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# What's (The) News? Reassessing “News Values” as a Concept and Methodology in the Digital Age

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## ABSTRACT

This themed issue provides a comprehensive overview of journalism scholarship that variously builds on, develops, and re-examines the conceptual and methodological framework of “news values” research in the digital age. As such, it purports to demonstrate, explore and reflect on its distinctive merits and limitations, both actual and potential, as a distinctive approach to understanding ideas, practices, and experiences of “newsworthiness”, and indeed “news”, in the contemporary media environment and society, where the vectors of change affecting “news” production, circulation and use have been manifold. In doing so, the special issue brings together contemporary conceptual, methodological and/or empirical studies that variously contribute to the outlined research agenda. It does so by presenting scholarly work (1) situated across the constituent dimensions of news values analysis, articulating interactions between material, cognitive, social, and discursive perspectives; (2) considering the diversity of news actors and normative conceptions that make up the fragmented field of journalism; (3) crossing disciplinary boundaries within the heterogenous domain of journalism studies by integrating theoretical perspectives and exploring multi-method approaches; and/or (4) engaging digital media(technologies) or tools either as an object of study or a methodological approach.

## KEYWORDS

News values; news factors; newsworthiness; digital; multi-disciplinarity; mixed methods

This themed issue provides a comprehensive overview of journalism scholarship that variously builds on, develops, and re-examines the conceptual and methodological framework of “news values” research. As such, it purports to demonstrate, explore and reflect on its distinctive merits and limitations, both actual and potential, as a distinctive approach to understanding ideas, practices, and experiences of “newsworthiness”, and indeed “news”, in a media landscape and journalistic field that continues to evolve.

Questions about what constitutes “news” (to whom) and how “news” comes about and takes shape, are key to journalism studies. In a general sense, the exchange of new information has historically fulfilled basic human needs for orientation, connection, and security (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001; Stephens 2014). A more specific notion of “the news” grew entangled with journalism, though, as the production and dissemination of recent public information through the generic form of “news stories” (Rantanen 2009)

became the sole province of specialized practitioners adhering to a set of professional values and routines. As part of the “news paradigm” (Høyer and Pöttker 2005) that developed as such, a conception of “news value factors”, or criteria informing the (perceived) newsworthiness of reported events, emerged. The scholarly field of news values research took off with Galtung and Ruge’s 1965 “foundation study” on foreign news coverage, which yielded a list of so-called “news factors” including “frequency”, “negativity”, “proximity”, “intensity”, and “elite” values, and the (“selection”) hypothesis that “[t]he more events satisfy the criteria mentioned, the more likely that they will be registered as news” (71). Since then, numerous communications and media scholars looking into news selection and journalistic routines have built on and revisited their ideas, substantiating, refining and complementing the findings of this groundbreaking work (e.g., Harcup and O’Neill 2001, 2017; Hall 1973).

However, in an insightful assessment of the “news values” research tradition, Caple and Bednarek (2016) argue that, in the process, the concept of “news values” has been stretched so far as to include “any factor or criterion” affecting news selection and treatment (p. 438, emphasis in original) as well as what could be considered general “news writing objectives” (ibid.; see also Bednarek and Caple 2017 or Strömbäck, Karlsson, and Hopmann 2012). In order to preserve the notion’s usefulness as an analytical approach in its own right, they propose, therefore, to retain a narrow conception of news values/newsworthiness as “the values that establish the worth of an event to be reported as news” (ibid.). Moreover, and importantly, it is argued that largely implicit in the extant literature on “news values” is a multidimensional understanding of newsworthiness, which has translated, correspondingly, into different research foci and methodological approaches (Caple and Bednarek 2016; Bednarek and Caple 2017). As such, previous studies have mainly defined “news values” either or both in terms of (identifying) the material aspects of an event or issue that render it potentially newsworthy, the cognitive belief systems of journalists and/or audiences, or the shared routines and codes learned and practiced through socialization in (particular) newsrooms and journalistic communities (ibid.).

What characterizes the state of the field, then, is a primary focus on clarifying and explaining why particular events are or may be considered newsworthy, which conceptualizes “news values” as external to and pre-existing news talk and text (ibid.). Yet, this tends to overlook or background how “news values” are communicated and in fact mutually constituted through the various semiotic resources of language and image that make up (news) discourse (ibid.; cf. Hartley 1982). More or less along the same lines, Galtung and Ruge (1965) previously asserted in their “distortion hypothesis” that “[o]nce a news item has been selected what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be accentuated” (p.71). Shifting attention from the “why” of “news selection” to the “how” of “news treatment”, then, a discursive approach—developed by Bednarek and Caple into a Discursive News Values Analysis (DNVA) analytical framework—asserts itself as a complementary, constructivist perspective on “news values” as (negotiable) discursive constructs or practices (ibid.; Bednarek and Caple 2017). Interestingly, DNVA opens up to conceptual and methodological cross-fertilizations in journalism studies, for instance with the well-established framework of “framing” through the notion of “salience” (Moernaut, Mast, and Temmerman 2019), or analyses of news form and style (Broersma 2010; Schudson 1978).

Considerations of “newsworthiness” along each of these dimensions have shifted in the contemporary media environment, where the vectors of change affecting the way “news” develops, is exchanged and communicated and, indeed, essentially understood, have been manifold, and where a general sense of self-reflexivity and transparency has manifested itself. For the conditions and affordances of a networked, participatory media culture have considerably extended the range of sources and voices, or information and stories surrounding and potentially feeding into the daily news stream. In tandem with the diffusion of digital media technologies, various kinds of “newcomers” have emerged, who occupy hybrid positions encapsulated in notions such as “produser” (Bruns 2009) or “in-betweeners” (Ahva 2017), and both emulate and transform journalistic codes and conventions. The positionalities of these bottom-up actors not only add new inflections to established news selection criteria but equally challenge legacy media’s longtime status as “primary definers” of news. In this environment, where news is “ambient” (Hermida 2010), social media, search engines and (automated) news aggregators, and the algorithms and web analytics that drive them, have become key to (understanding) journalistic routines and news circulation. On the production’s end, these technologies allow—and urge—the careful monitoring both of news flows for input and story idea generation (cf. Gans 1979), and audience (inter)activity—which stories are clicked, liked, shared, or commented upon, and (thus) succeed in generating traffic. As such, considerations of “clickability” and “shareability” (Harcup and O’Neill 2017), search engine or social media optimization, feed into the editorial process and the selection and “de-selection” of news items (Tandoc 2014). By the same token, on the distribution and reception side, a networked media culture entails multiple manifestations of “secondary gatekeeping” (Nielsen 2016), whether by human intervention or (largely) automated, leading to the articulation of highly customized, personalized and, therefore, in a sense “de-industrialized” (Broersma and Peters 2013) “news diets” and corresponding perceptions of “newsness” (Edgerly and Vraga 2017)—observations which also link up with the associated phenomena of the “filter bubble” and “echo chamber” (see also Temmerman and Mast 2020).

From a “meta” perspective, these shifting routines and belief systems ultimately open new conversations on the constituent elements of “news”. For while it could be argued that the “news paradigm” reached an apotheosis in the 24/7, “breaking news” culture where news is always “on”, “hard” news has become less of a marker of distinction for professional journalism in the light of shrinking news cycles and the sheer availability of news (online). Against the background of a highly competitive, fragmented news market, and a cultural atmosphere of (self-)reflexivity, a renewed interest in “other”, non-traditional and often marginalized, journalistic genres and news discourses has emerged. What is implied, then, is the reexamination of the normative assumptions and epistemologies of “hard news”. This occurs, notably, through the proliferation of “soft” and hybrid news, and the (re)invigoration of narrative and interpretive news discourses, including (but not limited to) digital, multimodal genres. Additionally, alternative forms of journalism have taken shape around particular critiques of traditional norms and practices guiding news production, including its basis in “news values”. So, for example, inspired by the principles of positive psychology, “constructive” and “solutions-oriented” journalism (Glyndensted 2015; Mast, Coesemans, and Temmerman 2019) attempts to remedy mainstream news’s (perceived) emphasis on “negativity”, whereas the “slow journalism” movement

proposes to replace its “event”-centeredness and “immediacy” with “slow news values” which move beyond and behind the daily news cycle (Le Masurier 2015).

This renewed context of news production, circulation, and use, ushered in by digitization, compels journalism scholars to re-assess the merits and limitations of the “news values” framework, and embrace or explore approaches that are (more) attuned to the digital, networked environment. Clearly, such effort not only entails reorienting the topical focus of research, to evolving journalistic principles, practices and forms, and to shifting notions of “news(worthiness)”, but also pertains to a (re-)consideration of the epistemologies and methodologies guiding news values research. As such, this special issue brings together contemporary conceptual, methodological and/or empirical studies that variously contribute to the outlined research agenda. It does so by presenting scholarly work (1) situated across the constituent *dimensions* of news values analysis and articulating interactions between material, cognitive, social, and discursive perspectives; (2) considering the *diversity* of news actors and normative conceptions that make up the fragmented field of journalism; (3) crossing *disciplinary* boundaries within the heterogeneous domain of journalism studies by integrating theoretical perspectives and exploring multi-method approaches; and/or (4) engaging *digital* media(technologies) or tools either as an object of study or a methodological approach.

We set off our exploration of this proposed research agenda with Bednarek, Caple and Huan’s contribution *Computer-Based Analysis of News Values: A Case Study on National Day Reporting*. In this paper, the authors build on the aforementioned interdisciplinary framework of Discursive News Values Analysis (DNVA), which they developed and applied in previous work. Importantly, bridging linguistics and journalism studies, DNVA complements other established approaches in news values research by shifting focus from “news selection” and news values as “atextual or pretextual” categories, to “news presentation” and how news values are “discursively constructed” through various semiotic resources. While this analytical approach typically involves large measures of interpretation and work in this area, therefore, has typically been conducted manually, the present study aims to further the idea of disciplinary cross-fertilization by integrating computer-assisted techniques that are well-established in corpus linguistics and other areas of digital humanities. Indeed, the authors see particular strength in the *combination* of automated, quantitative and manual, qualitative methods, and thus the emphasis is on how tools like word frequency lists, collocation and concordancing, as well as visualizations of word co-occurrence, may aid—rather than replace—the interpretive textual analysis that they consider to be integral to DNVA.

Set against the background of shifting public discourses and growing societal divisions regarding Australia’s official national day, which remembers the beginning of colonization, Bednarek, Caple and Huan apply the proposed approach to the recent coverage of Australia Day in two major Australian newspapers. Most notably, the authors find strong indications of Negativity, a sentiment that is typically marginal to or absent from mainstream news discourses on national day events generally. Elements of Negativity are evident both in the occurrence of alternative expressions for the national day, such as “invasion day” and “survival” day, yet, also in the immediate co-text of the most common, “neutral” term “Australia day”. This suggests, it is argued, that the “material reality” of controversy and grievance increasingly surrounding Australia’s national day, informs journalists’ perceptions of the event’s newsworthiness which, in turn, translates

into the treatment—or discursive construction—of the news reporting. As such, the broader implications of this case study are not limited to the methodological potentials it demonstrates and sketches out, but they also pertain to the contextual nature of news values analysis and national day research, and the ensuing need for cross-cultural comparative approaches in these areas.

The argument for a computer-aided approach to news values analysis also resonates in Philip Meyer's paper *Promoted Media Coverage of Court Decisions: Media Gatekeeping of Court Press Releases and the Role of News Values*. This study provides an original angle on well-documented issues in journalism (studies) pertaining to news selection, journalist-source relationships, and, ultimately, journalistic autonomy, by looking at judicial public relations and justice reporting through the lens of news values. Adopting computational methods and bridging disciplinary fields in doing so, Meyer purports to advance the empirical foundation for a theoretical model that helps explain the "media success" of court communication. Building on the notion of "intereffication", the present focus is on the mutual dependency between routine considerations of "newsworthiness", and decision-promoting press releases of the German Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), which are selectively issued to establish openness and, in the process, assertiveness, with the general public.

In order to shed light on this interaction underlying day-to-day news work, Meyer develops a comprehensive research design integrating automated and manual content analysis that enables to ascertain methodically whether the FCC's "information subsidies" (Gandy 1982) are picked up by German quality newspapers, and to what extent particular news value(s) increase the probability of selection. Looking at the entire population of "decision-promoting" press releases issued by the FCC and all available newspaper coverage mentioning the court, which appeared over the course of a 10-year period (2008–2018), algorithmic computation is used to measure the "textual alignment" between press releases and news reports published within 10 days of publication of the release. Next, through manual coding of a random subsample of these news article/press release "dyads", and testing the results against the previously identified "textual alignment scores", a threshold for measuring "media success" is determined—indicating whether a promoted court decision is explicitly referenced and/or copied by at least one news report. Finally, the "independent variable" of newsworthiness is coded through a full-text screening of the original court decisions, looking specifically for common phrases and acronyms. This proceeds on the idea that the distinct nature of court decisions and justice reporting entails that newsworthiness needs to be understood, here, in terms of "political magnitude". As such, following previous research, Meyer argues that three indicative news values can be identified: "conflict" (referring to both political and legal oppositions); "political power" (denoting institutional, Court branches); and "familiarity" (which would in this case follow from previously held public oral hearings). The analysis also controls for length (complexity) of the decision text and the press release, and possible time effects.

The results show that (only) 18% of promoted court decisions succeed in being reported on in the press, which compares with the findings of existing research in related areas such as political and organizational communication. Moreover, it appears that in cases involving "conflict" and "political power", where it is said that the need of the courts to influence public information is most pertinent, press releases don't have a

substantial impact on news content (and at best serve as a trigger for further, “original” reporting). Conversely, “familiarity” of the issue on the news agenda and with the general public, informed by previous oral hearings, does significantly influence “media success”. It is concluded, then, that the present study provides no empirical support to the “normatively justified concern” about the impact of public relations on news content and copy/paste journalism. Yet, this comes with the important caveat that at least to some extent, cost-efficiency considerations do seem to be at play in the observed “oral hearing” follow-up reporting. By the same token, further research into editing practices and the substance and accuracy of journalistic work is needed to be able to make normative judgements about the impact of active court communication on the quality of justice reporting and public information.

Like Meyer’s study, the third paper in this themed issue, *“Cross-Editing”: Comparing News Output Through Journalists’ Re-working of Their Rivals’ Scripts*, by Vivien Marsh, sheds light on the role of news values at the production side of the news process. Yet, whereas the source-journalist perspective adopted above primarily considered measures of alignment between promoted content and news output, the present study shifts focus specifically to the analysis of news editing practices and news discourse. In doing so, it also continues the agenda of methodological innovation, complementing the macro-level and (partly) automated approaches of the previous two contributions by proposing a framework for collaborative and comparative news values research at micro-level. In what is referred to as “cross-editing”, professional and organizational routines, including conceptions of newsworthiness, are examined through the analysis of participant-generated content by having journalists working at two distinct news organizations edit each other’s work and reflect on the process. While the method is influenced by related creative methodologies that purport to illuminate editorial processes, including comparative experimental textual analysis, reconstruction interviews, and progression analysis, what sets “cross-editing” apart is the explicit focus on the final stage of editorial decision-making and, above all, the active participation of the object of study, professional journalists, in the data collection and analysis. Engaging the principle of “citizen science”, the approach enables to bridge the gap between academia and practice, and thus ultimately transposes the ideas of connectivity and participation that permeate the network culture to the scholarly field.

Marsh tests the method and the comparative dimension implied, in a cross-cultural analysis of editorial decision-making conducted with a small sample of news desk editors from BBC and China’s official English-language news provider CCTV-News (now CGTN). These “cross-editors” each received a transcript (and corresponding video file) of a news item from the “rival” broadcasting station, which they were then asked to evaluate, annotate and edit as they saw fit. Informed by the preliminary findings of a pilot study, the “main” cross-edit centered on randomly selected broadcasts of an event in which both countries had a stake—the 2014 Hong Kong protests—and one in which neither country was directly involved—the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris. Integrating discourse and discursive news values analysis, an in-depth scrutiny is carried out of the reformulations and lexical choices as well as selections and omissions, proposed and deliberated by the cross-editors regarding each other’s work.

The findings indicate both elements of differentiation, most evident in the Hong Kong case, and consensus, most distinctive of the reporting of the Charlie Hebdo event. In



terms of news values, the analysis points out, for instance, that disagreements on the news treatment of the Hong Kong protests and mutual accusations of “bias” particularly pertained to expressions and interpretations of “superlativeness”, “impact”, and “negativity”—and related to the latter, the foregrounding of the social value of “harmony” in Chinese reports. In general, the study thus demonstrates and clarifies how both internalized professional and sociopolitical or cultural values shape routine judgments of newsworthiness and editing practices. Marsh concludes by providing a procedural framework and possible avenues for future “cross-editing” research, whose comparative rationale could be applied to other contexts and theoretical lenses and holds a lot of potential in a globalized—or interconnected—and increasingly diversified (news) media landscape.

The idea of diversification, essentially implied in comparative research like Marsh’s cross-editing study, resonates particularly in the digital era where the range of news actors has multiplied. The manifold forms and practices that have come to co-exist with traditional journalism and legacy media prompts students of news values to widen the analytical lens and take a more encompassing approach that acknowledges “newcomers” in the field asserting legitimacy and authoritative status.

This understanding underlies the next two papers in this edited collection, the first of which focuses on a case of “alternative”, citizen media, which have variously emerged alongside and frequently in opposition to mainstream news outlets. In *Casual, Colloquial, Commonsensical: A News Values Stylistic Analysis of a Populist Newsfeed*, Molek-Kozakowska and Wilk investigate the genre of “propaganda as news”—or, partisan public information by-passing yet resembling conventional news—provided on the American Tea Party’s official website. Approaching populism as a proliferating affective “communicative style” strategically aimed at garnering political support, the authors take this grass-roots, right-wing newsfeed as a prototypical case of mediated populist discourse, and set out to explore the discursive features of its demonstrated popular appeal.

In doing so, the original contribution of this study is twofold. Besides charting new territory by shedding light on aspects of newsworthiness in the context of a non-traditional “news” genre, it also pioneers an integrated methodology intersecting discursive news values and stylistic analysis to lay bare how the populist newsfeed succeeds in aligning communicatively with the cognitive and emotional preferences of its target audience. Drawing a “constructed week” sample of newsfeed headlines posted in the “All News” section of the populist newsfeed in spring 2019, the authors adapt Bednarek and Caple’s DNVA approach outlined above while complementing it with an analysis of style, operationalized as “bundles of lexical, grammatical, register and compositional resources.” Building on established insights about the particular capacity of communicative style to induce audience engagement, three discursive patterns characteristic of populist discourse, referred to in the article title, are discerned and exemplified.

In terms of “newsworthiness”, it is found, first, that the newsfeed headlines are saturated with markers of “personalization” and “proximity”, which, thus, can be considered “normalized” and in this sense “constitutive” features of populist media communication (largely) explaining its popular appeal. Further differentiating how “news” is conceived and discursively constructed on the feed, “eliteness” and “negativity” prove salient, commonly entwined categories, a pattern that corresponds with populist sentiments of anti-establishment, authoritarianism and a “politics of fear”. These findings are supplemented by the stylistic analysis, which articulates the sensationalizing, stigmatizing, moralizing



and simplifying nature of the populist newsfeed's discourse through its distinct repertoire of informality, authenticity and entertainment emerging from the persistent use of "casual" speech, "colloquialisms" such as nicknames or offensive labels, humor, and "commonsensical" us/them polarizations. As the biased "newsfeed diet" cultivated as such, reinforces a communal bond built on shared values and a sense of self-righteousness, while antagonizing and discrediting opponents, its mobilizing power contributes to the formation of populist information bubbles and, consequently, a fragmented public sphere. Resonating particularly well with a "post-truth" atmosphere and the implications of a highly mediatized, networked society, as Molek-Kozakowska and Wilk argue, a "populist communicative logic" becomes more pervasive, urging political communication scholarship to understand the role of this kind of "pseudo-journalistic" media genres, across political right/left divisions, in shaping public discourse, hence democratic debate. This paper, and the proposed analytical protocol, offers scholars heeding this call a fruitful foundation to work from.

The next paper, *Effects of News Factors on Users' News Attention and Selective Exposure on a News Aggregator Website*, by Luebke, Engelmann and Kessler, maintains this themed issue's engagement with fresh methodological approaches to news values research, while also re-locating its analytical focus, like the previous, "populist newsfeed" study, outside traditional journalism, to the new sorts of "news" providers that have emerged in the digital media landscape. Whereas Molek-Kozakowska and Wilk's interest, here, was in teasing out how grassroots media emulate conventional notions of "newsworthiness", the main question guiding the present study, which shifts attention to the user perspective, is to what extent traditional "journalistic relevance criteria" persist in the renewed context of news aggregator websites, where processes of news selection are primarily determined by algorithms. Key to the argumentation is the notion of "news cues", or the formal presentation features of news items (such as position, length, or accompanying picture) which have been empirically demonstrated to direct users' selective attention and exposure to news. Although such cues clearly predate the digital era, considering news users' essentially limited cognitive capacity to pay attention to and process information, their navigational role has arguably become ever-more relevant in the high-choice environment of news aggregator websites. At the same time, their application has become largely technology-driven and, thus, no longer exclusively defined by professional editorial judgement. As this raises the empirical question and normative concern to what degree conventional considerations of newsworthiness remain relevant to understanding news selection in an aggregator context, the authors argue it is imperative to investigate news factors' *direct* effect on users' news selection as well as possible *indirect* effects materializing through interaction with algorithmically driven news cues.

Interestingly, the authors do so by using a "mixed methods" study design that combines a standardized content analysis of news items with an eye-tracking observation of users, which allows for a more "objective" coding of news selection practices than traditional measurement techniques that rely on self-reporting. A sample of 47 student participants, recruited at a German university, were asked to browse the quintessential news aggregator website Google News, to obtain a general overview of the news. By tracking eye movements, participants' "news attention", operationalized as "dwell time", and "selective exposure", or the more "overt action" of clicking a news item, were measured. Subsequently, each news item users paid attention to was coded for "news factor" and

“news cues”, as independent variables informing users’ selection decisions. In addition to a set of formal presentation cues (with source credibility, recency and number of related articles added to the aforementioned examples), the analysis of the “news factor” component is confined to four “collective relevance indicators” which have been shown in previous research to succeed in arousing interest and thus influence news selection: “power elite” (powerful persons, institutions or nations have more societal impact), “prominence” (idem for well-known persons), “proximity” (physically or culturally nearby is more likely to be considered relevant) and “conflict” (of a political or non-political nature, which potentially has social implications and/or affects personal well-being), while news item “topic” was used as a control variable.

Consistent with the findings of similar, previous user studies conducted on traditional media, the results confirm the crucial role of formal presentation features in guiding news users’ attention, and their mediating position between news factors and news selection process. What is more, no direct effects of “news factors” on the items users pay attention to or click, were found, which leads to the important observation that in the present context of aggregated news provision, where information is abundant, news cues’ “partial mediations become full mediations.” A mixed picture emerges, then, with (young) news users relying strongly on prominent formal cues rather than a shared sense of newsworthiness when browsing aggregated news content, while at the same time traditional news factors do remain relevant predictors in the, admittedly, more complex workings of algorithmically defined news. While these findings, from a normative perspective, may be seen as affirmative, nuancing concerns about eroding journalistic principles and growing audience fragmentation in the digital era, the authors point out that caution is warranted, and further research needed, in light of algorithms’ nubilous nature, changing news consumption patterns, and the exigencies of a market-driven, metric media landscape.

Moving on to the final section of this themed issue, the primary focus shifts toward concept development, with the two remaining papers variously proposing to think beyond and expand established understandings of newsworthiness.

The first, *Attention for Attention Hotspots: Exploring the Newsworthiness of Public Response in the Metric Society*, by Fürst and Oehmer, builds on a contextual framework that links up neatly with that of the preceding, “news aggregator” study. Besides taking similar current developments in the digital era as a starting ground for their analysis, the authors also draw attention to the audience perspective in news values research. In the previous paper, the described trends were considered as a relevant background, and impetus, to examine current news selection practices from the user end, and to ascertain whether traditional, collective newsworthiness criteria hold up amidst shifting configurations of news use. The present study, in turn, engages the idea that aspects of web analytics and audience fragmentation feed back into “primary”, editorial gatekeeping (Nielsen 2016) by prompting a renewed conception of news value.

Sketching out the contours of a media culture where technological and economic transformations have ever-more turned events that succeed in drawing “collective attention” into a scare and therefore valuable good, while allowing for the continuous monitoring and monetization of this attention, “public response” emerges as a news factor exhibiting both (intrinsic) cultural meaning and (extrinsic) commercial value—not unlike journalism generally. These multiple overtones subsequently transpire in the

conceptualization of the proposed news factor along three dimensions—"audience response", "media response", and "event response"—which are analytically distinguished and can but need not co-occur within individual news reports. Each refers to explicit statements about actual, expected, or estimated amounts of "response", whether in the form of indications of audience popularity or usage (like ratings, or number of likes, shares, followers, etc.), meta-coverage of media attention for particular actors or events (or publicity), and/or descriptions of event participation.

In line with the methodological agenda of this themed issue, the conceptualization of the newly proposed news factor is further developed into an analytical framework that allows for qualitative and quantitative measurement. Evoking the discursive approach to news values analyses (DNVA) adopted in some of the other contributions, "public response" is initially operationalized into a set of linguistic (descriptive or metaphorical), numerical and visual indicators, discerned and exemplified along its three constituent dimensions through a case study of (US) news coverage of the 2016 US presidential candidates, Trump and Clinton. Additionally, these qualitative categories lay the foundation for the quantitative analysis of the presence or intensity of audience, media, and event response in news media reports, which it is suggested may either take the form of a differentiated coding of the three dimensions at the level of individual statements, or a generalized coding of full articles through a sum index. By providing these tools, this study not only succeeds in carving out a space for the newly proposed category of newsworthiness but also enables its recognition and wider adoption in future empirical research along established news factors. As such, at least part of Fürst and Oehmer's contribution lies in calling attention to evolving notions of newsworthiness and the value of developing a solid and transparent methodology for news values analysis. Yet, based on the case study analysis, the present article also prompts deeper reflection as it considers possible ramifications of "public response" reporting for journalistic quality. Problematising the frequently observed lack of a sense of critical judgement regarding the status of metric data, the strategic objectives behind its circulation, and the (self-)reinforcing dynamic underlying this kind of reporting, the discussion of "public response" again—like those provided in the other contributions in this special issue—reveals news values (analysis) as profoundly implicated with related, key areas of concern in (the study of) journalism practice.

Similarly, this themed issue's closing article, *Joy is a news value*, by Perry Parks, elevates the discussion beyond news values analysis *per se* to a more profound contemplation of journalistic principles. Premised on the "contingent and constructed" nature of news values, Park's analysis, like the previous, could be understood as an argument to rethink newsworthiness in light of the transformations re-shaping contemporary media culture. In the case of "public response", this materializes in a descriptive sense, through the observed emergence of a present-day news value immediately associated with processes of datafication and fragmentation in the digital era. Alternatively, Parks adopts a meta-journalistic perspective which engages in a re-examination of normative conceptions and epistemologies concerning "news", and thus ultimately "journalism", instigated by the shifting practices and discourses in a networked or "de-industrialized" (Broersma and Peters 2013) journalistic field. The aim, here, is not so much, or not primarily, to add to extant news values categorizations as it is to interrogate the paradigmatic notions of news(worthiness) that have been typically implied in such conceptual frameworks.

In doing so, the rationale of Parks' analysis aligns with shifting epistemologies in media research and the journalistic field encapsulated in the notion of the "affective turn". Problematizing the traditionally marginalized position of the experiential in normative conceptions of journalism, which have typically esteemed ratio, cognition, and objectivity over emotion, affect and subjectivity, the author sets out to carve out a space for "joy" as a distinct, and "privileged", news value alongside and complementary to paradigmatic news values categories. As with "public response", the present paper proceeds in its effort to recognize "joy" as a legitimate and valuable guiding principle in news work by offering both conceptual and methodological reflection. Key to the argument developed here, is the emphasis throughout on a humanistic understanding of "embodied experience" and "affect" that goes beyond social scientific, psychometric approaches to emotional engagement with news. Building on philosophy, theology, and literature, "joy" is defined as "the cheerful harnessing of human potential in the face of all manner of adversity" and conceptualized as an ephemeral and non-representational affective response to life that is generative, empowering, and social. Conceived as a profound approach or deep attitude that influences "how problems are perceived, how people are addressed, how events are interpreted, how stories are told", "joy" is set apart from occasional instances of constructive, inspirational journalism or isolated, often clichéd "good news" stories. As a way of offering "proof of concept", Parks elaborates a purposive sample of cases of "joy" found in journalistic and quasi-journalistic work along eight constitutive "pillars" or guideposts—derived from the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu's *The Book of Joy*: "perspective", "humility", "humor", "acceptance", "forgiveness", "gratitude", "compassion", and "generosity". To this, more expansive conceptions are added through open coding, which Parks sees epitomized in stories of "performative defiance".

Importantly, entailed in the humanistic perspective and related conceptualization of "joy" Parks proposes, is the belief that journalism scholars as well need to re-think their own disposition and engagement with news, as "joy can be cognitively apprehended only in and amongst being felt". The paper's intervention thus stretches beyond concept explication to a fundamental reconsideration of the epistemologies and methodologies guiding scholarly analysis of affect and/in news, a stimulating proposition which the present analysis does not so much state as actually *live* in an invigorating way throughout.

Likewise, this special issue hopes students of news values will feel inspired and enabled by the multifarious work presented here to explore, refine and interrogate theorizations and methodologies in the field, and to pursue the avenues for future research suggested or prompted by the different contributions. As demonstrated throughout, "news values", as one of journalism studies' foundational analytical frameworks, persists in the contemporary media culture and zeitgeist as a rich, vibrant site of debate and analysis, which, importantly, radiates the research field's heterogenous nature. This is evident in the range of disciplinary traditions feeding the conceptual frameworks and methodologies assembled here, from communications, literature and linguistics, to philosophy and theology, to law studies, political sciences, and psychology. As a result, a variety of methodological approaches, both well-established and state-of-the-art, are exemplified and often brought together in refreshing ways under the umbrella of news values analysis. Examining news values through features of processes and products, and production and user practices, methods as diverse as computer-aided content and discursive analysis,

experimental designs using eye-tracking software or collaborative, participant-generated research techniques, or a form of auto-ethnography, are applied to various kinds of media, including newspapers, global television and online sources such as news aggregators and grassroots newsfeeds. In doing so, this themed issue also engages and traverses the different dimensions along which news values can be understood, considering interactions between them—as in cognitive perceptions and/or routines reflecting, adapting to or distorting material reality, or discursive choices expressively reinforcing perceived news values—while also contemplating an additional, “affective” dimension. What emerges from this, is a view of news values as a solid and productive research tradition in its own right that is essentially entwined with fundamental debates on current and future developments in journalism, with which the contributing authors engage in both descriptive and normative ways. Above all, as these observations entail elements of contextual, holistic and comparative sensitivities, normative awareness, considerations of communicative power, and, finally, methodological pluralism, they ultimately point out how the conversation prompted by the central theme of “news values in the digital age” is very much aligned with the “core commitments” of the journalism studies field (Carlson et al. 2018).

## Disclosure Statement

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