (Allan, 2013; Blaagaard 2012, 2013). Here, I would like to trace how such developments are shaping the epistemology of journalism in the digital era.

The epistemological implications of journalistic forms have long been discussed by journalism scholars.ⁱ Ettema and Glasser (1987), who were among the first to develop the idea of the epistemology of journalism, understood and studied it in terms of how “journalists know what they know.” Looking at investigative journalism, they examined what “counts as empirical evidence and how that evidence becomes a justified empirical belief -- ergo, a knowledge claim about the empirical world” (Ettema and Glasser, 1987: 343). This chapter, however, understands the epistemology of journalism more broadly, in terms of the “rules, routines and institutionalized procedures that operate within a social setting and decide the form of the knowledge produced and the knowledge claims expressed (or implied)” (Ekström, 2002: 260). This is particularly important to consider in the light of journalism’s epistemological position as the “primary sense-making practice of modernity” (Hartley, 1996: 32-34). The knowledge claims of journalism have broader ideological consequences, but are also shaped by sociological forces and prevailing power relations. As Matheson (2004) described it, drawing on a Foucauldian analysis of the relationship between knowledge and power:

Conventions of newswriting do not simply chronicle the world but [...] constitute certain claims to knowledge about such matters as the audiences for news texts, the position of journalists in that world and the relationship between audience and journalist. [...] Journalists adhere to these conventions in order to be able to make the kinds of authoritative statements about events and individuals which we are accustomed to hear from them. News discourse

can be seen as a particular instance of the more general ‘will to truth’ which motivates and constrains institutional forms of knowing in modern society (Matheson, 2004: 445).

What I suggest, drawing on Matheson’s (2004) approach, is that the digital age has ushered in new platforms and genres of expression – including in journalistic forms – which may move beyond conventional “objective” practices and allow for more personalized, subjective and emotional forms of narrative. I have developed these points in more detail elsewhere (e.g. Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014, 2015) but am by no means the first to identify the epistemological shifts associated with transformations in journalism. For example, Dahlgren (2013) has written about the “multi-epistemic” nature of public discourse resulting from both technological and social change.

These changes have occurred alongside shifts in the material circumstances of journalism practice, and the power relations informing them. Along those lines, I do not wish to suggest that technologies are transformative in and of themselves. It is important to understand that the adoption, appropriation and use of particular technologies are contingent on, and interact with, a broader array of political, economic and social circumstances. As work in journalism studies and elsewhere has pointed out, it is far more useful to see technologies as possessing particular affordances – forms of action it makes possible – and to understand how these affordance might shape their use (e.g. Kammer, 2013), in interaction with particular sociocultural contexts (Papacharissi, 2014). In today’s “polymedia” environment, made up of intersecting and hybridizing technologies, media, platforms and applications (Madianou, 2013), we can trace particular affordances that may enable

new forms of voice (Chouliaraki and Blaagaard, 2013: 150). As I will discuss in the next section, the rise of the digital era has been closely associated with a widening and democratisation of opportunities for news production with the emergence of technologies that make it much easier for “ordinary people” not just to make news, but also to share it with others known and unknown.

Digital journalism and emotion: Tracing the consequences of “digital disruption”

The “digital era” is often associated with the emergence of the internet in the 1990s. The development of convergent forms of news content enabling greater interactivity in a proliferation of forums, genres and forms – ranging from blogs, comments and user-generated content to social media - has had profound consequences. Starting with the earliest experiments in the 1990s and early 2000s, media organizations enabled users to comment on online stories, and the introduction of blogs facilitated further instantaneous dialogue, for the first time generating communities of opinion that could respond in real time to unfolding news events (see Steensen, 2011).

The internet was welcomed with much fanfare by observers who saw it as an opportunity to “produce virtual public spheres” (Papacharissi, 2002) and hence revolutionize mediated public participation. From the very beginning, the innovations facilitated by the affordances of new technologies challenged conventional forms of journalistic storytelling and hierarchies of production and distribution.

The changes wrought by digital journalism are, simultaneously, challenging conventional power relations of the public sphere, where participation is no longer

the preserve of mainstream media. Instead, “ordinary people” have been granted a greater autonomy over the production and distribution of opinion. Media organizations, which have tended to function as the “gatekeepers,” have become “gatewatchers” or curators, sorting through and publicizing information available elsewhere on the internet (Bruns, 2005: 2). Perhaps most importantly, the increasing role of audience contributions represents a shift from the situation where such contributions are consistently and neatly parceled off in specific sections, and towards one where they are, at least on occasion, broadcast or published alongside content provided by professional journalists. This is significant, because it means that the clashing and fundamentally incompatible epistemologies of conventional “objective” journalism and “emotional” audience content now sit alongside each other, rather than the former being privileged by the hierarchies of news content (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2014).

To many observers, the transformations signaled here began with the emergence of the phenomenon variously described as citizen journalism, user-generated content, “we media,” and collaborative journalism. The phenomenon of views, images and videos contributed by members of the public first gained prominence after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, where eyewitnesses were able to film the disaster as it unfolded, providing news organizations with unprecedented immediacy in their coverage (Allan, 2009). It gained further impetus and importance after the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005, and since then, the coverage of most major news events – ranging from the Arab Spring to the Boston Marathon bombings – has been inexorably shaped by contributions from members of the public.

While a great variety of terms are in circulation to describe the phenomenon, the phrases “user-generated content” and “citizen journalism” are perhaps the most

widely used. Whereas the former takes an institutional view, based on the idea that *users are generating content* for legacy media, the latter has clear normative implications in drawing on the vocabulary of citizenship. Here, I will draw on the vocabulary used by the scholars discussing the phenomenon, on the assumption that the use of terminology is aligned to particular analytical and normative optics.

For scholars tracing the consequences of these transformations, the challenges to norms of objectivity and the emergence of new ways of knowing has been a prominent theme. The distinctive stance of citizen journalists is in part captured through the idea of what Allan (2013) has referred to as “citizen witnessing.” This term captures what are by now well-established practices of first-person reportage; ones “in which ordinary individuals temporarily adopt the role of a journalist in order to participate in newsmaking, often spontaneously during a time of crisis, accident, tragedy or disaster when they happen to be present on the scene” (Allan, 2013: 9). However, the participation of “ordinary people” through practices of citizen witnessing is shaped not by the routines and values of mainstream news, but rather by the vernacular of lived experience— often emotional, embodied and deeply personal. For example, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s approach to the Victoria Bushfire Emergency 2009 demonstrated that through the use of technologies, the broadcaster made an active effort at generating affective communities and containing anxiety caused by the disaster. ABC started the Bushfire Community site which asked for audience members to share “your experience by text, photos, audio or video” (Pantti et al., 2012: 84). This site could be seen as exemplary of a new participatory genre which is hosted by mainstream media but “where there is no hierarchy of discourse and where access is unlimited” (Pantti et al., 2012: 84). This structure does not necessarily afford contributors the

same authority as professional journalists but does give voice and opportunity for information-sharing to individuals who may not otherwise have venues for communication, and thus facilitates the creation of a community.

The creation of an online community was a priority because the remote and spread-out geography of the area affected by the disaster, which meant that it was difficult for journalists to reach. Following the creation of the site, members of local communities caught up in the bushfire proceeded to use it to share information as well as eye-witness photos and videos about conditions on the ground. Increasingly, however, members of the community began to share their emotions about the disaster, in the form of poems, deeply personal accounts of their own experience, and condolences and prayers. This represented a shift in the types of agency and accounts typically afforded to victims of disaster, made possible by the affordances of digital technologies:

[T]he contributions of ordinary people to the bushfire coverage on ABC Online represented a departure from the role they have traditionally played in disaster reporting, that is, as news sources or news characters represented by media professionals. Rather than being media-led, the affective community seemed to be in dialogue with itself, as the media provided a space for sharing emotions and forming a community. (Pantti et al., 2012: 86).

Audience participation and authenticity

The shift towards a greater prominence of audience participation as part and parcel of journalistic content – and the associated greater emphasis on subjective and emotional discourses and ways of knowing – has been seen to represent a

significant challenge to the paradigm of objectivity. Proponents see it as a welcome paradigm shift challenging the “dry, distancing, lecture-like mode of address” of traditional journalism (Allan, 2013, p. 94). Allan (2013) characterizes their position as follows:

Journalism by the people for the people is to be heralded for its alternative norms, values and priorities. It is raw, immediate, independent and unapologetically subjective, making the most of the resources of web-based initiatives...to connect, interact and share first-hand, unauthorized forms of journalistic activity promising fresh perspectives (Allan, 2013, p. 94).

Allan’s reconstruction of the arguments in favor of “journalism by the people for the people” suggests that its power lies precisely in its subversion of the ways of knowing - or epistemology - of traditional journalism. With its “raw, immediate, independent and unapologetically subjective approach,” it challenges the norms of objectivity so closely aligned with conventional journalistic story-telling. Instead, it is shaped by “arational” motivations and “breaks with deliberative democratic formats in that emotions, affect and passion are introduced into the deliberative space through technology” (Blaagaard, 2013: 72).

The shift towards more emotional forms of expression in citizen journalism heralds, to many observers, the emergence of a “new authenticity” (e.g. Chouliaraki and Blaagaard 2013), signaling a new system of truth claims tied not to the authority of the ideal of objectivity, but to the truth inherent in unrehearsed, unpolished and personal accounts of ordinary people. In this context, authenticity is understood as closely tied to ideas around such contributions being raw, immediate, and subjective, as discussed by Allan (2013) above. The emphasis on the authenticity of the more

personal and emotionally inflected style of “ordinary people’s” journalistic contributions is consistent with research on audience responses to user-generated content, which suggests that audiences tend to value because it is seen as more “authentic” than professional content (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2010). The understanding of authenticity advanced by audiences involves the idea of an uncensored outpouring of personal storytelling, emotional integrity, realism, immediacy and identification. This is contrasted to the perceived professional distance of journalism, which involves a “cold,” “detached,” “objective” and “distanced” approach (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2010). For example, in describing user-generated content after Hurricane Katrina, Michael Tippett, founder of NowPublic.com, argued “it’s a very powerful thing to have that emotional depth and first-hand experience, rather than the formulaic, distancing approach of the mainstream media” (Allan, 2013: 94). Such observations highlight the ways in which the perceived authenticity or “truth” that comes from emotional involvement and personal experience appears to trump the expertise associated with professional skills.

To some observers, these new forms of truth claims are closely related to the affordances of new technologies, particularly the use of mobile phones for recording audio-visual content. As Blaagaard (2012: 80) put it:

[T]echnology becomes an extension of the lifeworld and of narrative. We are shown the world not only from the perspective of another individual, but as if we were inside that person’s body, seeing the world with his or her eyes. This is particularly apparent in visualized citizen journalism, in which the poor

quality and visibly unprofessional aspect of mobile phone footage makes that footage even more “compelling” and suggests to us that the story is true.

The rise of citizen journalism offers a challenge to the abstract and analytical approach of conventional media, and a reshaping of the relationship between the public and the private. This is precisely because of the embodied, partial, subjective and personal nature of opening up for empathy in the sense of being able to put ourselves in other people’s shoes. This, in turn, suggests new horizons for the moral power and responsibility of news media, which have the capacity to generate an “injunction to care” about the suffering of distant others (Cottle, 2013). For Chouliaraki and Blaagaard (2013), these developments have the potential of raising fundamental questions about conventional journalism values, and ultimately may support cosmopolitan forms of action in the context of reporting on disasters, crises and suffering. The interest in the cosmopolitan potential of emotional and personal forms of journalistic story-telling highlights what is perhaps one of the most important insights into the place of emotion in public discourse: The growing recognition that rather than necessarily undermining the rationality of the public sphere, emotional expression may be a vital positive force in enabling new forms of engagement and identification among audience members.

Social media, emotion and journalism

If anything, questions about how the digital era may drive more personalized and emotional forms of journalistic discourse have been further amplified with the advent of social media. Issues around emotional expression and engagement have always

been central to the architecture of social media. This is in part because of the influence of the fields of public relations and marketing in shaping the architecture of social media (Wahl-Jorgensen, forthcoming). These fields have always been preoccupied with questions of how to generate emotional resonance, engagement and attachment to particular products and brands. As early as 1928, the pioneering public relations expert Edward Bernays, writing to provide advice on what strategies politicians ought to adopt to optimally sway public opinion, examined in detail the role of emotional appeals, suggesting that candidates need to harness “as many of the basic emotions as possible” (Bernays, 1928/2004: 119, cited in Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 91). Emotional expression and elicitation are structurally encouraged in social media, as a way of ensuring and monetizing engagement – this is, for example, evidenced in the development of the Facebook “Like” button, which operates as a way of expressing what Pariser (2011) has described as bland positivity (see also Hermida, 2014). It also informs the emergence of sentiment analysis, “the computational treatment of opinion, sentiment, and subjectivity in text” (Pang and Lee, 2008: 10). Sentiment analysis employs data mining techniques on very large sets of data, in some cases consisting of millions of postings, examining the positive and negative sentiments in opinion expression (Liu, 2010). This approach entwines commercial questions with political ones: It interprets the display of emotions in social media as a *collective* and *political* practice; and one which provides useful information about public opinion – despite clear methodological and normative problems (e.g. Andrejevic, 2011). This is an intriguing direction given that it explicitly links understandings of citizenship (as expressed through measures of public opinion) with emotion or, at the very least, its interpretation in the form of “sentiment.”

Much scholarly research using sentiment analysis has focused on Twitter because postings on the site are public and searchable. Here, scholars have demonstrated, through a correlation of large-scale sentiment analysis with news events, that emotional evaluations of events map onto broader indicators of public mood (Bollen et al., 2010). For example, research has found that Twitter sentiments on Barack Obama closely mirror polling data regarding approval ratings (O'Connor et al. 2010).

A second driver of the emphasis on emotion in social media is the fact that most users are strongly motivated by self-expression and the sharing of personal experiences and feelings:

We are using social media to take the private habit of chronicling our life and make it public, producing a collective and shared account of society. Every day, millions of people are openly recounting their life stories on digital spaces, telling everyone about their lives, experiences and views (Hermida, 2014: 29).

The emotionality of expression and sharing practices in social media has resulted in a further blurring of the boundaries between public and private first ushered in by the advent of citizen journalism and user-generated content. This is not to suggest that social media represent the transformation of public debate into a private and non-political space. Rather, the “performative architecture presented through Twitter is everyday space where dominant narratives are reproduced and can be challenged through performances that are both personal and political,” (Papacharissi, 2014: Kindle location 2240). These processes of the reproduction and challenge of dominant narratives occurs through the collaborative construction of

what Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012) have referred to as “affective news streams.” In a study of story-telling on Twitter during the Arab Spring events in Egypt, they emphasized “the need to consider affect in explanations of the role of media use during mobilization.”

We characterized the news streams we studied as affective, because they blended opinion, fact, and emotion into expressions uttered in anticipation of events that had not yet attained recognition through mainstream media.

Combined with the networked and “always on” character of social media, the affective aspects of messages nurture and sustain involvement, connection, and cohesion. Previous studies have emphasized the role of shared topics, interests and geolocality. We extend this work by advancing the concept of *affective news streams*, to describe how news is collaboratively constructed out of subjective experience, opinion, and emotion within an ambient news environment. (Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira, 2012: 279).

The idea of affective news streams highlights the fact that in today’s ambient news environment, forms of public expression are no longer tightly regulated by professional norms shaped by an allegiance to the ideal of objectivity. Instead, they are collaboratively constructed in ways that blend conventional facts-based information with personal experience, subjective opinion and emotion in a way that does not privilege particular forms, genres or styles. Extending on this body of work in examining the affective tone of Twitter discussions in the Occupy Wall Street movement, Papacharissi (2014) likened the role of Twitter to that of music:

In some ways, Twitter plays a part similar to the role music used to play for movements—by enabling affective attunement with the movement itself.

Songs that reflect the general aspirations of a movement allow publics and

crowds to feel, with greater intensity, the meaning of the movement for themselves. Affective attunement permits people to feel and thus locate their own place in politics. Antagonistic content injections interrupted the affective harmony of #ows, creating an effect similar to that of noise interrupting a song. (Papacharissi, 2014: kindle location 1852).

The metaphor of music evokes both the ambient and the sensual. It suggests that a plethora of forms of discourse may make themselves heard at any moment, but that just as emotion may play a positive role in bolstering the aims of a movement, it may also interrupt harmonies – it may contribute to challenging dominant narratives and call consensus into question. This insight calls to mind the insights of radical democrats, who have long been interested in agonistic forms of public discourse (e.g. Mouffe, 2005), arguing that the ability to make dissenting voices heard is central to democratic practice. Further, it reminds us of the importance of understanding negative emotion – including anger and disagreement – as central in motivating and shaping political action (e.g. Gould, 2001). Digital technologies and social media have made possible the articulation of the whole spectrum of emotion, and understand the specific ways in which they operate is vital to charting this new media landscape.

Along those lines, our motivations for responding to stories, photos and videos shared by others are often emotional in nature: “Emotions play a vital part in the social transmission of news and information. Interest, happiness, disgust, surprise, sadness, anger, fear and contempt affect how some stories catch on and travel far wider than others” (Hermida, 2014: 53-54). In particular, research has demonstrated that content which induces emotions reflecting high arousal - including positive emotions of awe, and negative emotions of anger or anxiety, was more likely

to be socially shared than content inducing low arousal emotions such as sadness (Berger and Milkman, 2012). This systematic pattern, in turn, generates an emotional information universe which may be very different from that created by the conventional news agenda of legacy media. It is one where the content that tugs the hardest on the heart strings of its audience is more likely to go viral, whereas content that just makes us sad will never top the agenda (see also Pariser, 2011). At the same time, this new economy of emotional sharing cannot be viewed as isolated from the news selection processes of mainstream media. In an era driven increasingly by concerns about audience metrics and the emergence of click-bait journalism (e.g. Anderson, 2011), journalistic news values and decisions are now profoundly shaped by predictions of click-through and sharing (Tandoc, 2014). As Tandoc (2014) wrote, based on ethnographic case studies of news selection in three newsrooms:

In order to attract an audience no longer loyal to legacy news, journalism dances in a provocative manner—publishing stories about the wildest celebrities, uploading adorable cat videos, highlighting salacious headlines—hoping to attract attention, to increase traffic (Tandoc, 2014)

Tandoc's (2014) work - and that of others tracing the ways in which news organizations have responded to the emotional dynamics of social sharing (e.g. Hermida 2014) reminds us that precisely because of the porous line between audience and journalistic practices, and between social media and legacy media, we now have to view emotion as a central factor in shaping the news agenda, for better and worse.

Shifting power relations and emotion in journalism

This discussion, in turn, serves as a useful reminder that the emergence of new forms of story-telling, styles, and forums for journalism is not a sufficient precondition for changing the epistemological paradigm of journalism, but that such changes occur through complex interactions between audiences and news organizations. Changes in journalistic story-telling do not occur solely as a result of the incursion of amateurs into news production process, and neither are the more emotional and less “objective” story-telling practices confined to members of the public contributing to the news. In investigating the epistemology of blogging, Matheson (2004) took a closer look at how the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, responded to the introduction of the new form in its own hosted blogs. He demonstrated that they were characterized by a distinctive way of knowing premised on the “establishment of a different interpersonal relation, of a different authority and of a journalism focused upon connection rather than fact.” (Matheson, 2004: 453).

Here, then, journalists are using the affordances of the new medium to establish emotional connections to their audiences in a way that would not be possible using conventional “objective” journalistic style. To Matheson, the writing represented a “more ‘raw’, less ‘cooked’, source of information, allowing users to participate more in constructing knowledge about events in the world” (Matheson, 2004: 455). This echoes the language around the “new authenticity” afforded by the technologies used by citizen journalists, and demonstrates that the practices of professional journalists are also shifting in response to the affordances of digital media, possibly enabling forms of expression which may be more partial, embodied and emotional.

For example, Ashok Ahir, formerly Political Editor for BBC Wales, has suggested that the prominence of Twitter as a tool of journalistic reporting has

changed professional routines of impartiality. Today's journalists are no longer reporting for just one platform, but are required to produce content that might circulate through social media, online, as well as in the conventional broadcast and print formats of legacy media. Increasingly, journalists will tweet throughout the day when covering breaking news events. Because of the distinctive affordance of Twitter – the fact that messages are limited to 140 characters - there is rarely an opportunity to represent stories in a balanced and impartial way. Rather, Twitter posts from journalists reporting on specific events will tend to offer short bursts of opinion, analysis and factual information in ways that would be inconceivable in conventional broadcast and print reports, but represents news as an ongoing process and unfinished product. As such, journalists depart from an impartial approach in the Twitter reporting, which occurs throughout the day, but return to it in their writing and production of content for the conventional finished product of news – in the form of print editions and evening news broadcasts (Ashok Ahir, personal communication, October 2013).

At the same time, the shift documented in this chapter may also be making it increasingly acceptable for journalists to share their own emotions, particularly in the context of crises and traumatic events:

Journalists are now able to use a range of different platforms, networks and channels to get their content across in different ways. They vary their style and message and perhaps even their editorial principles accordingly. They seek attention for their work in new ways. The audience can also personalize their news consumption and shape their relationship with the mediated world according to their views, habits and, I think, emotions (Beckett, 2014).

In tracing these shifts, Beckett exemplifies this development towards a more flexible – and more openly emotional and non-objective – storytelling style – by discussing a film made by BBC Correspondent Andrew Harding for the BBC 10 O’Clock News on the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, in which Harding both reported events but also reassured villagers that “I’m sure help is on its way” – thus overstepping the boundaries of the role of the “objective” journalists who is an impartial and distanced observer. This report was broadcast on the evening news – the stalwart of conventional legacy media genres. Yet Beckett suggests that these shifts have occurred due to the opportunities demonstrated, and rendered acceptable, by the affordances of new technologies. The “new authenticity” that has been brought about by increased audience participation, then, has also spilled over into a less “objective” and more emotional and personalized forms of story-telling amongst *professional* journalists who might increasingly be drawing on more vernacular forms of discourse, drawing on the conventions of everyday life rather than engaging in purely “objective” reporting. This highlights the fact that it is no longer possible to understand particular platforms, genres or practices as entirely autonomous and operating in isolation from others. Rather, there is a need to appreciate how the digital age has brought about a profound shift – and one which has had significant consequences for the ways of knowing in journalism.

At the same time, it is worthwhile noting that the changing forms of journalistic story-telling, and the increasing prominence of audience participation, have not gone unchallenged by professional journalism. In seeking to protect the privileges of their beleaguered profession they carry out painstaking boundary work which emphasizes their professional skill and objectivity (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2015; Carlson and Lewis, 2015). News organizations have invested heavily in enabling audience participation

through user-generated content – ranging from platforms including CNN’s iReport to the *Guardian* newspaper’s GuardianWitness site. However, these platforms share a strategy of cooptation (Kperogi, 2011), fencing off audience contributions in special sections and sites, designed to relegate members of the public to being providers of supplementary, emotive content (Williams et al. 2011).

The strategy of cooptation is based on carving out a continued role for professional journalism that goes beyond practices of curation; one which is premised on the quality of information and analysis provided by journalists whose skill sets, in the eyes of the profession’s defenders, are perhaps now more important than ever. The epistemological tensions between the historical professional paradigm of objectivity on the one hand, and the more emotional styles of citizen journalism, user-generated content and social media on the other, are therefore by no means resolved. Rather, what this chapter has demonstrated are some potentially productive spaces of encounter between them. This encounter results in dynamic and variegated outcomes circulating across amateur and professional forms of news production and traditional and new media platforms.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the role of emotional expression has tended to be overlooked in journalism scholarship and practice, in part due to the profession’s historical allegiance to the ideal of objectivity. Nonetheless, the era of digital journalism has made emotional expression increasingly prominent. The impetus towards this development has come from several directions: First of all, the

increasing prominence of citizen journalism and user-generated content have generated new ways of knowing, through personalized and embodied accounts of news events ranging from bush fires to protest and revolutions. Secondly, the emergence of social media – closely informed by the fields of PR and marketing which have always been alert to the central place of emotion in public discourse – have further amplified these trends through the generation of affective news streams. These affective news streams embody both positive and negative emotion, support and disruption, consent and dissent. However, the emotional turn in digital journalism is not complete, but a dynamic and hotly contested process, continually challenged by professional journalists. Scholars have discerned the possibility for embodied accounts of personal experience to cultivate cosmopolitan sensibilities. At the same time, emotionalized public discourse is one where anger, hatred and intolerance might be given voice in ways that might challenge consensus and unity – for better or worse. Understanding how these changes shape our views of the world and what we know about it is an urgent task.

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ⁱ This paragraph draws on material published in Wahl-Jorgensen (2015).