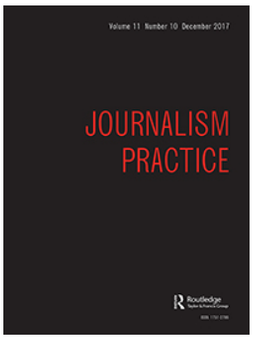

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IT'S ABOUT ME
A study of journalists' self-presentation of their visual and verbal selves

Serena Carpenter, Duygu Kanver, and **Rashad Timmons**

*Media sociology literature supports the assumption that freelancing as a way of life should have an impact on the self-presentation behaviors of journalists. The present research is concerned with how journalists—employed and freelance—frame their identities and disclose relevant information in social media spaces through a quantitative content analysis of Facebook fan pages (*N = *468). Freelance journalists, faced with employment instability and fewer organizational constraints, may hypothetically be less guided by journalistic principles. Specifically, we created measures to investigate how their visual (i.e., profile images) and verbal (i.e., self-categorization, textual formality, skills) fronts differed in these settings. The results revealed that freelance journalists communicated a more serious professional self, emphasizing their journalism skills and identifying less with organizational attributes. A separate analysis showed that females were more likely to post an image with a smile and share personal information on social media channels, while men presented a more serious front. These results suggest that freelancers similarly align with employed journalists concerning their journalistic ideals, but the need to secure consistent work likely influences the degree that they share personal content. Overall, however, descriptive results show that most journalists wrote about themselves rather than writing about their connection to journalism or humanity.*

KEYWORDS branding; Facebook; freelance journalists; gender; self-categorization theory; self-presentation; skills; social media; visual self

Introduction

It is assumed that journalists use social media platforms to communicate that they are competent in several areas. Social media users make particular choices about the information they share in order to participate in a branding culture that demands visibility for the sake of positive self-promotion (Goodwin et al. 2016). We do not know, however, precisely how practitioners use such platforms to strategically communicate their identity because existing research instead has centered on illuminating how people portray themselves on a personal level rather than a professional one. As a result, the present study contributes to theory through the empirical development of several constructs (i.e., self-categorization, text formality, and visual front) that can be applied in a self-presentation context. The present study contributes to practice through the examination of the degree to which journalists share more informal, personal sides of themselves and whether the hypothetical norm that journalists are blending their personal and professional lives holds on social media channels.

Journalism is a logical occupation for the study of mediated self-presentation. The present fragmentation of occupational roles and duties may be dismantling the storyline that unites journalists as workers carrying out the journalistic missions. Norms and values

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bind journalists together to support a narrative associated with their idealized societal functions. The rise of other types of journalists, such as citizen and freelance journalists, requires them to articulate their expertise and authority as reliable information sources. Broadly, identity is critical to investigate whether the movement toward self-employment and job instability is having an impact on journalists, including their behaviors associated with their higher purpose. We seek to determine whether routine and organizational constraints affect journalists' identity by studying the self-presentational differences of freelance and employed journalists. One major indicator that communicates journalistic identity and expertise is employment with a news organization (Russo 1998). Media sociology literature consistently demonstrates that employed journalists' behaviors are influenced by set organizational standards and routine norms. People working in environments free from such constraints may behave differently than employed journalists because freelance journalists possess more professional autonomy (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). Hypothetically, freelancers should be bound by discourse at an occupational level because they share the same education and professional association codes of ethics. If differences do exist between the two types of journalists, findings could suggest a larger problem concerning the identification of qualities that unite journalists as a field.

As a first step, the present research examined the visual and narrative presentations of self and sought to theoretically extend the digital self-presentation literature to professional, rather than personal, settings by analyzing the variance of visual (i.e., profile image selection) and verbal (i.e., self-categorization, skills, and text formality) fronts through a quantitative content analysis of Facebook fan pages of journalists. It is assumed that public journalist fan pages represent an articulation of the professional self because social media literacy has been argued to be a necessary practice for journalists. We also build on this line of research by empirically assessing how journalists communicate their identity to various audiences because most research on branding and the freelance community consists of interviews. We also examine the impact that gender has on self-presentational behaviors because females and males vary in how they present themselves.

Freelance Journalism

Media work increasingly reflects a pool of self-employed workers detached from organizational anchors. As a result, present sociological models in journalism should be revisited. Keith (2011) has argued that theoretical models are less applicable in today's media landscape due to an increase in the individualization of labor. Evidence supporting Keith's observation is the increase of freelance journalists contributing to journalistic products. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), more than 14 million workers are self-employed as of 2016, and this number is expected to increase steadily by 2020. The field of journalism, among other sectors, stands out in terms of the number of freelance workers. In the United Kingdom, the rate of self-employed journalists is twice the rate of the self-employment average in all industries (Ward 2012). A US journalists' survey showed that 54 percent of their work was freelance (Hermes et al. 2014). Globally, self-employed journalists made up 18 percent of the journalists in New Zealand (Hannis 2008), 33 percent in the United Kingdom (Franklin 1997), while in Norway, 50 percent of journalists under the age of 30 were reported to work as freelancers (Gynnild 2005). Despite their prominence in the media landscape, they are one of the most overlooked categories of journalists by scholars (Hanitzsch and Wahl-Jorgensen 2009).

Scholars have attempted to distinguish professional journalists from *non-affiliated* journalists (e.g., citizen journalists, entrepreneurial journalists) who start their own organizations and/or report, write, and produce content on platforms because "everyone is both a producer and consumer of content" due to the accessibility of online production tools (Deuze and Dimoundi 2002, 86). Entrepreneurial journalists have been argued to create and own small organizations, which leads to the addition of a voice or innovation to the media marketplace (Hoag and Compaine 2006), whereas citizen journalists have been defined as people who do not receive an income from mainstream news organizations and people who most likely produce content for one publication (Robinson and DeShano 2011). Thus, the increase in the number of journalist categories requires the continued efforts of scholars in articulating concepts to describe their work, identity, and functions.

Freelance journalists are distinct because they are more motivated to secure employment and less motivated to express their voice as is the case in citizen journalism or entrepreneurial journalism. Freelance journalists are defined as "organizationally independent journalist[s] earning [their] living by selling [their] services wherever [they] can" (Gynnild 2005, 112). The literature review revealed that freelance journalists: (1) have freedom in the selection of reporting topic/fields; (2) lack permanent employment; (3) engage in self-promotion, or personal branding, for employment opportunities; (4) sell their services to a news organization or another type of an organization without a contract; and (5) likely possess an ability to work for more than one medium due to their multimedia and cross-media skills (Gynnild 2005; Hunter 2015; Solomon 2016).

Freelance journalists possess more internal autonomy and job satisfaction than employed journalists. Internal autonomy is the state of being free from financial pressure, ideologies, and editorial limitations dictated by a particular media organization (Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska, and Anikina 2015). This means that freelance journalists experience greater freedom to select employment that aligns with their biases (Gollmitzer 2014). Professional autonomy, an inherent characteristic of the gatekeeping role of journalists, is a predictor of job satisfaction (Weaver et al. 2007). Freelance journalists have reported feeling greater satisfaction because they can spend more time with their families (Massey and Elmore 2011); however, another study found that family life was impossible as a freelancer (Solomon 2016).

Such latitude, however, may also influence freelance journalists' identification with the field of journalism, which may mean a lesser connection with occupational standards, ideologies, norms, and public service orientations (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). Freelancers may be "marked by insecurity and weakness in the market rather than a sense of freedom and independence" (Ornebring 2009, 9). Many freelance journalists have been let go from their organizational job (Hermes et al. 2014), which has led to a life of irregular hours and pay (Solomon 2016). In one survey, almost all freelancers (92 percent) experienced anxiety associated with their finances, with some mentioning funding their own reporting projects and struggling to make enough income to buy food (ProjectWord 2015). Furthermore, freelance journalists have expressed mental burnout and other health issues (Gollmitzer 2014). In turn, freelancers may set aside journalist principles and ethical concerns in order to please a client to earn an income to support their families (Edstrom and Ladendorf 2012; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Ladendorf 2012). As a result, freelance journalists' objectivity has been questioned due to the direct involvement in the financial aspects of their work (i.e., obligation to attract funders, outlets to sell work) (Hunter 2015). Although, they express that non-

journalistic activities such as creating newsletters, proofreading, and moderating public discussions have not influenced their commitment to journalistic endeavors (Gollmitzer 2014).

In the present study, we examined how freelance and employed journalists expressed their identity through the construct of self-presentation. Based on the literature review, it is expected that freelancers will be more communicative by sharing more information. Editors often monitor freelancers' social media behaviors because of their talents to interact with audiences. In interview studies with freelance journalists, freelancers used social media extensively to create and communicate their personal identity and professional brand because they found it to be an affordable and effective way to showcase their expertise and network (Brems et al. 2016; Holton 2016).

Self-presentation

People often seek professional advancement and personal recognition, which leads them to adjust their self-presentation behaviors. Self-presentation is an actor's strategic selection of information presented about the self (Goffman 1959; Schneider 1981). Goffman theorized that actors perform roles within a specific context by constructing or altering their *fronts* (e.g., appearance, mannerisms) in order to convey appropriate or expected behaviors mediated through conventions and norms. For example, a student recently graduating from an undergraduate university program may alter his or her social media profiles to align with standards of professionalism; thereby, seeking to prompt a certain impression in potential employers. The student may upload a profile picture wearing business attire or disclose previous work experience on his or her social media account. Accordingly, an employer may view the prospective applicant's profiles to evaluate his or her talent and employability. Ultimately, both parties behave and interact to produce shared outcomes.

The present study adds to the self-presentational research stream by investigating how individuals publically communicate their professional visual and textual fronts on Facebook fan pages and developing constructs to investigate these behaviors. Scholars have studied the use of self-presentation strategies online in various social and cultural contexts, including personal homepages (Papacharissi 2002) and online dating environments (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs 2006). In non-professional contexts, Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008) studied US undergraduate student Facebook users' accounts to observe how their identities were developed through cultural, visual, and verbal fronts. The researchers examined users' self-descriptions, finding that users overwhelmingly employed visual (e.g., images smiling with friends, expressing affection) and narrative (e.g., "About Me") fronts to present themselves. Thus, the selective presentation of information by a social actor is achieved both verbally and nonverbally in face-to-face interactions (Jones and Pittman 1982).

Individuals can present their most desirable identities through profile pictures, descriptor text, and message compositions (Walther 2007). For example, Qiu et al. (2012) found that Facebook users' friends presented a happier front on Facebook than in their physical lives. Perhaps the platform's publicness leads to filtered content selection. Facebook is a less anonymous environment than early online social media platforms such as chat rooms and bulletin boards. In particular, Facebook has documented an average of 1.13 billion daily active users worldwide in June 2016, with 84.5 percent of the users outside the United States and Canada (Facebook 2016), and has become increasingly popular among professionals in career-oriented and organizational contexts (Boyd and Ellison 2007).

In the present study, we explored how journalism practitioners presented themselves in profile pictures and narrative fronts on their "About Me" sections. This section provides a large space to detail accomplishments and interests. While the aforementioned quantitative studies demonstrate the explanatory value of self-presentation in relation to identity presentation on personal Facebook accounts, few referenced studies explore self-presentation in the context of professionalism, business etiquette, or organizational influences (e.g., Hanusch and Bruns 2016). We focus on both the verbal (i.e., skills, self-categorization, text formality) and visual in to order to gain a more complete understanding of how journalists articulate their identity.

Visual Front

Social network sites afford people the opportunity to construct their identities in online environments. Goffman (1959, 23) described the front as the "expressive equipment" employed by social actors when presenting themselves in a given context. Increasingly, these sites encourage participants to upload photographs and other images, making visual fronts fundamental to the articulation of users' self-identities (Boyd and Ellison 2007). Arguably, the most integral component of the Facebook profile is the profile image, defined as the single default photo by which Facebook users choose to identify themselves within a social network (Hum et al. 2011). The default photo has been argued to be the most important element because it communicates their perception of self and it is the most viewed page attribute (Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert 2009; Zhao and Gonglue 2011).

Social media users often employ *look at us* visual strategies by communicating playfulness and affection (Mendelson and Papachararissi 2010). As a result, Facebook users choose profile images they perceive as attractive or fun (Strano 2008). The selection of images is often adjusted based on feedback from their community, making identity a fluid state (Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008). The selection of an image can influence people's perceptions of journalists. Smiling in photographs is related to judgments of agreeableness and extraversion, direct eye contact with the lens is associated with agreeableness and openness, and a full body shot is associated with neuroticism (Guntuku et al. 2015; Naumann et al. 2009). On another similar social network site, StudiVZ, users were most likely to look directly into the camera (78 percent) with a posed facial expression (52 percent) or a serious (25 percent) one (Kramer and Winter 2008). Journalists may be concerned with presenting themselves professionally and, in turn, select images accordingly (Hum et al. 2011). People add and remove images based on their desire to appear hardworking (Peluchette and Karl 2010). The present study contributes by breaking down visual practices into several common practices based on literature and observations of journalist profiles (i.e., serious close-up, smile close-up, action, posed body, posed facial expression).

RQ1: How do freelance journalists differ in their visual presentation of self compared to employed journalists?

Verbal Fronts

Textual formality. Walther (2007) suggested that technological affordances (e.g., time, editability) enable users to engage in self-presentation strategies through a careful

construction of messages, self-descriptors, and other textual information. Scholars investigated this claim in a variety of settings, namely online dating environments (Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs 2006). We anticipate that journalists' message composition will reflect a desire to sustain a professional self. Audience orientation and online interaction among journalists, however, invites more personal, journalist–audience communication (Hedman 2014). The blurring of personal and professional lives on social media platforms may result in more practitioners sharing information about their family, pets, etc. In a study of Australian journalists' Twitter 160-word biographies, Hanusch and Bruns (2016) found that 41 percent shared personal information. Furthermore, freelance journalists use Twitter in a more interactive and personal way than employed journalists (Brems et al. 2016). As social media influences how journalists develop and disseminate their work, as well as interact with their audiences, investigating the online self-presentation strategies of journalists is critical to understanding how social media communication influences journalism professionalism in the twenty-first-century news environment. Hedman (2014) concluded that journalists' use of social media has facilitated the creation of new professional expectations as sites such as Twitter are being normalized in journalistic work.

Consequently, the present research examined the formality of their textual information. It is unclear whether freelance or employed journalists will be professional. Journalists struggle in the management and communication of their personal and professional lives with various publics as they gain freedoms in their ability to express both (Carpenter and Lertpratchya 2016; Holton and Molyneux 2015). In fact, organizational leaders often advise journalists to remove personal content such as family photos, while requiring them to post positive content about the organization (Molyneux and Holton 2015). Holton and Molyneux (2015, 14) stated "this choice presents a paradox: if journalists choose to present too much of a personal identity, they risk punishment by their employers. If they present only a professional identity, they risk offending their audiences."

RQ2: How do freelance journalists differ in their textual formality compared to employed journalists?

Self-categorization. People define themselves based on different levels of inclusiveness to a group. One possibility is that freelance journalists may feel less belongingness toward the occupation of journalism or humanity itself due to their work environment. Interdependency is critical for the continued survival of journalism as a semi-profession. People identify with groups because they feel gratifying experiences from being associated with such groups; and in return, groups influence their identity through norms, values, ethics, etc. (Turner 1985; Turner and Onorato 1999). Freelance journalists may identify at the individual level rather than being guided by service to the profession or humanity. Hypothetically, citizen journalism, job instability, and scarce resources may be tearing the seams that bind freelancers to journalistic principles. Therefore, personal self-interests may be more influential because newsroom settings and routines are less influential (Shoemaker and Reese 2014).

Self-categorization is a concept that can be used to investigate the extent to which journalists communicate group identity. The social psychological concept of self-categorization distinguishes personal from social identity and is concerned with how such degrees of perceived membership influence behavior. Within the self-categorization theoretical perspective, an individual may depersonalize himself or herself if he or she feels strong

belongingness to a group (Hogg and Turner 1987; Turner 1985; Turner and Onorato 1999). For example, a journalist may identify as someone who is a member of the journalism profession or a "reporter for Channel 10 television news" because of the positive distinctiveness associated with a particular social category.

The categorization through a distinction of self versus other groups happens at different levels of abstraction. Turner (1985) argued there are at least three levels of self-categorization that are salient to people: human, social, and personal; and Leonardelli and Toh (2015) stated that people act in a hierarchy of increasingly inclusive self-categories. They posited that people categorize themselves at varying degrees that include a personal level, ingroup–outgroup level (i.e., intermediate categorization), and a human self-categorization (i.e., a superordinate category).

We investigated the extent that journalists self-categorize themselves based on four categories: personal, organizational, journalism, and human race identification. Personal identification reflects one's emphasis on the perception that one is special or different from other individuals. This particular category often uses words such as I, me, mine, etc. The latter categories represent the degree to which individuals communicate their identification with a particular social category. The two social intermediate categories developed were organization and journalism. These identifications investigate the degree to which individuals believe that they are members of an organization or the occupation of journalism, which often consists of defining themselves as *we* or *us*. Lastly, the human category reflects an individual's desire to understand what it means to be a part of the human race through various behaviors such as reporting on human rights (Turner and Onorato 1999).

RQ3: How do freelance journalists differ in their categorization of self compared to employed journalists?

Skills. The last verbal front under investigation is skills. In order to carry out professional tasks and gain employment, journalists must possess skills and they will likely communicate that expertise to various publics (Nikunen 2014). Tedeschi and Riess (1981, 11) theorized that "actors seek attributions of competence usually in one specific area such as intelligence, knowledge, or athletic prowess … this strategy of self-presentation usually has some immediate goal such as admission to a university or employment at some desirable job." Employers primarily review journalism and technical skills when making hiring decisions. Specifically, journalism practitioners are expected to possess both technical skills such as blogging, editing images, and shooting video, and non-technical skills such as researching topics, writing text, and editing information (Carpenter 2009; Pierce and Miller 2007; Tang, Robin, and Harvey 2011). Freelance journalists may highlight non-technical and technical skills to a greater degree than employed journalists because they need to secure employment. In an international interview study, freelancers rated writing as the most valuable skill, while photography was the most used skill. The participants also rated video shooting and editing skills highly because they got paid more to produce such content (Solomon 2016).

RQ4: How do freelance journalists differ in their skills compared to employed journalists?

Gender. Gender is salient to self-presentational visual and verbal behaviors. Generally, women are more likely to portray themselves as relationship builders and they are less likely to engage in self-promotion, while men are more likely to highlight their competencies and engage in other status-maintaining behaviors (Josephs, Markus, and Tafarodi 1992;

Vohs, Baumeister, and Ciarocco 2005). As evidence, a study of US senators and house members' images on websites found females were more likely to portray themselves as connected to the people they represent, while men were more likely to communicate that they had access to people in power in politics (Gulati 2004). Geurin-Eaglemen and Burch (2016) found that female athletes were more likely to divulge personal narratives and share photos of their private lives on Instagram. On personal sites, females are more likely to share personal topic information (e.g., family and romantic partner) and upload a profile image that they perceive as putting forth an attractive or fun-loving identity (Dominick 1999; Strano 2008). In a journalism context, Larsosa (2012) found that female journalists were more likely than male journalists to disclose personal narratives and share aspects of their daily lives on social media. In the present study, we sought to explore the self-presentation behaviors employed by female and male journalists.

RQ5: How do males and females differ in their visual presentation of self on their social media pages?

RQ6: How do males and females differ in their textual formality on their social media pages?

RQ7: How do males and females differ in their categorization of self on their social media pages?

RQ8: How do males and females differ in their skills on their social media pages?

Method

We employed a quantitative content analysis because we were interested in how journalists presented themselves to various publics. Content analysis is an appropriate method when studying the communication behaviors of individuals.

Sampling Procedure

The unit of the analysis was a journalist's Facebook fan page. Facebook fan pages are public profiles set up by celebrities, businesses, etc. We selected journalists' pages on Facebook because of the website's popularity in the world (Alexa 2016; Pew Research Center 2014).

Characteristics of the content shared on Facebook was also influential in our choice of this platform. Unlike Twitter, which depends heavily on text content, and Instagram, whose main focus is visual content, Facebook consists of a balanced mix of visual and text content, enabling us to analyze both visuals (e.g., profile photo) and text (e.g., "About" page) shared by the journalists.

We selected fan pages of the journalists as opposed to personal pages, because they are a common way to learn about notable individuals and organizations, as these spaces provide journalists with the structural freedom to share much more detailed professional and personal information. Fan pages are used to build one's own professional brand, sustain interaction with one's audience, as well as communicate personal values (Lin and Lu 2011). In addition, Facebook search shows healthier results for journalist pages under

"Pages" compared to those under "People." When individuals create a fan page, they can pick a category such as "journalist," which then allows their page to be listed among journalist pages, while there is no such categorization option for personal profiles.

We created the sampling frame through a search process because no substantial directory exists. We found only one directory, and it included only 26 names of notable journalists (http://fanpagelist.com/category/journalists/) at the time. The search strategy employed involved typing "journalist" into Facebook's built-in search bar and limiting search results to Facebook fan pages (https://www.facebook.com/directory/pages/). Facebook requires membership to find Facebook fan pages. We created a separate Facebook account using a newly created email address with no contacts or location information. We restricted the analysis to pages that were operated in English and included full names of individual journalists. In addition, several researchers used their Facebook site search engine to assess whether additional names could be found through other users' sites. The search process yielded 468 journalists' Facebook fan pages.

Measures

Visual self. Coders examined information from the smaller left primary photo on the Facebook fan pages. We created a measure to assess the variation in journalists' presentation of self. Coders were instructed to place the image in one of six categories: (1) serious close-up (similar to passport photo), (2) smile close-up (similar to passport photo with teeth showing), (3) action (picture doing a certain activity such as working), (4) posed body (person strikes a pose like a model), (5) posed facial expression (e.g., scrunching the nose, sticking out a tongue), and (6) other.

Text formality. Coders coded all Facebook fan pages in one of four categories based on the number of sentences or clear phrases on the "About" page. Hyperlinks were not included as text. This measure was created to assess the expectation that journalists may be presenting both professional and personal selves within these spaces. Categories included: (1) no text presented (includes just list of links), (2) professional (CV, work history, all work-related), (3) personal (hobbies, family, etc.), and (4) a mix of professional and personal.

Self-categorization. We created a measure to assess how journalists socially categorize themselves. The variables were created based on a review of self-categorization theory and literature. Information provided on the "About" tab was coded for the self-categorization dimensions. The "About" tab of a public/fan page on Facebook consisted of three main sections, "About," "Basic Info," and "Contact Info," at the time of data collection. Facebook had subsections such as Biography, Awards, Personal Interests, Personal Information, Location, Affiliation, and Website. We coded each full sentence, bullet statement, and fragment that contained at least some reference to the following in one or more of those subsections. The dimensions included:

(1) *Personal identity*: This variable represents an emphasis on self and examines to what extent they self-reference themselves including first-person references such as "I" statements (e.g., "I am a freelance journalist looking for stories and work"; "I've

always been interested in news"), as well as self-referencing statements written in the third person (e.g., "Allie is an award-winning journalist who has received multiple Associated Press awards").

(2) *Organization identity*: The emphasis is the organization and each statement should provide identifying information with their organization. In this category, the person defines himself or herself as an extension of the organization (e.g., "I have been a member of WNYW-FOX 5 News since 1986"; "Despite having some great professors in college, nothing prepared me for the 'real world' like the internship work I did at WYMT"; "Matt reconfirms KUTV's commitment to using 'the public's airwaves' to keep all Utah consumers informed and safe").

(3) *Journalistic profession identification*: This variable reflects the promotion of values, norms, and symbols that reflect the ideals of journalism. The emphasis is on journalism as a group and this type of statement provides some identifying information about the referent relevant to the ideals of journalism (e.g., "I am reporting truth for those who seek it"; "I want to raise consciousness about issues and stories that don't always make the headlines"; "No matter the medium or subject of my work, my goal is the same: Enlighten people about the world around them in the way that will engage them the most").

(4) *Human race identity*: The emphasis is people, humans, and society in general (e.g., "I am a longtime supporter of causes that promote child and adult literacy"; "When Sarah is not hard at work, she enjoys spending time mentoring young women"; "I believe that global awareness makes a person smarter and ultimately more human").

Skills. Coders recorded the presence or absence of *non-technical* skills journalists listed in the "About" tab of their fan page: summary content writing (e.g., writing headlines and captions), multiplatform writing (e.g., writing for both offline and online), multimedia writing (e.g., writing for online-broadcast), Associated Press style knowledge, the ability to work under deadline pressure, the ability to edit copy, news judgment, the ability to research, teamwork, interviewing skills, client relations, and communication skills. Coders also recorded whether the journalists stated that they possessed *technical* skills: computer programming (e.g., PHP, Ruby on Rails, Python, Javascript, Ajax, Django), Web content management system (e.g., Joomla, Drupal, WordPress), HTML/CSS, database management (e.g., SQL/C/C++/DSS), ColdFusion, Web-editing software (e.g., Dreamweaver), graphics program (e.g., Quark/In-Design), Web design, animation, word processing (e.g., Microsoft Word), Microsoft Excel, search engine optimization, tracking software (e.g., Omniture), image-editing software (e.g., Adobe Photoshop), slideshow editing applications (e.g., Soundslides), podcasting, audio/video editing, video shooting, photo shooting, blogging, posting of online content, and the use of social media (Carpenter 2009).

Freelance journalists. Coders recorded whether journalists mentioned that they were freelance journalists. Employed journalists were assessed by determining whether the journalist mentioned a place of employment.

Intercoder Reliability

Following pretests and expert feedback, one doctoral student and one faculty researcher coded 84 pages or 18 percent of a randomly sampled set of pages for the

purposes of intercoder reliability. We employed Krippendorf's alpha, Cohen's kappa and Scott's pi for reliability analyses for the nominal-level variables. Reliability for the variables ranged from 0.80 to 0.92. Pearson's correlation was used for ratio-level variables, and self-categorization variables were reliable at a 0.85 level or greater.

Results

From a general descriptive perspective of the sample, the majority of journalists identified the United States (74.8 percent) as their home. The remaining 23.4 percent ($N = 107$) of our sample consisted of journalists based in 30 different countries. Journalists outside the United States were distributed continentally: 29 percent in Europe, 26 percent in Asia, 19 percent in Africa, 17 percent in Oceania, and 9 percent in Americas. Most of the journalists were female (54.9 percent), followed by male (44.7 percent) and unable to tell (0.4 percent). Journalists primarily identified with the television (41.5 percent), newspaper (12.2 percent), and online/digital (7.9 percent) mediums. Slightly more than 16 percent were associated with a verified Facebook page. The majority posted a picture of themselves (94.4 percent) making direct eye contact with the camera lens (75.4 percent) in the small icon image area on their Facebook homepage. A smaller proportion of journalists (43.8 percent), however, included a large banner photo of themselves at the top of the page.

RQ1 sought to identify whether journalists differed in how they visually presented themselves to the public on their Facebook fan pages. The differences in proportions tests revealed one significant difference, as shown in Table 1. Freelance journalists (38.9 percent) were more likely to visually present a more serious front to the public than other journalists (23.2 percent) on their Facebook fan pages ($p < 0.05$).

RQ2 queried whether freelance journalists would be more textually formal compared to other journalists. The difference in proportions tests did not reveal any significant differences (see Table 2).

RQ3 investigated whether freelance journalists differed in how they categorized themselves using independent samples *t*-tests. There was a significant difference in scores for freelance (mean = 0.04, SD = 0.19) and employed journalists (mean = 0.33, SD = 0.67; $t(466) = 3.178$, $p = 0.01$, two-tailed) in their organizational identification. The magnitude of the difference in means (mean difference = 0.29, 95 percent confidence interval = 0.111–0.472) was between small to moderate ($\eta^2 = 0.027$). The remaining variables did not reveal any significant differences (see Table 3).

RQ4 sought to examine whether freelance journalists would be more likely to communicate skills knowledge areas on their fan pages. The difference in proportion results

TABLE 1
Profile images of journalists on Facebook fan pages (%)

	Freelance ($N = 54$)	Employed ($N = 414$)
Serious close-up*	38.9	23.2
Smile close-up	38.9	39.1
Action	9.3	15.2
Posed body	3.7	9.2
Posed expression	0.0	1.4
Other	9.3	11.8

*$p < 0.05$.

TABLE 2
Text formality of journalists' Facebook fan pages (%)

	Freelance ($N = 54$)	Employed ($N = 414$)
Professional/personal text	31.5	30.7
Personal text	0.0	5.6
Professional text	68.5	59.4
No text	0.0	4.3

showed that freelance journalists (27.8 percent) were more likely to state that they possessed non-technical skills than employed journalists (12.6 percent) ($p < 0.01$). No significant differences were found between freelance journalists (20.4 percent) and employed journalists (14.0 percent) in their communication of technical skills.

RQ5 sought to identify whether males and females differed in how they visually presented themselves. The differences in proportions tests revealed two significant differences, as shown in Table 4. Males (34.9 percent) were significantly more likely to visually present a more serious front to the public than females (17.1 percent) on their Facebook fan pages ($p < 0.001$), and females (49.8 percent) were more likely than men (26.3 percent) to post a close-up smiling profile picture ($p < 0.001$).

RQ6 investigated whether gender was related to whether they wrote professional text on their profiles. Females were more likely to be personal (6.6 percent) than males (2.9 percent) on their Facebook pages (see Table 5).

RQ7 sought to identify whether male and female journalists differed in their self-categorization practices on Facebook. The independent samples *t*-test did not reveal any significant differences (see Table 6); although, the human self-categorization difference between males (mean = 0.13, SD = 0.58) and females (mean = 0.18, SD = 0.50) neared significance ($p = 0.07$).

RQ8 asked whether male and female journalists differed in how they posted information related to their skills. The analysis did not produce significant results. Males (13.9 percent) and females (15.6 percent) did not significantly differ in their technical skills, and males (12.0 percent) and females (16.3 percent) did not significantly differ in the sharing of their non-technical skills knowledge.

Discussion

The theoretical emphasis of the present study investigated whether freelance journalists communicated their identity differently than employed journalists through the

TABLE 3
Self-categorization of journalists on Facebook fan pages

	Freelance	Employed	η^2
Self	4.52 (3.51)	5.33 (5.77)	
Organization**	0.04 (0.19)	0.33 (0.67)	0.03
Journalism	0.22 (0.57)	0.37 (0.89)	
Humanity	0.06 (0.23)	0.17 (0.57)	

Values are means with standard deviations in parentheses.
**$p < 0.01$.

TABLE 4
Profile images of male and female journalists on Facebook fan pages (%)

	Male ($N = 209$)	Female ($N = 257$)
Serious close-up***	34.9	17.1
Smile close-up***	26.3	49.8
Action	17.2	12.5
Posed body	7.7	9.3
Posed expression	1.4	1.2
Other	12.4	10.1

***$p < 0.001$.

TABLE 5
Text formality of male and female journalists' Facebook fan pages (%)

	Male ($N = 209$)	Female ($N = 257$)
Professional/personal text	30.1	31.1
Personal text*	2.9	6.6
Professional text	63.6	58.0
No text	3.3	4.3

*$p < 0.05$.

TABLE 6
Self-categorization of male and female journalists on Facebook fan pages

	Male	Female
Self	5.39 (5.53)	5.13 (5.61)
Organization	0.33 (0.72)	0.27 (0.57)
Journalism	0.39 (0.91)	0.37 (0.81)
Humanity	0.13 (0.50)	0.18 (0.58)

Values are means with standard deviations in parentheses.

construct of self-presentation. Journalists must perform for multiple known and unknown audiences including friends, family, employers, peers, etc. on social media channels. It was assumed that journalists would seek to present their ideal selves with an emphasis on constructing their professional identity on social media channels because of the possibility that employers or other journalists viewing their public pages or because freelancers may behave differently due to fewer routine and organizational controls. The overall results provide evidence that freelance journalists presented a more serious front and communicated their skill competencies such as interviewing to a greater extent, and their identity aligned less with an organization. Significant differences did not occur when comparing whether they differed in their text formality, technical skills, and self-categorization with humanity and journalism. As suggested earlier, non-significant differences could be interpreted as a positive finding because differences would mean that freelancers do not align themselves with employed journalists' definition of self. We also found that male journalists were more likely to present themselves seriously on Facebook, while females were more likely to share personal information.

Social media spaces enable people to use multiple props, and photographs play a large role in how identity is communicated. This is why RQ1 sought to identify whether journalists differed in how they visually presented themselves to the public on their Facebook fan pages. Freelance journalists conveyed a more serious visual self. This finding makes sense in the context of personal branding, in which freelance journalists may attempt to promote a personal brand that appeals to potential employers. Returning to Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation, he posited that individuals will alter their identities based on audience and context to achieve intended outcomes. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are often employed by public figures and professionals to generate personal brand equity and loyalty (Geurin-Eaglemen and Burch 2016; Molyneux and Holton 2015). In an expansive social network such as Facebook, freelance journalists—presumably seeking more job security—are less likely to engage in more personal self-presentation practices because they lack the social capital and consistent audience to do so. Journalists employed by news organizations likely enjoy an increased measure of job security that does not necessitate the communication of such a front.

RQ2 queried whether freelance journalists would be more textually professional compared to employed journalists. While the data did not reveal significant differences, analyses did reflect that freelance journalists, consistent with their visual fronts, strove to communicate a more serious self through text than other journalists. Perhaps journalists' written communication tends to also lean toward more formal on such sites. Thus far, the present research shows that freelancers presented a more professional front to publics.

RQ3 sought to understand the identity of freelance and employed journalists by examining how they self-categorized themselves. As expected, freelance journalists' identity construction expressed fewer organizational ties than employed journalists. It is common for journalists to present themselves as an employee of an organization (Hanusch and Bruns 2016). Branding can involve the sharing of information to promote their home organization (Holton and Molyneux 2015). This finding is supported by other research that found employed journalists identified with their news organization by publishing Twitter content associated with their home organization because supervisors pressured journalists to select images and text that aligned with their employer (Brems et al. 2016; Molyneux and Holton 2015). Self-categorization theory posits people's behaviors depend on how strongly they identify with a collective. Organizational leaders and the public reinforce the status associated with organizational employment. Thus, future work should investigate whether the perceived distinctiveness and prestige of organizational ties influences their psychological health because organizational membership has long been a predictor of perceived satisfaction and effectiveness. Thus, belongingness may influence commitment to journalistic practices and reinforce their role as members of the journalism field (Mael and Ashforth 1992). The results, however, did not show differences in how they communicated their personal, journalist, and human identities with the public. These results support that freelance journalists likely identify with the field at occupational and societal levels, which is critical for journalism as a collective that serves the public through certain values and ideals.

The lack of differences at the human and journalistic levels, however, could also be explained with additional self-categorization statistical descriptive analyses. The majority of all sampled journalists did not express salience with the field of journalism (mean = 0.36) or human race issues (mean = 0.16), but rather they shared information mostly about themselves at an individual level (mean = 5.24) on their Facebook fan pages. Thus,

journalists appear to align with the personal self with an emphasis on "I" to a greater degree rather than the collective self (e.g., journalism ideals, humanity, organizational activities). This behavior may ultimately mean the behaviors of individual journalists may be less affected by an occupational or a public service point of view. A more collectivist view would reflect the listing of attributes that are valued by a group. This descriptive finding is potentially problematic because people identify at the individual level when group boundaries are less concrete or when inclusion in a group is illegitimate or less valued (Ellemers 1993). The pursuit of individual self-interests as communicated on public spaces showed that the focus on "I" is a publically accepted way to communicate identity. The production and expression of self across channels in which people share their lives to publics has been referred to as *mass self-communication* (Castells 2007). This phenomenon demonstrates that people seek to express their identities focused on self on both personal, and as the results show, professional channels. This study supports further investigation related to how self-categorization perceptions and behaviors relate to group identity, altruism, objectivity, occupational prestige, role ambiguity, journalistic roles, journalistic values, in-group homogeneity, etc.

On Facebook, journalists can communicate specialized knowledge by highlighting their skill knowledge areas. Freelancers should hypothetically be more likely to list their qualifications to express their abilities and uniqueness in comparison to employed journalist. Results for RQ4 showed that freelance journalists significantly disclosed more non-technical skills on their fan pages. Perhaps freelancers seek to legitimize their expertise by communicating journalistic abilities to their publics. Non-technical skills consist of writing, fact checking, editing, and interviewing. Employment with a news organization implicitly communicates knowledge of such skills, but freelancers may need to emphasize that they possess basic journalistic training in order to secure consistent work. Further evidence may be supported by an inspection of the correlation matrix. It revealed that identification with an organization was related to a reduced likelihood that they posted technical and non-technical skills knowledge (see Table 7). They may feel less inclined to share their skills knowledge if they are already employed. The sharing of their skill competencies was also associated with the identification with self, journalism, and humanity self-categorizations. Non-technical skills such as writing were related to identification with self, journalism and humanity. The findings could mean that skills knowledge and journalism and humanity self-categorization are intertwined.

Additionally, the matrix revealed that journalists blending professional and personal text wrote about themselves, but they also identified with journalism and humanity. Thus, this finding may mean that journalists interpret espousing the higher-level functions as a personal act, perhaps because journalists have been trained to be objective in their reporting.

RQ5–RQ8 further investigated whether gender was related to variations in presentations of self. The analysis showed significant differences in the types of images displayed on journalists' Facebook fan pages. Women were more likely to share a close-up profile image with a smile, whereas men's profile images generally included a serious close-up shot. Females were also more likely to share personal text about themselves than males. Self-presentational approaches may differ due to whether Facebook users seek to express their connection to others or increase their self-esteem (Jones 1990). Smiling is a strategy used in relationship building. The assumption of the present study is that journalists on public Facebook pages used the channel to promote themselves, but they also could

TABLE 7
Correlation matrix among all major variables

	Freelance	Gender	Serious close-up	Smile close-up	Action	Professional text	Personal text	Professional and personal text	Technical skills	Non-technical skills	Self-identification	Organization identification	Journalism identification	Human race identification
Freelance	1	−0.06	0.12*	−0.00	−0.05	0.06	−0.08	0.00	0.06	0.14**	−0.05	−0.15**	−0.06	−0.07
Gender	−0.06	1	0.21**	−0.24**	0.07	0.06	−0.09	−0.01	−0.02	−0.06	0.03	0.04	0.04	−0.05
Serious close-up	0.12*	0.21**	1	−0.46**	−0.24**	0.19**	−0.04	−0.15**	0.01	0.06	−0.01	−0.06	0.01	−0.08
Smile close-up	−0.00	−0.24**	−0.46**	1	−0.33**	−0.04	−0.02	0.08	0.07	−0.03	0.05	0.09	−0.05	0.02
Action	−0.05	0.07	−0.24**	−0.33**	1	−0.11*	−0.01	0.05	−0.04	−0.03	−0.07	−0.02	0.04	0.05
Professional text	0.06	0.06	0.19**	−0.04	−0.11*	1	−0.28**	−0.83**	−0.01	−0.01	−0.21**	−0.03	−0.03	−0.10*
Personal text	−0.08	−0.09	−0.04	−0.02	−0.01	−0.28**	1	−0.15**	−0.04	−0.07	−0.04	−0.04	−0.06	−0.05
Professional and personal text	0.01	−0.01	−0.15**	0.08	0.05	−0.83**	−0.15**	1	0.06	0.07	0.32**	0.09*	0.10*	0.16**
Technical skills	0.06	−0.02	0.01	0.07	−0.45	−0.01	−0.04	0.06	1	0.33**	0.15**	−0.10*	0.16**	0.09
Non-technical skills	0.14**	−0.06	0.06	−0.03	−0.03	−0.01	−0.07	0.07	0.33**	1	0.18**	−0.06	0.13**	0.13**
Self-identification	−0.05	0.03	−0.02	0.05	−0.07	−0.21**	−0.04	0.32**	0.15**	0.18**	1	0.20**	0.24**	0.35**
Organization identification	−0.15**	0.04	−0.06	0.09	−0.02	−0.03	−0.04	0.09*	−0.10*	−0.06	0.20**	1	0.05	0.00
Journalism identification	−0.06	0.04	0.01	−0.05	0.04	−0.03	−0.06	0.10*	0.16**	0.13**	0.24**	0.05	1	0.34**
Human race identification	−0.07	−0.05	−0.08	0.01	0.05	−0.10*	−0.05	0.16**	0.09	0.13**	0.35**	0.00	0.34**	1

Gender: female = 0, male = 1. Journalist category: employed = 0, freelance = 1. The rest of the variables were coded as absent = 0 or present = 1 with the exception of the last four ratio-level self-categorization variables.
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

use it as a relational tool. Social media users often present information strategically to garner social support (Oh and Larose 2016) and build social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2007). Future research should examine whether two goal categories of journalistic users exist or overlap: relationship builders and self-promoters, and whether gender explains those differences (Underwood, Kerlin, and Farrington-Flint 2011). As social media engagement and transparency become normalized in journalistic practices, a further area of study might explore what effect greater transparency and openness from male and female journalists has on audience perceptions of news credibility and liking (Lee 2015). Future research could also examine other individual predictor variables such as age and nationality to assess the role that they play in self-presentation.

The narrative techniques employed by journalists highlighted how they construct and communicate expertise and identity in public spaces. Previous research on personal sites showed that people display their playfulness, attractiveness, and fun nature (Mendelson and Papacharissi 2010; Strano 2008). From a practical contribution, descriptive results showed that professionals seeking employment should use a smiling (39.1 percent) or serious (25.0 percent) close-up image based on the results from a group of journalists that self-identified as journalists on Facebook. Nearly a third of the sample shared both professional and personal information (30.8 percent), while the majority (60.5 percent) posted only professional information. Future research should analyze the impressions of various publics, such as employers and friends, to determine the success of their self-presentation skills. Future research could replicate this research by utilizing the newly developed measures (i.e., self-categorization, text formality, visual self) to determine whether results are similar because these results reflect a distinct group of people (i.e., journalists who publically post on Facebook), and thus these results cannot be generalized to all journalists.

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