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THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF JOURNALISTIC TRANSPARENCY

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Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, this study explores how journalistic doxa and cultural capital come to be discursively formed. The study culls references to journalistic transparency from a broad range of US journalism trade publications and sites from 1997 to 2015 in order to examine the discursive construction of transparency within the journalistic field. The analysis focuses on what members of the journalistic field in the United States mean by transparency and how transparency is or is not discursively legitimized. Implications for field theory are considered.

KEYWORDS code of ethics; cultural capital; discourse analysis; doxa; field theory; journalistic capital; journalistic field; occupational norms; transparency

Introduction

When the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ)—the largest and among the oldest journalism organizations in the United States—announced its revised code of ethics in September 2014, "transparency" appeared as a key ethical principle (SPJ 2014a). The changes to the code, last updated in 1996, emerged from a process involving an 18-member committee, multiple drafts, and formal debate by SPJ members over the course of more than a year. Members of the wider journalistic field, however, had been engaged in an informal debate—particularly about transparency—for more than a decade. Indeed, the SPJ discussion is a microcosm, and perhaps something of a culmination, of that broader debate about transparency's place in the US journalistic field. An early draft of the new SPJ code, for example, did not include an explicit reference to "transparency" at all. Some members argued the concept was imprecise and already implicit in specific admonitions to disclose sources, potential conflicts, and the like. "The entire section on 'accountability' is pretty much about transparency," a committee member told one critic (SPJ 2014b). By the final version, however, transparency would claim equal footing with accountability in the code's fourth abiding principle, "Be Accountable and Transparent." This study examines journalists' discursive construction of transparency in the years leading up to the formalization of journalistic transparency in the SPJ code. The aim is understand how a journalistic norm is constructed.

Journalism has obviously changed tremendously since 1996. For example, the essentially limitless space online has changed publishing from the production of a static product to a dynamic ongoing process in which there is no reason not to include or link to additional information in a story or to update and correct information almost continuously. Such changes have been accompanied by debates about the merits of being transparent about corrections and other changes to online news stories, about documenting sources of information, and about openness to input from audiences and sources. Transparency has

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been cast as an ethical obligation, essential to truth telling and vital to trust (Ingram 2009). It has also been cast as "run amok" when the correction of a typo is accompanied by outsized pronouncements in the name of transparency (Romenesko 2012). In its strongest form, transparency is promoted as a full-blown epistemological shift in the basis of journalism. Some journalists have lauded transparency as a replacement for objectivity, which had been the height of orthodoxy in journalism for the better part of a century. As one journalist (Weinberger 2009) put it, "Objectivity is a trust mechanism you rely on when your medium can't do links. Now our medium can." If "transparency is the new objectivity" (Weinberger 2009), this would constitute a remarkable shift in journalism's cultural capital; i.e., in the normative basis for journalistic practice.

Such a shift in journalistic capital provides a rare occasion to examine how institutional norms come into being or how a new norm comes to usurp some of the authority of an older norm. Schudson (2001) has reminded us that journalistic norms, or journalistic cultural capital (Benson and Neveu 2005; Hanitzsch 2007), are discursively constituted. A practice might become normalized through repetition and routine, but a practice can only take on a normative character, according to Schudson, through discursive articulation. Thus, this study seeks to discern how members of the journalistic field are discursively constructing transparency as a journalistic norm. This study culls references to journalistic transparency from a broad range of US journalism trade publications from 1997 to 2015 in order to examine the discursive construction of transparency within the journalistic field.

The value of this study is in the close attention it pays to the ways practicing journalists discursively construct the legitimacy of transparency in normative terms. This site of investigation is not commonly explored and hence the study adds to empirical knowledge about the state of transparency as an institutional norm in the twenty-first century. The study is also valuable in the attention it gives to an important feature of field theory. Fields are generally conceptualized as a source of consistency and orthodoxy. How is it then that cultural capital changes?

Theory and Literature

Bourdieu (1998, 40) conceptualizes journalism as a field, as a "structured social space." That space is structured by various kinds of shared understandings. As Bourdieu (1998, 37) puts it, the journalists who inhabit this field share "a system of presuppositions inherent in membership in a field." Those suppositions include accepted institutional roles, ethical standards, and epistemological frameworks (Hanitzsch 2007), including an understanding about methods and styles of constructing truthful news stories. These suppositions constitute what Bourdieu calls the cultural capital of the field. The nature of cultural capital is that it must constantly be maintained and defended from both endogenous and exogenous forces. Put another way, journalism's cultural capital "must be re-won because it is always threatened" (Champagne 2005, 50). Bourdieu (1998, 41) argues that the journalistic field is a space where "various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field."

Journalism's cultural capital has remained fairly consistent over the breadth of the twentieth century. Objectivity, as a broad concept about a means to truth telling, would weather a series of criticisms and suspicions to command the allegiance of the journalistic field (Schudson 2001). That allegiance now seems fragile. Journalists had long promoted objectivity as the epistemological basis for their professionalism (Evensen 2002; Maras

2013; Mindich 1998; Stensaas 1987). Indeed, objectivity has been central to journalism's claims to legitimacy (Vos 2012). But, objectivity has increasingly come under criticism, both from within and outside the journalistic profession (Maras 2013). Journalists, and others, have questioned whether or not objectivity is really a reliable means for truth telling (Ward 2009; Zelizer 2009). Critics have long decried the ways in which objectivity served the interests of elites and the maintenance of the status quo (Schiller 1981). The press criticism implicit in political blogs (Vos, Craft, and Ashley 2012) and reader comments (Craft, Vos, and Wolfgang 2015) likewise underscores objectivity's changing status, with both groups proffering objectivity as a criterion of performance while simultaneously questioning whether it is possible (or even desirable) to attain it. All of this suggests a journalistic paradigm is beginning to shift (Elliot 2008; Kuhn 1970).

If objectivity is losing its dominance as a journalistic norm, journalists' will likely have to make their epistemological claims, and base their professionalism and legitimacy, on some other basis (Peters and Broersma 2013). Transparency seems to be emerging as that alternative; i.e., as the alternative epistemological justification for the journalistic field (Craft and Heim 2008; Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2012; Karlsson 2010). Transparency is generally described in terms of openness and accountability (Karlsson 2011; Singer 2007). Journalists are open and explicit about their processes, methods, limitations, and assumptions. This openness allows anyone to criticize, check, or simply monitor journalists in a way that leads to more truthful news stories (Deuze 2005).

No single definition of "transparency" appears in the research literature, though Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2001) "Rule of Transparency" has been influential, judging by how often it is cited. That "rule" conceptualizes transparency in terms of the opening up of news processes to public view by "embedding in the news reports a sense of how the story came to be and why it was presented as it was" (83). Media industry participants in the 2004 Aspen Institute conference issued a call for journalists to be "as practical as possible" (Ziomek 2005) and offered specific ways—greater explanations of editorial choices, expanded corrections, and even newsroom tours—of doing so that align with Kovach and Rosenstiel's approach. While such practical definitions typically associate greater transparency with greater credibility and public trust in journalism, the justifications and the linkages between theory and practice are not always explicit. A review of how transparency has been understood both inside and outside the profession noted inconsistencies, with "availability" and "disclosure" perspectives suggesting potentially contradictory understandings of transparency's value and what it means for journalism to be transparent (Craft and Heim 2008). Similarly, Karlsson (2010) contrasts "disclosure transparency" with "participatory transparency." The first is defined as making clear various aspects of the news production process, such as content selection and personal positions relevant to the news; the second is aimed at involving audiences in news production processes.

Some see transparency as a central journalistic norm, since it becomes the means to enforce journalism's other norms (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2011). Other discussions of transparency highlight its power to reshape the cultural capital of the journalistic field in ways that some contend are beneficial and perhaps inevitable, and others, potentially dangerous. Deuze (2005) argues that in opening up possibilities for news practices that are more inclusive of the audience, transparency represents a challenge to established notions of journalistic autonomy. Challenging such ideal-typical journalism values is, though, part of an appropriate rejection of utopian and anti-utopian discourses in our "liquid modern news times" (Deuze 2005, 458). Plaisance (2007) likewise addresses

autonomy in locating the justification for transparency as an ethical norm in Kant's theory of human dignity, in which "truthful forthrightness" is essential to respecting the autonomy of those with whom one is communicating. Ethical justification notwithstanding, Allen (2008, 324) warns of the danger transparency poses to journalism to the extent it, "rather than serving as a normative standard, has become an instrumental value enlisted to protect institutional legitimacy and stave off criticism."

In empirical research, transparency's value is connected to accountability (Lasorsa 2012; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012; Karlsson 2011; Singer 2007) and to enhancing trust and credibility (Chadha and Koliska 2015; Morton 2015; Singer 2007), even though a recent experiment with readers showed transparent journalism showed almost no greater credibility than journalism without the hallmarks of transparency (Karlsson, Clerwall, and Nord 2014). To investigate how journalists understand and practice transparency, researchers have used surveys and interviews with journalists (Chadha and Koliska 2015; Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2012; Plaisance and Deppa 2008) and examined the content of blogs (Singer 2005), online newspapers (Karlsson 2010; Phillips 2010), tweets (Lasorsa 2012; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012), and literary journalism narratives (Morton 2015). Other studies have examined how experts (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2011) and audiences view transparency (Karlsson, Clerwall, and Nord 2014; Lowrey and Anderson 2005).

Definitions employed in previous research echo Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001), though many studies build more specifically on work by Singer (2005, 2007). Singer (2007, 84) defines transparency as an active, disclosure-oriented extension of accountability—being publicly answerable for one's actions—such that transparency covers "truthful disclosure before and during an act as well as after it has been taken." Two studies examining norms related to journalists' use of Twitter (Lasorsa 2012; Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012) treat transparency and accountability as near synonyms, describing, for example, hyperlinks as "an opportunity for journalists to be more transparent, *and thus more accountable*, in the course of their work" (Lasorsa, Lewis, and Holton 2012, 24, emphasis added). These studies operationalized tweets that "contribute to transparency" as those in which journalists link, discuss their jobs and personal lives, and engage in discussion with other tweeters (Lasorsa 2012, 406). Plaisance and Deppa (2008, 379) define transparency as "straightforwardness," a lack of ulterior motives or hidden agendas in reporting, and connect it to increased public trust and credibility. Transparency relates to how journalists interact with sources and subjects of news and offers a way to correct misperceptions about journalists' "true intent." However, journalists' discussions of transparency in their research interviews were very limited, leading Plaisance and Deppa (2008, 376) to conclude that journalists had an "inadequate appreciation of the importance of holding the concept of transparency as an end goal in ethical deliberations."

Building on Singer's notion of transparency as a vital component of the self-correcting mechanism online, Phillips (2010) conceptualizes transparency as attribution, offering a way for citizens to trace sources of information. Her examination of UK journalism shows that increased pressures to produce more content leads to widespread "churnalism" and copying of information from other news outlets and sources, undermining citizens' ability to verify information. Lowrey and Anderson (2005) likewise view transparency as an avenue for audience empowerment through direct access to information, including information about processes and decision-making, and greater interaction with journalists.

However, at the time this study with news audiences was conducted in 2005, there was little to suggest audiences were clamoring for such participation in news-making.

More recently, Chadha and Koliska (2015, 216) examined how journalists understand and implement transparency, defined as "making visible to the public, the decisions, methods and sources that go into the production of a news story." In-depth interviews suggested that journalists articulated a conceptualization of transparency that aligns with the ideal of openness found throughout the literature. In practice, however, transparency was rarely discussed as a norm of good practice in the newsroom, and its implementation emphasized those things most easily accomplished via technology, such as linking and publication of reporter email addresses.

> Journalists and news organizations thus seem to have a conflicted approach to transparency. While the idea does not seem to have much institutional purchase as a normative standard, at the same time, journalists appear to recognize that in order to retain audiences in a rapidly changing and uncertain media environment, they have to "demonstrate," as an NPR reporter said, "that we are what we say we are, fair, balanced, accurate." (Chadha and Koliska 2015, 221)

Such conclusions return us to the matter of whether or how transparency might be emerging as a form of journalistic cultural capital. If transparency is to take on a normative character, Schudson's (2001) logic—a norm cannot exist without being discursively articulated—would lead us to believe that journalistic discourse is the site where the articulation of this norm will take place.

Research Questions

Hence we arrive at the following questions to guide this study:

RQ1: What do actors in the journalistic field mean by *transparency*?

RQ2: How do actors in the journalistic field discursively construct transparency as an institutional norm?

Study Design

Given the study's focus on journalistic discourse, it seemed logical and valuable to use discourse analysis as the method for answering our research questions. Discourse analysis is focused on the ways in which meaning is constructed, particularly the ways in which word choice, style, and literary devices can shed light on the discursive techniques and strategies of speakers or writers (Alba-Juez 2009; Hall 1980; van Dijk 1988). Discourse analysis is attentive to the social and institutional context in which discourse is structured (Burr 1995; van Dijk 1980) and to the ways in which power is produced and reproduced in institutional and social settings (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002; Van Leeuwen 2008). Simply put, discourse has the power to create the normative contours of the journalistic field (Schudson 2001). This is not to say that actors within the journalistic field consciously set out to establish institutional norms. Indeed, the discourse that defines journalistic capital can be offered for a variety of reasons and even elude reflexivity on the part of the actors engaging in the discourse (Benson and Neveu 2005).

Sampling Frame

The aim was to identify the journalism field's discourse about transparency. To locate this discourse we identified 15 US journalism trade journals, journalism reviews, and journalism association websites where discussion by journalists about journalism practices and principles was likely to occur (see Appendix A). We then collected or scraped all articles and posts from 1997 to mid-2015 that addressed journalism and transparency in some way. The range of years is tied to the changes to SPJ's code of ethics—starting after the 1996 revision, when transparency was not mentioned, and concluding with the year after the most recent revision, when transparency was added. Some sites have been in existence for the whole period and some for as little as a year. This strategy yielded 252 articles, posts, and items that substantively addressed journalistic transparency.

Since our unit of analysis is the field's discourse about transparency, the various sites of the discourse and the articles from those sites are of secondary importance. Granted, these sites contain important contextual clues and are certainly not ignored, but the focus is on the discourse as a product and constituent of the field. Indeed, the discourse and the field are mutually constitutive—the field produces the discourse and the discourse constitutes the field. To underscore our focus on discourse of the field our findings only occasionally identify the speaker, writer, or publication by name.

Analysis

We analyzed the articles (1) to understand what members of the journalistic field meant when they used the word *transparency* and (2) for the discursive techniques and strategies that bore on the relative legitimacy of transparency as a norm and practice. We looked for similarities and differences in how transparency was invoked. We also looked for the ways in which transparency was characterized; e.g., was it received as a solution to previous problems or as an effective means for arriving at sound truth claims? In other words, we sought to understand the discursive means by which transparency was legitimized, delegitimized, or otherwise portrayed. The co-authors and two assistants proceeded through multiple rounds of coding, using a constant comparative approach to arrive at discursive patterns and themes. Along the way, we paid attention to the diversity and unanimity with which transparency was discussed.

Transparency and the Discourse of the Field

After an initial silence, the notion of transparency clearly caught the attention of the journalistic field in the early 2000s. Journalists called for greater transparency from the key institutions of social power—government, business, religion, health care, and, for the most part, journalism. Journalists discussed and debated what transparency really means, what it can produce, what should be its limits, and, ultimately, whether it is to be welcomed or shunned. As journalists engage in this discussion and debate, they discursively constructed the relative legitimacy of transparency as a journalistic norm. Which is to say, much of the discourse legitimized transparency as a norm and practice. Eventually, a reaction emerged and gave voice to concern that the transparency movement had run amok. Critics saw old values under attack. Thus, while the field came close to an agreed-upon definition of the

concept, its value as a journalistic norm, as our analysis shows, was not an altogether settled matter.

The Meaning of Transparency

If there is a synonym for "transparency" in this discourse, it is "openness." Transparency means being "open about relationships and goals" (Herrmann 2001), "open to criticism" (Mopsik 2012), "telling consumers who we are, what we aim to do and how we operate" (Sill 2011), and letting users "inside the news gathering, production and decision-making process" ("CBS News launches Public Eye" 2005). Transparency-as-openness is characterized as fair play; because journalists expect transparency from those they cover, it is only fair they act transparently as well. These manifestations of openness echo the "disclosure transparency" identified in previous research as a proactive approach in which explaining and not just showing is important (Craft and Heim 2008; Karlsson 2010). "Participatory transparency" (Karlsson 2010), in which audiences have a role in news-making processes, also was evident, as in this description of what a more transparent journalism might portend: "When everybody stops freaking out, the best hope is this: There will be a new dimension to journalism in which the consumer is also a contributor, ombudsman and fact-checker" (Palser 2005, 66). Less common but still present in the discourse was the "availability" (Craft and Heim 2008) form of transparency in which practices such as linking, corrections, and letters to the editor (Carmichael 2006), and limiting the use of anonymous sources (Gratz 2005) are stand-ins for transparency.

While there is no clear antonym for transparency in the discourse, "objectivity" (or, relatedly, "bias") comes close. Openness about who journalists are and what they do is, after all, a departure from the detached, "news from nowhere" stance of objectivity. That transparency and objectivity are often cast as opposite, or at least contradictory, concepts is evident in the notion that "having both" is akin to someone wanting to have "her proverbial cake and to eat it, too" (Masullo Chen 2009). Transparency appears as an antidote to objectivity, "a way of countering an inherent bias" (Bartzen Culver 2013). More often, however, transparency and objectivity are defined in terms of their relative contributions to journalistic credibility. These comparisons are interesting not just because they tend to promote transparency as more suited to building credibility, but also because they suggest it is strange for something so seemingly contrary to objectivity to have displaced it.

Transparency is also expressed as a component of journalism's voluntary and informal system of accountability. It is a "key ethic" (Bartzen Culver 2013), "the last strong ethic standing" (Pompilio 2009), and "part of holding ourselves accountable to a public that has long wondered who's watching the watchdogs" (Smolkin 2006b, 17). To speak of transparency as an ethic, especially a "key" and "strong" one, certainly calls attention to its status as a norm. That it acts as a tool of accountability underscores its distinctiveness relative to objectivity, which largely assumes that facts speak for themselves.

Legitimizing Transparency

As the definitions of transparency suggest, the term conjures largely positive connotations. To be open, for example, invokes a broad social value associated with honesty and above-board dealings. Hence, like most metaphors (see Lakoff and Johnson 2003; Semino

2008), transparency suggests how certain qualities from one domain come to bear in another domain, enticing us to see only those qualities that the metaphor illuminates. The discourse analyzed here, while indeed largely positive in its construction of transparency in journalism, also exhibits a discursive complexity in how these positive associations are conveyed. In the end, more than just portraying transparency in a positive light, the discourse legitimizes transparency as a journalistic practice and a norm. In the process, the discourse sheds light on the social and institutional values that journalists seemingly embrace. Thus, what emerges is a window onto a range of journalism's doxa and cultural capital.

One discursive strategy that finds ready expression in the collected discourse is transparency as a value well-suited to the environment of the internet. Indeed, transparency is portrayed as an inevitable product of the internet (Nordenson 2008). The internet owed its existence to open-source coding, and so, it was argued, had transparency in its DNA (Usher and Lewis 2011). The "digital revolution," it was argued, "fostered a culture that demands transparency from powerful institutions" (Schudson and Fink 2012, 63). Transparency was legitimized as a "natural fit" for the internet age (Palser 2002, 66). Thus, journalism on the internet had little choice but to be transparent. This functioned as a kind of naturalizing discourse; i.e., journalistic transparency was constructed as well adapted to an evolved landscape. Evolutionary forces had selected transparency as the superior value; what argument could there be?

Transparency was largely constructed as an instrumental value, and as such comes with a promise to deliver a wide range of positive outcomes for journalism. Above all, advocates believed transparency would deliver much needed trust in, and credibility of, journalism. Transparency "delivers trust" (Ingram 2009). News organizations that practiced transparency would be seen as "trustworthy" ("How to Make Sites Trustworthy" 2002) and suspicions would be quelled ("Shifting Sands" 2007). As one journalist put is: "Transparency is how you get to credibility" ("Transparency, Ethics and Sponsorship" 2006). Even upstart blogs could gain credibility through transparent practices ("The Corporatization of Blog Nation" 2005). Also if your news organizations are already there, transparency is how credibility is preserved (Jill Rosen 2003) and maintained (Miller 2009); it is how a news organization "stays credible" (Pompilio 2009, 32). Beyond these discrete values, transparency was also discursively constructed in more grandiose ways. For example, it would return a greater measure of humanity to journalism. The discourse promised that transparency would break journalism out of its monastic self-denial of the goods of public life and even encourage civic engagement—if reporters want to work for a women's shelter, transparency will allow them to do so (Bunch 2008). Working for a non-governmental organization would no longer disqualify someone from the journalism field (Ganter 2009). Advocates also promised more tangible benefits. In a time in which quality journalism was forced to compete within online imitators, transparency would set quality journalism apart and therein provide the basis for a sound business model (Sill 2011). Greater transparency could also forestall more intrusive government regulation for broadcast journalists, since it would be seen as a form of self- or audience regulation (Eggerton 2011). Implicit in this discourse is an index of the longings of journalists. They had seen dark days when journalism commanded little respect; transparency promised newfound trust, credibility, humanity, and even profitability.

A related discursive strategy was to associate transparency with a better "future" for journalism. Much of the discourse examined here acknowledged that journalism was being transformed or stood in need of transformation in the twenty-first century. Transparency

represented a way forward. In fact, transparency was helping bring about the "journalist of the future" (Kumar 2009, 10) and the "media of the future" (Morris 2012). Meanwhile, old ways and old media still closed themselves off to the public; they relied on their brand rather than earning their legitimacy anew by being more transparent (Morris 2012). This discourse drew legitimacy from old memes—the promise of the future versus the disappointment of the past; and the vitality of the new versus the drudgery of the old.

Interestingly, journalists' discourse did not construct transparency as an entirely settled concept, especially in the first decade of the century. Rather than seeing this lack of fixity as a fatal flaw or sign of illegitimacy, much of the discourse was ready to treat transparency as a worthy project. Thus, for example, news organizations were encouraged to find limits to transparency so that confidentiality and privacy, when needed, would be respected (Bergman 2013; Westphal 2009). Organizations, such as the *New York Times*, had been committed to transparency, according to one writer, but still had work left to do to achieve a full measure of openness (French 2010). Steps toward transparency, however, were largely constructed as steps in the right direction (e.g., Palser 2005). (Meanwhile, others saw transparency's lack of fixity as a serious problem; more on that below.)

It is clear that transparency was understood to be "one of the most important values" for the journalistic field (Podger 2009, 32) and that much of the discourse about transparency had the effect of constructing its legitimacy. But, was transparency ultimately being offered up as a journalistic norm, as a key piece of journalism's doxa or cultural capital? One indication that transparency was entering the journalistic doxa was the taken-for-granted way in which trade articles offered various forms of practical advice for making their news organizations more transparent (e.g., Albarado 2013). The goal of transparency was seemingly a foregone conclusion; it was only now a matter of working out the details (e.g., "Ideas for News Sites" 2005). Closely related to this were stories that documented how news organizations (Strupp 2007), including major ones, such as the *New York Times* (Jay Rosen 2003), BBC ("BBC: Newsgathering Transparency" 2005), CBS, and *Newsweek* ("WP, CBS News, Newsweek" 2006), were taking steps to increase transparency.

Perhaps a more telling sign that transparency was being discursively constructed as a journalistic norm, and hence a part of journalism's cultural capital, was in the ways that it was set in contrast to objectivity. Transparency was offered as a "better goal" than objectivity because of the trust that it imbued (Ingram 2009); and transparency was put forward as a better way to deal with reporters' biases than objectivity (Weiss 2012), because journalists "can't truly be objective" (Bartzen Culver 2013). Key journalistic figures, such as Tom Rosenstiel, are shown arguing against reliance on balance as a journalistic norm and arguing instead for a dedication to transparency (Hart 2005). Even those who argued that objectivity did not have to be jettisoned nevertheless saw transparency as the way forward. As one essay put it, "Focus on transparency, and greater objectivity will follow" (Masullo Chen 2009). So, while objectivity had long been recognized as the centerpiece of journalistic capital (see Mindich 1998), transparency was now being talked about in similar tones.

Still another indication that transparency was conceptualized as a journalistic norm could be found in the ways that journalistic actors used transparency to judge various journalistic actions. For example, a *Seattle Times* decision to own up to an ethical lapse was praised for its transparency (Dorroh 2005) and the *New York Times* was lauded for its response to the Jayson Blair crisis, emerging as an "almost transparent institution" (Jay Rosen 2003, 37). One newspaper that failed the test of transparency was described as

arrogant and lacking in accountability (Potter 2005). Wikileaks was also repeatedly called out for its lack of transparency (e.g., Goldberg 2007). As one journalist put it, "A nonprofit journalism organization dedicated to imposing transparency on reluctant governments seems to think the rules don't apply at home" (Barnett 2010). Here, however, the argument is as much about Wikileak's perceived hypocrisy as it is the value of transparency. In fact, it was not uncommon for transparency to be used in this way—as a stick to beat those who would foist transparency upon the entire journalism field. (More on this below.)

The ways in which transparency is invoked as a basis for normative judgment finds a corollary in how journalists talk about the value of transparency in other institutions. Thus, we see again how institutional legitimacy is anchored in a broader social discourse. The journalistic discourse is persistent in praising transparency as a value and practice in government, business, and other institutions, in demanding transparency from these institutions, and in criticizing those institutions that fail to provide transparency (e.g., Lieberman 2007; Rendall 2008; Spencer 2012; Stearns 2013). Institutions, in other words, are assigned legitimacy by journalists based, at least in part, on the degree of those institutions' transparency. This suggests another way of legitimizing transparency in journalism —what is a valued standard in other powerful institutions should naturally be a standard for journalism as well.

Delegitimizing Transparency?

Although the journalistic field has pinned a good many hopes on transparency as a way forward for the field, particularly in the face of exogenous forces that have battered journalism, not all journalistic actors appear ready to accept a shift whereby transparency takes on unquestioned normative status. Here the discourse of the field is brought to bear to create negative associations with transparency, and to question if it can deliver lasting benefits to the field and to the public. Along the way, the discourse indexes the values and attitudes of at least some members of the journalistic field. In other words, the discursive strategies that journalistic actors employ say much about how they look at the field and the world.

If the definitions of transparency are a source of its legitimacy, its lack of a clear definition is a delegitimizing force. Transparency is "the buzziest of buzzwords" (Cunningham 2006, 9). It is simply a pitch line to people who are all too eager to buy what the advocates of transparency are selling (Herrmann 2001). Who, the skeptics ask, are the advocates of transparency? Early on, at least, it was bloggers—those seeming parasites of real journalism—who were seen as the loudest advocates (Cunningham 2006). Even later on, skeptics depicted journalism as being swept along by a "transparency movement" (Schudson and Sonnevend 2010, 63; Smolkin 2006b, 16). Such strategies raised questions about the intentions of transparency's advocates and ultimately about the legitimacy of transparency as a norm and practice.

One of the discursive strategies emerging from the collected discourse is the portrayal of transparency as "run amok" (Romenesko 2012) or going "overboard" (Smolkin 2006b). Some of the discourse about transparency casts it as overly deferential to the audience. Transparency seemingly requires every journalistic peccadillo to be followed by "groveling apologies and overwrought explanations" (Smolkin 2006b, 16). Here, transparency has become so totalizing that it becomes unanchored from the very goals it purports to achieve. In one article the writer argues, "there is a point at which the pursuit of

transparency veers into the absurd, and instead of clarifying the question of what journalists do and why, can only obfuscate" (Cunningham 2006, 9). In other words, all the effort to give the readers more and more information just ends up burying significant details in a pile of insignificant information. Readers are left "overwhelmed" (Strupp 2007, 30). The discursive theme is simply that transparency, at least as a practice, is too much; it is *over* the top.

What emerges in much of this critical discourse, including the depiction of transparency as over the top, is that advocacy for transparency is naïve. It purports to serve the public, but unwittingly makes things worse. It is meant to solve problems, but it inevitably "backfires" (Kinstler 2013). Transparency is supposed to increase trust, for example, but it just makes audiences more suspicious (Posetti 2012). In an article tellingly titled "Too Much Information?," the writer wonders if showing graphic images of war ultimately "blurs the line between transparency and propaganda" (Johansen 2010, 8). Here, the advocates of transparency become the dupes of propagandists whose motivations are the opposite of good journalism. Also here, we gain insight into the values and attitudes of certain members of the journalistic field. As others have noted (see, e.g., Fallows 1996; Rosen 2010), journalists value savviness; they conceive of themselves as cosmopolitans. "'True believer' is a universal term of contempt in newsrooms, skeptic a universal term of praise" (Rosen 2010). Lodged in this discourse then is the barely concealed distain for the true believers in transparency.

Again, this critical discourse illuminates the values of that corner of the journalistic field that finds transparency an affront to valued journalistic traditions. Another theme in the delegitimizing discourse suggests transparency is a kind of softness, out of keeping with the masculine persona of the field. For example, an editor is quoted as indignant with journalists' misguided belief that transparency is an adequate tactic for the battles that lay ahead for journalism:

> But in this gentler age of transparency and accountability, not to mention heightened public contempt for the media, editors have largely swallowed their frustration. They have chosen to answer passionate—often virulent—denunciations by explaining the painstaking path that national security stories travel to publication. (Smolkin 2006a, 24)

Elsewhere an article wondered if journalism had gone New Age by embracing transparency. "You can almost see the self-assured cigar smoke dissipating, the Wild Turkey neglected in favor of … healing crystals? Or, as the healing crystals are known in our business, 'transparency'" (Smolkin 2006b, 16). The soft, mystical qualities of transparency are mourned as a weak substitute for the seemingly dying hard-edged newsroom.

This, the discourse suggests, is neither the rough-and-tumble style of journalism's past nor a savvy approach for the way forward. As a delegitimizing strategy, this subtext relies on a general cultural acceptance of masculine norms in the public sphere and reticence about perceived softness (Gans 1979). It also mirrors a traditional distinction between "hard" and "soft" news in which "hard" news stories are considered more important and are more likely to be assigned to male reporters. This is not to say, of course, that all who criticize transparency espouse such views; rather, select critics are using a discursive strategy that taps into social values that these critics apparently believe hold some remaining cultural power.

Conclusions

Transparency is loved; it is merely accepted; and it is hated. On the one hand, transparency is discursively constructed as a legitimate norm of the journalistic field. In its strongest form, it is the new objectivity, the natural heir apparent as the ruling principle of journalism in the twenty-first century. It is the natural product of journalism in the age of the internet, able to deliver a vast set of journalistic and social goods. On the other hand, it is an overbearing, disordered force. It is overboard, its advocates are overwrought, and the public is left overwhelmed. It provides the opposite of what it promises—instead of clarity we are left with obfuscation. Worst of all, it is naïve; and it is soft. All of which is to say, that transparency, for all of its discursive advancement, is probably not a *settled* institutional norm. Nevertheless, it does seem to have a place in journalism's doxa and cultural capital. Contrary to the conclusions of Chadha and Koliska (2015, 221) that transparency had little "institutional purchase as a normative standard," the study here found that the journalistic field routinely appeals to transparency, implicitly and explicitly, as a standard by which to judge journalistic practice. The inclusion of that standard in the newly revised SPJ Code of Ethics, then, represents the end of a discursive battle. It would have been largely impossible for transparency to be "formalized" (Schudson 2001, 151) in this way without a field engaged in years of discussion and debate about the value and practice of transparency. Thus, we might interpret this years-long debate as the necessary condition for the formalization of an institutional norm that a code of ethics can provide. That being said, a formalized ethics code does not mean that all the work of legitimization is done.

This study helps us think through how it is that a value or ethic takes on normative status within a field. Schudson (2001, 151) has convincingly argued that for a value to be an institutional norm it must be *articulated* as a norm or "prescriptive rule." We have seen that the journalistic field is not lacking for discourse that articulates transparency in prescriptive and normative terms; moreover, the change to the SPJ code represents a formalization of transparency as an ethic of the field. Thus, this study provides insight into how cultural capital might undergo change. However, when it comes to changing cultural capital, we are also left with more questions. What are we to make of the delegitimizing discourse that has also found expression here? Does it negate the legitimizing discourse of transparency's champions? And is settledness an important criterion for what qualifies a value to be an institutional norm? For all of objectivity's status as the "great law" (Mindich 1998, 114) of journalism, it was seldom without its critics (Schudson 1978); in which case we should not expect more from transparency. While it would be tempting to propose a census of the statements about transparency, count them, and declare a winner, Schudson (2001, 151) also reminds us that "wide-spreadness" is not a measure of normative status. What we are left with is a sizeable group of journalists—whose voices find regular expression in the trade publications and sites of the journalistic field—who treat transparency as if it is part of journalism's doxa and cultural capital. Thus, their discourse provides some structure to the "social space" that is journalism (Bourdieu 1998, 40).

The discursive construction of transparency does suggest that a paradigm shift (Elliot 2008; Kuhn 1970), if not realized, is nevertheless underway. Journalists are clearly struggling for "the transformation or preservation of the field" (Bourdieu 1998, 41). Transparency's opponents have anchored their delegitimizing discourse in journalism's once proud past, when journalists were savvy, independent men. They long for a kind of journalism—or an era of journalism—in which journalists had autonomy, unencumbered by audience

engagement. Their focus is largely discursively inward (to the field) and backward (to the field's past). The proponents of transparency, meanwhile, have anchored their legitimizing discourse in a digital age in which powerful institutions are judged by their transparency. Their focus is more discursively outward (to the public) and forward (to the field's imagined future). The imagined interlocutors for the proponents of transparency are the public. These journalists want the public to find their work credible and have discursively constructed transparency as the means to deliver that trust and credibility.

This consideration of the discursive construction of transparency can also help us think about the assumptions of field theory. The articulation of journalism's cultural capital is typically understood as a basis for the autonomy of the field (Benson and Neveu 2005; Hanitzsch 2007). Journalists had understood their autonomy and their legitimacy to be mutually constitutive. Greater autonomy simply meant greater legitimacy (Bourdieu 1998). But paradoxically, transparency is a form of cultural capital whereby the field willingly foregoes a measure of autonomy to gain legitimacy. The new SPJ code posits transparency as an ethic of journalism done while in "a civil dialogue with the public" (SPJ 2014b), something of a departure from the detachment at the heart of objectivity. Thus, transparency reminds us that fields are inherently relational (Bourdieu 1998)—the audience field and the journalistic field help define one another. Thus, the right relational balance amongst fields is likely just as important to the legitimacy of the journalistic field as is the maximization of autonomy.

This study is not meant to be the last word on transparency. Even long-held cultural capital has required maintenance and defense (Champagne 2005). Relatively newly formed cultural capital likely requires the same, or even more, discursive maintenance and defense. The discursive construction of transparency moving forward bears continued scrutiny. Which is to say, transparency is not a finished product. For instance, Chadha and Koliska (2015) point out that transparency will be made real when it shapes everyday journalistic practice. Objectivity, for all its faults, came with implications for the daily work of doing journalism. That level of guidance does not appear to yet exist when it comes to transparency (Chadha and Koliska 2015). This translation of a norm into practice merits further investigation.

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Appendix A

List of Publications

Publications	Number of articles
American Journalism Review	54
American Society of Media Photographers	5
Broadcasting & Cable	5
Columbia Journalism Review	76
CyberJournalist	8
Editor & Publisher	10
Extra!	8
Folio	4
FPO Magazine	1
Grassroots Editor	1
Jim Romenesko	7
Media Magazine	8
Mediashift	21
Nieman Journalism Lab	14
Online Journalism Review	10
Quill	18
TVNewser	2
Total	252