

# A new platform for quality journalism?

A study of four U.S. nonprofit university centers and their attempt to save professional reporting through using classrooms as newsrooms.

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Gunhild Ring Olsen

Thesis for the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)  
University of Bergen, Norway  
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UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



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## **Abstract**

This is a study of four university-based U.S. nonprofits, and their attempt of saving professional reporting through 1) the production of quality investigative journalism and 2) educating the next generation of investigative reporters. Using the theory of professions as the key theoretical framework the main research question is “what potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?”

### *Background*

With the journalism crisis leading to fewer journalists reporting less news in fewer pages, many have asked if professional, resource-demanding journalism is going to survive. As a response to this concern, numerous nonprofit newsrooms aiming at saving quality reporting were established during or after the financial crisis of 2008/2009. The four university nonprofits examined in this study are part of a subgroup of this “professional movement”. As hybrids between newsrooms and classrooms, they pair students from their mother-university with experienced reporters from established newsrooms, having them work together on real investigative stories. The arrangement has been presented as a win-win situation: While economically pressured newsrooms get extra labor through the students, the students learn investigative reporting from some of the best reporters in the field. This dissertation examines the validity of these claimed benefits.

### *Research design*

In order to examine the professional potential of university nonprofits in general, four of the most prominent and renowned centers in the U.S. – the IRP Berkeley (UC Berkeley), the Stabile Center (Columbia University), the Workshop (American University), and the New England CIR (Boston University) – were selected for a multiple case study. The empirical data material consists of 69 in-depth interviews with students, faculty, staff and reporters from external newsrooms connected to the centers, approximately 90 days of observation, and a content analysis of 40 center stories.

## *Findings*

The main research question of the study (what potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?) is answered through focusing on the questions' three key concepts: "alternative", "professional platforms", and "quality journalism".

First, the centers can be seen as an *alternative* to the traditional news industry, as they represent a new way of organizing newsrooms where professional ideals and norms are central. Through only cooperating with external newsrooms, foundations, and universities sharing the notion of an informed public as an indispensable societal good, the centers have managed to unite accomplices from various fields in their striving towards saving quality reporting. At the same time, the four centers – representing the largest university nonprofits in the world – are small and fragile. Not having endowments to rely upon, the Workshop and the New England CIR in particular are engaged in an everyday struggle to survive – using much of their total time negotiating partnerships, earning revenue, fundraising and highlighting their impact. Hence, university nonprofits do not appear to be a *solid* alternative to the news industry.

Second, the centers' combined newsroom and classroom role give them high potential as *professional platforms*. Advocating a "public trustee" view on professionalism, emphasizing core values like truth and democratic effect, the centers' staff and associates effectively portray journalism as a public good deserving of its position and privileges. In addition, all four centers provide reporting in line with the principles of the journalism profession – counteracting the growing gap between realities and ideals. Holding a complex, practice-oriented knowledge view focusing on "learning by doing", the centers' classroom role consists of teaching new practitioners the necessary mindsets and "know-how" of the profession, and advancing the knowledge of the practice field. Despite of their small size, the centers can thus be described as important cornerstones in the journalistic belief system, strengthening the journalism profession's jurisdiction over news.

The third key concept of the main research question is *quality journalism*. Defined according to the dominant professional logic of the journalistic field as “responsible and engaging community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful”, quality journalism is more than investigative reporting. It also includes journalism of lower symbolic value, like the local reporter covering municipal councils and court hearings on a daily basis. Due to their small size, university nonprofits cannot substitute the full range of everyday “middle class” quality reporting traditionally provided by the commercial news industry. Instead, they focus on producing investigative reporting, known as the prototype of quality journalism. This makes their production a supplement – not a replacement.

### *Conclusion*

Nonprofit university centers do not seem to have much potential as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism. They do however appear to be important ideology builders. From this perspective, the centers can be of great importance to a profession struggling with ongoing challenges and change. Not being *the* solution to the journalism crisis, nonprofit university centers can thus be *part* of the solution – keeping the core values of journalism alive.

### *Relevance*

As one of few in-depth studies of university nonprofits, this dissertation contribute to a fuller understanding of a relatively new phenomenon. For journalism schools and newsrooms wanting to start similar cooperations, the study can be of direct practical use. Moreover, the exploration of different practice-oriented teaching methods should be of interest to most journalism educators, while the discussion on core values and innovation, legitimation and ideals, bring new aspects to how the journalism profession reacts to change. Last, but not least, the instrumentalization of the terms “professional” and “quality journalism” can be of inspiration to both practitioners and scholars attempting to better unite the practical and scholarly world of journalism.





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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 A possible solution to the “journalism crisis”?

In 2013, when I started the work on this study, “the journalism crisis” was a well-established term in Norway. Failure of advertising, falling circulation and small earnings online resulted in dramatic reductions in newsroom staff, and many journalists and academics asked themselves if professional, resource-demanding journalism was going to survive (Omdal, 2013).

While dramatic in Norway, the situation for the commercial press in the United States had long been far worse.<sup>1</sup> According to Pew Research Center’s State of the News Media reports (2013, 2014), the total advertising revenue for U.S. newspapers had fallen by 49 percent from 2003 to 2013. From 2000 to 2012, the number of journalists were reduced by about 30 percent.<sup>2</sup> As Downie and Schudson described in their report, *The Reconstruction of American Journalism* (2009):

[T]he economic foundation of the nation’s newspapers, long supported by advertising, is collapsing, and newspapers themselves, which have been the country’s chief source of independent reporting, are shrinking—literally. Fewer journalists are reporting less news in fewer pages, and the hegemony that near-monopoly metropolitan newspapers enjoyed during the last third of the twentieth century, even as their primary audience eroded, is ending. (p. 1)

As a result of the crisis, several alternative forms of ownership and financing of journalism had emerged. According to the Pew Research Center (Mitchell, Jurkowitz, Holcomb, Enda, & Anderson, 2013), more than 120 nonprofit newsrooms were established during or after the financial crisis of 2008/2009. Among these were several nonprofit centers based at universities. One subcategory of the university

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<sup>1</sup> During the peak of the recession, from 2007 to 2009, the newspaper revenues on all platforms fell by 8 percent in Norway. In the U.S. the revenues fell by 30 percent – constituting the largest fall in the entire OECD area (Hjeltnes & Warmedal, 2012, pp. 40-46).

<sup>2</sup> Since starting this project, the numbers have worsened. According to the 2016 State of the News Media report, the newspaper workforce shrunk by about 20,000 positions, or 39 percent, in the 20-year period from 1995 to 2015. Additionally, 2015 saw the greatest decline in advertising revenue since the recession years of 2008 and 2009, with a fall of 8 percent. The fall included losses in both print and digital advertising revenue (Barthel, 2016).

nonprofits was actually producing investigative journalism in collaboration with established news outlets, winning prestigious awards, including the Pulitzer Prize (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a). The centers were pairing students from the University with experienced reporters from established newsrooms and having them work together on real investigative stories. The Investigative Reporting Workshop, a university nonprofit center based at American University in Washington, DC, was one example – having their master students work inside the *Washington Post*. The arrangement was presented as a win-win situation, where the newsroom got extra resources through the students; while the students got the chance to learn investigative reporting hands-on, working with some of the best journalists in the country (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-b). As a lecturer in journalism, with a former career as a journalist and editor, I became especially interested in these nonprofit university centers.<sup>3</sup> Could they be part of the solution to the journalism crisis?

After some examination, I found that there were approximately 20 nonprofit centers at U.S. universities, some of them specializing in investigative reporting and partnering with the news industry. I found these nonprofits particularly fascinating for several reasons.

- They were often led by renowned investigative reporters.
- Many were based at world famous universities and journalism schools, like Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.<sup>4</sup>
- Most were cooperating with world-known newsrooms, like the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Boston Globe* and the *Washington Post*.
- The main goal of the centers was to save investigative reporting – the kind of journalism predicted to vanish first during a recession. (Bastiansen, 2010, pp. 116-117)

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<sup>3</sup> I will return to how my previous career has affected this study in Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> The communication studies at Columbia University was ranked fourth in the world by Academic Ranking of World Universities 2015, while UC Berkeley's communication studies was placed fifth.

The fact that world-known reporters were leading them, and world-famous newsrooms and universities were sponsoring them, made these new collaborations between academia and the news industry seem viable. Adding to my curiosity was the fact that this form of cross-institution cooperation between journalism schools and the news industry was not common in most European countries, including Norway.

When I started the work on this study, both the Pew Research Center and The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University had done mappings of the relatively new nonprofit field of journalism (Holcomb et al., 2011; C. Lewis, 2010b; C. Lewis, Butts, & Musselwhite, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2013). However, being more preoccupied with gaining an overview of the field, these studies did not relate to the daily operation of the centers and the role of the different actors connected to them. Selecting only four of the centers, I wanted to study this new branch of nonprofit journalism in more detail. How, exactly, did the cooperation between students and reporters work? Was this just another way of making students work for free, or a unique, new form of master learning? Were the centers actually producing quality journalism? In addition, what were the main differences between these new university nonprofits and the news industry they were collaborating with?

## 1.2 Main theoretical approach

Because of the few studies conducted on nonprofit university centers, I wanted to do an empirical study, which means that the theoretical framework has been selected because of its ability to discuss and enlighten the empirical findings. I have chosen the theory of professions as the key theoretical approach for four main reasons.

First, I find it rewarding to see professions as an alternative to the state and the market – or a “third logic” as Freidson (2007) puts it. In the striving to be a third alternative lies a quest for autonomy that is interesting when studying the journalistic nonprofit centers. The journalism crisis, and its negative impact on journalism, has been the main reason for establishing most of the centers (Mitchell et al., 2013). This detachment from the news industry can be seen as an effort to become less dependent on the market, and thus more autonomous.



Second, the theory of professions relates to the normative side of professional practice. Most professions have a practical aim. Within medicine, for instance, doctors intervene in bodily processes to improve health (Abbott, 1988, pp. 184-185). This gives the medical practice a superior, normative level. To improve health is good; to worsen health is bad. The goal of the journalism profession is often described as producing content that is of use to society (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). Derived from this, the New England Center for Investigative Reporting at Boston University, for instance, states that their mission is to “ensure the survival of serious in-depth investigative journalism that provides citizens with the critical information they need to hold the powerful accountable” (n.d.). With the help of the theory of professions, normative democratic theory and more general journalistic theory<sup>5</sup>, I will try to grasp the professional aim of journalism, and determine why some journalistic content is considered high quality, while other types of content are considered low quality – or not journalism at all.

Firmly tied to the normative aim of professions is professional legitimation. Through legitimating acts, professions attempt to connect their practical work to central values in the larger culture. Thereby, the professions establish the cultural authority of professional work (Abbott, 1988, p. 184). Journalism’s aim to produce content necessary to citizens in a democracy can be seen as an effort to connect journalism to such central cultural values, thus building the legitimacy – and the power – of the profession.

Third, the theory of professions is not a separate discipline but derives its intellectual resources, theories, models and methods from both social science and humanities, and applies these to study professions, professionalization and professional practice (Molander & Smeby, 2013, p. 10). I will make use of the theory of professions in the broadest sense, which means I will not only lean on the sociological tradition

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<sup>5</sup> The term “journalistic theory” refers to the codified practical and theoretical knowledge of the journalistic field. In comparison to disciplines like Social Sciences and Languages, the body of knowledge about professional fields often is quite recently constructed and referred to as “quasi-disciplines” (Eraut, 2004, p. 204). Thus, the term “journalistic theory” can be said to mean “the quasi-discipline of journalism” – including theory derived from various adjoining disciplines, and the codified “know-how” of the journalistic field. For further discussion of the journalistic knowledge base, see Chapters 2 and 7.

represented by Talcott Parsons, Eliot Freidson, Magali Sarfatti Larson, Andrew Abbott and others but also make use of theory not directly aimed at studying professions. This broader conception of professional studies includes theory and methods from disciplines like philosophy, educational science, historical studies, pedagogy, cognitive psychology and economics. I find this wide approach especially rewarding when discussing professional knowledge – a central term in the dissertation since the centers are part of the curriculum of their respective universities.

Fourth, creating cultural legitimation, increasing autonomy and building an abstract knowledge base are seen as central steps in the professionalization process (Abbott, 1988). Creating an alternative structure to the news industry, specializing in investigative reporting and seeking partnerships with universities can thus be seen as attempts to strengthen the journalism profession.<sup>6</sup>

Whether journalism is a profession or not in sociological terms has been highly debated (Waisbord, 2013, p. 4). Thus, using the theory of professions when studying journalism can be perceived as problematic. However, by using professionalism as an analytical device to think about journalism – and avoiding a taxonomic approach – the question of whether journalism is a true profession or not becomes less important.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3 Presenting the research question

The overarching research question of this study is: *What potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?*

The question contains three key concepts: “alternative”, “professional platforms” and “quality journalism”.

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<sup>6</sup> In this study, the concept of “the journalism profession” does not only involve the editorial staff of various news outlets. In line with the professional understanding of Abbott (1988, p. 80), it also involves the staff of journalism’s professional organizations, and the staff at worksites maintaining and furthering the professional knowledge of journalism (the academic settings, journals, research institutes, etc.).

<sup>7</sup> See further discussion in section 2.1.

To discuss whether the centers represent an “alternative” or not, a starting point is necessary. Seeing the centers as a result of the journalism crisis, the news industry represents this starting point. I will in other words discuss what distinguishes the nonprofit university centers from traditional newsrooms – both when it comes to structure, professionalism and the production of content. It is, for instance, interesting that the centers seem to collaborate with the same news industry from which they initially broke. Why are they forming these partnerships, and what do they gain? Are the nonprofit centers truly an alternative to the traditional news industry, or are they just copies, leaning on universities and foundations instead of advertisers? The centers also represent a meeting point between universities and the journalistic practice field. It is thus interesting to examine which role the centers perceive as the most important: Are they mainly educators or news providers?

Using the term “professional platform” is a way to emphasize the fact that the centers, as part of universities, have the potential to be more than content producers. According to Abbott (1988), universities can play several roles in professional life.

- They can serve as legitimators, providing authoritative grounds for the exclusive exercise of expertise.
- They can house the function of knowledge advancement, enabling academic professionals to develop new techniques outside of practice.
- They can train young professionals, often in conjunction with the function of research. (p. 196)

The university centers’ potential role in legitimating the journalism profession, building knowledge, developing new techniques and teaching thus becomes central to this study.

Using a normative term like “quality journalism” in the main research question can be regarded as unwise, since normative assumptions are still considered unscientific (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007, p. 1). I do however find it hard to study professions and their accomplishments without including normative terms, as the practice of most professions has a normative aspect. Put in other words: As producing quality journalism can be perceived as the main purpose of the journalistic practice

field, discussing and defining the term “quality” is essential. Moreover, a decrease in “quality journalism” is regularly presented as the result of the journalism crisis – often without discussing what quality journalism is. By using, discussing and defining the term, I hope to connect this study to the current public journalistic debate, and thus make it more relevant outside of academia. In addition, defining the term is necessary when trying to analyze the role of the nonprofit university centers. They are themselves proclaiming to be an answer to the journalism crisis by producing and teaching quality, investigative reporting when traditional news media fail to do so (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-a). Following from this, it is interesting to compare the centers’ perception of “quality, investigative reporting” with the quality definitions used within the theory of professions and journalistic theory. I will also make use of the definition when analyzing stories produced by the centers. Rather than “quality journalism”, I could of course have chosen to focus on the more tangible term “investigative reporting”. Although often used as synonyms, quality journalism is however much more than investigative reporting. As Schudson (2008) sees it, both the investigative reporter, the White House correspondent, the business reporter, the theater critic, and the obit writer offer news that serves vital social and democratic functions (p. 8). By focusing on quality reporting, I thus hope to include and discuss the full breadth of what is perceived as journalism’s societal task, and not just the investigative part.

## 1.4 Empirical selection and methods

As indicated by the research question, the main aim of this study is to debate the *potential* that nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism. Following from this, I deemed it necessary to study the university centers with the highest likelihood of succeeding. Hence, the criteria that I set for the selection was that the centers had to 1) specialize in investigative reporting, 2) win journalistic awards, 3) collaborate with external newsrooms, 4) be part of the university curriculum<sup>8</sup>, and 4) use graduate students.

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<sup>8</sup> As later shown, many university nonprofits are *located* at universities without being part of the university.

Regarding the first selection criterion, investigative reporting is often seen as the most significant form of journalism (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). Hence, the centers specializing in this method would probably have strong potential as prominent examples. In addition, the centers winning the most prestigious journalism awards, being part of the most respected universities, collaborating with the most acclaimed newsrooms and using the most experienced students, would most likely have a high potential of succeeding.

After making a shortlist based on my own enquiry, I emailed the executive directors of three renowned U.S. organizations for investigative reporting: Investigative Reporters and Editors, The Center for Investigative Reporting and The Center for Public Integrity<sup>9</sup>, asking them to quality check the list. The process, which is described in more detail in Chapter 3, resulted in the selection of four nonprofit university centers:

- The Investigative Reporting Program at the University of California, Berkeley
- The Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University
- The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University
- The New England Center for Investigative Reporting at Boston University

By attempting to find the most prominent examples, I had conducted a purposive or judgement sampling (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 88).

Since wanting to study a wide range of topics, from the structure of the centers to the knowledge building and the content produced, I decided to use the methods of in-depth interviews, observation and content analysis. I ended up conducting 69 in-depth interviews with students, faculty and staff at the centers, and with representatives from the collaborating newsrooms. I also completed approximately 90 days of observation, and a content analysis of 40 stories produced by the centers. This massive amount of empirical data was both a great help and a slight disadvantage.

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<sup>9</sup> Brant Houston, former executive director at Investigative Reporters and Editors, Robert Rosenthal, executive director at The Center for Investigative Reporting and Bill Buzenberg, executive director at The Center for Public Integrity responded to the emails.

Both the volume of empirical data and the features of the different methods used are further discussed in Chapter 3.

## 1.5 Operationalization and dissertation outline

I will use five sub-questions to help operationalize the main research question. First, to be able to determine how the centers function as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism, I must define the concepts of “quality journalism” and “professional”. Hence, the first sub-question is:

1. What is considered professional, and what is quality journalism?

As the question is sought answered using existing theory only, it forms the basis for the presentation of the study’s theoretical framework in **Chapter 2**. Through the application of the theory of professions, normative democratic theory and journalistic theory, the central aspects of professionalism are outlined and the term “quality” is connected to different aspects of journalism’s role in society. Both the debate about journalism’s social contract and the accountability of journalism are thus central (Curran, 2011; Downie & Schudson, 2009; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Waisbord, 2013). Because of the centers’ classroom role, **Chapter 2** also explores various forms of professional knowledge and training.

Second, to determine whether the centers function as *alternative* professional platforms for quality journalism, I have to define the characteristics of the nonprofit university centers. How are they structured? How do they differ from the traditional news industry? What is their main function? Sub-question two, therefore, is:

2. What characterizes the four university nonprofits?

The question is debated in **Chapter 4**, using existing reports and research on nonprofit newsrooms, in addition to the in-depth interviews and observations of the study.

Being a true professional alternative also requires autonomy. The centers of this study form partnerships with universities and external newsrooms. In addition, they rely heavily upon foundation support. Hence, a key question is how these partners and

sponsors influence the centers. Choosing which subjects to cover, having the freedom to select stories, and deciding what to emphasize in the stories produced are seen as important markers of journalistic professional autonomy (Beam, Weaver, & Brownlee, 2009). How the universities, partnering newsrooms and sponsors effect the centers' reporting processes, is thus of great importance. Sub-question three, therefore, is:

3. How autonomous are the centers?

Using the in-depth interview and observation data, the question is discussed in **Chapter 5**.

Fourth, to determine whether the centers function as alternative *professional* platforms for *quality journalism*, both their professional ideals and the content they produce must be examined. Journalists are a multifaceted group – and far from all journalism produced can be labeled “quality”. As members of a profession, journalists do however share a common occupational ideology of how things *should* be – a form of group identity characterized by common symbols (Heggen, 2008, p. 323; Schön, 1988, p. 33).<sup>10</sup> To be perceived as professional platforms, the centers' staff needs to share the ideals of the journalism profession. Additionally, the stories produced by the centers need to meet the professions' quality standards. Hence, the fourth sub-question, which is debated in **Chapter 6**, is:

4. What kind of journalism are the centers idealizing and producing?

The first part of the question is answered through analyzing the in-depth interviews, where 55 students, reporters and faculty members give their definition of quality reporting. The second part of the question relies upon the content analysis, where ten stories from each center are examined. Since the production of the centers is both work-intensive and comprehensive, this is the equivalent of approximately one-year's production.

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<sup>10</sup> See further discussion in Chapter 2.

The fifth and last sub-question concerns the building of professional knowledge. As described above, universities and their function of knowledge-advancement is an important part of building a profession. According to Abbott (1988) “professions rest on knowledge and universities are the seat of knowledge in modern societies” (p. 195). Thus, any attempt to discuss the potential of university centers as alternative, professional platforms has to examine the characteristics of the knowledge-building conducted by the centers. Central to this debate is the distinction between practical and academic knowledge. The academic knowledge system of a profession generally accomplishes three tasks: legitimation, research and instruction (Abbott, 1988, pp. 56-57). Practical knowledge, on the other hand, is often free of formal concepts and theories, learned by experience from the performance of concrete tasks in concrete settings, and often focuses on the effective achievement of concrete practical goals (Freidson, 2007, p. 31; Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 227). As a result of these differing strengths and characteristics, most central academics within the theory of professions see a mix of practical and theoretical training as the ideal professional education (Freidson, 2007, p. 121; Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 229). Hence, the fifth sub-question is:

5. What characterizes the centers’ knowledge base and teaching methods?

When debating this question in **Chapter 7**, one of the most interesting aspects is whether the centers favor one knowledge type over another. If they do, this can have consequences for teaching, research and the development of new knowledge. Universities are, for instance, said to have a central role within professional research and innovation, as they enable academic professionals to develop new knowledge and techniques outside of practice (Abbott, 1988, p. 196). Are the centers part of this knowledge development? If so, what kind of knowledge do they develop: practical, theoretical, or both? If too oriented towards the practical, the teaching could start to resemble apprenticeships – known for such negative aspects as a lack of standardization, high pressure on performance, limited time and little room for mistakes (Freidson, 2007, p. 89; Schön, 1988, p. 37). There is also a risk of socializing students into particular practices and “old ways of doing things”, which



can be a hindrance for innovation (Mensing, 2010, p. 515; Picard, 2015, p. 8). Neither is becoming too academically oriented a good solution. Many argue that professional knowledge is dependent upon a subjective, tacit dimension that can only be learned by doing (Benner, 1984; Freidson, 2007; Polanyi, 1967; Schön, 1988). Following from this, a system of internships and other hands-on training experiences is the only way of teaching students how to become reporters. Hence, in order to function optimally, the centers need to find the right balance between practical and theoretical knowledge.

By attempting to answer the five sub-questions outlined above, I believe it is possible to elaborate and discuss the overarching research question of this study: *What potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?* Although partly discussed in connection with the five sub-questions, the final and concluding debate of the main research question is found in **Chapter 8**. Here, both the centers' prospective as alternatives to the news industry and their role in building the journalism profession are elaborated. According to Dzur (2008), traditional sociological definitions of professionalism have three central components: 1) knowledge, 2) self-regulation, and 3) social responsibility (p. 45). Hence, Chapter 7, discussing knowledge, Chapter 5, discussing self-regulation and autonomy, and Chapter 6, discussing ideals and production, potentially form a solid basis for debating the centers' role as professional providers of quality journalism.

In addition to the chapters addressing the five sub-questions, and Chapter 8 debating the overarching research question, **Chapter 3** concerns the research design and the methodological reflections of the study. Summarized, the dissertation outline looks as follows:

**Chapter 2:** The theoretical framework of the study, addressing the first sub-question: *What is considered professional, and what is quality journalism?*

**Chapter 3:** Research design and methodological reflections.

**Chapter 4:** A research overview and a short introduction to the four centers that combined seeks to answer the second sub-question: *What characterizes the four university nonprofits?*

**Chapter 5:** A study of the centers' relationship to their "mother universities", partnering newsrooms and supporting foundations, discussing the fourth sub-question: *How autonomous are the centers?*

**Chapter 6:** A presentation of the views on quality journalism represented by the interviewees, and a content analysis of the journalism produced by the centers, seeking to answer the fourth sub-question: *What kind of journalism are the centers idealizing and producing?*

**Chapter 7:** A study of the centers classroom role, debating the fifth sub-question: *What characterizes the centers' knowledge base and teaching methods?*

**Chapter 8:** The final discussion, attempting to answer the overarching research question: *What potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?*

## 1.6 Relevance and objective of the study

The objective of this study is twofold. First, I hope to contribute to the knowledge base of the journalism profession through discussing such important aspects as the aim of the profession, the role of autonomy, the relevance of the occupational ideology of journalism, and the character of the professional knowledge base. Second, I want to present and discuss a relatively new way of structuring newsrooms, exemplified by the university nonprofits. The purpose is, in other words, to contribute to two types of knowledge: Knowledge for its own sake (knowing what) and knowledge for problem solving (knowing how) (Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 229).

Following from this objective, I consider the study to be of relevance to both the theoretical and practical sides of journalism. As far as I know, this is the first in-depth study of U.S. nonprofit university centers conducting investigative reporting. The empirical data thus represents new knowledge. This knowledge can be used both as a foundation for further research and as a guide for academics, lecturers and journalist looking for new ways to structure the journalistic practice field. In-depth knowledge about the characteristics, challenges and benefits of the university nonprofits can thus be both an inspiration and a warning. Because of the disparities in social, educational and media structure, some of the findings are most relevant in the U.S. The combination of a liberal media system, numerous private universities and a strong

philanthropic tradition is not commonly found outside North America (Fröhlich & Holtz-Bacha, 2003; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Kaplan, 2013; Parsons & Platt, 1973). However, the more overarching topics – like the balance between practical and theoretical knowledge, the constant struggle between journalistic core values and innovation, the legitimation of the profession and the definition of quality journalism – are probably relevant for most practitioners and academics.

Being a former journalist and editor, currently a journalism lecturer, I am part of the profession I am studying. As the foundation of my work, journalism is a profession I am personally dependent upon. I also find the journalistic professional task – producing content of relevance to society – important. The study thus becomes an exploration of the characteristics of my own profession, and an attempt to outline a possible solution to the challenged position of journalism. I am, in other words, what Niblock (2007) labels a practitioner-academic, with a wish to contribute to the development of journalism (p. 21).<sup>11</sup>

## 1.7 Abbreviations of the four center names

The four centers of this study have lengthy, similar-sounding names. To make it easier to distinguish between the centers, and to make the text more readable, the following abbreviations will be used in parts of the text:

- The Investigative Reporting Program at the University of California, Berkeley, is called **the IRP Berkeley**, or **the IRP**.
- The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University is called **the Stabile Center**.
- The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University is called **the Workshop**.
- The New England Center for Investigative Reporting at Boston University is called **the New England CIR**, or the **NECIR**.

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<sup>11</sup> Both the normative and personal aspects of the study are further discussed in Chapter 3.

## 2. The journalism profession. A theoretical framework

The main research question of this study – *What potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?* – include two central terms that are both complex and normative, namely “professional” and “quality journalism.” What is considered “quality” or “professional” is in other words dependent upon *selected* values and ideals. To a commercially oriented outlet, a story achieving high audience figures, for instance, can be considered “high quality” regardless of its content. To a publicly oriented outlet, the story can be considered “low quality”, regardless of its audience figures, if the content cannot be said to be of democratic value. In the same manner, the views about professionalism and professions vary. Some see professions “as forces of good and morality in modern societies”, and as counterweights to commercial and political interests (Waisbord, 2013, p. 94). Others see professions as efforts by mobilized groups to monopolize a certain market of services to achieve economic and social gains (Larson, 1977).

As stated in Chapter 1, using normative terms like “quality journalism” and “professional” in the main research question can be regarded as unwise, as normative assumptions are often considered unscientific (Hyslop-Margison & Naseem, 2007, p. 1). I do however agree with academics within the theory of professions, like Molander and Terum (2008b), who state that normative and controversial terms often represent the most basic and important concepts about the social and political world (pp. 16-17). Hence, instead of neglecting these terms, it is important to discuss them in order to develop useful tools for arranging the world (pp. 16-17). As Riis (2011) asserts, questions about normativity emerge whenever science takes up issues that are subject to a polarized discourse in society (p. 110). If attempting to be “objective” by ignoring the issues of the conflict, science risks becoming irrelevant to society (p. 110).

The two first sections of this chapter are an attempt to answer the first sub-question: *What is considered professional, and what is quality journalism?* (Sections 2.1 and

2.2). As an extension of the discussion of what is considered professional, the central theory on professional knowledge and teaching methods is presented in section 2.3.

## 2.1 Professions and professionalism

As indicated above, there has been much disagreement relating to how the field of professional study can be defined, what characterizes a profession and what function professions can be said to have in society (Fauske, 2008, p. 31).<sup>12</sup> In general, the history of research on professions can be divided into three main phases: The first lasted until the 1960s, and was characterized by researchers attempting to identify the characteristics of the professions and their position in society. During the second phase, which lasted from approximately 1970 to 1990, the professions' monopolization of tasks and exercise of power was examined critically. In the third phase, towards the end of the 1980s, the critical approach was replaced by a more open and synthesizing methodology, where elements from the various research traditions were united in a more comprehensive understanding (Fauske, 2008, pp. 32-49). The theoretical framework of this study is mainly derived from the third phase, with Andrew Abbott's *The System of Professions* (1988) and Eliot Freidson's *Professionalism; The Third Logic* (2007) as central texts. Put simply, the underlying assumption of these works<sup>13</sup> is that professions have the *potential* to perform necessary, positive functions in society – although it is obvious that not all professions fulfill this potential in a proper manner. Moreover, it is recognized that professions have power, and that this power can be misused. Hence, Abbott and Freidson can be said to represent an intermediate position between the positive perception of professions and their role in society represented by functionalists like Talcott Parsons, and the critical view of monopolists strongly inclined by Weberian, Foucauldian and Marxist approaches to power, like Magali Sarfatti Larson.

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<sup>12</sup> The term "field" is often associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Although acknowledging the similarities between Bourdieu's field theory and Abbott's ecological theory (Liu & Emirbayer, 2016), this study will not draw explicitly on the work of Bourdieu.

<sup>13</sup> In his first publications, Freidson held a more critically-oriented view on the power of professions. In later works, like *Professionalism Reborn* (1994) and *Professionalism; The Third Logic* (2007) he developed a more positive view, seeing the ideal typical professional ideology as a necessary counterweight to the ideologies of markets and bureaucracies (Fauske, 2008, p. 49).

### 2.1.1 What is a profession?

#### Taxonomies and definitions

In the first phase of research on professions, many academics concentrated on identifying the characteristics distinguishing professions from other occupations (Fauske, 2008, p. 34). For instance, Abraham Flexner, known to be the forerunner of this taxonomic/trait approach, presented six features: 1) professions are intellectual operations with considerable individual responsibility; 2), they derive their raw material from science and learning; 3) they work this “raw material” up to a practical and definite end; 4) they possess an educationally communicable technique; 5) they tend to self-organization; and 6) they become increasingly altruistic in motivation (as cited in Fauske, 2008, p. 34). Following Flexner, many academics made similar lists. Frequently, doctors and lawyers were used as examples of the ideal typical profession, while teachers, nurses, and social workers were seen as semi-professions (Fauske, 2008, p. 39).

In spite of the efforts, the focus on traits and characteristics did not lead to common agreement about what a profession is. Moreover, critics claimed that the characteristics of professionalism and professionalization identified by researchers often seemed to be conditioned more by ideological perceptions than scientific analysis (Fauske, 2008, p. 40). Today, most academics have abandoned the making of long lists of characteristics, acknowledging that it is hard to draw clear boundaries between professions and other occupations. Instead, most current researchers agree about a few, central characteristics and regard the term “profession” as an *ideal type* (Molander & Terum, 2008b, p. 17). As mentioned in the introduction, Dzur (2008), for instance, states that traditional sociological definitions of professionalism have three central components: 1) knowledge, 2) self-regulation, and 3) social responsibility (p. 45). Hence, the ideal typical profession can be said to hold special knowledge, be autonomous, and have special obligations towards society. Dzur’s central components correspond with the findings of Beam et al. (2009). Studying the most frequently mentioned key traits and attributes of professions; they found that most included the following characteristics:

- A profession is an occupation that is organized around a body of knowledge or specialized technique.
- Members of the occupation have considerable autonomy to carry out their work.
- Members of the occupation are willing to put public service ahead of economic gain.
- The occupation has an established professional culture that includes organizations or institutions that promote its values, norms, and symbols.
- The occupation socializes its members through education and training.
- Members of the occupation produce an unstandardized product.
- The occupation is usually lifelong and terminal. (p. 278)

Abandoning the taxonomic/trait model, the main occupation of most academics within the theory of professions no longer distinguishes which occupations can be named professions and which not. As a result, many operate with broader definitions of professions. Abbott (1988), for instance, states that a firm definition of “profession” is both unnecessary and dangerous, since the definition only needs to be strong enough to support one’s theoretical machinery (p. 318). He describes professions as “exclusive occupational groups applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases” (p. 8). Freidson (2007) uses a somewhat more stringent definition, stating that professionalism may be said to exist “when an organized occupation gains the power to determine who is qualified to perform a defined set of tasks, to prevent all others from performing that work, and to control the criteria by which to evaluate performance” (p. 12). McQuail (1994) uses a simpler wording, stating that professionalism can be associated with non-amateur job-performance, absence of external interference, and judgement by fellow professionals.

### **Is journalism a profession?**

As previously stated, using the theory of professions when studying journalism can be perceived as problematic, as whether journalism is a profession or not in sociological terms has been highly debated. Although journalism historically has undergone several “professionalizing” stages, it is still seen by many academics as a

quasi-profession, a semi-profession or a proto-profession (Waisbord, 2013, p. 78). Most sociologists with a taxonomic approach argue that journalism cannot be titled a profession because of 1) the lack of formal knowledge, 2) an absence of credentialism, and 3) a weak professional identity (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 77-83).

According to the first critique, the journalistic knowledge base mainly consists of technical skills and competencies and not the specialized and abstract knowledge commonly associated with professions. The knowledge of news-gathering and news-reporting methods, ethical norms and intuition-based experiences does not establish strong enough differences between professional expertise and the lay public, critics state (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 77-83).

When it comes to the absence of credentialism, many refer to the fact that “journalist” is not a protected title. Unlike other occupational groups, such as doctors and lawyers, no formal education is required to become a reporter. Moreover, many academics argue that the libertarian tradition of press freedom makes credentialism within journalism impossible, since credentialism inevitably requires state authority. An alliance with the state in order to achieve exclusivity rights to practice journalism “uncomfortably fits the anti-statism of the liberal ideology espoused of mainstream journalism”, as it runs contrary to the ideals of freedom of expression and constitutional rights (Waisbord, 2013, p. 85). The lack of credentialism does, however, make it harder to monopolize part of the labor market – which in turn makes the achievement of autonomy, status and high income more difficult (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 77-83).<sup>14</sup>

The third claim – of journalism having a weak professional identity – points to the fact that only a minority of journalists participate in professional organizations, and that there is no single association claiming to represent the interests of all journalists

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<sup>14</sup> The level of credentialism does of course vary from country to country, with the liberal media system of the U.S generally being more “anti-state” than the media systems of many European countries (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Italy for instance, has the ODG (Ordine dei Giornalisti/the Order of Journalists), a state-approved organization that regulates the journalistic profession by imposing membership on anyone who wants to become a professional reporter (Örnebring, 2016, p. 49). The focus of this study is however the U.S. media system.



(Waisbord, 2013, p. 82).<sup>15</sup> In addition, there seems to be considerable disagreement about what journalism really is. The professionalization project is often seen as an effort to streamline practices and ideals across newsrooms. Moreover, consensus is perceived necessary to determine and enforce a common set of norms. As journalism has a number of competing visions at the core of its self-definition, affirming the journalistic field as a separate occupation, with distinctive norms and values, can be difficult (Waisbord, 2013, p. 41). As a result, whether journalism is “a craft, a profession, a set of practices, a collective of individuals, an industry, an institution, a business or a mindset” is still highly debated (Zelizer, 2009, p. 32).

When avoiding a taxonomic approach and, instead, following the dynamic and ecological line of academics like Abbott (1988), it is not necessary for journalism to fulfill all the traits on a list in order to use the theory of professions as an analytical device. According to Abbott (1988), professions are not the result of a steady, linear process by which certain occupations acquire clusters of characteristics that eventually match an ideal type. Instead, they are gradually formed, meaning that many functioning professions may only have acquired certain segments of the ideal type (p. 81). This dynamic perspective, seeing professionalization as a project, opens for an examination of the professional *ambitions* in journalism (Waisbord, 2013, p. 87). Whether seeing journalism as a true profession or not, the many similarities between journalism and other professions – including university education and training, norms and codes of ethics, and a public-interest mission – make the theory of professions a helpful analytical device to *think about journalism*.

Although the social structure of professions is not fixed, a variety of non-permanent settlements are perceived to create temporary stabilities in the process of competition with other occupations (Abbott, 1988, p. 84). Some professional structures can in other words give competitive advantages in given contexts. Hence, without taking a taxonomic approach, it is possible to compare the social structure of journalism with structures known to strengthen professions. In order to determine the centers’

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<sup>15</sup> Again, there are of course differences between the media system of the U.S. and some of the European media systems. In Norway, the percentage of organized journalists has for instance, traditionally, been high (Ottosen, 1996).

*potential as professional platforms*, central aspects of professionalism, and structures known to weaken and strengthen professions, will thus be discussed in the following section.

### **2.1.2 Central aspects of professionalism**

The ideal typical profession has been described above as an autonomous occupation holding special knowledge and having special obligations towards society. Many academics<sup>16</sup> within the theory of professions see these characteristics as closely linked and mutually dependent. Put simply, the view can be described as follows: It is hard for an occupation to gain autonomy without holding special knowledge and a social obligation. Moreover, it is hard for an occupation to develop special knowledge and fulfill its social obligations without autonomy. In the same way as the essence of democracy has been described as the tension between liberty and duty, freedom and responsibility, the essence of a profession can be described as the tension between autonomy and obligation, work and integrity (Shulman, 2005, p. xv). Schön (1988) writes:

In return for access to their extraordinary knowledge in matters of great human importance, society has granted them [professionals] a mandate for social control in their fields of specialization, a high degree of autonomy in their practice, and a license to determine who shall assume the mantle of professional authority. (p. 7)

Professional self-regulation is, in other words, not an automatic privilege – it is earned because of what is seen as the profession’s contribution to society.

#### **Strategies to gain or keep control over work**

How professions attempt to control their work is the central aspect of Abbott’s *The System of Professions* (1988). As he sees it, professions constitute an interdependent system, where they fight over various areas of work. As a profession cannot occupy a jurisdiction (the link between a profession and its work) without either finding it

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<sup>16</sup> This includes scholars with a functionalist view about professions, and most scholars within the “third phase” of research on professions. Scholars of the “second phase”, however, as previously debated, have a more critical approach towards professional autonomy and power.

vacant or fighting for it, professions continually need to dominate outsiders who attack their control (p. 2). As a result of the competition, the tasks, the professions, and the links between them change continually (p. 35). Following from this, Abbott sees the link between a profession and its work (the jurisdiction) as a central phenomenon of professional life (p. 20). To analyze professional development, Abbott states, is to analyze how this link is created in work, how is it anchored by the formal and informal social structure of the profession, and how the interplay of jurisdictional links between professions determines the history of the individual professions themselves (p. 20). Put simply, the study of professions thus becomes the study of inter professional competition – and how professions attempt to gain and keep control over certain areas of work.

Taking a closer look at the elements of professional control, it is said to be twofold (Molander & Terum, 2008a, p. 18). Through *external control*, professions regulate their occupational task through the monopoly over a given labor market. As previously mentioned, this monopoly is often enforced through different types of credentialism, like higher education degrees controlled by the occupation itself. Hence, the professions ensure that the members of the profession have the required knowledge and skills to fulfill the occupational task. If managed properly, credentialism and monopoly can thus be useful structures, protecting both the profession and its clients against “quacks” and amateurs. As put by Susskind and Susskind (2015): “We would not want any Joe performing brain surgery on us” (p. 22). However, as further discussed in section 2.1.3, monopolies can also be misused. Instead of useful tools, many critiques see them as efforts by mobilized groups to achieve economic and social gains. Rather than a natural evolution of modern societies, professionalism is thus viewed as an ideology and a project intended to achieve social power (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 81-82).

The second form of professional control, *internal control*, refers to the phenomenon of professions having relative autonomy in the performance of their tasks. This means that the standards of the professional work are defined by the profession itself, on the foundation of the professional knowledge base – and not by an external authority.

Within its area of operation, the profession thus provides its own "laws" (Molander & Terum, 2008a, p. 18).

As part of their professional self-control, some professions are also granted the privilege of by-passing normal modes of behavior or morality. Gawande (2007) describes the position of surgeons like this:

The public has granted us extraordinary and exclusive dispensation to administer drugs to people, even to the point of unconsciousness, to cut them open, to do what would otherwise be considered assault, because we do so on their behalf – to save their lives and provide them comfort. (p. 148)

Of special interest to this study, journalism can also be said to undermine the principles of common morality<sup>17</sup> on a regular basis – interfering in other people’s affairs and causing harm to individuals by publishing injurious information. The reason why these actions are accepted is largely that they are seen necessary in order to provide society with truthful and reliable information. The public’s right to know is considered to outweigh the disadvantages of the involved individuals (Altschull, 1990, p. 291; Bjerke, 2009, p. 141; Grimen, 2008b, p. 9). In other words, as part of their privilege, some professions are granted more or less moral amnesty.

*Legitimation through the claim of a “secular calling”*

As described above, professional autonomy is perceived not as an entitlement but a privilege, given in return for fulfilling important societal tasks. To be recognized as professions, and to enjoy the privilege of autonomy, occupations need to legitimize their position through convincing the public of the superiority of their societal role, knowledge and skills.<sup>18</sup> From this perspective, professional ideology – described by Freidson (2007) as “the claims, values, and ideas that provide the rationale for [the] institutions of professionalism” – is seen as an important tool (p. 105). As “neither political nor economic power is intrinsic to bodies of knowledge and skill” ideology

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<sup>17</sup> According to Beauchamp and Childress (2009) the common morality consists of moral norms that bind all persons in all places, following the four main principles of justice, non-maleficence, beneficence and autonomy.

<sup>18</sup> Described by Abbott (1988) as a claim made before the public for the legitimate control of a particular kind of work (a jurisdictional claim) (p. 60).

becomes “the primary tool available” for professions to gain “the political and economic resources needed to establish and maintain their status” (p. 106).

As Freidson (2007) sees it, there are three opposing ideal typical ideologies which provide the rationale for the control of work: professionalism (the ideology of professional control); consumerism (the ideology of marked control); and managerialism (the ideology of bureaucratic control) (p. 106). In consumerism and managerialism, Freidson claims, work is valued primarily as a means of gaining a living or holding a job. While consumerism assumes that workers are primarily motivated by their desire to maximize their income, managerialism assumes that the workers are motivated by their prospects within the organization. Moreover, both ideologies see any kind of work as intrinsically unpleasant. Hence, satisfaction is often found in the consumption of goods and in leisure rather than in work. In contrast, professionalism (the “third logic”) sees *work* as a good. Moreover, as professionals mainly gain satisfaction in performing their work well, the role of work in providing a good living becomes subordinate. Professional work can therefore be viewed as a *secular calling*, and a modern source of meaning and identity (p. 108). According to Freidson, the calling includes concern that the work is performed as well as possible, and with an interest in elaborating, refining and extending the professional knowledge base (pp. 105-123). Due to the claim of being “a secular priesthood”, serving transcendent and self-evidently desirable values, professionals can claim independence of judgement and freedom of action rather than mere faithful service, Freidson states (p. 122). In comparison to the ideal typical ideologies of consumerism and managerialism, the ideal typical ideology of professionalism is in other words perceived as more *altruistic*. To protect the altruistic values of professionalism, Freidson states, autonomy can be justified as a way of protecting professional ideology against market- and bureaucratic forces (pp. 220-222). Another scholar presenting a similar line of thought is LeGrand (2010). In his study of what motivates professionals, he lists several explanation models – including the trust and the mistrust model. According to the trust-model, public service professionals are “knights”, meaning that they are “public-spirited altruists committed to the welfare of the people that they were being employed to serve” (p. 57). Due to their altruism, the

knights can be trusted “to provide high-quality services without any direction from government or from anyone else” (p. 57). However, the trust-model claims, if the knights become subject to any outside control, they will become discouraged and demoralized. At worst, the control can promote self-interested behavior, as extrinsic motivation drives out intrinsic motivation. Hence, the knights might turn into knaves – motivated by a self-interest for financial gain, promotion and job security (pp. 58-59). For the professions to be able to fulfill their “secular calling”, autonomy is thus seen as a prerequisite. Hence, confessing to a variant of the ideal, professional ideology can be an effective strategy for professions attempting to gain or keep control over their own work.

Because of their use of ideology to gain autonomy, professions can be seen as politically constituted occupations with more or less exclusive rights to perform certain tasks on behalf of society (Molander & Terum, 2008a, p. 18). According to Freidson (2007), the public at large, the state, and powerful elites can have the authority to grant these rights (p. 32). Ultimately, no ideal typical institution of professionalism can however exist without the support of the state. It is, after all, the state that has the power to: 1) officially define and classify particular kinds of work in the labor force; 2) permit and support the occupational jurisdiction and adjudicate jurisdictional disputes within it; 3) defend labor market shelters against both labor consumers and would-be competitors; 4) legitimate the professional training; and 5) give credence to the professional ideology (p. 128). All professions can thus be said to be politically constituted occupations depending upon the state for their empowerment.

#### *Legitimation through the claim of superior knowledge*

In addition to altruism, a central aspect in the ideology of professionalism is claiming that the work of trained and experienced specialists is superior to that of amateurs (Freidson, 2007, p. 111). Many professions thus present themselves as experts in a specific field – doctors claim to be experts on the human body, lawyers claim to be experts on the law – having knowledge that lay people do not (Molander & Terum, 2008a, p. 17). Hence, all professions can be seen as a solution to the same problem,

namely “that none of us has sufficient specialist knowledge to cope with all of our daily challenges” (Susskind & Susskind, 2015, p. 3). As Susskind and Susskind (2015) state:

[The practitioners of the professions] save our lives and keep us in good health, they educate our children, counsel and enlighten us spiritually, advise us on our legal entitlements, manage our money, assist us in running our businesses, help us complete our tax returns, design our homes, and much more. (p. 10)

Along with claiming superior knowledge, most professions also try to establish cultural authority through connecting their work to such “culturally valued results” as democracy, health, justice, happiness, self-actualization, and economic growth (Abbott, 1988, pp. 184-187). The work of doctors is for instance closely related to the cultural value of health, while the work of lawyers is related to the value of justice (Abbott, 1988, p. 185). When attempting to legitimize their position, referring to the direct usefulness of their area of work and the connected values can thus have a legitimating effect. As cultural values undergo autonomous shifts, the steadily pressured professions must however be careful about moving towards the currently valid legitimacy bases. If not, they can, as Abbott (1988) put it, “face the erosion of jurisdiction” (p. 195). As an example, many professions adjusted their legitimation arguments towards the cultural values of efficiency, rationality and science when these values gained ground during the nineteenth and twentieth century (Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 227). As will later be discussed in more detail, this led to greater university control of professional training.

In addition to legitimizing their work results, professions also need to justify *how* they do their work in order to strengthen their jurisdiction. This means that they have to convince society that their work is produced in a “culturally approved manner” (Abbott, 1988, pp. 184-185). Hence, most professions have explicit, written guidelines or codes of ethics meant to protect the interests of clients and society. Based on the profession's goals, values and ideals, these guidelines are also important to ensure that professions actually do what they are supposed to do – according to the

cultural legitimation. The ethical guidelines, in other words, are meant to ensure that the members of the profession “wants what they should want, and acts as they should act” (Nohria & Ghoshal, 1994, p. 493).

#### *Legitimation through actual work results*

Within the theory of professions, it has long been pointed out that professions tend to have high ideals that do not always correspond with their everyday work (Fauske, 2008, p. 33). This has, in turn, led to the discussion of whether the privileged position of professions is a result of their *actual* work results, or whether it is mainly based upon successful professional ideology building. Most academics in the third phase of the research on professions state that professions cannot build legitimacy *alone* through what they claim to be. There has to be a connection between how professions entitle themselves, and what they actually do. Since claiming that the work of trained and experienced specialists is superior to that of amateurs, the quality of work thus becomes an important measurement. As Abbott (1988) says:

It is clear that the claim to be a profession is essential, since only by that claim can a group enter the competition in the first place. However, once a group enters the competition, what matters for us is not what it claims to be, but what it actually is. (p. 82)

Although acknowledging that “the existence of dominant power and of system conservatism is not to be doubted”, Abbott states that “the issue is of their degree” (p. 135). Yes, the forces of power and conservatism can be powerful in the short run; however, in the long run, “no profession delivering bad services can stand indefinitely against competent outsiders, however powerful it may be” (p. 135). A profession that is not able to fulfill its proclaimed aim over time can, in Abbott’s words, be accused of “treatment failure”. Treatment failures can, in turn, make vulnerable the control that a profession has over its work (p. 46). Dzur (2008) uses a simpler wording to make the same point: Professions cannot just say they serve vital social interests; they must in fact do so. Therefore, they are continuously subject to questions of legitimacy (p. 62).



In cases of treatment failure over time, a profession is often held accountable. A forum with sanctioning authority can for instance ask the decision-makers within a profession to justify their actions (Molander & Eriksen, 2008, p. 172). Due to its power, these confrontations are often – indirectly or directly – arranged by the state. If failing to justify its actions over time, the profession thus risks losing its privileges.

### **Professionalization and deprofessionalization**

As described above, the jurisdictional boundaries of professions are perpetually in dispute. The results of this permanent struggle is traditionally named professionalization and deprofessionalization – where deprofessionalization refers to “the apparent decrease in professional legitimacy and autonomy on the one hand and to the lessening benefits of professionalism for the members of the profession on the other” (Abbott, 1988, p. 18). Put simply: If the loss of legitimacy and autonomy is great enough, the profession ceases to exist. On the other hand, if a profession manages to increase its legitimacy and autonomy, the result is professionalization.

Based on his understanding of professions as part of an interdependent system, Abbott (1988) explains the development and changes within professions, which can lead to professionalization and deprofessionalization, as the result of jurisdictional contests. Put simply, professional change can be seen as the result of a disturbance, which leads to a fight for jurisdiction, which again leads to professions negotiating new jurisdictional settlements to stabilize the system (pp. 91-113). When the dust settles, some professions might have increased their autonomy and legitimacy (strengthening their jurisdiction), while the result for others is the opposite: deprofessionalization. The jurisdictional settlements as the result of a jurisdictional dispute vary. While some professions can claim full control, some become subordinate, while others again are forced to give up their jurisdictional claim – or split it into interdependent parts (p. 69). Freidson (2007) uses technicians as an example of the ever-changing landscapes of professions:

In the future, some individual occupations in the technician category may gain professional status, others become semi-professions, others simply disappear as their skills are made redundant by new technology, and still others become

members of the occupationally anonymous semi-skilled worker category. (p. 90)

The influences that disturb the system could be both external and internal. While external forces, like new technologies and organizational change, can open new task areas for jurisdiction and destroy old jurisdictions, internal forces can strengthen or weaken *current* jurisdictions and produce similar results (Abbott, 1988, pp. 91-96). As Waisbord (2013) notes: “Professional boundaries that protect autonomy do not automatically evaporate. Tested from the outside, they are redefined from the inside” (p. 64).

Following from the above, a profession has a certain ability to hold jurisdiction in each “turf battle”. According to Abbott (1988), this ability is especially dependent on the professions *knowledge system* and *internal structure*. While the development of new knowledge and skills may consolidate jurisdictional control or facilitate expansion at others’ expense, the standards and organizational efficiency of a profession can make it more or less able to defend its own jurisdiction and/or threaten the jurisdiction of others (pp. 96-98). In the permanent struggle for professional power, autonomy and legitimacy, a well-developed knowledge system and a solid internal structure thus is essential.

As further discussed in section 2.3, there are many forms of professional knowledge. When it comes to jurisdictional disputes, *abstract* knowledge is, according to Abbott (1988), especially important – as only a knowledge system governed by abstractions can redefine occupations problems and tasks, defend them from interlopers, and help them seize new problems (p. 9). The main reason for this multi-functionality, he states, is that abstract knowledge has the potential to clarify the foundations of professional work, and trace these foundations to major cultural values (p. 54). Abstract knowledge is therefore important, both when it comes to the development of new knowledge and skill and for the profession’s legitimation of work (the work aimed at increasing the profession’s cultural authority). Hence, the development of an abstract knowledge system is seen as “the ultimate currency of competition between professions”, and the main reason why professions manage to survive the continuous

external changes that affect them (p. 9). According to Abbott, most professions have developed an abstract knowledge system. As a result, most professions are strong enough to encounter and adapt to the continuous changes in cultural values and technology, and also organizations challenging their jurisdiction. Therefore, the main reason for professions to disappear is not just change but that their professional task disappears (p. 91).

### **What can be considered professional?**

As an answer to the first part of the first sub-question of this study, it is the understanding of professionalism as outlined above that is used when discussing the four centers' potential as professional platforms. In summary, the *ideal typical* profession can be said to 1) hold special knowledge, 2) be autonomous, and 3) have special obligations towards society. Moreover, these features are perceived as being mutually dependent. While professional self-control is a privilege given in return for fulfilling important societal tasks and holding special knowledge, autonomy is seen as necessary for professions to be able to develop their special knowledge and fulfill their social obligations. To keep their privileged position, professions must prove their value through actual work results. In addition, an ideology based upon the claim of superior knowledge and a secular calling has proved to be “a powerful tool” in the fight for jurisdictions.

### **2.1.3 A short glimpse at the journalism profession**

As discussed above, many academics argue that journalism cannot be called a profession because of the lack of formal knowledge, the absence of credentialism, and the weak professional identity. Abbott (1988) for instance argues that journalism remains a “very permeable occupation” due to the mobility between journalism and public service relations, the mobility between journalism and other forms of writing, and the absence of credentialism (p. 225). In spite of this, the “incumbent” profession of journalism has come to have “extraordinary power” through its jurisdictional claim to the collection and distribution of “factual” information about current events (the news jurisdiction). Hence, whether journalism qualifies as a profession or not is not so important, Abbott states (p. 225). As journalism has gained a privileged position in

society due to its jurisdiction over news, it is interesting to look at how this jurisdiction is maintained and defended. In the following, a short introduction to what is seen as the “liberty and duty”/“autonomy and obligation” of journalism is presented – leading to the discussion of the concept of “quality reporting”.

### **The problematic aspect of autonomy**

Most academics agree that journalists hold a privileged position in society. Many countries, for instance, operate special legislation for reporters<sup>19</sup>, direct or indirect state subsidies for journalistic organizations, and/or allow journalists to by-pass some moral rights and duties (see section 2.1). However, when it comes to work autonomy, journalism is less privileged, despite the fact that it has “been widely assumed that journalism requires autonomy to serve democracy” (Waisbord, 2013, p. 43). The main reason for critics labelling journalism a “dependent” profession is its history of functioning within the boundaries of political or corporate structures (Waisbord, 2013, p. 57). At first, the press of Western democracies was inevitably linked to organized politics (the state and political parties). During the nineteenth century, this gradually changed when the press started to produce news for the mass market. With journalism becoming more profitable, publishers could increasingly declare independence from political control (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 19-25). Many critics claim that, instead, the press became “firmly embedded in capitalist dynamics” (Waisbord, 2013, p. 54). The “so-called independent press” had in other words traded “one master for another” (Summers, 1990, p. 74).

One of the academics claiming that newsrooms are not capable of making truly independent decisions, due to their organization around private property and profit maximization, is Murdock (1988). He makes a distinction between allocative control and operational control, where allocative control defines the goals of press companies, including decisions about the distribution of resources, and is in the hands of press owners and upper management. Operational control, on the other hand, is

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<sup>19</sup> In the U.S. a legal definition of “journalist” determines “the scope of a set of journalistic privileges ranging from federal libel law to state and federal privileges protecting journalists’ right to keep sources confidential, to a provision in Oregon’s Public Meetings Law allowing journalists to attend executive sessions of public bodies that are otherwise closed to the public” (Gleason, 2015, p. 376).

exercised by managers and editors – but is dependent upon allocative control. Hence, the lack of allocative control makes the decisions of news managers non-autonomous, as they are structurally determined by the overall organization of news business in capitalism. Journalism’s lack of work autonomy can thus be understood in terms of the economic constraints of the press (Waisbord, 2013, p. 55).

The above discussed “market path”, with the press becoming “firmly embedded in capitalist dynamics”, was not the only arrangement chosen when journalism started its withdrawal from politics. Rejecting the idea of the market as the best guarantee of professionalism, some broadcasting systems – with the BBC as the most famous – became “state promoted” parts of the profession (Torstendahl & Burrage, 1990).<sup>20</sup> In spite of these systems being sheltered from the influence of elected officials through regulation, several critics claim that regulations have proved insufficient to guarantee autonomy, especially when national interests are at stake (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 33-36). Both the market and the broadcasting/state-supported path have thus been considered inadequate in the journalistic striving towards autonomy.

Given the importance of autonomy, and the failed attempts to gain it, the establishment of the university nonprofits of this study become especially interesting. As mentioned in the introduction, the nonprofits seem to have left the “market path” in order to become more autonomous. The question thus is whether the “nonprofit path” really can be said to increase professional control. Are nonprofits really more sovereign than traditional newsrooms, or are they just another example of the journalism profession trading “one master for another”?

### **Legitimation through the cultural value of democracy**

When it comes to the “obligation” and “duty” of journalism, the work of reporters is often connected to the culturally valued result of democracy. Put briefly, their claim is that professional reporting can provide the citizens in a democracy with news and

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<sup>20</sup> Hallin and Mancini (2004) name the media model of North Europe, from where the BBC example is taken, the “Democratic Corporatist Model”. In most north European countries they state, the media is not simply seen as a private commercial enterprise, but a social institution for which the state has important responsibility (p. 161).

information that is reliable, truthful and impartial.<sup>21</sup> Through news communicated by professional journalists, the informed, rational, citizens of a democracy are enabled “to weigh information to develop civic attitudes and make decisions” (Waisbord, 2013, p. 95). Further, journalists often attempt to distinguish themselves from the public through claiming to be “experts in providing news” (Folkerts, 2014, p. 228). Hence, the quality of news provided by professional journalists allegedly is higher than the quality of news provided by regular citizens.

As described above, the legitimation claims of a profession has little value in the long run if there is little connection between how the profession entitles itself and the work actually done. Since the journalism profession claims to be a prerequisite for democracy, it actually needs to produce reporting of societal value. If not, the link between the profession and its work will become vulnerable. Waisbord (2013) believes that if journalism does not regain its professional mission “amidst runaway commercialism, partisan talk on cable television, and rogue reporters”, it will run the risk of being lost (p. 74). However, the problem for journalism, and most other professions, is that the work conducted in the practice field differs from the professional definition in many ways – through sub-specialties, particular experiences and perspectives and style of operation. As further discussed in section 2.2, this can be explained by the difference between a profession’s identity and the professional identity of the various practitioners included in the profession. While the professional identity can vary from reporter to reporter, the profession’s identity can be seen as a version of group identity – characterized by common symbols more than joint action. This common symbolism creates mutual notions of how things *should be* rather than describing how things actually *are* (Heggen, 2008, p. 323). In spite of their legitimating efforts and common values, professions will always include

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<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that, according to Abbot (1998), the most efficient way of legitimizing a profession lies somewhere between the very specific and the more general cultural values (p. 104). He notes that “few use such extremely general legitimations as the ‘pursuit of truth’ or ‘ultimate concern’”(p. 187). The journalism profession does however legitimate its existence through the seeking and reporting of truthful information. As an example, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) put “obligation to the truth” on top when listing the ten most important elements of journalism.

differentiating practitioners and work results. Waisbord (2013) describes the situation as follows:

Because news can't be tightly controlled, it seems improbable that one conception of professionalism may be able to determine news norms across the vast, multilayered world of news. A conception of professionalism that remains embedded in the public trustee model of journalism coexists with alternatives grounded in quite different visions about good and necessary journalism. (p. 93)

As the profession is not able to control the work of all reporters and all news outlets, there will always be some “partisan talk on cable television” in the mix. However, *too many* members operating outside the profession's shared and legitimizing ideas *over time* can result in “treatment failure” and weaken the position of the profession. As later discussed in more detail, many critics claim that this has already happened in journalism.

### **The impact of the journalism crisis**

Located at the junction between politics, economics, society, culture, and technology, journalism is familiar with change. In spite of this, many see the recent journalism crisis as particularly challenging. As Meyer (2009) opens the first chapter of his book *The Vanishing Newspaper*: “Journalism is in trouble.”

To justify the dramatic opening, Meyer points to the fact that U.S. newspapers have experienced a slow decline in readership since the 1970s. In 2007, the weekday circulation of daily newspapers fell to 50.7 million – the lowest point since 1945. The deterioration was topped by the 2008/2009 recession, alongside a strong decrease in advertising and low earnings online (p. 1).<sup>22</sup> As previously mentioned, the result has been a vast fall in income for the news industry, and a dramatic reduction in newsroom staff.<sup>23</sup> The crisis has also led to increased demands for profitability from

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<sup>22</sup> Newspapers are, as later discussed in more detail, often seen as the main deliverers of original, quality reporting.

<sup>23</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, Pew Research Center's State of the News Media report (2013) stated that the circulation and advertising revenue for U.S. newspapers had fallen by 43 percent since 2000. In the same period, the number of journalists had decreased with 28 percent.

owners, and centripetal tendencies in the management of media conglomerates and technological development – putting the journalistic boundary work to test (Eide, 2010, p. 10). Hence, many argue that the recent crisis has marked the end of the relatively solid separation of news and business. Moreover, as advertising and marketing priorities are increasingly affecting the mandate of journalists' work, some claim that the capacity to maintain autonomy and independence is undermined (Macdonald, 2006, p. 755). As a result, the journalism crisis is seen as the end of the “professional heyday” of journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 218). Using Freidson's (2007) terms, the journalism crisis can thus be perceived as an example of commercialism gaining ground at the expense of professionalism.

Some of the best-known empirical studies examining the relationship between commercialism and journalistic autonomy are the surveys of Weaver et al. Since the surveys started, they have documented a continuing erosion of perceived professional autonomy in U.S. newsrooms. While 60 percent of journalists said that they had “almost complete freedom in selecting their stories” in 1971 and 1982, only a third (33.6 percent) said so in 2013 (Willnat & Weaver, 2014, p. 13). Moreover, the surveys show a direct link between newsrooms under stress – experiencing buyouts, layoffs or shrinking staff numbers – and reports of declining autonomy. In newsrooms under stress, for instance, reporters claim to be less successful in covering subjects they find important. In addition, they experience that their ability to choose which stories to work on has shrunk, and that they have less freedom to decide what to emphasize in the stories actually produced (Beam et al., 2009). Stating that “professional autonomy is fundamental for independent journalism”, the academics conclude that the findings “should be of concern to anyone who cares about the role of journalism in a democratic society” (Beam et al., 2009, p. 291).

As if journalism's economic challenges were not enough, many academics have also pointed towards other troubles more directly caused by the recent implementation of digital technology. First, the multiplication of information outlets and the fragmentation of publics is seen to undermine the control journalism historically has had over news (Waisbord, 2013, p. 5). Less journalistic control and more diverse



news outlets can of course strengthen the public discourse (Haas, 2007). However, it can also – as demonstrated in the U.S. – lead to the creation of multiple echo chambers, “re-enforcing pre-existing audience predispositions and undermining the possibility of reflexive and open deliberation across lines of difference” (Benson, 2016, p. 32). Second, and strongly connected to the first challenge, technological development makes everybody a potential journalist – and when everybody is a journalist, there is no such thing as a journalism profession (Haas, 2007). Summarized, the combination of the recent economic, political and technological transformations are said to have “shaken the old journalistic order with still unpredictable consequences” (Waisbord, 2013, p. 5).

Applying Abbott’s (1988) theory of professions to the journalism crisis, it is obvious that external forces – like new technology – have disturbed the professional system of which journalism is part. Hence, journalism needs to draw on its internal forces (its knowledge system and its internal structure) to avoid deprofessionalization. In this perspective, the four centers of this study’s “potential as professional platforms”<sup>24</sup> can be seen as their ability to strengthen the internal forces of journalism. The centers’ professional potential can thus be described as their *jurisdiction-strengthening potential*. From the professional understanding outlined above, this can, very simply, mean that the centers have a great potential as professional platforms if they: 1) produce content that live up to the ideals of what journalism claims to be, 2) emphasize ideals corresponding with the ideology of professionalism (like the idea of a secular calling), and 3) help build a solid knowledge system.

### **The problematic aspects of professional journalism**

In the chosen theoretical framework of this study, professions are seen to have the *potential* to perform necessary, positive functions in society. As previously mentioned, however, many academics hold a less positive view – questioning the professions dominance, power, and autonomy to a greater degree. Much of this critique is relevant when it comes to the journalism profession. Before discussing

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<sup>24</sup> The phrase used in the main research question.

how the term “quality reporting” can be understood, the main arguments against a strong journalism profession will be presented.

First, both classic and Neo-Marxist theories argue that the norms and ideals of professionalism are inseparable from the economic structure of the capitalist press. The critics claim that pretending to be knights serving the public, professional journalism, like any ideology, is really a discursive strategy intended to serve particular economic interests (Dzur, 2008). Hence, instead of being autonomous professionals, journalists represent the ideology of press owners and other dominant classes. Rather than a “third logic”, professionalism thus becomes a fable covering structural relations, using illusory ideals to claim legitimacy. In this view, the idea of professionalism is a tool to control labor, maximize profit, and exert ideological power in society (Waisbord, 2013, p. 101).

Second, several academics, with John Dewey as a forerunner, claim that the press prioritizes elites and expert opinions rather than the views and thoughts of regular citizens. According to the communitarian critique, “the kind of journalism championed by the professional model isn’t communication – rather, it’s one-way, top-down information transmission determined by a small group of people who operate according to their own norms and/or the interests of news organizations” (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 106-107). It would be more democratic if journalism became a *conversation facilitator* rather than a *news decider*, deliberative oriented theorists argue (Dewey, 1927/1991; Dzur, 2008; Haas, 2007; Rosen, 1995; Waisbord, 2013). Hence, the journalism profession should move from an expert-based “journalism of information” to a “journalism of conversation” – stimulating citizens to participate more actively in democratic processes (Haas, 2007, p. 7). Today, new interactive technologies, like email, text messaging and blogging, make it easier than ever for citizens to participate in the public debate, they argue (S. C. Lewis, 2012, pp. 848-849; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, pp. 238-240). Hence, instead of building an elitist, expert profession providing mostly one-way information, the journalism profession should concentrate on creating a public sphere where *all* citizens have access.

Third, several critiques are influenced by Michel Foucault's work on hegemonic power (1969/2002). According to Foucault, there are guidelines for how we think and act in different contexts. In spite of what we think, these guidelines are neither universal, natural nor finally established – but culturally and socially constructed. However, as they *seem* natural, we hardly notice them, and believe that we think, speak and act completely freely. Since the order of things appear as normal, the guidelines will, at least to some extent, seem unproblematic (Neumann, 2001, p. 168).

According to Foucault (1969/2002), there is much power in making the culturally and socially constructed guidelines appear "normal", as few will challenge them. Hence, different groups constantly fight for *their* depiction of reality to become the commonly accepted reality. If several people with a common interest for a specific reality deception institutionalize themselves, they will constitute a position in the public discourse. If a representation within a discourse emerges so unchallenged that it is perceived as "natural", a state of hegemony arises. However, since there will always be a certain competition between the different representations within a discourse, maintaining hegemony requires discursive work through an affirmative production of statements and practices (Neumann, 2001, pp. 177-178). The true power of a group thus lies in the ability to maintain hegemony over time, a performance that both requires power and gives power.

Several generations of media theorists, from Horkheimer to Chomsky, have claimed that the practice of journalism is more about constructing hegemonic power than democratic empowerment (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 85). In this view, journalism's ideals of freedom, autonomy, truth-telling and neutrality is just an discursive construction intended to gain and maintain power (Waisbord, 2013, pp. 104-106). Following from this, revealing and minimizing the influence of the journalism profession become important.

Summarizing the main arguments of the three critical perspectives presented above, professions are perceived as organized groups gaining power at others' expense. Academics with a critical view about professions thus mainly see professionals as knaves – motivated by a self-interest for financial gain and power – instead of

altruistic knights ruled by a secular calling.<sup>25</sup> Although the main theoretical framework chosen for this study holds a more positive view of professions, the arguments of the Marxist, the communitarian and the Foucauldian critique are of great importance, as they highlight the potential problematic sides of professional ideology. In the analysis of the professional view of the interviewees in particular (section 6.1), the critical perspectives outlined above add an important perspective.

## 2.2 What is quality journalism?

As discussed in the introduction, the journalism crisis has led to a public debate about whether professional, resource-demanding “quality journalism” will survive. But what exactly is quality journalism? As part of popular discourse, the term is so common and intuitive that most people have an immediate understanding of it (Eide, 2011, p. 115). Attempting to define the term is, however, a challenge, as it involves great complexity. What is perceived as quality by some can be considered average or poor by others (R. K. Olsen, 2012, pp. 38-42). Swiss professor Stephan Ruß-Mohl is, for instance, known for stating that defining quality journalism is like “nailing a pudding to the wall” (as cited in R. K. Olsen 2012, p. 38). Later he concluded that quality is definable if one adds some special form of glue to the pudding (Held & Ruß-Mohl, 2005). In this section, I will attempt to find the theoretical ingredients necessary to make this glue. This will in turn enable me to discuss the potential that nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism (the main research question).

### 2.2.1 The normative basis of the quality term

As with the term “professional”, the term “quality journalism” is normative. When defining it, it is thus necessary to reflect upon the underlying normative standards leading to the definition. Since the theory of professions is the key theoretical approach to this study, what is named “the occupational ideology of journalism” will make the normative basis in the following discussion. According to Deuze (2005), journalistic ideology can be defined as “a collection of values, strategies and formal

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<sup>25</sup> See section 2.1 for a presentation of the main arguments in LeGrand’s “Knights and Knaves Return: Public Service Motivation and the Delivery of Public Services” (2010).

codes characterizing professional journalism and shared most widely by its members” (p. 445). Moreover, this ideology is “generally referred to as a dominant way in which news people validate and give meaning to their work” (p. 446). I am, in other words, focusing on what Kåre Heggen (2008) names *the profession’s identity*, namely the previously mentioned group identity characterized by common symbols and a common view of how things *should* be (p. 323). As discussed above, the *professional identity* of all journalists will not of course correspond with the common identity of the profession. In some cases, the profession’s identity and a reporter’s professional identity may be in contrast (p. 325). Claiming that journalism has a common identity, therefore, is not the same as claiming that *all journalists* have the same values. Hovden (2016) puts it like this:

As is the case with any social microcosm, some types of activities and positions – and those involved – will always, varying by period and country, be seen by most journalists as more important and more valuable, more *charismatic*, than others. (p. 72)

While the multifariousness of the journalistic world means that there is not just one type of valued journalism, there will always be some who are generally seen to belong to the *core* of journalism – doing “real” journalism. At the same time, there will always be some practitioners in the *periphery* whose claim to do journalism often is doubted, or even denied (Hovden, 2016, p. 72). Discussing the aspect of quality journalism based on journalistic ideology is, in other words, the same as discussing the currently perceived “core” of journalism in a given context.

### **2.2.2 Journalisms “social contract”**

Many academics have claimed that journalism has a weak professional identity (see section 2.1). Later empirical studies, however, have suggested that journalists in elective democracies *do* share similar characteristics and speak of similar values in the context of their daily work (Beam et al., 2009; Benson, 2008; Deuze, 2005; Hovden, 2016; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2006; Willnat & Weaver, 2014). According to Deuze (2005), journalists in all media types, genres and formats carry the ideology of journalism. It is therefore, as he puts it, possible to

speak of “a dominant occupational ideology of journalism on which most news workers base their professional perceptions and praxis, but which is interpreted, used and applied differently among journalists across media” (p. 445). Especially when faced with public criticism, journalists are known to apply these ideological values as a way of giving legitimacy and credibility to what they do (p. 446).

As emphasized by Hovden above, the evaluations of what can be considered examples of “real” or “ideal” journalism vary by period and country. This can be explained by the fact that most normative theories of journalism can be understood in relation to larger claims about the “good society” (Benson, 2008, p. 2591). As described in section 2.1, the work of reporters in today’s Western world is often connected to the culturally valued result of democracy. In principle, there can however be as many normative theories of journalism as there are political systems – ranging from Marxism-Leninism to diverse conceptions of democracy (Benson, 2008, pp. 2591-2592). As originally stated by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1963) in *Four Theories of the Press*, the press can be said to “always take on the form and coloration of the social and political structures” within which it operates (pp. 1-2).<sup>26</sup>

Focusing on *current Western reporting*, the following discussion will concentrate on the perception of “quality reporting” as a way of strengthening the “good society” of democracy. According to Benson (2008), there are several competing democratic theories – including the libertarian theory, the social responsibility theory, the democratic elite theory, the democratic participatory theory, and the public sphere theory. The ideal that has become dominant globally is *the social responsibility theory* (p. 2593). Based upon the duality of journalism’s service and privileges, rights and obligations, this theory echoes the essence of the theory of professions described above. In addition to the social responsibility theory, labels like “the social responsibility doctrine”, the “social contract of the press”, “accountability journalism”, and “the grand bargain” are also used to describe the ideology (Downie & Schudson, 2009; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Siebert et al., 1963; Susskind &

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<sup>26</sup> The four theories presented by Siebert et al. in 1963 were the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do.

Susskind, 2015). Simplified, the essence of the theory can be defined as in section 2.1: The journalism profession claims to be better than the lay public at providing news and information that is reliable, truthful and impartial. In return for this community service, society gives the journalism profession certain privileges like autonomy, special legal protection and financial subsidies of various kinds (Eide, 2011, p. 19).

Historically, the social responsibility theory dates back to the Hutchins Commission, appointed by the publisher Henry Luce.<sup>27</sup> Formed during World War II as a response to public and government criticism of media ownership, the Commission was asked to inquire about the role of the media in a modern democracy. Finding that the press did play an important role in saving and developing society, the Commission concluded that journalists, because of their important role, had a moral obligation to society when making decisions. The goal of the press should be to elevate society's standards, providing citizens with the information they need to govern themselves, the Commission remarked in its 1947 conclusion (Altschull, 1990, pp. 283-287). Hence, the press should, for instance, strive to “tell the truth behind the facts” (Altschull, 1990, p. 284; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 42). If it did not fulfill its moral obligations, there would be a risk of the public demanding government regulation of the media (Altschull, 1990, p. 284).

Most of today’s analyses of the social contract of the press follow the example of the Hutchins Commission, tying the concept to journalism’s role of providing citizens with essential societal information. Without this information, it is believed that citizens cannot make informed decisions during elections – or make useful contributions to the public debate between elections (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 332).

Before taking a closer look at the elements of the social responsibility theory, it is important to note that the theory not only is a professional ideology created and maintained by journalists themselves. Institutions and the state also draw upon the dominant normative theories of journalism, implicitly or explicitly, when shaping

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<sup>27</sup> The publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines.

media policies that carry real incentives or penalties for deviant behavior (Benson, 2008, p. 2592). Hence, the ideological claim of socially responsible journalism seems to be accepted by society at large. According to Sjøvaag (2013), the original social contract is an agreement between the citizenry and the state. This contract is based on a mixture of the liberal principles of freedom and the republican ideas of morality. The social contract is, in other words, an exchange of rights and obligations. Within this exchange, the institution of journalism can be seen as a third contractual partner – providing information to citizens about the affairs of the state, upon which citizens, in turn, act politically. This makes the social contract a triangle of contractual exchanges, in which obligations between the people, the press and the state remain balanced. The support for such a position, Sjøvaag claims, is that “the contract between the people and the state is impossible in our large and complex societies without a communicating intermediary – the press” (p. 141). In this view, what constitutes quality journalism – or “good journalism” – can be seen as an agreement between the citizenry and the journalistic institution (Kieran, 1997, p. 269). The social contract of the press could thus be summarized as follows: 1) The public is entitled to “relevant, quality journalism bound by a competent evaluation of sources and by the ethical principles of the profession” (Eide, 2010, pp. 16-17). 2) If not providing the journalism the public is entitled to, the press can face regulations (Altschull, 1990; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

#### **Four normative models of democracy**

As described above, most of today’s analyses of the social contract of the press follow the example of the Hutchins Commission, tying the concept to journalism’s role of providing citizens with “essential societal information”. What the term “essential societal information” actually means, however, is debated. As Strömbäck (2005) puts it, it is perhaps not controversial that the purpose of journalism is to provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing. However, the consensus fades as soon as an attempt is made to define what kind of information that is (p. 333). Following the tradition of Siebert et al. (1963), Strömbäck states that the “discussion about proper standards by which to evaluate news journalism” must always be seen in relation to different normative models of



democracy (p.333). Only when specifying unequivocally the model of democracy involved when using the word “democracy” can the expectations of media and journalism be clarified (p. 333). Based on the analysis of a broad range of theory, he states that the four most important and most often discussed normative models of democracy are the procedural democracy model, the competitive democracy model, the participatory democracy model and the deliberative democracy model. Since democracy is ultimately an ideology concerning decision making, the models carry different normative expectations of citizens and politicians – and thus ascribe different normative obligations upon media and journalism (pp. 331-333). Thus, what is considered high quality news from the perspective of one model of democracy might not be perceived as quality from the perspective of another.

The first democracy model, the model of procedural democracy, demands of media and journalism that the rules and procedures of democracy are respected in word as well as in actions. Beyond that, Strömbäck claims, “it is up to the media owners, editors and journalists to decide how they want to use the freedom that democracy grants them” (p. 338).

In the second model, the competitive democracy model, elections are normatively essential. During elections, political candidates or parties compete for support. To be able to hold the politicians accountable, the voters need information about the societal development and the actions of the politicians. Hence, the most important role of journalism is to provide information and knowledge “about important societal problems, about how society works and how the country is governed and by whom, and about differences between the political alternatives” (pp. 338-339). As the public is meant to trust and act upon the information, the reporting must be fact-based, critical of news sources, impartial and proportional. Moreover, it is important that reporters, and not the politicians, set the news agenda. The model does not however expect citizens to participate in public life or in the public sphere outside of the elections. Hence, many claim that the competitive democracy model leaves it up to the political elites to act, while the citizens only react (pp. 334-339).

Unlike the procedural and competitive democracy models, the third democracy model, the model of participatory democracy, expects people to be engaged in civic and public life. In addition to the information needed to form a competitive democracy, citizens of a participatory democracy thus need knowledge about *how* to participate in and influence political decision-making. Following from this, it is important that the press allow ordinary people to speak for themselves, and that citizens set the agenda for news coverage. Instead of being framed as passive victims of forces they cannot change, citizens should thus be perceived as active subjects with possibilities as well as responsibilities to change what needs to be changed (pp. 335-340).

The fourth and last democracy model, the model of deliberative democracy, sees democracy as collective decision-making. Hence, all affected by a decision ideally participate in an exchange of arguments – where the goal is reaching mutually acceptable decisions (pp. 336-341). For the deliberation to be successful, all participants must thus be committed to the values of rationality and impartiality. As an extension of the participatory model, the deliberative democracy model sees the public sphere as an arena. Since it is through media and journalism that citizens mainly access political discussions, it is thus, as discussed in section 2.1.3, seen important that the press acts as a conversation facilitator and not a news decider (p. 340).

### **“Truth” as a common ideal**

Although having many differences, especially when it comes to the involvement of citizens, all the four normative models mentioned above also have similarities. All for instance emphasize that citizens need verified, impartial and truthful information about society and political processes, and that the press should be the provider of this information (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 332). As stated by the Hutchins Commission, the press needs to “tell the truth behind the facts” in order to fulfill its democratic role. Hence, it might not be surprising that Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) put “obligation to the truth” at the top when making their list of journalism’s ten most important elements. Moreover, they claim that a “disinterested pursuit of truth” is ultimately

what sets journalism apart from all other forms of communication (p. 41). As reflected by the objectivity debate, using “the truth” as a legitimizing argument can however be challenging. By 1938, journalism textbooks started to question how truthful the news really could be (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 39). As a result of the following debate, most academics stopped perceiving news as a mirror reflecting the most important and recent happenings. Instead, news was seen as a subjective interpretation of reality. Hence, most of today’s academics, including Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), underline that they see truth as a *goal* (p. 45). Ettema and Glasser (1998), for instance, state that the standard of the assessment of truth “is not a rigid correspondence but a realistic and flexible – a very human – coherence” (p. 135). Editor Patty Calhoun puts it like this: “What we’re saying is you cannot be objective because you are going to go in with certain biases [...] But you can certainly pursue accuracy and fairness and the truth, and that pursuit continues” (as cited in Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, pp. 36-37). Journalism is thus seen as a practical or functional form of truth – and not a truth in the absolute or philosophical sense (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 42). Nevertheless, attempting to pursue truth is of great importance, as “accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built: context, interpretation, debate, and all of public communication” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 43).

Because of journalism’s occupation with truth, journalistic independence, or autonomy, is especially important to the profession. The perception is that reporters cannot dig up and tell the truth if they have partial interests. If journalists are loyal to the government or have special financial interests, some stories – and thus some parts of the truth – would most likely never be told (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, pp. 52-53). Also it is important that journalists take the time to verify information and not merely “shovel the latest information onto the air or the web” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 46). In a time when the internet gives easy access to stories and quotes, the public needs journalists to be “sense-makers”, Kovach and Rosenstiel state (2007, p. 87). Hence, one of journalism’s main tasks in the current media landscape is verifying and synthesizing “the ever-growing stream of data pouring in through the

new portals of information” (2007, p. 87). Journalists should, in other words, strive to be reporters – not repeaters (Hjeltnes & Warmedal, 2012, p. 20).

### **Investigative reporting – the journalistic flagship**

In addition to providing verified, impartial and truthful information, many academics list the tasks of critical scrutiny and advocating on behalf of the citizenry among the main normative expectations of journalism in democracy (McNair, 2009, p. 240). Often described as “watchdogs”, journalists are expected to hold the powerful in government, business and other influential spheres accountable (McNair, 2009, p. 239). In addition to conveying truthful information engaging citizens, this gives journalism a more active, political role.

Many see the period of “yellow journalism” as the starting point of journalism’s watchdog role. The term characterizes the sensational U.S. journalism that occurred in the mid-1890s, especially the reporting published by Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* (Altschull, 1990, pp. 271-276). Aiming to defend “the law, the justice, and the liberty of the people” against capitalists and other power holders, the “muckrakers” of the yellow press soon became known for their “righteous indignation” (Altschull, 1990, p. 274).

Today, the term “muckraking” is mainly used to underscore the shady side of journalism. The successor, “investigative reporting”, is however known to enjoy “an unmistakably honorary connotation” (Ettema & Glasser, 2006, p. 126). At least since Bernstein and Woodward, Ettema and Glasser (2006) claim, investigative reporting has come to mean “journalism of the highest order” (p. 126). The development from muckraking to investigative reporting in the U.S. accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s. Through the Freedom of Information Act and so-called Sunshine laws<sup>28</sup>, the press gained greater access to documents and activities of the government. With the Watergate scandal, investigative reporting would “suddenly gain celebrity and sex appeal” in such a way that it redefined the image of the journalistic profession

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<sup>28</sup> All U.S. states, the District of Columbia and the federal government have open meeting laws, often referred to as “sunshine laws”, guaranteeing that the public and the media can attend the meetings (The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, n.d.).

(Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 140). As Altschull (1990) puts it: “Never before the Watergate era was it possible for the journalist to claim credit for bringing down a corrupt person who had reached the highest position in the country, the presidency” (p. 263).

When attempting to define investigative reporting, many academics emphasize that it is a method of systematic and independent investigation, initiated by the press itself. The result of the investigation is often information of great public interest that would not have been revealed without the investigation (Hanson, 2009, p. 14). Moreover, many state that investigative reporting is based on the same principles as all quality journalism, except that it is *more of everything*. According to Ytreberg (2012), good investigative reporting exceeds quality reporting in the “range of ideas, research, observation, sources, advanced search, analysis, organization and quality assurance” (p. 142). Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) describe the watchdog role like this:

For all that it is similar to all other journalism, it requires special skills, a special temperament, a special hunger. It also requires a serious commitment of resources, a desire to cover serious concerns, and a press independent of any interests except that of the ultimate consumer of the news. (p. 158)

To Ettema and Glasser (2006), the main difference between daily reporting and investigative reporting lies in the fact that the latter more often reports on moral, legal and social transgressions, and accuses powerful people and groups of wrongdoing. Hence, it is essential that the stories are as accurate as possible. While daily reporters strive for *accuracy*, investigative reporters thus have to strive for *veracity* (p. 129). As reporter Loretta Tofani explains:

People say a lot of things, often a lot of false things, but you try to arrive at as much truth as you can in the space of a day. [...] [Y]ou test what people are saying against things like court documents, against what people saw and what people heard. It’s a much more careful and painstaking process. You’re trying to find out what is true. (as cited in Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 11)

Due to the challenging nature of investigative reporting, it requires more time and resources than daily quality reporting. As a result, it should be freed from deadlines and other “debilitating constraints” of daily journalism (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 10).

Another central element for Ettema and Glasser (1998) is that the essential energy of investigative reporting, like the energy of the muckraking, can be characterized as “righteous indignation” (p. 61). At the same time, journalists are supposed to pursue objectivity, which means they cannot make a direct claim of wrongdoing. Hence, the solution has become to offer information about wrongdoing while leaving it to the public to react. A main characteristic of investigative reporting can thus be said to be the expectation of the public to make a judgement about its disclosures, with investigative reporters often issuing “a compelling call for public moral indignation” (p. 3). This, Sjøvaag (2010) states, makes the public an active part of the social contract of the press. Citizens have the *right* to be informed and at the same time are *obliged* to react politically to this information when this is democratically warranted (p. 881). The social contract is thus “ultimately upheld by the citizen’s obligation to speak up against legislative errors, misuse of power and social, moral and legal unfairness” (p. 880). For the public to react, reporters and audience need to operate on the same moral ground, sharing an appreciation of what is considered right and wrong in society (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 7). Moreover, it is essential that the information provided is as close to the truth as possible so that the citizens do not respond to false premises. Ideally, Ettema and Glasser (1998) state, investigative reporting, can thus be described as “the fiercest of indignation fused with the hardest of fact” (p. 10).

### **2.2.3 Accountability journalism**

Combining social contract theory and the theory of investigative reporting creates the notion of accountability journalism. Put simply, journalists must hold the powerful accountable, and are themselves accountable to the fulfilment of their social mission. According to McQuail (2003), to be accountable for one’s activities is to both explicate the reasons for them and supply normative grounds whereby they may be

justified. Thus, normative components of interaction always “center upon the relations between the rights and obligations expected of the participants in a range of interactive contexts” (p. 15). In their 2009 report, Downie and Schudson puts an equal mark between watchdog and accountability reporting, as both aim to “foil the arrogance of power and self-dealing rather than to advance ideology or policies” (p. 89). By definition, they claim, accountability journalism can bring new information to light and grow into society-changing work (p. 89).

Just as it is the journalist's job to hold those in power accountable, it is the public's right to hold journalists accountable – requiring quality, relevance and reliability of the information labeled “journalism” (Eide, 2011, p. 119). Accountability journalism can thus be described as responsible community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful (Eide, 2011, p. 41). If the news media fail to live up to their contractual obligations, or fail to keep order in their own house, the state and public can – as previously mentioned – issue sanctions. The state can, for instance, revoke licenses and public funding, or introduce new legislation, while citizens can “render a news provider illegitimate or invalid as agenda setter” through getting their news elsewhere (Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 883).

What the state can do in principle and in practice, however, are two different things. Within a society founded on liberal-democratic ideals, like the U.S., the press often holds a powerful position, since liberal principles are largely negative rights – like the freedom *from* the regulation of markets, freedom *from* restrictions on expression, and freedom *from* religious belief (Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 877). To several critics, accountability is a more acceptable code word for control. Especially when imposed by the government, accountability is associated with restrictions on the freedom of expression (McQuail, 2003, p. 16). In a society founded on liberal-democratic ideals, one of the few acceptable government regulations thus is to limit any tendencies to monopoly, as monopolies can lead to “the reduction of active voices in the public sphere” (Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 877).

Because of the limited sanctioning options, journalists are expected to keep a certain type of order “in their own house” through collegial organizational procedures and

guidelines (Grimen, 2008b, p. 31). One example of such guidelines is the Code of Ethics adopted by the Society of Professional Journalists (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 9). It states that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy, where ethical journalism “strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). The four principles that are encouraged to be used “by all people in all media” are 1) seek truth and report it, 2) minimize harm, 3) act independently, and 4) be accountable and transparent (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). To be accountable, reporters need to take responsibility for their work and explain their decisions to the public, the Code of Ethics state. In more detail, this means that journalists need to:

- Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences, and encourage the public to dialogue about journalistic practices, coverage and news content.
- Respond quickly to questions about accuracy, clarity and fairness.
- Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently.
- Expose unethical conduct in journalism.
- Abide by the same high standards as expected of others. (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014)

In other words, even though autonomous, journalism should not be a powerful elite elevated from the public it serves. Hence, through its dialogue with citizens, and modesty towards its own weaknesses, the press can ideally be accountable without state interference.

### **Accountability journalism as “especially threatened”**

The journalism crisis is, as described in section 2.1, seen as a great challenge to the journalism profession. According to Downie and Schudson (2009), accountability journalism is especially threatened by “the economic troubles that have diminished so many newspapers” (p. 12):

What is under threat is independent reporting that provides information, investigation, analysis, and community knowledge, particularly in the



coverage of local affairs. Reporting the news means telling citizens what they would not otherwise know. (p. 8)

Since it is often capital- and labor-intensive, time-consuming and accusatory of character, investigative reporting has mainly been conducted by large and established newsrooms. Today, many argue that the new technology has made it easier for everyone to gather information, investigate the powerful, and provide analysis. Even if all news organizations vanished, information, investigation, analysis, and community knowledge would most likely *not* disappear, according to Downie and Schudson. However, they also claim that large press organizations often have better conditions for accountability reporting:

Something is gained when news reporting, analysis, and investigation are pursued collaboratively by stable organizations that can facilitate regular reporting by experienced journalists, support them with money, logistics, and legal services, and present their work to a large public. Institutional authority or weight often guarantees that the work of newsrooms won't easily be ignored. (p. 11)

In addition to experienced reporters, newsrooms are seen to have the financial and organizational strength to pursue controversial issues in the courts if necessary (Hjeltnes & Warmedal, 2012, p. 36). When facing powerful opponents, stability, experience, expertise, time, money and authority are necessary. Hence, even though "everybody" can become an investigative journalist, it is more likely, according to Downie and Schudson (2009), that bigger organizations can provide the necessary structure to conduct influential investigative reporting.

In addition to their institutional authority and resources, some academics worry that the weakening of newspapers could mean that journalism's culture for investigative reporting will deteriorate. Alex Jones (2009), for instance, estimates that 85 percent of the professionally reported accountability news comes from newspapers. However, within newspapers, the kind of political news traditionally deemed "necessary for democratic life" only averages around 15 percent of the content, Jones claims (p. 14). The rest of the newspaper consists of advertising and "crowd-pleasing soft news",

like features, entertainment, lifestyle, sports, health and other subjects (pp. 14-15). The journalism crisis can therefore be seen as a threat to the already small amount of quality reporting that traditionally has been produced within the market model.<sup>29</sup>

### **Accountability journalism as an ideology builder**

Because of its position as “journalism of the highest order”, accountability reporting has great potential in the building of a journalistic ideology. According to Eide (1992), the advantage journalists has as ideology producers is that only a small amount of good journalism is needed for it to be effective (p. 31). Even though relatively rare, investigative reporting thus can be described as one of the cornerstones of the journalistic belief system. Ettema and Glasser (1998) do for instance state that it “may be true that investigative reporting, despite flashes of high visibility, has appeared relatively infrequently on America’s front pages” (p. 64). Yet an adversarial attitude has deep roots in American journalism (p. 64).

Following from the above, it is of great importance for the journalism profession to have prominent examples of quality reporting to refer to when its legitimacy is questioned. Stories of this sort can be named “signal stories” (G. R. Olsen, 2012). One example is the *Boston Globe* revealing child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church in 2002. When, in 2016, the movie *Spotlight*, retelling how the reporting was conducted, won the Oscar for best picture, one of the reporters noted after the ceremony: "It's a chance to remind people of the importance of investigative journalism [that is] increasingly becoming an endangered species” (Usborne, 2016).

According to Raaum (1999), the main reason why investigative reporting has a central role in the ideology building of journalism is that as it portrays journalism as an oppositional force to the three formal branches of state power<sup>30</sup> (p. 66). The perception of journalism as a “watchdog” or a “fourth estate” places the press “firmly within the political structure – as intermediary between citizen and state” (Sjøvaag,

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<sup>29</sup> According to Benson (2016), content analysis studies have consistently shown that democracies with strong legal press protection for newspapers, and newspapers that receive content-neutral subsidies, offer more in-depth news than purely commercial newspapers (p. 34).

<sup>30</sup> The executive, the legislative and the judicial.

2010, p. 880). Hence, the ideology of investigative reporting gives journalists a unique role and considerable authority.

Giving the journalism profession a unique position, the role of accountability reporting is also central in the boundary work of journalism.<sup>31</sup> Seeing accountability reporting as the core of journalism, many warn that there is a danger of journalism vanishing inside the larger world of communications if accountability reporting disappears (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 3). Edward Wasserman, dean at UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, asks:

Just how little of that raging flood of online information is any good? The digital public square draws the enthusiasm and energies of legions of content creators. But they don't have the training or analytical skills to verify and understand the realities they're reporting, and to put them into the broad and meaningful context that real news demands. (n.d.)

As a part of the boundary work, the *definition* of accountability reporting also becomes important. Due to its high symbolic value, many warn that there is a risk that newsrooms call low-quality reporting “investigative reporting”. After the Watergate scandal, followed by the success of *60 Minutes*, investigative journalism came to be seen as a resource for both the public good and for commercial ratings (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 150). However, in a 1997 study of prime-time news magazines, fewer than one in ten stories were concerned with such topics as education, economics, foreign affairs, the military, national security, politics or social welfare – all “areas where most public money is spent” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 151). Instead, stories like “dangerous doors” and “inside your washing machine” – reporting on the risks of opening and closing doors and bacteria on linens – were presented as investigative reporting. Investigative reporting had in other words turned into a form of entertainment (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 151). This strategy is however both dangerous and not working, Kovach & Rosenstiel (2007) warn:

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<sup>31</sup> Several empirical studies show that investigative ideals have become stronger during the last two decades (Hovden, 2016; Willnat & Weaver, 2014).

When you turn your news into entertainment, you are playing to the strengths of other media rather than your own. [...] The value and allure of news is that it is different. It is based on relevance. The strategy of infotainment, though it may attract an audience in the short run and make be cheap to produce, will build a shallow audience because it is built on form, not substance. (p. 195)

In the “turf war” between journalism and other occupations (see section 2.1), it has thus become more important to define what journalism is or should be – and what it is not.

In line with Freidson (2007), several journalism academics see the ideology-building of journalism as an effective and necessary strategy to gain or keep control over work. Sjøvaag (2010) puts it like this:

[Ideology] is more than a journalistic mythos. Rather, it is a vital and natural part of the democratic fabric, which helps sustain not only the press and the journalistic profession but in turn also the citizenry and the state. For it is through this mythology that journalism can fulfil its obligations. (p. 886)

Many also see the building of an ideology *especially important* to the journalism profession because it lacks the social authority of classic professions (Raaum, 1999, p. 9). Though, as discussed in section 2.1.3, there is a more critical tradition that sees the discursive strategies of professions as a way to gain power at the expense of others. When it comes to the ideology-building role of accountability reporting, many find the “fourth estate” and “watchdog” images as being of more damage than of advantage to society. Petersson (1996), for instance, claims that the journalism ideology divides society into three groups: sources, audiences and newsrooms. The worst that can happen, according to this ideology, is that the innocent people are left alone with those in power. Politicians must therefore not intervene directly with citizens but communicate through journalists. And, through investigation, journalists are able to disclose realities hidden by those in power – thus becoming heroes. This mix of elitism and populism, Petersson claims, elevates journalists to the position of deciding what information citizens should have access to – while the sources and the audience have little or no impact. Since perceived as heroes, the powerful role of

journalists is assumed unproblematic, and not challenged. Petersson's arguments do in other words hold elements of the communitarian and the Foucauldian critique (see section 2.1.3).

Another strong critic of what he calls "the normative twentieth-century views of what journalism ought to be" is Picard (2015, p. 9). According to him, it is of great importance to remember that the dominant conceptualization of journalism's role was asserted by journalists – not given by society. Journalists used their near-monopolies over publishing platforms to define the functions of journalism in society, he states, and democratic society accepted the claims because they proved "somewhat functional" (p. 5). According to Picard, speaking truth to power "presumes that journalists know what is true, that power listens, and that journalists don't have power and aren't part of the power system" (p. 5). These assumptions, he concludes, are "highly debatable" (p. 5).

#### **2.2.4 Storytelling with a purpose**

Before reaching a conclusion on what quality journalism can be said to be, it is important to point out that the journalism profession's perception of quality includes more than democratic ideals. An essential part of the journalistic mission is efficient communication; in other words, journalists must make the significant interesting and relevant. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), for instance, define journalism as "storytelling with a purpose", where the purpose is to provide people with the information they need to understand the world (p. 189). The first challenge is thus to find "the information that people need to live their lives". The second is to make this information "meaningful, relevant and engaging" (p. 189). Hence, an important part of the journalistic task is to explain complicated events, issues, and processes in clear language to a broad public, and provide information in such a way that people will be inclined to listen (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 10; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 189). This requires knowledge of the reported issue, knowledge of society in general, and communication expertise. According to reporters interviewed by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), conventional journalistic storytelling shares many of the same weaknesses:

- Character is missing. Hence, sources become templates, not real people.
- Time is frozen so that everything happened yesterday or this evening.
- Information is designed for a single audience, not multiple ones.
- The news is presented as a conversation of insiders.
- Stories do not illuminate a greater meaning.
- There is little attempt to globalize the local or localize the global.
- Storytelling is predictable and formulaic.
- The internet is used as a new place for old material rather than as a distinct technology. (p. 196)

To make a story meaningful, relevant and engaging, reporters should in other words strive to include character, a wide timeline, information for multiple audiences, etc.

### **2.2.5 “Quality journalism” – a definition**

From the above, the term “quality journalism” – when defined according to the current “core” of journalism ideology – seems to resemble reporting often labeled accountability journalism/social responsibility journalism/public service reporting/public affairs journalism. In other words, responsible community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful. In addition, journalistic form is of great importance. Being storytelling with a purpose, it is the journalist’s job to make the information needed to understand the world meaningful, relevant and engaging. Hence, a definition of quality journalism based upon the dominant professional logic of the journalistic field can be *responsible and engaging community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful*. Following from this, some of the most important aspects of quality journalism can be said to be:

- That it is democratic relevant, often concerning topics where most public money is spent. Examples of such topics are education, economics, foreign affairs, the military, national security, politics and social welfare.
- That journalists are not turned into a powerful elite elevated above the public they serve. The press needs to have a dialogue with citizens, and be modest towards its own weaknesses.

- That the information and worldview presented is as close to the truth as possible. Hence, the information needs to be fact-based, critical, impartial and proportional.
- That it holds those in power accountable, and thus attempts to uncover information concealed by powerful people or groups.
- That it strives to be meaningful, relevant and engaging, through providing analysis and other elements of good storytelling.

It is important to remember that the ideology forming the definition of quality above has two purposes: First, it serves as a collection of values, strategies and formal codes characterizing professional journalism. Second, as the ideological claim of socially responsible journalism seems to be accepted by society at large, it can also be an effective tool for legitimating journalism's privileged position in society – and thus a tool for strengthening journalism's jurisdiction over news.

### **2.2.6 Attempts to save quality reporting**

As the publishing of “quality journalism” as defined above has a central role in the justification and legitimation of the profession, several journalists and academics have tried to find ways to increase the production of quality reporting. The founding of the Committee of Concerned Journalists in 1997 is one of the better-known efforts (Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute, n.d.). Consisting of journalists, publishers, media owners, academics and citizens “worried about the future of the profession”, the committee's work culminated in the book *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect* (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007) – cited frequently in this study. Due to its strongly normative character, the work of the Committee was soon named “the journalism ethical reform movement” (Macdonald, 2006, p. 754). However, according to several critics, the movement was so “overly idealistic” that it failed to acknowledge certain structural factors at the root of the journalism crisis. Hence, they claimed, “the onus of better journalism” ultimately was placed upon “individual journalists adopting more rigid standards” (Macdonald, 2006, p. 754). As put by Gans (2003), one of the characteristics of the reform movement is that it sees ideals as weapons “to fight the commercial and other forces

threatening the profession” (p.36). However, as he dryly comments, “whether any ideal has sufficient fire power to overcome a powerful reality is doubtful“ (p. 36).

Initiatives such as the reform movement – or examples of journalistic “self-study” as Gans (2003) labels it – are seen as one in many ways which journalist’s react to “their troubles” (p. 36). Another is the public, or civic, journalism movement. Instead of seeking rededication to professional ideals, Gans argues, it tries to strengthen journalistic commitment to political education and democracy. Starting in the 1980s, it has grown into a “multifaceted set of projects to advance local, usually small city, democracy” (p. 36). As discussed in section 2.1.3, public journalism claims that everybody can be news gatherers due to the new technology. Freelancers, university faculty members, students, and citizens armed with smart phones can now supply the stream of news (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 3), and different versions of user-generated content, like grassroots journalism, citizen journalism, Wiki journalism and proam journalism<sup>32</sup> are seen as supplements to traditional journalism (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 40; Eide, 2014, p. 687). However, as with the ethical reform movement, several critics find the public journalism movement much too idealistic. According to Eide (2010), journalists cannot confine themselves to “acting as a careful supervisor in the user-generated traffic” (p. 21). Bolder ambitions are required to be able to confront and handle increasingly professional and media-competent sources. “To consider anybody publishing on the web a journalist is as mindless as considering anyone who asks ‘How are you today?’ a doctor”, he states, before continuing: “One day you might need a real doctor. And even in a media-savvy world, you might one day need a proper journalist” (p. 21). Moreover, relying upon Schudson’s work (2005), Eide argues that democracies need an unlovable press. Since journalism has to “shake and stir its audience as well as its sources”, it cannot be totally absorbed in the business of pleasing (p. 19).

Other suggested solutions to the journalism crisis are less focused on ideals, and more focused on structural factors. For instance, in their much cited 2009 report, Downie

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<sup>32</sup> Proam journalism is not just professionals or just citizen journalists, but professionals and amateurs working together over the Internet (Downie & Schudson, 2009, p. 40).



and Schudson recommend six ways to better support independent, original and credible news reporting (p. 77). First, it should be easier for independent newsrooms to be created as, or converted into, nonprofits – regardless of their mix of financial support (p. 22).<sup>33</sup> Second, foundations, other philanthropists, private interests, and individual citizens should “significantly increase their voluntary support for independent news reporting” (p. 76). Third, public radio and television should be substantially reoriented towards accountability reporting (p. 84). Fourth, and of particular interest of this study, universities should devote more of their resources to support news reporting, just as they support student and faculty work in other fields (pp. 76-77). Fifth, a national fund for local news should be created with money from the Federal Communications Commission (p. 91). Sixth, public information collected by federal, state and local governments should be made more accessible (p. 94).

Of the six recommendations, the fifth – creating a national fund based on money from a federal commission – was especially highly criticized as soon as the report was published. As previously mentioned, the liberal news system in the U.S. has a strong tradition of separating the state and the press. It did not even help much that the authors of the report argued that they did *not* recommend “a government bailout of newspapers”, nor any of the various direct subsidies given by governments in European countries (p. 72). Moreover, indirect support and “appropriate safeguards” directed at the government, was advocated (p. 94). Hence, in spite of the authors’ efforts to make the recommendation more acceptable, it was characterized as “a tough sell politically” and “a flawed concept” (Edmonds, 2009). Other critiques were skeptical of the report’s “perception of reality”, as the problems of the press were presented as the problems of American society. Just as society has taken collective responsibility for other public needs, like education, health care and scientific advancement, it must now take responsibility for supporting independent news reporting, the report claims (Downie & Schudson, 2009, pp. 75-76). As a result, the report was characterized as “a tin cup” for an industry that “has to rethink what it is

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<sup>33</sup> U.S. newspapers can become nonprofits for educational purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code – similar to charities and educational and cultural nonprofits. This is seen as a great advantage, as all philanthropic contributions are tax-deductible.

and what it teaches” (Rosenblum, 2009). David Carr of the *New York Times* summarized the report’s recommendations like this:

So there you have it. All we have to do is get the government to open the kimono on databases, foundations to rethink their priorities, universities to become newsrooms, rewrite the federal tax code, get public broadcasting overlords to think local, and commercial broadcasters to kick in money for the public good, and we will have a dependable news infrastructure for a new, more complicated age. If only it were so simple. (2009)

Finding a way to save quality journalism does in other words seems to be a challenging task.

## 2.3 Professional knowledge and training

As mentioned in the introduction, the four nonprofit centers of this study are all part of a university curriculum. According to Abbott (1988), this gives them a strong potential for professionalization: First, they are part of educating the next generation of practitioners; second, they can contribute to the knowledge advancement of journalism; and third, they can help legitimate the work of the profession (pp. 195-196). To be able to discuss the centers’ potential as professional platforms, it is thus necessary to debate their role as educators. Moreover, to be able to debate the centers’ role as educators, a theoretical framework considering professional knowledge and professional training is required. Hence, various views upon knowledge types and teaching methods will be discussed in the following – with special emphasis upon the traditional dichotomies theory/practice and classroom teaching/real world learning. In addition, some of the recent positions in the debate over what journalism education should be are presented, including the so called “teaching hospital model”. The overall aim of the section is discussing which knowledge types and training methods are seen as better suited for strengthening the journalism profession’s jurisdiction over news. What perception of quality the students are taught and how they are instructed in order to learn how to produce quality content are thus central aspects. Moreover, which knowledge base is the most effective when legitimating the work of the profession, and which knowledge type is best suited when the profession needs to

adapt to change and external pressure, are also important questions. The answers to these questions will be applied when discussing the knowledge base and teaching methods of the centers in Chapter 7.

### **2.3.1 Knowledge types and knowledge bases**

Within the theory of professions, there is often a distinction made between theoretical knowledge (“knowing that”) and practical knowledge (“knowing how”). According to Freidson (2007), formal knowledge/theoretical knowledge is composed of bodies of information and ideas organized by theories and abstract concepts. In addition, most formal knowledge is divided among specialized disciplines and practiced by different groups of specialized workers. Practical knowledge/working knowledge, on the other hand, is addressed exclusively to accomplishing work. It is segmented into bodies of practical knowledge and skill, both conscious and tacit, and is only shared by those who share the same work (pp. 31-34).

Most academics within the theory of professions believe that an ideal typical professional knowledge base relies on both theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2007; Parsons & Platt, 1973). Abstractions and theoretical knowledge, for instance, (as discussed above) are perceived effective when legitimating the work of a profession – as theory can demonstrate the “rigor, the clarity and the scientifically logical character of professional work” (Abbott, 1988, p. 54). In addition, theoretical knowledge is seen essential for professions to be able to conduct research and instruction (Abbott, 1988, pp. 56-57). Practical knowledge, on the other hand, is seen as crucial to the fulfillment of a profession’s practical tasks – as it consists of information about the tasks to be performed, and the skills to be employed when performing them (Freidson, 2007, p. 31). A surgeon for instance must know how to perform a certain operation, while an engineer must know how to build a bridge (Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 233; Susskind & Susskind, 2015, p. 22).

Although agreeing that a mix is necessary, there has however long existed a disagreement about which of the two knowledge types is most important, how they relate to each other, and how they can be defined. According to Grimen (2008a),

there are two classical models of how to understand the relationship between practical and theoretical knowledge. The first, oldest and most dominant, considers practical knowledge as application of theory – which makes theoretical knowledge primary (a theoretical-oriented knowledge view). The second model sees theoretical knowledge as an offspring/articulation of practical knowledge. Hence, practical knowledge becomes primary (a practice-oriented knowledge view) (pp. 74-75).

One of the academics viewing practical knowledge as primary is Patricia Benner.<sup>34</sup> Strongly influenced by Thomas Kuhn and Michael Polanyi, she emphasizes that professionals have many skills (knowing how) that are learned without theoretical knowledge (knowing that) (1984, pp. 2-3). Moreover, since it is not always possible to theoretically account for our “know-how” for many common activities – such as riding a bicycle or swimming – some practical knowledge may elude scientific formulations of “knowing that”, she claims. In addition, “know-how” that may challenge or extend current theory can be developed ahead of scientific formulations. Therefore, she claims, knowledge development in an applied discipline “consists of extending practical knowledge (know-how) through theory-based scientific investigations and through the charting of the existent ‘know-how’ developed through clinical experience in the practice of that discipline” (1984, p. 3).

Like Benner, many academics with a practice-oriented knowledge view emphasize the dimension of “tacit knowledge”. According to Freidson (2007), tacit knowledge is practical knowledge and skill that is neither verbalized nor codified (pp. 31-34). Michael Polanyi, one of the first users of the term, is best known for the formulation “we can know more than we can tell” (1967, p. 4). All knowledge, according to him, is based on a subjective dimension. Hence, in all areas where experience is central, theoretical knowledge is not sufficient. It is not possible, he claims, to learn a new language, drive a car or play the piano through reading a book – since a bodily experience is necessary (1967, pp. 18-19).

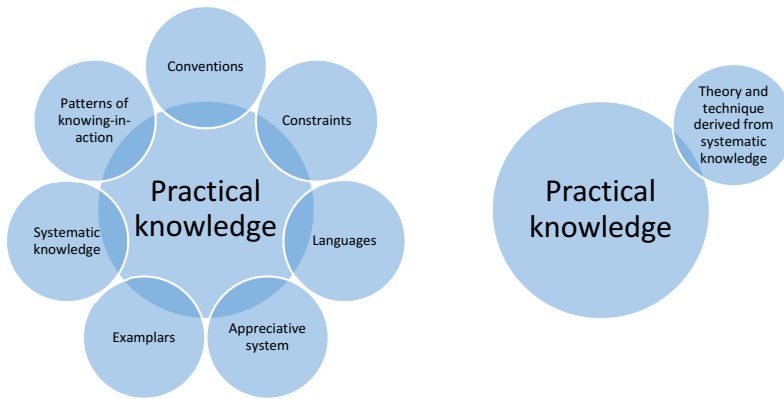
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<sup>34</sup> Although holding a practice-oriented knowledge view, it is important to note that Benner (1984) also emphasize the value of theoretical/codified knowledge. She does for instance state that “theory is a powerful tool for explaining and predicting” (p. 2).

In contrast to practice-oriented academics, academics with a theoretical-oriented knowledge view place theoretical knowledge above practical knowledge. Moreover, many claim that occupations not based upon a solid fundament of formal knowledge cannot be named professions at all (see section 2.1.1). Glazer (1974), for example, states that practitioners solving well-formed instrumental problems by applying theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge belong to the “major professions”. The best examples of such scientific, “learned” professions are medicine, law and engineering (p. 346). In comparison, the knowledge base of “minor professions” – like nursing, social work, planning, and psychology – is seen as relatively diffuse, unstable, and insecure. Compared to the major professions, minor professions “cannot boast a strong epistemological grounding”, he claims (p. 346).

Not surprisingly, there has long been a dispute between theoretical-oriented and practice-oriented academics. Those with a strong theoretical orientation have for instance been accused of reducing practical knowledge to the application of theory, while in reality it is far more complex. Schön (1988) for example describes the learning of a practice as being “initiated into the traditions of a community of practitioners and the practice world they inhabit, [learning] their conventions, constraints, languages, and appreciative systems, their repertoire of exemplars, systematic knowledge, and patterns of knowing-in-action” (pp. 36-37). In contrast to the theoretical oriented knowledge view, seeing practice as an application of theory alone, Schön thus sees practical knowledge as relying upon *seven* different knowledge elements (see Figure 1). Eraut (2004) points towards the same complexity, stating that practical knowledge consists of both codified, academic knowledge (theory), codified knowledge which is not academic, cultural knowledge that has not been codified, and personal knowledge (like everyday knowledge and various skills) (p. 202).

Figure 1. A complex, practice-oriented knowledge view (left) versus a theoretical-oriented knowledge view (right).



Academics with a strong practical orientation, sometimes named “fluency theorists”, have been accused of ignoring the value of codified/theoretical knowledge. According to critics, these theorists suggest that all knowledge possessed by expert practitioners is embodied, tacit and exercised in a fluent way without passing through cognition at all. As a result, all knowledge becomes more-or-less mystified know-how – which puts practitioners in a powerful position (M. Young & Muller, 2014). Within journalism, the ability to find good journalistic stories, for instance, has been referred to as “having a nose for news” or “the right spinal cord reflex” (Schultz, 2007, p. 198; Østlyngen & Øvrebø, 1999, p. 26). As an answer to the critique, many academics with an practice-oriented knowledge view, like Schön, have attempted to analyze and codify practical skills – in addition to encouraging practitioners to reflect upon their own practice (Schön, 1988, 1995).<sup>35</sup> Others claim that the reference to different kinds of “intuition” can be useful “as long as we remember that it is ‘wisdom based on experience’”, and that the intuition “can be gained through practice and socialization, including the acquisition of interactional expertise” (Collins, 2010, pp. 148-149). All tacit knowledge can in other words be articulated, but not always through language. Sometimes it is both necessary and more effective to *show* how

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<sup>35</sup> According to some scholars, for instance M. Young and Muller (2014), Schön is one of the “fluency theorist” overemphasizing individual knowledge and experience. However, his emphasis on reflection and codification causes me to disagree to this view. Instead, I see him as part of the later-described “midway position”.

things are done. There are, in other words, different ways of teaching different kinds of knowledge (Grimen, 2008a, pp. 78-82).

In addition to being ignorant about the value of theory, academics with a strong practice-orientation have also been accused of watering down the term “professional”. To many academics, application of formal/scientific knowledge is one of the main elements separating professions from other occupations like cooks, plumbers, carpenters and electricians: While the knowledge base of occupations has been considered practical, the knowledge base of professions has been considered scientific (Grimen, 2008a, p. 71). By overly emphasizing the practical side of professional knowledge, many warn that the distinction between occupations and professions will vanish.

Although the dichotomy theory/practice still exists, most of today’s academics within the theory of professions hold a “midway position” between the two extremes described above. Moreover, most see professional knowledge as a complex phenomenon. Hence, it cannot be described by the dichotomy theory/practice alone (Heggen, Smeby, & Vågan, 2015, p. 71). As suggested by Grimen (2008a), there is no clear and fundamental distinction between knowledge types, but a continuum. Hence, there is not only one kind of relationship between theory and practice, but several – and the practical side of professions is characterized by the complicated interaction between them (p. 71).

Due to the complexity of professional knowledge, Grimen (2008a) recommends the use of three epistemic dimensions when charting the knowledge base of professions: homogeneity/heterogeneity, integration/fragmentation, and practical/theoretical synthesis. First, a knowledge base is homogeneous if all its elements originate from a single scientific discipline or a single field of knowledge, such as physics, chemistry or biology; It is heterogeneous if it is composed of elements from different scientific disciplines or fields of knowledge (p. 72). Second, a knowledge base is heavily integrated if all its parts are logically connected in a system; it is highly fragmented if it consists of few or no logical connections. Normally, a knowledge base composed of heterogeneous elements has weak integration. However, knowledge can also be

weakly integrated if it consists of knowledge from one field. This will typically be the case with the social sciences, Grimen claims, where various research traditions are often in conflict and there are no overarching theories creating unity in the field (p. 72). Third, the professional knowledge base has a theoretical synthesis if extensive theory integrates the various elements of knowledge; if claims from the professional practice integrate the knowledge elements, the synthesis is however practical (p. 72).

Using his own charting tool, Grimen concludes that the knowledge base of most professions is both heterogeneous and fragmented. In addition, the different elements are often integrated through a practical, and not a theoretical, synthesis. Moreover, the practical aim of most professions makes their theoretical knowledge base further fragmented, as they focus on fulfilling their practical task rather than seeking theoretical connections (pp. 72-73). Instead of pursuing knowledge for its own sake, professions are, according to Grimen, dependent upon the theoretical knowledge to be *functional*. To most professions, theoretical knowledge is thus seen as a tool enabling practitioners to fulfill their professional task. As put by Parsons and Platt (1973), professional competence is “not how much what you know initially, but how competent you are in coming to know what you need to know and in going about informing yourself” (p. 228). Often, this means applying knowledge from a variety of academic disciplines. The so-called science of medicine, they claim, is not a discipline but a mobilization of relevant knowledge from a number of disciplines (p. 228).

Because of the differing aims and characteristics of practical and theoretical knowledge, many academics holding a “midway position” argue that it is important that professions have a somewhat distant relationship to theory. First, no theory can be put completely into practice. Second, all theories should not be put into practice (Benner, 1984; Grimen, 2008a; Heggen, 2014; Schön, 1988). Moreover, as the practice dimension of professions has a normative side, practical knowledge is not just about the application of knowledge but also includes moral, political and legal judgment. Hence, practical knowledge can to only a limited extent be governed by rules (Grimen, 2008a, p. 73).



In Chapter 7, the above theory will be applied on the ideal knowledge base of the interviewees: Can it be said to be fragmented and heterogeneous, or integrated and homogenous? Moreover, how can the characteristics of the knowledge base influence the debate upon whether journalism can be said to be a profession or not? If fragmented and heterogeneous, it can for instance reinforce the impression of journalism as lacking formal knowledge.

### **2.3.2 Professional training**

As already established, universities are seen as essential when building a profession, since “professions rest on knowledge and universities are the seat of knowledge in modern societies” (Abbott, 1988, p. 195). During the twentieth century, professional schools emerged as the dominant form of professional training in the United States (Freidson, 2007, p. 97). Today, a distinguished school of professional training with no university connections scarcely exists. According to Parsons and Platt (1973), the main reason is that the post-industrial society has become dependent on theoretical knowledge (p. 227). Thus, practitioner-controlled forms of education have been overshadowed. Today, university diplomas, “rather than the practitioner’s say-so”, certify professional competence and provides qualification for professional status and practice (Burrage, 1993, pp. 142-143).

University control of professional training did not however arise without conflict. According to Burrage (1993), the control of professional education had to be “prised” from the practitioner’s grasp. Even after universities took control, practitioners often launched counter-attacks to retrieve some element of practice-based professional education (p. 143). Many claim that the battle between practitioners and universities, and thus the debate between theoretical and practical knowledge, is still highly relevant within much professional education. According to Reese (1999) an “academic-professional tension” can be found for instance in schools of law, medicine, business, theology, architecture – “and certainly journalism” (p. 74).

Before society became dependent on theoretical knowledge, and universities took control of professional training, most recruits to the crafts were trained on the job. Having apprentice status, and thus a reduced salary, the recruits learned their craft

working on the job with a fully-fledged member of the trade serving as a teacher and supervisor. Thus, most trades were learned as a practical, job-related enterprise. All working knowledge and tacit skills required were learned as the work was conducted (Freidson, 2007, p. 89). Today several crafts are still taught on the job, while most professional education is located at universities. According to Freidson (2007), apprenticeships have several negative aspects for crafts aiming to be professions:

- What can be learned is to some degree random, since learning is dependent upon what work happens to be performed during the course of training.
- The particular craft workers who engage in training and supervising novices may differ in their proficiency, their effectiveness as instructors, and their conscientiousness.
- Since training takes place in practical circumstances, a continuous performance of productive work is required. Thus, there may be no opportunity to engage in discursive instruction that conveys abstract concepts and formal theories.
- There is a very real danger that on-the-job-training will be perfunctory and exploitative, and its substance sacrificed in favor of gaining the benefit of cheap apprentice labor.
- Since both jobs and work-sites vary, as well as the capacity and motivation of those who provide the training, it is difficult to standardize training. It is, in other words, hard to know whether all who have successfully completed their training are roughly equal in competence. (p. 89)

In comparison, Freidson claims, professional training has fewer difficulties as it is not merely practical in substance. One of the strongest benefits of professional training, he argues, is that theory and first principles are taught formally in school, where students and teachers are insulated from the immediate practical demands of everyday work. The teaching of theory and abstract concepts gives the students a general and applicable knowledge base, which can be perceived as superior to gaining practice from a selection of particular work settings (2007, p. 95). In addition, Freidson ascribes professional education the following advantages:

- As the academic or liberal studies of ideas, theories and works are treasured by the cultural elite, the university connection heightens the social status of professionals.
- Due to the emphasis on theoretical knowledge, the claim to be more than “narrow technical specialists” is given a foundation.
- Carried out by faculties in formally organized institutions, professional training can plausibly claim standardization and reliability for the credentials it produces.
- Ideally, the faculties can devote themselves to systematizing, refining and expanding the body of knowledge and skill over which the profession claims jurisdiction – in addition to teaching. Through innovating and experimenting, new knowledge and techniques can be developed.
- Schooling makes it more likely that students are socialized into a distinct occupational culture and community (pp. 96-101).

From the above, it might seem that Freidson holds a strongly theoretical-oriented knowledge view. When describing the content of the ideal-typical professional training, he does however argue that it is “not merely the narrow depth of a technician, or the shallow breath of a generalist, but rather a wedding of the two in a unique marriage” (p. 121).<sup>36</sup> To Freidson, what makes universities an ideal arena for professional training is the prospect of autonomy. Seeing the logic of professions as a counterweight to the logic of markets and bureaucracies (see section 2.1), professional knowledge can be described as “a force of resistance to the encroachment of money and bureaucracy in society” (Waisbord, 2013, p. 82). To continue to be a counterweight, however, professional knowledge does need to be shielded. From this perspective, universities make better learning arenas than the practice field, as the training is placed outside the labor market and within a formal training institution. In addition, Freidson argues, the very organization of academic disciplines encourages critical thought rather than acceptance of received ideas and methods and practical compromises. A practitioner, he states, would not be able to

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<sup>36</sup> The same point is made by Parsons and Platt (1973), stating that applied professionals tend to define their roles and responsibilities too narrowly, while academic specialists tend to define theirs too abstractly – and hence irrelevantly (p. 229).

maintain this critical distance (p. 123). An independent faculty, with time and resources to systematize, refine and expand the body of knowledge and skill over which the profession claims jurisdiction, has an “institutionalized capacity to innovate and adapt [which] facilitates a more flexible response to technical and social change than is possible for the crafts” (p. 96). The faculty of the professional school thus has the potential of being one of the major structural sources for sustaining professionalism (p. 96). Following from this, the form of training that the nonprofit centers of this study apply can have a great impact on their potential as professional platforms.

### **Learning by doing**

As with the view upon professional knowledge, the best teaching methods for developing expertise are highly debated. Academics with a practice-oriented view upon professional knowledge warn against what they see as an ongoing theorization of professional education. As Schön (1988) explains:

Because the unique case falls outside the categories of existing theory and technique, the practitioner cannot treat it as an instrumental problem to be solved applying one of the rules in her store of professional knowledge. The case is not “in the book”. If she is to deal with it completely, she must do so by a kind of improvisation, inventing and testing in the situation strategies of her own devising. (p. 5)

The problem with general theories and principles is that it can be problematic to apply them in complex concrete situations. Therefore, classroom teaching alone is seen to have clear limitations in the development of expertise (Benner, 1984; Schön, 1988). As practical knowledge is seen to have a subjective and situational dimension, *experience* is required (Benner, 1984, p. 3). Skills that cannot be codified or described systematically, must be learned through practice – and thus “become part of the eye, ear and hand” (Freidson, 2007, p. 26). Hence, professional training of practitioners must possess an element of “learning by doing”. Instead of application of theory, many academics of the “midway position” thus emphasize that professional schools need to teach students the ability to solve professional, situation-based, real-

world problems. This ability seems to have many labels, among them expertise, practical mastery, know-how, artistry, and capability (Benner, 1984; Heggen, 2014; Schön, 1988). Simplified, this “capability” seems to involve at least three skills: 1) the ability to understand a complex situation – and thus the ability to frame a problem; 2) the ability to apply the right tools to solve the problem;<sup>37</sup> and 3) the ability to improvise if the applied strategies do not work.

The Oxford Dictionary defines an expert as a “person who is very knowledgeable about or skillful in a particular area” (Expert, n.d.). Expertise can thus be referred to as the characteristics, skills, and knowledge that distinguish experts from novices and less experienced people (Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman, 2006, p. 3). Using Dreyfus and Dreyfus’ five-stage model (1980), Benner (1984) describes how students pass through five levels of proficiency: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. A novice normally has a rule-governed behavior that is extremely limited and inflexible, with little understanding of the contextual meaning of the recently learned textbook terms. An advanced beginner, on the other hand, can demonstrate a marginally acceptable performance. Because of their skill level, both novices and advanced beginners can however take in little of the practice situation, as it is “too new, too strange, and besides, they have to concentrate on remembering, the rules they have been taught” (p. 24). Hence, access to codified knowledge is seen important, as formal models can function as a substitute for practical mastery, “just like maps serves the outsider who lacks the first-hand knowledge of a native” (p. 228). In comparison, the three top skill levels involve context-dependent judgement, hence, they can only be obtained in real situations (p. 21). After being on the job in the same or similar situations for two to three years, the practitioner develops competence, then becomes proficient, and finally reaches expertise. In contrast to the novice, the expert does not have to rely on an analytic principle to connect their understanding of the situation to an appropriate action. With an enormous background of experience, the expert has an intuitive grasp of each

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<sup>37</sup> As previously discussed, these tools can be codified academic knowledge, codified knowledge which is not academic, cultural knowledge that has not been codified, and personal knowledge like everyday knowledge and various skills.

situation (practical mastery/know-how/artistry/capability above). Hence, a trained expert typically understands the situation, applies the right tools, or improvises without having to “stop and think” (pp. 20-38). Operating from a deep understanding of the total situation, capturing the description of expert performance can however be hard (pp. 20-38).

### **The ideal of the practicum**

In addition to seeing experience as utterly important when learning a profession, practice-oriented academics also ascribe high importance to *the type* of experience. There is, for instance, little transfer from high-level proficiency in one domain to proficiency in other domains – even when the domains seem, intuitively, very similar (Ericsson et al., 2006, p. 47). An eye surgeon for instance is not an expert in heart surgery. To obtain the right expertise, it is crucial that the practitioner is given the right tasks during training. Moreover, not all types of experiences are seen to heighten professional capability. According to Benner (1984), experience is only gained when “preconceived notions and expectations are challenged, refined, or disconfirmed by the actual situation” (p. 3). Schön (1988) calls the phenomenon reflection-in-action. Usually, he states, our spontaneous knowing-in-action gets us through the day. On occasion, however, it does not, when a familiar routine produces an unexpected result. We may respond to this surprise by “brushing it aside” or by various ways of reflection. While reflection-on-action is reflecting on what went well and what could have gone better after completing a task, reflection-for-action is anticipating how to execute a future task successfully. When reflecting-in-action, the practitioner thinks about how a task can be executed successfully *while performing it*, and processing the moment-to-moment intrinsic feedback necessary to continue carrying it out (pp. 25-33). All forms of reflection, especially reflection-in-action (on-the-spot-experiment), is seen to hold a critical function in gaining new experience/knowledge (p. 28). Additionally, both reflection-on-action and reflection-for-action can help professionals articulate and codify their tacit knowledge, which in turn can help demystify practical knowledge – and make future instruction easier (p. 31).

Like Freidson (2007), Schön (1988) perceives apprenticeships as not ideal, since most offices, factories, firms and clinics are not set up for the demanding task of initiation and education. In the practice field, pressures on performance tend to be high, time is limited and mistakes costly. The best way of learning a practice, Schön argues, is the practicum. The practicum is a constructed context similar to the practice world, where students learn by doing. It is, however, a “virtual world, relatively free of the pressures, distractions and risks of the real one” (p. 37). During the practicum, students learn by undertaking projects that simulate and simplify practice, or they take on real-world projects under close supervision. According to Schön, the practicum is an

intermediate space between the practice world, the “lay” world of ordinary life, and the esoteric world of the academy. It is also a collective world in its own right, with its own mix of materials, tools, languages, and appreciations. It embodies particular ways of seeing, thinking and doing. (p. 37)

In the practicum, work is accomplished through a combination of the students learning by doing, interactions with coaches and fellow students, and a more “diffuse” process of “background learning”. Often the students’ work “falls short of real world work” (p. 37). Most practicums involve groups of students who are often as important to each other as the coach is, and sometimes the students even play the coach’s role. The coaches, or senior practitioners, might teach in the conventional sense from time to time by communicating information, advocating theories and describing examples of practice. Most of the time they are, however, demonstrating, advising, questioning, and criticizing (p. 38).

### **2.3.3 Journalism education**

When it comes to theory versus practice and classroom teaching versus real world learning, the journalism profession has not escaped the debate. Being a profession with a practical aim, anchored in both the printing trade and the world of intellectuals, both the academy and the press has contributed to the forming of the journalistic knowledge base (Folkerts, 2014, p. 228; Reese, 1999, p. 70). Hence, the ongoing discussion over theory and practice, between academic and professional, the role of

teaching and research, and corporate influence over academia is said to be as old as journalism itself (Folkerts, 2014, p. 228; Reese, 1999, p. 70). Today, Jean Folkerts (2014) claims, the tension is represented by two main views upon journalism education: 1) that the main purpose of educating journalists is to improve the quality of journalism; and 2) that the main purpose of training journalism students is to make them function efficiently in a newspaper office – or any media environment (p. 227). Hence, journalism education can be said to find itself located “in the uneasy spot between practical and academic studies” (Joseph, 2009, p. 45).

### **Idealists versus functionalist**

According to several academics, the duality of journalistic knowledge became especially apparent under the establishment of university journalism programs during the first decades of the 1900s. While the University of Wisconsin integrated journalism within the liberal arts, the University of Missouri<sup>38</sup> emphasized hands-on training in a “real-world” environment (Folkerts, 2014; Reese, 1999; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). In 1912, journalism education in the U.S. became organized through the American Association of Teachers in Journalism (AATJ). Twelve years later the association declared that an appropriate journalism curriculum should be “sufficiently broad in the scope to familiarize the future journalist with the important fields of knowledge, and sufficiently practical to show the application of the knowledge to the practice of journalism” (Folkerts, 2014, p. 238). Including subjects such as history, economics, government and politics, the four-year course of study should not be associated with a trade school, but “be of the same standard as those of other professional schools and colleges” (Folkerts, 2014, p. 238). The statement did however not say anything about how far the courses should “embrace the emerging discipline of social science”, how much they should focus on traditional academics, or how much they should focus on practical applications (Folkerts, 2014, p. 238). Hence, the discussion over theory and practice, and the role of teaching and research, continued. Supporting AATJ’s pursuit of journalism becoming a “real profession” and not a “mere trade and a technique”, Eric Allen, dean at the University of Oregon,

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<sup>38</sup> Established in 1908 as the first freestanding professional journalism school in the U.S.



argued that the journalism curriculum had to be “based upon some depth of understanding” (as cited in Folkerts, 2014, p. 238). In an issue of the *Journalism Bulletin* from 1927, Allen argues that competent journalists have to understand “the scientific basis of current life, the complex of established principles that underlies any modern objective, civilized discussion of politics, government, economics, psychology—in general, the art of living” (as cited in Folkerts, 2014, p. 238).

Today, more than 80 years later, the balance between theory and practice is still vigorously discussed. Central academics like Robert G. Picard, Stephen D. Reese, and Mike Gasher have positioned themselves on the “idealist” side<sup>39</sup>, arguing that the main purpose of educating journalists is to improve the quality of journalism. In line with Dean Eric Allen, Picard (2015) states that higher education is about helping students understand “the past, how people and societies work, what forces affect the human condition, how to deal with the inevitable changes they will encounter in their lives, and how to find their own paths to success” (p. 7). Higher education isn’t about ensuring employment, he claims, but about shaping and sharpening students’ abilities to think – and giving them skills they can use in a *variety* of activities in future years (p. 7). A more general, academic knowledge within the journalism curriculum is seen as useful as a substantial number of journalism students’ futures lie elsewhere than in journalism (Shapiro, 2015, p. 11).

As stated in section 2.2, journalism can be described as storytelling with a *purpose*. Many academics with an “idealist” view about journalism argue that focusing too much on skills can eliminate this purpose. According to Picard (2015), many journalism programs see their primary contribution as teaching students how to communicate well – not teaching them how to think and critically analyze social developments. Thus, journalism schools educate communicators without anything to communicate, and with little rationale for communicating (p. 7). When students’ understanding of the topics that typically inform news coverage – history, geography, politics, the justice system, science, the arts – is neglected, Gasher (2015) argues,

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<sup>39</sup> Described by Jean Folkerts (2014) above as one of two main views upon journalism education, seeing the main purpose of educating journalists as improving the quality of journalism.

their store of basic knowledge is compromised. Moreover, without basic knowledge, the students' ability to do proper research and ask informed and challenging questions is weakened. Hence, they become increasingly reliant on expert sources because they lack the critical skills to evaluate the information those sources provide. "The risk is that they are left to practice stenography rather than journalism", Gasher warns (p. 106). Instead, journalism schools should focus on "content expertise", as this general knowledge is harder to accomplish:

Presentation styles are relatively easy to learn – many journalism educators learned them on the job, and our graduate programs cover the basics of storytelling in two or three semesters. Content expertise takes much longer to acquire, and greater emphasis should be placed on it in the education of journalists, particularly in universities. (p. 106)

Instead of higher education providing technical and elementary journalism training, some of the "idealists" suggest that easily available skills can be taught by media organizations on the job, just like in the old apprentice system (Reese & Cohen, 2000, p. 214).

Not everyone agrees with the "idealistic" view upon journalism education. As previously mentioned, many have a more practical view, where making students function efficiently in a newspaper office is seen as the main purpose of training. According to Folkerts (2014), the functional view has mainly been the view of newspaper owners and editors. Moreover, several editors holding this view have historically refused to hire college graduates as reporters. Horace Greeley, the founder of the *New York Tribune*, shall for instance have stated, "Of all horned cattle, deliver me from the college graduate" (as cited in Folkerts, 2014, p. 229).

### **Innovation versus autonomy**

In addition to the debate over theory and practice, another central discussion within journalism education has addressed the relationship between journalism training and innovation. In 1938, after leading the first full-scale evaluation of U.S. journalism education, Everette Dennis, dean at the University of Oregon, formed the "National Task Force on the Future of Journalism and Mass Communication". In what has later

become known as “the Oregon Report”, the Task Force stated that journalism schools were “not exactly centers of innovation”; that they were regarded as “following industry, not leading it”; and that the schools were believed to be the “handmaiden to industry, not its critic or visionary guide” (Folkerts, 2014, p. 265). Many universities consulted the Oregon Report when later revising their curricula, especially following two of the recommendations: that journalism schools should be organized as independent schools separate from liberal arts; and that media industries and foundations should support journalism schools in greater measure (Folkerts, 2014, pp. 268-273). As Reese (1999) describes the development:

Journalism on many campuses has left its traditional home in the arts and sciences. It has joined with other communication and media fields to create independent professional schools within the university. In doing so, it has found it easier to enter into symbiotic relationships with the professional community, an alliance that has brought new resources but also corresponding pressures to satisfy those constituencies. (p. 72)

By attempting to become more innovative and closer to the news industry, Reese seems to imply that journalism educators have put their autonomy in play.

In addition to Dennis and the Oregon Report, the Knight Foundation, the top philanthropic funder of journalism schools, is also known as one of the harshest critics of journalism education (Folkerts, 2014, p. 284). In the 2000s, journalism schools that had been slow to address the new digital age were the main targets of criticism. In a speech in 2012, Eric Newton of the Knight Foundation recommended journalism program leaders to innovate more and be “engines of change” through creating both new uses of software and new software itself (Newton, 2012). Following his recommendations, journalism programs no longer had to “be the caboose on the train of American media” (Newton, 2012). Some of the journalism programs, however, replied that they had been slow to change on purpose; not seeing their role as being merely reactive to the “newest gadgets”, they wanted to respond thoughtfully over the long haul (Folkerts, 2014, p. 284).

Zelizer (2009) summarizes the ongoing negotiation between journalists, journalism educators and journalism academics as follows:

Journalists say journalism scholars and educators have no business airing their dirty laundry; journalism scholars say journalists and journalism educators are not theoretical enough; journalism educators say journalists have their heads in the sand and journalism scholars have their heads in the clouds. (p. 31)

As each group has fixated on “who will be best heard above the din of competing voices”, the concern for journalism has often been shunted to the side, Zelizer states (p. 31).

### **The teaching hospital model**

As discussed above, practitioners have often attempted to regain some control over professional training. According to Burrage (1993), some of the few practitioners actually succeeding are the practitioners of medicine, as it is not “that remarkable to find a surgical amphitheater or a hospital inside a university” (p. 157). To some degree, Burrage claims, the relationship between academic medicine and medical practice can thus be described as collaborative. The medical school professor can be both a teacher and a practitioner, and the medical student can also be an apprentice (p. 157).

The idea of journalism schools as “teaching hospitals” was first suggested in 2009 by Nicholas Lemann, then dean at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism (Konieczna, 2014, p. 94; Mensing & Ryfe, 2013, p. 3). Like teaching hospitals, he argued, journalism schools could provide essential services to their communities while educating their students (Lemann, 2009). Eric Newton at the Knight Foundation soon became a key advocate of the teaching-hospital model, and in his previously mentioned 2012 speech, he strongly encouraged journalism programs to expand their role as community content providers. “University hospitals save lives. University law clinics take cases to the Supreme Court. University news labs can reveal truths that help us right wrongs”, Newton stated (2012).

The backdrop of Lemann's new model and Newton's speech was the journalism crisis. "Given the precarious financial state of the news media, our core conviction about the role of our profession feels a bit shaky", Lemann stated, before continuing:

[T]he education sector is just about the only part of journalism whose business model is still in excellent health. [...] what can we do to help change the situation for news organizations, so that journalism schools and the profession might thrive together? (2009)

According to the visions of Newton and Lemann, journalism schools can, through using the resources of the university, have the potential to revive the profession. As a result of this perceived potential, the Knight Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation formed the "Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education" in 2005. Being concerned about the state of the media, the foundations wanted journalism schools to be more active in resolving the situation (Knight Foundation, 2011). One of the primary efforts of the Initiative was News21, initiating annual national investigative projects. Produced by students and overseen by campus professors, the investigations were distributed nationally by cooperating news outlets (Folkerts, 2014, p. 288; Knight Foundation, 2011). In 2011, Newton stated that if applied nationally, practices like News21 could unlock the potential of more than 200,000 journalism and mass communication students "to help underserved communities" (2011). By using the resources of universities, journalism could be saved.

Even though the teaching hospital *metaphor* was new, many saw the model as a continuation of the "Missouri Method" described above. With extensive hands-on training as the main teaching method, the school's student-run newsrooms had served the local community since 1908 (Mensing & Ryfe, 2013, p. 3). Historically, the "Missouri Method" had been the exception, not the rule. Due to the journalism crisis, more and more journalism schools did however start to experiment with the model (Francisco, Lenhoff, & Schudson, 2012, p. 2679). Generally, the model implies students "working with professional journalists, in the context of a university, to

produce content for general audiences in partnership with professional media organizations” (Konieczna, 2014, p. 94).

Being modelled on the most prominent example of practitioners succeeding in regaining control over professional training (Burrage, 1993, p. 157), it might not be surprising that several academics quickly criticized the idea of journalism schools as teaching hospitals.<sup>40</sup> Grounded on a direct and integral relationship between journalism schools and the news industry, the model was perceived as a new approach by practitioners to regain control over journalism education (Francisco et al., 2012, p. 2690). Statements implying that it is possible to run a hospital without research but not without doctors did not lower the tension (Folkerts, 2014, p. 283).

As part of the critical response to the teaching-hospital model, several academics claimed that its industry orientation could threaten the autonomy of journalism education (the same claims were, as described above, made in the aftermath of the Oregon report). Gasher (2015) puts it like this:

Training news workers in an era of shrinking newsrooms and growing technological dependence means serving industry’s immediate needs, which too often include quick story turnaround, single sourcing, newsroom-based reporting, brand journalism, and native advertising; this produces Jacks and Jills of all platforms, masters of none. We need to draw a distinction between the learning environment of the classroom and the production environment of the newsroom. (p. 106)

According to Gasher, the current situation is “a tug of war”, where the increasingly corporate, concentrated, and commercial news industry tries to appropriate journalism as a commercial enterprise serving markets rather than publics. In a time when the structure of the news industry has evolved dramatically, it becomes increasingly important to distinguish between the good journalism the news industry

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<sup>40</sup> The model has also been criticized within medicine because of the shortcomings of intern-delivered medical care, the long working hours of students, and the disjunction between the practices students learn in providing hospital care—treating extremely sick people in acute situations—and the experience of most physicians in practice who normally treat healthy patients (Francisco et al., 2012, p. 2678).

produces and the increasing number of practices that degrade the profession and “render audiences cynical and mistrustful”, he states (p. 107). To stay autonomous, he argues, journalism educators need to draw a distinction between information and content, between publics and markets and between production and distribution. If autonomy is lost, some fear that one of the “hallmarks of academe” – namely the professional tradition of critical philosophical reflection – will vanish (Reese & Cohen, 2000, p. 221). Others argue that journalism schools must “maintain an independent perspective on the profession and the world” in order to remain “loyal critics” of the journalism profession (Bollinger, 2003; Josephi, 2009, p. 50).

As described above, a tighter relationship with the news industry has often been seen as a way of increasing innovation in journalism education. The teaching hospital model has however been criticized for *hindering* innovation. Since practice-oriented, professional journalists are often hired as teachers, delivering skills and mentoring and also socializing students into the “expectations, norms and traditions expected of them when they arrive at their first jobs” (Mensing, 2010, p. 515). However, these reporters are not always adequately updated on the latest developments, critics state (Mensing, 2010, p. 515). “Why would anyone think that hiring someone from a decaying news organization, steeped in old ways of doing things, is an effective way to create the journalists and news organizations for the future?” Picard (2015) asks, before continuing: “Few former journalists who have spent the past twenty or thirty years working for a large firm have the outlook, attitudes, and skills needed now” (p. 8). If to survive and succeed, journalism education must become much more aggressive in seeking change, the critics claim. If not, journalism programs will disappear along with the existing news industry (Mensing, 2010; Mensing & Ryfe, 2013; Picard, 2015). To Mensing and Ryfe (2013), the solution is the “entrepreneurial model of journalism education”. Defined as journalism education with an “orientation to change”, the model seeks to replace old values with newer, more relevant orientations (pp. 6-7). According to Picard (2015), this means that students need to be taught:

- How to be strategic and flexible in serving audiences across multiple distribution platforms.
- How to focus on the environment and processes of information provision, not merely information creation.
- How to be more oriented to the needs of their readers, listeners, viewers, and users.
- How to become more specialized rather than generalized.
- How to find data and information created by others and how to create stories from that data and information.
- How to analyze and explain what public developments mean and what readers can do to prepare for what is coming next. (p. 10)

Echoing the “idealist” critique above, some journalism programs focusing on entrepreneurship have however been accused of being too technological and economic-oriented. “Entrepreneurial journalism” really means seeking new ways to serve advertisers and maximize page views – appropriating journalism into a commercial enterprise enlisted to serve the market instead of the public, Benedetti (2015) states (p. 94). In the eagerness to innovate, key principles of journalism, like fact checking, accuracy, and news judgment, can be jeopardized. Moreover, he continues, new and innovative models meant to improve journalism – such as user-generated content, citizen journalism, and journalism as curation – are in reality eroding the boundaries of journalism. Without a distinction between news and content, consumers and producers, reporting and posting, journalism risks becoming everything – and thus nothing (p. 96).

Building a bridge between the traditional-oriented and the entrepreneurial-oriented academics, M. L. Young and Giltrow (2015) argue for thinking more broadly about teaching, learning, and innovating (p. 46). Instead of focusing on socio-technical and economic problems, journalism education would be more innovative if it slows down enough to effectively unpack both implicit and explicit professional knowledge, they argue. Thus, the students will be able to both produce news and understand the values and conceptual knowledge related to journalism practice. “The concept of ‘slowing



down' might be anathema to journalistic ways of being and knowing, but without it, we risk developing the skills and competencies for more 'dentists' [...] than innovators", they state (p. 49). Within the teaching hospital model, slowing down could be difficult, according to Mensing and Ryfe (2013). Just as teaching hospitals are actual hospitals, the teaching-hospital model turns journalism schools into actual news-production operations (p. 4). This means that professional journalism schools risk adopting the previously mentioned negative sides of apprenticeships. Since "a real world environment" often requires continuous performance and productive work, it can be hard to find the time to convey abstract concepts and formal theories – and thus innovate, they argue.

### **2.3.4 The ideal educational role**

In line with the normative democratic theories of journalism described in section 2.2, many academics claim that the goal of journalism should ultimately be to improve the practice of journalism and thereby the democratic society in which it is rooted (Reese & Cohen, 2000, p. 214). As shown above, agreeing about the goal of journalism education and agreeing about what students should be taught, and how, is not the same. According to the presented theory, the ideal professional training can however be said to hold two main characteristics.

First, it needs to provide a mix of practical and theoretical knowledge. In addition to being an important tool when training novices and advanced beginners, abstractions and theoretical knowledge can help legitimate the work of the profession, and increase its status among the cultural elite. Practical knowledge on the other hand is essential for the professions to fulfill their practical task. As stated by Polanyi (1967), it is not possible to learn a new language, drive a car or play the piano through reading a book. To become reporters, students must learn the practical skills of reporting.

Second, the ideal training must provide relevant, real-world experiences. If not, it is impossible for the students to obtain transferrable, professional capability. At the same time, the students must be shielded from the practice field, where pressures on performance tend to be high, time limited and mistakes costly. Schön's practicum – a

constructed context similar to the practice world, where students learn by doing – does for instance seem to be a good model.

As a conclusion, the four university centers of this study can be seen to increase their potential as professional platforms (help strengthen the journalism profession's jurisdiction over news) if they manage to teach both theory and practice within a practicum-like setting.



### **3. Research design and methodological reflections**

A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected, and the conclusions to be drawn, to the initial questions of study (Yin, 2014, p. 26). This chapter seeks to describe and discuss the whole research process behind this study – from the selection of units of analysis to methods of data collection and strategy of analysis. In addition, both ethical considerations and the position within the philosophy of science will be discussed. Hopefully, as debated at the end of the chapter, this account of what was done, and why, will help improve the study’s validity.

#### **3.1 Overall research strategy**

As agreed upon by most academics, a study’s research strategies should be driven by the research questions the study seeks to answer (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014; Neuendorf, 2002; Ryen, 2002; Østbye, Helland, Knapskog, & Larsen, 2013). As previously described, the goal of this study is discussing the potential that nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism. The research question is in other words both broad and exploratory. In addition, “alternativeness”, professional potential or journalistic quality are not observable or measurable quantities. In order to be able to answer the research question, I thus made three major decisions about the research design.

First, I chose to conduct a case study. A case study is often about small groups, communities, decisions, programs, organizational change, or specific events over time (Yin, 2014, p. 31). Since the unit of analysis is small, case studies are known as efficient tools when attempting to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2014, p. 4). Hence, a case-study approach would allow me to conduct an intensive and detailed study despite the broad and compound research question (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 236).

Second, I decided to operationalize the research question using five sub-questions:

- 1) What is considered professional, and what is quality journalism?
- 2) What characterizes the four university nonprofits?
- 3) How autonomous are the centers?

- 4) What kind of journalism are the centers idealizing and producing?
- 5) What characterizes the centers' knowledge base and teaching methods?

To be able to answer these questions, I applied both theory and my own empirical findings.

Third, I chose a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4).<sup>41</sup> Although not directly observable or measurable, the centers' structure, their overall professional potential, and the quality of their reporting could be observed *indirectly* through 1) the selected interviewee's verbalization of ideals and values, 2) through social and organizational actions and initiatives in concrete settings, and 3) through the counting and measuring of quality indicators in the stories produced. Therefore, a combination of qualitative in-depth interviews and observation and a quantitative content analysis was seen as an efficient mix of methods when attempting to answer the research question in the best possible way. As later discussed, this way of combining qualitative and quantitative methods can be challenging, as it reconciles different epistemologies and ontologies, and integrates different forms of data and knowledge (Mason, 2006, p. 9).

### 3.2 Position within the philosophy of science

Within the theory of science there is a long and ongoing debate about what knowledge is, how knowledge is formed, and what criteria must be fulfilled for information to be deemed valid or true. If studying the essence of these theories as ideal types, it is, however, according to Aase and Fossåskaret (2014), possible to differentiate two opposing views: the theory of coincidence (correspondence) and the theory of context (coherence) (p. 45). While strong research traditions like positivism and pragmatism can be said to have much in common with the theory of "correspondence", directions like phenomenology, constructivism, hermeneutics, cultural analysis and postmodernism are closer to the theory of "coherence" (p. 52).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) define mixed methods studies as research where "the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry" (p. 4).

<sup>42</sup> As later discussed in more detail, no research tradition can be said to resemble either the correspondence or the coherence theory. However, on a scale with the ideal types of correspondence and coherence as the extremes, most traditions can be placed closer to one or other of the ideal types.

Simplified, the theory of coherence advocates that all knowledge is constructed according to our cultural knowledge. The outer reality is in other words a reflection of our thoughts. Therefore, what distinguishes “true” or good knowledge from “false” or poor knowledge is not concurrence with an objective reality, but the logical coherence of knowledge. To appear internally logical, the assumptions a theory or analysis it is based on must be meaningful to us. In addition, there must be a correlation between the assumptions and the conclusions derived from them (p. 47). Following from this, an analysis inspired by the coherence theory does not claim to be objectively true. Rather, the point can be to understand and discuss how different respondents experience their reality (p. 51).

Unlike the theory of coherence, the theory of correspondence postulates the existence of an objective reality outside of human beings. Material things, landscapes and laws of nature exist independently of humans (p. 45). Hence, reasoning is a way of converting nature (objective reality) to culture (knowledge) (p. 46). According to this epistemological paradigm, it is possible to separate knowledge and reality. Following from this, the goal of science is to produce knowledge that is as close to the reality as possible – and thus *corresponds* with reality (p. 47).

Applying both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study can, as mentioned above, be challenging, as it can be seen as an attempt to reconcile the two opposing paradigms of coherence and correspondence. As a result, many mixed methods advocates like John W. Creswell, Kathy Collins, Abbas Tashakkori and Denton Charles Teddlie prescribe to the paradigm of pragmatism, claiming that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily (Christ, 2013, p. 110). Several academics, however, find the presentation of pragmatism as a distinctive worldview problematic as pragmatism is not one thing. According to Lipscomb (2011), there are almost as many pragmatisms as there are pragmatists. In addition, pragmatists disagree profoundly about the meaning and remit of this approach to understanding. As a result, several academics have recently argued that “middle-position paradigms” like transformativism, dialecticalism, critical realism, post positivism, constructivism, and embodied/grounded cognition also fit into a mixed-methods design (Aase &

Fossåskaret, 2014; Christ, 2013; Johnson, 2015; Lipscomb, 2011). Most of these paradigms unite the theories of correspondence and coherence through agreeing that the outer world can only be understood through the experiences we have (coherence) – but at the same time recognizing that there are things “out there” that are independent of our perception and understanding (correspondence). An outer world does exist but, as humans, we can only understand it through our bodily experiences (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 59). Hence, these paradigms recognize the value of both epistemological camps – and thus both qualitative and quantitative data collecting methods.

Applying mixed methods, this study is influenced by the middle-position paradigms, especially critical realism (CR). Along with Belfrage and Hauf (2017), I see CR as a useful “third way” between “the naïve realism of positivist research and the radical constructionism of much postmodernism” (p. 4). Moreover, I find CR to be a more tangible and rooted paradigm than pragmatism. Combined, CR represents a combination of concrete assets and flexibility, as it can function as a general methodological framework for research without being associated with any particular set of methods (Fletcher, 2017, p. 2). To a broad and exploratory study like this, CR can thus be a helpful – but not restraining – methodological framework.

### **3.2.1 The worldview of critical realism**

One of the most important tenets of CR is that ontology (what is real) is not reducible to epistemology (our knowledge of reality). Rather, CR sees human knowledge as only capable of capturing a small part of a deeper and vaster reality. Hence, CR does not deny that there is a real social world we can attempt to understand or access through philosophy and social science. It does however acknowledge that some knowledge can be closer to reality than other knowledge (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2012; Fletcher, 2017). Following from this, reality is stratified into three levels:

- 1) The empirical level. This is the territory of events as we experience them. At this level, events or objects can be measured empirically – although they are always mediated through the filter of human experience and interpretation.

- 2) The middle level. This level consists of the actual, and there is no filter of human experience. At this level, events occur whether or not humans experience or interpret them. These true incidences are often different from what is observed at the empirical level (Danermark et al., 2012, p. 20).
- 3) The real level. At this level, causal mechanisms exist. These are the inherent properties in an object or structure that act as causal forces to produce events like those appearing at the empirical level (Fletcher, 2017, p. 3).

It is the primary goal of CR to explain social events through reference to the causal mechanisms of level three. Unlike the natural world, social structures are “activity dependent”. This means that causal mechanisms “exist only in virtue of the activities they govern and cannot be empirically identified independently of them” (Bhaskar, 2014, p. 48). If observable at all, causal mechanisms can thus only be observed at the empirical level. Hence, while stipulating the existence of a material reality, CR maintains that all knowledge about reality is socially constructed and historically contingent. Critical realists are therefore profoundly interested in the social construction of meaning through discourse or semiosis (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017, p. 4). For a study interested in the level of casual mechanisms (the construction of professional ideology and power) – which can only be observed through the empirical level (in depth interviews, observation and content analysis) – a paradigm occupied with moving from the concrete to the abstract and back again can be of great help. Instead of only focusing on *how* the interviewees describe quality reporting (the empirical level), the study also needs to focus on *why* the interviewees describe quality reporting the way they do (the level of casual mechanisms). In CR, this movement from “the manifest phenomena of social life, as conceptualized in the experience of the social agents concerned, to the essential relations that necessitate them” is called retroduction (Bhaskar, 2014, p. 32). With retroduction as the ultimate goal, CR can thus be helpful in the attempt to answer the research question of this study in the most “reality capturing” way.



### **3.2.2 Practical consequences of the research paradigm**

In addition to the focus on retroduction, the worldview of CR also influences the research design and findings of this study in several other ways.

First, CR states that events or objects are always mediated through the filter of human experience and interpretation. All research data is thus created through an interpretive process, which makes the researcher both an observer and a constructor of meaning (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 41). Following from this, it is important that empirical data are referred to at the lowest possible abstraction level. Only by describing what was actually seen and heard can the reader evaluate the researchers interpretations – and thus the logical coherence of the new knowledge (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 37). As a result, direct quotations from interviewees are frequently presented in this research report. Moreover, observational scenes are described as they happened, and categories and definitions are sought explained and clarified.

Second, the analysis does not claim to be objectively true. Rather, the report is an attempt to understand and discuss how the different interviewees experience their reality, and how the stories the centers produce can be interpreted. Following from this, phrases like “might be” and “seems to” are used frequently when presenting the findings of the study.

Third, studies influenced by CR look for tendencies, not laws, as the social world is seen as consisting of open systems. Hence, any number of occurrences and events can overlap and interact, in which people can learn and change (Fletcher, 2017, p. 5). Thus, the findings of this study can only be said to be an interpretation of the reality at the time of the collection of the empirical data. In the years it has taken to finish the study, several parts of the reality – like the quality perceptions of the interviewees and the structure of the nonprofit centers – might have changed.

Fourth, CR aims to find the best explanation of reality through engagement with existing theories about that reality (Fletcher, 2017, p. 6). After the main empirical findings of the research have been identified through coding, empirical data are re-described using theoretical concepts. Through moving back and forth between observable phenomena and possible explanations, the goal is to gain a deeper

knowledge of a complex reality (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017, p. 5). All explanations of reality, including the explanations provided by research participants, theorists, and scientists, are however treated as fallible (Fletcher, 2017, p. 7). Participants' experiences and understandings can thus challenge existing scientific knowledge and theory (Fletcher, 2017, p. 8). Following from this, most CR-oriented research, including this study, can be described as abductive, where the research process is an interplay between theory, analytical concepts, and empirical observations (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 114).

Fifth, due to its ontology, CR sees structure and agency as possessing distinct properties and powers in their own right. While social structures are seen as relatively enduring features of the world, human agency can reproduce or transform these structures over time. Moreover, human agency is shaped, but not determined, by structures. Hence, CR treats the “ideas and meanings held by individuals – their concepts, beliefs, feelings, intentions, and so on” as equally real as physical objects and processes (Fletcher, 2017, pp. 9-10). Following from this, the meanings and ideas of the interviewees of this study are of great importance when discussing the potential that nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism.

### **3.2.3 CR and the normative aspects of the study**

As mentioned in the two previous chapters, normative terms like “quality” and “professional” have central roles in this study. This normative orientation can be considered unscientific to some research paradigms. As normative statements cannot definitively be determined by empirical studies<sup>43</sup>, the primary task of science has been understood as *describing* the world, while normative assessments have been attributed to philosophy or politics (Sayer, 1997, p. 475). According to the critical realism (CR) paradigm, this view upon normative-oriented research is however invalid for two main reasons.

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<sup>43</sup> Hume's Law for instance states that “ought” cannot be derived from “is”.

First, revealing an impersonal and objective truth is seen as impossible, as events or objects are always mediated through the filter of human experience and interpretation. From this perspective, a normative-oriented study can be said to be more “true” than a descriptive study, as it is not claiming that the researcher is a disinterested observer, but “an active member of a society ridden with social antagonisms and relations of exploitation, domination and exclusion” (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017, p. 9). Rather than falsely pretending to be objective, the researcher should thus strive to disclose the assumptions upon which a theory or analysis is based. It is only such openness and translucency that can enable the reader to evaluate the validity of the research. Following from this, a normative study can be valid as long as two criteria are fulfilled: 1) a detailed overview over the most important decisions made during the research process, and which implications these decisions are known to cause, must be enclosed in the report. 2) The readers must find the analysis internally logical and meaningful. In this study, it is for instance important to be utterly clear about how the terms “quality” or “professionalism” are defined – and that the definitions are the result of *selected* values and ideals. Instead of using the occupational ideology of journalism as the underlying normative standard, looking for indicators of “truth”, good storytelling, and the guarding of the powerful (see section 2.2.5), the study could for instance have emphasized more commercially oriented quality aspects, looking for indicators of sales potential. Following from this, the valuation of the quality of the centers’ stories (see Chapter 6) could have reached a completely different conclusion. Since there is no pretending that the terms are “objective”, it is easier for the readers to be critical. Moreover, the openness can be helpful for readers to decide whether they find the analysis internally logical and meaningful or not.

Second, according to the ontology of CR, it is possible to claim that normative studies actually have the potential of developing knowledge that is *closer* to reality than descriptive studies. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the practice of most professions has a normative aspect. Practical knowledge is not just about the application of knowledge but also the application of moral, political and legal judgment (Grimen, 2008a, p. 73). Therefore, a study of professional practice

excluding normative aspects would be incomplete. This perspective coincides with the worldview of CR, where ideas and meanings are a central part of the casual mechanisms in the “real” level of reality. A focus on normative aspects and human agency can, for instance, be an effective way of uncovering *why* the interviewees describe quality and professionalism the way they do. As long as I am open about my own role and biases, and describe which decisions were made and why, I thus find a normative orientation enriching to a study of this character.

### 3.3 The selection of centers

As described above, one of the first and major decisions made about the research design of this study was to conduct a case study, as this would make it possible to explore the research question in more depth. Since I wanted to discuss the *potential* that nonprofit<sup>44</sup> university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism, I decided to conduct a purposive sampling, selecting the centers with the *highest* likeliness of succeeding as both professional platforms and providers of quality reporting. Following from this, I started what Yin (2014) describes as a “two-phase approach” in the screening of case study candidates (p. 95). I began by collecting relevant data about the entire pool. As it soon became obvious that most nonprofits were located in the U.S. (see section 4.1.3 for details), I decided to focus on U.S. university nonprofits only. To get an overview of the field, the previously mentioned mappings of journalistic nonprofits conducted by the Pew Research Center and The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University were central (Holcomb et al., 2011; C. Lewis, 2010b; C. Lewis et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2013). The member directory of the largest association of nonprofit news organizations in North America, the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), was also of help (Institute for Nonprofit News, n.d.-a). However, as the definition of a nonprofit news organization varied significantly, and the field seemed to contain a great number of new, small, and relatively unstable organizations, it proved hard to get a complete overview of the field (see section 4.1.1). Hence, I had to crosscheck the information several times before being certain that the largest, most significant nonprofits were part of my list.

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<sup>44</sup> The term “nonprofit” is thoroughly discussed and defined in Chapter 4.

Once obtaining an overview of the field, Yin (2014) recommends that the researcher defines some relevant criteria for either stratifying or reducing the number of candidates. The goal should be reducing the number of candidates to twelve or fewer (p. 95). As described in the Introduction chapter, I applied five selection criteria. To be considered a possible case, the nonprofits had to 1) specialize in investigative reporting; 2) be acknowledged by the journalism profession through journalistic awards; 3) collaborate with the media industry; 4) be part of the curriculum at the university; and 5) use graduate students. By using these criteria, I hoped to distinguish the centers with the greatest potential as professional platforms for quality journalism. From a list of more than 170 nonprofits, I ended up with a list of 16 university nonprofits that seemed to be conducting investigating reporting part or fulltime. Of these, seven were excluded as they were not *part* of universities but independent organizations *based* at universities (see section 4.1.2 for more details on university nonprofits).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, four were omitted because they only worked with undergraduate students and/or were only investigating special topics.<sup>46</sup> I ended up with a list of five potential centers: 1) The Investigative Reporting Program at the University of California, Berkeley; 2) The Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University; 3) The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University; 4) The New England Center for Investigative Reporting at Boston University; and 5) Watchdog New England at Northeastern University in Boston.

When having less than twelve possible candidates left, Yin (2014) recommends that the researcher moves on to the second phase of the screening approach: querying people knowledgeable about each candidate (p. 95). Originally, I wished to select five centers as cases, as evidence from multiple cases often is considered more compelling and robust (p. 57). I thus sent the list of five centers to the executive directors of Investigative Reporters and Editors, The Center for Investigative Reporting and The

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<sup>45</sup> Among these was the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and *inews*, a center teaching students at San Diego State University.

<sup>46</sup> The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University for instance uses bachelor students as research assistants, while the Medill Justice Project at Northwestern University only focuses on criminal justice issues.

Center for Public Integrity, asking them to quality check the list against the selection criteria and to give notice if good candidates were left out, or if they found some of the university nonprofits on the list ineligible. Representatives from all three organizations replied, characterizing the list as “good”.<sup>47</sup> In addition, three additional centers were suggested, but none of these fulfilled the selection criteria.<sup>48</sup> Two of the representatives also commented on the Watchdog New England – one saying that he had too little knowledge of the Center to comment on it, the other questioning whether the Center really used graduate students. When the budget of my study became much tighter than originally expected, due to the Norwegian krone losing value<sup>49</sup>, I decided to remove Watchdog New England from the list. In addition to the Center seeming to be the least known of the five – and that, after some more research, it appeared to only use undergraduate students.<sup>50</sup> Excluding the Watchdog would also secure a better geographical dispersion among the units of data collection.<sup>51</sup> Following from this, I ended up with four university nonprofits representing four units of data collection.

### **3.3.1 Gaining access**

After selecting the four centers I wanted to study, the next step was gaining access to those centers and their partners. Since many of the reporters and faculty members could be described as elite informants, I thought the process would be long and tortuous. Two of the center leaders – Charles Lewis at the Workshop and Lowell Bergman at the IRP Berkeley – were for instance named as two of the 30 most

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<sup>47</sup> As stated in Chapter 1, Brant Houston, former executive director at Investigative Reporters and Editors, Robert Rosenthal, executive director at The Center for Investigative Reporting and Bill Buzenberg, executive director at The Center for Public Integrity responded to the emails.

<sup>48</sup> Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, inewsources, teaching students at San Diego State University and the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University were suggested. As previously mentioned, the two first centers are independent organizations, while Schuster Institute only uses bachelor students as research assistants.

<sup>49</sup> All the economic support for the project was given in Norwegian kroner. Because of the drop in oil prices starting in the fall of 2014, the value of the Norwegian krone fell by more than 25 percent against the U.S. dollar during the stay. Hence, staying and traveling in the U.S. became much more expensive than first budgeted.

<sup>50</sup> At first, I thought the center used graduate students as the Northeastern University has a graduate program in journalism. When examining the topic further, it did however appear to only use undergraduate students. Soon after making my selection, the Watchdog stopped operating – and the center’s webpages were shut down.

<sup>51</sup> Both the Watchdog and the New England CIR are regional New England centers operating from Boston. By removing the Watchdog, the four remaining centers were based at four different U.S. cities: Boston, Berkeley, New York and Washington, DC.

notable investigative reporters in the U.S. since World War I by the George Washington University's *Encyclopedia of Journalism* (see Chapter 4). Since elite informants are known to have long working hours, with tight schedules and frequent travel – in addition to being under a high degree of pressure and holding great responsibility – I thought many of the potential interviewees would be nearly impossible to reach (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 299). This assumption however soon proved wrong, as most of the center staff, reporters, students and faculty that were contacted were very accommodating. As I see it, there may be five main reasons for this somewhat unexpected response:

First, when making contact, I presented myself as a former journalist and editor and thus might have been regarded an “insider”. Several newsroom studies have demonstrated how “journalists often question whether outsiders without relevant media practitioner experience can truly understand the processes of a newsroom” (Figenschou, 2010, p. 963). Moreover, reporters often tend to view researchers as ignorant of “real life” and guilty of intellectual arrogance (Figenschou, 2010, p. 963). As a former practitioner, therefore, I avoided the problematic outsider status.

Second, my contacts within Norwegian journalism made it possible to find a sponsor that was firmly respected by the “other cultural members” (Agar, 2008, p. 135). Referring to a common acquaintance in the first email, Workshop-leader Charles Lewis immediately agreed to be my sponsor, later stating that “any friend of Andre<sup>52</sup> is a friend of mine”. Often named “the godfather of nonprofit investigative journalism” (see section 4.2.3), his sponsorship proved to be an important door opener into the rest of the nonprofit field.

Third, I was awarded a Fulbright Flagship Stipend, a well-known and respected program in the U.S., and I always presented myself as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar when contacting new interviewees. As with the name of Charles Lewis and my background, this seemed to increase the chances of access.

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<sup>52</sup> Andre Verløy is a Norwegian reporter who used to work with Charles Lewis at The Center for Public Integrity, focusing on international investigative projects.

Fourth, many of the interviewees seemed to be interested in the topic of my study. When thanking him for his time, Dean Thomas Fiedler at Boston University's College of Communication stated that he always found time to discuss interesting and important journalistic core issues (field interview March 13, 2015). Many of the interviewees expressed similar views before or after the interviews, or by email when responding to the interview request.

Fifth, being a relatively young, female researcher from Norway might have made my research seem of little menace. Moreover, my study had an extremely long deadline (two and a half years from conducting the first interviews). As a result, becoming part of my study was probably not perceived as precarious, as the chance of revealing any confidential information about the work in progress was minimal.

Combined, the five aspects mentioned above seemed to make the issue of access fairly unproblematic. All the leaders of the three remaining centers – the IRP Berkeley, the Stabile Center and the New England CIR – welcomed me to both observe and do interviews. Moreover, of the more than 60 persons I wanted to interview, only a handful did not respond or said they did not want to participate. Of these, the most significant was Edward Wasserman, dean at the Graduate School of Journalism at UC Berkeley.<sup>53</sup> The other non-responding/negatively responding candidates were mostly reporters or editors in newsrooms partnered with the university centers, and who could be easily replaced by other interviewees.

### **3.3.2 The Workshop as the main study object**

In order to do an in-depth case study of the four selected centers, I needed sufficient time for observations and interviews. With three young children, traveling back and forth over the Atlantic, staying away for weeks at a time was not an option.<sup>54</sup> Hence, I decided to bring the whole family to the U.S. for a year. This meant that I needed a steady base, allowing the oldest children to attend school. I thus started to examine if one of the four centers could be my “main study object”. With three of four centers located at the east coast, the IRP Berkeley was excluded due to travel costs. As the

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<sup>53</sup> Wasserman and his office did not reply to multiple emails requesting an interview.

<sup>54</sup> The children were one, five and seven years old at the time.



Workshop was the largest of the east coast centers, and I had an acquaintance in common with Workshop-leader Charles Lewis, the choice fell on the Workshop. Choosing one center as my main study object was therefore the result of practical considerations. Ideally, I would have preferred to spend the same amount of time at each of the centers, getting as much in-depth information as possible.

During the whole academic year of 2014/2015, I was formally affiliated to the Workshop as a Visiting Scholar at American University's School of Communication (SOC). Having been given my own desk in a corner of the Workshop office, I spent two to three days, on average, every week observing Workshop staff and students, while working on other aspects of the study simultaneously. In addition, I spent one day a week for four weeks observing the Workshop's Practicum<sup>55</sup> inside the *Washington Post* newsroom. Hence, I conducted more than 80 days of observation at the Workshop during the academic year.<sup>56</sup> In contrast, I only visited the other three centers for a week.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, 35 of the study's 69 interviews involve Workshop staff, faculty, students or reporters while only ten to twelve key informants were interviewed at each of the other centers.

Following from the above, I could have named my research design an embedded single-case study, meaning that a single case (the Workshop) is studied through multiple units of analysis (the structure, the professional potential, and the production of the centers) (Yin, 2014, p. 50). However, I find it more accurate to name the research design a multiple-case embedded design, seeing all the four centers as cases. Although the amount of empirical data is unbalanced, I still consider the least amount

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<sup>55</sup> Later referred to as the Washington Post Practicum.

<sup>56</sup> On average, two days a week for ten months (40 weeks). The number of days I was present during a week did of course vary significantly. When visiting the other centers, or during holidays, I was not at the Workshop at all. Other weeks, I could be present as many as five days a week.

<sup>57</sup> Because of a combination of public holidays and the way the centers were structured, I did not manage to observe for a full week at any of the centers. At the IRP Berkeley, I only sat working and observing in the center office for four days, as the fifth day was Veterans' Day. At the New England CIR, I conducted two days of observation at the center's office space at WGBH News, while the three remaining days were spent at the center's Boston University office and/or at collaborating newsrooms, conducting interviews. At the Stable Center, I only got to observe the weekly Investigative Seminar, as the Center did not have its own news production facilities. There was therefore nothing else but classes to observe.

of data acquired from a single center – ten interviews, some observation, and a content analysis of ten stories – sufficient for conducting an in-depth analysis.

In my experience, operating with a main study object had both advantages and disadvantages. Arriving from Norway, with limited understanding of both the nonprofit field and the U.S. system of higher education, the opportunity to continuously observe a university nonprofit's activities and ask questions was of great value. At the same time, there was of course a risk that the focus on the Workshop negatively affected my ability to gain knowledge about the other three centers. I could, for instance, have overlooked important structural aspects (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 48), as I might have taken for granted that all university nonprofits specializing in investigative reporting were similar to the Workshop. Moreover, because of the variety of time spent, I probably developed a tighter relationship with the Workshop staff and students than with the representatives of the other three centers. Therefore, there is a danger that, in spite of trying not to, I have interpreted the Workshop observations and interviews less critically than the data from the other centers.

### **3.3.3 Studying “the establishment”**

Another relevant critique of this study's overall research design is related to the selection criteria described above. By choosing centers that are part of traditional and respected journalism schools, run by traditional and respected investigative reporters and mainly collaborating with traditional and respected external newsrooms, I might have selected the university centers with the most potential of succeeding as professional platforms and providers of quality reporting in the *traditional* way. Hence, I have probably excluded university centers or newsrooms seen to have more “innovative potential” of success. Jan Schaffer, executive director at J-Lab (The Institute for Interactive Journalism at American University), for instance, pointed to *Neon Tommy* as an example of a university newsroom with high innovative potential (interview October 17, 2014). Operating from the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the web-only student publication was regularly linked to by newsrooms like the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Huffington Post* and *Gawker*.

In addition, the website had won several prestigious awards during its years of operation (Neon Tommy, n.d.).<sup>58</sup> According to Schaffer, more established university centers are less entrepreneurial than *Neon Tommy*, as “they’ve always followed the ladder of what they were supposed to do” (interview October 17, 2014). Through my selection, I might therefore have prioritized “the establishment” within the relatively young and dynamic nonprofit field. As described by Hovden (2008) and Larson (1977), a profession is however always defined by its elites (p. 31; p. 227). Even though not necessarily being the most innovative, I thus find the four selected centers interesting from a professional point of view. As I am aiming to discuss the *potential* university nonprofits have as professional platforms, studying the “elites” of the new field can in other words prove useful. Nevertheless, acknowledging that the centers’ entrepreneurial orientation is an interesting aspect, this topic will be thoroughly explored in the later analysis of the centers.

### 3.4 Tools of data collection

As previously mentioned, I have chosen to use both quantitative and qualitative methods when collecting data about the four centers. While the in-depth interviews have mainly been used to examine the ideals, values and opinions of selected interviewees, the foremost goal of the observation has been to register social and organizational actions and initiatives in concrete settings. Through counting quality indicators in the centers’ stories, the content analysis has been applied to gain an overview of the centers’ production. Following from this, I have conducted what Denzin (1989) names a methodological triangulation (p. 302). One of the main reasons for this is the conviction that different data-collecting methods have different strengths and weaknesses (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007, p. 108; Denzin, 1989, p. 302; Mathison, 1988, p. 15). By combining methods, observers can thus achieve “the best of each”, providing a fuller understanding of the phenomenon under study. In the following, I will discuss the characteristics of each of the methods used. I will also describe the precautions taken in order to secure optimal conditions for data retrieval,

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<sup>58</sup> In 2015, the Neon Tommy webpage was closed down. All student media operations at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism are now part of Annenberg Media, a student-run media organization publishing at [uscannenbergmedia.com](http://uscannenbergmedia.com) (Annenberg Media, n.d.)

and discuss how the different procedures conducted can influence the study's conclusions.

### **3.4.1 In-depth interviews**

Both in-depth interviews and observation are well-known qualitative methods. Within social sciences these methods are mainly used to gain in-depth information on social phenomena such as relationships, processes, roles and responsibilities (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, pp. 11-13). Rather than scale and extent, qualitative research is thus preoccupied with content and character. Hence, the goal of interviewing and observing is not to develop generalized laws or to designate some mindsets as more "true" than others but to understand and explain the logic of different phenomenon (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 61).

Starting with the qualitative interview, this study includes data from 69 formal in-depth interviews with a total of 60 interviewees.<sup>59</sup> In addition, an unknown number of informal field interviews were conducted during the observation periods. Although labor intensive, in-depth interviewing is known as one of the best data collecting methods when attempting to provide detailed information on a subject (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014; Boyce & Neale, 2006; Ryen, 2002; Østbye et al., 2013). Moreover, interviewing is a flexible method, allowing the researcher to explore new topics promoted by the interviewees, or detect misunderstandings through follow-up questions (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014; Boyce & Neale, 2006; Ryen, 2002; Østbye et al., 2013). Hence, the method proved efficient when exploring a relatively new and uncharted field.

Since not knowing the centers or their partners in detail, the selection of interviewees started with emailing the center leaders. To gain knowledge of all aspects of the centers, I ideally wanted to interview four to five members of the center staff (both the center leaders and the most central reporters), four to five students (current and/or alumni), one or two faculty members (the dean of the journalism school and eventually a member of the faculty working closely with the center), and two to three

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<sup>59</sup> Several of the Workshop staff members and students were interviewed multiple times. See Appendix A, "List of interviews", for an overview.

representatives from collaborating newsrooms. The center leaders were asked to suggest some names in each category. The only criterion set was that the potential interviewees had to know the center well. In some cases, I received a list of names to choose from. In other cases, only two or three names were given, and I had to ask the leaders for more names, get additional names via other members of the centers' staff, or wait until the visit to fulfill the selection. As a result, most of the interviewees were directly or indirectly selected by the centers themselves. This can be problematic, as the center staff probably seek to present their workplace in a favorable light. Therefore, there is a chance that I have ended up only interviewing the most distinguished and loyal candidates. This can, in turn, make the centers emerge as nobler than they really are (Bryman, 2008, p. 211). However, my lack of knowledge meant that I did not have much choice.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, the centers are so small (see Chapter 4), it would have been hard to make a severely biased selection: Except from the Stabile Center, which picks about 15 Stabile students every year, I interviewed *all* the current student interns at both the New England CIR and at the Workshop. At the IRP Berkeley, I interviewed three out of five Mark Felt scholars (the students spending the most time at the center). In addition, I attempted to interview both alumni and prior staff members to get a less biased picture.<sup>61</sup>

As with participant observation, in-depth interviews are conducted by a biased human who serves as the instrument for data collection. Hence, the results of the interviews are highly dependent upon the researcher's interviewing skills and knowledge of the topics discussed. There is, for instance, always a risk that the researcher dominates the conversation to such a degree that the interviewees are unable to tell their stories in their own way, or asks the wrong questions (Ryen, 2002, p. 102). Moreover, the researcher's gender, ethnicity, class, and theoretical approach may affect both the interview and the later interpretation of what was said (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014; Figenschou, 2010; Odendahl & Shaw, 2002; Ryen, 2002).

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<sup>60</sup> The webpages of the centers did not contain enough detailed information about staff, students or partners to make a more neutral interviewee selection.

<sup>61</sup> Of prior staff members, I interviewed investigative reporter at the *Baltimore Sun*, Catherine Rentz, who used to be a Workshop reporter and the co-founder of the New England CIR, Maggie Mulvihill, who has now left the center. In addition, eight alumni were interviewed.

Being a former journalist, I was used to conducting interviews. I knew the importance of asking open questions, how to open an interview, not to dominate the situation too much (or too little), and to ask questions in the right order, etc. (Ryen, 2002, pp. 100-124). I was not, however, used to conducting interviews in English. In addition, I did not know the field (university nonprofits) very well. Therefore, I conducted five pilot interviews – four with Workshop students and one with the managing editor of the Workshop – testing questions, recording equipment, and my language skills. These interviews were later implemented in the material.

With the exception of three phone interviews and one Skype interview, all the interviews were conducted face to face at locations like the interviewee's office or a nearby café. I had presented both myself and my project through the emails requesting the interviews. During the meetings, further information was given, and the interviewees were asked if they had any questions. I also asked them to sign an informed consent form.<sup>62</sup> Since other researchers conducting interviews with reporters and editors in the U.S. had advised me to keep the form simple, it was formulated thus:

By this, I agree to be interviewed by research fellow Gunhild Ring Olsen for her PhD Project on the cooperation between journalism educators and news organizations. I agree to let her make use of my statements in her research, academic publications and in media articles on the subject.

At first, I asked the interviewees to sign the form prior to the interviews. However, as many of them reacted negatively, asking if “this really was necessary” or stating that I was not committed to use such a form in the U.S., I mostly started handing the consent form out when the interviews were finished. Following from this, the interview setting became less formal, and I could avoid the form drawing attention from the topics I wanted to discuss.

When meeting the interviewees, I also asked them for permission to use their full name in the report. Although it is normal to anonymize informants in much research,

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<sup>62</sup> The four persons interviewed by phone/Skype were asked to give an oral consent.

I wanted to avoid this for several reasons. First, the topics discussed were not sensitive, and most of the interviewees were used to expressing their opinions in public. Hence, I did not think that an anonymization was necessary in order to protect the interviewees' integrity, nor that it would have made them more outspoken. Second, journalists do not anonymize their sources unless it is absolutely necessary. Following from this, the interviewees would probably have found an anonymization both unnecessary and strange. Third, using full names can potentially increase the validity of the study. In addition to the interviewees becoming accountable for their statements, it makes my research more transparent. Citing a named interviewee incorrectly would probably lead to more reactions and corrections than incorrectly citing an anonymous interviewee. Finally, the centers are so small, and the people connected to them so few, that it would have been hard to achieve complete anonymization. Except for one interviewee asking me to contact her if I used her name in the report, none of the other 68 informants made any remarks about the use of full names.

In order to fully focus on what was said, and to avoid disturbing the interviewees, I chose not to take notes during the interviews. I did however write short memos shortly after finishing them, both summarizing main findings and pointing towards possible interpretations. In addition, I recorded all interviews using an app on my phone. This enabled me to analyze the interviews properly in the aftermath (Ryen, 2002, pp. 109-111). During one of the interviews, however, I forgot to put the phone on flight mode, and an incoming call disrupted the recording after 12 minutes. In the absence of a complete recording, I had to write down what I remembered immediately after finishing the interview.<sup>63</sup> Luckily, all the other recordings functioned without problems. All the interviewees were of course asked permission for recording, both in the email requesting the interview and during the actual meeting. In the one case where recording was not acceptable, I took notes instead.

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<sup>63</sup> The interview with Managing Editor Tim McGirk at the IRP Berkeley.

All of the 69 *formal* interviews conducted during this study were semi-structured, based on a set of preset questions (interview guides) (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 105).<sup>64</sup> In order to take advantage of each interviewee's special knowledge, some of the questions varied from group to group, from center to center, and from person to person. Most of the centers' staff members were for instance asked how the center balanced its teaching and producing roles, while the deans were asked why universities should be involved in the production of investigative journalism. In addition, all the groups were asked a set of cross-group core questions about the center, like "what works" and "what does not work as well?" Following from this, I could both make comparisons between the different centers and groups, and get in-depth information on central topics.

The formal interviews, with some exceptions, lasted for 35 to 45 minutes. The longest interview lasted for 70 minutes, while the shortest – a follow up interview with one of the Workshop students – lasted for eleven minutes.<sup>65</sup> Most of the time, the extent was determined by the interviewee's talkativeness. While some answered with short responses, others needed more time and space. I did however control the time to a certain degree, as I asked follow-up questions if the answers were short and incomplete – or attempted to move on if a subject felt exhausted.

In total, I ended up with 43 hours of interview recordings. In order to transcribe such extensive material, I hired three graduate students from American University. All three were paid from my own research funding, none was interviewed in the study, and none held central editorial positions at the Workshop. Moreover, in order for the transcriptions to be as accurate as possible, the students were paid by the hour and not per interview.

Before being handed any material, the transcribers signed a confidential agreement stating that they were not allowed to distribute or share the interviews or transcriptions in any form, and that they were committed to delete all provided material upon request. All three students were also given oral and written instructions

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<sup>64</sup> See Appendix B, "Interview guide, example".

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix C, "Interview and observation overview", for more information.



on how to conduct the transcribing. In general, the transcribers were asked to transcribe the full interviews word by word. However, if some parts of the interviews were obviously irrelevant, like when I answered questions about living in Norway, they were asked to mark a short summarization of the topic with brackets. An example could, for instance, be [Olsen talking about the best places to visit in Norway]. They were also asked to exclude small utterances with no relevance to the conversation (like “I see”, “hmm”, “eh” etc.), in addition to laughter. Moreover, if it was hard to decipher what was said, they were asked to mark the word or sentence(s) with hashtags (#).

After checking the first transcriptions thoroughly against the recordings, giving the students feedback if they had to change some of their routines, I started to carry out random checks of the finished transcriptions. Using Hyper Transcribe, the students had been asked to mark the text with time-codes every two minutes. Hence, it was relatively easy to track quotes or quality-check certain parts of the transcriptions. Except from some misspellings of names and misinterpretations of words, all three students appeared to produce accurate and reliable transcriptions. Moreover, since the students had better English skills than I did, they probably had a better foundation for avoiding mistakes. Following from this, the ten interview transcriptions I did myself are probably of lower quality than the student transcriptions.

The main negative aspect of in-depth interviews is that they are prone to bias. As previously discussed, the interviewees might want to represent themselves, their organization, their profession and their choice of action in a favorable light. Therefore they might withhold information or give answers making them appear better than they are (Bryman, 2008, p. 211). This especially applies when interviewing elites – known to use their power to control the interview and only presenting themselves in a positive light (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002). Since the centers of this study are small and unstable organizations, dependent on external support (see Chapter 4), they have everything to gain in being presented in a positive way. It is thus important to note that the information gained through the interviews probably give a somewhat “glossy” picture of the centers.

Although, being a relatively young, female researcher from a foreign country meeting representatives of the U.S. journalism elite, I never felt patronized. Most of the time, the interviews actually felt like meetings between somewhat equal partners, discussing a topic of common interest. The interviews settings thus seem to correspond with what Hannerz (2004) describes as “interviewing sideways”. The feeling of “studying sideways” instead of “studying up” (which often is the case when studying elites), was probably partially caused by my “insider” status. In addition, most of the interviewees were professional or aspiring reporters, used to meeting new people when conducting their own interviews. Following from this, many aspects that could have weakened my study – for instance my occasionally stuttering English – did not seem to cause much harm. Instead, my good, but not flawless, language skills sometimes proved an advantage. The use of “teaching” instead of “learning” could for instance lead to jokes about journalists and the lack of correct language, and thus break the ice. Moreover, being a foreigner made it easier to ask the interviewees to reformulate or elaborate their answers if something appeared unclear.

A more negative aspect of conducting the interviews in a foreign language was that I became less confident in the interview setting than normal. Following from this, I had to rely more upon the interview guides than would have been necessary in a Norwegian setting. Therefore, I might have missed some chances to discover new perspectives and unexpected topics through follow-up questions (Ryen, 2002, p. 102). In addition, the chances of misunderstanding did of course increase since I was not using my first language.

### **3.4.2 Observation**

From the pioneering studies of Tuchman (1978) and Gans (1980), observation has become a commonly used method within the tradition of news-production studies. One of the most positive aspects of the method is that it implies directness (Robson, 2002, p. 310). Instead of just asking people what they do, how they feel and what their attitudes are, the researcher can actually observe actions, emotions and attitudes as they are played out. The method is thus useful when wanting to detect the tacit

knowledge of a group or a profession (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 127). Following from this, observation has been described as a way of getting access to the "backstage culture" of a group (de Munck & Sobo, 1998, p. 43).

As mentioned above, the amount of observation is very unevenly distributed among the four centers of this study. While more than 80 days of observation was conducted at the Workshop, I only observed for four days or less at the other three centers. One could therefore argue that only the Workshop observation material is comprehensive enough to actually be labeled observation, as observing can be described as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 79). Although not systematic because of the short timeframe, I did however gain a lot of valuable information from the time spent at all four centers. Short or extended, the observing thus proved effective in order to gain a fuller understanding of the centers and their context. Through the time spent at the centers' offices and meetings, I did for instance realize just how much time and energy the centers had to use on tasks related to economy and funding. Moreover, the observation periods gave me an opportunity to adjust the interviewees' reality representations. Since being present during classes and practicums, I could observe how they were conducted and thus compare this impression to the descriptions given by the interviewees. I could also get a better impression of how well the partnerships with external news organizations functioned, and how closely the students were mentored. Sometimes, for instance, I could be told that the students worked very closely with the staff reporters while there was hardly any interaction at all during the observation period. This observation made me change the students' interview guides, asking them about how much mentoring they actually got during a week (in minutes or hours). As a result, the combination of observation and interviews helped me gain a fuller impression of how the centers were structured.

As already mentioned, the outcome of observation is highly dependent upon the researcher. Rather than being representative of what actually happens in a culture, observations are based on the researcher's individual interest in a setting or behavior. Moreover, the researcher can affect the situations and environments observed. Hence,

instead of being described as objective observers of meaning, researchers should be described as *constructors* of meaning (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 41). My observations do not represent the only “truth” about the centers, as other researchers would perhaps have emphasized other aspects and interpreted events differently. Attempting to influence the research results as little as possible, however, I chose to follow two well-known techniques.

First, I kept one version of the field notes at the lowest possible abstraction level. Through only describing what was actually seen and heard, I had a less subjective starting point for the later analyses (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, p. 37). This proved helpful as, several times, I experienced that my interpretations changed when obtaining increased knowledge on a subject.

Second, I chose an “observer as participant” stance. This means that I participated in some of the center activities, but my main role was to collect data (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 115). At three of the centers, I spent most of the time sitting in the center’s office space working on my computer and observing at the same time.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, when attending meetings or classes I attempted to keep as low a profile as possible – only actively participating when asked questions. Choosing an “observer as participant” stance also meant that I did not conduct any reporting or teaching on behalf of the centers. At the Workshop in particular, my role can be described as a “peripheral membership role”. This role enabled me to observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 380).

Although the “observer as participant” role is known to influence the phenomenon under study less than, for instance, the “complete participant” role (Østbye et al., 2013, pp. 115-116), the center staff, students and reporters were of course influenced by my presence. Sometimes, it did seem as if the center reporters interacted more with the students when I was in the newsroom (this sensation was based on the

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<sup>66</sup> As previously mentioned, the Stabile Center did not have its own office space.

reactions of the students). Furthermore, after interviewing one of the staff members about the center's knowledge base (see Chapter 7); one of the classes seemed to become more structured and theoretically oriented. On one occasion, I was also asked to give advice on how to improve the organization of the class. In these cases, the concerns of keeping a low profile and the wish of "giving something back" could be hard to reconcile. As with most observers as participants, I felt a debt of gratitude because of the time and energy invested in my project. At the same time, I wanted to influence the centers as little as possible. This balance proved difficult, especially at the Workshop, as I was part of the center for two whole semesters. Often, the solution was giving a little back, but not too much. For instance, I turned down the offer of co-writing a story about international nonprofits while at the Workshop, though I agreed to write an essay on my primary findings after returning to Norway.

### **3.4.3 The content analysis**

Unlike in-depth interviews and observation, content analysis is known as a quantitative method. When the first general textbook in content analysis was published in 1952, the method was defined as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). Following from this definition, many academics, including Neuendorf (2002), have claimed that the content analysis "fits the positivism paradigm of social research" – attending to criteria like objectivity, a priori design, reliability, generalizability, replicability and hypothesis testing (pp. 11-13). From this perspective, conducting a quantitative content analysis in a study influenced by critical realism (CR) seems illogical. As previously discussed, CR claims that objectivity is impossible as all events or objects are always mediated through the filter of human experience and interpretation. Following from this, the aspects of reliability and replicability become particularly problematic. Later definitions of content analysis, however, have become more constructivist-oriented. Krippendorff (2004) for instance argues that "all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers" (p. 16). Following from this, there is nothing inherent in a text that can be measured without interpretation, he claims (p. 28). Moreover, texts have meanings relative to particular contexts,

discourses or purposes. This means that the researcher must *choose* which context to draw specific inferences from (pp. 28-31). Krippendorff's way of understanding content analysis thus does not collide with the worldview of CR. Inspired by Krippendorff, this study sees content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts [...] to the contexts of their use" (2004, p. 18).<sup>67</sup>

As I wanted to conduct a content analysis in order to examine the four centers' potential of producing quality reporting, I chose to analyze ten single stories from each of the four centers. As the centers have specialized in publishing relatively few, but extensive, in-depth stories, this represented about one-year's production.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, I chose to analyze the most recent stories published, as the centers' structures seemed to be constantly changing (see Chapter 4). Therefore, the newest stories would probably give the most accurate picture of their current producing potential. In addition, the following selection criteria were applied:

- Since studying the centers' potential as professional platforms, the teaching aspect of their operation was important. I thus wanted to prioritize stories where students were listed in the byline or as contributors.
- As the cooperation with the external news organizations was a central aspect when selecting the centers, all stories analyzed had to be published by an external news outlet. If more than one outlet had published the story, the story published by the outlet with the largest audience number was analyzed.
- Only single stories were analyzed, even though they were follow-ups or part of a series.
- To make sure that the readers of my study could read/see/listen to the stories analyzed themselves – and thus quality-check my analysis – only stories openly published on the web were selected.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Both the aspect of replicability and validity are further discussed below.

<sup>68</sup> See Chapters 4 and 6 for details on each centers production.

<sup>69</sup> As most outlets give you access to a certain number of stories for free, the only production excluded by this selection criteria was the Workshop/Showtime production "Years of Living Dangerously".

- Because the journalism profession's jurisdiction over *news* is at the center of this study, only news stories were included. Comments, academic/scholarly articles, graphics without text, chats, blogs, etc. were not part of the selection. Both text, audio and video news stories were included.
- In order for me to understand them, the analyzed stories had to be published in English.<sup>70</sup>

In spite of relatively clear selection criteria, the actual selection of stories did however prove a little complicated. First, it was not always unproblematic to select stories produced by center staff and students, as two of the centers (the IRP Berkeley and the Workshop) published stories produced by external nonprofits and students alongside their own work. According to the center staff managing the webpages, this was done in order to keep the webpage “fresh”, or to draw attention to interesting investigative work conducted by others (J. Hui interview November 12. 2014, L. Perri interview May 28. 2015). Hence, I had to consult the centers' staff in order to separate the center stories from the external stories. Second, I could not always find ten stories where students had contributed with the help of the center webpages. Normally, all center stories that were published by an external news outlet were also published on the center webpage. Therefore, I could start at the top of the list (the most recently published stories) and check if the story fitted the selection criteria. If it did, I later found the story to analyze on the webpage of the largest news outlet that had published it. If the story did not meet the selection criteria, I proceeded down the list until finding the ten most recent stories that did. The IRP Berkeley webpage, however, did not contain enough stories fulfilling the selection criteria.<sup>71</sup> Hence, I had to ask Managing Editor Tim McGirk for additional stories that were recently published where students had participated. Following from this, three of the IRP Berkeley stories were selected by the center itself. This can of course have resulted in a biased selection, with the managing editor choosing the most impressive stories. Furthermore, even with the additional stories I got through McGirk, I did not have ten

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<sup>70</sup> Some of the largest news outlets publishing versions of the stories, like Univision, publish in Spanish. In these cases, the largest outlets publishing in English were chosen.

<sup>71</sup> The IRP Berkeley webpages are now redesigned. The new version seems to contain both more stories and more information on the stories produced.

productions. As a result, I had to include some of the most recent stories produced by the IRP Berkeley staff and fellows where students had *not* contributed. Luckily, the other centers' webpages were more transparent. The Stabile Center webpage for instance included a subtab listing the most recently published student publications, including links to the publishing news outlets. The New England CIR and Workshop webpages also contained enough stories to make a selection.

### **The construction of the codebook**

As already stated, journalistic quality cannot be directly observed or measured. I thus needed to construct a codebook that could measure different quality *indicators*. Because of the theoretical framework of this study (see Chapter 2), these quality indicators were based upon the common occupational ideology of journalism. All the variables<sup>72</sup> were thus constructed in order to measure aspects like democratic relevancy, level of truth, accountability, critical attitude, and engagement potential (see section 2.2.5). Through registering the primary content categories of the center stories, I could for instance catalogue whether the centers covered areas believed to hold high democratic relevancy – like education, economics, and foreign affairs (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 151). Moreover, the number of sources in a story could indicate the amount of time and resources used to produce it, which in turn could point towards an attempt to get as close to the “truth” as possible. Additionally, the use of observation and personalization could heighten the chances of the stories being perceived as meaningful and engaging (see further details in section 6.2.2). All in all, the final version of the codebook consisted of 38 variables designed to register features like bylines, audiences, formats, awards, citations, type of sources, proportion, level of originality, and level of conflict (see Appendix D, “Codebook content analysis”, for details).

Most of the codebook, as with most content analysis, was constructed prior to the actual analysis with the help of existing theory. Hence, the analysis can be said to

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<sup>72</sup> A variable is a definable and measurable construct that varies, meaning that it holds different values for different individual cases or units (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 48).



have a deductive, a priori design (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 11). When constructing the variable “soft news/hard news”, for instance, I read several articles on the subject before deciding on a definition of the two categories. Following from this definition, I constructed a variable consisting of three dimensions: topic, focus and style. If a story could be considered soft in the topic-dimension and one of the other dimensions (focus or style), it was considered soft. However, if it was considered hard in the topic-dimension and one of the other dimensions, it was considered hard. If the story was categorized different in topic than in both focus and style, it was put in the category “neither” (see Appendix D, variable 25, for details).

Although most of the variables and categories were based upon existing theory, I also had to more or less construct some myself, such as “proportion” and “audience”. Starting with “proportion”, many content analyses have measured proportion within one publishing platform (for instance print). My selection however consisted of print, web, audio, and video productions. I thus had to create my own, common measurement scale. Because it was easy to visualize, and because the vast majority of stories had text as the main media component, I decided to use the scale “A4 pages”. Hence, I had to decide how many A4 pages one minute of audio or video would count as, and how many A4 pages different forms of graphics, photos and illustrations would make. This method of measuring proportion was of course inaccurate, something that made me consider dropping the variable on several occasions. Finally, I decided to keep it for two main reasons: it could give an *impression* of the proportion of the stories; and the measurement procedure was described in detail in the codebook (see Appendix D, variable nine). Therefore, although imprecise, the readers of my study had the opportunity to see exactly how the proportion of the stories was measured, and thus make up their own mind about the validity of the measurement.<sup>73</sup>

The construction of the “audience” variable posed similar challenges. The encounter in comparing potential audience numbers across platforms lay in merging different

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<sup>73</sup> This view upon validity highly corresponds with the previously mentioned theory of coherence, and will be further discussed in section 3.7.

audience-measurement scales – like unique visitors per month, daily circulation, and average listeners/viewers – into a common “audience” category. At first, I attempted to adapt the measurements through, for instance, splitting the monthly numbers into daily numbers. This however did not seem to make the numbers more accurate as they were not story-specific. Moreover, the consumption of stories on different platforms can vary significantly. While print stories are often read the same day, online stories can have a much longer life because of social media and googling (Ottosen & Krumsvik, 2008, pp. 48-52). Hence, I found the merging of the different scales to be the best solution, despite the differences in measurement time. As with the measurement of proportion, the potential audience numbers can however only constitute an approximate indication.

Having made the first version of the codebook, I conducted a test analysis of ten stories in order to modify the different variables. During this process, I realized that I had to clarify several of the definitions and categories used. As a large number of sources appeared in the stories in very different ways, I soon realized that the source classification needed further clarification. Therefore, I decided that only specified sources that were named<sup>74</sup> and quoted directly or indirectly would be registered. Following from this, the sentence “some employees protested against the ruling”, for instance, is not considered to contain a specified source. However, within the sentence “according to some employees, they protested against the ruling”, “some employees” count as one source. Additionally, some variables were broken down into multiple variables. The variable “format” was divided into the variables “video”, “graphics”, “still pictures”, and “audio” in order to get a better overview. I also decided to drop some variables like “journalistic style” and “narrative voice”, as they were too hard to operationalize. Other variables were, as described above, retained under some doubt.

Some of the changes made to the codebook were also practically motivated. When counting sources, for instance, I ended up using the transcripts of the audio and video stories when available as counting sources based on long video and audio clips

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<sup>74</sup> Naming includes both names and titles, like “the nurse”, “several lawyers”, “Phil Smith”, etc.

proved very time consuming. The IRP Berkeley/*Frontline* production “Firestone and the Warlord” (story number B1)<sup>75</sup>, lasted for 84 minutes and contained about 57 sources. Moreover, counting sources in the transcripts seemed to give more or less the same results, as only two or three sources seemed to be left out of the transcript per story (often the written sources, like papers or photographs, documenting different events).<sup>76</sup> Overall, the positive aspects of using transcripts seemed to exceed the negative, and the codebook was changed.

In addition to the pilot testing, some parts of the codebook were also changed during the actual content analysis. Whenever this happened, I had to code all the stories analyzed through the prior version of the relevant variable all over again. Therefore, although deductive at the beginning, the content-analyzing process as a whole can be described as a combination of induction and deduction.

### **The inter coder reliability check**

In the tradition of content analysis, testing reliability and replicability through inter coder reliability checks is central. In short, this means testing if other researchers end up with nearly the same results when using the relevant codebook on the same material. Within more constructivist-oriented research paradigms, the emphasis on replicability is disputed due to the similarities with positivism's emphasis on falsifiable and verifiable theories (Ryen, 2002, p. 176). As Krippendorff (2012) puts it, content-analysis researchers must do their best to explicate what they have done and describe how they have derived their judgments so that others – especially critics – can replicate the results (p. 5). To a study like this, influenced by the CR research paradigm, replicating results is in itself not a major point. However, constructing a codebook with the goal of passing an inter coder reliability check will probably make the codebook more clearly defined and orderly. Hence, the inter coder reliability check can be an important tool in order to reach the goal of most research: avoiding the biases of the investigator as far as possible (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 11). Moreover,

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<sup>75</sup> See Appendix E, “List of stories, content analysis” for an overview of the analyzed stories.

<sup>76</sup> When the stories contained a combination of text and short audio and/or video clips, both the text and the audio/video material was analyzed. If the same source appeared in more than one of the story components, it was only registered once (see Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, for further details).

developing a detailed codebook corresponds with the validity requirement of qualitative research: describing the research process and the choices made, openly and in detail.

In short, inter coder reliability refers to the amount of agreement or correspondence among two or more coders (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 141). Agreement can here be described as whether or not coders agree as to the precise values assigned to a variable across a set of units. In other words, it looks at hits and misses (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 143). Do the coders for instance put the same stories in the same primary content categories? Are the number of sources registered in the articles more or less the same?

In this study, as all of the 40 stories were analyzed by me, the inter coder reliability check consisted of a second person<sup>77</sup> coding 20 percent of the data (eight stories). As conducting a reliability check is both time-consuming and resource-demanding, only nine variables were tested. These were however the variables thought to be the most latent. Since objectivity is a much tougher criterion to achieve with latent than with manifest variables, variables measuring latent content are expected to receive generally lower reliability scores (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 146). Following from this, the nine chosen variables would probably give lower reliability scores than the untested variables. It is thus possible to argue that the inter coder reliability of the whole content analysis is acceptable as long as the nine chosen variables appeared to have a sufficient level of agreement. Put in other words: If the codebook is complete and unambiguous enough to eliminate individual differences among coders when analyzing latent content, this is probably also the case when it is applied upon manifest content.

Before the actual reliability check began, the test coder was trained through a collective coding of two stories not included in the test sample. During the factual test, the coding was however done independently, without consultation or guidance (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002, p. 601). A random sample of eight stories

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<sup>77</sup> PhD fellow at Volda University College, Anne Natvig.

was analyzed, conducted via Excel: Four Workshop stories (A1, A5, A7 and A9), two IRP Berkeley stories (B6 and B7), one Stabile Center story (C4), and one New England CIR story (D8). The nine variables tested were “primary content categories” (variable 10), “specified sources” (variable 12), “elite sources” (variable 15), “ordinary sources” (variable 16), “soft news/hard news” (variable 25), “level of conflict” (variable 27), “number of viewpoints in conflict” (variable 28), “observation/scenes” (variable 34) and “focus on person(s)” (variable 35).

Several coefficients are available for reporting the level of agreement or correspondence between coders’ assessments, for instance Scott’s *pi* and Cohen’s *kappa* (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 148). Because of the data characteristics, I chose to calculate simple agreement through percent agreement ( $PA_o=A/n$ ). This involves dividing the number of agreements between the coders (*A*) by the total number of units the two coders have coded for the test (*n*). Hence, the results can range from .00 (no agreement) to 1.00 (perfect agreement) (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 149). For the three ratio variables, namely “specified sources” (variable 12), “elite sources” (variable 15), and “ordinary sources” (variable 16), I did *not* however calculate percent agreement, as one of the most important drawbacks of using simple agreement – in addition to the failure to account for chance agreement – is the rigid requirement of the perfect matching of coder’s scores (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 149). In other words, in order to get a “hit”, coder a (myself) and coder b (the test coder) would have needed to register the exact same number of sources in the stories analyzed. If coder a counted 38 sources and coder b counted 40 sources it would be considered a “miss”. Following from this, all my ratio variables would have ended up with a no agreement result (.00), in spite of the numbers registered being close. Therefore, I chose to expand the notion of precise agreement to what might be called range agreement – counting a hit every time the two coders came to a result within a certain distance of one another (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 150). For results involving numbers higher than five, I divided the lowest number by the highest number, getting the overlapping percentage. If the overlapping percentage was higher than .75, for instance if coder a counted 42 sources and coder b counted 37 sources, it was considered it a hit ( $37/42=.88$ ). Results including numbers lower than five were however considered a

hit if the results did not vary by more than two sources, as calculating overlapping percentage based on such low numbers would have been misleading. If, for instance, coder a counted one source and coder b counted two sources, it was considered a hit.<sup>78</sup>

Following from the procedure described above, the inter coder reliability test of this study resulted in agreement ranging from 75 to 100 percent across the variables (see Table 1).

*Table 1. Percent/range agreement for the variables tested in the inter coder reliability check.<sup>79</sup>*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Percent/range agreement</i>
Primary content categories (variable 10)	100
Specified sources (variable 12)	75
Elite sources (variable 15)	88
Ordinary sources (variable 16)	75
Soft news/hard news (variable 25)	100
Level of conflict (variable 27)	88
Number of viewpoints in conflict (variable 28)	75
Observation/scenes (variable 34)	88
Focus on person(s) (variable 35)	75

As most textbooks do not offer a specific criterion of acceptable agreement, and those that do vary somewhat in their recommendations, whether these results are acceptable can be debated. According to Neuendorf, reliability coefficients of .90 or greater would be acceptable to all, while .80 or greater would be acceptable in most situations. For coefficients of .80 or lower, there is however “great disagreement” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 143). Hence, the inter coder reliability coefficient of four of my variables might be considered too low. Following from this, the next step could have been 1) dropping the variables, 2) reconfiguring them with fewer and better-defined categories, 3) using the variables only as components in a multi measure index, or 4) using noncontent analysis data for the particular variables (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 160). I chose to keep all variables as they were for three main reasons:

<sup>78</sup> If calculating overlapping percentage, the result of this example would have been .50.

<sup>79</sup> See Appendix F, “Inter coder reliability check, coding results, content analysis”, for a more detailed overview.

First, a higher frequency of occurrences coded allows for greater difference in agreement among coders before crossing the reliability threshold within a category than when there are a low number of occurrences coded (Compton, Love, & Sell, 2012, p. 357). As the two ratio variables with the lowest score register a relatively high number of sources (in the test results, the highest source number counted is 62), a range agreement of .75 could thus be considered acceptable.

Second, the variables tested can all be said to measure latent content. As previously mentioned, “objectivity” is a much tougher criterion to achieve with latent than with manifest variables (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 146). Therefore, a range or percent agreement of .75 on variables measuring latent content can be more acceptable than if obtained on variables measuring manifest content.

Third, the different coding results might not necessarily be caused by poor operational definitions or categories alone; coder misinterpretations, coder inattention and coder fatigue might also have been interfering causes (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 112). As the stories analyzed are comprehensive, in addition to including several media formats (story number A9, “Prosecutors build murder cases on disputed Shaken Baby Syndrome”, for instance contains an extended text, multiple videos, and graphics), the risk of misinterpretations, inattention, and fatigue increases. In sum, I thus consider the reliability of all the tested variables – including the ones with a percent or range agreement of .75 – acceptable.

### 3.5 Strategy of analysis

The way the analysis of the collected data is done is crucial for what kind of knowledge is produced (Mason & Dale, 2010, p. 18). Because of the different methods used in this study, the strategy of analysis also varied. As described above, the content analysis had a deductive, a priori design as a starting point, while the later analyzing process was a combination of induction and deduction. Also the interview and observation data were analyzed through a combination of induction and deduction. However, in contrast to the content analysis, the starting point of the interview and observation analysis was truly inductive. Moreover, also in contrast to

the content analysis, the observation and interview data were analyzed through a thematic analysis, meaning that patterns (themes) were identified, analyzed and reported (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). As the content analysis is described in detail above, this section will mainly concentrate on the analysis of the qualitative data material.

### **3.5.1 The thematic analysis**

Instead of using existing theory as a base, the analysis of the transcribed interviews and the field notes started using two types of empirical data: extensive and intensive (Fletcher, 2017, p. 5). While the extensive data consisted of information on nonprofit university centers in general, the intensive data material was gained through the in depth interviews and observation of this study.

To begin, the extensive data was retrieved through several literature searches in databases such as Bibsys, Oria, EBSCOhost Web, UMI Dissertation Express, WorldCat and Academic Search Elite. I also did some searches at Google scholar and in the databases of journals representing the field, such as the *Journal of the Association for Journalism Education*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism Practice* and *Journal for Applied Journalism & Media Studies*. Since there seemed to be little research on the subject, I had to use several different search phrases. Some of these were: “investigative reporting students university nonprofit”; “nonprofit university investigative journalism students”; “nonprofit university investigative reporting”; “nonprofit university investigative”; “investigative reporting students”; “investigative journalism students”; “nonprofit journalism universities”; “universities professional journalism”; “newsroom as classroom”; and “teaching hospital journalism”. In addition, I undertook searches using the names of the four selected centers. Despite all these searches, I did not get many hits. Following from this, there seems to be little research conducted on nonprofit university centers producing investigative reporting. There are, however, several studies exploring the broader field of nonprofit journalism. As previously mentioned, both the Pew Research Center and The Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University have produced several reports on the relatively new phenomenon (Holcomb et al., 2011; C.



Lewis, 2010b; C. Lewis et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2013). In addition, a number of case studies have examined a small selection of nonprofit newsrooms. Of these, Magdalena D. Konieczna's PhD dissertation *A Better News Organization: Can nonprofits improve on the commercial news organizations from which they arose?* (2014) seems to be the most congruent with this study.<sup>80</sup> As the Pew Research Center and the Investigative Reporting Workshop report, Konieczna's dissertation does not however focus on university nonprofits or nonprofits conducting investigative reporting. Nevertheless, nonprofits of this kind, including the four nonprofit university centers of this study, are mentioned in all studies. In addition, some reports of nonprofits specializing in investigative reporting exist, like Kaplan's *Global Investigative Journalism: Strategies for Support* (2013). There are also a few studies examining university nonprofits, like Francisco, Lenhoff and Schudson's "The Classroom as Newsroom: Leveraging University Resources for Public Affairs Reporting" (2012). Therefore, the extensive empirical data material gathered was a patchwork based on studies circling the main theme of this study (in section 4.1, some of the extensive material collected is presented).

For details on the gathering of the *intensive* data material, see section 3.4.

Since conducting a thematic analysis, the first step was familiarizing myself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Hence, I re-read the transcribed interviews and field notes while writing down initial ideas. The next step was generating the initial codes. With the help of NVivo I started coding different features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. As advised, I coded for as many potential themes/patterns as possible, as it was difficult to know what might be interesting later (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 88-89). Moreover, I coded extracts of data inclusively, meaning that I kept a little of the surrounding data in order to understand the context better in the coming phases of the analysis. In some cases, the same extracts of data were coded as several different nodes/themes. This was done in order avoid determining the analysis at too-early a

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<sup>80</sup> Konieczna conducted ethnographic work at three nonprofit news organizations: The Center for Public Integrity, the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, and MinnPost (Konieczna, 2014, p. i).

stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 88-89). Since my data material was extensive, most of the initial codes were mainly descriptive<sup>81</sup>, with “center descriptions”, “economy”, “partners and production”, “views on journalism”, and “teaching, research and innovation” as the superior nodes.<sup>82</sup> Hence, the first part of the analysis mainly consisted of making the large quantity of material more lucid.

The third step of the analysis process was collating the codes into potential themes.<sup>83</sup> In this phase of the analysis the theoretical framework of the study became more relevant as, for instance, I started looking for aspects in the material pointing towards professionalization or deprofessionalization. From the theory, I could conclude that autonomy is often seen as central for professions to succeed. To be successful professional platforms, the centers thus had to be more or less independent. Following from this, I started searching for indicators of dependency and independency in the initial codes. Some of the themes, like “autonomy”, thus ended up consisting of data from most of the initial codes, as the centers’ structure, economy and partnerships seemed to influence their independency. Other themes, like “knowledge base”, were mainly based upon one of the initial codes (“teaching, research and innovation”).

In contrast to the work on the initial codes, most of the theme-developing work was conducted in Word, using different headline-levels in combination with the navigation pane. At first, both relevant theory and relevant empirical data were put into the same Word document. This could result in preliminary documents of themes or subthemes consisting of more than 100 pages. After organizing, reorganizing, writing and rewriting the material multiple times, the documents turned into chapters or sections in the research report. In order to keep the empirical material as transparent and easy to navigate within as possible, the initial NVivo codes were not changed during the theme-developing process. Through keeping the codes at a descriptive level, the analysis process became more flexible, as I could easily start all over again if deciding to change or modify the themes of the analysis. The analysis

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<sup>81</sup> Descriptive codes are also named organizational codes (Fletcher, 2017, p. 6).

<sup>82</sup> See Appendix G, “Nodes NVivo”, for an overview.

<sup>83</sup> Called “demi-reguliarities” by many critical realists (Fletcher, 2017, p. 5).

was thus not a linear process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Instead, it was a recursive process, constantly moving back and forth between phases, empirical data and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86).

Following from the above, the starting point of the thematic analysis was inductive. When developing the actual themes, however, existing theory became more central. Hence, the analysis process can be described as abductive, defined as an combination of induction and deduction where “something new” is added (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 114). In other words, I have attempted to interpret a particular phenomenon (the nonprofit university centers) from a set of general ideas or concepts (the theory of professions) in order to present new knowledge (Fletcher, 2017, p. 8). Within critical realism (CR) this process is called retroduction (Fletcher, 2017, p. 9). The goal of retroduction strongly coincides with CR ontology<sup>84</sup>, namely, moving back and forth between observable phenomena (the empirical level) and possible explanations (theory) in an endeavor to gain deeper knowledge of a complex reality (the real level). Following from this, the ideal analytic process should involve a progression from description, where the data have simply been organized to show patterns in semantic content, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications – often in relation to previous literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). When writing the research report, the goal has thus been to reflect upon possible explanations and implications of the empirical data and not just a descriptive report of a new phenomenon. As an example, instead of only presenting the interviewees’ different views upon quality reporting, I have, with the help of existing theory, attempted to describe *why* the interviewees describe quality reporting the way they do – and what implications these descriptions have.

### **3.5.2 Quantification**

As previously described, qualitative research is mainly preoccupied with content and character, not scale and extent. Hence, most of the data collected from the in-depth interviews and observation is used, analyzing specific themes in depth. On some

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<sup>84</sup> See section 3.2.1

occasions, I have however quantified some of the qualitative data material in order to give readers an indicative overview of the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Therefore, phrases like “the majority of the interviewees”, “several interviewees”, “some interviewees” and “a few interviewees” can be found in the text. I have been reluctant to use exact numbers when referring to the interview material, as qualitative data, as I see it, has an openness and ambiguity that requires a cautious approach to quantification in order to avoid a false impression of certainty and regularity. Moreover, the level of interest a subject has is not just determined by its occurrence in the material; a subject mentioned by three of the interviewees could be given equal or more space in the research report than a subject mentioned by 20 interviewees.

In contrast to the analysis of the qualitative data, exact numbers are of course used frequently when presenting the data from the content analysis. As previously described, the whole point of a content analysis is converting certain characteristics of a text into numbers. After coding the stories, all the results were written down in separate coding forms. Thereafter, all the codes from all the forms were gathered in a single SPSS file.<sup>85</sup> Through SPSS the numbers were analyzed, finding means, medians, the distribution of individual variables, similarities of differences between the centers, etc. As with the analysis of the qualitative data, the overall goal of the content analysis was to combine deduction and induction in order to gain deeper knowledge of a complex reality. Hence, both analyzing methods can be said to fit into the ontology of critical realism.

## 3.6 Ethical considerations

### 3.6.1 Studying my own field

As described in the introduction, I am what Niblock (2007) labels a practitioner-academic (p. 21). In addition to working as a journalist and editor for ten years, I am currently a journalism lecturer, having both working knowledge (knowing how) and theoretical knowledge (knowing what) of journalism practice and teaching (p. 28).

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<sup>85</sup> Appendix H, “Coding Scheme, content analysis”, contain all the codes.

As previously discussed, my journalistic background has given me several advantages during the research process. In addition to easier access to informants, the knowledge of context and professional codes has abetted me to ask more precise questions when collecting data and conducting the analysis. My background knowledge can also have reduced the research impact, as it can have made it less relevant for the interviewees to put up a façade or to conceal something (Støkken & Nylehn, 2002, p. 210). Moreover, some claim that journalism research “to date has been predominantly shaped by the work of scholars who are non-practitioners” (Niblock, 2007, p. 28). Therefore, an “insider” perspective like mine can prove helpful in order to register “uncharted territory” (Niblock, 2007, p. 28).<sup>86</sup>

Of more negative aspects, a lack of analytical distance, over-identification with the interviewees, and forgetting to problematize the customary are known challenges when conducting research in one’s own field (Støkken & Nylehn, 2002, p. 211). Hovden (2008) warns that “journalists-scientists” and “scientists-journalists” are structurally inclined to play a double game for academic and journalistic capital. Hence, they appear especially susceptible to mistake highly ideological, dominant classifications as natural. Moreover, they often transform journalistic problems and interests into scientific problems – for instance through their preoccupation with “bad” versus “good” journalism, and through attempting to solve the professions problems through scientific analysis (pp. 30-31).<sup>87</sup>

In order to minimize the negative aspects of doing research in my own field, I have endeavored to follow two main strategies. First, I have attempted to be as open as possible about my journalistic background, and its implications. According to this study’s research paradigm, I believe that value judgements guide all research. All scholars are part of what they study, meaning that a neutral and positivistic stance reflecting no kind of normative conviction is impossible (Henriksen, 2011, p. 13). However, without being aware of these necessary normative dimensions, they may

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<sup>86</sup> Several academics do not agree with this view. According to Hovden (2008), press research in Norway has been dominated by ex-journalists (p. 31).

<sup>87</sup> One could state that this is a precise description of this study, focusing on quality journalism and university nonprofits as a possible solution to the journalism crisis.

tend to determine the field of studies in ways that are not desirable. Henriksen (2011) believes that it is only the awareness of the different dimensions of normativity in empirical studies that makes it possible to handle the impact of these normative dimensions in a transparent, and accordingly, scholarly way (p. 13). An important aspect of scientific normativity is that it is not hidden and implied, but “explicit and open for discussion and criticism”<sup>88</sup> (p. 78). Therefore, I have striven towards making implicit normative theories explicit (see the discussion of the term “professional” and “quality” in Chapter 2). I have also attempted to become aware of my own biases, tried to minimize them, and strived to be open about them in the research report. In Chapter 1, I have for instance declared that the initial selection of research topic (can nonprofit university centers be part of the solution to the journalism crisis?) is a direct result of my journalistic background and the wish to contribute to the development of journalism.<sup>89</sup> Being aware of my own normative starting point, I have however attempted to stay extra critical towards the focus of my study: the nonprofit university centers. Having a normative orientation is, in other words, as emphasized by numerous academics including Aakvaag (2008) and Henriksen (2011), not the same as conducting uncritical research.

Second, and following from the above, I have actively reflected on my own role when interacting with the interviewees, the empirical data, and the theoretical perspectives. An example is the use of alternative theories and explanation frames – known to counteract the negative aspects of value orientations (Aakvaag, 2008; Benson, 2008; Henriksen, 2011). Although emphasizing the work of academics belonging to the third phase of research on professions – seeing professions as having the potential to perform necessary, positive functions in society – the perspectives of the second period, which examines the role and power of professions more critically, is also applied.<sup>90</sup> The view upon professions as powerful groups attempting to achieve economic and social gains at the expense of others is, for instance, as previously

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<sup>88</sup> This applies to both research that strives to be value free, and research that has a declared normative basis (Henriksen, 2011, p. 78).

<sup>89</sup> As shown in section 2.2, this view upon journalism often is deeply connected to seeing journalism as having the potential to strengthen the universal value of democracy.

<sup>90</sup> See description of the different phases of research on professions in section 2.1.

mentioned, central when analyzing the professional view of the interviewees in section 6.1. I have also critically examined the empirical data in order to find information that contradicts my own theories and tentative conclusions. Hence, during the whole analyzing process, I have read and reread several of the interviews to be sure the analysis results are adequate. In spite of being a “scientist-journalist”, I have thus made a conscious effort *not* to mistake highly ideological, dominant classifications as natural. Moreover, the fact that the research was conducted in a foreign country might have hindered an over-identification with the interviewees. In sum, the openness and awareness described above is an attempt to increase the credibility of the study (see further discussion in section 3.7).

Despite the two approaches described above, my background did cause some misunderstandings. The most major by far was my ignorance about the The Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research (NSD) at the beginning of the research process. As a journalist, an external organization had never had to approve my work. To reporters, such interference would have been perceived as an attempt to restrict the freedom of expression (see section 2.1). Therefore, it never occurred to me that freely given, informed, and explicit interviewee consents was insufficient, and that an ombudsman organization for research existed.<sup>91</sup> Because of my background, I did in other words forget to problematize the customary. I therefore applied to NSD for approval *after* conducting the interviews.<sup>92</sup> Luckily, journalism and research share many of the same norms and values (see section 5.2.1). I had already fulfilled all of NSD’s demands, except one: I had not asked the interviewees if they were ok with the data being stored after the study’s expiration date. I thus emailed all the interviewees<sup>93</sup> asking them to give me notice within two weeks if not agreeing to the data storage. Moreover, I used the opportunity to double check if all still agreed to participate in the study under their full name. I also asked the interviewees to make

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<sup>91</sup> As discussed above, none of my interviewees were considered vulnerable, and all agreed to the use of full names. Under different circumstances, for instance if interviewing vulnerable groups, I probably would have been made more aware of NSDs existence.

<sup>92</sup> See Appendix I: “Project assessment, the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research”.

<sup>93</sup> Except from the Workshop data editor, David Donald, who I was sorry to learn died in December 2016. Instead of the email, I went through all of Donald’s statements one more time, double-checking the transcript against the recording of the interview.

contact if they had any questions about or remarks upon the study as a whole. None of the interviewees had any objections. Thus, being a practitioner-academic caused me, the NSD, and the interviewees extra work. Most of the time, being drilled in the journalism professions ethical guidelines (Norsk Presseforbund, 2015) was however a useful supplement to the ethics of social sciences, humanities, law and theology (Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics [NESH], 2016).

In sum, being a practitioner-academic has had both advantages and disadvantages. Because of the precautions taken, I do however think that the advantages from my background (access, knowledge and an alternative perspective) exceeded the possible disadvantages (lack of distance, over-identification, and forgetting to problematize the customary). Moreover, holding a mainly practice-oriented knowledge view (see section 2.3), I see it important that the term “research” also includes aspects like the codification of tacit knowledge. From this perspective, practitioners, coaches, and researchers studying their own practice can make an important contribution to a profession’s knowledge base (Schön, 1988, p. 326). Furthermore, as the main focus of the practice-oriented knowledge view is building professional capability, the preoccupation with “bad” versus “good” journalism becomes highly relevant. The criticism of “scientists-journalists” referred to above, can in other words be the result of “clashing epistemologies” (see further discussion in section 7.1.3).

### **3.6.2 Other ethical considerations**

Compared with much research, this study has involved few ethical challenges. First, none of the topics discussed were especially controversial. Second, no vulnerable groups were involved. At the beginning of the research process, I did consider anonymizing the students as they were the most vulnerable group of the interviewees. However, as graduates at some of the most prominent journalism education programs in the world (see Chapter 4), I concluded that an anonymization was unnecessary. Hence, no special precautions were taken towards any of the interviewees.

For more general ethical considerations I have attempted to obtain “integrity in documentation, consistency in argumentation, impartiality in assessment and openness regarding uncertainty” (NESH, 2016). In addition to the two strategies



described above, this means that I have avoided anonymization of the interviewees, and used accurate literature references – specifying chapters or pages when possible. Moreover, I have attempted to conduct a clear distinction between the informants' descriptions and my own interpretations. Since having only indirect access to the phenomena of study (the centers' level of professionalism and the quality of their reporting), and because of the several possible causes of error, I have also been careful with not being too categorical in my conclusions. Further, I let the center leaders<sup>94</sup> read a rough draft of the study, to give them the opportunity to correct *factual* wrongs or misunderstandings.<sup>95</sup> This was done as I found that an exploratory study like this, with a lot of detailed and new information, was likely to contain errors – in spite of my efforts to avoid them.<sup>96</sup>

As described above, conducting interviews in English has sometimes been challenging. When starting to write the research report, the use of a foreign language also made the argumentation less precise. As a result, I considered writing the report in Norwegian. However, as stated by NESH, “participants in research have a right to receive something in return” (2016). Making the research results available to the interviewees would thus be a way of “giving something back”. Moreover, by writing in English, it was more likely that the study would be critically examined or re-used. The concern of the interviewees and the accountability of the study finally outweighed the concern of precision. Hopefully, the academic language skills acquired during the writing process, and the professional copyediting of the final draft, has weeded out the worst inaccuracies.

### 3.7 View upon validity, reliability and generalization

Originating from positivist quality criteria, both validity, reliability, and generalization are controversial phenomena within qualitative research (Ryen, 2002, p. 176). The main reason is the diverging ontologies of the two research paradigms described in section 3.2.1. According to the theory of coherence, what distinguishes

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<sup>94</sup> Lowell Bergman at the IRP Berkeley, Sheila Coronel at the Stabile Center, Charles Lewis at the Workshop, and Joe Bergantino at the New England CIR.

<sup>95</sup> As opposed to the potential factual errors, I did of course not promise to make any changes to the analysis.

<sup>96</sup> The center leaders were given two weeks to report factual errors. Only Joe Bergantino from the New England CIR responded. This resulted in a correction of some minor details in the information about the Center.

“true” or good knowledge from “false” or poor knowledge is not concurrence with an objective reality. Hence, the quality of knowledge cannot be evaluated based on how close to reality it is. Rather, the quality valuation must be based on internal logic, meaningfulness, and the correlation between assumptions and conclusions. Following from this, the traditional, positivist definitions of research quality cannot be applied to qualitative research. Through customizing and redefining the term’s validity, reliability and generalization, they can however be important tools for evaluating the quality of the qualitative data, the data processing, and the conclusions derived (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 124). The following clarification of the view upon validity, reliability and generalization is thus also an account of how research quality is sought and obtained.

Starting with validity, the term can refer to “the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects what humans agree on as the real meaning of a concept” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 12). Therefore, validity is often addressed with the question: “Are we really measuring what we want to measure?” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 12). Applied to this study, one could ask if my research design (the data collecting methods, the theory used, and the strategy of analysis) really can lead to conclusions about the four centers’ “alternativeness”, professional role, and level of reporting. Put in other words: Have my research strategies made me able to answer the research question? As “alternativeness”, professional role, or journalistic quality are not observable or measurable quantities – and all human knowledge is the result of interpretation – it is impossible to know how close to the “truth” my conclusions are. Therefore, the internal validity/credibility of my research has to be based on an evaluation of my arguments of what was done and why. How, for instance, can interviewing representatives from the centers be used to obtain information of professionalism? And what does professionalism really mean after all? Are the normative terms of the study sufficiently discussed and defined? Is the thematic analysis systematic enough? And how well defined does the codebook of the content analysis seem to be?<sup>97</sup> For the reader to be able to evaluate all these questions, and

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<sup>97</sup> Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) use the terms design suitability, design fidelity, within-design consistency, and analytic adequacy to describe the different elements of validity (pp. 301-302).

thus the credibility of my study, an accurate and reliable use of sources is necessary. Moreover, as stated multiple times above, a thorough account of *what* was done and *why* is crucial. Following from this, the detailed description of research design and methodologies in this chapter is an attempt to improve this study's validity.

The second quality criterion, reliability, is not commonly applied within qualitative research. Seeing all knowledge as interpretation and social phenomena as both complex and in flux, demonstrating that the operations of a study can be repeated with the same results is often perceived as irrelevant (Ryen, 2002, pp. 180-181). Nonetheless, due to the traditions of content analysis, I have conducted an inter coder reliability check. As described above, the main aim of the check, however, was not to measure replicability. Instead, the check was used as a tool to make the codebook as clearly defined and orderly as possible. As described by Krippendorff (2012), the focus on reliability has the potential for preventing “analysts from pursuing research questions that allow no empirical validation or that yield results with no backing except by the authority of the researcher” (p. 44). Correlating with the worldview of critical realism, the overall goal of the reliability check can thus be said to keep the research process as explicit, predictable and coherent as possible.

According to the last quality criterion, some methodologists – especially those with statistical training – claim that qualitative data is usually not generalizable. The two main reasons are that the sample sizes are often small, and that random sampling methods are not used (Gobo, 2008, p. 193). This also applies to this study. Although analyzing a relatively large number of interviews and journalistic stories, the sampling methods have been purposive, not random. As with most qualitative research, this study aims to expand and generalize *theories* (analytic generalizations), not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations) (Yin, 2014, p. 21). Following from this, the generalizations possible are at a conceptual level higher than that of the specific case (Yin, 2014, p. 41). Applied to this study, this means, for instance, that information derived from a single university nonprofit is not generalizable to all university nonprofits, as the economy, the number of employees, the characteristics of partnerships, etc. will vary significantly. My study can however

say something about how economy and structure can influence the autonomy of newsrooms, and how a certain knowledge base can influence teaching, research and innovation. As discussed in the introduction, the debate on topics like the balance between practical and theoretical knowledge, the constant struggle between journalistic core values and innovation, the legitimation of the profession and the definition of quality journalism, are probably transferable to several other contexts.

When debating generalization, it is also important to remember that the overall goal of most qualitative studies, including this, is not constructing general theories. Rather, the aim is developing a deeper understanding of the studied phenomena (Østbye et al., 2013, p. 232). Hence, this study might be a contribution to uncovering parts of what critical realism names “the real level”.



## 4. An introduction to the university nonprofits

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part will introduce some of the research conducted on nonprofit journalism newsrooms – with a special emphasis on university nonprofits and nonprofits specializing in investigative reporting.<sup>98</sup> The second part gives an overall presentation of the four centers at the core of this study: The IRP Berkeley, the Stabile Center, the Workshop and the New England CIR. Through discussing the characteristics and overall structure of the centers – in addition to the differences and resemblances between them – the chapter seeks to answer the second sub-question of this study: *What characterizes the structure of the four university nonprofits?* The discussion will be an important step towards debating the centers potential as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism.

### 4.1. Nonprofit university centers: a research overview

#### 4.1.1 Nonprofit journalism in the U.S.

When Pew Research Center published the last large survey of nonprofit media organizations in 2013 (Mitchell et al.), they registered 172 online nonprofit newsrooms established since 1987. Of these, more than two thirds – or 71 percent – were established during or after the height of the recession in 2008 and 2009. Because of this, nonprofit journalism is often seen as a relatively new phenomenon. Nonprofit newsrooms have, however, existed as long as the press itself – with the Associated Press<sup>99</sup>, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Tampa Bay Times*<sup>100</sup> as well-known examples (Konicieczna, 2014, pp. 13-14). The Center for Investigative Reporting, founded in 1977, is the first U.S. nonprofit news organization for *investigative* reporting, with The Center for Public Integrity following in 1989. In recent times, ProPublica, founded in 2007, has become the flagship among nonprofit newsrooms for investigative journalism. The newsroom publishes stories in cooperation with other media organizations, and employed more than 50 reporters and editors in 2017 (ProPublica, n.d.-a). By the summer of 2017 ProPublica had

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<sup>98</sup> See section 3.5.1 for details about how the literature searches were carried out.

<sup>99</sup> Established in 1846.

<sup>100</sup> Formerly the *St. Petersburg Times*.

received numerous prestigious awards, including four Pulitzer prizes, three Peabody Awards, and two Emmy Awards – and the 2016 annual budget was in excess of 13 million dollars (ProPublica, n.d.-b, n.d.-c).

In the U.S., the term nonprofit mainly refers to a particular legal framework and a special type of business structure. In general, the main goal of the nonprofit organization is not in making money. Unlike traditional, commercial media organizations, the profits are returned to and invested in the organization, not handed out to shareholders.<sup>101</sup> As previously mentioned, U.S. newsrooms can become nonprofits for educational purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code. This has two main advantages: First, individual contributions to nonprofit organizations are considered tax-deductible, which may improve the ability to contract financial support from individuals. In addition, the nonprofits are exempt from paying certain federal taxes (Mitchell et al., 2013, p. 4).

In 2009, the Investigative News Network, the largest professional association of nonprofit news organizations in the United States, was founded. Twenty-seven nonpartisan nonprofit news organizations gathered to plan the future of investigative journalism, and wrote the so-called Pocantico Declaration (Institute for Nonprofit News, n.d.-a). According to Konieczna (2014), the Declaration was the first to identify the new and growing field of self-standing, nonprofit news organizations (p. 25). Strongly affected by the journalism crisis, the Declaration stated that there was an “urgent need to nourish and sustain the emerging investigative journalism ecosystem to better serve the public”, since investigative reporting, crucial to a functioning democracy, was under threat (Institute for Nonprofit News, n.d.-a). The nonprofit newsrooms therefore saw themselves as possible saviors of investigative reporting. By the summer of 2017 the association, now named the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), had more than 120 registered members (Institute for Nonprofit News, n.d.-b).

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<sup>101</sup> A study by the Knight foundation (Patel & Maness, 2013) of 18 nonprofits found that they devoted from 34 percent to 85 percent of their budgets to creating content. The average for commercial news operations is said to be 12 percent to 16 percent (Benson, 2016, p. 37).

According to Charles Lewis, founder of The Center for Public Integrity and the Workshop, the nonprofit world is in a constant state of flux:

This is a fluid, highly competitive, stressful environment, dependent on the vagaries of fate, the national and local economies, the moxie, stamina and entrepreneurialism of the founders, the steadfastness or fickleness of funders, the public resonance of the actual journalism, to name just a few variables. (2010b)

The large increase in nonprofit newsrooms since 2008, the great number of small organizations and the continuing establishment and closure of new nonprofits make it hard to get an overview of the field. It does however seem that there are two major groups of nonprofit newsrooms. While only newsrooms producing investigative public-service reporting<sup>102</sup> can become INN members (Institute for Nonprofit News, n.d.-a), several nonprofits registered in the Pew Research Center (Pew) reports<sup>103</sup> do not seem to fulfill the quality standards of the journalism profession (see section 2.2.5). Analyzing the content of 39 nonprofits publishing at least one original story a week in average, Pew found that:

- About half of the newsrooms produced stories that were clearly ideological in nature.
- Of the 1,203 analyzed articles, 50 percent only offered a single point of view on controversial issues.
- There was often a correlation between the selected topics and the political orientation of the sites and their contributors. A conservative group of twelve Watchdog websites funded by the Franklin Center for Government & Public Integrity for instance favored stories of inefficiency and waste within the government. (Holcomb et al., 2011)

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<sup>102</sup> As described in section 2.2, public service reporting is journalism inspired by the social responsibility theory. According to Benson (2016), public service commitment is most strongly indicated when owners make choices to support “journalistic professional excellence” even when it has no clear economic upside and may even entail a potentially dangerous downside. It is indicated by ongoing investment in reporting and commentary that “serve normative ideals of accountability, diversity, public participation and comprehensiveness” (p. 31).

<sup>103</sup> Holcomb et al. (2011) and Mitchell et al. (2013).



Pew also found a dichotomy in the sample: The sites that were clearly ideological were usually financed by one, large parent organization. Moreover, they were not clear on who they were and how they were funded, and they produced few stories and had few employees. The sites that had a more balanced and varied political content often had multiple funding sources. These sites also tended to be more open about who they were, and how they were financed. They also had more staff, and published more content (Holcomb et al., 2011).

In contrast, the Workshop mappings of 2010 and 2012 (C. Lewis, 2010b; C. Lewis et al., 2012) only focus on suppliers of "serious, public journalism". In this group, former editors or journalists started an overwhelming majority of the nonprofits – and two thirds of the full-time staff were former journalists with "professional journalistic experience". Moreover, 28 of the 60 registered newsrooms had won awards for their reporting, 61 percent had their own ethical and editorial guidelines, and 85 percent disclosed their sources of income. The Workshop and Pew mappings thus give a picture of the nonprofit field as divergent and fragmented. While one group seems to hold ideals strongly related to the dominant occupational ideology of journalism – attempting to produce quality public service reporting (see section 2.2) – the other group appears to have more in common with political activist groups. In this study, I will focus on the first group – which I have chosen to name the “professional-oriented nonprofits” (PONs).

### **Professional-oriented nonprofits (PONs)**

As mentioned in the introduction, professional journalists run all the nonprofit university centers examined in this study. The four centers are also cooperating with world-renowned newsrooms, have won several prestigious journalism prizes, and have stated that saving investigative reporting is their main goal. Hence, they seem to have all the central characteristics of professional-oriented nonprofits mentioned above (PONs).

In addition, Graves and Konieczna (2015) list three hallmarks describing the group<sup>104</sup>:

- The journalists starting these nonprofits are building what they see as a parallel, independent news production system in response to the perceived failure of commercial news outlets.
- The nonprofits are part of a growing professional movement supported by a philanthropic sector focused on the crisis in journalism.
- The nonprofits are working closely with traditional news outlets to produce and distribute investigative stories. (p. 1972)

Starting with the first hallmark, the journalists working for PONs are, as also described in the Workshop mappings, often investigative reporters who left mainstream news (Houston, 2010, p. 48). Frustrated with the state of commercially produced public affairs journalism, these journalists founded their own nonprofit newsrooms. Unlike many news reformers, the founders did not focus on fixing the processes and values of *commercial* journalism. Instead, they wanted to create a *new institution* that would “allow for the production of quality public affairs journalism [...] that market-oriented organizations were once able to produce, but no longer are” (Konieczna, 2014, p. 16). Benson (2016) puts it like this: The journalists who work at these start-ups [...] see themselves as developing or redeveloping a “purer” model of investigative, analytical and exploratory journalism than was previously possible under the old commercial, advertising-funded model (p. 40). Applying the terms of Chapter 2, the establishment of the PONs can thus be seen as an attempt to strengthen journalism’s jurisdiction over news through offering a new structure for news providers.

The second hallmark, concerning foundation support, also refers to the separation of news from the marketplace. Instead of producing public affairs journalism as a

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<sup>104</sup> Graves and Konieczna (2015) use the term “news nonprofits”. I will however use the term “professional-oriented nonprofits”, as I find the term “news nonprofits” a bit misleading. Many nonprofits produce news. The hallmark of these nonprofits is however, as I see it, their attempt of saving quality public affairs journalism. Hence, I find the term “professional-oriented nonprofits” more accurate.

byproduct of commercial journalism, the nonprofits are directly supported by foundations and individuals believing that the journalism produced by the PONs is important for democracy – and thus for the wellbeing of society (Konieczna, 2014, p. 40). The nonprofits have in other words created a niche where quality journalism, through its promoting of democracy, has its own value. According to Konieczna (2014), this means that public-affairs journalism has been outsourced into the niche of nonprofit news organizations (pp. 42-43).

Following from the above, the PONs must demonstrate effectiveness in democratic terms to gain foundational support. This leads to the third hallmark of PONs. Although being funded because of the “failure of commercial news outlets”, the nonprofits work closely with traditional news outlets to produce and distribute investigative stories. In doing so, the PONs increase the impact of their stories. As the financial incentives of nonprofits are tied to improving democracy, collaborations and sharing of content can improve the nonprofits chances of receiving support (Graves & Konieczna, 2015, p. 1972). As nonprofit veteran Charles Lewis describes:

The commercial, for profit companies have smaller newsgathering capacities and less money, and are desperately seeking serious news content at little or no cost. The investigative nonprofit organizations have plenty of high quality content but are desperately seeking eyeballs – online visitors, page views, and traffic – to their online news sites. The two groups help and need each other; it is a marriage of convenience. (2010a)

The PONs can thus be described as strongly schizophrenic, being both dependent upon and created as a reaction to the “failing” news industry.

### **Small, fragile newsrooms**

In the reports and studies of nonprofit newsrooms, one strong characteristic is repeated: their fragile economic situation. Many nonprofits report a lack of resources to deal with the business of sustaining themselves and, in the 2013 Pew-survey (Mitchell et al.), 21 percent of the responding nonprofits reported to have 50,000 dollars or less in revenue over the past year. Twenty-six percent had between 50,000

and 250,000 U.S. dollars in annual income. Because of this fragile economic situation, Pew found that:

- More than 80 percent of the nonprofits had five or fewer full-time employees, while a quarter had no full-time employees at all.<sup>105</sup>
  - Nearly three-quarters used unpaid volunteers, interns or contributors. While most had five volunteers or fewer, 15 percent had 25 volunteers or more.
  - Forty-four percent produced ten or fewer pieces of original content in a two-week period. Straight news accounts, of 500 words or less, were the most common.
- (Mitchell et al., 2013)

In addition to being small, most nonprofits seem to rely heavily on a small number of foundation sources (Konieczna, 2014, p. 27; Mitchell et al., 2013). According to several case studies, gifts from foundations and endowments represent 75 percent or more of the total budget in two out of five nonprofits (Knight Foundation, 2015, p. 9). Neither the nonprofit newsrooms themselves nor the foundations seem to be pleased with this dependent economic situation. In the *American Journalism Review*, Mary Walton (2010) quotes an anonymous source from one of the largest foundations stating that “no one in the foundation world wants to think these nonprofits are going to be dependent on foundations for a long time. Journalism startups have got to figure out some way to get people to pay for them”. Walton herself describes the foundations as “notoriously fickle”. With their changing priorities, they are unwilling to “shell out money forever to the same causes”. Additionally, the strong increase in nonprofits since 2008 has made the competition over foundation funding harder (Mitchell et al., 2013). Charles Lewis, founder of several nonprofits, describes the change:

When I began The Center for Public Integrity from my house in 1989, it was only the second nonprofit, investigative reporting center in the world. Today

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<sup>105</sup> Although small and economically vulnerable, Pew found most nonprofits to be relatively optimistic. Forty percent believed they would hire more staff in the year to come, while only 10 percent thought they would have to downsize. Eighty-one percent were confident or quite confident that they would have solved their biggest economic problems within five years (Mitchell et al., 2013).

there are literally dozens of them, most of them begun in just the past five years from the diaspora of immensely talented journalists suddenly without a commercial newsroom. (2010a)

As a result, most nonprofits attempt to be less foundation-dependent. Many are trying to increase their number of individual donors, since they are considered a more predictable source of income than foundations (Knight Foundation, 2015, p. 12). Advertising on the nonprofit news sites, sale of content, tuition on courses held on investigative reporting techniques, sale of subscriptions to specialty publications, and getting sponsors for different events, are also becoming common ways of earning income (Knight Foundation, 2015, p. 13).

#### **4.1.2 University nonprofits**

A subcategory of nonprofit newsrooms are *university-based*, nonprofit newsrooms. There are essentially two types: 1) independent 501(c)(3) organizations, with offices on or close to the University; 2) centers or programs that are part of the university organization. Both types usually have a mutual exchange relationship with the universities. The universities often offer:

- Physical infrastructure such as buildings, offices, libraries, databases and studios, as well as expensive and sophisticated reporter equipment.
- A steady stream of motivated and cheap labor, represented by the university students.
- An infrastructure to support the nonprofits needs related to personnel, legal liability, and insurance.
- The ability to use the university's reputation and goodwill to attract media partners and gain credibility with sources. (Houston, 2010, pp. 49-50; C. Lewis, 2013)

In return, the centers offer teaching, internships and student guidance – often through letting students work alongside experienced reporters on real life stories (Houston, 2010, pp. 49-50; C. Lewis, 2013).

Of the 172 nonprofits included in the 2013 Pew report (Mitchell et al.), 23 percent had a university as a parent organization (41 nonprofits). Of these, some were organized as centers or programs, just like the four nonprofits of this study. Moreover, nearly half (19 of 41) were primarily engaged in general news reporting, while investigative reporting represented the largest specialization group, including six nonprofits (p. 23). However, as the Pew-study does not include independent nonprofits (nonprofits with their own 501(c)(3) status) located by or at universities), the number of U.S. nonprofits cooperating closely with universities is probably much higher than the 41 listed above. In a study of investigative nonprofits worldwide, only 27 percent were part of/located at universities. At the same time, 84 percent reported that they frequently taught investigative techniques – often at universities (Kaplan, 2013, p. 39). It can thus seem like education and training is a key task for most nonprofits – at least the ones specializing in investigative journalism – regardless of where they are located or how they are organized.

According to Pew (Mitchell et al., 2013), university nonprofits have fewer revenue streams, less income and a smaller staff than independent nonprofits. They do, however, receive more and larger start-up grants and have superior financial security. In the 2013 survey, more than half of the university centers stated that they had set aside enough money to be able to operate for a year or more without additional revenue. In contrast, more than half of the independent nonprofits anticipated that their accumulated funds would not last more than six months (Mitchell et al., 2013, pp. 21-23). University nonprofits in other words seem to enjoy more financial security than independent nonprofits. At the same time, the low and little-differentiated income seems to make the university-affiliated nonprofits relatively small – and highly dependent upon university support.

One of the few studies examining the characteristics of university nonprofits in more detail is Francisco, Lenhoff, and Schudson's "The Classroom as Newsroom: Leveraging University Resources for Public Affairs Reporting" (2012). Like the Pew reports, the study characterize university nonprofits as small. Therefore, they are

described as “very dependent on the energy, initiative, and personality of individual faculty members” (2012, p. 2691). In addition, the study finds that:

- Most university nonprofits work with students through regular for-credit courses or several “feeder” courses. The “feeder” courses are often organized assignments, where some of the student work can be selected as appropriate for outside publication.
- Supervision is conducted by school faculty, or by faculty along with news partner editors.
- Some media partners are actively involved in the classroom, while others are “silent”, receiving news copy from the schools but providing little input into shaping it.
- Some students are being paid for their work, while others are not.
- While some clients pay a fee for running student-produced stories, others have bylines or other forms of credit as the only compensation.

When narrowing down the university nonprofits to university nonprofits specializing in investigative reporting, Kaplan’s report from 2013 is useful. Ranking the ten largest U.S. investigative nonprofits, based on the organization’s annual operating budget, four university nonprofits make the list. The Workshop at American University (annual budget of 1.7 million dollars), is in fourth place, while the IRP Berkeley (annual budget of 1 million dollars) is in sixth place, the Schuster Institute at Brandeis University (annual budget of 800,000 dollars) is in seventh place, and the Stabile Center at Columbia University is in ninth place (annual budget of 500,000 dollars). Three of the four university nonprofits examined in this study are in other words on the list; the New England CIR is not. At the top of the list, is ProPublica, with an annual budget of 10.1 million U.S. dollars<sup>106</sup>, followed by The Center for Investigative Reporting (annual budget of 5.2 million dollars) and The Center for Public Integrity (annual budget of 5.1 million dollars) (2013, p. 31). This shows that the field of nonprofits specializing in investigative reporting is relatively small –

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<sup>106</sup> In 2016 the annual budget had, as previously mentioned, increased to more than 13 million dollars (ProPublica, n.d.-b, n.d.-c).

dominated by three large independent nonprofits and several small university nonprofits. As an example, the leap between the Workshop and ProPublica is vast, with ProPublica having an annual operating budget nearly six times bigger than the largest university nonprofit.

#### **4.1.3 Nonprofit journalism outside the U.S.**

Most agree that the nonprofit model, as described in this study, has its origin in the United States. Outside the U.S., the British papers the *Guardian* and the *Observer* are well-known examples of news organizations with many of the same characteristics as nonprofits.<sup>107</sup> In Kaplan's 2013 report, attempting to register all *investigative* nonprofits worldwide, the distribution is described as follows:

The nonprofit model, which started in the United States, has spread rapidly both in the U.S. and abroad. The trend began in the 1970s and '80s, with a handful of U.S.-based nonprofits devoted to advancing investigative journalism. Joined by organizations in Scandinavia and the Philippines, the model caught on after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. New centers in Armenia, Romania, and Bosnia began in the early 2000s, offering a home for reporters to write hard-hitting stories that major media in those countries would not carry. At the same time, similar groups were formed in Brazil, the Netherlands, and South Africa. International conferences, workshops, and online media have helped spread the model worldwide. (p. 25)

In spite of some diffusion, Kaplan (2013) does however emphasize that the nonprofit model is primarily prevalent in the U.S. In most countries, nonprofits do not get tax benefits. In addition, the strong philanthropic tradition in the U.S., with numerous wealthy foundations and endowments, can hardly be found anywhere else in the world (p. 27). Hence, over a third of the 106 nonprofits registered in the report are

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<sup>107</sup> The newspapers are published by the Guardian Media Group, owned by the independent foundation The Scott Trust (Guardian, n.d.). Some say these newsrooms are not nonprofits, but rather "not-for-dividend companies", since the Guardian Media Group seek profit (Levy & Picard, 2011, p. 65). Just like the nonprofits, the group is however channeling all their revenue back into the newsrooms.



North American, with 37 of 39 located in the U.S (p. 33).<sup>108</sup> In addition, the nonprofits outside North America seemed to be even smaller than the U.S. nonprofits. More than half had less than five employees, and a budget of 50,000 U.S. dollars or less a year. Seventeen percent did not even have a physical office and functioned as virtual networks (p. 34). In a 2016 report, the Workshop found that the cumulative total of the annual budgets of investigative reporting organizations outside the U.S. was a little more than 6 million dollars. As a comparison, the report points towards U.S. based ProPublica having a budget of about 11.5 million dollars in 2014 (Lombardi & Farber-Ball, 2016). Moreover, only 3 out of 27 registered non-U.S. investigative nonprofits were part of/located at universities. Following from this, nonprofit university centers conducting investigative reporting, like the four centers of this study, hardly seem to exist outside the U.S.<sup>109</sup>

## 4.2 Presenting the centers of this study

Established in 2006 (the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center), 2008 (the Workshop) and 2009 (the New England CIR), the four centers of this study are all part of the “new wave” of nonprofits, established as a reaction to the recent development in the news industry. The Workshop for instance states that in recent years much of the traditional American media, in a drive to cut costs and maintain profits, “has slashed the capacity to do investigative journalism” (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-a). Through “creating significant, original investigative reporting on subjects of national and international importance”, the Workshop seeks to address this “fundamental issue for democracy” (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-a). Of other similarities, all four centers are members of the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), and state that the promotion and protection of investigative reporting is their main goal. Moreover, all four centers seek to fulfill this goal through training students and producing investigative journalism (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a;

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<sup>108</sup> Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were the base of almost one-quarter of the registered nonprofits (25), while 18 were situated in Western Europe. Latin America and the Caribbean were the base of eleven nonprofits, while the remaining 13 were spread across the rest of the world (Kaplan, 2013, p. 33).

<sup>109</sup> Of the three university affiliated nonprofits outside the U.S., the British Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ), based at City University in London, seems to have the most in common with the centers of this study. Founded in 2010, the Bureau cooperates with al Jazeera English, the *Independent*, the *Financial Times*, the *Guardian* and other established newsrooms (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, n.d.).

The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-a; The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.; The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.).

All four centers are also:

- Led by known and celebrated investigative reporters.
- Using graduate students in the production of investigative reporting.
- Winning multiple journalism awards for their reporting.
- Relatively small staffed, with four to six full-time employees.
- Specializing in investigative reporting techniques.
- Producing a relatively low quantity of stories, with an average of ten to twelve long-term stories a year.
- Forming partnerships with traditional news outlets.
- Strongly mission driven.
- Dependent on support from foundations and endowments.

All four centers do in other words seem to share the characteristics of professional-oriented nonprofits (PONs) described in section 4.1.

In the following, each of the four centers is presented in more detail. As their structure seems to be in a constant state of flux, with partnerships, foundation-support, employees and students coming and going, *most of the presentation will concentrate on the organization of the centers at the time of my visits in 2014/2015.*<sup>110</sup> Moreover, as this presentation functions as an overview, most of the topics discussed – like partnerships, production, and teaching – will be further elaborated and analyzed in later chapters. Starting with the first established center, the IRP Berkeley, the presentation will precede to the most recently founded university nonprofit, the New England CIR.

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<sup>110</sup> I visited the IRP Berkeley in November 2014, the Stabile Center in January 2015 and the New England CIR in March 2015. I was staying at the Workshop in between these visits, from August 2014 until June 2015. As an example of the instability, the number of full time employees at the New England CIR for instance grew from four to eight, and back to four again, from March 2015 to August 2017 (Bergantino email August 31, 2017).

#### 4.2.1 The IRP Berkeley, UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism

Formally established in 2006, the IRP Berkeley is both a newsroom producing stories and a branch of the University of California, Berkeley. Director and founder Lowell Bergman, well-known within the field of investigative reporting, heads the Center. In 2009, Bergman was, for instance, labeled one of the 30 most notable investigative reporters in the U.S. since World War I by the George Washington University's Encyclopedia of Journalism (Berkeley Journalism, n.d.). In addition, he has won several prestigious awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 2004.<sup>111</sup> His work is also chronicled in the Hollywood production *The Insider*, where Al Pacino stars as Bergman, investigating the tobacco industry for *60 minutes*.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, he is one of the co-founders of The Center for Investigative Reporting, the first, and second largest, investigative nonprofit news organization in the U.S.

The first activities of what later became the IRP Berkeley started in 1991, when the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism hired Bergman to teach investigative reporting seminars. Seeking to get his students "out of the academic idea", and thus make them more employable, he started working with students on real-world investigations (interview November 10. 2014). In 1998, he formed a partnership with the *New York Times* and the PBS *Frontline*, using his students as researchers for multimedia investigative stories. Hence, many reckon the IRP Berkeley to be the first *unofficial* investigative reporting center based at a U.S. university.<sup>113</sup> Bergman describe the process like this:

So basically, what I did was integrate my seminar with *Frontline* setting open an office [...]. We started recruiting students from the documentary program to work on the films, the grunt labor and sort of entry-level work on a

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<sup>111</sup> The prize was awarded to the production "A dangerous business", a cooperation between the PBS *Frontline*, the *New York Times* and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Bergman and two of his students was a central part of the production team.

<sup>112</sup> Bergman has, among other jobs, worked as a producer for PBS *Frontline*, ABC News and CBS.

<sup>113</sup> Since not institutionalized until 2006, when Bergman was named the Reva and David Logan Distinguished Professor of Investigative Journalism, The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University, launched in 2004, is said to be the first *official* center (The Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, n.d.). The IRP Berkeley sets its own startup year to 2006 (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a).

documentary. Then I started integrating my students and my seminar into the research and reporting that would go into various stories. And that's been extended to getting them work with the *New York Times*, for instance, or getting them published. (Interview November 10. 2014)

In 2014/2015, the IRP Berkeley had a core-group of approximately 18 people regularly connected to the Center (staff, faculty and students). Of these, about four were full-time employees.<sup>114</sup>

### **Teaching and students**

Located across the street from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, the IRP Berkeley is, as Director Lowell Bergman puts it, “a privately funded arm of a public university” (interview November 10. 2014). Hence, the Center is affiliated with one of the most prestigious journalism schools in the U.S, and part of a university that was ranked the fourth best in the world in by Academic Ranking of World Universities 2015. The Berkeley Journalism School offers a two-year Master of Journalism degree, and usually receives between 250 and 350 applications for the 60 places available (The UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, n.d.-b)

According to Managing Editor Tim McGirk, the IRP Berkeley is open to all journalism students who need help with their individual projects (interview November 13. 2014). It is, however, the fellows and the scholars that are the most frequent users (J. Hui interview November 12. 2014). Every year the Center awards four postgraduate fellowships in investigative reporting, and five Mark Felt scholarships. While the fellowships are year-long, and provide a salary and up to 10,000 dollars in approved travel expenses for selected journalists, the scholarships are aimed at graduate students specializing in investigative reporting (The investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-b). To apply, the students pitch an idea for an investigative reporting project – often the idea for their master thesis.<sup>115</sup> If awarded,

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<sup>114</sup> In November 2014, the Center had eight staff-members: Lowell Bergman (director), Tim McGirk (managing editor/lecturer), Andrés Cediell (producer/lecturer), Zachary Stauffer (producer/lecturer), Matt Isaacs (reporter/lecturer), Abbie VanSickle (reporter/lecturer), Janice Hui (managing director) and Brian Joseph (reporter/event producer). It also had four fellows and six students. Of the students, five were Mark Felt Scholars and one was a graduate student researcher.

<sup>115</sup> For the five 2014/2015 scholarships, about 20 students applied (T. McGirk interview November 13. 2014).

the IRP Berkeley helps “move the story forward”, advising the students on which sources to use and introducing them to potential publishing partners (L. Bergman interview November 10. 2014). The scholars also get a 10,000-dollar stipend to cover reporting expenses or tuition (Berkeley journalism, s.a.-b). Apart from attending the three-credit “Investigative Reporting Seminar” held every Friday, the Mark Felt scholars (named after the confidential source in the Watergate-disclosures) do not have a set number of hours that they are supposed to spend at the Center. If interested, they can however assist on the stories produced by the IRP reporters.

In addition to guiding students and fellows for approximately 15 to 20 hours a week, the editorial staff of the IRP Berkeley – consisting of about six reporters and producers – conduct a total of about six hours of teaching a week (T. McGirk interview November 13. 2014). The Investigative Reporting Seminar, described as “an introduction to tricks of the trade, occupational hazards, sources and guides to help navigate the field of watchdog reporting”, is the best known of the classes – and has been taught by Lowell Bergman for more than 20 years (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a). The seminar’s main purpose is, as Bergman puts it, to introduce students to potential sources or people that they do not meet while at Journalism School:

A federal judge and an FBI supervisor came in the other day and spent the whole class. Next week, we have three private investigators, the kind whose names never show up in the press, but they’re in major cases all over the country. You know, I may bring in a narc or I may bring in a snitch, someone who is a professional informant or a federal judge. So trying to expose them to people they wouldn’t meet otherwise, who also might become sources that may help them find other people. (Interview November 10. 2014)

The seminar seems to be exclusively oriented towards the practice field of journalism. The same can be said of the other seminars and classes taught by the Center. During the Daily Californian seminar, reporters and editors from the student newspaper the *Daily Californian* do for instance meet with the IRP staff to discuss and get guidance on the investigative stories that the students are working on (The

Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a). The Center also teaches several skill-based mini-courses, like how to conduct interviews, how to find under-reported subjects or how to be an associate producer (L. Bergman interview November 10. 2014).

According to Bergman, several of the mini-courses were established because of the Center hiring students to work on documentaries and discovering that they lacked basic journalistic skills. The interview course, for instance, was started in order to teach students “more about how to get interviews and do interviews in the real world” (interview November 10. 2014). The IRP also connects the Journalism School to the “real world” through the Logan Symposium. “By invitation only”, the Symposium brings together “top journalists, law enforcement and government officials, media executives, media attorneys, academics, major foundations, and philanthropists” each spring, to network, listen to panels and be guests at the gala dinner (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a).

### **Production and partnerships**

Although being part of a university, the IRP Berkeley’s main objective is not teaching but producing “good journalism, which would have been hard to produce elsewhere” (T. McGirk interview November 13. 2014). Hence, the IRP staff is continuously working on reporting projects in between seminars, courses and mentoring. From the IRP webpage, it seems like the Center’s staff, students and fellows produce six to ten stories of various dimensions a year (The investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-d).

Most of the time, the Center partners with external newsrooms like the *National Geographic*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Time* magazine, ProPublica, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Univision from project to project. The relationship with PBS *Frontline* and The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) is however especially close, with many common reporting projects over the years. As a result, three of the IRP staff members were working as producers for *Frontline*

projects on a regular basis in 2014<sup>116</sup>, while one of the reporters<sup>117</sup> was co-hired by the Center and the CIR.

The IRP has won numerous awards over the years. In addition to the previously mentioned Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 2004 for “A Dangerous Business”<sup>118</sup>, where two students were part of the project, the Center has received Emmy awards, Peabody awards, and the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a). One of the most recent productions, “Rape in The Fields” from 2013, was awarded more than six prizes for excellent reporting.<sup>119</sup> The co-production between the IRP, the PBS *Frontline*, Univision and The Center for Investigative Reporting included the work of more than 15 alumni/current students of the Journalism School, and was originally generated by a graduate student (A. Cediél interview November 13, 2014).

### **Funding**

As with the three other centers of this study, the IRP Berkeley discloses a detailed list of its funding sources on its website. The main reason why this is done is to ensure transparency and accountability (C. Lewis, 2010b).<sup>120</sup> Originally, the IRP was the result of an endowed faculty position, the Reva and David Logan Distinguished Chair in Investigative Journalism, appointed to Lowell Bergman in 2006 (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a). The Reva and David Logan Foundation also supports other parts of the Center’s operation, including the annual Logan Symposium on Investigative Reporting. In addition, the IRP receives support from several individual donors and foundations such as the Financial Times Foundation, the Hellman Family

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<sup>116</sup> Lowell Bergman, Andrés Cediél and Zachary Stauffer. However, as described in more detail in section 5.3.1, PBS *Frontline* cancelled the broadcast of the IRP/*Frontline* production “Bigger than Vegas” in 2015 (Frontline, 2015). As a result, Bergman withdrew from his position as senior producer and consultant (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a).

<sup>117</sup> Abbie VanSickle.

<sup>118</sup> In addition to the Pulitzer Prize, “A Dangerous Business” won two major broadcasting awards: The George Polk Award for Investigative Journalism and the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University award. The story was a joint investigation by *Frontline*, the *New York Times* and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

<sup>119</sup> See section 6.2 for details.

<sup>120</sup> “Donor transparency” is one of the formal membership standards of the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN). It is required that all members disclose contributions above 1,000 dollars on their websites (C. Lewis et al., 2012)

Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. In 2012, a gift from the Heising-Simons Foundation allowed the university to purchase a building for the IRP and the student newspaper the *Daily Californian* (The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-a). Hence, the Center does not have to pay rent for their office locations.

The contribution from foundations and donors is mainly used to cover salaries, story expenses and equipment. According to Managing Director Janice Hui, the support is sufficient to make the IRP “mostly self-sustained”. The staff does however need to cover about a quarter of their salary through teaching. Hui puts it like this:

We’re like the sustaining body, and then they can make money through various other ways to make it more equal to 100 percent. [...] Technically, it’s supposed to be they get paid partially here, and partially there. The majority, here. (Interview November 12. 2014)

Although being part of a university, the Center is in other words, as most nonprofits (see section 4.1.1), mainly foundation-funded.

### **Main goal and functions**

In an attempt to outline the main characteristics of the IRP, it seems that:

- The main goal of the Center is producing “good journalism, which would have been hard to produce elsewhere”. This is done in two ways: Either the Center-staff produce stories with or without the help of students, or the staff guide student projects into publishable stories.
- Much of the IRPs work consists of connecting the Journalism School to the practice field. The partnerships, the Investigative Reporting Seminar, the Logan Symposium and the fellowships connect the IRP, and thus the Journalism School, to external newsrooms and sources.
- Most of the courses taught by the Center are skill-based, giving the students the knowledge needed to become “employable investigative reporters”. Outside the courses, the students “learn by doing”, working on real-life projects aimed at being published by established, well-known newsrooms.



Summarized, the IRP seems to be an investigative newsroom connecting the University to the practice field, teaching students practical skills, with the aim of saving investigative reporting.

#### **4.2.2 The Stabile Center, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism**

The Stabile Center is part of the ten-month master program at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, where the Center teaches and guides students selected for the Stabile Program. Unlike the IRP Berkeley, the Stabile Center does not produce its own stories. However, it supports student and graduate projects through the Stabile Investigative Project Fund. In 2014/2015, the Stabile Center had a core-group of approximately 27 persons regularly connected to it (faculty and students). In addition to the two main instructors<sup>121</sup>, an investigative faculty of ten people teaches courses in investigative reporting and/or act as advisers to the Stabile students.

When the Stabile Center was established in 2006, teaching investigative journalism had long been a core task for the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism (Columbia Journalism School, n.d.-a). The Center was made possible by “a generous endowment” from Toni Stabile<sup>122</sup>, and Sheila Coronel, an investigate reporter from the Philippines, was hired as the Center’s director (Columbia Journalism School, n.d.-a; The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.). As with Bergman at the IRP Berkeley, Coronel has a strong reputation within the field of investigative reporting. She has received numerous awards for her work, and authored/edited several books. In 1989, she founded the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism. She has also worked for the *Manila Times*, the *Manila Chronicle*, the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, where she covered seven attempted coups against the Aquino government. In 2014, she was appointed academic dean at the Columbia Journalism

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<sup>121</sup> Director Sheila Coronel and private investigator Jim Mintz, who both work part time for the Center. In addition to being the director of the Stabile Center, Coronel has been the academic dean of the Journalism School since 2014. Jim Mintz is also the founder and CEO of the Mintz Group – a private investigation firm based in New York.

<sup>122</sup> Stabile was an investigative reporter in the 1960s and ‘70s, and did her post-graduate study at Columbia’s Journalism School (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.).

School, in addition to being director of the Stabile Center (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.).

### **Teaching and students**

Along with the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, Columbia Journalism School is one of the best-known and well-respected journalism schools in the U.S. In 2015, Columbia – which is a private research university – was considered the eighth best university in the world by Academic Ranking of World Universities. Founded in 1912 by Joseph Pulitzer, the School is the only journalism school within the Ivy League.<sup>123</sup> The School is also known for administrating several journalism prizes, including the Pulitzer Prize and the Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Award (Columbia University, 2015).

Located in Upper Manhattan, the Graduate School of Journalism offers both a Master of Science (M.S) degree and Master of Arts (M.A.) degree. The Stabile Center is part of the M.S. degree, where Investigative Journalism is one of the specializations<sup>124</sup>. Students can apply for the Stabile Program when applying for the School, and about 15 students are selected every year (Columbia University, 2015). All Stabile students take three courses offered by the Stabile Center on top of the other M.S. requirements<sup>125</sup>, adding to the workload of the already intensive ten-month degree. Stabile alumna Julia Harte describes it as “a very intense time” where many of the students “were stressed out pretty much all year” (interview January 12. 2015).

The courses offered by the Stabile Program are only open to Stabile students<sup>126</sup> and in 2014/2015 more than 120 students applied for the 15 Stabile seats<sup>127</sup> (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015). Journalism experience is not required to become a Stabile student but, according to Director Sheila Coronel, the Center seeks students

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<sup>123</sup> The term Ivy League commonly refers to a group of eight private U.S. east-coast colleges and universities, known for their high standard of education. The Ivy League schools often have low acceptance rates, and intense tuition.

<sup>124</sup> In 2014/2015, the students could choose between three specializations: investigative journalism, data journalism and documentary.

<sup>125</sup> In 2014/2015, the students had courses in broadcast, newspaper, magazine, and new media – in addition to their specialization.

<sup>126</sup> However, non-Stabile students can take other courses in investigative skills and techniques offered by the Journalism School.

<sup>127</sup> In an average year, the Center has between 60 and 80 applicants (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015).

with “patience, persistence, and willing to put in the hard work that it takes”. It is also important that the Stabile students “think that journalism has a role to play in righting the wrongs in society” (interview January 26. 2015). Many of the Stabile students have earlier careers within such fields as law, teaching or the military – or they are journalists wanting to improve their skills. Reporter and Stabile student Joshua Hunt explains: “It sounds a little trite, but I just wanted to be the best journalist that I could be” (interview January 27. 2015).

All M.S. students at Columbia have to conduct a practical, journalistic master’s project. For Stabile students, the project has to be investigative. As advisors to the master’s projects, the Stabile Center has handpicked a group of well-known investigative reporters meeting with the students approximately every other week (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015). In addition to being mentors and active journalists, most of them also teach investigative courses at the Journalism School. To Dean Steve Coll, the reporters resemble “player coaches”: experienced practitioners that direct the students fieldwork, functioning as both editors and mentors (interview January 29. 2015). In 2014/2015 the investigative faculty consisted of reporters from the *New York Times*, Consumer Reports, The Center for Public Integrity, Thompson-Reuters and ProPublica (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.). The student-advisor meetings are ideally held in the reporter’s newsroom, where actual investigative reporting is conducted (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015).

In addition to working on their master’s project, the Stabile students attend classes in investigative reporting, as well as the Investigative Seminar.<sup>128</sup> In the classes, the Stabile students learn skills and techniques necessary when working on their master’s project, such as developing story ideas and investigative interviewing techniques. They also learn data analysis, how to use spreadsheets and database managers. According to student Jessica Huseman, everything the Stabile students learn in class has an application to the master’s project: “kind of like killing to birds with one

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<sup>128</sup> In 2014/2015, three courses were offered by the Stabile Center: Investigative skills, Investigative techniques and The Investigative Seminar: The changing landscape of investigative reporting (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.).

stone” (interview January 27. 2015). Director Coronel describes the process as workshopping problems, roleplaying difficult situations and sharing experiences (interview January 26. 2015). The Investigative Seminar is, however, less skills-based. In addition to examining the “classics” of the investigative genre, the Seminar discusses topics like the role of investigative reporting and how societal change influences the media industry (interview January 26. 2015; The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, s.a.; observation January 29. 2015).<sup>129</sup> In addition to the Stabile courses, the Stabile students can attend the investigative courses offered to all students at the Journalism School, taught by the members of the investigative faculty.

As the IRP Berkeley, the Stabile Center offers fellowships. Students who demonstrate both “academic excellence and financial need” can get support from The Toni Stabile Fellowship Fund, which provides financial support for the students master’s projects, including travel costs (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.). In addition, the Toni Stabile Investigative Project Fund offers stipends for students to pursue their reporting projects after graduation (Columbia Journalism School, n.d.-a). Director Coronel guides the students, in addition to helping them getting their stories published or aired (Columbia Journalism School, n.d.-a). *All* projects with a publishing commitment, and some of the projects perceived the most promising, normally receive support. As Coronel puts it: “What’s the point of supporting something that’s not going to get published?” (Interview January 26. 2015).

### **Production and partnerships**

According to the Stabile Center’s webpage, external news outlets publish approximately ten student stories every year (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.). Unlike the IRP Berkeley, the Stabile Center does not have its own staff producing investigative stories. Coronel describes the Center as a *teaching center*, where “teaching students how to succeed in the world of investigative reporting” is the fundamental goal (interview January 26. 2015). Therefore, all

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<sup>129</sup> Until 2014/2015, the Stabile students had also undertaken group investigative projects during the investigative seminar (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015). Because of Coronel’s appointment as academic dean, the seminar was cancelled. Instead, the Stabile students can choose between the investigative courses offered to all students at the Journalism School.

projects published in partnership with external news outlets are student work sold as freelance-stories. Coronel describes the Center's position as a conscious choice between learning and producing. To her, focusing on production means that "professional journalism" takes precedence:

This model prioritizes what students learn. If you produce, you are prioritizing the production. Student learning may be sacrificed. So, if you're doing something for publication, the best students probably make it, but the ones who are behind, they end up doing clerical work. [...] The hard work is done by the professional journalists, and some students question that. We want students to be able to work on their own with our guidance and to own the topic and be responsible for it. (Interview January 26. 2015)

As a result, the Stabile Center does not approach potential media partners until the students have strong stories to pitch.<sup>130</sup> Coronel is not fond of pitching during the school year: "If they pitch while they're in classes, the news organization would be very demanding and they cannot devote their entire time because they have other classes that they need to do (interview January 26. 2015). However, it is seldom that the students come up with publishable stories during the ten months of the Program. Most students continue to work on their project after graduation – with or without support from the Stabile Investigative Project Fund (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015). The work of Stabile students has been published by outlets like the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, National Public Radio, PBS, the *Huffington Post* and ProPublica. Moreover, student work has won several awards, including the Polk Award, the Sigma Delta Chi Award and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Awards (Columbia Journalism School, n.d.-a; C. Lewis et al., 2012; The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.).

Although not partnering with external newsrooms, one of the aims of the Stabile Center is pairing students with the best investigative reporters available (S. Coronel

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<sup>130</sup> The exception is one of the group projects conducted during the investigative seminar – a series on student lending – where the *Huffington Post* "were in it from the beginning with the crowdsourcing part" (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015).

interview January 26. 2015). Out of ten reporters being part of the investigative faculty in 2014/2015, five had won the Pulitzer Prize one or several times, while one was a three-times Pulitzer finalist (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.). Building this faculty is, among other factors, possible because of the Center's location. Dean of the Journalism School Steve Coll describes it as having "all of the profession a Subway ride away", where "the editors and the chief executives come up here all school year long, talking about their new models and the next big thing" (interview January 29. 2015).

### **Funding**

As mentioned above, the Stabile Center is mainly funded by the Toni Stabile endowment. According to Director Sheila Coronel, most of the Center's resources are used on fellowships, scholarships and paying professors. Her own position is partly paid for by the Stabile endowment, and partly by the Journalism School (interview January 26. 2015). Altogether, it seems that the combination of the Stabile endowment and contributions from the Journalism School is sufficient to keep the Stabile Center running.

### **Main goal and functions**

To summarize the main characteristics of the Stabile Center, it is possible to conclude that:

- The Center's main goal is training students for careers in investigative journalism. This differentiates the Center from the IRP Berkeley, where the key function is *producing* investigative journalism.
- As with the IRP Berkeley, the Stabile Center practices learning by doing. Most classes run by the Center revolve around the practical, investigative master's project, teaching the students practical skills and techniques needed to conduct an investigative project.
- Even though the Stabile students are not producing investigative stories in partnership with external newsrooms, the Center has strong connections to real-world investigative reporters and newsrooms. In addition to practicing journalists making the majority of the investigative faculty, the student-advisor meetings are

preferably held inside external newsrooms. Hence, contact with the practice field seems to be of high priority to the Center.

- The Stabile Center does not produce its own stories. Nevertheless, publishing student work seems of great importance. The main criterion for receiving support from the Toni Stabile Investigative Project Fund is a publishing commitment. In addition, the main content on the Stabile Center webpage consists of news updates on published student work and awards (The Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, n.d.).
- Since the Stabile Center only mentors and guides a small group of carefully selected journalism students, it seems to be more secluded than the IRP Berkeley, which – at least in theory – is open to all journalism students, and hire students for productions.

The structure of the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center is thus somewhat different, with the Stabile Center focusing on teaching, while the IRP Berkeley has a stronger emphasis on production. At the same time, the two centers also have several similarities. As previously mentioned, the IRP Berkeley can be described as an *investigative newsroom* connecting the University to the practice field, teaching students practical skills, with the aim of saving investigative reporting. By replacing the term “investigative newsroom” with “teaching center”, the Stabile Center can be described in almost exactly the same way, as a *teaching center* connecting the University to the practice field, teaching students practical skills, with the aim of saving investigative reporting.

### **4.2.3 The Workshop, American University’s School of Communication**

The Workshop is, like the IRP Berkeley, both a newsroom and part of the journalism program at American University’s School of Communication. In addition to teaching classes, the Center hire students to work on its stories. Established in 2008, the Workshop is led by founder<sup>131</sup> and Executive Editor Charles Lewis. In 2014/2015, the

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<sup>131</sup> Lewis founded the Workshop together with Wendell Cochran, a longtime business reporter, editor and SOC faculty member (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-a). Cochran has now retired.

Center had a core-group of approximately 20 persons regularly connected to it (staff, faculty and students). Of these, about four were full-time employees.<sup>132</sup>

In 2008, the year he founded the Workshop, Charles Lewis was named “the godfather of nonprofit investigative journalism” (Glaser, 2008). At the time, he had been a nonprofit founder and leader for nearly 20 years. In 1989, he had started The Center for Public Integrity (CPI), the second oldest and third largest nonprofit news organization for investigative reporting in the U.S. After working 11 years as an investigative producer for ABC News and the CBS news program *60 Minutes*, he was “frustrated by the pressures to produce ‘more entertaining’ stories and not to pursue stories that would require greater time and effort” (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 157; Levy & Picard, 2011, p. 101; interview October 7. 2014). The CPI was, in other words, a result of the perceived failure of commercial news outlets – just as the PONs described in section 4.1. Before starting the Workshop, Lewis had also founded the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists – recently most known for disclosing the Panama Papers – and the Fund for Independence in Journalism. In addition, he is one of the co-founders of Global Integrity and the Institute for Nonprofit News. In 2009, Lewis was, along with Lowell Bergman at the IRP Berkeley, named as one of the 30 most notable investigative reporters in the U.S. since World War I by the George Washington University’s Encyclopedia of Journalism in 2009 (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-a).

According to the Workshop itself, and David E. Kaplan’s previously mentioned report, the Workshop is the largest university-based investigative reporting center in the U.S. (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, s.a.-a; Charles Lewis interview December 10. 2014; Kaplan, 2013).<sup>133</sup> Moreover, the Workshop has been central in building the nonprofit investigative journalism field through regularly publishing

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<sup>132</sup> In June 2015, the Center consisted of eight staff-members: Charles Lewis (executive editor), Lynne Perri (managing editor), Larry Kirkman (executive producer), John Sullivan (senior editor), David Donald (data editor), Barbara Schecter (development director), Kris Higgins (financial operations manager), and Monika Ingram (office coordinator). Rick Young (filmmaker-in-residence), Fritz Kramer and Emma Schwartz (associate producers) were also connected to the Workshop through *Frontline*, but not part of the staff.

<sup>133</sup> Others argue that the IRP Berkeley is the largest. According to Lewis, the result “comes down to your methodology” (interview December 10. 2014). However, all seem to agree that the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley are the two largest university centers in the U.S.



analyses and essays concerning the new “ecosystem”. Lewis also participates in numerous national and international conferences regarding investigative nonprofit reporting, and has contributed to several books on the subject (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-b).

### **Teaching and students**

Unlike Berkeley and Columbia universities, American University did not make the list of the world’s 500 top universities in 2015 (Academic Ranking of World Universities).<sup>134</sup> American University’s School of Communication was, however, placed among the 151-200 best schools of communication in the world (Academic Ranking of World Universities, 2015).

Also unlike Berkeley and Columbia, American University’s School of Communication (SOC) offers both graduate and undergraduate programs in a wide range of media studies.<sup>135</sup> The Workshop is part of the eleven-month, full-time Master of Arts (M.A.) in journalism and public affairs, offering classes for students in the investigative journalism specialty<sup>136</sup> (American University, School of Communication, n.d.). In 2014/2015 the Center taught four classes: 1) The Investigative Journalism Practicum<sup>137</sup>, where students work in groups on long-form investigative projects with the *Washington Post* and other SOC-partners. 2) International Investigative Journalism. 3) Data-driven Journalism. 4) In-depth Journalism (American University, School of Communication, n.d.).

Every semester, the Workshop selects about five students – a graduate fellow and four graduate assistants – to work at the Center. The Workshop-fellowship is based on “merit as well as school and program needs” – and awards a tuition remission and a stipend (American University, School of Communication, n.d.). How many hours the fellow spends working on Workshop projects depends on the budget (L. Perri

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<sup>134</sup> Berkeley was, as previously mentioned, placed fourth while Columbia was placed eighth.

<sup>135</sup> In 2014 /2015, SOC offered studies within communication, public communication, film and media arts, and journalism. Within journalism, the graduate students could choose between a Master of Arts in journalism and public affairs, interactive journalism, or media entrepreneurship.

<sup>136</sup> The students can specialize in investigative, broadcast, or international journalism.

<sup>137</sup> In this study referred to as the Washington Post Practicum.

interview September 14. 2014).<sup>138</sup> Most of the fellows keep working for the Workshop over the summer after graduation, but the one-year postgraduate fellowship that used to be offered by the Center was discontinued because of a tight budget situation (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014, C. Lewis interview October 7. 2014). The SOC also awards selected students graduate assistanceships, which means the students are assigned to assist part of the faculty and get a stipend in return (American University, School of Communication, n.d.). The Workshop usually gets three or four research assistants, technically attached to each of the professors at the Center, helping them with classes. Most of the time, however, the assistants do research for the Workshops projects, working together with the Workshop staff or partnering news organizations – just like the Workshop fellow (L Perri interview September 14. 2014, observation 2014/2015). Additionally, five to seven SOC students are selected for the Washington Post Practicum each semester, spending approximately one day a week inside the *Washington Post* newsroom. More often than not, the assistants and the fellow are part of the Practicum.<sup>139</sup>

Besides the more permanently connected fellows, research assistants and practicum students, the Workshop assign students or recent graduates from project to project, including a more permanent intern in graphics and photography (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014). Finding it necessary to run twelve months a year to be successful, the Center also hires four or five students as summer interns (L. Perri interview May 28. 2015). Overall, approximately twelve students are thus connected to the Center every a year.<sup>140</sup>

### **Production and partnerships**

As with the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop's main goal is producing, not teaching. As Executive Editor Charles Lewis explains:

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<sup>138</sup> The 2014/2015 fellow worked ten hours a week.

<sup>139</sup> In the fall of 2014, two of the Workshop students were in the Practicum. In the spring of 2015, five Workshop students participated.

<sup>140</sup> Since the graduate assistants and the graduate fellow often are part of the Washington Post Practicum, the total number of students is lower than the sum of students in each category. As the Workshops' managing editor puts it: "Everything overlaps" (L. Perri interview September 14. 2015).

I see our role as producing because we got to produce. We have people giving us money, and we're saying we're great. We've won awards. We haven't won awards because we're simply instructing. The classroom is for instructing. This is for investigating the bastards and kicking ass and taking names and going through records and interviewing people on the street and going knocking on doors. I know that they will learn in the process of doing that. And they will do it through here. But I'm interested in results. I want to be publishing stuff. It matters. (Interview May 12, 2015)

Hence, when the Workshop staff is not teaching, fundraising or promoting the Workshop, they are working on investigative projects together with students and partnering newsrooms (L. Perri interview September 14, 2014).

Like the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center, the Workshop seems to publish about ten stories a year in collaboration with external newsrooms (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-b). In 2014/2015 a majority of the Workshop investigations were produced through the Washington Post Practicum (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-b). The Practicum started in 2013, when the Workshop, the SOC and the *Washington Post* jointly hired John Sullivan, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist ("John Sullivan joins," 2013).<sup>141</sup> In the press release, the appointment is described as an "innovative approach [that] combines the academic expertise of a top communication school with the investigative prowess of an iconic journalistic organization" ("John Sullivan joins," 2013). While the SOC and the *Washington Post* has long been collaborating through fellowships, internships and class content, the Practicum was the first SOC class to be taught inside the *Post*'s newsroom. During the Practicum, the students assist Sullivan or other reporters in the investigations unit, producing stories meant to be published in the *Post*. In addition to the Practicum, the Workshop also uses the other investigative classes they teach at the

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<sup>141</sup> Together with a team of colleges from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sullivan won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 2012 for covering underreported violence in Philadelphia's inner-city public schools ("John Sullivan joins," 2013). In 2014/2015, he was both a senior editor at the Workshop, an investigative reporter-in-residence at SOC and an investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*.

SOC as “feeder” courses.<sup>142</sup> As the classes mostly consist of practical assignments, the Workshop staff can sift out the stories with the most potential, turning them into Workshop projects (L. Perri interview September 14. 2015).

In addition to the Washington Post Practicum, the Workshop has a close relationship to the PBS *Frontline*. Together with the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop thus is one of two university-based production “hubs” for *Frontline* in the U.S. (C. Lewis interview October 7. 2014). A production team based at the SOC, led by producer Rick Young, collaborates with *Frontline* on a project-by-project basis, hiring students as researchers and assistants. As contractors through the Workshop, the team does not have to carry all the costs of being a full production company, in addition to SOC handling the accounting. The team is also offered a reduced rent by the SOC. However, the team is *not* part of the workshop staff (K. Higgins interview September 26. 2014, F. Kramer interview October 22. 2014).<sup>143</sup>

Along with the formal cooperation with the *Washington Post* and the close relationship with *Frontline*, the Workshop also conducts project-based partnerships with several other newsrooms like the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, NBC News, *Politico*, the *Financial Times* and the *Huffington Post*. Like the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center, the Workshop has won numerous awards for its projects, like the Creative Use of Online media award, the Writers Guild of America award, and the Society of Professional Journalists documentary award (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-b).

### **Funding**

The Workshop is, like the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center, primarily funded by grants from private foundations in addition to some university support. The Center’s faculty members are paid by the University for their teaching, while about a quarter to a third of their salary is covered by Workshop funds (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014, K. Higgins interview September 26. 2014). Among others, the Center has

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<sup>142</sup> As explained in section 4.1.2, “feeder” courses are often organized assignments, where some of the student work can be selected as appropriate for outside publication

<sup>143</sup> See further details in section 5.1.2.

received support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-b). Unlike the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center, the Workshop does not, however, have a permanent endowment to rely on, which seems to make the Center's economic situation somewhat more challenging and unstable (see section 5.1 for further details).<sup>144</sup>

**Main goal and functions:**

In summary, there seems to be many similarities between the Workshop, the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley.

- Like the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop's main goal is producing quality investigative journalism. In addition, both the IRP Berkeley and the Workshop have an ongoing cooperation with the PBS *Frontline*.
- Like the IRP and the Stabile Center, one of the major tasks of the Workshop seems to be connecting the University to the practice field, especially through the *Washington Post* and *Frontline* collaborations.

There are also some major differences between the three centers:

- Unlike the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center, the Workshop is not part of a world-renowned university.
- The Workshop does not have a permanent endowment to rely on, which seems to make the Center's economic situation more fragile.
- Through the Washington Post Practicum – taught inside the *Washington Post* newsroom, with *Post*-reporters as supervisors – the teaching of the Workshop seems to be closer to the practice field than the teaching of the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center.

Despite the differences, the Workshop does however fit the description of the two other centers: Like the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop can be labeled an investigative

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<sup>144</sup> An endowment can be defined as money or property given to an institution, with the expectation that it will be invested. Typically, the institution invests its endowment and helps finance its activities with the profit from the investments (Endowment, n.d.). Hence, endowments often equal permanent and predictable support.

newsroom connecting the University to the practice field, teaching students practical skills, with the aim of saving investigative reporting.

#### **4.2.4 The New England CIR, Boston University's College of Communication**

Like the IRP Berkeley and the Workshop, the New England CIR has a double function: It is both a nonprofit newsroom located inside the WGBH News<sup>145</sup> – and a training unit based at Boston University. With the help of students and interns, the Center produces investigative stories in addition to teaching classes in investigative reporting. In 2014/2015, the Center had a core-group of approximately 13 people regularly connected to it (staff, faculty and students), where about five were full-time employees.<sup>146</sup>

The New England CIR is known as the first U.S. nonprofit, university-based investigative reporting center dedicated to *local* and *regional* issues (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.). Strongly inspired by Charles Lewis and the Workshop, the Center was founded by Joe Bergantino and Maggie Mulvihill in 2009 (M. Mulvihill interview March 12, 2015, J. Bergantino interview March 10, 2015). As the founders of the three other centers, both Mulvihill and Bergantino were merited reporters at the time of the funding. Bergantino had been working at local and national TV stations for over 30 years, winning many of the broadcasting industry's most prestigious awards, including a duPont-Columbia Award (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.). Mulvihill, a former media lawyer, had more than 15-years' experience in print and broadcast reporting (Boston University, College of Communication, n.d.-b).<sup>147</sup>

Like most other PONs, the New England CIR was established as a response to the journalism crisis. As Mulvihill describes: “There were cutbacks in newsrooms, and

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<sup>145</sup> WGBH News is a multi-channel newsroom, including – among others – the public radio station WGBH (89.7) and WGBH-TV.

<sup>146</sup> In March 2015, the Center staff consisted of Joe Bergantino (executive director), Clara Germani (managing editor), Beth Daley (investigative reporter), Jenifer McKim (investigative reporter), Jillian Saftel (training manager), Joshua Eaton (digital producer) and Hunter DeLench (director of marketing communications).

<sup>147</sup> Mulvihill left the New England CIR in 2013 to work as a clinical professor of journalism at the Boston University's College of Communication (M. Mulvihill interview March 12, 2015). Bergantino retired as executive director in June 2016 (email August 31, 2017).

the Washington bureaus were being closed, people were not covering the state house, you know, I used to cover the county courts system, that position had gone away” (interview March 12. 2015). With support from Boston University’s College of Communication (COM), and a grant from the Knight’s foundation, the Center started its operation from the COM-basement (M. Mulvihill interview March 12. 2015, The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, s.a.).

According to Charles Lewis, executive editor of the Workshop, the New England CIR is one of few university centers “actually making money” (field interview March 2015). Knowing that the Knight Foundation would not renew the startup grant, the Center soon began searching for new revenue streams. After what Dean Thomas Fiedler describes as a “pure serendipity”, the Center started arranging investigative reporting summer workshops for high-school students – using the tuition to fund the Center (T. Fiedler interview March 13. 2015).<sup>148</sup> Bergantino uses the following calculation as an example: In 2014, each of the 132 high school students participating in the various workshops paid around 2100 dollars in tuition, which makes a total of more than 275,000 dollars. Hence, the tuition income equals “a huge grant”. Stating that the Center has “more money than anybody else coming in that is self-generated revenue”, Bergantino saw the potential of growing this revenue as “enormous” (interview March 10. 2015).

### **Teaching and students**

Unlike the other centers of this study, the New England CIR has its own 501(c)(3) status<sup>149</sup>, but this is, as Bergantino describes it “kind of put aside right now, we don’t use it” (interview March 10. 2015). Instead, the Center is part of Boston University’s College of Communication, a private research and teaching university, positioned as the 73rd best university in the world by The Academic Ranking of World Universities 2015. The University is also one of the largest employers in the city of

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<sup>148</sup> The idea came from one of the Center’s advisory board members in April 2009, and was implemented through “a lot of hard work” (J. Bergantino, email August 31. 2017).

<sup>149</sup> U.S. newsrooms can become nonprofits for educational purposes under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code See section 4.1 for further details.

Boston, with over 33,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and nearly 10,000 faculty and staff connected to it (Boston University, n.d.).

Like American University, Boston University offers both graduate and undergraduate programs in a wide range of media studies. In journalism, students can choose between a Bachelor of Science degree (B.S.) and a Master of Science degree (M.S), in addition to a M.S. degree in science journalism. The staff of the Center is responsible for teaching the Investigative and Project Reporting course, available to students in the B.S. and M.S. journalism programs. The New England CIR is also one of COM's internship programs, which means that students can earn credit while interning at the Center (Boston University, College of Communication, n.d.-b). In March 2015, the New England CIR had six interns, which is about average, according to Bergantino (interview March 10. 2015). When choosing the interns, the Center prefers to commit to "anyone who has done some aspect of reporting before" (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015). Henceforth, the interns are assigned to the Center's reporters, assisting them "with whatever they need", such as general research, background checks and finding contact information (C. Jedra interview February 23. 2015). After working at the Center for a while, the interns are also encouraged to pitch their own stories. Normally, they spend about 20 hours at the Center each week, earning four credits for their efforts (C. Jedra interview February 23. 2015, J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015). In addition to interns, the New England CIR also gets COM-financed teaching assistants from time to time. As at the Workshop, these assistants are seldom involved in teaching, but use most of their time researching and producing investigative projects (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015). The New England CIR also assigns volunteer interns, who do not earn credit or receive any payment for their work.<sup>150</sup> In March 2015, the Center had two volunteer interns.

Although it is one of COM's internship programs, COM-dean Thomas Fiedler does not see teaching as a primary responsibility for the New England CIR reporters:

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<sup>150</sup> Volunteering for nonprofits is legal as long as certain obligations are fulfilled, like the volunteer position not being full-time, and volunteers not displacing regular employees (Herman, n.d.).



The idea is while they are working on an investigation, that students have an opportunity to work with them – side by side perhaps, or assisting in some way. But the primary responsibility of the journalist is to go after that story. It is not necessary to mentor that student [...]. They are not evaluated on that at all. (Interview March 13. 2015)

In addition to producing stories with the help of students, both executive director Bergantino and the two NECIR reporters were teaching the previously mentioned Investigative and Project Reporting course in the spring of 2015, training students in computer-assisted reporting and other investigative tools. In the spring of 2015, the students were also researching the story of a man, claiming to be wrongfully convicted, being imprisoned for 30 years (J. McKim interview March 9. 2015).

In addition to Investigative and Project Reporting course, the student internship program and the high school summer workshops, the New England CIR also run a weeklong investigative reporting certificate program aimed at college students, journalists, and individuals (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.). Like the high school summer workshops, the tuition from this program is an important source of income for the Center (J. Saftel interview March 12. 2015). The Center's reporters also train working journalists all across the U.S. through a cooperation with Investigative Reporters and Editors (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.).

### **Production and partnerships**

When only counting long-form journalism stories, the New England CIR seems to produce about twelve stories a year, a quantity similar to the other three centers of this study (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.). Being mostly a newsroom and not a classroom, the reporters at the Center uses approximately 80 percent of their time producing journalism (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015, B. Daley and J. McKim interviews March 9. 2015). Reporter Beth Daley estimates that she produces “one or two big things a year” in addition to doing “smaller things” (interview March 9. 2015). For the longer stories, the Center mostly approaches potential news outlets when the project is finished, with the *Boston Globe* and the

WGBH News as frequent publishing partners. In addition, the Center has had cooperation with more nationally oriented newsrooms, like those of the *Washington Post* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. For the most part, the partners pay for the content published (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015).

One of the aspects separating the New England CIR from the other three centers of this study is that the producing part of the Center is located inside the WGBH News newsroom. Having signed a partnership agreement with WGBH News, the Center's reporters, editors and interns were relocated from their offices at COM in 2013, while the "training and education unit" remained at Boston University.<sup>151</sup> In short, the agreement gave the New England CIR free office space within an operating newsroom, while WGBH News got free access to some of the investigative stories produced by the Center. The WGBH and the Center also cooperate on some stories. Boston University fully supported the relocation, since it gave the Center "a more comfortable working environment inside a real newsroom" (T. Fiedler interview March 13. 2015). The New England CIR is, however, still free to collaborate with newsrooms other than WGBH News, which they do, especially on the bigger productions (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015, C. Germani interview March 9. 2015).

Of the *shorter* stories produced by the New England CIR in 2014/2015, most were part of the Center's monthly investigative reporting subscription service, "The Public Eye", launched to help media outlets across Massachusetts deliver more in-depth investigative reporting (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.). According to Managing Editor Clara Germani, the service originally had ten to twelve local subscribers, paying per story used. However, because of the high newsroom's budgets, the service only had seven subscribers left in 2015. Hence, the Center planned to abandon the pay-per-story model and, instead, charge a lower yearly rate with the help of donors willing to underwrite local coverage (interview March 9. 2015).

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<sup>151</sup> In 2015, Bergantino and training manager Jill Saftel still had their offices at Boston University.

As have the three other centers, the New England CIR has won several awards, among others the New England Newspaper and Press Associations "Publick Occurrences" award, and the Society of American Business Editors and Writers first place award for healthcare journalism (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.).

### **Funding**

According to the 2015 Knight report, 50 percent of the New England CIR's income in 2013 was earned revenue (Knight Foundation, 2015). As shown in section 4.1, this is a much larger percentage than the average nonprofit. While the three other centers of this study had no plans to expand, the New England CIR was planning to hire two additional reporters.<sup>152</sup> In addition to revenue earned through tuition and the sale of stories, Bergantino points to lucrative partnerships as an explanation to the unusually high percentage of earned income. In 2015 WGBH News was not only offering the Center free office space but also covered/planned to cover part of the salary for several members of the staff (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015). When it comes to Boston University, the Center enjoyed free office space in the University basement. In addition, the University was covering part of Bergantino's salary, helped arrange and market the high school workshops, gave the Center an equivalent of 60,000 U.S. dollars a year in "operational support", and provided the staff "very good health benefits and retirement benefits" (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015, J. McKim interview March 9. 2015). As at the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley, the reporters' salaries were mainly covered by Center funds, with the teaching providing additional income (T. Fiedler interview March 13. 2015).

Besides earned revenue and the partnership arrangements, the New England CIR is still dependent upon grants from private foundations. In 2013, foundation funding and other grants made 44 percent of the Center's income (Knight Foundation, 2015). Among the sponsors are the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the

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<sup>152</sup> The reporters were hired after my visit in March 2015, but due to a tightening budget situation the NECIR was back to two reporters in 2017 (J. Bergantino email August 31. 2017).

McCormick Foundation, the Hearst Foundation and the Boston Foundation (The New England Center for Investigative Reporting, n.d.).

### **Main goal and functions**

Starting with the differences from the three other centers, the New England CIR:

- Has a regional, and not a national, focus.
- Seems to be more production-oriented than the other centers. (It is located inside an external newsroom and, thus, less attached to its “mother-university”. Moreover, it is regularly using as unpaid volunteers interns who are not students).
- It is less dependent upon foundation support than the other three centers. Like the Workshop, the Center does not however have any permanent endowments to rely on. In spite of the high percentage of earned revenue, the Center’s financial situation thus seems more fragile and unstable than the financial situation of the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center.<sup>153</sup>

There are also several similarities. As with the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley, the New England CIR can be described as an investigative newsroom connecting the University to the practice field, teaching students practical skills, with the aim of saving investigative reporting.

### **4.2.5 University-based PONs**

As stated at the beginning of section 4.2, the four centers of this study seems to belong to the group of professional-oriented nonprofits (PONs) described in section 4.1.1. Besides being PONs, the main characteristic of the four centers is that they are part of universities. Hence, they can be described as university-based PONs. Through the relationship to their “mother-university”, the university-based PONs seem to become hybrids: partly newsrooms and partly classrooms. As newsrooms, their main task is producing quality investigative reporting. As classrooms, their main task is educating the next generation of investigative reporters.<sup>154</sup> When studying the characteristics of the four centers, their key differences seem to relate to which part of

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<sup>153</sup> See further discussion in Chapter 5.

<sup>154</sup> The newsroom and classroom roles as described by the centers themselves. See Chapter 1.

this double role they, and their mother-university, emphasize. First, how entwined is the center and the university? Second, what is the main goal of the center? Third, how does the center conduct partnerships with external newsrooms?

Based on the previously mentioned characteristics, it seems that the New England Center is the least university-connected. In addition to having its own, resting, 501(c)(3) status, it is the only center receiving general operational support from the university. The New England Center also is the only center having the majority of its staff located inside an external newsroom. In contrast, both the Workshop and the Stabile Center have their offices in the same building as the journalism department of their university, while the IRP Berkeley is located just across the street from the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

All centers, including the New England CIR, combine teaching and producing. It does however seem that the centers have to prioritize one or the other. If the center focuses on producing, there will be fewer resources left to teach, and if the center focuses on teaching, there will be fewer resources left to produce. When asked about the main goal of the center, three out of four emphasize the production of investigative reporting. The Stabile Center is the only center characterizing itself as a teaching center, with the aim of “teaching students how to succeed in the world of investigative reporting”. Since the staff is not producing its own stories, the Stabile Center dedicates most of its time to students. In comparison, the staff of the Workshop, the IRP Berkeley and the New England Center seems to use much more time producing.

The third main difference – how the centers conduct partnerships – also seems to separate the Stabile Center from the other centers. While the other three centers co-produce stories with external newsrooms on a more-or-less regular basis, the Stabile Center only involves external newsrooms as publication platforms – selling the student stories on a freelance basis. Of the three other centers, both the Workshop and the New England CIR have formed steady partnerships with external newsrooms. Through these partnerships, the students get to work inside actual newsrooms. Hence, the partnerships of the centers seem to range from loose, individual arrangements to

more dense and tight relationships. Summarized, the centers can be said to have the diverging characteristics presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Diverging characteristics of the four university centers.

<p><b>The IRP Berkeley:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tight connection to university</li> <li>○ Production-oriented</li> <li>○ Has no permanent partnerships, but collaborates with external newsrooms in the production process.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Stabile Center:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tight connection to university</li> <li>○ Teaching-oriented</li> <li>○ Has no permanent partnerships, and does not collaborate with external newsrooms in the production process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Workshop</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tight connection to university</li> <li>○ Production-oriented</li> <li>○ Has a permanent partnership, and collaborates with external newsrooms in the production process.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The New England CIR:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Loose connection to university</li> <li>○ Production-oriented</li> <li>○ Has a permanent partnership, and collaborates with external newsrooms in the production process.</li> </ul>

As previously mentioned, the four centers also have several similarities. In addition to the characteristics of most PONs described in section 4.1.1 and 4.2., the university connection seems to give the centers more economic stability. As described in section 4.1.2, the universities provide both physical infrastructure and access to students. In addition, the universities offer a stable revenue stream through paying the center staff for teaching.

Moreover, the centers also seem to have the same method of teaching, practicing a skills-based “learning by doing” approach – where experienced investigative reporters (either center reporters or reporters from collaborating newsrooms) guide the students. All four centers also seem to be “hubs”, connecting the journalism schools to the practice field. Although the Stabile Center is not forming production partnerships with external newsrooms, the Center still has a strong emphasis on connecting its students to practicing investigative reporters and newsrooms.

In summary, all four centers can be described as hybrids between newsrooms and classrooms, connecting their mother-universities to the practice field, teaching students practical skills in addition to producing actual investigative reporting.



## 5. The autonomy of the centers

As shown in the previous chapter, professional oriented nonprofits (PONs) seek to build a parallel, independent news production system in response to the perceived failure of commercial news outlets. At the same time, they are dependent upon both foundation support and partnerships with external newsrooms. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) summarize this double dependent situation as follows:

As interesting as these new efforts are, they have to be considered fragile and embryonic, certainly compared with mainstream journalism. The support of private philanthropy can disappear as quickly as it can be given, and their ability to draw an audience depends on getting the attention of for-profit media outlets to air the research. (p. 158)

In addition to external newsrooms and foundations, the university-based PONs of this study also rely upon their mother-universities. Hence, they are not double dependent like the PONs but *triple* dependent. This means that three groups – foundations, external newsrooms and universities – have an especially high potential of controlling and influencing the centers' work.

As described in section 2.2.1, autonomy is often seen as one of the most important preconditions of professional work. Without autonomy, developing special knowledge and fulfilling societal obligations can be challenging. McQuail (1994) associates professionalism with non-amateur job-performance, *absence of external interference*, and *judgement by fellow professionals* (italics added). Thus, attempting to achieve autonomy through 1) being part of an external organization (the centers' mother-universities), 2) becoming highly dependent upon one revenue stream (foundation-support), and 3) partnering with commercially oriented news organizations seems like a poor tactic. On top of this, all four centers specialize in investigative journalism – the one reporting form said to be the most autonomy-



dependent of all. Most agree that reporters cannot reveal and tell the truth if they have partisan interests (see section 2.2.2). If journalists are loyal to groups other than the citizens, or have special financial interests, the result is often that some stories – and thus some parts of the truth – are never told, state Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007, pp. 52-53). Hence, university-affiliated, foundation-dependent investigative reporters “selling” their content to the market-driven media industry seems like a contradiction in terms. Put in other words: Is it at all possible to be *triple* dependent (like the four university nonprofits of this study) *and* autonomous?

Choosing which subjects to cover, having the freedom to select stories, and deciding what to emphasize in the stories produced are seen as important markers of journalistic professional autonomy (Beam et al., 2009). How the foundations (section 5.1), mother-universities (section 5.2), and external newsrooms (section 5.3) affect the centers’ reporting processes thus become a key question when discussing the third sub-question of this study: *How autonomous are the centers?* Being substantial actors in their communities, and often dependent upon individual and foundation support themselves, the centers’ mother-universities must for instance maintain a good relationship with sponsors and other central societal groups. The core value of investigative reporting, however, is to hold accountable the powerful in government, businesses and other influential spheres (see section 2.2.2). Following from this, there is a high risk of the centers damaging the interests of their mother-universities through their reporting. Hence, it must be tempting for the universities to try to control which stories the centers are allowed cover – and how.

## 5.1 Foundation dependency

The first group described above as having a particularly high potential of controlling and influencing the centers’ work are foundations. From 2005 to 2009, foundations like Knight, Carnegie, Ford, Hewlett, MacArthur, Pew, and Rockefeller provided 128 million dollars to news nonprofits (Downie & Schudson, 2009, pp. 63-64; J-Lab & Knight Community News Network, 2012). A substantial sum, but far from enough to sustain the increasing number of nonprofit newsrooms. As a result, most nonprofits – including the nonprofits of this study – are small and fragile (see Chapter 4). It may

therefore not be a surprise that many of the interviewees refer to economy and funding when asked to describe the biggest challenges of running a nonprofit newsroom. Kris Higgins, the Workshop's financial operations manager<sup>155</sup>, can be said to represent the main view of the interviewees, stating that:

From my perspective, it's money. Just having enough to do all of the things that both need to be done and we want to do. You know, and finding the money and making sure that it's appropriate [...] By appropriate, I mean both the source and the intent of it. (Interview September 26, 2014)

Being foundation-dependent thus seems to cause two main problems: 1) economic instability (finding the money), and 2) potential foundation impact (the funding must be "appropriate").

According to theory, both of the problems listed by Higgins can cause autonomy loss. First, newsrooms under economic stress, as previously mentioned, report to be less successful in covering subjects they find important, have less liberty to select what stories to work on, and less freedom to decide what to emphasize in the stories they produce (Beam et al., 2009). For newsrooms specializing in investigative reporting – which is often capital- and labor-intensive, time-consuming and accusatory of character – appropriate funding is even more essential. A 2015 study, comparing journalist roles in non-profit and for-profit newsrooms, found, for instance, that few resources often resulted in more straight news reporting – regardless of organizational form. On the other hand, more resources allowed more complex stories (Carpenter, Boehmer, & Fico, 2016, pp. 15-16). If the financial situation of the centers becomes too fragile, it can be hard to conduct investigative reporting.

When it comes to the second problem described above, potential foundation impact, a public and common critique is the risk of individual foundations attempting to affect the reporting in their own interest (Browne, 2010, pp. 890-891). Because of this risk, most nonprofits, as previously mentioned, are careful about disclosing their funding sources – believing that openness reduces the risk of foundation impact and

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<sup>155</sup> Higgins is hired by American University's School of Communication, working with the financials of all the centers that are part of the school – including the Workshop (K. Higgins interview September 26, 2014).

credibility loss (C. Lewis, 2010b). Apart from the impact critique there has, according to Harry Browne, been relatively little critical consideration of philanthropy-supported journalism (2010, p. 889). One exception is some critical academics claiming that foundations represent the establishment. In their view, philanthropy is an effective way of maintaining existing structures of elite control (Browne, 2010, p. 893).<sup>156</sup> Hence, foundation-funded newsrooms, like the four centers of this study, can be said to be just another example of elite-controlled journalism, serving hidden agendas and keeping close to ideologies permitted by the establishment. This perception strongly corresponds with the traditional Weberian, Foucauldian and Marxist critique of the journalism profession described in section 2.1.3. Instead of a new organizational model, potentially generating more professional autonomy due to the liberation from market forces (see section 4.1.1), nonprofits can thus be said to represent the old elite-controlled model in new wrapping.

Being aware of the negative aspects of foundation dependency, most nonprofits see funding from multiple and diverse sources as the ideal (C. Lewis, 2009). However, unlike the largest nonprofits, like ProPublica and The Center for Investigative Reporting, most nonprofits do not have the financial ability to uphold their own development departments. With part-time staff handling the economy and funding, there is not much time to experiment with revenue models. As a result, the general nonprofit dependency upon foundation support does not seem to decrease (C. Lewis, 2010b; C. Lewis et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2013).

The following discusses the problems that the four centers of this study experience in relation to economic instability, foundation impact, and autonomy. As described in section 4.2, two of the centers, the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley, have permanent endowments to rely on. This seems to stabilize their economic situation, allowing them to spend less time in fundraising. When discussing the problem of economic instability (“finding the money”), a large part of the discussion will thus

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<sup>156</sup> The term “elite” will be defined and further discussed in Chapter 6.

relate to the Workshop and the New England CIR. The debate about potential foundation impact (“appropriate funding”) will however involve all four centers.

### **5.1.1 “Finding the money” – a time-consuming chase**

Throughout the observation periods, the most striking and surprising aspect was the amount of time the editorial staff used on tasks related to economy and funding. This practice differs from the news industry, where a relatively solid firewall between the news and business divisions has traditionally been the norm (see section 2.1 and 2.2). This impression from the observation periods was confirmed during the interviews. When starting his job as executive director at The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR)<sup>157</sup>, Robert Rosenthal experienced the joint editorial and economic obligations of the nonprofit world as a “major transition” from what he was used to in the traditional news industry.<sup>158</sup> He describes the “stress and pressure of constantly raising money” as “not easy” and “not fun” (interview November 13. 2014). Also Charles Lewis, executive editor at the Workshop, refers to fundraising as the “least fun part” of running a nonprofit. In a perfect world, he would instead “investigate the bastards, whoever they are, and not run anything”. Fundraising is, however, “part of reality”, he states, before continuing: “If this is the result, then it’s definitely worth it (interview May 12. 2015). Both Rosenthal and Lewis thus seem to view the revenue side of running a nonprofit as hard, but necessary, work.

Many of the interviewees point to the fact that fundraising has become increasingly challenging since 2008/2009 because of the escalation in the number of nonprofits. Strong leaders, renowned reporters, credibility and conducting “great journalism” are no longer enough, they claim. In addition, nonprofits need to continually renew themselves and try “new things” in order to get support (C. Lewis interview October 7. 2014, R. Rosenthal interview November 13. 2014).<sup>159</sup> Rosenthal gives this example of what fundraising at The Center for Investigative Reporting can look like:

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<sup>157</sup> One of the external newsrooms partnering with the IRP Berkeley.

<sup>158</sup> Rosenthal has worked for newsrooms like the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. At the *Philadelphia Inquirer* he held the position as executive editor.

<sup>159</sup> Foundations are, as described by Mary Walton in section 4.1.1, often not “willing shell out money forever to the same causes”.

You have to talk about how you can track things. You have to talk about how you may specifically create content aimed at young people and show how you're doing that. You really have to show how you take huge datasets and make them accessible for people. And how you're planning, not only just to do the story, but how to make sure you're getting the story to people. People who are going to be touched by it, and maybe take action. (Interview November 13, 2014)

For the small-staffed centers, generating revenue can thus become a broad and demanding task on top of the already demanding task of producing investigative reporting. The New England CIR reporters were, for instance, discussing the possibility of participating in Skype-meetings with parents and potential students to increase the number of applicants for the summer high school program<sup>160</sup> – and thus bring in more earned revenue (observation March 10, 2015).<sup>161</sup> This would come on top of other economy-related activities, like attending fundraising events and teaching classes outside the University (interviews and observation March 10, 2015). Also at the Workshop, a large proportion of the editorial staff's time seemed to be spent on negotiating partnerships, looking for sponsors, examining new revenue streams, and finding alternative ways to run the nonprofit more effectively. As an example, the re-negotiation of the previously mentioned Washington Post Practicum, regarding the future economic contribution of the three partners<sup>162</sup>, lasted for months and included numerous meetings, conversations, and phone calls (observation August 2014 – May 2015). When adding the time and energy used on other partners and fundraising events during the two semesters I was observing, the editorial staff's total efforts towards structure- and economy-related aspects seemed substantial.

In addition to all the hard work required to keep the centers afloat, at least three other features seem to make university nonprofits specializing in investigative reporting vulnerable.

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<sup>160</sup> See section 4.2.4 for details.

<sup>161</sup> According to executive director at the New England CIR Joe Bergantino the reporters never ended up conducting the discussed Skype-meetings (email August 31, 2017).

<sup>162</sup> The Workshop, American University's School of Communication, and the *Washington Post*.

First, fundraising conducted by the center leaders seems to create the larger proportion of the centers' income. Being experienced, well known and merited, the leaders often have good contacts and relationships within the philanthropic field (B. Schechter interview October 7. 2014). The backdrop of strong leaders "being great at fundraising" is, however, that the centers risk becoming highly dependent on one person. According to Financial Operations Manager Kris Higgins, many of the Workshop's loyal funders are in reality funding Charles Lewis and his work – not the Center:

I think if Chuck<sup>163</sup> decided to leave the Workshop, I don't think they would be willing to continue long-term funding. We might be able to get another year or two out of them, but I think it really is about that relationship. (Interview September 26. 2014)

The IRP Berkeley and the New England CIR also seem to be highly dependent upon the connections of their leaders.<sup>164</sup> This finding corresponds with Francisco, Lenhoff, and Schudson's previously mentioned "Classroom as Newsroom" study (2012), stating that most university-based news production programs are small, which make them very dependent on the energy, initiative, and personality of individual faculty members" (p. 2691).

Second, the university-connection seems to be an obstacle when approaching sponsors. In general, "people tend to think that universities have a lot of money", New England CIR leader Joe Bergantino states. Therefore, both individuals and foundations are often more reluctant to support university nonprofits than independent nonprofits (interview March 10. 2015). Additionally, individual donors contributing to the centers are often added to the mother-university's list of potential donors. Hence, they face the risk of being "badgered forever" by universities conducting their own fundraising, and become more reluctant about sponsoring the centers, believes development director at the Workshop, Barbara Schechter (interview

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<sup>163</sup> The nickname of Charles Lewis.

<sup>164</sup> In the interviews with the representatives from the Stable Center, fundraising was not a central topic, and thus neither the fundraising role of Director Sheila Coronel.

October 7, 2014). On the positive side, working with students gives access to funders supporting student work and educationally specific projects (K. Higgins interview September 26, 2014).

Third, fundraising for investigative reporting can be hard, since this form of reporting is often expensive, uncertain, and provocative. “The more you rattle cages, [...] the more becomes controversial, and certain people don’t wanna be attached to that”, Phil Redo, general manager at WGBH Radio, housing the New England CIR, states (interview March 10, 2015).

In summary, running a university nonprofit specializing in investigative reporting appears to be challenging. Even the most experienced nonprofit leaders in the U.S.<sup>165</sup>, running some of the largest investigative nonprofits in the world (see section 4.1.2), seem to face economic trials on a regular basis. The structure of the university nonprofits also appears to include some contradictions in terms:

- Because of the economic fragility, and thus the small size of the organizations, the editorial staff is very much involved in the economic and structural aspects of the centers. Hence, instead of becoming less market-dependent, there is a risk of nonprofits confusing market and professional values, which in turn can jeopardize the journalistic credibility of the centers.
- To ensure the autonomy of the centers, funding from multiple and diverse sources is seen as the ideal. At the same time, the effort put in fundraising seems to increase proportionally with the number of funders and revenue streams. As a result, the ideal form of funding leaves less time for other obligations – like producing investigative reporting. Thus, more economic autonomy seems to imply less authority over the total time the centers have at their disposal.
- Being attached to a university can give the centers more economic stability (see section 4.1.2). At the same time, being part of a university seems to decrease the

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<sup>165</sup> The leaders of both the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley have long experience in establishing and leading nonprofits. Charles Lewis is, as previously mentioned, named “the godfather of nonprofit investigative journalism”, while Lowell Bergman was one of the co-founders of the first nonprofit for investigative reporting, The Center for Investigative Reporting, in 1977.

chances of finding other sponsors. If the university does not support the center sufficiently, the university connection can become a hindrance to stability.

### **5.1.2 Unstable organizations**

The fragile economic situation described above appears to result in an unstable organization, with ways of earning revenue, partnerships, projects and employees constantly changing. At any given time, the Workshop has between eight and twelve open grants, with a financial predictability of eight to twelve months (K. Higgins interview September 26. 2014). The New England CIR estimates their predictability to be about a year (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015).

One of the strategies used to deal with the low financial predictability seems to be keeping a small core staff and hiring reporters and students on short, project-to-project work contracts. This way of operating, however, is not seen as optimal. Ideally, Lynne Perri, managing editor at the Workshop states, the Center would have a full-time fundraiser, a full-time web developer, and two or three assignment reporters (interview September 14. 2014). With a better economy and more core staff, what Executive Editor Charles Lewis calls “this bus station thing” would improve, increasing the Center’s autonomy (C. Lewis interview December 10. 2014)

An example of the instability caused by the lack of funding is the Workshop fellowships. In 2014/2015, the Center could no longer afford to pay the fellow for 20 hours a week, and the working hours were cut to ten hours (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014, K. Higgins interview September 26. 2014). Moreover, the tight budget forced the Center to stop offering the postgraduate fellowship and, instead, include the fellow in the short-contract system. Since most graduate fellows are experienced journalists who know the Workshop well, and are thus productive reporters, the development was seen as very unfortunate (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014, C. Lewis interview October 7. 2014). The following quote from Financial Operations Manager Kris Higgins, describing the contract-situation of one of the short-time employees, illustrates how precarious the economic hand-to-mouth situation can be:



Chuck<sup>166</sup> kept coming back to me and saying, you know, “Can we hire her for another two to three months?” And I would have to dig through the budget and say, “Okay, we can do three months.” And then, you know, three months would be coming due and he'd come back and say, you know, “I really need her for another two months.” And I'd have to look through the budget and say, you know, “Okay, we can do it for another two months, but if we do that, you're gonna have to give up, you know, something else”. (Interview September 26. 2014)

A more dramatic effect of the tight economy is staff members losing their jobs. In 2011 “too much money was being spent and there weren't enough controls”, according to Development Director Barbara Schecter (interview October 7. 2014). Hence, four staff members had to go, including two *Frontline* producers<sup>167</sup> (K. Higgins interview September 26. 2014, L. Perri interview September 14. 2014). Emma Schwartz, associate producer with the *Frontline* team cooperating with the Workshop, describes the instability of the nonprofit world as “not always fun”. If constantly worrying about when the next “crash” is going to come, there is a danger that the functionality of the staff and the quality of their work can suffer, she states (interview October 22. 2014). Because of the instability, Financial Operations Manager Higgins often finds it hard to decide how much information to provide to the Workshop’s staff. As he puts it, he does not want “people to be scared that they're gonna lose their jobs”. At the same time, he wants them to “be aware” (interview September 26. 2014).

In addition to the more personal impact of the economic instability, the insecurity also seems to correspond badly with conducting influential investigative reporting. Again using the Workshop as an example, the Center’s budget became more restricted after the 2011 lay-offs mentioned above. This resulted in the Center becoming dependent upon developing projects and getting them funded *before* hiring

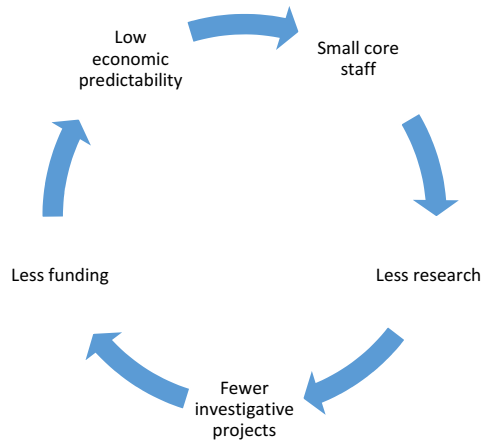
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<sup>166</sup> The nickname of Executive Editor Charles Lewis.

<sup>167</sup> One of the producers, Rick Yong, went back to his independent company. Today his *Frontline* production team is based at the SOC. The team uses students as researchers, is a contractor through the Workshop, and gets reduced rent on the SOC office space (see section 4.2.3). Since 2011 the team has not received salaries through the Workshop (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014).

reporters and producers to work on the projects (L. Perri interview September 14, 2014). To develop an investigative project however often requires a lot of research (see section 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). Hence, a vicious circle develops: Without funding for research, it is hard to develop good enough ideas – and without good enough ideas, there is no funding. Visualized, the process can look as in Figure 2:

Figure 2. The interdependence between resources and research.



In addition, the outcome of the long-term research periods is often unsure. After months of researching, the reporters can risk having no story at all. There is also the possibility of not getting the story funded. In 2014, a producer who had been part of the Workshop since its establishment in 2008 did for instance lose her job only weeks after winning a 2014 Emmy Award. Since she had not succeeded in developing a new, funded, project in time, the Center could not afford to cover her salary. Following from the above, conducting investigative reporting on a contract basis does not seem ideal. As Catherine Rentz, one of the producers who lost her job in 2011 and was later hired on a contract basis says: “It’s too hard to conduct investigative reporting that way” (interview October 6, 2014).

### 5.1.3 Direct and indirect foundation influence

As shown in section 4.1.1, the establishment of nonprofit newsrooms has been seen as a way of removing direct commercial pressures from journalism. However, case studies show that nonprofits are challenged by many of the same problems as

commercial journalism. Instead of facing market pressure, foundation-funded journalists must often “anticipate and chase after the perhaps-idiosyncratic whims of funders” (Browne, 2010, pp. 890-891). While seldom imposing direct constraints, foundations often effectively manage the organizations they fund *indirectly* – through meetings, conferences and suggestions (Browne, 2010, p. 892). In addition, foundations have a strong potential sanctions: If not satisfied with the nonprofits work, they can withdraw their grants (Browne, 2010).

The experience of the interviewees in this study seems to correspond with Browne’s findings. While none had experienced direct influence, a few had experienced indirect influence. Many foundations for instance earmark their support for specific topics. Associate producer with *Frontline*, Emma Schwartz, puts it like this: “So a lot of times, grant money will be more designated for, not your general operating, but you know, a health topic or political. So if you're not on a particular, one of those will be hard” (interview October 22. 2014). New England CIR reporter Beth Daley describes the indirect foundation influence as follows:

I think there’s a feeling at the Center that we have to chase money, so I think there’s a lot of pressure on me sometimes to apply for money that I don’t see as being in the best interest. I think that’s normal, it’s sort of the business side versus the journalism side. (Interview March 9. 2015)

In general, the staff of the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop, and the New England CIR does not however seem to view foundation impact as a significant problem.<sup>168</sup> Several of the interviewees point to the fact that so-called activist foundations seldom support investigative reporting, as this kind of journalism is known to be hard to influence. In a few, particular cases, the IRP Berkeley has been requested to be a “hired gun”, according to Managing Editor Tim McGirk. These proposals have however always been “promptly rejected”, he states (interview November 13. 2014). Managing editor at the Workshop, Lynne Perri, points to the fact that investigative projects frequently change course, as the reporting more often than not yields new information. On these

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<sup>168</sup> Fundraising was not a central part of the conversation with representatives from the Stabile Center, as the Center seems to conduct less fundraising than the other three centers of the study.

occasions, the Workshop never goes back to the funder to get approval to change the story – they just change it (interview October 1. 2014). Investigative reporting can in other words be hard to control. When it comes to earmarked funding, development director at the Workshop, Barbara Schecter, states that the Center might accept projects initiated by foundations if the Workshop and the foundation have corresponding interests. However, “if somebody has some crazy project that was particularly of interest to them, [offering] five million bucks”, she continues, “we wouldn't take it for 50 million dollars” (interview October 7. 2014).

Rather than seeing foundations as a source of negative influence, many of the interviewees actually seem to think that foundation support increases the centers' professional autonomy; for Charles Lewis at the Workshop, running a nonprofit means having the opportunity to concentrate on the “important issues” (interview December 10. 2014). Charles Ornstein, senior reporter at ProPublica, thinks that “at ProPublica, unlike other news organizations, we have more freedom to do what we want to do” (interview January 28. 2015). To illustrate the difference between the traditional news industry and the nonprofit field, Robert Rosenthal, executive director at The Center for Investigative Reporting, refers to a small speech he held when hiring a two-time Pulitzer-winner who had just lost his newspaper job:

When I met him, I said “this is a really different place”. [...] “I want you to be more ambitious than you've ever been in your life or as ambitious. You've done great journalism. I want you to do better journalism. And if you do stories that lead to positive change and reveal problems and have impact, you will help sustain everybody's salary here”. (Interview November 13. 2014)

In the traditional news industry, Rosenthal did not always experience quality journalism as a goal:

I've been in meetings where I would write a note to the entire staff about what a great investigative story we had done and how hard it was, etcetera. And I go into a meeting with the publisher and the executive committee. And someone said: ‘Who gives a shit about that story?’ I mean, they didn't care. (Interview November 13. 2014)

As stated by Konieczna (2014) in section 4.1.1, nonprofits in other words seem to have created a new business model, turning quality reporting into revenue. Hence, both the economic fragile Workshop and the bigger and more solid Center for Investigative Reporting have the liberty to prioritize professional goals. Since not having to cover a beat or do daily coverage, the centers can use all their available resources on producing investigative reporting. Unlike many traditional newsrooms, the leaders of the centers can thus be said to have allocative control (Murdock, 1988) – defining their own goals and distributing their own resources. Therefore, their decisions can be seen as more autonomous than decisions made by news managers in traditional newsrooms, who are often structurally determined by the overall organization of “news business in capitalism” (see section 2.1 3). This finding corresponds with Nee (2011), stating that one of the most commonly cited benefits of donor funding among the nonprofit leaders interviewed for her PhD dissertation was a greater “freedom to choose stories based on merit and public impact” rather than having to “pander to commercial interests to generate more traffic” (p. 116). Without fulfilling professional goals, the centers would in fact not earn income. As the business model of investigative nonprofit journalism can be said to change society for the better<sup>169</sup>, the most successful nonprofits are the ones that are able to initiate such changes. C. Lewis and Niles (2013) suggest that “[b]oth nonprofit newsrooms and their charitable donors are in business to ‘do good’, [...] and both want to know they’re succeeding”. Hence, the centers spend a lot of time and energy highlighting the quality and impact of their work, knowing that all positive attention will increase the chances of new partnerships, revenue streams and sponsors. As stated by Rosenthal at CIR: “We can do stories which we can show lead to changes in legislation, changes in law, you know, big debate around the subject. And we track that. They want to see results” (interview November 13. 2014).

From the above, it seems that the direct influence foundations have upon the work of the centers is minimal. Of indirect impact, it can be problematic that some foundation support is topic-specific, as investigative reporting is often described as a systematic

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<sup>169</sup> A discussion of the term “professional”, and the aim of the journalism profession, is found in Chapter 2.

and independent investigation, *initiated by the press itself* (Hanson, 2009, p. 14). Nevertheless, most of the foundational influence seems to consist of encouraging the centers to produce “society-improving” journalism. Hence, it actually seems that the centers have found a revenue stream rewarding the production of professional-oriented quality reporting (often labeled accountability journalism, social responsibility journalism, public service reporting, or public affairs journalism. See section 2.2 for details). Following from this, the nonprofit centers can be said to fulfill one of the goals of the Pocantico declaration<sup>170</sup>, namely, increasing the autonomy of the journalism profession through separating the news from the marketplace.

#### **5.1.4 Fragile economy, low foundation impact**

Of the two main challenges connected to running a nonprofit newsroom (as described by the interviewees), the findings above indicate that “making sure that the funding is appropriate” is the lesser problem. The main reason for this seems to be that the aims, ideals, and values of the centers and the foundations in question seem to be more or less in line. The funders do, however, have great *potential* authority, as the autonomy of the centers is dependent upon both the centers and the foundations understanding and defending the principles of journalism. For centers living from hand to mouth, it must be tempting to earn extra revenue through giving foundations more influence over the topics covered. For foundations, it must be tempting to exert some control over the results of their support. Hence, there is an overhanging risk of greater foundation control. As described above, some see philanthropy as an effective way of maintaining existing structures of elite control. From this perspective, the independence of the centers can be described as autonomy based upon the grace of the elites.

When it comes to the bigger problem, “finding the money”, running a small nonprofit seems to be an everyday struggle to survive. If the centers have to use much of their total available time negotiating partnerships, earning revenue, fundraising and

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<sup>170</sup> The declaration written by 27 nonpartisan nonprofit news organizations in 2009, founding the Investigative News Network (the largest professional association of nonprofit news organizations in the U.S.). See section 4.1.1 for further details.

highlighting their impact, there is a danger that the reporters have too little time left to conduct quality investigative reporting. Moreover, the joint editorial and economic obligations of the nonprofits editorial staff can be seen as an unfortunate mixture of market and professional values. As a result, fundraising without jeopardizing journalistic credibility becomes a balancing act.

According to Freidson (2007), the formal institutions of professionalism “establish the economic and social conditions which allow those with a specialized body of knowledge and skill to control their own work” (p. 105). As previously discussed, the founders of most professional-oriented nonprofits abandoned the traditional news industry because they found its economic and social conditions unsatisfactory. The financial fragility of some of the nonprofits does however seem to hinder them in achieving economic stability and independence. As a result, their attempt at improving the conditions for producing quality reporting only seems to be partially successful.

## 5.2 Universities as “acceptable rescuers”

While foundations are external supporters of the centers, the university relationship is of another character – with the four centers actually being part of their respective mother-universities. Thus, the natural question seems to be: How can an independent, investigative newsroom be part of a non-journalistic organization? As previously described, American journalism is dominated by liberal principles (see section 2.2), hence, any form of external control or regulation is seen as a possible threat to the freedom of expression (Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 877). Following from this, one would assume that professional reporters would disapprove of investigative newsrooms affiliated with external, non-journalistic organizations. Of the 69 interviewees of this study, including several representatives from external news organizations, only a few do however express any direct dissatisfaction with the university involvement. Beth Daley, reporter at the New England CIR, is one of the most critical interviewees, stating that:

I don't like being affiliated with the university, I hate it. [...] It's dangerous, right? What happens if we have a higher education story? I think it gives a

perception out there that we're affiliated with the University, and I don't think everyone looks at that negatively, but I think if you're looking at a journalist and seeing if they're independent, it's not a good thing. (Interview March 9, 2015)

Seeing the university connection as a threat to journalistic autonomy, Daley's view thus seems to correspond with the general principles of the American press. In contrast, the majority of the interviewees seem to perceive universities as suitable rescuers of quality journalism. Dean at American University's School of Communications, Jeffrey Rutenbeck, even sees the university involvement as the start of a new era:

With all of the media activity, the social media activity, the existence of these large datasets, the increased interaction of people and the flow of information, this should be the golden age of journalism. And in some ways, you could argue it is becoming that, but just not with journalistic organizations always being front and center. So universities are well positioned to step up and fill some of those capacity gaps and capacity needs. And it's a great opportunity to do so. (Interview October 22, 2014)

Just like some of the academics referred to in section 2.2.6, Rutenbeck and a majority of the other interviewees do in other words see universities as part of the solution to the journalism crisis. The view seems to be that when news organizations are failing to conduct their professional task, universities can, using Abbott's (1988) terminology, serve as a base for professional reporters attempting to reclaim the jurisdiction over news. It is most likely due to this perspective that the majority of the interviewees perceive the cooperation between nonprofits and universities as a good idea.

In the following, I will examine what characteristics universities have that make them more accepted as "rescuers" than other external organizations. I will also discuss their potential negative influence on the centers. Have any of the four mother-universities for instance attempted to interfere in the centers' editorial decisions?



### 5.2.1 Similar norms and mutual benefit

When asked about how independent, investigative newsrooms can be part of universities, a majority of the interviewees refer to the similar culture and values of academia and journalism. As New England CIR reporter, Jenifer McKim, says:

The universities are one place that are rich for prompting thought and questions, and funding research that otherwise can't get paid for. So in a certain way it makes sense that the universities are helping as journalism changes from for-profit to whatever the next thing is. (Interview March 9, 2015)

According to several academics, McKim is right. There are a number of similarities between journalism and academia, especially when it comes to investigative reporting. When applying the Mertonian norms of modern science, investigative reporting can actually be said to follow three out of four.<sup>171</sup> First, the goal of both academics and investigative reporters can be described as revealing an impersonal and objective truth (universalism) (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 41; Merton, 1973, p. 270). Second, selflessness and objectivity are ideally seen as basic elements of both institutions (disinterestedness) (Merton, 1973, p. 275). From this perspective, performing work as well as possible, often improving society as a result, can be seen as the primary motivational factor. Hence, both journalists and researchers ideally are knights, and not knaves motivated by self-interest (see section 2.1.2). Third, both academia and professional journalism aim to share their reliable, truthful and impartial information with the public (“communism”) (Merton, 1973, p. 273). Within science “the substantive findings” are seen as “a product of social collaboration” and thus “assigned to the community” (Merton, 1973, p. 273). Investigative reporters, on the other hand, need to reach a large audience in order for the public to “evaluate” and react politically to the revealed information (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 9; Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 881). Moreover, as previously mentioned, reaching large audiences is a way for nonprofits to show impact and secure support. Nonprofits can thus be

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<sup>171</sup> The fourth Mertonian norm, organized skepticism, is, as later described, not shared by journalists and scientists.

said to be closer to the norm of sharing than the traditional news industry, as the industry often shields its reporting from other publishers in order to sell their journalistic product exclusively.

When asked about the positive sides of being part of a university, most of the interviewees' answers can, directly or indirectly, be related to the three Mertonian norms. IRP Berkeley director Lowell Bergman is one of the interviewees drawing out the parallel between the two institutions the furthest, describing investigative reporting as “the research end of journalism”, adding to “the body of knowledge”. In addition, he states, most investigative reporters provide this new knowledge “for free for people to use that information in the future, which is pretty much like the purpose of a research university” (interview November 10. 2014). When applying the terminology of Merton, Bergman seems to state that investigative reporting fulfills the ideals of universalism, “communism” and disinterestedness. For two of the deans, the joint public service motivation of academia and the press appear especially important. When asked why their department is supporting investigative reporting, Thomas Fiedler at Boston University’s College of Communication answers: “Community service I guess is the simple answer” (interview March 13. 2015). Steve Coll at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism describes the shared ideal as follows:

To reveal, to discover, to hold powerful institutions accountable, to take advantage of the emerging tools of data science, of data analysis, to reveal patterns of the exercise of power or patterns of the consequence of public policy, that matter to the public. (Interview January 29. 2015)

Closely related to the norms of universalism and disinterestedness are the research methods of academia and journalism. According to Steve Coll, some forms of investigative reporting can be said to have the same “depth and rigor” as certain types of social science research – relying upon documentation, field studies and data collection (interview January 29. 2015). David Donald<sup>172</sup>, data editor at the

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<sup>172</sup> Workshop data editor David Donald unfortunately died in December 2016.

Workshop, makes the same point when labelling data journalism “scientific journalism” because of the use of methods borrowed from social science (interview October 21. 2014). Scholars comparing ethical and epistemic standards for investigative journalists and researchers point to the same analogy, stating that “both groups conduct interviews, observe individuals and events, administer surveys, and analyze secondary data” (Newman & Glass, 2014, p. 295). Moreover, investigative research is seen as an “intellectual process”, based on “gathering and sorting ideas and facts, building patterns, analyzing options, and making decisions based on logic rather than emotion” (Williams, 1978, p. 12). Both interviewees and academics thus see a clear parallel between investigative reporting and the academic research process.

In addition to corresponding norms, aims and methods of research, the interviewees give several organizational and practical reasons for why universities make appealing partners. First, the university’s reputation and goodwill can, as described by Houston (2010) and Lewis (2014) in section 4.1.2, help the centers gain credibility with sources. When introducing himself, director at the IRP Berkeley, Lowell Bergman, for instance, often uses his title of professor: “When I call up, and say ‘I’m Lowell Bergman. I’m a professor at the university.’ People either call me back or interestingly enough, people will come to my seminar”, he states (interview November 10. 2014). Located at universities, the centers are also surrounded by skilled members of the faculty, with the potential of acting as sources or experts (L. Bergman interview November 10. 2014, C. Lewis interview October 7. 2014).

Second, universities are large organizations with substantial resources. Since nonprofits in general are both small and fragile, having a more solid partner is often a great advantage – especially when conducting investigative reporting (see section 2.2.3). To Lowell Bergman, the University represents a “base” giving him “some level of establishment” (interview November 10. 2014). Charles Lewis of the Workshop puts it like this: Since the potential of being “sued by Russian billionaire oligarchs” is always present, it is easy to “feel awfully alone” when conducting investigations (interview October 7. 2014). A mother-institution equipped to face

powerful opponents, having the financial and organizational strength to pursue controversial issues in the courts is thus perceived to be of great help.

As described in Chapter 4, being part of a university can also improve the overall financial stability of a nonprofit. In addition to representing a steady source of income, offering physical infrastructure and access to motivated and cheap labor (students), some interviewees highlight that the universities can help the centers operate during periods of low income. Joe Bergantino, executive director at the New England CIR, describe the university-connection as “almost like having a bridge loan”. If the Center is running a monthly deficit, the University will “fill it in, and then we pay it back (interview March 10. 2015). During the 2011 economic struggles of the Workshop (see section 5.1.2), American University, for instance, agreed to cover “somewhere in between half and two thirds of the overage” to ensure the operation of the Center (K. Higgins interview September 26. 2014). Universities thus seem to make the small, unstable and underfinanced centers more sustainable.<sup>173</sup>

Third, some of the interviewees find the durability of universities positive. “You know, they're always surrounded by change, that's been true since they were created hundreds of years ago”, Steve Coll, dean at Columbia Journalism School, states. Hence, he sees Universities as “voices of the long run, of what really matters” (interview January 29. 2015). This view seems to correspond with the view of certain journalism programs described in section 2.3.3. Not being “merely reactive to the newest gadgets”, and instead “responding thoughtfully over the long haul”, universities are seen to hold an important role in preserving important journalistic core values (Folkerts, 2014, p. 284).

Following from the above, it seems that the mother-universities of the centers represent resourceful, respected and steady partners with a tradition for autonomy, thorough methods and society-building work. For the universities, the greatest benefit of hosting the nonprofit centers seems to be the previously mentioned connection to

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<sup>173</sup> In addition to the resources directly utilized by the centers, universities also have many hidden assets, according to the Workshops Charles Lewis. He estimates that there are 30 or 40 investigative reporters in academia “throughout the world”. By harnessing and creating a network of these “former investigative reporter types” and their students, it would be possible to do “unbelievable stuff” (interview October 7. 2014).

the practice field (see Chapter 4). To Jeffrey Rutenbeck, dean at American University's School of Communication, the danger of university studies is that "it can get progressively irrelevant", with the faculty spending most of their time teaching, and little time practicing their profession (interview October 22. 2014). In contrast, most of the centers' staff members actively produce journalism and interface with the practice field on a regular basis (see Chapter 4). The centers can in other words be described as a continuously maintained bridge to the "real world". Rutenbeck uses the Workshop-initiated Washington Post Practicum as an example:

I was at the *Post* a couple of weeks ago to see so many of our students in the newsroom of one of our nation's most prestigious newspapers, playing a variety of roles, [...] doing work that's meaningful, the work that has an impact, working with amazing, experienced journalists and doing it on this kind of national stage. (Interview October 22. 2014)

Twenty years ago, it would have been hard for a school like the School of Communication to approach a newsroom like that of the *Washington Post*, Rutenbeck claims. The disrupted media landscape, and the deep need of resources, however, gives journalism schools and their students access to the most prestigious parts of the practice field. Hence, the increased cooperation between newsrooms and journalism schools is one of the few, positive effects of the journalism crisis, the Dean states (interview October 22. 2014).

Another useful outcome of hosting nonprofit centers seems to be positive publicity, as the name of the mother-university is often referred to when a center or its students win awards. In addition, the university name is repeatedly mentioned in students' bylines and credits. The connection to well-known newsrooms is also seen as a competitive advantage when recruiting new students (J. Rutenbeck interview October 22. 2014, W. Cochran interview October 8. 2014, T. Fielder interview March 13. 2015). All the interviewed students connected to the Workshop, the IRP Berkeley, and the Stabile Center confirm this last aspect, as they state that the reputation of the centers and/or the staff working there were the main or part of the reason for applying

to their current university.<sup>174</sup> Charles Lewis at the Workshop is described as “a big deal”, Stabile director Sheila Coronel as “some sort of guru within investigative reporting”, and Lowell Bergman at the IRP Berkeley as someone “everyone knows” (C. Animashaun interview September 14. 2014, S. Alecci interview January 26. 2015, H. Mack interview November 11. 2014).

From the above, it seems that the university-center partnership functions in some sort of a symbiosis. While the universities get access to a respected and renowned part of the practice field and its practitioners, the centers get resources, stability, and easy access to academic expertise. Both universities and centers also seem to benefit from each other’s positive reputation. Moreover, the similarities between investigative reporting and academia, such as the corresponding norms, aims and research methods, seem to ease the collaboration. Hence, the university-center partnerships can be described as uniting the best aspects of two similar fields.

### **5.2.2 Differences and challenges**

In addition to the many similarities, there are of course also many differences between journalism and academia. When interviewing the centers’ editorial staff, many for instance emphasize the difference between themselves and the rest of the faculty. As Charles Lewis of the Workshop puts it:

I am a full professor. It’s ridiculous. I don’t have a PhD. And I’m not a real academic. [...] What I mean is I don’t live and die for peer review articles. I don’t know if I’ve ever done one. [...] But I have a practical view about investigative information. It doesn’t matter how many good degrees you have. I think academia is a lot of bullshit to be honest with you. And I don’t ever want to become entirely one of those people. (Interview December 10. 2014)

Although the centers are technically part of universities, with staff members holding academic titles, many of the editorial staff do in other words still see themselves as journalists.

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<sup>174</sup> None of the New England CIR student interns had however heard of the Center before applying to Boston University.

As discussed in section 2.3.1, one of the main differences between practical and a theoretical knowledge, is the aim. Instead of seeking “truth” and knowledge for its own sake, journalists, and other practice-oriented professionals, often use knowledge as a tool to fulfill their professional task. Therefore, although both practice-oriented reporters and theory-oriented academics seek truthful information, the *reason* for seeking truthful information differs. Weinstein (2007) summarizes the dissimilarity as follows: While the main purpose of research “is to discover knowledge for its own sake and for the betterment of human kind”, the main purpose of journalism is to improve the practice of democracy by supplying the public with information to facilitate the “voting of wise decisions” (p. 523).

One of the results of the different knowledge views/aims of academia and journalism is that universities and the press are organized differently. While the press is structured to prioritize informing the public by relaying current facts, universities are designed to produce “warranted and generalizable truth claims to advance durable forms of knowledge” (Newman & Glass, 2014, p. 300). Therefore, both the audience and the context of the “truthful information” differ. While the journalists’ primary responsibility is to inform the general public, traditional researchers often write for a smaller population – namely the specialists in their field (Newman & Glass, 2014, p. 290). Additionally, academia is often less politically oriented than journalism. While journalists often describe themselves as a “fourth estate”, guarding the people against government abuses, academic research, ideally, is impartial and apolitical, avoiding direct political advocacy and commentary. Hence, universities are frequently designed to be somewhat cloistered from current events and politics “so as to facilitate the quest for objective knowledge and truth” (Newman & Glass, 2014, p. 301). This insulation can also reduce the risk of market forces affecting research. Investigative reporters, on the other hand, often face “the pressures of producing ‘hooks’ that reel in audiences to generate revenue for their employers” and “the pressure of deadlines and the accelerated speed of the 24-hour news cycle in the competitive media market” (Newman & Glass, 2014, pp. 299-300). Moreover, the framing of the information differs. Whereas reporters generally present facts within limited historical and cultural contexts and strive to prefigure “what will happen

next”, academic publications are meant to be “enduring contributions” to the “historical archives”. Hence, academic work is often a more advanced draft of history than what is expected of a news report (Newman & Glass, 2014, p. 301). Journalistic reports for instance seldom include a detailed methodological discussion or a theoretical framework (Hanstad, 2010, p. 123; Newman & Glass, 2014, p. 295), and journalistic stories do not undergo “the rigorous review process” of academic research, or fulfill scientific demands of testable and replicable data (also known as the Mertonian norm of organized skepticism) (Merton, 1973, p. 277; Newman & Glass, 2014, p. 298). The result is that academic research and publishing are often severely time-consuming, and three years can pass from an article being submitted until it is published (Hanstad, 2010, p. 127). Although some of the core values of academia and journalism are similar, the two cultures do in other words also have several dichotomous ideals. Simply put, academia can be described as slow, narrow and apolitical – while journalism is fast, broad and political.

According to the interviewees, one of the major problems crystalized from the differences between academia and journalism mentioned above is that universities have a higher threshold for publishing sensitive and challenging stories. Without the tradition of publishing politically potent information to a large public, universities can be “very squeamish”, as senior editor at ProPublica, Charles Ornstein, puts it. Being too concerned about “liability and other things”, they “don't see themselves as publishers per se”, he states (interview January 28. 2015). Susanne Reber, executive editor at The Center for Investigative Reporting, points to the same tendency: Despite the ideals of autonomy and academic freedom, universities are not terribly good at handling “the heat” when they get “pointed out” (interview November 12. 2014). To support this assessment, several interviewees tell stories of troublesome occurrences at other journalism schools. A young journalism teacher, for instance, had been fired after involving her students in filing a “bunch of FOILs” that were sensitive to the university (S. Reber interview November 12. 2014).<sup>175</sup> Another center’s website was

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<sup>175</sup> FOIL stands for Freedom of Information laws, meant to secure U.S. citizens access to information about their governments, schools, taxes and much more. Filing a records request is often referred to as filing a FOIL-request (Taddeo, 2016).



supposedly shut down after the center leader and his students started to investigate a lobbyist's disclosure about the university, "inflaming" the university trustees (C. Lewis interview December 10. 2014, A. Gregg interview September 18. 2014). Hence, only the more "aggressive-minded" universities with the "backbone" to support their independent newsrooms are seen as good partners (C. Lewis interview December 10. 2014). If the universities are not committed enough, there is a risk that they will concede the second the reporting becomes sensitive for the university itself, or other powerful groups and institutions aligned with the university, one of the interviewees state (A. Gregg interview September 18. 2014). Being a publisher of journalistic content, the universities must in other words tolerate being associated with the "unlovable" part of the press (see section 2.2.6).

In addition to the various challenges connected to universities becoming publishers, many of the interviewees mention challenges connected to the slow, tedious and meticulous side of the university culture. The most resented seems to be university bureaucracy. In journalism "[y]ou live and die on your ability to be fast and mobile and flexible", associate producer with *Frontline* Fritz Kramer states. "And those are not just necessarily words that you associate with large institutional entities" (interview October 22. 2014). According to managing director at the IRP Berkeley, Janice Hui, "there are so many layers and processes" at a university, "that just to get somebody paid is like an arduous task" (interview November 12. 2014). For Joe Bergantino at the New England CIR, the "huge bureaucracy" makes it hard to get "anything done" (interview March 10. 2015). Lewis at the Workshop puts it like this: "There's more bureaucracy and red tape and you just have to roll your eyes and try not to freak out about it and be upset about it" (interview October 7. 2014). In addition to the bureaucracy, the university calendar, with semesters and classes, is perceived as challenging as it is hard to combine with ongoing journalistic projects. Many of the student-produced stories must for instance be transferred to new students or they are never finished at all (C. Lewis interview December 10. 2014). The structure of universities, aimed at producing "warranted and generalizable truth claims", does in other words not always appear ideal to the nonprofits, aiming at informing the public of current facts.

### 5.2.3 The universities impact on the reporting

Because of the differences between universities and newsrooms, and the many stories of universities as reluctant publishers, Charles Lewis at the Workshop comes up with this advice about university-based nonprofits: “[D]ay-to-day editorial independence and authority must be absolutely clear. If it is not, then nothing notable will be produced, including perhaps public credibility, and it will likely fail” (2009). Put in other words, university nonprofits need to regulate and influence their own work and set their own professional standards without interference from the university management. Otherwise, producing quality journalism is impossible. Hence, Lewis echoes the professional understanding described in section 2.1: Without autonomy, it is hard for professionals to fulfill their societal obligations.

According to all the center leaders, their mother-universities do allow them autonomy. Lewis at the Workshop describes the relationship like this:

I don't have to get any stories approved here. [...] that's important to me. It's crucial. If I had to ask the Dean, no offence, I like the Dean, but if I had to ask people above me at the University for approval, I wouldn't do this. I'm serious. And if they said no to a story, I'd be out of here. (Interview December 10. 2014)

Dean at the School of Communication, Jeffrey Rutenbeck, confirms that he has never had a single conversation as dean regarding the subject of any investigative work done by the Workshop, the *Washington Post* or any student project. “In that respect, I can say from very direct experience over the past two and a half years, that there's been no attempt to influence”, he states (interview October 22. 2014).

At the New England CIR, neither the reporters nor the interns seem to have experienced any conflict of interest. “I don't sense any hesitation to go after something if it was a real problem” intern Andrea D'Eramo states (interview March 9. 2015). Dean Thomas Fiedler sees conflicts due to the investigations as a natural part of the arrangement: “If you are doing good investigative reporting [...], and you are holding powerful interests to account for something, [...] you are going to create some problems. And that's part of the deal” (interview March 13. 2015).

At the Stabile Center, some of the students have experienced restrictions – but perceive these to be caused by the time limits of the master program: “I don't think that we're necessarily restrained in terms of, like, controversy or what we can or can't cover. I think that if we could do it in six months, then they would let us do it”, student Jessica Huseman declares (interview January 27. 2015). Like Fiedler at Boston University, Dean Steve Coll at Columbia University states that being “unlovable” is an inseparable part of investigative reporting:

Journalism makes people uncomfortable routinely, and you have to defend its independence and integrity. [...] We have room to work in here, and there's a lot of autonomy that the school enjoys and I certainly don't have any worries about the university pressuring us about investigative reporting. I think they really have been very supportive. (Interview January 29. 2015)

IRP Berkeley also reports having had no troubles with its mother-university. According to Director Lowell Bergman, the Center did not even get complaints after running a story about how the University earns parts of its income. Resulting in a new state law, the consequence of the coverage was direct economic loss for the University (interview November 10. 2014). Also the three other centers have several examples of stories hurting the interests of their mother-university. At the day of the interview with Dean Fiedler at Boston University, the *Boston Globe* published one of its co-productions with the New England CIR, accusing a Boston University professor of defending abusive parents under false pretenses (McKim, 2015). “Nobody is yelling at me for that inside the university because the story is straight. Straight on, it is a legitimate story. It was fair. Everybody had an opportunity to review it and all that stuff”, Fiedler declares. Nevertheless, there is often, as he puts it, “a little bit of shifting around and uncomfot” when the “spotlight gets turned” (interview March 13. 2015).

Despite of the University not interfering with the New England CIR's coverage, the university-newsroom partnership has sometimes resulted in critics questioning the Centers' credibility. For instance, a story on sexual assault on college campuses in 2010 did not include Boston University (BU) as part of the story (Mulvihill &

Bergantino, 2010). As the critics saw it, this was because NECIR was part of the University. According to the Center itself, BU was left out as the story was based upon the reports of colleges and universities in a certain grant program attempting to hinder violence against women. Since BU was not part of the program, there was no data from BU. Many critics did not however find this response satisfactory as BU was known to have several incidents of sexual assault. Although the University did not interfere with the Center's coverage, the affiliation with the University had proved to be problematic. As a result, the University asked for an even stronger separation – to make sure that the NECIR was not perceived as “the investigative arm of Boston University” (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015). Dean Fiedler points to more openness as a solution: If the reporters had explained in the article why Boston University was not part of the story it would have been less “awkward”, he states (interview March 13. 2015).

To make the cooperation between centers and mother-universities easier, all four centers seem to have routines of informing the university management of controversial or sensitive projects. Dean at Columbia University, Steve Coll, for instance informs his “bosses” if a story is “involved with the university in some other way, whether it's donors or executives on the board of the university and so forth” (interview January 29. 2015). When developing a project called the “Bank Tracker” around the time of the financial crisis, the Workshop received an angry letter from the American Bankers Association stating that the story “could jeopardize the health of the United States of America” because there could be “a run on the banks” that could “cause a national panic” (C. Lewis interview October 7. 2014). Suspecting that the banks would go to the trustees of the university, Executive Editor Charles Lewis sent an email to the Dean, informing him that the Center was about to publish a “very significant project that the bankers were not happy about”. As Lewis tells the story, the reply from the Dean was simply “Good luck” (interview October 7. 2014). To the universities, such early warnings seem to provide time to prepare for possible reactions. Dean at American University's School of Communication, Jeffrey Rutenbeck, describes the situation as follows: “Our legal team would be advised. Our

university communications team would be advised. And then we monitor the activity. And we have to be ready to stand behind the work” (interview October 22. 2014).

From the above, it seems that the four centers of this study have a clear and beneficial relationship to their mother-universities. When asked why the university-partnership seems to be working so well, despite the many possible pitfalls, several of the interviewees point to the fact that they are part of professional-oriented journalism schools. “We’re pretty clearly a school with a professional approach to journalism rather than what some people might call a more academic approach”, co-founder of the Workshop, Wendell Cochran, states (interview October 8. 2014). Without “such good strong support from our Dean and from colleagues on the faculty” willing to “come along for the ride as it was”, the Workshop could never have functioned as an independent newsroom, he declares (interview October 8. 2014).

The main reason why the relevant journalism schools are described as “professional-oriented” appears to be them having a relatively high percentage of former and current reporters on their faculty. Three of the schools also have prior reporters as deans. Steve Coll at Columbia is a staff writer at the *New Yorker*, with a 20-year long career at the *Washington Post*, Fiedler at Boston University worked for the *Miami Herald* for more than 30 years, and Edward Wasserman, dean at the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, has a former career as both reporter and editor.<sup>176</sup> According to Joe Bergantino at the New England CIR, the Center “would never have set [itself] up with Boston University if it wasn’t for Thomas Fiedler being “a high-quality journalist” and “a man of great integrity” (interview March 10. 2015). Fiedler himself thinks that “it certainly helps” that he “understand[s] what the investigative reporting function is”. In addition to being more comfortable, knowing that there’s going to be some occasional “pushbacks”, the university management tend to give him a lot of latitude because of his experience and credibility in the journalism field, he states (interview March 13. 2015). Deans knowing, understanding and

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<sup>176</sup> Fiedler was an investigative reporter, a political columnist, the editorial page editor, and the executive editor at the *Miami Herald* (Boston University, College of Communication, n.d.-a). Coll, who is a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, was a reporter, a foreign correspondent and a senior editor at the *Washington Post* (Columbia Journalism School, n.d.-b). Wasserman, held positions as reporter and editor in several Maryland, Wyoming and Florida newspapers (The UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, n.d.-a).

appreciating the aims, norms and knowledge of the journalism profession (labelled occupational ideology in section 2.1) does therefore seem to increase the journalistic autonomy of the centers, making it easier to conduct investigative reporting at a university.

Instead of hindering autonomy, many of the interviewees seem to think that the university connection increases their ability to choose which subjects to cover, to select stories, and to decide what to emphasize. Both the resources and the long-form research culture of the mother-universities seem to allow the centers to conduct more time- and resource demanding investigative projects than would have been possible within the market model. Although being critical of the Center being part of a university, Beth Daley does think that the structure of the New England CIR makes it possible for her to “pursue things much more freely” and “branch off into new areas that no-one’s covering”. When working as a reporter at the *Boston Globe*, the structure was, as she describes it, more “bureaucratic”, since she was an environment reporter and had to cover her environment beat (interview March 9. 2015). Andrés Cediel, producer at the IRP Berkeley, puts it like this: “If you work at a news organization, you’re not doing research. You’re producing it all the time. And it’s a lot more pressure and the deadlines. It is harder to develop a bigger project”. According to him, “there is not a lot of other places where you get that kind of time to develop a story” (interview November 13. 2014). Compared to some parts of the traditional news industry, some parts of the university sector thus seem to represent what Freidson (2007) calls a “market shelter”, where the power of the market and the ideology of consumerism are limited. In a best-case scenario, the university connection thus seems to make it easier for the centers to follow the norms and aims of the journalism profession.

#### **5.2.4 Autonomy as a prerequisite for success**

In summary, the university-connection of the centers seems to have many similarities to the foundation-connection:

- At the time of the interviews, the affiliation seemed to increase, rather than decrease, the centers’ autonomy.

- The autonomy is fragile. Since the mother-universities have great *potential* authority, the centers are dependent upon the universities understanding and defending the principles of journalism.

For now, being part of a *professional-oriented* journalism school seem to be an important prerequisite for the centers' autonomy. In addition to the centers and academia sharing basic ideals, like universalism, "communism", and disinterestedness, members of the faculty of professional-oriented journalism schools were often once reporters, valuing the aims, norms and knowledge of journalism. Moreover, the relationship between the professional-oriented journalism schools and the centers seem to be mutually beneficial. While the professional-oriented schools get access to respected and renowned practitioners, continuously conducting real-world reporting, the centers get resources and stability. As a result, the centers' ability to conduct quality reporting increases, while the universities can offer their students relevant and updated practical knowledge. The centers' autonomy thus seems to be a *prerequisite* for the university-center partnerships to succeed. Without autonomy, no "professional" journalism can be produced. And without the production of real-world, professional reporting, the universities cannot offer their students a unique "real life" experience.

### 5.3 External newsrooms as "brothers in arms"

Compared to the relationship with foundations and mother-universities, the newsroom partnerships do not seem to cause the centers any professional agony. As described in section 5.2.2, the editorial staff members of the centers mainly identify themselves as journalists. This means that the influence of other journalists is not seen as external interference. Therefore, the partnering newsrooms can be described as family and not outside intruders. Moreover, as in most families, the various partnerships seem to represent a myriad of different connection-types. While some external newsrooms resemble the strict and controlling parent, others are similar to the distant uncle, only approached when in need of a favor. A third group can remind of close siblings, collaborating with the centers on apparently equal terms with seemingly equal gain.

Although not perceived as a challenge to autonomy by the interviewees of this study, several academics do think that the commercial news industry can influence professional journalism in a negative way. Derived from the critical views described in Chapter 2, the strongest concerns about the news industry are that it is:

- **Too market-oriented:** Because of the media crisis, the news industry has become increasingly corporate, concentrated, and commercial. As a result, the news industry will try to appropriate journalism as a commercial enterprise serving markets rather than publics. (Gasher, 2015, p. 107)
- **Too traditional:** Steeped in old ways of doing things, the “decaying” news organizations do not have the outlook, attitudes, and skills needed to adapt to the new reality caused by the financial crisis. (Picard, 2015, p. 8)

As described in section 4.1.1, most of the professional-oriented nonprofits (PONs) were established as a reaction to the “failing” news industry. Hence, PONs becoming dependent on the same newsrooms that many PON-reporters left in protest might seem unwise. To get mainstream news organizations to publish content produced by nonprofits, the content needs to be perceived as journalism by these newsrooms. As a result, Konieczna (2014) believes that the nonprofit journalism becomes driven by traditional news norms and values (p. 174). The nonprofits thus risk becoming producers of “old school journalism driven by old school rules” (p. 39). Without maintaining a critical distance from the “failing” news industry, the PONs do in other words risk becoming a replica – not a parallel, independent news production system.

In the following, I will examine how dependent the four centers are upon the “market-oriented” and “traditional” news industry, how the partnerships influence the centers reporting, and what the two parts achieve by collaborating.

### **5.3.1 Different forms of partnerships**

In 1920, Walter Lippmann looked with distress upon the American journalism he was part of. Causing the distress was a perception of journalism not having the intellectual resources necessary to present an accurate picture of the world. To succeed, “political observatories” outside journalism dedicated to investigation, analysis and study had



to provide predigested materials for reporters to relay to the publics, he stated. These observatories could for instance be found in government, in private institutions and in the universities (as cited in Schudson, 2008, p.4). Almost a century later, Lippmann's "political observatories" play vital roles, since more entities than ever share the field of public information with newspapers (Schudson, 2008, pp. 9-10). At the time of the interviews, the *Washington Post*, for instance, cooperated with several universities, nonprofits and newsrooms across the U.S. (J. Leen interview October 2. 2014). Hence, the nonprofit centers of this study are just one example of the many "political observatories" currently partnering with the traditional news outlets, "feeding" them "predigested" investigations, analysis and studies.

As described in section 4.1.1, the relationship between nonprofits and traditional newsrooms can be seen as a marriage of convenience. For the centers, the major advantage is access to a large public. Although a Knight report from 2015 shows that the websites of nonprofits are attracting more and more unique visitors, the audience numbers are far from large enough to "boost the impact of their stories" (Graves & Konieczna, 2015, p. 1972; Knight Foundation, 2015, p. 19). Neither do the average visiting numbers of the four centers of this study seem to be satisfactory. According to Lynne Perri, the Workshop has about 50,000 unique visitors a month on average, which she characterizes as "very small" (interview September 14. 2014).<sup>177</sup>

To the external newsrooms, cooperating with the nonprofits often means "extra manpower" and/or news content at little or no cost. "It's very difficult to resource properly without looking for partnerships", Phil Redo, general manager at WGBH Radio states (interview March 10. 2015). Without the New England CIR and other partnerships, the radio station would probably have been able to produce "one or two truly investigative projects a year"; through partnering, the station can however publish about twenty investigative stories a year (interview March 10. 2015).

The fact that the centers are part of universities does not seem to be a problem to the external newsrooms. "Whoever owns you are going to have a business interest", Scott

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<sup>177</sup> While often getting "a big spike" in readers when publishing a big project, the readership soon decreases as the center does not publish on a regular basis (interview September 14. 2014).

Allen, editor of the *Boston Globe* Spotlight Team, states (interview March 13. 2015). As an example, he mentions one of the *Boston Globe*'s "biggest stories" in 2014 – an investigation of the Boston Red Sox sportscaster and his son, Jared Remy, convicted for murdering his girlfriend (Moskowitz, 2014a, 2014b). As the principal owner of the Red Sox, John W. Henry, was also the principal owner of the *Boston Globe* – and a personal friend of the sportscaster – the reporting became "very challenging". Throughout the process the reporters had to be "really careful" about what they said and "make sure the owner understood" what they were doing, according to Allen (interview March 13. 2015). Hence, he does not see collaborating with universities as any worse than being embedded in the commercial media market. Rather, he sees the partnerships as a new way of doing business – and a necessary response to the financial crisis (interview March 13. 2015).<sup>178</sup> Phil Redo, general manager at WGBH Radio, also recognizes that a large organization like Boston University "has an interest in the city, or is up for something".<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, this does not mean that WGBH cannot cooperate with Boston University – it only means that the newsroom continually has to make sure that it is "making judgements that have nothing to do with anyone but our editorial staff" (interview March 10. 2015). Other representatives see the cooperation as unproblematic since the centers and the newsrooms have an overlap between their missions, sharing the same values, goals and standards (J. Leen interview October 2. 2014, S. Reber interview November 12. 2014). The argumentation is in other words the same as used by the centers when justifying their university affiliation: As long as the partners share the same principles, it works.

While all the center-newsroom partnerships of this study in some way trade audiences for investigative material, the way the partnerships are constructed differs greatly. As shown in Chapter 4, the Stabile Center is only involved in distribution-oriented partnerships, whereas the three other centers also co-produce stories with external newsrooms on a more-or-less regular basis. Often, the source of the story idea seems

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<sup>178</sup> Here Allen indirectly makes the same point as Abbott (1988), who states that many professions are identified by their organizational location. Characteristically, however, the work organizations involved are controlled by groups outside the profession (p. 80).

<sup>179</sup> As previously mentioned, the University is one of the largest employers in the city of Boston, with over 33,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and nearly 10,000 faculty and staff connected to it (Boston University, n.d.).

to be decisive for which partnership is developed. If the external news organizations have the idea, collaboration starts. If the story is based on a center idea, the result is often a distribution partnership. There are, however, several exceptions to this rule. In general, the partnership approach often seems to follow the principle of “whatever works” – a tactic made possible because of the small size and flexibility of the centers. Except for the Stabile Center, none of the centers seem to have any partnership preferences, as all partnership models appear to have an equal number of advantages and disadvantages. By dividing the center partnerships into three groups – 1) distribution partnerships, 2) coequal cooperation partnerships and 3) unequal cooperation partnerships – I will try to outline the differences between them, especially emphasizing the various levels of autonomy.

### **Distribution partnerships**

When using the external news organizations as publication platforms, the centers have more or less full control over the reporting process. Most of the time the centers come up with the idea for the story and do their own reporting and producing before offering or selling the story to a news outlet. Hence, the distribution partnerships can resemble the distant uncle, only approached when in need of a favor. Lynne Perri, managing editor at the Workshop, describes her role in the process like this:

I edit any numbers of drafts of what we would do and then, if we are pitching to another organization, I send them a pitch memo, I send them an edited draft, I talk to them about what other collateral we might have for the visuals.

(Interview September 14. 2014)

The approximate autonomy of the distribution partnerships seems to have several advantages. First, it gives the centers flexibility and room to test ideas. “Sometimes we want to do something that we just don’t know what the story is yet”, Lynne Perri states (interview September 14. 2014). Second, the model enables the centers to earn revenue through selling their stories. This is actually the main reason that the New England CIR avoids collaborations. According to Executive Director Joe Bergantino, it would be “kind of hard to ask them to pay you, when they’ve had one of their own people work on [the story] from day one” (interview March 10. 2015). Third, the

distribution partnerships can make the reporting process more effective. In contrast to the centers making their own decisions, co-reporting and co-editing can be exhausting, with various editors giving the reporters differing commands. As reporter at the New England CIR, Jenifer McKim, puts it: “Sometimes you’ve got to just sit down and write your stories (interview March 9. 2015).

The big challenge when using external news outlets as distribution channels, appears to be getting the center stories published. A high level of accuracy is important conducting investigative reporting, as it often involves accusing powerful people and groups of wrongdoing (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 10). As put by Scott Allen at the *Boston Globe*, the newsrooms can potentially be sued for everything that is incorrect (interview March 13. 2015). If not involved from the beginning, most newsrooms become less interested in publishing the stories. Large, renowned news organizations like the *Washington Post* in particular seem to have very comprehensive procedures connected to the publishing of external content. After sending the newsroom a finished story, the New England CIR, for instance, became entwined in what Managing Editor Clara Germani describes as a “ridiculous, long process”, with three to four editors “picking the story apart” (C. Germani interview March 9. 2015, B. Daley interview March 9. 2015). Because of the reluctance of the *Washington Post*, the Center ultimately decided to give the story to the *Boston Globe*, where both of the Center’s reporters used to work.<sup>180</sup> With editors knowing and trusting the reporter of the story, the publishing process became less problematic (S. Allen interview March 13. 2015). The other centers also seem to prefer to contact “people they know” with their finished stories, for fear of ending up with “editors picking their story apart”. As with the *Boston Globe*, these contacts often vouch for the centers’ professional standard, and much unnecessary work can be prevented (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014, S. Reber interview November 12. 2014).

Although giving the centers more-or-less control of the *reporting* process, the distribution model can in other words never give the centers control over the *publishing* process. The external organizations often put their mark on the story,

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<sup>180</sup> Beth Daley and Jenifer McKim.

change and edit it, or ask the centers for additional reporting or sources (T. McGirk interview November 13. 2014). The exception might be when the centers make demands or negotiate how much the story can be edited (L. Perri interview May 28. 2015). When defining journalistic autonomy as 1) the freedom of choosing which subjects to cover, 2) the freedom to select stories, and 3) deciding what to emphasize in the stories produced (Beam et al., 2009), the model seems to fulfill requirements one and two, but not the third. Without their own publication platform, the centers can never have full control over the finished product.

### **Coequal cooperation's**

Except for the Stabile Center, all centers practice collaboration partnerships in addition to distributional partnerships. There are however many variations of the collaboration model. While some partnerships seem to be based upon mutual involvement, respect and gain, the authority over other collaborations appears more unevenly distributed.

Starting with the coequal relationships, the centers and the external newsrooms seem to include and involve each other during the whole reporting process. The cooperating reporters often know each other well, and have worked together on several previous occasions. The Workshop/WAMU, Workshop/*Frontline*, IRP Berkeley/Center for Investigative Reporting, IRP Berkeley/*Frontline* and New England CIR/WGBH Radio partnerships seem to all be examples of such coequal collaborations. The idea of the partnering project often comes from the external newsroom, but not always. In the Workshop/*Frontline* partnership, the idea of a project can be a Workshop proposal, a *Frontline* idea, or the idea of the production team itself (L. Perri interview September 14. 2014). Sometimes, the partners even develop ideas collectively.

In addition to extra resources and distribution-access, one of the main reasons for establishing coequal cooperations seems to be the professional properties of the partners. Associate producer Emma Schwartz states that the *Frontline* production team benefits from the “potential sort of intellectual capital of having a group of good journalists [...] at the Workshop (interview October 22. 2014). Another example is

WAMU-reporter Patrick Madden claiming that his projects have clearly benefitted from the “expertise from the professionals” at the Workshop, as there are no investigation editors at WAMU (interview October 20, 2014). At The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR), Executive Director Robert Rosenthal states that one of the considerable benefits of cooperating with the IRP Berkeley is Director Lowell Bergman’s “great ideas and great sources” (interview November 12, 2014).

As an example of coequal cooperation, the WAMU/CIR/Workshop project “Assault on justice”<sup>181</sup>, concerning the large number of people arrested for assaulting police officers in Washington, DC, seemed to be one of the most mutually inclusive partnerships of the observation period. Throughout a little more than two months, WAMU-reporter Patrick Madden and his co-author<sup>182</sup> frequently met with the Workshop staff. While the Workshop’s data editor David Donald was overseeing the data work of the project, managing editor Lynne Perri functioned as the project editor, giving feedback on several different versions of the stories, and asking for additional reporting or sources (observation March-May 2015, L. Perri interview May 28, 2015). In addition to the Workshop expertise, the project was also assigned to seven student researchers – spending a substantial amount of time examining and coding more than 2,000 court cases. Through the partnership the Workshop was thus able to offer its students a “real world experience”. In addition, the story itself – and the many awards<sup>183</sup> later won – shows impact, and thus helps both the WAMU and the Workshop approach new sponsors. Hence, the collaboration seems to resemble what executive director at The Center for Investigative Reporting, Robert Rosenthal, describes as the ideal partnership:

Collaboration is really about going from strength to strength. You know, if one partner’s not very good at something, it doesn’t work. You want to be, in a

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<sup>181</sup> Story number A10 in the content analysis (see Appendix E). The story was named “Assault on justice” when published by WAMU, and “In DC, wiggling while handcuffed counts as assaulting an officer” when published by *Reveal*, the online outlet of The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR).

<sup>182</sup> Christina Davidson, a freelancer hired by The Center for Investigative Reporting.

<sup>183</sup> An AP award for Outstanding Enterprise Reporting, the Daniel Schorr Journalism Prize and the Murrow Award for Radio Investigative Reporting (The Investigative Reporting Workshop, n.d.-a).

sense, equals with different skills, but each skill should really help each other as a team. (Interview November 13. 2014)

Despite good intentions and equal partners, a Pew Research Center case study from 2014 shows that partnerships between nonprofits and for-profits are extremely fragile. Nonprofits running out of funding and key individuals within the partnership changing jobs were some of the most common reasons for partnerships failing (Edmonds & Mitchell, 2014). Professional conflicts seem to be another. According to several of the interviewees, cooperations are a constant negotiation, where the partners always are “one mistake away from ending it and one success away from keeping it going a little longer” (J. Rutenbeck interview October 22. 2014). In 2015, *Frontline*, for instance, canceled the airing of a 90-minute documentary named “Bigger than Vegas”.<sup>184</sup> At that point, Lowell Bergman and his team at the IRP Berkeley had spent more than two years investigating the story. Bergman accused *Frontline* of withdrawing the story because of concerns about the legal consequences, since the gambling billionaires in focus were known to file lawsuits against journalists (Grove, 2015; The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-c). *Frontline*, on the other hand, stated that their reasons for canceling the film were editorial. In a press release, the editors claimed that the documentary did not live up to *Frontline*’s “journalistic obligations to accuracy, fairness and proof”(Fanning & Aronson, 2015). Because of the conflict, Bergman cut all ties to the PBS series that he had been connected to for more than twenty years as a senior producer and consultant, and started partnering with the *Guardian* and the NBC News on the gambling stories instead (Ball, Davies, Bergman, Isaacs, & Marks, 2015; The Investigative Reporting Program, n.d.-c).<sup>185</sup> Although sharing the same values, goals, and standards – and cooperating for decades – the partners thus ended up having severe editorial disagreements.

When applying Beam, Weaver and Brownlee’s (2009) definition of journalistic autonomy, the collaboration model actually fails to meet all three requirements.

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<sup>184</sup> The story concerns the activities of Chinese organized crime figures and money-launderers, and their alleged ties to American-owned casinos.

<sup>185</sup> *Frontline* owned the footage of the film (Grove, 2015).

Often, the centers do not choose which subjects to cover, select the stories or decide what to emphasize in the stories produced. When agreeing upon values, goals and standards, and being able to cooperate, this lack of autonomy does not seem to be a problem to the centers. When disagreements or conflicts of interest occur, finding more understanding partners does however seem to be the only alternative. For the teaching-oriented Stabile Center, the lack of autonomy makes it hard to cooperate at all. According to Director Sheila Coronel, collaborating with external outlets often results in professional journalism taking precedence over teaching (interview January 26. 2015). The logic of the Stabile Center can thus be described as follows: 1) the center does not share the goal of the news outlets (producing); 2) in collaborations, the news outlets will have more authority than the Center; 3) if collaborating, the goal of the center (teaching) will be sacrificed over the goal of the news outlets (producing); and 4) since it is not willing to sacrifice the goal of teaching, the Center thus avoids cooperations.

### **Unequal cooperation's**

While most of the center-newsroom collaborations appear to be between “equals with different skills”, some partnerships seem more like a cooperation of unequals. The strongest example is perhaps the relationship between the *Washington Post* and the Workshop. While one of the interviewees describe the Workshop as a “research arm” for the *Post*, another describes the partnership as “not quite an equal footing” (C. Rentz interview October 6. 2014, J. Schaffer interview October 17. 2014). Lynne Perri, managing editor at the Workshop, explains: “With the *Post* we are pretty much now doing what they want to do. So they have ideas, John is part of a team that comes up with story ideas. And we attach students” (interview September 14. 2014).

One example of the apparently “unequal footing” is the amount of time John Sullivan, the investigative reporter running the Washington Post Practicum, uses on center- and university-related assignments. Although the Workshop and American University's School of Communication cover two thirds of his salary, the five



Practicum students<sup>186</sup> are only supposed to be at the *Post* newsroom once a week. Except for certain meetings, Sullivan can thus use the rest of his time working on investigative stories for the *Post*. For executive editor at the Workshop, Charles Lewis, the fact that Sullivan’s duties towards the Workshop “are almost nonexistent” is not a large problem (interview December 10. 2014). For the Workshop, the Practicum means that the center can contribute to the production of sorely needed and important quality journalism. In addition, the Workshop students are getting access to a world-renowned newsroom, and the Workshop is mentioned in *Post* credits and bylines (interview December 10. 2014). Dean at the School of Communication (SOC), Jeff Rutenbeck, describes the partnership thus:

We’re wanting the students to engage in activities that achieve a certain level of visibility and that are done with a certain level of reputational capital. So while there may be other distribution mechanisms or organizations that would be easier to get access to, they’re not as highly regarded. They’re not as influential or visible. So the *Post* represents the perfect mix of all those things. (Interview October 22. 2014)

In exchange for the resources that the Workshop and the SOC are putting into the Practicum (part of Sullivan’s salary and the work effort of students), they get access and visibility. As described in Chapter 4, the SOC and *the Post* have long been collaborating through fellowships, internships and class content. The Practicum is however the first SOC class to be taught inside the newsroom. The Workshop students are also the first to be affiliated with the investigations unit (J. Leen interview October 2. 2014, S. Higham interview October 2. 2014). Not only is the unit producing high quality investigative reporting, with 13 out of 14 staff members being Pulitzer Prize winners or finalists (The Washington Post, n.d.).<sup>187</sup> Permanently set up by Bob Woodward in 1982, the unit is closely associated with the Watergate

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<sup>186</sup> The number of students vary from five to seven, with five being the most common number (J. Sullivan interview September 10. 2014)

<sup>187</sup> Ten of the reporters listed as staff members of the investigation unit at the *Washington Post* webpage are one-time or multiple Pulitzer Prize winners. As a reporter or an editor, investigations editor Jeff Leen has for instance been awarded seven Pulitzer Prizes. Of the four remaining staff members, three are Pulitzer Prize finalists (The Washington Post, n.d.).

scandal. As discussed in section 2.2.2, investigative reporting as conducted by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein has come to mean journalism of the highest order (Ettema & Glasser, 2006, p. 126). For a small, investigative nonprofit like the Workshop, a tight affiliation to the more-or-less iconic investigations unit of the *Washington Post* thus seems invaluable. Hence, the Workshop and the SOC are, as put by John Sullivan, “basically getting something they couldn’t get anywhere else” (interview September 26, 2014).

The Workshop’s contribution to the *Post*’s journalistic production is however not only limited to the Practicum. During the summer, the Workshop normally employs four interns to work on Workshop projects. Sometimes, these interns are sent to work at the *Post*. The Center is thus using its own grant money to cover the salary of interns working inside an external newsroom (during the Practicum the students get credit and are not paid). Usually the interns spend four days a week at the Workshop, and one day a week at the *Post*. Some interns do however spend all summer at the *Post* newsroom. When asked why the Center supports the *Post* in this way, managing editor Perri answers that it helps Sullivan “further research something that he wants to work on” (interview October 1, 2014). Since Sullivan’s stories can be seen as *both* Workshop and *Post* stories, sending interns to work with him is thus perceived as natural.

Following from the above, one could ask if the Workshop is an independent newsroom anymore, or just a supporting unit for the *Post*. Since Sullivan spends most of his time at the *Post*, he seems to be more of a *Post* reporter than a Workshop reporter. From this perspective, the Workshop never gets to choose which subjects to cover, select the stories or decide what to emphasize in the stories produced. As a research arm doing “pretty much what the *Post* wants to do” (stated by Lynne Perri above), the Workshop thus seems to have lost all journalistic autonomy. Why this lack of influence is not perceived as a problem is most likely because the Workshop and the *Post* share the same values, goals and standards. Therefore, the Center can lack autonomy but remain committed to essential public service ideas. Moreover, the opportunity to cooperate with one of the most renowned sections of the journalistic

practice field seems to create so many positives that a certain loss of autonomy is accepted.

### **5.3.2 Professional-oriented cooperations**

As mentioned in section 2.2.1, the journalistic practice field is multifaceted. While the common occupational ideology of the profession creates mutual notions of how things *should* be, the ideals do not describe how things actually *are* (Heggen, 2008, p. 323). Hence, the practice field includes differing practitioners and work results, where runaway commercialism, partisan talk, and rogue reporters represent one extreme while multiple Pulitzer Prize winners represent the other. By choosing to cooperate with Pulitzer winners over rogue reporters, the centers can thus – regardless of how autonomous they are – be perceived as part of the response to the “failure of commercial news outlets”. The four centers of this study can in other words be said to cooperate with the “non-failing” part of the commercial news industry. Through partnering with “the best”, the centers thus seem to avoid the potentially negative influence of the “too market-oriented” and the “too traditional” commercial news industry. Instead of a threat to autonomy, the external news organizations and reporters can thus be perceived as some sort of brothers in arms, co-fighting to improve the conditions for investigative reporting.

Although functioning adequately at the moment, a relevant question is how long the professional partnerships can last. As shown by Beam, Weaver and Brownlee (2009), journalists in newsrooms under stress, experiencing buyouts or layoffs and shrinking staff numbers, experience low professional autonomy. Although wanting to conduct quality reporting, the lack of resources might thus eventually restrain even the most professional-oriented reporters. If one accepts the premise that quality journalism is about to disappear from the traditional news industry – because traditional newsrooms are no longer capable of, or willing to, prioritize the production of time-consuming and expensive reporting – being dependent upon a few, remaining reporters does not seem like a sustainable arrangement. From this perspective, instead of using their scarce resources in clinging to the mast of the news-industry shipwreck, the centers would be better off developing a less-dependent organization.

The opposite premise, with the traditional news industry making it through the current financial challenges, can also be problematic to the center partnerships. According to Jeffrey Rutenbeck, dean at American Universities (AU) School of Communication, the partnership with the *Washington Post* is, as previously mentioned, a symptom of a disrupted media landscape and a disrupted educational landscape. “It’s something that can always go away. So if the pressure is decreased, and all of a sudden Jeff Bassos decides to invest half a billion dollars in the newsroom, they might not feel like they need us anymore” he states (interview October 22, 2014). Journalistic organizations will in other words always strive for autonomy, although the financial reality occasionally makes them join partnerships. Hence, they are not very stable partners. In addition, all partnerships are dependent upon mutual benefit and trust. As shown above, this is not always easily obtained. The beneficial cooperation between like-minded professionals thus might be rewarding – but very fragile.

#### 5.4 Strong ideology, little leeway

In Chapter 2, keeping a distance from other fields such as markets and bureaucracies is listed as especially important when building the journalism profession. One would thus think that the isolation of journalist organizations would be the best solution. According to Schudson (2008), the disorientation – and ultimately alienation– of journalists will help the press to be free (p. 60). Paraphrasing Hannah Arendt, he states that “the solitude of the philosopher, the isolation of the scientist and the artist, the impartiality of the historian and the judge, and the independence of the fact-finder, the witness and the reporter” are outstanding models of truth-telling (p. 10).

Because of the media crisis, many newsrooms – including the university nonprofits of this study – are seeking alternative ways to finance their reporting. Hence, the borders between external, non-journalistic organizations have become less rigorous.

Foundation-funded nonprofit newsrooms becoming part of universities can thus be seen as an example of the profession adapting to structural change. As part of the process, the centers are continuously incorporating and balancing external demands – using their internal forces to regulate the external disturbances (Abbott, 1988, pp. 91-

96). The jurisdiction settlements as the result of the process can, as described in section 2.1.2, vary. While some changes lead to reduced professional control, others cause little change or increased control (Abbott, 1988, p. 69). In the case of the four university centers, the relationship with external fields like foundations and mother-universities appear to have a high *potential* of leading to less control, with the centers gaining resources and stability but not being able to set their own professional standard. As exemplified above, reporting that is sensitive to the university itself – or to other powerful groups and institutions aligned with the university – might risk being censored. Additionally, through only supporting certain topics and subjects, foundations can have considerable impact on nonprofits’ work. For now, the centers’ relationship to foundations and their mother-universities does however not seem to challenge the professional control: In spite of weakened boundaries between two external fields, the centers are still committed to the essential public-service notion of journalism.

The main reason that the centers can retain their autonomy in the relationship with foundations and universities seems to be that the three groups have similar, overarching goals. As philanthropic organizations, the foundations supporting the centers are in business to “do good”. Since the objective of investigative reporting can be said to change society for the better, the centers are thus rewarded by the foundations when fulfilling their own professional aim. Professional-oriented journalism schools, on the other hand, often value the aims, norms and knowledge of the journalism profession. Hence, teaching students how to produce this form of journalism, often regarded as “journalism of the highest order”, becomes an important task (Ettema & Glasser, 2006, p. 126). Since many of the schools seem to be convinced that the best way of learning investigative reporting is by doing it, the centers can thus make use of the resources of the journalism schools to produce public-service reporting. Additionally, because of their tradition for autonomy, thorough methods and society-building work, universities can actually be said to have better structural conditions for producing time- and resource-demanding reporting than parts of the traditional news industry.

Following from the above, the opposite of isolation – cooperation with external fields – actually seems to have the ability to sustain journalism as a profession.

#### **5.4.1 Ideology-driven partnerships**

The only group having direct impact on the centers' work appears to be the external newsrooms. In unequal cooperations, the news outlets control the subjects covered, the selection of stories and the final version of the stories produced, leaving the center with little autonomy.

What differentiates the ideology of professions, the market and bureaucracy are, according to Freidson (2007), meaning and purpose (p. 106). Unlike managerialism and consumerism, members of professions work for the satisfaction gained in performing their work well. Professionals, in other words, have a secular calling. By cooperating with reporters and newsrooms that share the same professional values as the centers, and not the more market- or bureaucracy-influenced parts of the press, the centers are thus able to remain committed to essential ideas linked to public service. The external partners of the centers, the universities and the foundations, also seem to be driven by a similar ideology – keeping a distance from markets and bureaucracies. Hence, partnerships between philanthropic foundations and professional-oriented centers, newsrooms and schools can be seen “as forces of good and morality in modern societies” and “counterweights to commercial and political interests (Waisbord, 2013, p. 94). By uniting highly idealistic people, organizations and fields, the centers are thus better equipped to act as professional organizations – what Freidson (2007) labels “the third logic”.

While some look at ideology-driven groups as counterweights to commercial and political interests, others see them as efforts to achieve economic and social gains (Larson, 1977). Hence, professional journalism can be seen as a discursive strategy intended to serve particular economic interests. From this perspective the relationship between foundations, universities, external newsrooms and centers may seem to support autonomous and public-serving professionalism. In reality, the critical scholars will state, the partnerships serve the ideology of press owners and other dominant classes. Rather than a “third logic”, the so-called professional orientation of

the centers is thus a fable covering hidden structural relations. All the three groups supporting and/or cooperating with the centers can for instance be said to represent the elites:

- The main objection against philanthropy-dependent journalism is, as previously mentioned, that foundations represent the establishment (Browne, 2010, p. 893). Through supporting the centers, the elites thus make sure that parts of the journalistic field serve their agendas and keep close to their preferred ideologies.
- Traditionally, intellectual elite institutions such as universities have been the home of the social and economic elite. Concerned with shaping the mind and character of the ruling class, universities have prepared students for broad elite roles in government and the learned professions (Trow, 1973, pp. 5-7). Hence, the centers are part of elite institutions, known for preparing its students for a life within the establishment.
- Several media theorists claim that journalism is more about constructing hegemonic power than democratic empowerment (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 85). According to Schudson (2008), one of the reasons journalism falls short in informing the public about public affairs is that professional journalists working inside “corporate beasts” are hobbled by in-group values of media elites, motivated by professional advancement, or “driven by their own political views rather than by a passion to make democracy work” (p. 7). Although pretending to have a public service mission, the reporters and newsrooms partnering with the centers can thus be described as part of the media elite, serving their own agenda.

From the above, the centers could be depicted as the institutionalization of several elite groups with a common interest in a specific reality deception. Together, and through the centers, they constitute a position in the public discourse. The partners’ allegiance to freedom, autonomy, truth-telling and neutrality can in other words be described as a discursive construction – intended to gain and maintain power.

The problem with the elite theory, however, is the centers’ fragility. Rather than powerful elite establishments, some of the centers appear to resemble small, fragile and idealistic organizations treading water. Instead of a dangerous force, the

professional orientation of the centers actually seems to be the element keeping them afloat. According to Schudson (2008), the problem of most experts/professionals is that they have too little rather than too much authority. Hence, the expertise risks “crumbling before the power of bureaucracy or politics” (p. 116). From the above, the same can be said about the centers: The main problem does not seem to be that they are too autonomous and powerful, but that they are too fragile.

#### **5.4.2 A better structure for news providers?**

As previously mentioned, the establishment of nonprofits can be seen as an alternative path towards autonomy and professionalism, as both the market and the broadcasting path of journalism has been considered inadequate. Although the centers have a huge *potential* for journalistic autonomy, due to the joint ideology of the partners, the vast problem of the news model is – as thoroughly discussed – finding ways to earn enough revenue. Although none of the partners hinder the centers in having internal control, they are in constant danger of becoming economically incapacitated. Simply put, there is not much use in the centers having allocative control – defining their own goals and distributing their own resources – if they do not have the resources to distribute.

One of the main problems of the nonprofit organizational model seems to be that the effort put into fundraising is increasing proportionally with the number of funders and revenue streams. Therefore, being mainly dependent upon one loyal foundation, like the Stabile Center (the Toni Stabile endowment) and the IRP Berkeley (the Reva and David Logan Foundation), seems much more sustainable than attempting to earn revenue or being supported by several foundations. To be economically independent implies greater economic fragility, and less time to conduct investigative reporting. Hence, the attempt to gain autonomy from the market forces of commercial journalism has resulted in the centers losing maneuverability. The alternative to economic fragility seems to be the trading of “one master for another” (Summers, 1990, p. 74; Waisbord, 2013, p. 55). Instead of being dependent upon the market, the nonprofits become dependent upon a few loyal foundations. Since “any source of funding for journalism has the potential to be problematic” (Konieczna, 2014, p. 24),



making journalism truly autonomous seems like an insurmountable task. Isolation also seems not to be a sustainable solution. As stated by Charles Lewis during a discussion at the University of Wisconsin, there is a risk of nonprofits becoming “so pure” that they die as organizations (Walton, 2010).

Although not resulting in a solid construction, the cooperation between foundations, universities, external newsrooms and centers show that different fields can have many similarities. In attempting to keep a distance from markets and bureaucracies, it seems more productive to cooperate with selected foundations, universities and newsrooms than with the more commercial side of the news industry. Ideally, the joint forces of such “brothers in arms” can make strong enough organizations to produce quality journalism. For now, the “new path” of nonprofit reporting represented by the centers does not seem solid enough to be a real alternative to the market and the broadcasting path.

*I think we think about ourselves as “standard bearers”.  
I think that’s what we hope to be.*

Andrés Cediel, producer at the IRP Berkeley

## 6. Quality journalism; ideals and production

The four centers of this study can be said to have a great potential as professional platforms if they: 1) produce content that lives up to the ideals of what journalism claims to be, 2) emphasize ideals corresponding with the ideology of professionalism, and 3) help build an abstract professional knowledge base (see section 2.1.3).<sup>188</sup>

Focusing on points one and two, this chapter seeks to answer the fourth sub-question of the study: *What kind of journalism are the centers idealizing and producing?*<sup>189</sup> In more detail, the two central questions are:

- 1) How is quality journalism defined by the interviewed students, center reporters, faculty and external reporters?
- 2) What kind of journalism are the centers producing?

The quality definitions of the interviewees are interesting for two main reasons. First, a common appreciative system – or a shared professional identity – is a central part of a profession’s “internal force” when fighting to strengthen/keep their jurisdictions. All professions need to agree upon 1) what knowledge is most important, 2) what ideals and standards should form the basis of regulation, and 3) what the social responsibility of the profession is (Dzur, 2008, p. 45). It is thus interesting to examine the professional identity of the students, the center reporters, the external reporters and the faculty members. Does their identity correspond with the common identity of the profession or is it in contrast? As shown in Chapter 2, many claim that journalism is no profession at all due to a weak professional identity. If the interviewees share the journalism profession’s common appreciative system<sup>190</sup>, they can be said to help

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<sup>188</sup> “Professional platforms” is a central term in the main research question (see section 1.3). Based upon the theoretical framework of this study, the professional potential of the four centers is understood as their jurisdiction-strengthening potential (see section 2.1.3 for details).

<sup>189</sup> The third point is discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>190</sup> See quality definition in section 2.2.5.

strengthen the common journalistic identity – which in turn can be helpful in the fight for jurisdiction.

Second, the ideals and values expressed through the quality definitions are in themselves central. As shown in section 2.1, an ideology based upon the claim of superior knowledge and a secular calling has proved to be “a powerful tool” in the fight for jurisdiction. Not everyone sees professionalism as a normative ideal. From a critical perspective, the only thing that separates professions from other occupations is the success they have had in convincing outsiders that they are different, and that their status and autonomy is deserved. Hence, professions can be described as nothing more than over-privileged and under-regulated business occupations (Dzur, 2008, p. 64). *How* the interviewees connect their work to central societal needs, and which professional view they hold, is thus interesting. Do they for instance hold a “traditional elitist” or a more “democratic” professional view? (Dzur, 2008). According to several scholars, elitist-oriented professions often have legitimacy problems as there is a higher risk of them being perceived as self-serving (Dzur, 2008; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Strömbäck, 2005).

For professions to keep their privileged position, ideology alone is not enough.<sup>191</sup> They must also prove their value through actual work results. The second part of the chapter thus focuses on what kind of journalism the centers are producing. As previously mentioned, the ideals and standards forming the appreciative system of a profession do not always correspond with the profession’s actual work. Rather, the system is a form a group identity, creating mutual notions of how things *should* be (Heggen, 2008, p. 323). If too many members of a profession are not able to fulfill the profession’s proclaimed aim over time, it could be accused of “treatment failure”, which in turn can weaken the profession’s jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988, p. 46). In Dzur’s (2008) words, professionals cannot just say that they serve vital social interests – “they must in fact do so” (p. 62). If not, the profession risks facing sanctions, and its clients may eventually go elsewhere (pp. 70-73). Hence, it is important to examine whether the four centers publish “quality journalism” as

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<sup>191</sup> At least according to the professional view applied in this dissertation. See section 2.1.2 for details.

defined by the profession itself (see section 2.2.5). If they do, they can help strengthen the journalism profession's jurisdiction over news.

## 6.1 Views on quality journalism

As described in section 2.2, the dominant sense of what journalism is and should be is not constant. At any time, there will be several competing normative theories attempting to challenge the dominant perception. An occupational ideology changes over time as it excludes or marginalizes certain ideas and values while codifying or making others salient (Deuze, 2007, p. 163). Due to the changing journalistic markets and work situations reinforced by the journalism crisis in general, and the nonprofit breach with the traditional news industry in particular, it is interesting to see whether the professional identity of the interviewees coincides with the current dominant occupational ideology of journalism<sup>192</sup> or whether they represent a new version. In his study of role orientations among journalism students in Nordic countries, Hovden (2016) for instance asks whether ideology follows economy, meaning that the decline of favorable conditions for investigative journalism (like the increased use of temporary staff, newspapers' increasing lack of resources, etc.) conditions journalists to see investigation as a less central ideal. Alternatively, will inner cohesion increase with external threat, meaning that the core values of the field are strengthened when new challenges appear (2016, p. 71)? Others, like S. C. Lewis (2012), state that the recent technological development – with internet applications focused on participatory information creation, tagging, sharing and remixing – can lead to a slow, philosophical shifting from expert control to distributed control (p. 852).<sup>193</sup>

### 6.1.1 The interviewees' quality perceptions

Seeking to get an impression of the center staff's professional identity, all students, reporters and faculty members participating in this study were asked the same question during the in-depth interviews: "What is quality journalism to you?" For most, their first reaction was pointing out how hard it is to define quality, giving

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<sup>192</sup> The social responsibility theory (see section 2.2 for details).

<sup>193</sup> The ideology of journalism is seen as one of expert control, while the ideology of de-professionalized participation is seen to be one of distributed control (S. C. Lewis, 2012, p. 848).

answers like: “It’s like what this Supreme Court Justice said about pornography; I can’t define it, but I know it when I see it” (D. Donald interview October 21. 2014). All of the 55 interviewees asked – 21 students, 14 center reporters, 15 external reporters and 5 faculty members – did however end up giving their own definition.<sup>194</sup> Moreover, the answers provided were surprisingly similar, with all of the responses referring to one or more of the following quality aspects: 1) truth, 2) effect, 3) form, and 4) new information.<sup>195</sup> The most frequently mentioned aspect was “truth”, with more than two thirds of the answers including key phrases and words like “well researched”, “accuracy”, “holistic reporting”, “all possible sides”, “objectivity as a goal”, “find the closest thing to the truth”, “facts”, “evidence”, “figure out what is really happening”, and “looks past surface level”. In addition, about half of the replies had elements relating to “effect” and “form”, while about a third described characteristics relating to “new information” (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of statements referring to central key terms. N=55

Key term	Referred to	Selected keywords and key phrases from answers relating to the term
Truth	In more than two thirds of the answers	“Well researched”, “accuracy”, “holistic reporting”, “all possible sides”, “objectivity as a goal”, “find the closest thing to the truth”, “facts”, “evidence”, “figure out what is really happening”, “looks past surface level”.
Effect	In about half of the replies	“Change”, “give meaning, understanding and insight”, “the fourth estate”, “impact”, “makes a difference”, “improve people’s lives”, “empower people”, “expose wrongdoing”, “inspires”.
Form	In about half of the replies	“Accessible”, “readable”, “a good story”, “engaging”, “great storytelling”, “fresh”, “clarity”.
New information	In about a third of the replies	“Stories that nobody else is doing”, “being surprising”, “something that people are probably unaware of”, “fresh”, “original reporting”, “unique”, “urgent”.

<sup>194</sup> Since not being part of the editorial staff, four of the centers’ staff members were not asked. Additionally, one student did not answer the question due to limited time and poor cell phone coverage. Hence, 55 out of the total number of 60 interviewees replied.

<sup>195</sup> Since most of the statements were extensive, including several different elements and aspects, each statement often referred to several of the key terms. One of the students for instance described quality journalism as: “Finding out things that aren’t already known and that people perhaps have a reason to not tell you. Making it very readable and accessible to someone that is not already invested in the story”. While the first part of the answer can be said to relate to “truth” and “new information”, the second part can be said to relate to “form”.

## **Truth and new information**

When taking a closer look at the responses, it seems as if the interviewees' definitions of quality share several similarities with the definition outlined from the dominant professional logic of the journalistic field (see section 2.2.5). Starting with "truth", it is both the most often-mentioned quality aspect among the interviewees, and the most emphasized quality feature within accountability journalism/social responsibility journalism/public service reporting/public affairs journalism.<sup>196</sup> Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) for instance put "truth" on top of their list of journalism's ten most important elements, while the eight following elements have strong correlations to truth. Moreover, a number of interviewees seem to imply that quality and truth are interdependent values, for instance when describing quality journalism as "the fullest spectrum you can have of a story to get close to the truth" (H. Bui interview September 26. 2014). This resembles the opinion of several central journalism scholars, emphasizing truth as the "ultimate goal" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 45). To reach this goal, and thus higher levels of quality, does however require time, resources, thorough reporting and impartial research. Workshop student Ke (Amber) Liu puts it like this:

You have to make use of material resources and make use of relations resources to make more evidence of the project, of the events you are reporting. It's just make use of all resources and then figure out what is really happening, and trying to balance the story [...] Don't let your emotions push you to become biased [...] To cover multiple sides of one event. To show the public what is really going on. (Interview September 14. 2014)

Finding the truth is, in other words, a complex process. Complicating the task further are the powerful groups attempting to hide parts of the truth. To several of the interviewees, this means that quality involves "finding out things that aren't already known and that people perhaps have a reason to not tell you" (J. Shulberg interview September 30. 2014). Because of this, a majority of the interviewees connects quality to the method of investigative reporting, stating that investigative stories "go beyond

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<sup>196</sup> Labels on journalism outlined from the social responsibility theory. See section 2.2.

general reporting” (C. O’Molloy interview January 20. 2015). Just like the academics (Ettema & Glasser, 1998, p. 11), the interviewees thus seem to perceive investigative reporting as the most effective method when attempting to get as close to the truth as possible. A few of the interviewees also mention other methods, like working “as a social scientist in a lot of ways”, or conducting “solid investigative data reporting” (A. Gregg interview September 18. 2014, C. Jedra interview February 23. 2015). Common for all the methods mentioned is that they seem to be aligned to increasing the journalistic level of objectivity and fact-orientation – and thus the possible level of truth in the reporting.

The quality indicator “new information” appears to be a somewhat narrowed and processed version of “truth”. Yes, quality journalism needs to tell the truth – but all parts of the truth is not equally interesting, according to several of the interviewees. Quality journalism needs to “say something new”. Like many scholars, the interviewees seem to define news as both “reports of recent happenings” and “new information about anything” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 24). Scott Allen, editor of the *Boston Globe* Spotlight Team puts it like this: “It doesn’t have to be a new subject, but it has to say something new, something fresh, something unique” (interview March 13. 2015). In more concrete terms, this seems to mean that quality journalism “gives to the public information they have nowhere else, including not in other newspapers” (D. Priest interview October 14. 2014). As with getting close to the truth, this originality and uniqueness does however require time and resources. To be “original”, the reporter needs to talk to people and write the stories, not just write about someone else, or another journalist who interviewed someone (C. Campbell interview September 23. 2014). It does in other words take “a little bit more time than just glancing at a headline” (E. Schwartz interview October 22. 2014). Hence, many interviewees pinpoint that quality journalism means journalists doing their *own* investigations. This echoes the statement of Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), warning that the internet gives such easy access to stories and quotes that there is a risk that journalists start to shovel the latest information onto the air or the web (pp. 46-48). To the interviewees, this form of “shoveled information” does not seem to qualify as quality reporting, as it is neither verified nor original. Rather, several label non-

original reporting of this kind as “crap” or “noise”. Thomas Fiedler, dean at Boston University’s College of Communication, explains:

As we are bathed in more and more information, the ability to have the information that is curated by ethical people is even more important. It’s that idea of having to take a sip out of a fire hydrant, you know. We are living in a fire hydrant world of information. We got to find a way to make that sip possible, and good journalism will do that. (Interview March 13. 2015)

Thus, according to a majority of the interviewees, quality journalism does not contribute to the constant torrent of shoveled information. Rather it curates parts of the stream to make it understandable.

### **Effect and form**

Related to “truth” and “new information”, the quality indicator “effect” is, as mentioned above, referred to by about two thirds of the interviewees. To many, quality journalism seems to be “meaningful” and have “a purpose” (T. Fiedler interview Mach 13. 2015). Some for instance state that journalistic reports can “empower people and make them aware of something being hid” (P. Lombardi interview September 14. 2014) and help citizens “hold power accountable in a serious way” (S. Coll interview January 29. 2015). Ultimately, quality journalism is thus is seen vital to “the quality of our democracy” (T. Fiedler interview Mach 13. 2015). The answers seem to correspond closely to the theory of the social contract of the press. When provided with democratically warranted information, citizens are expected to react politically – speaking up against legislative errors, misuse of power and social, moral and legal unfairness (Sjøvaag, 2010, pp. 880-881).

The “effect” group also hold less politically oriented replies. Quotes like “I think quality journalism reveals something that can have an impact in changing people’s lives for the better” (M. Baksh interview September 14. 2014), and “after you read a piece of quality journalism you are more conscious and a better person than you were before (P. Lombardi interview September 14. 2014), implies that the effects of quality reporting also can be associated with individual values like happiness, health and self-actualization (Abbott, 1988, p. 187). Both the more political and the more



individual-oriented replies do however relate quality journalism to positive effects. When citizens are exposed to quality reporting, something is changing for the better.<sup>197</sup> On the other hand, reporting without impact seems to be perceived as non-quality and is described in terms like “junk” or “empty calories” (L. Hu interview January 26. 2015). Wendell Cochran at the Workshop puts it like this:

I’ll look at a kitty video like anybody else. But if you give me the choice between spending my resources as a newsroom manager and creating a kitty video or creating a video that helps people understand the new property tax system and accounting, I’m going for that one (interview October 8. 2014).

A kitty video may in other words be entertaining and viewed by many. However, is it not quality reporting, as it does not evoke some sort of change or understanding of a complex topic. Again, the interviewees’ quality definitions seems to correspond with the ideals of the social responsibility theory, where the goal of the press is seen as elevating society’s standards, providing citizens with the information they need to govern themselves (Altschull, 1990; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). From this perspective, a kitty video might not be considered journalism at all. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) puts it: “When you turn your news into entertainment, you are playing to the strengths of other media rather than your own” (p. 195). Although cheap to produce and audience friendly, kitty videos do not have enough societal value to be labeled quality journalism.

The last of the four most frequently mentioned quality aspects is “form”. Brought up by about half of the interviewees, “form” is thus mentioned just as often as “effect”, and more often than “new information”. Most of the answers relating to form concern storytelling in general and writing in particular. Some also mention graphics, photos, video “and visuals in general that accompany it” (C. Lewis interview May 12. 2015).

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<sup>197</sup> What “better” means is of course dependent upon values and ideals. According to Ettema and Glasser (1998), all investigative reporters must relate to the common morality (see section 2.2.2). The common morality can be described as the moral that bind all persons in all places, following the four main principles of justice, non-maleficence, beneficence and autonomy (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009). “Better” can in other words be defined as the majority’s moral belief system. See further discussion in section 6.3.

Scott Allen, editor of the *Boston Globe* Spotlight Team, articulates the importance of form like this:

It's fresh writing. It is not a formula. It is more than the writing. It's the whole presentation. It is a package. It is the stuff that has immediacy and connects with the reader in a way that they want to read, and not just because they felt that they should do it as a citizen (interview March 13. 2015).

To be regarded as quality journalism, the reporting therefore needs to be effectively communicated. Interestingly, form is never pointed out as the *only* quality feature. When mentioned, it is always accompanied by quality aspects like “truth”, “new information” or “effect”. Quality is for instance described as when “everything works perfectly. The writing knocks you over. But the information is powerful” (C. Lewis interview May 12. 2015). Hence, the interviewees seem to refer to the same duality as Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) in section 2.2.1: Journalism's first challenge is “finding the information that people need to live their lives”. The second is “to make it meaningful, relevant and engaging” (p. 189). As put by Stabile student Lydia Hu, a story might be “beautifully done” – but still not be “worth the time” (interview January 26. 2015). However, without citizens reading or understanding what is reported, journalism cannot change anything. Hence, the combination of important content (“truth” and “new information”) and communication skills (“form”) seems to be a prerequisite for the wanted societal “effect”. The four quality aspects are in other words tightly interwoven and interdependent.

### **A strong professional orientation**

From the above, it is possible to conclude that the different groups of interviewees – the students, the center reporters, the external reporters and the faculty members – emphasize many of the same core values when defining quality journalism. When separating and comparing the answers of the different groups, the impression is confirmed. The quality aspects most often mentioned by the students are for instance nearly identical with the quality aspects most often referred to by the external reporters. The two groups with the most diverging answers seem to be external reporters and faculty, where the external reporters mention aspects referring to “truth”

more often than the faculty members. The differences are however minimal. Moreover, the four key terms mentioned most frequently by all the interviewees are, as previously mentioned, both wide and partly overlapping. If the groups had favored categories grounded in conflicting value sets – for instance, with external reporters being more market-oriented than the faculty members – the result would have been more notable. None of the interviewees however seem to emphasize commercial or bureaucratic-oriented quality aspects – for instance, stating that quality journalism is the kind of journalism that generates the most income or page views or that quality reporting equals the efficient fulfillment of a production plan. Instead, the quality aspects most often referred to can be said to be professional-oriented, relating journalism to the public good/the good society. It is thus possible to conclude that the 55 definitions given of quality journalism are surprisingly similar, and that there are no notable variations between the four interviewed groups.<sup>198</sup>

Summarizing the findings of section 6.1.1, the interviewees' perception of quality journalism can be described as "true, new and effectively communicated information changing society for the better". This is not much different from the definition based upon the dominant professional logic of the journalistic field outlined in section 2.2.5, stating that quality journalism is "responsible and engaging community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful". Through emphasizing quality aspects like truth and effect, both the professional identity of the interviewees and the profession's identity (the common identity of the profession) connect journalism to the social contract of the press – and thus to the cultural value of democracy. Following from this, one could conclude that members of the journalism profession seem particularly coherent when expressing professional values. Moreover, this could point towards a strong professional identity. It is however more likely that the groups interviewed are more preoccupied with professional-oriented quality aspects than the average reporter. As described in Chapter 2, investigative reporting is often perceived as a professional ideal – or "journalism of the highest order" (Ettema & Glasser, 2006, p.

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<sup>198</sup> As discussed in section 3.4.1, the main negative aspect of in-depth interviews is that they are prone to bias. The similar responses can thus be a result of the interviewees wanting to present themselves in a favorable light – knowing that professional oriented responses are often more valued than market- and bureaucratic-oriented responses.

126). Hence, it might not be surprising that interviewees connected to investigative reporting in one way or another are strong advocates of professional values. Additionally, the students, the center reporters and the faculty members are part of universities, institutions known as strong professional legitimators, providing authoritative grounds for the exclusive exercise of expertise (Abbott, 1988, p. 196). On top of this, all the interviewees are connected to nonprofits originally established to produce the public affairs journalism that the news industry apparently failed to provide (Konieczna, 2014, p. 16). Through their connection to 1) investigative reporting, 2) professional education, and 3) professional-oriented nonprofits – many of the interviewees can thus be described as triple professional-oriented. This strong professional orientation can, as stated by Freidson (2007), be an important tool when attempting to gain the political and economic resources necessary to maintain professional status (p. 106).

### **The relationship between quality journalism and investigative reporting**

Since the interviewees of this study are all conducting, teaching or studying investigative reporting, one could expect them to put an equal sign between investigative reporting and quality journalism. Despite of their emphasis on investigative reporting as an effective *method*, many are however preoccupied with stating that not all quality journalism is necessarily investigative. Quality journalism can also be “really solid beat reporting”, “feature stories”, “good legislation working its way through Capitol Hill”, and “enterprise reporting” (C. Ornstein interview January 28. 2015, J. McKim interview March 9. 2015). Others point to the fact that there is “a lot of bad investigative journalism too” – especially when it comes to the well-written, storytelling aspect (J. Hunt interview January 27. 2015). The lack of good storytelling can for instance make complicated investigative stories so “boring” that “people don't read them” (S. Alecci interview January 26. 2015). Thus, the interviewees seem to communicate that: 1) quality journalism is more than just investigative reporting, and 2) all investigative reporting is not quality journalism. Hence, they seem to agree with Schudson (2008), that very different work outcomes can all serve vital democratic functions; the investigative reporter, the White House

correspondent, the business reporter, the theater critic, and the obit writer are all offering news that serves vital social – and democratic – functions (p. 8).

Although quality reporting seems to be perceived as more than investigative reporting, several however, implicitly or explicitly, express a view that investigative reporting is the *core* of quality reporting. Jeff Leen, editor of the *Washington Post*'s investigations unit, is for instance very explicit, stating that: "To me, investigative reporting is the heart of journalism and the most important part because we are revealing the deepest, most fundamental truths and secrets about the government" (interview October 2. 2014). Other interviewees are less explicit but, when asked what characterizes good investigative reporting, give answers that relate strongly to their definition of quality reporting. Executive director at The New England Center, Joe Bergantino, for instance stated that a "great" investigative story is a story that:

makes something public that somebody would rather keep secret, that's of public importance and has an impact. [...] It's new information, it's in-depth information, it's bringing to light something that needs to be brought to light. It's holding the powerful accountable, it's making an impact. (Interview March 10. 2015)

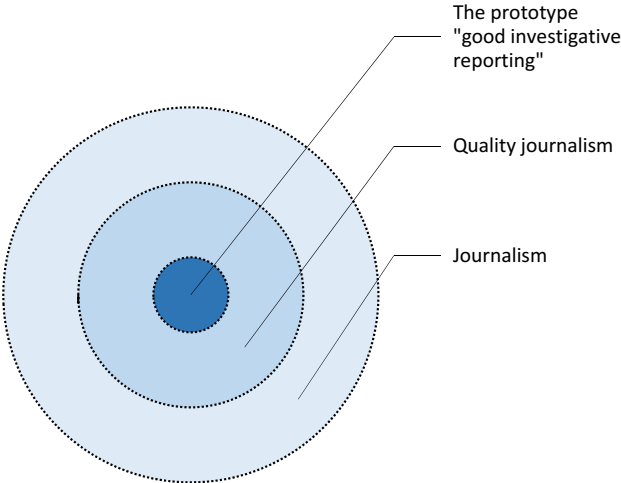
The interviewees' perception of investigative reporting thus seems to correlate with Ytreberg's (2012) definition in section 2.2.2, stating that "good investigative journalism is based on the same principles as all quality journalism" – except that it is "more of everything" (p. 142). According to the interviewees, investigative reporting especially seems to be more accusative, confronting and critical of power than quality reporting.

Following from the above, quality reporting and investigative reporting do not seem to be perceived as independent categories. Rather, investigative reporting seems to be a *prototype* of quality reporting (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014, pp. 157-158). This means that "good investigative reporting" is one of the observations best suiting the constituent idea in the category "quality reporting". "Really solid beat reporting", "feature stories", and "enterprise reporting" can also be put in the category "quality journalism". "Good investigative reporting" does however seem to represent "more

quality” and can thus be placed in the center of the “quality journalism” category (see Figure 3). Having “more of everything”, this form of reporting is, as later discussed, of high symbolic value to the profession.

When it comes to the outer circle of Figure 3, “journalism” seems to include what Zelizer (2004) describes as “the broadest possible range of activities associated with news making and the people who engage in them” (p. 21). Hence, the term can be said to embrace all forms of journalism and journalists – from the cable television host, to the White House correspondent, the sports reporter, the theater critic, and the Pulitzer Prize winner. As symbolized by the figure’s dotted lines, the meaning of most prototypes and categories is however not static but constantly negotiated due to cultural, social and technological change (Zelizer, 2004, p. 23). Following from this, keeping control over the definitions often involves continuous boundary work. According to Sjøvaag (2015), this especially applies to journalism as the lack of formal professional status means that its borders – including which subject areas are legitimate to report on – are in need of constant patrolling (p. 109). How this “border patrolling” is conducted by the interviewees is further discussed below.

Figure 3. The interviewees view upon journalism, quality journalism and investigative reporting.



### 6.1.2 Professional view

Although the professional identity of the interviewees of this study appears to be strongly professional-oriented, there can be *many forms* of professionalism. Dzur (2008), for instance, presents three versions: 1) the public trustee model, 2) the radical critique model and 3) democratic professionalism (p. 43). In this section, I will try to identify which form of professionalism the interviewees can be said to represent. As mentioned above, professional orientations can have great impact on the legitimacy of professional work – for instance, influencing whether professional-oriented journalists are perceived as followers of a normative ideal or constructors of a self-serving ideology (Dzur, 2008; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Strömbäck, 2005).

Dzur's (2008) first model of professionalism, the public trustee model, has much in common with the functionalist view upon professions described in section 2.1., seeing professionalism as a normative ideal. The meaning of a profession, both for the profession itself and the public, is not to make money but to “make health, or safety, or knowledge, or good government or good law” (p. 43). From this perspective, professional autonomy and power are seen as necessary to fulfill socially useful professional tasks (Abbott, 1988, p. 86; Dzur, 2008, p. 63). Although being severely criticized for being blind to professional power, the social trustee model is still said to be central to contemporary professionals and many of those studying them (Dzur, 2008, p. 82).

The radical critique model can in many ways be described as a reaction to – and the opposite of – the public trustee model. Hence, it has many resemblances to critical views like the monopolist view described in section 2.1. Instead of seeing professions as more ethical or more socially responsible than business occupations, the radical critique model describes professions as elitist, secretive, little responsive to social needs, and self-interested. Due to this view, the only difference between professions and business occupations is that business occupations are *open* about their self-interests. Therefore, professions are nothing more than successful ideology builders (Dzur, 2008, p. 64).

The third model of professionalism, democratic professionalism, is said to build on the insights of the other two. According to Dzur (2008), this form of professionalism is often represented by reform-minded professionals “who have grown uncomfortable with the antidemocratic tendencies of their domains”. Instead of shielding the profession against external interference, these reformers “seek to open up sites of authority that currently give them a good deal of power, status, and economic security” (p. 105).<sup>199</sup> Strongly influenced by scholars like John Dewey, the main role of professionals is seen not as leading or organizing the public but facilitating public engagement and public decision (p. 119). Professions should in other words not build barriers against the public they serve through organized autonomy or myths of “inherently superior knowledge and work” (p. 68). In doing so, they risk being perceived as high-level advisers to elites and elites in their own right (p. 6). To be able to serve the public, professions need an adequate understanding of the public (p. 274).

As described above, the interviewees’ descriptions of quality journalism seem to correlate strongly with the quality definition outlined from the dominant professional logic of the journalistic field. One of the central aspects of the common occupational ideology of journalism, namely the problematizing of professional power and autonomy, is however less visible in the interviewees’ quality definitions. As stated in the second bullet point in section 2.2.5, it is seen important that journalists should not represent a powerful elite elevated from the public they serve. Instead, the press needs to have a dialogue with citizens, and be modest towards its own weaknesses. None of the interviewees however seem to emphasize the value of citizen dialogue in their answers. Moreover, only one of the interviewees highlights that the journalism profession should be wary about becoming a powerful elite elevated from the public. Talking about form and effective communication, Workshop alumna Jessica Schulberg, states that “I think a lot of journalism is [...] pretty elitist. And if you haven't been closely following a particular issue, it's not digestible”. Following from

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<sup>199</sup> Democratic professionalism thus resembles the communitarian critique described in section 2.1.3.



this, she states that it is important for journalists “not getting sucked up into this echo chamber” of elites (interview September 30. 2014).

A high number of interviewees, as previously mentioned, refer to “the public”, “the people” and “the social contract” of the press in their quality definitions. Jan Schaffer at American University’s School of Communication states that quality journalism is “telling people something they didn’t know. It focuses on jobs that needs to be done for citizens’ sake whether it’s a problem that needs to be fixed, a situation that needs to have some transparency” (interview October 17. 2014). Hence, journalists are working on *behalf of* the citizens, but not – as Dewey encourages – *together* with them. A few, however, highlight that investigative reporters need to “identify with people whose stories are not being told” and “focus on journalism that matters for people” (S. Coll interview January 29. 2015, P. Lombardi interview September 14. 2014). These statements can be interpreted as indirect statements of the importance of public influence. After all, to be able to “identify with people” and focus on the journalism that matters for them, contact and dialogue is needed.

The lack of emphasis on citizen involvement can have many explanations. The contact with ordinary people may for instance be such an integrated part of journalism that many of the interviewees do not think to mention this aspect explicitly. Moreover, when defining quality journalism, it might be natural that the main focus of the definition is the finished product and not the entire reporting process.

When only relating to the explicit quality statements, the interviewees do however seem to view the citizen role as passive until the reporters have done their job. Only when the reporters have revealed their findings are the citizens expected to react (see section 2.2.2). Hence, as a group, the interviewees do not seem especially critical of professional power, or particularly enthusiastic about public dialogue. Following from this, their professional view seems to resemble neither the radical critique model nor the model of democratic professionalism. Rather, through emphasizing aspects like democratic relevance, truth, power critique, effect and good storytelling, the interviewees’ professional view appears to have many resemblances to the public

trustee model. If doing its job properly, the journalism profession is, according to this view, an indispensable part of a functioning democracy. Hence, the interviewees seem to share the same professional orientation as most “contemporary professionals” and many of those who study them (Dzur, 2008, p. 82). Moreover, out of Strömbäck’s (2005) four normative democracy models described in Chapter 2, the interviewees seem to share the values of participatory democracy – perceiving citizens as active subjects with opportunities and responsibilities to change what needs to be changed (pp. 335-340). However, unlike professionals sharing the values of the deliberative democracy model, the interviewees do not seem to emphasize the role of political deliberative discussions (p. 340). As shown later, this lack of focus on public interference can result in accusations of elitism – which in turn can have great implications for both legitimacy and work results (Dzur, 2008; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Strömbäck, 2005).

### **An effective shield towards competitors and market control**

Emphasizing classic professional values, the followers of the public trustee model are often seen as clearly traditionalist in spirit (Dzur, 2008, p. 48). Some interpret this traditionalism as representing rationality and honest skills that can have profoundly progressive effects (Dzur, 2008, p. 48). Others, like Picard (2015) in Chapter 2, claim that the profession needs to be more oriented towards change in order to survive. This means replacing old ideals with newer, more relevant orientations such as serving audiences across multiple distribution platforms, and becoming more oriented to the needs of readers, listeners, viewers, and users (p. 10).

When confronting the interviewees with the critique of being too traditionalist, the reactions vary. Many point to the fact that new technology has changed journalism for the better, due to new presentation techniques, new possibilities for public engagement, and the availability of large datasets. At the same time, many emphasize that quality journalism has been the same for decades. Hence, independently of new technology, quality reporting needs to be thoroughly researched, presented in a balanced way, relevant, defensible, and generate something of value to society at large. Jeff Leen, editor of the *Washington Post*’s investigations unit, summarize his

view like this: “The Internet has changed everything about journalism and the Internet has changed nothing about journalism” (interview October 2, 2014). Many of the interviewees do in other words seem to emphasize that the core values of journalism are the same – regardless of the recent technological development. Following from this, several of the interviewees also object to the perception of journalism needing more innovation. Dana Priest, reporter at the *Washington Post*’s investigations unit, for instance, states that the idea of innovation is often more about the presentation than the reporting. Hence, too much focus on innovation often means losing sight of the “actual most [sic] value of journalism”, namely to “unearth original information, especially information that people don’t want you to have” (interview October 14, 2014). Workshop alumna Jessica Schulberg seems to agree, stating that some parts of journalism are the result of “too much innovation”, coming “at the cost of quality journalism” (interview September 30, 2014). Reporter at the *Washington Post*’s investigations unit, Scott Higham, reacts like this when asked if journalism needs more innovation:

I think it’s crap. You can quote me on that. I do think it’s crap. Here’s why. Innovation is really important, and technology is really important. Getting stories out to as many people as you possibly can is really important. But what’s more important than that are the stories themselves. And that has not changed, and that never will change. (Interview October 2, 2014)

The interviewees thus see new technology as necessary but, at the same time, they fear that too much focus on new digital aspects can threaten the core values of journalism. Hence, the interviewees seem to constantly work on finding the right balance between professional renewal and professional boundary work described in section 2.1.3: To survive, journalism must adapt in form and style to reflect changes in culture, politics, taste and technology. At the same time journalists must keep in mind the purpose and principles of producing accurate information on behalf of the citizens, and, as Benedetti (2015) puts it, not jeopardize the key principles of journalism in the eagerness to innovate (p. 96). From this perspective, focusing on traditional values like truth, new information and effect can be seen as putting up a

professional firewall, safeguarding the core values of the profession against too much change and loss of control.

From a professional perspective, holding on to the traditional values can be positive for two main reasons. First, it seems an effective way of constructing boundaries towards other occupational groups. Getting as close as possible to the “truth” is a challenging task. In addition, the information must be new, fresh, and communicated effectively. Thus, producing quality journalism requires knowledge of the reported issue, knowledge of society in general, and communication expertise (see section 2.3.1).<sup>200</sup> Because of all the difficulties connected to it, journalists can claim that they fulfill their professional task better than the lay public or other untrained groups (Folkerts, 2014, p. 228). Hence, the risk of other occupational groups claiming jurisdiction over news is reduced. Moreover, focusing on traditional values like “truth” is an effective way of separating journalism from all other forms of communication (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 41). This can be seen as particularly important at a time when the technological development makes everybody a potential journalist (Zelizer, 2004, p. 23). Many of the interviewees for instance speak of outlets that “just pump out content” in order to “get more clicks” as representing the opposite of quality (J. Paladino interview November 10. 2014). Hence, they are making an effort to separate journalism from “the raging flood of online information” (see section 2.2.3). This kind of boundary work probably is of great importance to the journalism profession. As put by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) in Chapter 2: If the journalism profession fails to be associated with proper reporting of societal interest, there is a danger of it disappearing inside the larger world of communications (p. 3).

Second, focusing on classic professional journalistic values like “truth”, “effect” and “new information” can also be a way of shielding journalism from the increased market pressure caused by the “journalism crisis” (see section 2.1.3). Editor of the *Washington Post*'s investigations unit, Jeff Leen, states that “Investigative journalism is under assault from a bunch of directions right now because the financial model's been broken by the Internet” (interview October 2. 2014). Wendell Cochran at the

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<sup>200</sup> The knowledge base of the journalism profession is examined in more detail in section 7.1.

Workshop describes the situation as “some really awful journalism being done, mostly because people are trying to figure out this market question” (interview October 8. 2014). Market pressure and commercialism is in other words seen as a threat to quality reporting. As described by Freidson (2007), the interviewees’ focus on professional ideals, or “the third logic”, can thus be a way of safeguarding the profession from market control (p. 106). Several of the interviewees state that quality equals “the stories that take longer to produce”, “telling the story over time”, or stories that reporters “spend more than a week on” (E. Schwartz interview October 22. 2014, P. Redo interview March 10. 2015, J. Paladino interview November 10. 2014).<sup>201</sup> Hence, they seem to stress that quality reporting and profit maximization are incompatible elements, and thus draw a line between journalism and market ideology.

Following from the above, focusing on traditional values seems to be an effective way of shielding the journalism profession against both competitors and market control.

### **The problems of elitism and traditionalism**

In addition to effectively connecting journalism to central societal needs, and building strong professional boundaries, the social trustee model, as previously mentioned, also has characteristics that can influence the work and legitimation of a profession in a negative manner. Especially the interviewees’ elitist and traditional dispositions have traditionally been seen as negative features (Dzur, 2008; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Mensing, 2010; Mensing & Ryfe, 2013; Picard, 2015; Strömbäck, 2005).

Starting with the elitism critique, journalism’s overreliance on elite or expert sources has been one of the explanatory models used when trying to understand the profession’s low standing with the public (Dzur, 2008, pp. 143-144). The 2016 Gallup poll for instance showed record-low confidence in the mass media (Swift, 2016). Traditionally, only business executives, lawyers, advertising workers and car salespeople are ranked lower than journalists (Dzur, 2008, p. 142). In order to

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<sup>201</sup> Interestingly enough, none of the faculty members, the group that is probably the most shielded from market pressure, connected quality to resources. Five out of nine interviewees mentioning resources were external reporters, the group that might be the most affected by the journalism crisis.

improve their reputation, deliberative-oriented scholars claim, journalists need to reflect the interests of citizens, and not the agendas of office holders, party leaders, and other elite sources. If not, the legitimacy issues of journalism can never be resolved. Ultimately, this can lead to state- and public sanctions, and the profession losing its autonomy (Dzur, 2008, p. 143; Haas, 2007; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

Second, as mentioned above, many critics claim that the social trustee model represents a much too traditional view upon journalism. This can be a problem, as professions depend upon a successful adaptation to cultural, social and technological change to succeed. In focusing too much on traditional values and ignoring new techniques, methods, ideas, and products, the journalism profession risks becoming reactionary. As a result, other more change-oriented occupational groups, for instance those communicating more effectively with citizens through new technology, might threaten journalism's jurisdiction over news.

Following from the above, the centers need to produce journalism that is neither too elitist nor too traditional in order to strengthen journalism's jurisdiction over news. Hence, both elitism and traditionalism will be central aspects in the following discussion of the centers production.

### **A stronger orientation towards investigative ideals**

Summarizing the findings of section 6.1, the professional identity of the interviewees do not, as suggested by Hovden (2016) above, seem to follow the economy. In spite of the recent development within journalism, including fewer resources and dramatic staff reductions, the resource-demanding investigative ideal seems to stand strong. Hovden's (2016) second suggestion, that inner cohesion increases with external threat, appears more appropriate: The traditional core values of journalism seem to make the fundament of the professional identity of the interviewees, with investigative reporting functioning as the prototype of quality reporting. Moreover, little suggests that the professional identity of the interviewees is shifting from an ideology of expert control to an ideology of distributed control.

The findings above coincide with several recent empirical studies showing that investigative ideals have become stronger during the last two decades, while

participatory ideals are in decline (Hovden, 2016; Willnat & Weaver, 2014). Willnat and Weaver (2014) have for instance found that U.S. journalists are less likely to consider reaching the widest possible audiences and getting information to the public quickly as very important roles, and more likely to emphasize the importance of investigating government claims and analyzing complex problems (p. 1). This, they state, might suggest that U.S. journalists have recognized that their real strengths may lie in providing investigative reports and analyses rather than quick information, especially when competing with online media that can distribute news and information instantly (p. 15). As stated by Abbott (1988), the profession thus seems to use its internal forces to face external forces threatening its jurisdiction over news (pp. 91-96). When threatened by new technology, the profession seems to adjust its ideals towards investigation and analysis where the technology is less of a threat.

## 6.2 The production of the centers

Agreeing about what quality journalism is or should be does not automatically lead to the production of quality reporting. In this section, I will analyze what kind of journalism the centers are producing. According to Zelizer (2004), a growing gap between “the realities of journalism and its official presentation of self” lies at the core of most discussions of contemporary journalism. The gap, she claims, is the main reason for the public’s lack of trust in journalists (p. 7).<sup>202</sup> Journalism is, in other words, not what it claims to be. As described in section 2.1.2, this can be problematic, as autonomy, authority, and “other privileges” are earned on the basis of what is seen as the profession’s contribution to society. To avoid treatment failure, the profession needs to produce a sufficient amount of society-serving reporting at any time. If not, journalism’s jurisdiction over news will become vulnerable, and the profession might be replaced or vanish (Abbott, 1988, p. 46).

Since the goal of this chapter is discussing the jurisdiction-strengthening potential of the four centers, this section tries to answer four main questions:

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<sup>202</sup> Hence, she presents an alternative to the elite-focused explanatory model described above.

- Does the centers' production live up to the professions' stated quality ideals, or does it represent a treatment failure?
- How elite-oriented is the reporting? Not anchoring the reporting in the public interest can, as previously shown, lead to legitimacy issues.
- How traditional is the reporting? Is there a risk that other, more change-oriented occupations might claim jurisdiction over news?
- How much impact does the reporting seem to have? The broader the audience and the more awards the centers win, the stronger their jurisdiction strengthening potential can be said to be.

Before debating these questions, the main findings of the content analysis will however be presented.

### **6.2.1 Characteristics of the centers' production**

A content analysis of 40 stories was conducted in order to gain an overview of the journalism produced by the four centers of this study. As described in Chapter 3, the unit of analysis is the individual news stories, and the selection of news stories was achieved through the centers' home pages. As a general rule, the ten most recent news stories from each center that were 1) produced or co-produced by students, and 2) published by an external news outlet were chosen. With the centers being relatively small and specializing on in-depth investigative stories, the selection represented about one year of production for each center.

All of the 40 selected stories were analyzed through 38 variables (see Appendix D, "Codebook, content analysis", for details). To facilitate the presentation of the findings, these variables were later divided into four main categories: publicity, extent, content and form (see Table 4). In the following, the main findings in each category are presented.



Table 4. Overview of variables presented in each category. The number within parentheses indicate the variable number used in the codebook. The total number of variables is 38.<sup>203</sup>

Group	Variables in group
Publicity	Where published (2), other publishing outlets (3), byline/credit (6), crediting of center and university (7), potential audience (8), citations (37), journalistic awards (38)
Extent	Part of series (4), proportion (9), specified sources (12), written sources (13), oral sources (14), groups of sources (24), multimedia (29)
Content	Primary content categories (10), international or domestic (11), elite sources (15), ordinary sources (16), male sources (17), female sources (18), children sources (19), male elite sources (20), male ordinary sources (21), female elite sources (22), female ordinary sources (23), soft news/hard news (25), level of originality (26), level of conflict (27), number of viewpoints in conflict (28)
Form	Main format (5), video (30), graphics (31), still pictures (32), audio (33), observations/scenes (34), focus on person(s) (35)

## Publicity

Starting with publication platforms and potential audience numbers, the 40 stories in the selection were published by a total of 31 different news organizations. Of these:

- Seventeen were large, prestigious and world-renowned newsrooms, like the *Washington Post*, *Frontline*, the *National Geographic*, and the *Guardian*.<sup>204</sup>
- Seven were local or regional news organizations, like the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), and WAMU (Washington, DC).<sup>205</sup>
- Five were nonprofit news organizations, like The Center for Investigative Reporting and ProPublica.<sup>206</sup>
- One was a smaller, start-up magazine (the *California Sunday Magazine*)
- One was a publication owned by a university (the *New York World* owned by Columbia University).

<sup>203</sup> Variable 1 (story number) and variable 36 (elitist/popular orientation) are not included in this overview. The compound variable “elitist/popular orientation” will however be part of the analysis in section 6.2.2.

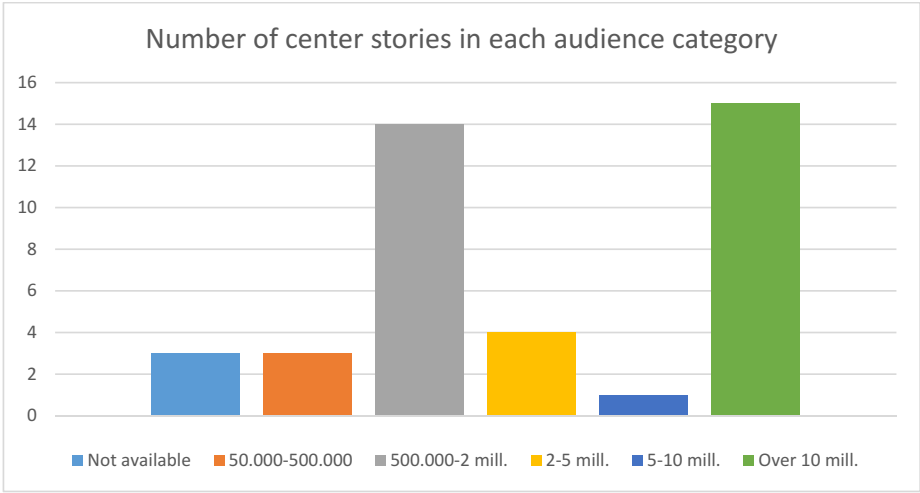
<sup>204</sup> The other large newsrooms were Al Jazeera English, Al Jazeera America, *Time.com*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Miami Herald*, Associated Press, *BBC News Magazine*, the *International Business Times*, the *New York Daily News*, Univision, the *Atlantic*, the *Nation Magazine* and the *Boston Globe*.

<sup>205</sup> The other local or regional news organizations were the *Ledger* of Lakeland (Lakeland, Florida), Albany *Times Union* (Albany, New York), Worcester *Telegram & Gazette* (Worcester, Massachusetts), WGBH News (Boston), and WUSF 89.7 News (Tampa, Florida).

<sup>206</sup> The other nonprofits were the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting, The Center for Public Integrity, and the *Texas Observer*.

As previously mentioned, the main reason for the centers to partner with external news outlets is to reach higher audience numbers. From the list of publishers, they seem to succeed. Fifteen of the 40 selected stories (38 percent) were published by newsrooms with an audience of 10 million unique visitors or more a month (see Figure 4).<sup>207</sup>

Figure 4. Number of center stories in each audience category (potential audience). N=40



The *BBC News Magazine*, publishing one of the Stable Center stories, had the largest audience number in the selection – with 76 million unique visitors a month (BBC, 2014). Then follows *National Geographic* and *Time.com*, publishing three IRP Berkeley stories between them, on platforms with approximately 26 million and 23 million unique visitors a month (National Geographic, n.d.; Kirkland, 2014). The centers are thus collaborating with some of the largest newsrooms in the world.

Of the four centers, the Workshop stories seems to have the largest average potential audience numbers. The main reason is the close cooperation with the *Washington Post*, publishing seven out of ten Workshop stories. In 2013 the *Washington Post* was the eighth largest daily printed newspaper in the U.S. – and the eighth largest online

<sup>207</sup> The audience numbers with a timeframe closest to the selected stories publication date were registered. Hence, the numbers may have changed since the analysis was conducted in 2014. See Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, and section 3.4.3 for more details about how the audience numbers were calculated.

newspaper in the world (Pew Research Center, 2013). Hence, seven out of ten Workshop stories were published by a newsroom reaching a public of 10 million or more.

The center with the lowest potential audience number appears to be the New England CIR, with nine out of ten stories in the audience category of 500,000 – 2 million. The main explanation is probably that the New England CIR has a regional focus, while the three other centers are nationally oriented. Therefore, the Center mainly partners with local and regional newsrooms – with local and regional audience numbers. Moreover, the New England CIR’s potential audience probably is larger than the variable shows, as the variable, for several reasons, only registers the audience number of the *largest* cooperating news outlet.<sup>208</sup> The New England CIR is however the center *co-publishing* the most stories. As many as eight out of ten NECIR stories were actually published by more than one news outlet. According to Charles Ornstein, senior reporter at ProPublica, creating unique “distribution avenues” that can “magnify” the audience number of a story is one of the main advantages of nonprofit newsrooms (interview January 28. 2015). As an example, the audience number of a NECIR story can actually rise from 1.7 million (the potential audience number of the largest publisher, the *Boston Globe*) to 3.2 million (the potential audience numbers of the *Boston Globe*, the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, and WGBH News combined) if co-published. By co-publishing, the centers can therefore more than double their potential audience numbers. Despite this, only four of the other centers’ stories are co-published (one Workshop story and three IRP Berkeley stories). Moreover, most of the co-published stories are only distributed by two or three different news outlets.<sup>209</sup> According to several of the interviewees, it is the partnering newsrooms that often hinder co-publications – not wanting to “help the competitor and give them our story” (C. Ornstein interview January 28. 2015). To be

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<sup>208</sup> Only the audience numbers of the largest outlet was registered for two main reasons. First, different publications often publish different versions of a story. Hence, it can be discussed whether a co-published story actually is the same story or not. Second, finding authentic audience numbers for the smaller publications often proved a challenge. See variable 2 and 8 in Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, for more details.

<sup>209</sup> The exception is the IRP Berkeley story “After Package from Yemen, Questions about Worker Illness and Government Response” (story number B9), published by as many as seven different newsrooms. These are the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting, *Miami Herald*, Associated Press, WUSF 89.7 News, Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, the Ledger of Lakeland, and The Center for Public Integrity.

able to co-publish, the various partners need to be “open” and not too “territorial” (J. Bergantino interview March 10. 2015). Hence, although wanting to co-publish – the nonprofit centers are not always able to.

In addition to reaching a large public through various publishing partners, the work of the centers is also gaining attention through awards and citations. Of the 40 stories in the content analysis, seven were prizewinners. Of these, three were IRP Berkeley stories and two were Workshop stories. The NECIR and the Stabile Center had one award-winning story each. In addition to the highest number of prize-winning stories, the IRP Berkeley also achieved the most awards *per story*. While the other centers’ stories won one or two awards, two of the IRP stories – “Rape in the Fields” and “Firestone and the Warlord” (story numbers B6 and B10<sup>210</sup>) – won more than six awards. According to Andrés Cediél, producer of “Rape in the Fields”, it is not often that a single-center story wins multiple prizes.<sup>211</sup> Thus, when it happens – approximately every two or three years – it is of great importance. Cediél sees it as a way of saying “Hey look. We’re still doing good work” (interview November 13. 2014).

Not only winning the most awards; the IRP Berkeley stories in the selection were also the productions cited the most by non-collaborating news outlets. While seven of the IRP Berkeley stories were picked up, six of the Workshop stories were cited. In comparison, the New England CIR and the Stabile Center only had, respectively, two and one cited story. In addition, of the cited stories, the IRP Berkeley and Workshop productions were mentioned most frequently. While eleven of the stories in the selection were cited by one to five news outlets, five stories, all from the IRP Berkeley or the Workshop, were cited by more than five different publications. Thus, the IRP Berkeley and the Workshop have gained more publicity through citations and awards than the two other centers.

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<sup>210</sup> See Appendix E, “List of stories, content analysis”, for an overview of the selected stories.

<sup>211</sup> “Rape in the Fields” won The Public Radio News Directors Inc. award, the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award, two Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards, a California Journalism Awards, and an award from The Society of Professional Journalists, Northern California. The production was also a finalist in the Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting, and nominated for an Emmy.

As described in section 5.2.1, one positive outcome for universities hosting nonprofit centers is positive publicity, as the university's name is often mentioned in students' bylines and credits. This kind of publicity is, of course, also advantageous for the centers themselves. In 31 of the 40 stories, both the center and the university were mentioned in conjunction with the story. Three of the stories however did not mention the center's name, while two stories did not include the university's name. Four stories, all from the Stabile Center, did not mention the University or the Center at all. Following from this, it seems that selling stories on a freelance basis (see section 5.3.1) leads to less publicity than closer collaborations.

Following from the above, there seems to be some variation in the publicity that the centers and their stories are given. In spite of the differences, it is possible to conclude that the four centers as a group reach a large potential audience. When adding the publicity from awards and citations, the few center stories that are published seem to achieve an unusually high level of public attention.

### **Extent**

The center stories consist of both text, photographs, video, audio and graphics. Hence, it is not easy to find a common measurement scale in order to quantify their proportion. To get an *idea* of the stories' size and the possible workload invested in them, the different media components were weighted and converted into A4 pages.<sup>212</sup> Following from this, the average length of the stories seemed to be a little more than 13 pages. There was, however, large variation between the publications. While the most extensive story contained about 66 pages (the IRP Berkeley), the smallest story only measured about 1.5 pages (the New England CIR). Following from this, the median story was shorter than the average, counting about eight pages. This is still, however, much more wide-ranging than the regular journalistic report.

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<sup>212</sup> The visual scale of "A4 pages" was chosen as the measurement scale, as the vast majority of cases had text as the main media component. The number of pages was calculated after copying the text into a Word-document, using a standard set of fonts, sizes and paragraphs. For the other media elements, the number of A4 pages was calculated from set values. Simple graphics for instance counted as 0.5 A4 pages each. See section 3.4.3 and the Appendix D, "Codebook, content analysis", for further details.

Not surprisingly, the video documentaries produced in collaboration with PBS *Frontline* are the most extensive. Of the four stories measuring more than 40 pages, three are *Frontline* productions.<sup>213</sup> The most wide-ranging publication in the selection seems to be the IRP Berkeley/*Frontline*/ProPublica production “Firestone and the Warlord” (story number B1), telling the story of the U.S. rubber tire manufacturer Firestone’s role during Liberia’s civil war. Based on inside accounts from the company’s Liberia rubber plantation, in addition to diplomatic cables and court documents, the investigation reveals how Firestone conducted business during the war – and indirectly supported the warlord Charles Taylor. According to reporter Jonathan Jones, the story took more than six years to research and produce as “there was so much material to learn” (interview November 13, 2014). Although working on the story for several years as a freelancer, and later in cooperation with *Frontline* and ProPublica, the project started when Jones was awarded an IRP Berkeley fellowship in 2008. Free from the constraints of a regular newsroom where “you got to produce”, Jones could immerse himself in the research. Hence, Jones claims, the award-winning project could never have been realized without the year at the IRP Berkeley (interview November 13, 2014).

Of the ten smallest stories in the selection, of six pages or less, eight were follow-ups on previous investigations. Having the majority of the smaller stories, including four of the follow-ups, the New England CIR’s average story measures less than seven pages. In comparison, the average Workshop story measures 21 pages, the average IRP Berkeley story a little more than 16 pages, and the average Stabile story 9 pages. Following from this, the main differences in size seems to be caused by the number of follow-ups and the amount of video in the stories (both the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley have few follow-ups and use video in 40 percent of their productions).

When looking at the number of specified sources in each story (written and oral), the impression of the stories as unusually extensive is affirmed. On average, each story consists of as many as 30.25 sources.<sup>214</sup> While the lowest number of sources in a

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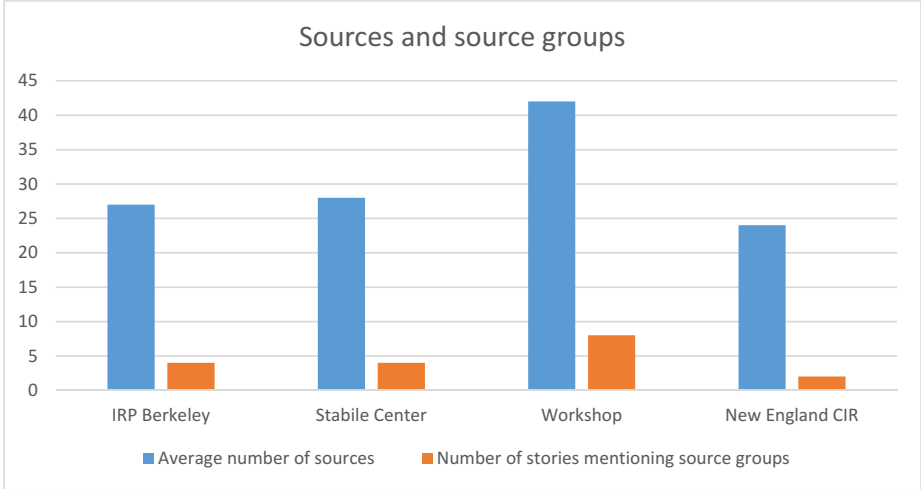
<sup>213</sup> Two IRP Berkeley stories and one Workshop story.

<sup>214</sup> The median is 27.5.

single story is seven (the IRP Berkeley), the highest number is 63 (the Workshop). In addition, 45 percent of the stories refer to the use of source groups. These groups can be a large number of documents, a large number of interviews, observation over time – or a combination of the three. The story including the highest number of specified sources, “Stop and Seize” by the *Washington Post*/the Workshop (story number A4), does for instance state that “a database of hundreds of thousands of seizure records at the Justice Department” and “hundreds of federal court cases” are analyzed. In addition, “scores of police officers, prosecutors and motorists” are interviewed (Sallah, O’Harrow Jr., Rich, & Silverman, 2014). Hence, the total number of sources seems to be much higher than the 63 specified in the story.

As shown in Figure 5, the Workshop stories seem to have the highest number of sources, with an average of 42 sources per story. In addition, source groups are mentioned in eight out of ten Workshop stories. The other three centers have from 24 to 28 sources on average, and mention source groups in two to four stories.

Figure 5. The average number of sources and the number of stories mentioning source groups divided by center. N=40.



In addition to source groups and specified sources, some of the center stories also seem to include a high number of *unspecified* sources. This especially applies to the stories of a more literary or narrative style. As an example, the 2015 PEN Literary award winner for journalism, IRP Berkeley’s “The Contestant” (story number B10), only contains 27 specified sources. When attempting to include some of the most

obvious cases of unspecified sources, however, the number comes close to 40. IRP Berkeley fellow Daniel Alarcón does for instance write that “Leoncio and Vilma went to bed watching a World Cup qualifying match between Peru and Argentina. When they woke up, Leoncio heard his wife say, ‘Thalía hasn’t come home.’” Since the reporter did not wake up with the couple that morning, he must have got the information from one of them, but because of the literary style of the story, the source is not specified. With several of the selected stories having similar narrative features, the total number of sources in the selection thus probably is much higher than registered.

How many media components the average center story consists of can also say something about the extent of the center stories. As much as 83 percent of the stories in the selection actually contain four or more of the following elements: text, photograph, video, audio, graphic, comment fields and links. Five of the stories include as many as six different components. If defining multimedia as a presentation of a news story package where two or more media formats are utilized<sup>215</sup> (Deuze, 2004, p. 140), all of the stories can be defined as multimedia stories. Moreover, almost half the stories (19 out of 40) involve a combination of two or more of the elements text, video, audio and graphics. Again, the Workshop seems to represent the highest number, with an average of nearly five components per production. In comparison, both the IRP Berkeley and the New England CIR have an average of a little more than four components in their stories, while the Stabile average is four. The Workshop has the highest number when counting the stories in the selection that are part of larger, resource-demanding series. Of the four stories in the selection that are part of series, three are Workshop productions.<sup>216</sup>

Following from the above, all four centers seem to produce large and complex stories that are based upon an unusually high number of specified and unspecified sources. Of the four, the Workshop does appear to be in a category by itself. As discussed in section 5.3.1, how much the different partners contribute to a story can however vary.

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<sup>215</sup> Such as text, audio, moving and still images, graphics, animations, interactive and hypertextual elements (Deuze, 2004, p. 140).

<sup>216</sup> The fourth is from the Stabile Center.



When looking at the story bylines, Workshop staff or students are only mentioned in three out of ten. In the seven remaining stories, the Workshop affiliates are only listed as contributors, which often signals a story involvement lower than bylines. In contrast, reporters or students from the IRP Berkley, the Stabile Center and the New England CIR are part of all the bylines of their center's stories. This could indicate that the Workshop is less involved in their stories than the three other centers. Hence, although having the most extensive stories, the Workshop's work effort towards the stories might not in fact be higher than the other centers'.<sup>217</sup>

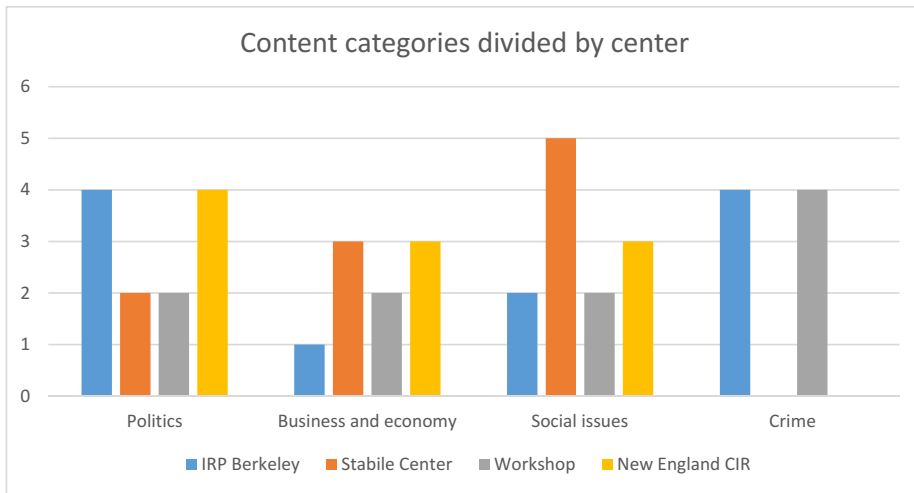
### **Content**

Out of the nine content categories used in the content analysis (1. Politics, 2. Culture, 3. Everyday life, 4. Sport, 5. Business and economy, 6. Social issues, 7. Crime, 8. Accidents, and 9. Other), the center stories only seem to fit into four. Twelve of the stories focus on social issues, eleven on politics, nine on business and economy and eight on crime. In a period of approximately 12 months, none of the centers thus had produced stories on culture, everyday life, sport or accidents. When dividing the content categories among the centers (see Figure 6), the number of topics is further reduced, as neither the New England CIR nor the Stabile Center have any stories on crime. Of other differences, the Stabile Center seems especially occupied with social issues, while the IRP Berkeley is the only center with just a single story covering business and the economy. Overall, the content orientation of the centers seems quite congruent. Despite this, none of the interviewees made any connections between theme and quality when asked to define quality journalism during the in depth interviews; rather, the effect of the stories, regardless of the subject, was emphasized (see section 6.1).

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<sup>217</sup> Different bylines/credits can of course also be the result of varying credit practices. See further discussion on bylines, especially student bylines, in Chapter 7.

Figure 6. The number of stories within each content category, divided by center. N=40.



In addition to content categories, it has long been a tradition within communication studies to make a distinction between “soft news” and “hard news” (Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, & Legnante, 2012, p. 1). Traditionally, the main distinction among the two has often been made between journalism that informs and journalism that tells a gripping tale (Zelizer, 2004, p. 132). Using the definition of Reinemann et al. (2012), however, the “soft news/hard news” variable of this content analysis is based upon three dimensions: topic, focus and style (p. 13).<sup>218</sup> A story that is politically relevant, reports in a thematic way, focuses on the societal consequences of events, and is impersonal and unemotional in style, can for instance be regarded as hard news. On the other hand, a story of low political relevance, reporting in an episodic way, focusing on individual consequences of events, dominated by a personal and emotional style, can be regarded soft news (Reinemann et al., 2012, p. 13). Following from this, as many as 36 out of the 40 center stories can be described as hard news. This means that 36 of the stories are considered to have a high degree of political relevance in addition to having a socially relevant focus and/or being told in a matter-

<sup>218</sup> The use of the terms hard news/soft news as dichotomies has traditionally been severely criticized – as quality reporting, as described in section 2.2, also is dependent upon form. By using the definition of Reinemann et al. (2012), the hope is capturing more of the complexity of the two terms. Moreover, several variables, for instance variable 34 “observations/scenes” and variable 35 “focus on person(s)”, charts the form of the center productions.

of-fact-style.<sup>219</sup> As one story was categorized as neither soft nor hard, only three stories in the selection were actually classified as soft. Interestingly enough, all these stories were produced by the IRP Berkeley. Two of them were about social issues<sup>220</sup>; while the third was the previously mentioned 2015 PEN award winner “The Contestant”, placed in the “crime” category.

As previously mentioned, the center stories seem to include a high number of sources. While the number of sources can say something about extent, the *type* of sources can be an indicator of characteristics and content. Hence, the number of specified sources in each story was sorted into eleven different source categories: oral, written, elite, ordinary, male, female, children, male elite, male ordinary, female elite, and female ordinary. Of a total of 1210 registered sources, the main findings were:

- That the proportion of written and oral sources was more or less the same.<sup>221</sup> Divided by centers, the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop, and the Stabile Center had about 50 percent written sources and 50 percent oral sources. The New England CIR however used nearly twice as many oral as written sources.<sup>222</sup>
- That about 75 percent of the total amount of oral and written sources were elite sources, 25 percent were ordinary sources (see Figure 7a).<sup>223</sup> With 79 percent elite sources, the Workshop seemed to be the most elite-oriented. The three other centers followed closely behind, with 74 percent (the Stabile Center and the New England CIR) and 71 percent (the IRP Berkeley).

Elite sources thus seem to be largely overrepresented by all four centers.

When analyzing the 614 registered *oral* sources in the selection, the tendencies were also quite clear:

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<sup>219</sup> To be considered “hard news” the story had to have a high degree of political relevance. In addition, it had to fulfill one or both of the two other criteria for hard news: 1) focusing on social relevance, and 2) being told in a matter-of-fact-style. See the Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, for further details.

<sup>220</sup> B2: “Rare Illness in California Afflicts Children with Polio-Like Symptoms”, and B9: “After Package from Yemen, Questions about Worker Illness and Government Response”.

<sup>221</sup> Of the registered sources, 595 were written and 614 were oral.

<sup>222</sup> Of the registered NECIR-sources, 146 were oral and 90 written.

<sup>223</sup> Of the registered sources, 904 were elite sources and 306 were ordinary sources.

- Of the 418 classified oral sources<sup>224</sup>, 64 percent of the sources were male and 36 percent were female. Three sources were children (see Figure 7b).
- Divided by center, the Workshop had the strongest male dominance, with 71 percent men and 29 percent women. The other centers had respectively 63 percent (the New England CIR), 60 percent (the Stabile Center) and 59 percent (the IRP Berkeley) male sources.
- Of the total number of male sources, 72 percent were elite sources and 28 percent were ordinary sources (see Figure 7c).
- Of the total number of female sources, 48 percent were elite sources and 52 percent were ordinary sources (see Figure 7d).

As a group, the four centers do in other words seem to prioritize male, elite sources – with the Workshop having the most elite- and male-dominant stories. In numbers, the 40 selected stories contain about 117 fewer female sources than male sources.

Moreover, more than half the female sources in the stories are ordinary sources. This means that half of the women function as examples/cases in a story, and are mainly interviewed because of their experiences as consumers, family members, witnesses, etc.<sup>225</sup> In contrast, only one third of the men are ordinary sources. The other two thirds are politicians, leaders, expert/professionals and other top people in their field.<sup>226</sup>

The story with the strongest male dominance is the Workshop/*Washington Post* story “Doing well by doing good: The high price of working in war zones” (story number A1). Of a total of 42 specified sources, none were women. A total of 13 men were interviewed – all of them elite sources. In comparison, only seven out of the 40 selected stories had more female than male sources. The story with the highest number of female sources is the previously mentioned “Rape in the Fields” (story number B6), with 22 out of 37 specified oral sources being women. Twenty of these female sources were however ordinary sources, most of them interviewed because of

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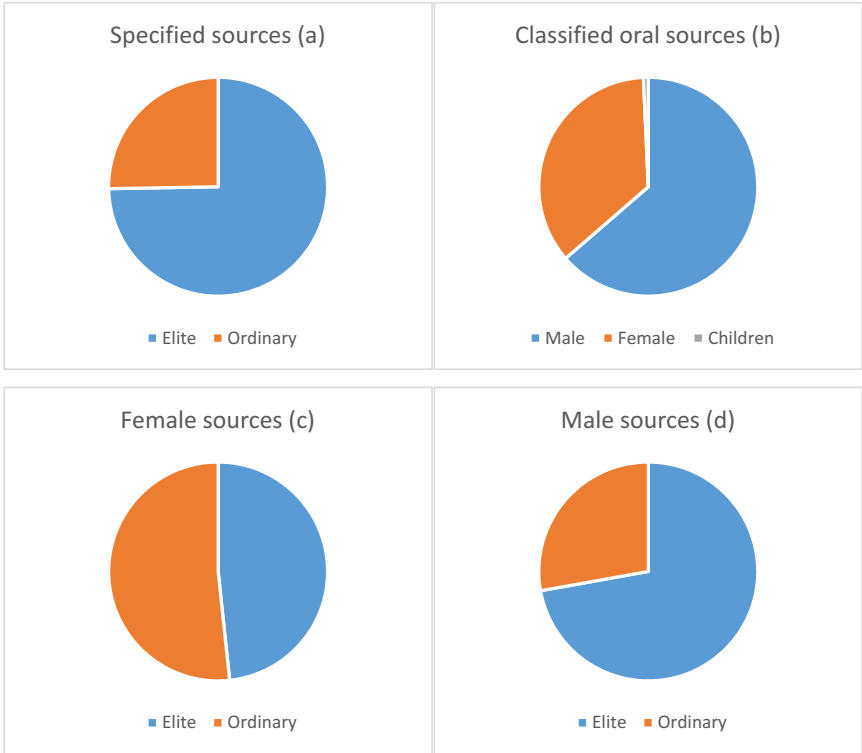
<sup>224</sup> Of the oral sources, 196 (32 percent) could not be registered by gender as they were only referred to by title – not name, for instance “an energy spokesman” or “a lawyer”.

<sup>225</sup> See the Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, variable 16, for the definition of “ordinary source”.

<sup>226</sup> See Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, variable 15, for the definition of elite source.

their role as victims of rape. Hence, only two of the 22 female sources were elite sources. In the whole selection of stories, there was actually no production with more than seven female elite sources.<sup>227</sup> The maximum number of male elite sources in a single story was nearly three times as high: 19.<sup>228</sup>

Figure 7. The distribution of different source categories within the total number of sources (a), the classified oral sources (b), the female (c), and the male sources (d). Figure 7a, N=1210. Figure 7b, N=418. Figure 7c, N=266. Figure 7d, N=149.



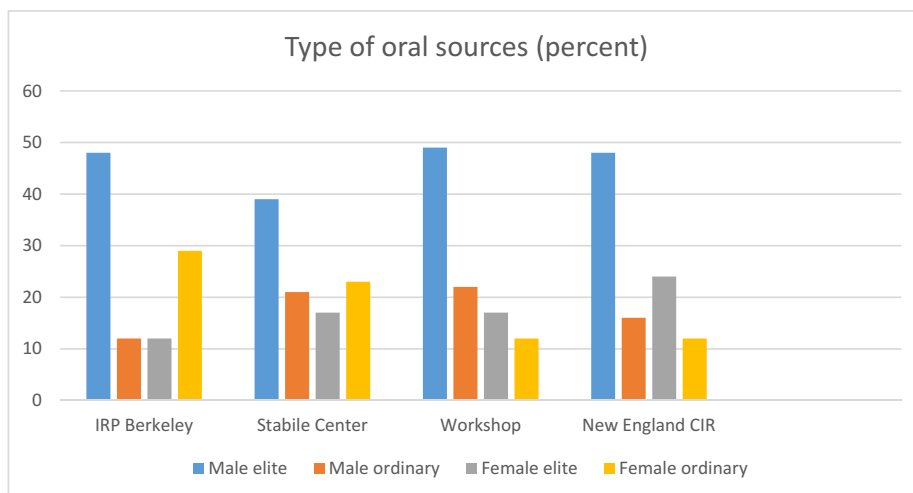
When looking at male elite, male ordinary, female elite, and female ordinary sources divided by center, the male elite sources seem to represent nearly half of the total number of classified oral sources in the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop, and the New England CIR stories. In the Stabile Center stories, the male elite sources represent 39 percent of the classified oral sources (see Figure 8). While two of the centers have ordinary women as their second largest source group, (the IRP Berkeley and the

<sup>227</sup> The Workshop/*Frontline* production “The Trouble with Antibiotics” includes seven female elite sources.

<sup>228</sup> The IRP Berkeley/*Frontline* production “Firestone and the Warlord” includes 19 male elite sources.

Stabile Center), ordinary men come second in the Workshop stories, and elite women in the New England CIR stories. For two of the centers, the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center, elite women are actually the smallest source group of all. All of the centers thus seem to prioritize male elite sources while female elite sources are the least prioritized by half of the centers.

Figure 8. The percentage of oral sources classified as male elite, male ordinary, female elite, and female ordinary divided by center. N=418.



In addition to content categories and sources, the stories' geographic orientation, originality and level of conflict were also examined. The main findings were that:

- A majority of the centers refer to events, persons and institutions within the U.S. Only three stories, two from the IRP Berkeley and one from the Stabile Center, has a mainly global focus.
- A majority of the stories are based upon original reporting. Only four of the stories are non-exclusive – meaning that their main content is commonly known and mentioned by a number of news outlets prior to the center publication.<sup>229</sup>
- A majority of the stories contain some level of conflict. While only two stories are based on facts where no particular disagreement or conflict can be traced, 14

<sup>229</sup> One of the non-exclusive stories is IRP Berkeley's "Rare Illness in California Afflicts Children with Polio-Like Symptoms" (story number B2). The story was part of a *National Geographic* series concerning Polio. Stories about the boy at focus in the IRP Berkeley story, and the occurrence of a polio-like disease in California, had been published several times prior to the IRP Berkeley story.

stories include weak conflicts. Twenty-four stories (60 percent) do however contain strong conflicts or accusations.

- Of the conflict-oriented stories, none represents only one viewpoint.

Following from the above, the typical center production can be described as a hard news story, favoring male elite sources, concerning social issues, politics, economy or crime. In addition, it is conflict-oriented but balanced, it is original, and it has a U.S. focus.

### **Form**

As stated in section 2.2, quality journalism is not content alone; the reporting also needs to be effectively communicated (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 189). Hence, the fourth and last category presenting the findings of the content analysis is form. Through looking at the format and person-focus of each story, in addition to the number of observations, it is possible to indicate how the centers communicate their findings.

First, a large majority of the stories in the selection (36 of 40) has text as their primary media component. Only three of the stories, all *Frontline* productions, consist mainly of video, while one story, Workshop's collaboration with the Washington-based National Public Radio channel WAMU, has audio as the primary format. As previously mentioned, several of the stories contain video, audio or graphics as a *complement* to the text. In sum, a total of eleven stories contain video and three contain audio (see Table 5). Only one of the stories, the IRP Berkeley production "After Package from Yemen, Questions About Worker Illness and Government Response" (story number B9), include both audio and video. Hence, as many as 27 of the 40 stories can be said to be traditional "print stories", consisting of a combination of text, images and graphics.

When looking at the multimedia orientation divided by center (see Table 5), there seems to be large variations within the group. While the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley has, respectively, six and four productions including video and/or audio, the New England CIR and the Stabile Center only have, respectively, two and one video/audio story.

Table 5. The format of the stories divided by center. N=40.

Center	Mainly text	Mainly video	Mainly audio	Suppl. video	Suppl. audio	Graphics
The IRP Berkeley <sup>230</sup>	8	2	0	2	1	1
The Stabile Center	10	0	0	1	0	3
The Workshop	8	1	1	3	1	8
The New England CIR	10	0	0	2	0	2

In addition to multimedia orientation, the number of observations/scenes also seems to vary between the centers. In the total selection, half of the stories contain scenes, showing that the journalist has been on the site to observe what happens (see Appendix D, variable 34). Divided by center, the IRP Berkeley reporters seem to have spent most time outside their offices, as only three stories contain no observation at all. All of the other centers have six stories without scenes. The IRP Berkeley also has the stories containing the *most* scenes. In the total selection, four stories include more than ten scenes. Three of these are IRP Berkeley productions and one is a Workshop story. Moreover, all four stories including more than ten scenes contain video. The IRP Berkeley/*Frontline* production “Rape in the Fields” (story number B6) for instance includes extensive footage from farms where immigrant female farmworkers have allegedly been assaulted and raped. The use of video does in other words seem to force reporters to become more outreach-oriented. In addition, the IRP Berkeley seems to use more scenes in their text-based stories. The IRP Berkeley/*San Francisco Chronicle* story “How deft bid-riggers harmed ex-owners of foreclosed homes” (story number B4), for instance, opens like this: “It was noon on a fall day in Oakland. Heat radiated off the white concrete steps and picnic tables out front of the Alameda County Courthouse where a band of would-be home-buyers gathered” (Baires & Hobb, 2014).

The last variable concerning form analyzes the person-focus of the stories. In short, are cases concerning people used to set an example and illustrate what the story is about? While 8 of the 40 stories have no person-focus at all, 8 have a low person-

<sup>230</sup> One of the stories contain both text, video and audio



focus, 14 have a medium person-focus and 10 have a high person focus. Again, there seems to be a divide between the centers. While the average IRP Berkeley and Stabile Center story has a medium person-focus<sup>231</sup>, the average Workshop and New England CIR story has a low one.<sup>232</sup> Moreover, while the Workshop has no stories with a high person-focus, the IRP Berkeley has four. One of these is the story of the Californian toddler Lucian Olivera, whose legs have been paralyzed through a polio-like disease. While the story mentions that there has been at least 20 confirmed cases of polio-like illness throughout California during the two previous years, the focus is on the toddler and his family and how they handle their new life situation. As an example, the first part of the story concerns how the toddler manages to move around: “Lucian Olivera doesn't use canes because they slow him down. ‘They're wobbly,’ he says. Instead he prefers his walker or his leg braces—neither of which seem to slow down the rambunctious three-year-old” (Nicol, 2014).

From the above, it is possible to conclude that a majority of the center stories are traditional text-based "print stories" with medium- to low person-focus. Moreover, a little more than half the stories contain scenes. However, again there are variations between the centers. While the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley seem far more multimedia-oriented than the Stabile Center and the New England CIR, the IRP Berkeley seems more outreaching. When it comes to person-focus, the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center stories seem to be more personified than Workshop and New England Center publications.

### **Main findings**

To summarize the findings of the content analysis, the centers seem to:

- Reach a large potential audience through cooperations, awards and citations.
- Produce large and complex original stories with a high number of sources.

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<sup>231</sup> The story has a case in the first three paragraphs/first 30 seconds – or has a case as the main illustration. However, the case is not the whole story/there is still a story without the case. See Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, variable 35, for details.

<sup>232</sup> The story has a case (person that works as an example of what the story is about), but the case is not the main illustration or part of the first three paragraphs/first 30 seconds of the story. See Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, variable 35, for more details.

- Focus on conflict-oriented hard news concerning social issues, politics, economy or crime.
- Produce traditional text-based "print stories".

At a more detailed level, the stories seem to be U.S. oriented with a medium quantity of person-focus and scenes. Moreover, all four centers seem to prefer male, elite sources. Of major differences between the centers, the Workshop and the IRP Berkeley seem to be more multimedia-oriented than the Stabile Center and the New England CIR.

In the following, the findings will be further discussed against the aspects of quality, elitism, traditionalism and impact. Although there are variances between the centers, the discussion will mainly relate to the major findings, seeing the centers as a group.

### **6.2.2 Central quality aspects**

#### **Signs of quality reporting**

As stated above, producing “quality journalism” as defined by the profession itself is important when attempting to strengthen journalism’s jurisdiction over news. Hence, a principal question is whether the centers’ production lives up to journalism’s common quality ideals or, alternatively, can be said to represent a treatment failure?

It is, of course, hard to measure quality. There is however a number of quality *indications* in the material presented above. First, all the centers seem to win journalistic awards on a more-or-less regular basis. Since prizes are known as powerful markers of cultural capital in the journalistic field (Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Hovden, 2008; Lindholm, 2015; Schultz, 2006; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013), seven out of 40 selected stories winning prestigious awards can be a signal of high quality production. The IRP Berkeley has even won the most prestigious of all – the Pulitzer Prize (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013, p. 1). Another indicator of cultural capital in the journalistic field, is story citations by competing news outlets (G. R. Olsen, 2012, pp. 86-87). Of the total 40 stories, 16 are cited by non-collaborating news outlets. The IRP Berkeley and the Workshop stories especially seem to be appreciated by the rest

of the journalism profession with, respectively, seven and six stories being picked up.<sup>233</sup>

Second, the fact that the center stories are published in large, world-renowned newsrooms can in itself be a sign of quality. Reaching a large audience, these news outlets probably have a steady stream of story submissions from external actors. More-or-less regular partnerships with newsrooms like the *Washington Post*, *Frontline* and the *Boston Globe*, can thus be a quality indicator. Moreover, as Scott Allen, editor of the *Boston Globe*'s Spotlights Team, pinpoints, high-quality work is especially important in investigative reporting, as "everything has to be right, and at a high [level]." If not, the newsroom risks being sued (interview March 13, 2015). Hence, it is unlikely that the investigative units of renowned newsrooms would publish low-quality reporting.

A third indicator of quality is the substantial size of the stories. The collaborating news organizations would most likely not use a lot of space or airtime on a low quality story. It is also more likely that the production of large stories involves more time and resources than smaller stories. Although not being a guarantee of quality, knowledge, time, and resources can, as described in Chapter 2, heighten the chances of obtaining valid and relevant information.

In addition to the more structural quality indicators, quality journalism – when defined according to the current "core" of journalism ideology – needs to be 1) democratically relevant, 2) close to the truth, 3) accountable, 4) critical of power, and 5) engaging (see the five bullet points in section 2.2.5 for further details).

Starting with the criterion of being democratically relevant, many academics, like Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), point to the importance of covering the areas where most public money is spent. Examples of such areas are education, economics, foreign affairs, the military, national security, politics and social welfare (p. 151). As shown above, the large majority of the center stories concern social issues, politics, business/economy, and crime. Except for the eight stories focusing on crime, the

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<sup>233</sup> Seven of the IRP Berkeley stories and six of the Workshop stories.

centers' production and the list of democratically relevant areas thus are fully overlapping.

The fact that 90 percent of the center stories can be described as hard news can also be an indicator of the centers' producing democratically relevant stories.

Traditionally, the terms "soft news" and "hard news" have been used to make judgements about "the quality of journalism and normative assumptions about media functions in democratic societies" (Reinemann et al., 2012, p. 222). While "hard news" has been connected to high quality and democratic relevance, "soft news" has often been associated with tabloidization and 'infotainment' (Reinemann et al., 2012, p. 221). Following from the definition of "hard news" used in the content analysis, 36 out of the 40 center stories have a high degree of political relevance. In addition, these stories either have a socially relevant focus, and/or are told in a matter-of-fact style. Ninety percent of the selected stories can thus be described as democratically relevant.

The second quality criterion listed above, is that the center stories need to be as close to the truth as possible. This means that the information should be fact-based, critical, impartial and proportional (see section 2.2.5). One of the most concrete markers of the centers' striving towards fact-based productions is the large number of sources used in the stories. As described by Tuchman (1972), "[t]he newsmen view quotations of other people's opinions as a form of supporting evidence" (p. 668). Hence, the use of sources becomes an important part of journalism's "strategic ritual" of objectivity. Another sign of the centers' efforts towards obtaining the "truth" is the reporting method used. As previously mentioned, investigative reporting is often called the research arm of journalism, as it can resemble the academic research process. Data journalism in particular can be perceived as "scientific", as it uses many of the same methods as social science (see section 5.2.1). With a few exceptions, all the center stories are investigative. Moreover, as many as 14 stories are based upon large numbers of source documents. Of these, a majority can be labelled data journalism, meaning that the reporters use numerical data in databases as their primary news material (Gynnild, 2014, p. 719). Workshop alumna Alexia

Campbell, for instance, recalls going through “hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of cases”, before coding the most relevant ones and putting the information in a spreadsheet (interview September 23, 2014). While more than 90 percent of the center stories are investigative, about a third make direct use of social science methods. In addition, most of the stories are original, which means that new facts and “truths” are revealed by the centers. The majority of the stories also seem to be critical, impartial and proportional – as 38 of 40 stories contain disagreements or conflicts and none of the conflict-oriented stories represents only one viewpoint. Although the level of “truth” is hard to measure, the centers do in other words seem to use a number of methods and strategies, heightening the possibility of getting as close to the truth as possible.

The third quality criterion following from the definition – that the press needs to be accountable, have a dialogue with citizens, and be modest towards its own weaknesses – is harder to detect. A majority of the stories have comment fields where the public can give their opinion. Additionally, the interviewees seem very aware of the many possible mistakes that can be made when reporting and thus stress the importance of professional routines and practices (see section 6.1). At the same time, the centers seem to initiate the majority of their stories themselves. Dzur (2008) encourages “public listening”, where reporters meet with citizens in order to find out what is of concern in a community (p. 144). However, the in-depth interviews, the observation, and the content analysis do not indicate that the centers use much energy facilitating public engagement or decision.

The fourth quality criterion – that the centers are critical to power – does seem to be fulfilled. As previously stated, 95 percent of the stories include conflicts or accusations. The accused – without exception – are powerful people or groups. In “Rape in the Fields” (story number B6), landowners and supervisors are for instance accused of taking advantage of vulnerable migrant women. In “Firestone and the Warlord” (story number B1), both the rubber tire company Firestone and the U.S. government are accused of valuing profits over the wellbeing of Liberian civilians. In “The Cost of D.C. Council’s Power over Contracts” (story number A6), the

Washington, D.C. Council is accused of favoring contractors who give large campaign contributions. In fact, the majority of the stories focus on social issues, politics, and economics – where powerful people or organizations are accused of causing or neglecting various societal problems.

The fifth and last quality criterion – that the stories should be meaningful, relevant and engaging – also seems to be fulfilled. While only a few stories can be described as “literary journalism”, highlighting the narrative style of the reporting (Zelizer, 2004, p. 133), 80 percent of the stories contain some level of person-focus. Additionally, half of the stories involve observations and scenes. In addition to being effective verification methods, both observation- and person-focus are known to evoke emotional responses – and thus increase the audiences’ involvement in a story (Schudson, 2008, p. 18; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013, pp. 3-4).<sup>234</sup>

Of other story-telling elements, all the center stories can, as previously mentioned, be labeled multimedia. Moreover, 19 of the stories can be considered examples of complex multimedia, as they combine two or more of the elements of text, video, audio and graphics. In nearly half of the stories, therefore, the public can enter the stories in multiple ways. Empirical evidence regarding multimedia effects on users has however, as (Tran, 2015) puts it, “been mixed and scanty” (p. 51). While most research shows that adding more complex multimedia makes news sites more appealing to news audiences (Appiah, 2006; Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Tran, 2015), “adding more ‘bells and whistles’ does not always translate into more positive outcomes” (Tran, 2015, p. 63). Some research even shows that multimedia reporting can cause distraction, as the public’s cognitive system risks being bombarded with too much extra information (Sundar, 2000, p. 493). Hence, it is uncertain whether the use of multimedia actually helps the center stories become more meaningful, relevant and engaging. The use of multimedia does however seem to make the stories more appealing.

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<sup>234</sup> When studying Pulitzer Prize-winning stories, Wahl-Jorgensen (2013) actually found that a majority relied heavily on emotional story-telling, using techniques like delayed leads, human interest details, realistic dialogues, and scene-by-scene reconstructions (p. 5). Hence, the centers’ use of scenes and persons seems to be a storytelling technique that is highly regarded by the profession.

There are also some parts of the findings, however, that point in the direction opposite to that of quality journalism. The center stories, for instance, are highly U.S. oriented, with only three stories having a mainly global focus. To some scholars this is a sign of lesser quality, as “we live in a more global world today” (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009, p. 86). Additionally, the centers have, as previously mentioned, been accused of being both traditional and elitist-oriented. Before concluding whether the centers can be said to produce quality journalism or not, it is thus necessary to discuss the topics of elitism, traditionalism, and impact (doing good).

### **Elite orientation**

Not anchoring the reporting in the public interest can, as previously shown, lead to legitimacy issues. Despite this, there are many signs of the centers being highly elite-oriented. Seventy-five percent of the centers’ total number of oral and written sources are elite sources. Additionally, 64 percent of the classified oral sources are male. Although this study defines “elite” quite broadly as “politicians, leaders, experts/professionals, and other persons at the top of their field” (see Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, for further details), 75 percent is a quite large proportion. If seeing news as a manifestation of the collective cultural codes of journalists, and not a reflection of the events in the world “out there” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 73), the high number of elite sources can point towards a high degree of elite-orientation.

In addition to sources, the variables “soft news/hard news” and “focus on person(s)” can also be used as indicators of elite orientation. As previously mentioned, soft news has traditionally been connected to tabloidization and ‘infotainment’, and personalization has been one of the main hallmarks of tabloid reporting. And while hard news has traditionally been found in elite-oriented “quality” papers, soft news has been connected to tabloid papers read by ordinary citizens (Allern, 2001, p. 26). Hence, a compound variable, consisting of three “elitist” criteria was used. If a story 1) mainly consisted of elite sources<sup>235</sup>, 2) was considered hard news, and 3) had a non-existing, low, or medium person focus – it was considered highly elitist-oriented.

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<sup>235</sup> Two thirds or more. See more details under variable 36 in Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”.

Following from this, as many as 22 of the stories were considered highly elitist-oriented. Moreover, 14 of the 40 stories were classified as “slightly elitist-oriented”, fulfilling two out of three elitism criteria. In comparison, only four stories were classified as popular-oriented – fulfilling one or less of the elitist criteria.<sup>236</sup>

Following from the above, 90 percent of the center stories seem to be elitist or slightly elitist oriented. This correlates with the findings in section 6.1.2, where the interviewees seem to share the values of the participatory democracy. Although perceiving citizens as active subjects with opportunities and responsibilities to change what needs to be changed, the public sphere is not viewed as an arena for emphasizing political deliberative discussions (Strömbäck, 2005, pp. 335-340). Both the in-depth interviews and the content analysis thus imply that the centers represent an elite-oriented professional view, inspired by the procedural and competitive democracy model. In this, they seem to resemble the production of the journalism profession in general. Over the years, a broad literature on media representation has stated that the mainstream media is elite-oriented – and therefore contribute to the reproduction of power (Thorbjørnsrud & Ustad Figenschou, 2016, p. 340). One of the first studies of media sourcing found for instance that about half of the front-page sources in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were government officials (Sigal, 1973). Later, many have described the relationship between official sources and news media as a “tug of war” or “tango dance”, where publicity is traded for high-level access and story information (Davis, 2009, p. 205; Gans, 1980). In addition, several studies show that official elite sources are regarded as more credible and authoritative than ordinary sources. Hence, favoring elite sources can be perceived as an effective way of achieving balanced and truthful reporting (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009, p. 77). Both credibility and mutual benefit can thus explain the overreliance on elite sources of the centers in particular and the press in general.

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<sup>236</sup> Interestingly enough, two of the four popular-oriented stories were among the seven award-winning stories in the selection. This means that 50 percent of the popular-oriented stories won awards, compared to only 14 percent of the elitist or slightly elitist-oriented stories. Hence, although rare, it seems that the popular-oriented center stories are highly appreciated by the journalism profession. This correlates with Wahl-Jørgensen (2013), finding that a majority of Pulitzer Prize-winning stories rely heavily on emotional story-telling.



Another explanation of the centers' elite-orientation can, ironically, be their specialization in investigative reporting. According to Schudson (2008), the features that most regularly "enable the press to maintain a capacity for subverting established power" are the focus on events, the fixation on conflict, cynicism towards politics and politicians, and alienation from the communities they cover (p. 50). Although being conflict-oriented, the centers do not focus on an event-centered discourse. Not being "more responsive to accidents and explosions in the external world than to fashions in ideas among cultural elites" (Schudson, 2008, p. 55), they thus diverge from the general media industry – lacking the "recurrent anarchic potential" of journalism, established through the "preoccupation with unpredictable events" that "keeps something uncontrollable at the forefront of journalism" (Schudson, 2008, p. 56). Because they are not covering day-to-day news, the centers do in other words risk becoming more elite-oriented than "regular" newsrooms. Moreover, the center reporters can be described as part of the elite themselves. More often than not, journalists can be said to operate within "conventional bounds of opinion that are common among a largely secular, college-educated upper middle class" (Schudson, 2008, p. 51). This description would probably fit the center reporters well. In addition to being connected to some of the most renowned journalism schools in the U.S., they are also conducting "journalism of the highest order", and forming partnerships with some of the largest and most prestigious newsrooms in the U.S. In many ways, the editorial staff of the centers can thus be named the elite of the journalism profession. Hence, the centers can be described as both "high level advisers to elites" and "elites in their own right" (Dzur, 2008, p. 6). This can, as previously mentioned, be problematic for several reasons. First, it limits "the range of opinion to which the general public is exposed" (Schudson, 2008, p. 52). Second, experts – like any class of rulers – are likely to ultimately "speak for their own private interest rather than for the public interest" (Schudson, 2008, p. 109). Third, the elitist orientation can make it harder to operate as an independent "fourth estate".

### **Traditionalism**

How traditional is the center reporting? As previously mentioned, many see the professional nonprofit "movement" as overly traditionalist, with the goal of

producing “old school journalism driven by old school rules” (Konieczna, 2014, p. 39). This can be a risk as more innovation-oriented groups might claim jurisdiction over news.

According to Gynnild (2014), innovation means cognitive expansion, and dealing with changing values as well as changing thought systems (p. 717). Innovation can in other words be described as an orientation to change, where old values can be replaced with newer, more relevant orientations (Mensing & Ryfe, 2013, pp. 6-7). Most often, journalistic innovation seems to imply the use of new technology in presentation or reporting (Deuze, 2004; Gynnild, 2014; Lassila-Merisalo & Uskali, 2011; Rogers & Rogers, 2003; Steensen, 2010). Hence, the centers’ use of multimedia and data journalism can be described as innovative approaches. As previously mentioned, 35 percent of the 40 selected stories are based upon large numbers of documents. Additionally, all of the stories utilize two or more media formats – and can thus be described as multimedia (Deuze, 2004, p. 140). However, at the same time, 36 out of the 40 stories have text as their primary media component, and as many as 27 stories can be described as traditional “print stories”, consisting of text, images and graphics.

The fact that text is the main media component in 90 percent of the stories can have multiple causes. As described in Chapter 2, the main supplier of professionally reported accountability news has always been newspapers (Jones, 2009, pp. 14-15). Hence, it might be natural for investigative reporters to write and cooperate with newsrooms mainly using text. Additionally, producing text requires fewer resources than producing video or audio. This may be the reason why the smallest center (the New England CIR) and the only teaching-oriented center (the Stabile Center) uses text most frequently. As mentioned, the Stabile Center has no employees producing stories – and using video or audio can prove too difficult for students with very limited production time. In some cases, the over-use of text also seems to be caused by the centers’ publishing partners. Two New England CIR stories for instance have video, audio or graphics connected to them on the center’s webpage but, when published by the Worcester *Telegram & Gazette*, only text and stills are included.

Because of the preferences of their partners, the centers might thus appear more text-oriented than they really are.<sup>237</sup>

From the above, the centers seem to be medium-innovation-oriented. Moreover, they all rely upon traditional news sources: representatives from the male elite. Some however see the nonprofit model that the centers are part of as innovation in itself. Both the collaborative incentives and working across established disciplines can be labeled as innovative, as newsrooms have traditionally operated as competing businesses (Gynnild, 2014, p. 725; Konieczna, 2014). The centers' role as "hubs", connecting journalism schools to the practice field (see Chapter 4), can for instance be an example of the former walls between academics and practitioners breaking down. From this perspective, the centers seem to be more innovative than their apparent favoring of traditional "print stories" might imply.

### **The impact of the center stories**

As described in section 6.1.1, a majority of the interviewees relate quality journalism to positive effects. If society is exposed to quality reporting, something will allegedly change for the better. To the centers, it is important to measure this "journalism effect" or "impact", as all positive attention and "doing good" will increase the chances of new partnerships, revenue streams and sponsors (see section 5.1.3). It is however hard to agree upon what effects to measure – and how (Holcomb, 2013). As described by Zelizer (2004), media effect can be "small or large, limited or strong, short term or long term, direct or indirect, intended or unintended, latent or manifest" (p. 61). To most nonprofits, the overall goal is, as put by Robert Rosenthal at The Center for Investigative Reporting, to document that the stories "lead to changes in legislation, changes in law", and "big debate around the subject" (interview November 13. 2014).

Due to the complexity of the term, measuring the full impact of all the center stories is not within the limits of this study. It is however possible to give some examples. Nine months after the publication of the Workshop/*Washington Post* story "Doing

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<sup>237</sup> As previously explained, only centers stories published by external newsrooms are part of the content analysis.

well by doing good: The high price of working in war zones” (story number A1), the U.S. Agency for International Development announced that it had suspended International Relief and Development (IRD)– one of its largest nonprofit contractors. According to the *Washington Post*, many of the allegations against IRD were built upon the *Washington Post* investigation. The newsroom had for instance revealed that IRD had provided “lavish salaries and millions in bonuses to its employees, including the husband-and-wife team who ran the organization, as well as their family members” (Higham & Rich, 2015).

Another example is the previously mentioned IRP Berkeley/*Frontline*/Center for Investigative Reporting production “Rape in the Fields” (story number B6). When analyzing the impact of the story, The Center for Investigative Reporting<sup>238</sup> found that the California Senate had since passed a bill that would revoke a farm-labor contractor’s license if they had hired a supervisor who had sexually harassed workers in the past three years. Moreover, an advocacy organization for victims of sexual assault changed its opening hours, as it was realized that it was impossible for agricultural workers to take advantage of their services during normal business hours. Additionally, more than 50 individuals had contacted the members of the reporting team to say they found the story “moving, infuriating and inspiring (Green-Barber, n.d.). Hence, the story had led to both structural and individual change.

As previously discussed, both potential audience numbers, citations and awards can also be indicators of impact. Reaching a large audience, with 40 percent of the stories being cited, and winning prestigious awards thus adds to the centers’ “journalism effect”. The centers’ somewhat modest production can therefore be said to have measurable impact.

### **6.2.3 Quality reporting or treatment failure?**

Following from the above, the center productions seems to involve signs of both high and low quality. As summarized in Table 6, the indicators of high-quality reporting

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<sup>238</sup> The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) is one of the nonprofits that has focused the most on impact-tracking. In 2013 CIR hired a “media impact analyst” to develop the “CIR Impact Tracker” (Green-Barber, 2015). In 2016 the open-source version, available to any organization, was launched (Green-Barber, 2016).

however appear to characterize the substantial majority. It is thus possible to conclude that the centers *are* actually producing quality reporting as defined by the profession itself. The reporting is not, however, flawless. In particular, the critique of traditional journalism being overly elitist-oriented seems to correspond with the findings of the content analysis. Moreover, it is actually possible that the centers are *more* elitist-oriented than the “average” newsroom, as investigative reporting lacks the “anarchic potential” of unpredictable events; and the centers can also be said to represent the professional elite.

Table 6. Indicators of high and low quality in the centers reporting. N=40.

<i>High quality indicators</i>	<i>Low quality indicators</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centers are cooperating with some of the most renowned newsrooms in the U.S.</li> <li>• Seven of the 40 analyzed stories had won prestigious journalistic awards.</li> <li>• 40 percent of the stories had been cited by non-collaborating news outlets.</li> <li>• The stories produced were of substantial size.</li> <li>• The average story consisted of more than 30 specified sources.</li> <li>• 45 percent of the stories referred to the use of source groups.</li> <li>• 80 percent of the stories focused on democratically relevant topics, like social issues, politics, and business/economy.</li> <li>• 90 percent of the stories were hard news.</li> <li>• More than 90 percent of the stories were investigative.</li> <li>• About one third of the stories were data journalism.</li> <li>• 90 percent of the stories were exclusive or had an exclusive twist.</li> <li>• 95 percent of the stories contained some level of conflict.</li> <li>• In all the conflict-oriented stories, more than one viewpoint was represented.</li> <li>• 80 percent of the stories contained some level of person-focus.</li> <li>• Half of the stories involved observations and scenes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only three stories had a mainly global focus.</li> <li>• The majority of the stories seemed to be initiated by the centers themselves.</li> <li>• 75 percent of the specified sources were elite sources.</li> <li>• 64 percent of the classified oral sources were male sources.</li> <li>• 90 percent of the stories could be classified as highly or slightly elitist-oriented.</li> </ul>

How well the allegation of the nonprofit “movement” being overly traditionalist is borne out by the findings is however more debatable. Both the centers’ use of multimedia, data journalism and the nonprofit model itself can be described as innovative. At the same time, 68 percent of the stories produced resemble traditional "print stories". The last of the four questions outlined in the beginning of this section,

about how much impact the centers seem to have, does however seem easier to answer. Both potential audience numbers and the number of awards and citations indicate that the centers' impact is high – especially compared to the level of production.

### 6.3 Small, but influential “standard bearers”

When asked about IRP Berkeley's role in saving and developing quality journalism, producer Andrés Cediél answers: “I think we think about ourselves as, what's the word, you know the term ‘standard bearers’? I think that's what we hope to be” (interview November 13. 2014).

To succeed as “standard bearers”, or custodians of journalistic ideals, the centers, as previously discussed, need to fulfill two main requirements. First, they must convince society of the importance of journalistic work. Second, they must show that members of the journalism profession have special skills and knowledge (Folkerts, 2014, p. 228).

Starting with the first criterion, the interviewees have been shown as effectively connecting journalistic work to one of the most important tasks in a democracy: providing citizens with essential societal information (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 332). In addition, many of the interviewees highlight journalism's “watchdog” or “fourth estate” role when describing quality journalism as reporting that reveals information that those in power sought to hide. The centers are thus contributing to the building of a heroic journalist image, known to be a powerful component in journalistic ideology (see Chapter 2). According to Petersson (1996), the worst that can happen according to this ideology is that those in power are left alone with the innocent people. Hence, the interviewees' quality definitions seem to place the press firmly within the political structure – as intermediaries between the citizens and the state (Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 880). In addition to connecting journalistic work to the cultural value of democracy, the interviewees are in other words supporting an ideology that constitutes journalism as one of society's most important and powerful professions. Through the ideals of the interviewees, the centers thus seem to fulfill the first requirement of “standard bearers”.

Another factor that can strengthen the jurisdiction of the journalism profession is that the interviewees' professional identity seems to coincide strongly with the common occupational ideology of the profession – thus making the profession's identity stronger. As already demonstrated, a strong common ideology is seen as a central part of a profession's "internal force", which in turn is seen as the most important tool in the constant "turf battle" with other occupations.

The centers also seem to fulfill the second requirement of "standard bearers", showing that the members of the profession have special skills and knowledge. Through producing stories that require knowledge of complicated journalistic methods, time, resources and communication expertise, in addition to knowledge of the reported issues and knowledge of society in general, the centers demonstrate that their work cannot be easily replicated by the lay public. In addition, the centers' production actually seems to resemble journalism's professional ideals. Hence, the centers are not contributing to the "treatment failure" said to mark the news industry in general (see Chapter 2). Instead, their production appears to strengthen the jurisdiction of journalists over quality news reporting.

The centers also have features known to influence professionalism in a negative manner. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, there is a thin line between seeing professionalism as an ideology developed to serve a public good and an ideology developed in order to serve the private interests of an occupational group. The interviewees' lack of emphasis on citizen involvement when defining quality journalism and the elite-orientation of the center stories can thus strengthen the image of the press as elite-oriented. This can – as described by several academics – lead to mistrust and loss of legitimacy. If the elite-orientation becomes too dominant, journalists risk losing their image as providers of public good. Ultimately, this can lead to sanctions like withdrawal of licenses and public funding, new legislation, and audience flight (Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 883).

Being too traditional can also lead to negative professional impact. As with all other professions, journalism needs to find the right balance between renewal and preservation of traditional core values. If too traditionally oriented, the profession

risks becoming outdated and replaced. If too oriented towards change, the profession can lose both identity and legitimacy. Some scholars have accused nonprofits of being too reactionary. The findings of this study however indicate that the centers have found a balance between tradition and change, as they focus on classic journalistic quality aspects like truth, new information and effect and at the same time experiment with new media models, multimedia and data journalism. While adapting in form and style, the centers are in other words fulfilling their social contract by producing accurate information on behalf of the citizens. From this perspective, the production of “old school journalism driven by old school rules” can be an effective way of distinguishing journalism from other parts of the communication field. As long as the centers keep on adapting to the most essential social, cultural and technological change, the traditional orientation can thus strengthen the identity and legitimacy of the journalism profession.

Following from the above, the *character* of the ideals and the production of the four centers appear to give them a strong jurisdiction-strengthening potential, and thus a strong potential as professional platforms. Due to their small size, how much influence the centers *actually* can be said to have is up for discussion. On the one hand, their production is small. Instead of day-to-day reporting, the four centers’ combined produce about 40 big, high-quality stories a year. From a professional perspective, this is a microscopic contribution.<sup>239</sup> On the other hand, the center productions potentially reach a large audience. In addition, they receive a lot of attention through citations and awards. Most of the centers’ stories also seem to represent a prototype of quality reporting: “good investigative reporting”. This gives the productions high symbolic value. As previously stated, the advantage journalists have as ideology producers is that only a small amount of good journalism is needed for it to be effective (Eide, 1992, p. 31). Hence, it might not be the number of center stories but the *quality* of the stories produced that is the most important ideology-building factor. Following from this, the centers can be described as strong legitimacy builders. In addition, the centers’ role as educators – forming the next generation of

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<sup>239</sup> As the production of most other nonprofits, the reporting conducted by the four university centers of this study can be said to be a *supplement* to journalism in general (Konieczna & Robinson, 2014, p. 972).



reporters – gives them substantial professional influence (see discussion in Chapter 7). In spite of their size, the centers can thus be described as central “standard bearers”.

## 6.4 Views upon the future of investigative reporting

According to Zelizer (2004), an existential angst permeates conversations about journalism’s viability. On any given day, she claims, close to 300 titles of newsletters, columns, professional roundtables and symposia contemplate “The End of Journalism” (p. 204). From this perspective, it is interesting that the interviewees of this study appear to have no angst at all. When asked if they see a future for investigative reporting, they all answer “yes”. In the following, the interviewees’ three main arguments for being optimistic are presented as a short intermezzo before the centers’ classroom role is discussed in Chapter 7.

### 6.4.1 High symbolic value = marketing potential

The main reason for the interviewees’ optimism seems to be strongly connected to the high symbolic value of investigative reporting discussed in section 6.3. Scott Allen, editor of the *Boston Globe* Spotlight Team, puts it like this:

For us, it is certainly, when the year is over, the investigative reporting we do is often the stuff that we are boasting about. It is the stuff that we can market. And I think that that sort of gives it a future. (Interview March 13. 2015)

Sheila Coronel, director of the Stabile Center, highlights the same “marketing potential” when claiming that large, well-funded news organizations will keep prioritizing investigative reporting, as it brings in prestige, Pulitzer prizes, power and influence “that they otherwise would not have” (interview January 26. 2014). News outlets portraying themselves as providers of a public good (quality reporting), supporting and producing the prototype<sup>240</sup> of quality reporting (investigative reporting) – can in other words be an efficient way of building symbolic capital. Following from this, several of the interviewees see the decline in investigative reporting during the journalism crisis as a “market failure”. Today, this failure is

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<sup>240</sup> See section 6.1.1.

about to be corrected, they claim, as business owners, media owners, and philanthropists have rediscovered the value of investigative reporting. Thus, “major publications like *BuzzFeed* starting investigative units”, “statewide investigative news sites cropping up left and right”, the increase in “cross-border investigative reporting”, and the steadily growing nonprofit investigative journalism sector are listed as signs of the positive development (A. D’Eramo interview March 9. 2015; J. Schaffer interview October 17. 2014; J. Mintz interview January 29. 2015; J. Hunt interview January 27. 2015; S. Coll interview January 29. 2015).

Instead of investigative reporting disappearing, the main concern of some of the interviewees actually seems to be that part of the media industry is misusing the term. Sarah Cohen, editor for computer-assisted reporting in the *New York Times* puts it like this: “It’s almost like we have to recapture our own brand because so many people are saying they’re doing investigative journalism and they’re not. And so then it gets a bad name” (interview January 30. 2015). As investigative reporting has a high symbolic value, parts of the news industry are claiming to conduct investigative reporting, although the quality of the reporting – according to the interviewees – is not good enough. Reporter at the New England CIR, Beth Daley, for instance, worries that investigative journalism will get a bad reputation as some reporters “overstate things that are not as bad as they say they are” (interview March 9. 2015). If too many outlets produce “low quality reporting” as investigative reporting, the symbolic value of the term might be threatened.

Instead of worrying about the future of investigative reporting, several of the interviewees seem concerned about the vigor of important quality journalism with lower symbolic value – like international reporting and local reporting. Steve Coll, dean at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, states that the journalism crisis has led to a clear decline in American-originated international reporting and in “the number of reporters paying attention to local hearings and decision-making” without the philanthropy and the public “stepping up”. One reason might be that these forms of reporting lack “the romanticism of investigative reporting in the public mind” (interview January 29. 2015). As international reporting and local reporting has a

lower symbolic value than investigative reporting, the market value is lower – which in turn can lead to a more insecure future.

#### **6.4.2 The main task of journalism has not disappeared**

The second main reason for the interviewees' positive view upon the future seems to be their strong belief in the societal role of investigative reporting. As stated in section 2.1.2, the main reason for professions to disappear is that their professional task disappears (Abbott, 1988, p. 91). The interviewees, however, believe that there is a continuing need for “true, new and effectively communicated information changing society for the better”<sup>241</sup>, and that investigative reporting is the best method for providing this information. Rick Young, producer at the PBS *Frontline*, does for instance state that “there’s a thirst and there will continue to be a thirst for in-depth analysis of things that are happening around us” (interview October 28. 2014).

Several of the other interviewees also use the “public thirst” as an argument for investigative reporting having a bright future. Susanne Reber, executive editor at The Center for Investigative Reporting, claims that various researches continuously confirm that the audience has “a lot of appetite for deeply reported stuff”. “The audience hasn’t said they don’t want quality”, she states (interview November 12. 2014). David Donald, data editor at the Workshop, puts it like this: “Every readership or viewership survey ever taken will tell you that the majority of readers and viewers and listeners expect us to be doing investigative reporting. They want it. That’s what they turn to for news reports” (interview October 21. 2014). Following from this, many emphasize that the “journalism crisis” was a result of the *business model* of journalism failing. Journalism itself has always stood strong, they claim. Thomas Fiedler, dean at Boston University's College of Communication, is one of the interviewees holding this view:

People confuse journalism with the media business. [...] Journalism is basically information that is gathered with a purpose in mind. It conveys

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<sup>241</sup> The interviewees own definition of quality reporting. See section 6.1.1 for details.

meaningful information, and it does it on a foundation of ethical behavior. [...]

And people are still going to want that. (Interview March 13. 2015)

Although the media landscape is changing, with some part of the media business struggling, journalism will continue to exist in one form or another, a majority of the interviewees claim. Jan Schaffer, executive director of J-Lab, The Institute for Interactive Journalism at American University, for instance states that “metro newspapers are [not] going to be around much longer”. This does not however mean that quality reporting will cease to exist, as national investigative news sites are “cropping up all over the place”, and new startups like *Vox* and *Vice* are “doing very high-end journalism” (interview October 17. 2014). Emma Schwartz, associate producer with PBS *Frontline*, summarizes the situation as follows: “I’m not sure that there’s a good economic model at this point, but I think it’s important and will continue in some form or another” (interview October 22. 2014). It is in other words the *profession of journalism* that is perceived to have a bright future, not necessarily the current media companies/business models. Hence, the interviewees seem to make the same distinction as Abbott (1988) (see section 1.2): Although many professions are identified by their organizational location, the work organizations involved are often controlled by groups outside the profession (p. 80). Therefore, the profession does not equal the news industry but, rather, the editorial staff of various news outlets and the staff at worksites maintaining and furthering the professional knowledge of journalism (the academic settings, journals, research institutes, etc.). As a result, the news industry vanishing is not the same as the journalism profession vanishing, as the profession can adapt to new business models/organizational forms. This finding corresponds with previous research, suggesting that journalists identify themselves more easily with the profession of journalism than with the medium or media company that employs them (Russo, 1998).

#### **6.4.3 Investigative reporting as a “secular calling”**

The third main reason for the interviewees’ optimism, like the two previous reasons, is also closely linked to the strong normative orientation of investigative reporting. To many of the interviewees, investigative reporting seems to represent a “secular

calling” (see section 2.1.2). Hence, they find meaning in – and base their identity upon – performing their work as well as possible (Freidson, 2007, pp. 110-122). Because of this calling, several of the interviewees seem to believe that investigative reporting is going to survive, regardless of weakened structural conditions. As some of them put it: “I think that as long as the desire is there, there’s a way” (C. Germani interview March 9. 2015). “When people want a way to do it, they find a way to do it” (S. Cohen interview January 30. 2015). “I think whether people are paying attention or not, whether they get paid or not, I think they’ll want to do it” (J. Sullivan interview September 29. 2014). Emma Schwartz, associate producer with PBS *Frontline*, states that the main reason for her career choice is the feeling of “working on something that could make a difference”. Because of this she is “willing to deal with the trade-off”, namely the “instability and the economics”<sup>242</sup>. As she puts it: “I’d rather do something that I’m happier doing” (interview October 22. 2014). Schwartz and other investigative reporters thus seem to resemble the public-spirited altruist “knights” from section 2.1.2, motivated by internal factors such as professional duty and the concern for welfare – and not by external motivation such as financial gain, promotion and job security (LeGrand, 2010, pp. 57-59). Hence, investigative reporters might not give up their “calling” easily. This might in turn make investigative reporting more tenacious.

According to the interviewees, the willingness to fight for a “greater good” is one of the reasons why so many new ownership and financing models have emerged in the aftermath of the “journalism crisis”. As discussed in section the introduction, more than 120 nonprofit newsrooms were established during or after the financial crisis of 2008/2009 (Mitchell et al., 2013). Universities, nonprofits, and university nonprofits are seen as part of this picture, where various independent efforts together make a big network supporting investigative reporting. Director of the Stabile Center, Sheila Coronel, puts it like this:

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<sup>242</sup> As described in section 4.2.3, Schwartz is part of a production-team based at American University, collaborating with *Frontline* on a project-by-project basis. Therefore, the team does not always know what their next project is going to be – or whether there is going to be a project at all.

Universities will not save investigative reporting or journalism, but they're part of a larger piece. There will be many different ways in which people will try to do their best to make investigative reporting flourish. Nonprofits are another piece of that. (Interview January 26. 2015)

As shown in section 5.1.1, obtaining enough funding to run the many new outlets and nonprofits is, however, challenging. Hence, although generally optimistic, many of the interviewees seem to worry about the sustainability of the new network. As a result, some go to the – at least in American eyes – drastic step of suggesting public financing.<sup>243</sup> Lowell Bergman, director of the IRP Berkeley, for instance, states that investigative reporting is providing a public good, just like “the fire department, the ambulance or the police when they’re doing their thing”. From this perspective, he thinks that investigative reporting financed by “public money” might be a tolerable solution (interview November 10. 2014). Sheila Coronel of the Stabile Center also sees government- or public funding as a possible solution. As she puts it: “Maybe it’s time to have a real debate on whether journalism funded by the government can be independent, and if so, what safeguards can be built to insure journalistic autonomy (Coronel, 2013).

From the above, one can conclude that the strong normative aspect and the high symbolic value of investigative reporting might serve as a safety net. At the same time, it is impossible to live on norms and values alone. Hence, the question of financing seems to lurk under the optimistic surface. Moreover, many of the interviewees state that it is impossible for the nonprofit model to conduct “all investigative reporting”. There is, in David Donald’s words “too much work to be done (interview October 21. 2014). As a result, none of the interviewees seems to believe that the nonprofit sector, as it is structured today, represents *the* solution to the journalism crisis – securing investigative reporting for the future. They do however seem convinced that there will be a solution and that the investigative

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<sup>243</sup> As described in section 2.2.3, American journalism is dominated by liberal principles. Hence, any form of external control or regulation is seen as a possible threat to the freedom of expression (Sjøvaag, 2010, p. 877).

nonprofits, focusing on professional norms and values, represent a step in the right direction.

*The only way to learn investigative reporting is to do it.  
But doing it is always more productive if you have a guide.*

Lowell Bergman, director at the IRP Berkeley

## **7. The centers' classroom role**

Having discussed two of the central components of professionalism – autonomy (Chapter 5) and social responsibility (Chapter 6) – this chapter will take a closer look at the centers in connection with the third and final central element of the ideal-typical profession: professional knowledge (Dzur, 2008, p. 45). More precisely, the aim is answering the fifth and last sub-question: *What characterizes the centers' knowledge base and teaching methods?*

As shown in Chapter 4, the university centers of this study can be described as hybrids: partly newsrooms and partly classrooms. As newsrooms, their main task is producing quality journalism. As classrooms, however, one of their key responsibilities is educating the next generation of investigative reporters. In addition, all professional education has the potential of housing the function of knowledge advancement and legitimating the work of the profession (Abbott, 1988, pp. 195-196). Following from this, this chapter consists of three main parts. The first two examine how the different centers are fulfilling their “classroom” role. First, what are the interviewees' ideals of knowledge and teaching? Second, how is the actual teaching conducted? The third and last part connects the centers' classroom role to their potential as professional platforms, discussing how the knowledge base and teaching models of the four centers can affect a) learning, b) knowledge development, and c) legitimacy building. As stated by Eric Allen in Chapter 2, for journalism to become a “real profession” and not just a “mere trade and a technique”, the journalism curriculum has to be “based upon some depth of understanding” (as cited in Folkerts, 2014, p. 238). What kind of knowledge this “depth of understanding” should consist of can however – as later shown – be discussed.



## 7.1 Ideals of knowledge and teaching

### 7.1.1 The ideal knowledge base

A professional can be described as one who makes a claim to extraordinary knowledge in matters of great human importance (Schön, 1988, p. 32). As shown in Chapter 2, there has been great disagreement about what the “extraordinary knowledge” of the journalism profession is – or should be. Educators have not agreed upon the relationship between theory and practice, between academic and professional, the role of teaching and research, and corporate influence over that of academia (Reese, 1999, p. 70). There is, in other words, little agreement upon “an adequate university approach” (Folkerts, 2014, p. 278).

When asking the 55 students, reporters and faculty members of this study “what is the most important thing that journalism students must learn?” their answers seem to echo the above described tradition of ambiguity and extensiveness. A summary of the responses actually could be that journalism students need to know “everything”. As put by Workshop student Ke (Amber) Liu, a high quality journalist should have “tons of skillsets” (interview June 8. 2015).

When taking a closer look at the replies, it does however appear that they can be divided into three main groups: While the largest relate to what many of the interviewees label “basic reporting skills”, the other two circle around the special knowledge of investigative reporting and the learning of professional values.

#### **What students need to learn**

Starting with the broad group of “basic reporting skills”, the term seems to encompass three major skillsets: 1) being able to gather trustworthy and relevant information, 2) being capable of analyzing and organizing this information in the best possible way, and 3) conveying this information effectively to the public. Clara Germani, managing editor of the New England CIR, for instance, puts it like this: “Can you tell the story? Can you write it well? Can you ask the questions so you have the resources so that you can write it well?” (Interview March 9. 2015).

Although appearing simple and straightforward at first glance, all of the “basic” skillsets are however complex when studied in detail. Being able to gather trustworthy and relevant information does for instance include interview technique, how to develop good source relations, how to find information that people have sought to hide, how to be “curious about the right thing”, how to get public records, and how to collect and deal with large datasets (H. Mack interview November 11. 2014, J. Minz interview January 29. 2015, S. Cohen interview January 30. 2015, D. Donald interview October 21. 2014).

The second skillset, being able to analyze and organize the obtained information in the best possible way, seems even more complicated – and is described by several of the interviewees as the hardest and most important part of reporting. Clara Germani at the New England CIR, puts it like this: “You can have all the data you want, but if you don’t have the human to put it in context and really get a good story, it’s going to be dry and no-one’s going to be interested in it (interview March 9. 2015). The main reason why “putting the information in context” is perceived as hard appears to be that it requires both knowledge of society in general and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. As Wendell Cochran, co-founder of the Workshop, explains:

You should know something about math. You should know something about philosophy. You should know a lot about history. You should know how the government systems operate or how they’re supposed to operate. [...] I think you need a strong liberal arts education and experience the world. Students say: “Should I go straight to graduate school?” And I’ll say: “No, I don’t think you should. I think you should go bump up against the world for a while and figure out how things operate”. (Interview October 8. 2014)

When explaining why general and in-depth knowledge on the subject matter is important, it is for instance seen necessary in order to get “a solid, working understanding of what they’re reporting on”, “expose lies”, and “to understand what the story is” ( J. Huseman interview January 27. 2015, B. Daley interview March 9. 2015, L. Perri interview October 1. 2014). To the interviewees, knowledge and analyzing skills thus seem to be the foundation for developing story ideas, asking the

right questions, finding the most important information, and presenting the information in an understandable manner.

The third major skillset within the category, “basic reporting skills”, is the ability to convey knowledge to the public – most often referred to as the skill of storytelling. This skillset is, as described above, highly dependent upon knowledge and analyzing skills. In addition, the students must learn what elements are needed “to make the story work on different platforms” and “how to reach people” (R. Young interview October 28. 2014, S. Alecci interview January 26. 2015). They must also learn the technical skills of “audio, video and multimedia” through practicing “various software”, and how to write well (T. McGirk interview November 13. 2014, F. Kramer interview October 22. 2014).

As described above, a large group of interviewees also state that journalism students need to learn investigative reporting. The principles of investigative reporting, as discussed in section 2.2.2 and 6.1.1, seem to be very similar to the principles of quality journalism – except that they are “more of everything”. Hence, the learning of investigative reporting appears to contain the same elements as the learning of “basic reporting skills”, only in a more intensive form. To be able to conduct investigative reporting, the students must learn the most *advanced* forms of information gathering, analysis, and storytelling. In addition, many of the interviewees point to the importance of the students learning the investigative-reporting *mindset*. According to Sheila Coronel, director at the Stabile Center, this means learning “to be skeptical about the information”, “to be critical and rigorous”, “to be patient”, “to be creative in getting the information” and to “be brave” (interview January 26. 2015). Other interviewees describe the mindset as becoming “kind of semi-obsessed”, “absolutely passionate”, “to have a total drive and passion for it”, “to live for your work”, and “always be ready to be uncomfortable” (A. Campbell interview September 23. 2014, A. D’Eramo interview March 9. 2015, C. Chen interview September 22. 2014). As New England CIR student Andrea D’Eramo puts it: “It’s gonna be really hard, so you wouldn’t choose that battle unless it’s something you really want to do. [...] I don’t see how you can do it as just a job – it’s not a job (interview March 9. 2015).

According to several of the interviewees, learning to become an investigative reporter thus seems to involve both the adoption of a passion and an attitude.

Closely linked to the learning of an investigative mindset is the fourth and last group of responses relating to the teaching of professional values. Put in other words: What is it that make all the passionate hard work worthwhile? The teaching of these values involves getting the students “to understand that this is a public service that we’re doing and that it’s an honor and a privilege to be a part of it” (S. Higham interview October 2. 2014). To several of the interviewees, it is this learning of “how to be professionals” that makes journalism “more than the trade that we practice” (S. Higham interview October 2. 2014, W. Cochran interview October 8. 2014). Wendell Cochran, co-founder of the Workshop, explains:

Ok, I’ll get all high and mighty here. I think that journalism is truly a public track. And because of that, people have to understand a lot more than just “Well, what’s the best way to get the answer to this question?” You have to also be able to appreciate the sociological, the historical perspective. People have to understand that what you’re doing has connection to other things. (Interview October 8. 2014)

The teaching of professional values also includes professional ethics, such as “the rights of individuals, privacy, and safety”, and the “responsibilities to get things right, to be careful, to be honest, to be respectful of the institution, and to be respectful of the people that we write for” (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015, S. Higham interview October 2. 2014).

In addition to the “basic reporting skills” – which upon closer inspection are anything but basic – an ideal reporter must in other words possess general knowledge, knowledge of the subject matter, life experience, a special mindset, and an understanding of professional values.

### **Heterogeneous, fragmented, and practice-oriented**

As discussed in section 2.3.1, a knowledge base is homogeneous if all its elements originate from a single scientific discipline or a single field of knowledge, such as

physics, chemistry or biology. It is however heterogeneous if it is composed of elements from different scientific disciplines or fields of knowledge (Grimen, 2008a, p. 72). It is obvious that the interviewees' ideal professional knowledge is derived from multiple disciplines and fields. Starting with the "basic reporting skills", being able to gather trustworthy and relevant information can be said to be based upon communication skills (interview technique), psychological and interpersonal skills (the development of good source relations), data technical skills (how to find information sought hidden, and how to best organize large amounts of information), ethical and juridical knowledge (how to protect sources), and knowledge about politics and public administration (how to get public records). The second skillset involves being able to analyze and organize the obtained information, acquire general knowledge of subjects like math, philosophy, history, government systems and liberal arts. In addition, the reporter needs in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. This can be knowledge from any discipline or knowledge field, as reporters have to cover a wide range of topics during their career. Within the third skillset — the ability to effectively convey knowledge to the public — both technical skills and knowledge of various software are necessary. Moreover, a special set of skills is often needed for *each* publishing form, as many reporters are expected to produce audio, video and text for several distribution platforms (Beam et al., 2009; Pew Research Center, 2014). It is also perceived necessary that journalism students develop a special mindset, adopt professional values and ethics, and understand the role of the profession in society. Hence, the ideal-knowledge base of the interviewees also has a normative dimension, introducing the students to the profession's ideology. In sum, the knowledge base thus seems strongly heterogeneous, combining a myriad of different knowledge fields, in addition to professional values, norms and ethics.

The interviewees' knowledge base also appears to score high on fragmentation. As described in section 2.3.1, a knowledge base is heavily integrated if all parts are logically connected in a system. However, if it consists of few or no logical connections, it is highly fragmented (Grimen, 2008a, p. 72). From the above, the components of the "basic reporting skills" appear to range from technical data skills to general knowledge of liberal arts, with no detectable, overarching theories uniting

the knowledge fields. According to Zelizer (2009), this fragmentation is a typical feature of the journalistic knowledge base. Since journalism has traditionally been approached in “pockets” by the academic fields of sociology, history, language studies, political science, and cultural analysis, there has only been an examination of parts of journalism’s workings rather than its whole (p. 35). As a result, Zelizer claims, journalism scholars have yet to produce a coherent picture of what journalism is (p. 34).

Although extensive theory does not seem to integrate the various elements of the interviewees’ knowledge base (a theoretical synthesis), their preferred knowledge appears to be strongly united through a *practical* synthesis (Grimen, 2008a, p. 72). The various fields of knowledge – from data technical skills to general knowledge of liberal arts – seems to be selected in order to fulfill the professional task in the best possible manner. As described in section 6.1.1, the interviewees describe the journalistic aim as providing true, new and effectively communicated information, changing society for the better. In order to get hold of true and new information, both various information gathering skills and analyzing skills are seen as important. The student must for instance know how to ask questions, which questions to ask, and how to get hold of public records. In order to communicate efficiently, a proper interpretation and understanding of the gathered information is necessary, in addition to general communication skills and knowledge of different platform technology. To understand what “changing society for the better” means, students must incorporate professional values, norms and ethics. Moreover, as discussed in section 2.1.2, professional ideology can be seen as a “secular calling”, representing a modern source of meaning and identity (Freidson, 2007, pp. 110-122). Hence, the teaching of norms and values, such as the idea of journalism’s public-service role, might increase the chances of students seeing journalism as more than “just a job”. This might again increase the chances of them becoming “kind of semi-obsessed” and “absolutely passionate” about their work. The normative elements of the knowledge base might thus provide an effective way of making aspiring professionals perform at their best. This can in turn increase the profession’s chances of fulfilling its aim.

### 7.1.2 How journalism is best taught/learned

The ideal knowledge base of the interviewees seems to be both heterogeneous and fragmented. When asking them how journalism is best taught/learned, their answers are however anything but ambiguous: All appear to emphasize the importance of learning by doing. According to producer with *Frontline*, Rick Young, how to tell a story in a narrative form can only be learned by experience through “just being around it, seeing it, and [...] actually sit down, watch, and cut” (interview October 28. 2014). Maggie Mulvihill, co-founder of the New England CIR, puts it like this:

Reporters learn reporting by reporting. You have to do it. [...] You can teach some of the concepts like how to attribute, how to source information, how to use quotes. [...] But the actual doing – you have to do it. [...] But I don’t think there is any special magic to teaching it, let them work with you, and see how a story comes together and how it gets revised and edited. (Interview March 12. 2015)

In extension of the unanimous belief in learning by doing, many of the interviewees emphasize that learning theories in a classroom is far from sufficient. “I don’t really think that writing papers for a class does much for you in journalism” states Catherine Rentz, investigative reporter at the *Baltimore Sun* (interview October 6. 2014).

Patrick Madden, district reporter at WAMU, puts it like this: “While it’s great to learn a lot of theories of journalism and that sort of thing, I think the most important thing is experience” (interview October 20. 2014). The students also seem to favor practical over academic learning. According to IRP Berkeley scholar Jason Paladino, there was an “uproar” among the students when the Journalism School wanted to “get rid of” the school’s hyper-local news sites, and instead spend the time and energy teaching journalism law and ethics. As a result, the school had to abandon most of its plans. Paladino himself is not in doubt about what is more important:

I mean, you can analyze case studies and journalism as much as you want. But, like when you graduate, is that really going to help you that much? I’d rather know how to, like, you know, produce good-looking content and interesting

content and know how to construct a narrative and all of these more technical kind of skills. (Interview November 10. 2014)

When asked *why* journalism is best taught/learned by doing, most of the interviewees struggle somewhat with articulating their opinion clearly. Most do however point towards the value of experience. Workshop student Hoai-Tran Bui puts it like this: “You could probably learn, like, the same – not the same skills, but kind of the same, like, aspects of it, but not, like, the actual – I don't know how to say it – kind of the experience of going through it or something (interview September 26. 2014). Others are more specific, describing experience as learning how to confront and solve practical problems and challenges. According to John Sullivan, senior editor at the Workshop and investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*, it is impossible to “confront any of the problems that we confront at the *Post*” in the classroom as “it’s all theory in a classroom” (interview September 26. 2014). *Frontline* producer Rick Young states that “[y]ou need to do it a thousand of times or whatever and struggle with it and make all the mistakes you’re going to make and learn from it” (interview October 28. 2014). Following from this, several of the interviewees emphasize that students must be challenged and exposed to *real problem solving* on order to learn. Hence, they cannot be “babied” but need to go through “the rigors and the horror” of reporting (W. Cochran interview October 8. 2014, M. Baksh interview April 29. 2015). Several of the instructors also find that the students do not internalize what is taught in the classroom until it is applied. Lowell Bergman, director at the IRP Berkeley, has for instance sent students “back to the instructor who lectured them because they didn’t remember a word he said when they were in school”. This has led him to the conclusion that “it isn’t until you are actually engaged that you actually learn” (interview November 10. 2014).

From the above, the interviewees seem to look at practical learning, or learning by doing, as a way of achieving experience. Moreover, experience involving problem-solving appears to be especially valued, as this teaches students how to confront the “real world” problems of the profession. Through real-world problem-solving, the students also seem to “actually learn” what has been taught in the classroom. The



interviewees' perception of how to achieve practical knowledge therefore appears to have a lot in common with the "knowing-in-action" emphasized by practice-oriented scholars like Michael Polanyi, Patricia Benner, and Donald Schön. As described in section 2.3.2, they see experience as essential in the development of knowledge-in-action. Moreover, experience is only gained when "preconceived notions and expectations are challenged, refined, or disconfirmed by the actual situation" (Benner, 1984, p. 3). Summarized, the view of the interviewees thus seems to be: 1) Practical knowledge can only be learned through experience. 2) The only way of gaining experience and expertise is through facing and learning how to handle real world challenges.

Since building up the ability to handle "real world problems" appears central to the interviewees, it is tempting to ask why journalism should be taught at universities at all. As described in section 2.3.2, universities are known to prefer and advocate *theoretical* knowledge (Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 227).

When asked if they think journalism is better taught at universities or on the job, only a couple do however seem to prefer on-the-job training. There appears to be three main reasons why a university setting is preferred. First, although practical knowledge is seen as being most important within journalism education, theoretical knowledge is also perceived as essential. Second, in order to develop the best learning environment, it is important to keep a distance from the practice field. Third, the practice field no longer has the time or the resources to conduct training.

Dean at Columbia Journalism School, Steve Coll, is one of the interviewees emphasizing that educating journalists is more than "teaching them how to write in the format of a news story". The students also need to "think about how politics and international relations and science, and other great subjects that are taught and debated at the university, are changing or how they matter" (interview January 29, 2015). The theoretical knowledge of the university is especially important to investigative journalism, he claims:

It's not something that's out on the street with a siren wailing that you can just go be a witness to, as important as that kind of reporting can be. If you don't

know something about campaign finance laws, you're not going to be able to investigate political campaign giving in a serious way and come up with breakthrough stories. (Interview January 29. 2015)

Several of the interviewees also emphasize that the university traditions of research and critical thinking is highly relevant to the practice of journalism (see section 5.2). As put by data editor of the Workshop, David Donald, the foundation of journalism education “has to be that they learn to think for themselves, become critical thinkers, and that they have a capacity for lifelong learning (interview October 21. 2014).

The second argument in favor of university-based journalism education is that the distance from the practice field can create a better learning environment. Not surprisingly, this view is especially advocated by representatives from the Stabile Center. As described in section 4.2, the Stabile Center is the only one of the four centers defined as a *teaching* center rather than a producing center. Stabile director Sheila Coronel claims for instance that journalism programs with a close relationship to the news industry have to prioritize production – and when prioritizing production, students might end up “doing data entry or routine work for someone else's investigation” (interview January 26. 2015). Moreover, as the students’ work “needs to be pretty good” to be published, there would be little time left for classes. Close collaborations could thus end up becoming “a struggle between you and them over who controls the classroom experience”, where “student learning may be sacrificed (interview January 26. 2015). Dean Coll puts it like this:

Our first priority is to figure out what is the best way to teach them. And I think glorified internships where you're really placing students into someone else's model of endeavor, no matter how exciting [...], that's not the same thing as learning. You're carrying out a function that is serving someone else's purpose. (Interview January 29. 2015)

Thus, both Coll and Coronel see the purpose of the practice field as different from the purpose of journalism education.

The third argument, that the practice field no longer has the time or the resources to conduct training, is the most common of the three arguments. In particular, students with fresh experience from the news industry seem to advocate this view. Stable student Joshua Hunt, for instance, states that “no one had the time to take me by the hand and teach me how to do journalism”. At journalism school he did however experience learning “a lot of really important tools for investigative journalism that a lot of people don't know”, and skills that are “becoming more rare because of the economics of the news industry” (interview January 27. 2015). Stable student Jessica Huseman describes the learning opportunities in a “pretty well-respected financial publication in Dallas” like this:

There was no one in the newsroom telling me, "Oh, file a FOIA<sup>244</sup> for this information." Or, "Look at the Federal Election Commission for this information." "Click here and here and here." And so because nobody told me how to do that, I didn't know how to do that – and so I didn't. (Interview January 27. 2015)

As Sarah Cohen, the *New York Times*' computer assisted reporting editor, says: “We're hiring you because you have specific skills, not because you need anything (interview January 30. 2015).

According to several of the interviewees, investigative reporting can be particularly hard to learn on the job, as it is often more time consuming, resource demanding, and unpredictable than regular reporting. As a result, “there are fewer investigative reporters doing investigative work” (J. Sullivan interview September 26. 2014). Following from this, teaching students how to conduct investigative reporting has mainly become the task of journalism schools. Thomas Fiedler, dean at Boston University's College of Communication, sees it as “less and less likely” that the next generation of investigative reporters will gain experience through “the old kind of apprentice system inside a newsroom” (interview March 13. 2015). Hanna (2008)

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<sup>244</sup> FOIA is short for the Freedom of Information Act, the law meant to secure U.S. citizens access to information about their governments, schools, taxes and much more. Federal agencies are required to disclose any information requested under the FOIA unless it falls under one of nine exemptions. “Filing a FOIA” thus is the same as “filing a bunch of FOILs”, described in section 5.2.2.

seems to agree with this, calling universities “evangelists of the watchdog role”. There can be little doubt, he writes, “that corporate cost cutting (to ensure increased profit margins) in the nation’s regional and local press have made it even less likely over the last two decades for a young journalist to be encouraged to try investigations” (p. 158). In such a situation, “universities become essential in the transmission of the skills and public service values of investigative journalism” (p. 168).

According to the interviewees, there are three main reasons why university-based journalism schools are more capable of teaching journalism than the news industry: time, resources, and structure. Sufficient time is important as “learning does take time” (R. Rosenthal interview November 13. 2014). Moreover, the resources and the structure of journalism schools make teaching, coaching, and mentoring a manifest part of the teachers’ job. As John Sullivan, leading the Washington Post Practicum, explains: “I’m in this role of looking out for the students. [...] I’m always having to try to advise the students about how to manage themselves inside a newsroom” (interview September 26. 2014). The structure also gives predictability, ensuring that all students get more or less the same education. In the newsroom, what is taught “depends on what kind of newsroom you end up in and how – it’s very tricky. Your editors may want to teach you, they may not – or you may learn the wrong things” (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2014). In journalism school, the students also get the opportunity to be “edited once or twice by a professor who cares about you before you’re edited by somebody who doesn’t care about you” – and there is more room for making mistakes (S. Cohen interview January 30. 2015). “Even some of the little ethical things that you run into at a university are things that’ll get you fired at a newsroom”, Sarah Cohen at the *New York Times* states and, hence, “to make those mistakes at a university is really a good thing” (interview January 30. 2015). Despite their emphasis on learning by doing and real world experiences, the interviewees thus see journalism schools as having a central role in preserving and developing the field of investigative reporting.

### 7.1.3 Representing a “midway position”

Summarizing the above findings, practical knowledge and experience may seem to be much more highly valued by the interviewees than theoretical knowledge and traditional classroom teaching. Therefore, the interviewees appear to belong to the second of the two classical models of how to understand the relationship between practical and theoretical knowledge described in section 2.3.2 – where practical knowledge is seen as primary. Following from this, one could conclude that the centers are solidly placed at the practice side of the dichotomy theory/practice. This might be problematic, as most scholars – as previously described – believe that an ideal-typical professional knowledge base must rely on both theoretical and practical knowledge. Without theoretical knowledge, legitimating the work of the profession, developing new knowledge, and instructing students can be hard (Freidson, 2007, p. 31; Parsons & Platt, 1973, p. 227).

When analyzing the answers of the interviewees in detail, however, it does seem as if theory has a more central role than first assumed. Although theoretical knowledge is not seen as *primary*, many of the answers describing what journalism students need to know include theory. The most obvious example is the second skillset of the “basic reporting skills”, being capable of analyzing and organizing information in the best possible way. In order to master this skill, both general knowledge of society and knowledge of the subject matter are seen as necessary. Of more concrete knowledge, the fields and disciplines of “politics”, “international relations”, “campaign finance laws”, “math”, “philosophy”, “history”, “government systems”, and “liberal arts” are mentioned in the answers above. Classic, disciplinary theory thus appears to be part of the interviewees’ ideal knowledge base. It is however not the most dominant part of the knowledge base – nor is it placed first. Rather, it is listed among various practical skills, analytical skills, professional values and professional ways of thinking. Due to the practical synthesis of the interviewees’ knowledge base, *how* the different elements of the knowledge base can help practitioners fulfill their professional task is therefore far more important than *what kind* of knowledge is applied.

From the above, the interviewees seem to hold a complex, practice-oriented knowledge view. Hence, they do not, as representatives of the oldest and most dominant knowledge view (theoretical-oriented knowledge), reduce practical knowledge to the application of theory (see section 2.3.1). Neither do they appear to ignore the value of codified/theoretical knowledge – an attitude assigned to the so-called “fluency theorists” within professional education. As described in section 2.3.1, critics claim that these theorists see all expert knowledge as embodied and tacit, which makes it more or less mystified (M. Young & Muller, 2014). Albeit many of the interviewees use phrases traditionally connected to this secretive view upon professional knowledge, like having a “nose for news”, “the right reflexes”, “talent”, “intuition” and “instinct”, the mysterious veil seems to lift when they are pressured about what this “instinct” really is. Charles Ornstein, senior reporter at ProPublica, for instance, puts it like this:

I think it has to do with problem-solving. [...] How do you get from here to there? How do you get this information? Just the ability to generate ideas of ways of tackling the problem. I also think a lot of it has to do with the way you tell the story, right? How you're able to tell this in a way that's engaging. That will get people interested, that will make people read it, that will think it's original, that will break through the noise of this media climate where people don't have a detection span at all. (Interview January 28. 2015)

The “instinct”, in other words, seem to resemble a selection of complex – yet concrete – knowledge. Moreover, most of the interviewees appear to think that “the right” instinct is learnable – as long as the students have the right attitudes and are willing to work hard (J. Mintz interview January 29. 2015, S. Cohen interview January 30. 2015). As put by Sarah Cohen of the *New York Times*: “Most people who want to do it, can. I'm trying to think of anyone I thought of who really loved it and washed out, and I can't think of anybody” (interview January 30. 2015). Hence, the interviewees seem to agree with Collins (2010) in section 2.3.1: Intuition is “wisdom based on experience”, and can be gained through practice and socialization – including the acquisition of interactional expertise (pp. 148-149).

Figure 9. The interviewees' view upon practical knowledge.



As the interviewees do not reduce practical knowledge to the application of theory at the same time as they value theory and demystify professional knowledge, they appear to hold a “midway position” in the classic conflict between theory and practice (see section 2.3.1). This impression is confirmed by the interviewees’ intricate view of professional knowledge described above, where many state that journalism students needs to learn “everything” – including theory, various practical skills, analytical skills, professional values and professional ways of thinking. Like the scholars of the “midway position”, the interviewees thus seem to value both “know-that” and “know-how”, and perceive professional knowledge as far more *complex* than the simple dichotomy of theory/practice (Heggen et al., 2015, p. 71). Applying Figure 1 of section 2.3.1, the knowledge view of the interviewees can be visualized as in Figure 9.

### **Formal knowledge – an unfitting aim**

From the above, it is obvious that the interviewees’ knowledge base does not fulfill the criteria of “formal knowledge”. It is not composed of bodies of information and ideas organized by theories and abstract concepts, divided among specialized disciplines, and practiced by different groups of specialized workers (see section 2.3.1). The interviewees do in other words appear to have little in common with the “rigorous professional practitioners” of Glazer’s (1974) “major professions” – solving well-formed instrumental problems by applying theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge. Instead, their knowledge base

seems relatively diffuse, unstable, and insecure – just as within Glazer’s “minor professions”. From this perspective, the interviewees’ ideals of knowledge and teaching do not appear to have much professionalization potential.

According to a practice-oriented knowledge view, it is however possible to argue that journalists are *dependent* upon a heterogeneous, fragmented and practice-oriented knowledge base in order to fulfill their societal task in a proper manner. As producing “true, new and effectively communicated information changing society for the better” is not an easy task, “tons of skillsets” – including basic reporting skills, a special mindset, and the right professional values – might be necessary. It is even possible to argue that the journalistic knowledge base needs to be even more heterogeneous and fragmented than the knowledge base of most professions, as journalistic knowledge can be said to have two dimensions. In addition to the set of basic reporting skills and professional values seen necessary to fulfill any reporting task, most reporters have to cover a wide range of topics during their career. Hence, they need to acquire knowledge of a large variety of subjects. This last type of knowledge can vary from day to day or from week to week if the journalist is an all-round reporter. Without this knowledge of the subject matter, it can be hard to fulfill the professional aim in the best possible manner – asking the right questions, finding the right information, or making the right analysis. In line with this reasoning, it is logical that the interviewees emphasize that journalists need to know a little bit of “everything”. Moreover, the ongoing and never-ending curriculum debate within journalism education can almost seem unavoidable.

From the above, the critique of the journalistic knowledge base, that holds that journalism cannot be a profession because of the lack of formal knowledge, appears to be grounded in “clashing epistemologies” (Heggen et al., 2015, p. 71). Holding a practice-oriented knowledge view, one could argue that the theoretical-oriented knowledge view fails to encompass the complexity of professional knowledge. To the interviewees, the “extraordinary knowledge” of their profession is not the application of theory and technique derived from systematic knowledge. Rather, it is the professional “capability” derived from different “depths of understanding” –



including codified academic knowledge, codified knowledge which is not academic, cultural knowledge that has not been codified, and personal knowledge such as everyday knowledge and various skills. Hence, it is natural that the interviewees ideal knowledge base only is partly theoretical-oriented, despite that they are part of institutions that are known to prefer and advocate theoretical knowledge. By focusing on theory *alone*, it would – at least according to the practice-oriented knowledge view – be impossible to teach journalistic capability.

### **The ideal professional education**

With their practice-oriented knowledge view, it is logical that the interviewees state that journalism only can be learned through “real world problem solving”. As described in section 2.3.2, scholars of the “midway position” often emphasize that the main aim of professional schools is teaching students how to solve professional, situation-based problems. This expertise/practical mastery/know-how/artistry/capability involves the ability to understand a complex situation (problem framing), the ability to apply the right tools to solve the problem, and the ability to improvise if the applied strategies do not work. Like the academics, the interviewees state that this know-how/capability is developed through doing something “a thousand times”, and through struggling and making “all the mistakes you’re going to make”. Only through practice, the interviewees claim, can the students, for instance, learn how to select and develop a good story from a mass of information (professional problem framing), find the best sources of information, ask the right questions, and tell the story in the most efficient way (apply the right knowledge to solve the problem).

Despite their emphasis on learning by doing and real-world experiences, the interviewees do, as previously mentioned, argue that journalism schools are best suited to teach journalism due to more time, resources and a firmer structure than the news industry. Although “real-world” experience is perceived essential – the “real world” does in other words *not* represent the ultimate learning environment. Hence, the interviewees’ ideal journalism education appears to have much in common with Schön’s practicum described in section 2.3.2, where a context *similar* to the practice

world is constructed. In contrast to the “real world”, the virtual world of the practicum is “relatively free of the pressures, distractions and risks” (1988, p. 37). As a result, students learn by undertaking projects that simulate and simplify practice, or take on real-world projects under close supervision. By constructing a virtual world, the teachers can adjust the practice projects to the students’ capability, and/or offer close supervision. In addition, an educational setting often has more room for reflection (an analytic/deliberative approach) than the practice field (Eraut, 2004, p. 201; Schön, 1988).

In an attempt to summarize, the interviewees’ ideals of professional training can be listed as follows:

- The goal of professional education is teaching professional capability.
- The best way of teaching professional capability is through real-world problem solving.
- The real world does however not always represent the ideal learning environment, as the lack of time, resources, and structure can lead to minimal supervision, no learning of relevant codified knowledge, and little room for reflection.
- A constructed context, similar to the practice world, is thus seen as the best training model.

In the following sections, the *actual* teaching of the centers will be examined. Are they for instance able to teach professional capability within a university setting? Moreover, can the teaching of the centers be said to fulfill the interviewees’ ideal of the practicum?

## 7.2 The teaching of the centers

When asking the interviewees about their classroom role, the leaders of three of the centers define themselves as “teaching laboratories” or “teaching hospitals”.<sup>245</sup>

Director of the IRP Berkeley, Lowell Bergman, for instance, states that his goal is to get his students “out of the academic idea” and into “the idea of laboratories” where they can get “directly involved” (interview November 10. 2014). Charles Lewis,

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<sup>245</sup> The term “teaching hospital” is discussed in section 2.3.3.

executive editor of the Workshop, describes the teaching method in similar ways: “It’s hands-on. Let’s get it done. What’s the deadline? When are we trying to get this finished? Where are we going? Who’s doing what? Just like a newsroom. This is, in that sense, a teaching laboratory” (interview May 12. 2015). Executive director of the New England CIR, Joe Bergantino, states:

It’s like a teaching hospital model, where the university is helping to support this venture that is producing quality journalism, at the same time students are learning how to do it as our interns, and they’re benefiting the community at the same time. (Interview March 10. 2015)

Through producing real investigative reporting with the help of students, the centers are, as described in section 4.2, attempting to kill two birds with one stone: teaching the next generation of investigative reporters and providing a community service through producing investigative reporting. The teaching hospital model has, however, as shown in section 2.3.3, been criticized for focusing too much on the production part, and too little on the educational part. As an important aspect of the model is cooperating with the traditional news industry, critics claim that journalism schools risk adopting the negative aspects of apprenticeships: the continuous requirement of performance and productive work. Hence, the professional tradition of critical philosophical reflection – and thus the development of new knowledge – has been said to be threatened. The critics of the teaching hospital model thus seem to share the same concern as the interviewees in section 7.1: When cooperating too closely with the news industry or focusing too much on production, teaching and learning might be sacrificed. Moreover, it has been claimed that the close relationship with the news industry can lower the autonomy of journalism education, turn students into cheap apprentice labor, and also hinder innovation as external reporters “steeped in old ways of doing things” are used as mentors (Picard, 2015, p. 8).

In the following, the main aim will be examining whether the centers can be said to fulfill their classroom role – in spite of their emphasis on production and/or learning

by doing.<sup>246</sup> In line with the ideals of the complex, practice-oriented knowledge view presented in section 2.3, three aspects of the centers' teaching in particular will be examined: the tasks of the students (are they really conducting real-world investigative reporting?); how they are mentored; and whether or not there is room for reflection in between the production and the mentoring.

### **7.2.1 The tasks of the students**

In the content analysis of the 40 center stories (see section 3.4.3 and 6.2), one of the variables<sup>247</sup> registered students being mentioned in bylines and/or in contribution tags. Usually bylines indicate high responsibility in production while contribution tags points towards a lower level of participation/responsibility. Moreover, single bylines – listing only one name – signals more management control than a shared byline. Hence, bylines and contribution tags can be good indicators of student responsibility.

Of the 40 analyzed stories, as many as 17 actually had a single-student byline, while eight had a shared byline. In addition, students were mentioned as contributors in eleven of the stories.<sup>248</sup> As 63 percent of the stories have a shared or a single-student byline, the students seems to have been given considerable liability during the reporting process. When looking at the results from each center, it is however obvious that the Stabile Center, the only one of the four characterizing itself as a *teaching center*, accounts for the majority of the high-responsibility stories. *All* of the Stabile stories actually have single-student bylines. In comparison, the IRP Berkeley has four, the New England CIR has two, while the Workshop has only one. Moreover, the Workshop has as many as seven stories with contribution tags, while the New England CIR has three, the IRP Berkeley one, and the Stabile Center none.

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<sup>246</sup> As previously mentioned, the Stabile Center sees itself as a teaching center. Like the three other centers, it does however cultivate a close relationship with the news industry – and practice learning by doing (see section 4.2 for details).

<sup>247</sup> Variable 6. See Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, for details.

<sup>248</sup> As mentioned in section 3.4.3, the original intention was only analyzing stories where students had contributed. Not being able to find ten recent stories from the IRP Berkeley involving students, four of the analyzed IRP Berkeley stories are produced by staff or fellows – without the help of students.

The responsibility of the students in other words seems to vary significantly – with the Workshop and the Stabile Center representing each end of the scale (see Table 7).

Table 7. The number of byline types and contribution tags, divided by center. IRP Berkeley, N=6. Stabile Center, N=10. Workshop, N=10. New England CIR, N=10.

Center	Student contribution tag	Student shared byline	Student single byline
IRP Berkeley	1	1	4
Stabile Center	0	0	10
Workshop	7	2	1
New England CIR	3	5	2

The high involvement of the Stabile students is obviously a result of the Center’s teaching strategy discussed in section 4.2: As the Center wants the students to work on their own under close guidance – and thus “own the topic” and be responsible for it – the staff of the Stabile Center is not producing their own stories. Moreover, the center never approaches potential media partners until the students have strong stories to pitch (S. Coronel interview January 26. 2015). For the other three centers, seeing the production of investigative reporting as their most important task, the student involvement appears to vary more. This impression is confirmed by the interview and observation data. While all the Stabile students produce their own investigative stories, the students of the other three centers seem to hold three main functions: 1) researchers (low involvement and responsibility); 2) reporting researchers (middle involvement and responsibility); and 3) full-scale reporters (full involvement and responsibility).

**Three student functions**

Starting with the “researcher” function, the students are typically assigned tasks that the reporters label “mundane”, “low skill”, “clerical work” or “leg work” – not being a notable part of the larger investigation. In more detail, this “leg work” can consist of transcribing interviews, translating, looking for case files, pulling documents, searching for article photos, making spreadsheets, reading cases in Pacer, and other types of “basic research”. From the observation and interview data, it seems that the Workshop students who are part of the Washington Post Practicum most often end up

in this role. According to John Sullivan, the Workshop/*Washington Post* reporter leading the Practicum, what typically happens is that reporters come to him and say, "I've got a project. It requires a lot of data work or a lot of records work. Do you have students who can work with me?" (interview September 10, 2014). Following from this, students are assigned as researchers. The Workshop/*Washington Post* story "Prosecutors build murder cases on disputed Shaken Baby Syndrome diagnosis" (story number A9 in the content analysis<sup>249</sup>), for instance, lists 33 names in the contribution tag. A majority of the contributors are students from as many as six different universities.<sup>250</sup> Mariam Baksh, one of the Workshop students working on the story, describes the experience as follows:

I did drive out to Maryland to get documents that were eventually used in a story [...], and I did call a lawyer, sorry, defense attorney, to try to get more stories and documents, but I didn't feel like it was my story [...] I didn't feel like I owned it. (Interview April 29, 2015)

Together, the students and the other contributors reviewed court dockets "in more than 800 U.S. counties, accounting for 75 percent of the nation's population", and examined "thousands of pages of court and police records, including medical and autopsy reports" (Cenziper, 2015). Because of the size of the project, and the many students and reporters working on it, each student had a minor role. As a result, none of the Workshop students, including Baksh above, felt that they "owned" the project (P. Lombardi interview April 28, 2015, K.A. Liu interview April 29, 2015). The same seems to be the case with the Workshop/*Washington Post* story "Stop and Seize" (story number A4 in the content analysis). According to Workshop alumna Alexia Campbell, she spent her time going through "all the court documents" and filling out a spreadsheet:

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<sup>249</sup> See Appendix E, "List of stories, content analysis", for an overview of the analyzed stories.

<sup>250</sup> Northwestern University, University of Missouri, American University (that the Workshop is part of), University of Florida, Arizona State University, and University of Georgia.

We got through, like, 600, all of us, like, 600 cases. Or 400. But they used that. They were like, “Out of 400 cases that the *Post* investigated...” So that was all the AU<sup>251</sup> students. We did all of that. (Interview September 23. 2014)

Workshop alumna Hoai-Tran Bui describes the situation like this: “We were just doing some number crunching and putting stuff in Excel. [...] We did the basics of the overall picture, but we didn't really get to really help out with that. Just the data entry kind of aspect” (interview September 26. 2014).

The Workshop students that were part of the Washington Post Practicum were however also involved in projects where they had more responsibility. In these projects the students often functioned as *both* reporters and researchers (the second student function mentioned above). Most typically, the reporting researcher students were part of smaller teams led by a trained reporter from the center, or by a reporter from a cooperating newsroom. In addition to “going through thousands of records” (like the researchers), these students were involved in planning the story, interviewing, and writing. How much responsibility the students of each team got seemed to vary. While some came with the trained reporter to watch them conduct interviews, others were allowed to ask questions or do their own interviews. Regardless of their level of responsibility, all the interviewed Workshop students did however appear to favor the “reporting researcher” function over the “researcher” role. When asked why, Pietro Lombardi describes the researcher role as “working with different reporters, different stories, and the stories were almost done”. In contrast, when working as a reporting researcher, he felt he was part of the process:

This time we started from scratch.<sup>252</sup> So we planned the story, we got the documents, we built our database. We made many mistakes, so now we know which mistakes we are not supposed to do. And then, after the database stuff, we met the lawyers, we went out reporting, I was out [...] for three reporting

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<sup>251</sup> Short for American University, where the Workshop is situated.

<sup>252</sup> Lombardi refers to the work resulting in the Workshop/*Washington Post* story “Probable Cause” (J. Sullivan, Hawkins, & Lombardi, 2016).

rounds. So that was great. And we were able to pitch each other ideas about the story. (Interview April 28. 2015)

Along with the Workshop, the New England CIR and the IRP Berkeley also use students as reporting researchers. While the New England CIR usually pair interns with center reporters, forming two-reporter teams, the IRP Berkeley seems to hire students to work in medium-sized teams with the center reporters. During my visit, for instance, managing editor at the IRP Berkeley, Tim McGirk led a team of students working on a Polio-story for *National Geographic*. Just as at the Workshop, how much responsibility the students get appears to vary at both the IRP Berkeley and the NECIR. While some of the students were mainly conducting research, in addition to assisting and observing the trained reporters, others were entitled to do their own interviews or write sidebars.

The third and last student function, the “full-scale reporter”, as previously mentioned is the only student function at the Stabile Center. Due to their work on their master’s thesis (see section 4.2), also the IRP Berkeley students spent much of their center time on full-scale reporting. Hence, *all* the students affiliated with the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley were guaranteed to work on at least one story where they had full responsibility over the whole reporting process. Both the New England CIR and the Workshop also have *examples* of students functioning as full-scale reporters, as both centers encourage the students to “pitch their own stories” (C. Jedra interview February 23., P. Lombardi interview April 28. 2015). Workshop alumna Alexia Campbell, for instance, got her own story published on the front page of the *Washington Post* – an accomplishment referred to by many of the Workshop affiliates. The New England CIR had similar examples frequently referred to. Just weeks prior to my visit, one of the Center interns for instance published a story about LEED certification<sup>253</sup> on the WGBH News webpage and in the Worcester *Telegram & Gazette* (story number D1 in the content analysis).

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<sup>253</sup> LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), is a green building rating system. The goal of the certification program is creating healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving green buildings (The U.S. Green Building Council, n.d.).



## Aspects influencing the students tasks

From the above, the tasks of the students seem to vary significantly – both between the centers and within each center. While the students of the Stabile Center *only* conduct full-scale reporting, the IRP Berkeley students *mainly* conduct full-scale reporting, in addition to some reporting research. The New England CIR students, however, mainly conduct reporting research, with some full-scale reporting, while the students of the Workshop mainly conduct reporting research, in addition to some research and some full-scale reporting. Except for the Stabile Center, which tasks the students are given can in other words appear quite arbitrary.

From what the center leaders and reporters say, there seems to be three main reasons why the student tasks vary so much: the abilities of the students, the time available, and the current production of the center/cooperating newsroom.

First, varying the tasks of the students appears to be a way of aligning student responsibilities to student abilities (Schumacher, Englander, & Carraccio, 2013, pp. 1636-1637). Although the center-students are master students, their general background, prior reporting experience, motivation, and interest in investigative reporting seem to differ a lot. Typically, the reporting experience of the Washington Post Practicum students for instance ranges between five years and none at all (J. Sullivan interview September 26. 2014). As investigative reporting is perceived to be “the hardest part of journalism”<sup>254</sup>, many state that students – and especially the least experienced ones – cannot function as full-scale reporters. As Jeff Leen, editor of the *Washington Post*’s investigations unit, explains: “We don’t really see the need to get an intern as an investigative reporter because they’re not experienced enough to do that. But we can use interns as researchers. And so that’s what we’ve been doing (interview October 2. 2014). Charles Ornstein, senior reporter at ProPublica, describes the centers’ work as an attempt at “short circuiting the process”:

So it’s a challenge in the sense that you’re expecting these students to come up with something and create something that’s a big contribution to their field –

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<sup>254</sup> See section 7.1 and 2.2.2

and yet these are people who don't have a lot of experiences and years of journalism that would enable them to a project with more use. You know, having the ability to sort of your experience as a gauge for what you do.

(Interview January 28. 2015)

Many of the students are thus seen as insufficiently equipped to conduct full-scale reporting. Every now and then, students with the right skills, experience, motivation, interest and “instincts” do however seem to emerge. In a class of 15 to 18 students, there normally are two or three “really impressive” ones, according to Charles Lewis, executive editor of the Workshop (interview May 12. 2015). These “really impressive” students appear to be the few, full-scale student reporters at the Workshop and the New England CIR mentioned above. Typically, these students seem to start out as researchers – just like all the others. As they prove themselves, they are given more responsibility. Scott Higham, investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*, describes the process as follows:

I started off by giving her small assignments: “Could you see if you can find this? Could you take a look at this audit of the project that was done? Let me know what you think about this” [...]. I just wanted to see how smart she was basically. And then as I saw how good she was, how capable, I started giving her more assignments. (Interview October 2. 2014)

Because of the student’s “drive and ambition”, Higham “kept getting her more and more involved” until she became kind of an equal partner in the projects (interview October 2. 2014). Due to the quality of her work, the student thus climbed the ladder from researcher, to reporting researcher, to full-scale reporter. The process seems to follow the same route at the other production-oriented centers: by proving themselves, students get additional challenges.

Due to the emphasis on aligning student responsibilities to student abilities, many of the interviewees argue that investigative reporting provides great teaching opportunities – in spite of it being perceived as “the hardest part of journalism”. First, investigative reporters are “not on deadline all the time”, which gives them greater prospects to get to know the students and understand their abilities (D. Priest

interview October 14. 2014). Secondly, as “there's so many different elements to an investigative story”, it can easily be broken down to “smaller but really important bits” that “don't require the same kind of judgment” (D. Priest interview October 14. 2014).

When asking *why* student responsibilities should be aligned to student abilities, some simply state that it “works better”. Others see it as a way of making students feel successful, despite their limited abilities – or as a way of preventing them getting a “heavier burden than they can handle” (R. Rosenthal interview November 13. 2014, S. Reber interview November 12. 2014). The arguments have resemblances to well-known principles of how to best teach practical skills – where over-complex practice situations and too much new information can be said to threaten learning by resulting in “cognitive overload” (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1637). Therefore, work should challenge learners, but not exceed their capacity (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1637).

In addition to the pedagogical-oriented reasons for aligning student responsibilities to students abilities, structural reasons, like the time available and the current production of the center/cooperating newsroom, also seem to impact on which tasks the students are given. This especially applies to the Workshop and the New England CIR, where the students are attached to current projects run by the center/cooperating newsroom. Hence, instead of customizing the projects to the students (as often done during the planning of a master's thesis), students must adapt to the current projects. Emma Schwartz, associate producer with *Frontline*, puts it like this:

Hopefully, we help create some opportunities for the students to learn. But it can be hard, you know, if we're in the early research phase, and we're just sort of, like, flailing, just talking to people and learning and trying to understand a topic. (Interview October 22. 2014)

As a result, students can, independently of their abilities, be put to work as researchers. Most often this appears to be the case when students are attached to large, long-running projects like “Stop and Seize” and “Prosecutors build murder cases on disputed Shaken Baby Syndrome diagnosis”, mentioned above. Of the ten

most comprehensive stories in the content analysis<sup>255</sup>, only one has a single student byline. In comparison, eight of the ten *least* comprehensive stories<sup>256</sup> have shared- or single-student bylines. Therefore, larger productions seem less suitable if the goal is to give students responsibility.

The time that students can use on practical assignments, the deadlines of the newsrooms/centers, and the time pressure of the center reporters also appear to be decisive for which tasks are given to students. First, as mentioned in section 5.2.2, student reporters follow semesters and take classes. This can be problematic, as “an academic year lasts about nine months, but a news organization’s year is 365 days” (Francisco et al., 2012). Because some of the projects “go on for like a year or more”, student work often ends up as “a time-limited chunk” (S. Reber interview November 12, 2014). In other words, it can be hard to combine student life with full-scale, real world, investigative reporting. As an example, the Washington Post Practicum is a three-credit course which assembles the work of approximately one day a week. Hence, students advancing to full-scale reporters or reporting researchers often have to use much more time than scheduled in order to finish their stories.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, research-tasks sometimes seem to be preferred as they often can be conducted anytime, anywhere. As Patrick Madden, district reporter at WAMU, explains: “Obviously, they have a lot of time commitments going on. So if they can do it at home, that’s easy” (interview October 20, 2014).

Second, the projects of the producing-oriented centers often operate with deadlines. Due to the fact that students are still “learning the ropes”, they cannot be expected to perform the same role as experienced practitioners (Richards & Josephi, 2013, p. 203). It can therefore be hard to include students in all parts of the project if the deadline is tight. Maggie Mulvihill, co-founder of the New England CIR, puts it like this: “Even though we have to pay it forward, you know, and we are training the next

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<sup>255</sup> Of 14 A4 pages or more. See variable 9 in Appendix D, “Codebook, content analysis”, for details on how the story proportions are measured.

<sup>256</sup> Six A4 pages or less.

<sup>257</sup> One example is the previously mentioned Workshop alumna Alexia Campbell. In order to finish the story that ended up at the front page of the *Washington Post*, she had to continue reporting after graduation. Part of this work was supported by a freelance fee provided by the Workshop (A. Campbell interview September 23, 2014).

generation, they are learning. You can't just send them to court, it takes twice as long" (interview March 12, 2015).

Third, inexperienced students often need a lot of guidance. If the reporters of the centers/cooperating newsrooms do not have sufficient time for mentoring because of other obligations, one of the solutions appears to be only supervising the most "talented" and motivated students (see further discussion in section 7.2.2).

In summary, which tasks the students of the production oriented centers are given seems to be decided according to a mix of pedagogical considerations (aligning student responsibilities to student abilities) and structural constraints (the time available, and the current production of the center/cooperating newsroom). In contrast, the only teaching-oriented center, the Stabile Center, appears to have chosen the student tasks out of pedagogical considerations alone.

### **7.2.2 Mentoring**

As with the tasks of the students, the mentoring of the students seems to vary significantly, both between and within the centers. While some students only occasionally interact with the reporter(s) responsible for the project they are working on, others work "elbow to elbow" with the reporter in charge. Moreover, the two centers mainly mentoring students who function as full-scale reporters – the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley – appear to have a more structured approach to mentoring than the Workshop and the New England CIR. In addition to scheduled meetings between students and mentors, these centers also arrange fixed skill workshops and seminars directly aligned to the work of the students (see section 4.2).

Not surprisingly, the students functioning as researchers seem to interact with the reporters in charge least frequently. During six weeks at the *Washington Post*, Workshop alumna Hoai-Tran Bui – by her own account – only met with the reporter responsible for the story she was working on three times (interview September 26, 2014). The Workshop students working on the "Shaken baby" story also appeared to be sitting by themselves much of the time as the reporter in charge often worked from home (observation September and October 2014). After four weeks working on the story, the students had only met with the reporter twice (P. Lombardi field interview

September 29, 2014). Due to the lack of mentoring, Workshop alumnus Aaron Gregg jokingly describes his *Washington Post* experience as being “dumped into a shark cage”:

There's very little guidance there. And John's<sup>258</sup> a good mentor, but you have to grab him. There's no curriculum. I mean, there is a curriculum, but it's essentially, long story short, the class is show up, work hard, don't do anything stupid. That's basically what you do. (Interview September 18, 2014)

Gregg's experience appears to apply to most of the students working as researchers: Since the reporters leading the work are busy, the students have to “grab” them if they need guidance. As put by Workshop student Christina Animashaun: “They're working in the industry that they're in. Time is always of the essence” (interview April 29, 2015). Workshop alumna Hoai-Tran Bui describes it like this: “If I didn't ask for work, they didn't give me work. Or if I didn't ask for meetings, they wouldn't give me meetings” (interview September 26, 2014).

When working as researchers, the students thus appear to get little guidance if they do not initiate it themselves. As many of the students are relatively young and inexperienced, they seem to find the newsroom and the reporters in charge a bit intimidating. This in turn can make it hard to ask for help. Workshop alumna Alexia Campbell, for instance, describes her first day at the *Washington Post* as “very scary”, while fellow alumna Hoai-Tran Bui refers to the newsroom as a “well-oiled machine” which do not need “interns or people working with them who aren't, like, their own reporters” (A. Campbell interview September 23, 2014, H.T Bui interview September 26, 2014). Scott Higham, reporter of the investigations unit, describes some of the young interns as “deer caught by headlight”:

I've seen that with reporters too. They're awestruck to the point where it is paralyzing. They're like: “Oh my god, I'm at the *Washington Post*. Now what?” It's a competitive place, and there's a lot going on. And some people

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<sup>258</sup> John Sullivan, senior editor at the Workshop and investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*.

could be overwhelmed by that. And I could imagine if you're 21 years old, it can be very intimidating. (Interview October 2. 2014)

In contrast to the researchers, many of the reporting researchers seems to get much more guidance, as they work in teams with the reporter(s) in charge throughout the whole project. Hence, the reporters are often present when problems occur and can guide the students towards a solution. Moreover, these students appear to learn a lot from observing the work of the trained reporters. As Workshop alumna Jessica Schulberg confirms: "I mean, any time you're around people that are really good at doing what you want to do, you learn a lot" (interview September 30. 2014). New England CIR intern Andrea D'Eramo describes it as seeing how reporters do their jobs, "without it needing to be a 'here, let me hold your hand and show you' kind of thing". She claims to have learned a lot from "just listening to [the reporters] on the phone, seeing them e-mail 20,000 people a day, staying on top of all this" (interview March 9. 2015). The reporting researchers thus seem to benefit from both direct mentoring (reporters helping them solve problems) and indirect mentoring (the demonstration of "good work"). The level of both direct and indirect reporting can however vary somewhat. While some reporters appear to be available to the students all the time, others seem to be more secluded. In general, the students working in small teams – consisting of only the reporter and the student – appear to get more guidance than students working in larger groups. Workshop alumna Jessica Schulberg describes her experience working with *Washington Post*-reporter Scott Higham as follows:

He would bring me to all [the interviews] and I was welcome to ask questions and I think I would occasionally ask a follow-up question or two. And he would always, before we would go to an interview, we would meet and he would say: "Here's the list of things I want to get answered. Am I missing anything? Do you have anything to add?" (Interview September 30. 2014)

According to Schulberg, Higham included her in "everything he could". Moreover, when the story they had been working on for two semesters was finally published, he took her to the printing plant to get one of the first newspaper copies off the press

(interview September 30. 2014). A majority of the Workshop students, and most of the New England CIR students, tell similar stories. At some point during their master's degree they have had the privilege of working closely with skilled reporters, being included in "every" part of the reporting process.

The more challenging the tasks, and the more unskilled the students, the more mentoring and practice is required (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1639). For students to function as full-scale reporters, sufficient mentoring thus is crucial. In addition to providing the opportunity to practice the relevant skill, the mentors must provide encouragement in the form of step-by-step coaching – and provide frequent feedback through dialogue that ensures learner understanding (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1639). Supervising students in full-scale investigative reporting is, in other words, a demanding task. Duff Wilson, Stabile advisor and investigative reporter with Reuters, describes his role as advising the students "on everything from what thing they should do to recording tactics and approaches to organization, writing and polishing. The whole gamut" (interview January 28. 2015). To Stabile instructor Jim Mintz, the mentoring means being "sort of up to our elbows in the stuff of how do you start, what are your first moves, what does a memo look like, etcetera" (interview January 29. 2015).

From the above, it might not be surprising that the centers with the most students conducting full-scale reporting – the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley – have a more structured form of guidance than the other centers. The Stabile students, for instance, have regular meetings with their advisers about once a week, in addition to the weekly Stabile Seminar, where various issues relevant to the master's thesis are discussed. In addition, the students can ask the center leaders for guidance whenever needed. At the IRP Berkeley, the reporters meet regularly with the students throughout the semester, often before or after the weekly Investigative Reporting Seminar (T. McGirk interview November 13. 2014). Additionally, as at the Stabile Center, the students can ask for supervision when needed. According to IRP Berkeley student Heather Mack, the reporters are "incredibly available" in spite of working on their own stories much of the time (H. Mack interview November 11. 2015).



Compared to the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley, the mentoring at the Workshop and the New England CIR seems far less structured. However, this does not mean that the students at these centers never get step-by-step coaching or frequent feedback. On the contrary, some of the Workshop and New England CIR students appear to get some of the closest supervision of all the students interviewed. Workshop alumna Alexia Campbell, for instance, describes the interaction with her mentors as follows:

All three of them would give me so many ideas. I would consult with them, and they would say maybe, "Have you tried this? Have you tried this?" And then the writing process was unlike any kind of editing I've ever experienced. Ever. John<sup>259</sup> edited it, like, twice, line by line and would say – I mean, it was a very painful process. But I learned so much. (Interview September 23. 2014)

The experience of being supervised by as many as three skilled reporters is however, as shown above, not shared by all the Workshop students – as some are described as “deer caught by headlight”, getting no guidance at all. Hence, the lack of structure seems to result in widely *varying* supervision. Scheduled story meetings, advisor meetings, or seminars appear to guarantee a certain level of interaction and guidance. Without such a structure, some students risk being left alone in the “shark cage” not daring to ask for help.

As with the tasks given the students, the amount of unstructured mentoring appears to be dependent upon the “talent” and “motivation” of the students. Scott Higham, investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*, puts it like this: “If the student is not going to seize the opportunity, then I’m not going to put my effort into it. I’ll cut them loose” (interview October 2. 2014). To Higham, seizing the opportunity means “taking initiative”, “adjusting things”, doing things without always being told what to do, and coming up with information. If students do not have this “drive, ambition or interest”, there are “hundreds of others behind them who do”, he states (interview October 2. 2014). Scott Allen of the *Boston Globe* express much the same, stating

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<sup>259</sup> John Sullivan, senior editor at the Workshop and investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*.

that he does not expect students to be “completely polished journalists” but they do need to be “willing to listen”, and “have a sense of what they want to do”, and the “right energy level” (interview March 13. 2014). Like Higham, Allen does not want to “get involved in something that is hugely difficult” unless he thinks there will be a good cap at the end (interview March 13. 2014). It is in other words not the weakest students that get the most mentoring; rather, the students having the right “drive” are chosen. From an educational perspective, this approach might seem counter intuitive. However, the main job of the external reporters is not to teach but to produce stories. Moreover, the students are part of real-life, investigative projects, where there is no room for mistakes. As investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*, Dana Priest, explains:

If we're gonna put it in the paper, we have to be really careful. [...] We will have to sort of fact check everything. I'm going to require that they give me transcripts of interviews, that they footnote all their facts so that I'm not trusting their judgment on any of it. [...] They're all very honest and earnest, but they just don't have the experience to know enough about what they might not be asking. (Interview October 14, 2014)

From this perspective, using time on the most promising and eager students might not seem that illogical after all. In the end, time is limited and the pressure for performance is high. Therefore, the reporters might not have the capacity to supervise all students on equal terms.

For most of the *center* reporters, supervising students is a more distinct part of their job. Hence, it appears as if students mentored by the centers' staff are treated on more equal terms than students guided by external reporters. Finding enough time for both teaching and producing can however be a challenge for the producing center reporters as well. John Sullivan, leading the *Washington Post* Practicum, describes his double role as follows:

In one sense, you can only do it with investigative work because it offers a little bit more flexibility. But by the same token, investigative work is really about momentum [...]. It's difficult to do it when you're constantly distracted

by students, their needs, the university, its needs, administrative stuff.

(Interview September 26, 2014)

From the above, one can conclude that all students at the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center seem to get sufficient mentoring to conduct full-scale investigative reporting due to the level of structured guidance. At the Workshop and the New England CIR, the mentoring appears to vary more, especially on projects where students are guided by external reporters. Moreover, the most motivated and talented students appear to get the most supervision. Therefore, the more production-oriented the project, the less supervision the “weakest” students seem to get. According to practice-oriented learning theory, the learning outcome of some students might thus be poor, as they are not pushed to “greater capability through sequenced challenges balanced with appropriate supervision and support” (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1638). As put by Workshop student Christina Animashaun:

The truth is I’m not going to jump. I’m not going to jump unless you push me into the pool. Now if you threw in some water wings and you came in with me and said ok, I think that would make all the difference. (Interview April 29, 2015)

### **7.2.3 Reflection and problem solving**

In summary, which tasks the students are given and the mentoring they are offered seem to vary significantly – especially at the production-oriented centers. Moreover, the stronger the link to the practice field, the more varying the tasks and the mentoring appear to be. At the Washington Post Practicum in particular, structural aspects like the time available and the current production of the newsroom appear to be crucial.

When it comes to room for reflection and more theoretical-oriented learning, a continuous requirement for performance and productive work again appears to be a hindrance. Often, the stories the students are working on tend to become immersive. Workshop student Christina Animashaun for instance labels the expected Workshop/*Washington Post* office hours “the joke of the century”. “I can honestly say, and this is not to get them in trouble, [...] that the work that the Workshop wants

to produce by far requires more than ten hours”, she states. One of the most intense periods of researching is described as follows: “This night, that morning, nights that turn into mornings, me going home to change and come back, come back in, update, losing papers, finding them again” (interview April 29. 2015).

Using more time on reporting than scheduled often means less time for other classes and obligations. Workshop student Mariam Baksh describes it as a tension “between how much time you decide to devote to any one of these things that are all important for your own success and the success of the stories you're working on” (interview April 29. 2015). Animashaun describes the work as “super stressful at times”, entailing “that you’re not going to get great sleep” and that “that A for your class is probably going to be a B”. However, since she is learning so much, she states that she is “going to weigh in terms of the content that’s being put out in these publications over my grades” nine times out of ten. As she puts it: “It’s tough. But you do it because this is hopefully what you want to do” (interview April 29. 2015). As Alexander Mullaney at the IRP Berkeley explains:

I always thought I’d be doing more, not scholarly, but more reading, more diving into like history and kind of like institutional problems, Senate issues and democracy, capitalism or whatever. But that’s not really happening, and I kind of understand why. I think it’s important, but it’s not necessarily a function of journalism that you’re expected to have when you graduate. You need to have your toolbox ready to go by the time May comes. (November 10. 2014)

The time-consuming and demanding character of real-life production can in other words result in less time for more theoretical-oriented studying. At the same time, all the centers seem to make an effort in having the students reflect on what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how they can do it better (referred to as reflection-on-action and reflection-for action in section 2.3.2). As with the student tasks and the mentoring, how structured this reflection is varies from project to project and from center to center. As previously mentioned, the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley have their weekly seminars. These seminars appear to strongly resemble Eraut’s

(2004) “skills sessions” or “reflective seminars”, where the main aim is discussing and interpreting the students concurrent work experience, in addition to introducing them to relevant theory and tools (p. 205). Stable student Scilla Alecci, for instance, describe the Stable Seminar like this: “It's like you take a step back from, you know, like, the field and you really have time to reflect on things”. One topic can for instance be how to conduct interviews:

During the Stable Seminar, they will tell you what is best. The best ways to get some information or the best way to approach someone, etc. [...]. And so, the next time when you do an interview, you will consider more other factors. It's good to be spontaneous, but at the same time [...] you want to have, like, a better result when you ask questions. Therefore, it's good that someone gives you advice beforehand. (Interview January 26. 2015)

Fellow Stable student Jessica Huseman describes the Seminar as like “talking about, you know, what we'd done over winter break, the mistakes that we've made, how we'd do things differently, what our successes were”. In addition, they sometimes discuss more general aspects, such as investigative reporting's role in society (interview January 27. 2015). Hence, the Seminar seems to be an arena in which to learn both the codified knowledge of the applied field (for instance the ideology of investigative reporting) and the codified knowledge of the occupational practice (for instance how to best conduct interviews), and as an arena for reciprocal reflection.<sup>260</sup> IRP Berkeley's Investigative Reporting Seminar appears to hold many of the same characteristics. As described in section 4.2, the seminar is presented as “an introduction to tricks of the trade, occupational hazards, sources and guides to help navigate the field of watchdog reporting”.

While both the Workshop and the New England CIR staff teach investigative classes, the reflection around the *center-initiated* stories seems less structured than at the

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<sup>260</sup> In addition to the interviews, my own observation strengthens this perception. During my visit in January 2015, 14 Stable students attended the three-hour-long investigative seminar. The first part of the class was used in studying two investigative stories, finding similarities and differences – and examining if the students could use some of the narrative techniques in their own master's projects. In the second part, two of the students presented the work they had done on their master's projects thus far, and received critique and feedback from the rest of the class (observation January 29. 2015).

Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley.<sup>261</sup> Although all the productions of both centers have more-or-less structured story meetings, there are no scheduled seminars or classes. As a result, the production demands of the centers sometimes appear to trump reflection. Workshop alumna Hoai-Tran Bui describes one of the projects she was working on as follows:

With the WAMU project<sup>262</sup>, we had Chuck<sup>263</sup> sometimes coming into our meetings to kind of see whether we had any, like, educational value coming out of it. He definitely, like, looked over our project to see, like, “Oh. Can you write a paper on, like, what you've done so far?” That kind of thing. [...] It was a little bit clunky sometimes because, like, we'd be like, “Oh, we're already deep in this process. We don't want to, like, write a paper about what we're doing because we already know what we're talking about.” But I think it helped out because he did try to, like, have some form of structure with it. (Interview September 26. 2014)

Due to the students’ schedules and the little time available, the Washington Post Practicum class used not to have regular meetings (J. Sullivan interview September 10. 2014). During the spring semester of 2015, leader John Sullivan did however start to gather the class every Wednesday to discuss the stories the students were working on.<sup>264</sup> According to the students, these meetings quickly became invaluable learning arenas. Workshop student Pietro Lombardi describes the difference between a regular story meeting and the Wednesday meetings like this:

I mean, John is also our professor. All the other reporters are just reporters. So we help them, we can have some meetings. With John it is different because we can talk with him a lot, we can ask him questions if we have doubts or we don't know what to do. (Interview April 28. 2015).

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<sup>261</sup> In addition to the center-initiated stories, the students’ class work – which is often various practical assignments and productions – become center stories.

<sup>262</sup> Story number A6 in the content analysis, “The Cost of D.C. Council’s Power Over Contracts”, a cooperation between the Workshop and the district radio channel WAMU.

<sup>263</sup> Charles Lewis, executive editor of the Workshop.

<sup>264</sup> The change might be a result of my own interviews with Sullivan, asking him about the mentoring and the guidance of the students. In an informal conversation after the interviews, Sullivan stated that the students would probably benefit from more structured feedback.

Compared to the story meetings of the practice field, the Wednesday meetings thus seem to be of higher educational value. First, they were led by a member of the center staff known to the students – and not an external reporter. Second, as the meetings were initiated by the university center, the students appeared to automatically assume that there was more room for questions. If the goal is taking a step back to “reflect on things”, more classroom-oriented story meetings therefore seem to function better than story meetings in the practice field.

Also when it comes to creating the best possible environment for problem solving and feedback (reflection-in-action), some characteristics of the practice field appear to be a hindrance. According to practice-oriented learning theory, most students need to feel safe and included in order to “ask for help when they are unsure”. Teachers should, for instance, treat trainees as colleagues and not merely subordinates (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1636). Moreover, it is seen as important that the learning environment has room for students to make mistakes (Freidson, 2007, p. 89; Schön, 1988, p. 37). Following from this, it is obvious that real-life, competitive newsrooms do not always represent the best learning environment. As previously discussed, one of the interviewees described the *Washington Post* newsroom as a strongly competitive “shark cage”. Patrick Madden, district reporter at WAMU, puts it like this: “It’s good to make mistakes, but you don’t want to make those mistakes in your projects” (interview October 20. 2014). In comparison, the Stabile and IRP Berkeley students describe their learning environment as follows: “It’s a good lesson because you can fail here. You know, if you miss an interview, it’s not – I mean, it’s terrible, but you’re not gonna get fired.” (J. Huseman interview January 27. 2015). “When you’re working on your thesis, there is a freedom to screw up, and then you have your advisor, who will of course give you corrections” (A. Mullaney interview November 10. 2014).

Again, the picture is not entirely black and white, as some of the students working with external reporters state that they have been treated like equals and included in the full project. As a general rule, it does however seem that the feeling of safety increases proportionally with the distance from the practice field.

## 7.2.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the teaching method

### **Worst case scenario: Back to apprenticeships**

According to the findings listed above, it appears clear that the critique of the teaching hospital model referred to at the beginning of this section is also valid when it comes to some of the centers' teaching. Especially the centers having the closest collaboration with the news industry seem to have adopted some of the negative aspects of apprenticeships<sup>265</sup>:

- What the students learn appears to be somewhat random. At both the Workshop and the New England CIR, and sometimes at the IRP Berkeley, which tasks the students are given is dependent upon what work happens to be going on during the course of training.
- The diligence of the reporters who engage in the training seems to vary, resulting in close supervision of some students while others are hardly supervised at all.
- As some of the training takes place in real-world newsrooms or in cooperation with real-world newsrooms, a continuous performance of productive work is required. Thus, the students seldom engage in discursive instruction conveying abstract concepts and formal theories.
- Since both projects and work-sites vary, as well as the capacity and motivation of those who provide the training, the training is not standardized. Hence, the competence of the centers' graduates probably varies strongly.

When it comes to other proclaimed negatives of apprenticeships/the teaching hospital model, such as the danger of exploiting students and “old school” mentors hindering innovation, the findings are less clear. Starting with the student role, many of the interviewees agree that hands-on, real-world training has the potential for exploitation. However, students, center staff, and representatives from the news organizations all claim that the model represents a win-win arrangement in the vast majority of cases. While the newsrooms benefit from “free labor”<sup>266</sup>, motivated workers, and an effective method of spotting talent, the main student advantages are

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<sup>265</sup> See section 2.3.2 for details.

<sup>266</sup> Many of the interviewees, especially external reporters and students, use this term.



supervision, clips, newsroom experience and newsroom contacts. As Joe Bergantino, executive director of the New England CIR, says:

In these intern discussions, I think very little attention is paid to the amount of investment that the host organization is making in that person, and the time commitment. I'm not even sure it's equal. I think the reality is, in a lot of internship situations, it's a lot more work than it's worth. I think it's important for part of our mission. (Interview March 10. 2015)

For the students not to be taken advantage of, a balance between work effort and supervision is in other words seen necessary. Beth Daley, reporter at News England CIR, states that she sometimes gets so much out of a student that she should pay them. For the most part, she thinks that she gives more than she gets back (interview March 9. 2015). Scott Higham, investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*, states that he would have had a problem with full-time interns working every day without compensation. He does not however see a problem with students coming in one day a week “volunteering” (interview October 2. 2014).

For the students, the opportunity to work with experienced reporters inside real-world newsrooms seems to overshadow all negative aspects. Workshop student Christina Animashaun puts it like this:

It's absolutely a model for getting us to work for free. Are we going to do it? Yeah. Always. Because I'm going to get a little box at the end of a story that says “Contributed by” [...] You really want to put yourself moving forward. (Interview April 29. 2015)

The newsrooms, the centers and the students thus appear to hold what Reese and Cohen (2000) names a “pragmatic pact”: As students more often than not aim to find employment after graduation, they tend to agree to the demands of the media industry. Student and newsroom satisfaction does not however mean that “hands-on, real world” experiences always represent the best education, they warn, as “the guided deep reflection that may create a more meaningful learning experience” is often missing (p. 225). As shown above, this also seems to be the case with some of

the centers' teaching, as the demands of the practice field sometimes appears to hinder reflection, and obstruct the students from seeking advice when they are unsure. Nevertheless, the students seem pleased as work experience, contacts, and clips often result in jobs after graduation. As Shan Wang at the New England CIR puts it: "It sounds very crude, when I think about it, but I want a byline. That's the most important thing. I get clips" (interview March 9. 2015).

Although content with the arrangement, some of the students do however point towards the irony of paying to work – as they have to pay tuition for attending the master programs offering the internships/practicum classes. Workshop alumnus Aaron Gregg is for instance concerned about the "bigger question" occurring when students can buy their way into "a small circle of people who can get you a job", as it favors students with families that are "well enough off that they can afford to subsidize you" (interview September 18. 2014). Workshop alumna Jessica Schulberg puts it like this:

I think AU<sup>267</sup> is great, but I've always sort of felt grad school is paying a lot of money to have people that are important and well-positioned to like you. [...] So I don't mean it in a bad way because it worked out very well for me, but I mean, it was essentially paying to have access to this internship that I wouldn't have qualified for on my own. (Interview September 30. 2014)

The students thus seem to echo some of the major criticisms of unpaid internships. In their study of the teaching hospital model, Francisco et al. (2012), for instance, state that unpaid internships can hinder a diverse profession in terms of economic background as it can be a way of screening out students who cannot afford to work for free. They consider this as a problem, because "the media are better served when diverse backgrounds and viewpoints are represented in the newsroom" (p. 2684). The use of unpaid internships, or practicums that students have to pay tuition to attend, can therefore amplify the elitist orientation of the journalism profession. As discussed

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<sup>267</sup> American University.

in Chapter 6, this can be a problem, as elitist and traditional dispositions are perceived to hinder the production of quality reporting.

When it comes to the critique of the teaching hospital model hindering innovation as the mentors from the news industry are “steeped in old ways of doing things”, most of the interviewees do not agree. As when discussing innovation in reporting (see section 6.1.2), many state that journalism has some core values, that the idea of innovation often is more about the presentation than the reporting, and that too much focus on innovation can result in the truly important parts of reporting being neglected. Moreover, many of the interviewees warn against journalism schools “chasing technology”. According to investigative reporter at the *Washington Post*, Scott Higham, journalism students must first learn how to be reporters and how to be writers. After learning these skills, they can learn “how to tweet stuff, how to embed photos into your stories, how to use Facebook and how to draw traffic”. Unfortunately, he states, “the tail has been wagging the dog a little bit”:

A lot of employers are seeing a lot of kids coming out of journalism school without the reporting skills. Yeah, they know how to do all the bells and whistles. But they don't know how to interview somebody. They don't know how to write a story in a compelling way. They don't know the basics of reporting in journalism. And that is shocking to a lot of people. (Interview October 2. 2014).

Following from this, Higham finds it important that students get the right foundation through being paired with journalists who really know reporting. A large majority of the other interviewees, including the students, seem to hold the same view. Stabile alumna Julia Harte says: “I mean there's so much you have to learn before you can begin to come up with new ways of approaching journalism” (interview January 12. 2015). Robert Rosenthal, executive director of The Center for Investigative Reporting, states that it is “invaluable for these young students to be mentored by experienced journalists” because much of journalism practice, like how to handle sources, how to manage conflicting information, and how to do research are “really important skills that everyone needs to know” (interview November 13. 2014). As

Stabile director Sheila Coronel says: “So Picasso needed to learn the classic painting method to be a cubic painter, right? So you still need the basics that will not change” (interview January 26. 2015). Most of the interviewees state that they *also* emphasize “new knowledge” regarding social media, audience engagement, and telling stories in different ways. In spite of this, “basic reporting skills” are – as shown in section 7.1 – seen as the most important. From this perspective, experienced supervisors “steeped in old ways of doing things” can be perceived a great resource, as they are experts in the areas perceived most important for journalism students.

When discussing innovation in education, several of the interviewees also point to the need for universities to be “durable institutions”. According to Dean at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, Steve Coll, such institutions have to have “confidence about what matters” – namely “honest, dedicated, public-minded reporting”. Hence, universities should not “rush to the latest fashion [...] the way the private sector does”:

I mean, look at the waves to the failed response to the digital era in the private sector. [...] This week it's Twitter, next week it's Instagram, the next week after that it's somebody else's social media network. That's not what we teach. We don't teach other people's businesses. We teach journalism. (Interview January 29. 2015)

According to Coll, the school does not want to “teach a kind of narrow skill set, like how to use a particular software or how to operate a particular camera”, as this knowledge will be obsolete in a few years. Instead, he wants to teach students the core skillsets that will always be central: “how to narrate, how to write, how to think, and how to decide what matters” (interview January 29. 2015).

None of the interviewees do in other words seem to worry about journalism schools not being “innovative” enough. Rather, several appear to worry about journalism schools not educating reporters anymore. According to Scott Higham, the *Washington Post* has recently hired “a lot of people who were not really journalists at all” as “all they can do was write code”. This, he claims, was getting the newsroom in “a lot of trouble because they didn’t have the values system that’s so important”

(interview October 2, 2014). Sarah Cohen, editor of computer-assisted reporting at the *New York Times*, states that journalism schools should concentrate more on educating reporters and editors and not attempt to teach students all kinds of skills that were previously conducted by other occupational groups. Many jobs in a modern newsroom are not traditional journalism jobs, she claims, but “production jobs, art jobs, and computer programming jobs”. Expecting students to do all these jobs, in addition to reporting, writing, editing and filming, is expecting too much, she states. Hence, journalism schools need to decide “what the advantage is of having a marketing specialization for social media and audience development”. Such courses, Cohen argues, could just as easily have been offered by business schools. The same applies to various forms of “data journalism”, she states, as “data journalism” can mean anything from the development of online apps to writing about data (interview January 30, 2015). Just like when it comes to reporting (see section 6.1.2), the interviewees thus seem to think that journalism education needs to focus on the core values of the profession. If not, the schools risk educating data programmers, software operators and marketing specialists instead of reporters.

### **Best case scenario: An unique way of learning**

While some of the teaching at some of the centers appears to have adopted some of the negative aspects of apprenticeships, all four centers do however also have examples of teaching methods strongly resembling the ideals described in section 7.1 and 2.3.2 – offering students challenging “real world” tasks, close mentoring, and room for reflection. The Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley in particular seem to have fulfilled the ideals of the practicum – as both centers have created a more-or-less shielded, intermediate space between the practice world and the world of the academy – making it possible for all students to conduct full-scale reporting. When asking the interviewees about the positive aspects of the centers’ teaching methods, it is this intermediacy – often referred to as bridging of the gap between the university and the practice field – that is most often emphasized. As IRP Berkeley student Heather Mack describes it: “We’re working on real stories that we’re trying to get published. It’s more than an academic schedule” (interview November 11, 2014). Due to the focus on investigative reporting, occupational practice, and the student’

own work, the classroom teaching (the seminars) of both the IRP Berkeley and the Stabile Center seem to be perceived as highly relevant to practice. As Stabile student Jessica Huseman explains:

They've kind of linked all of our skills and all of our projects back to our master's project. We're learning something really useful in class and then we go use it to advance our master's project instead of using it to advance a class exercise. (Interview January 27. 2015)

According to Huseman, she will be “able to continue all of the things that I figured out into the newsroom and very little will have to change”. In comparison, she thinks her husband, who studies law at Columbia, must “figure out everything all over again” as “law school is incredibly different from being a lawyer” (interview January 27. 2015). The seminars, in other words, appear to be examples of successful knowledge transfer from an educational setting to a workplace setting (Eraut, 2004).

The students at the Workshop and the New England CIR also emphasize various advantages that can be seen as a result of the centers' intermediate position. Several for instance state that the centers give them opportunities that do not exist within ordinary internships. Workshop alumnus Aaron Gregg puts it like this:

The thing that this provides that is truly revolutionary, and cannot be found at literally any other journalism training program or internship that I've ever heard of, is the ability to do investigative work when you're 22 and have an experienced person holding your hand. (Interview September 18. 2014)

According to several of the interviewees, learning how to practice investigative reporting through the centers is therefore a way of “breaking the hierarchy” of the practice field. Workshop alumna Alexia Campbell does for instance describe a normal internship as “doing the bottom of the barrel, the jobs that no one else wants to do”. In contrast, the Washington Post Practicum gave her an opportunity to work on high-level, in-depth projects (interview September 23. 2014). Instead of starting their career getting coffee “for the old, crusty guy who'd had that job for a long time”, the students can thus “jump right in” (J. Mintz interview January 29. 2015). A result

of the centers' intermediate position between the university and the practice field can therefore be journalists starting to conduct investigative work at a younger age – which in turn can increase the extent of investigative reporting.

### **Not always a win-win situation**

In summary, it is obvious that the teaching of the centers – based on hands-on, real world experiences – has both strengths and weaknesses. In the best-case scenario it does seem a unique way of learning. In the worst-case scenario, the teaching method appears to be an example of journalism education returning to the apprenticeship system, where what the individual student learns is more-or-less random. Presenting the teaching hospital model as a win-win situation, where newsrooms get extra resources through students while the students get the chance to learn investigative reporting working alongside some of the best journalists in the country (see section 1.1), thus appears like an oversimplification. It is true that some students end up working elbow to elbow with experienced reporters, getting a unique opportunity to learn directly and indirectly from “the masters of the trade”. It is however also a fact that some students end up conducting “grunt work” without getting either supervision or other forms of compensation in return. To the last group, the “win” seems minor. Hence, the training risks becoming perfunctory and exploitative instead of educational, and the students risk becoming cheap apprentice labor instead of learners. Due to the “pragmatic pact” between students and newsrooms, arrangements on the verge of being exploitative can be hard to uncover.

The critique that the teaching hospital model hinders innovation because “old-school” reporters from the news industry are used as mentors, however, seems less valid in relation to the centers' teaching. First, with the centers only cooperating with highly regarded professional newsrooms, the proficiency of all the external instructors appears high (see section 5.3). Second, it seems as if the prioritizing of “old school core values” – like finding interesting stories, good interview techniques and storytelling – is a *conscious choice* based on both professional-view and knowledge-view. As discussed in section 6.1.2, the interviewees fear that too much focus on innovation and new digital aspects could make journalism disappear into the larger

world of communications. The teaching of journalistic core values can thus be a way of shielding and strengthening the profession. Moreover, as discussed in section 7.1.3, the knowledge of various publishing- and analyzing tools is seen only as a minor part of the journalistic knowledge base while the main aim of journalism education is seen as teaching professional capability. Hence, focusing too much on new technology could leave insufficient time to teach the hardest and most important part of reporting. According to the professional-view and knowledge-view of the interviewees, “old school” reporters are in other words not hindering innovation, but the best teachers of the core values of the profession.

### **7.3 Learning, knowledge development, and legitimacy building**

In the two preceding sections of this chapter, the attempt has been to describe the centers’ classroom role through examining their knowledge base and teaching methods. In the following, the findings will be discussed towards the centers’ potential function as professional platforms. Starting with the centers’ role in educating the next generation of investigative reporters, the second part discusses whether the centers contribute to the knowledge advancement of the profession. The third and last part looks at how the centers’ classroom role can legitimize the work of the journalism profession – and thus strengthen its jurisdiction over news.

#### **7.3.1 What the students are learning**

According to the knowledge view of the interviewees, developing the professional capability of students should be the main aim of professional education. Put in other words: When graduating, the students should be able to solve various “real world” professional problems. As the centers specialize in investigative reporting, their goal is even more specific, namely educating the next generation of investigative reporters. It is of course hard to determine whether the centers reach this goal or not. Both teaching methods and the students’ learning experience can however give an indication.

Starting with the teaching methods, it is obvious that some of the centers do not follow all the ideals of practice-oriented learning theory. First, some of the students are only conducting “clerical work” or “leg work” and thus might not be pushed to



“greater capability through sequenced challenges” (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1638). Second, some students are barely supervised, which means they are not receiving “appropriate supervision and support” (Schumacher et al., 2013, p. 1638). Third, the demands of the practice field seem to hinder reflection and obstruct the students from seeking advice when they are unsure.

When asking the students what they had learned from the centers’ teaching, the learning outcome appeared to increase when the ideals of practice-oriented learning were followed: The more responsibility, mentoring and room for reflection, the more the students claimed to have learned. *All* the students however appear to have learned something. Although wishing to be included more in the overall project, and calling for the opportunity to report and write, the researchers did state that they had learned various researching skills.<sup>268</sup> Some had learned “to read federal court documents”, others how to “use Excel much better” or “how to be really good at tracking people and public records”. In addition, many of the researcher students stated that they had gained a valuable glimpse of the investigative process. Workshop-student Mariam Baksh does for instance state that “learning how much work goes into data-driven stories has been incredible” (interview April 29, 2015). Of the many skillsets and knowledge elements listed by the interviewees in section 7.1.1, the researcher students do in other words seem to have obtained some information gathering and analyzing skills in addition to getting a glimpse of “what it takes” to conduct investigative reporting.

Because they are a bigger part of the full reporting project, the students functioning as reporting researchers, however, do appear to have acquired a greater proportion of the “basic reporting skills” than the researchers, including interview technique and storytelling skills. Student at the New England CIR, Christina Jedra, for instance, states that she learned to find out “which stories were worth doing, if they were possible to do, testing stories and writing”, while fellow intern Shan Wang learned

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<sup>268</sup> A skill can be defined as the level of proficiency on specific tasks, or the learned capability of an individual to achieve desired performance outcomes. Thus, skills can be improved via practice and instruction (Schuelke & Day, 2012, p. 20).

“interviewing and finding the right people to interview” (C. Jedra interview February 23. 2015, S. Wang interview March 9. 2015). Workshop student Pietro Lombardi claims that he improved his “writing skills”, “pitching skills” and general “reporting skills” from the center’s teaching (interview April 28. 2015). In addition to the students who became more involved, the reporting researchers with less responsibility also seem to judge highly their learning outcome. Workshop student Ke (Amber) Lui, do for instance state that, even though she was not “in charge of anything or write anything”, she “experienced the entire process of how to produce a long-form investigative story from the very beginning to the end”. This, she states, was “a very valuable experience” (interview April 29. 2015). Like the researchers, the reporting researchers thus appear to develop an understanding of the culture and the demands of investigative reporting through observing the work of others. Moreover, as they work in a team, frequently participate in story meetings, and are often closely supervised, the reporting researchers *also* get access to the personal knowledge of the reporter in charge and the personal knowledge of their fellow students.

Compared with the researchers and the reporting researchers, the learning of the students in the third student function, the full-scale reporters, does seem to include an extra dimension. Workshop alumnus Aaron Gregg describes it as learning to design “a research methodology that's going to lead somewhere” (A. Gregg interview September 18. 2014). In addition to learning the different tools of reporting, the students are gaining experience in planning and conducting a reporting project. To Stabile director Sheila Coronel, letting students function as full-scale reporters is a way of teaching the students “the hard parts” of reporting:

Part of what we teach is that we don't tell them what to do. They have to find an idea that's worthy of investigation. Of course, we discuss it with them, but they have to find a story because that's the first thing that you need to do as a journalist, right? You're not just ordered to research the story. That's the easy part. The hard part is actually finding a story and reporting it. (Interview January 26. 2015)

In addition to training students in various reporting skills, the students conducting full-scale reporting thus are trained in problem framing (finding “an idea that's worthy of investigation”) and how to find the right tools to solve the problem (“reporting it”), which are both central aspects in the teaching of professional capability.<sup>269</sup> In contrast, the researchers and the reporting researchers are working in teams with experienced reporters *telling* them what to do. Hence, although getting an introduction to the knowledge and tools needed to develop professional capability (various researching skills, uncoded cultural knowledge, and personal knowledge), these students seem not to learn how to frame a problem or how to find the right tools to solve a problem *on their own*.

The findings of this study appear to coincide with the theory claiming that there is little transfer from high-level proficiency in one domain to proficiency in other domains (see section 7.1.3 and 2.3.2). The students doing “clerical work” appear to become good at doing “clerical work”. Students finding stories, planning and reporting improve their ability to find stories, plan and report. Generally, one could therefore argue that the Stabile and the IRP Berkeley students are probably more able to produce investigative stories *on their own* after graduation than the Workshop and New England CIR students. At the same time, the Workshop and New England CIR students are probably more trained in the use of certain investigative tools, and know more about working in real life newsrooms. If the goal is to develop professional capability, the better method thus seems to be full-scale reporting under close supervision, with the opportunity to “step back and reflect on things”.

From the above, the Stabile Center and the IRP Berkeley appear to have developed an effective way of teaching professional capability/artistry. All the students of *all the centers* – even the ones only working as researchers – do however seem to have acquired some investigative skills. Therefore, all the students affiliated with the centers can probably contribute to investigative projects in one way or another at the time of their graduation. While some might be able to conduct their own

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<sup>269</sup> As discussed in section 7.1, professional “capability” seems to involve at least three skills: 1) the ability to understand a complex situation – and thus the ability to frame a problem; 2) the ability to apply the right tools to solve the problem; and 3) the ability to improvise if the applied strategies do not work.

investigations, others know how to get hold of the most relevant court documents, or how to best arrange large amounts of information in spreadsheets. As stated by several of the interviewees in section 7.1.2, such investigative skills are becoming rare because of the economics of the news industry. Hence, both students with certain investigative tools and students with a more developed professional capability can be said to be of high value to the profession. Despite of some negative aspects, the centers can thus be said to have an important role in educating the next generation of investigative reporters as, overall, they teach their students much needed knowledge and skills.

### **7.3.2 Knowledge development**

When it comes to whether the centers can be said to contribute to the knowledge advancement of the *profession*, the answer is strongly dependent upon how knowledge is defined. If only referring to theoretical-oriented academic knowledge, with the scientific disciplines representing the highest standards, the centers might not have much to offer. However, if the term is defined according to the practice-oriented knowledge view – including codified knowledge of the applied field, codified knowledge of the occupational practice, cultural knowledge and personal knowledge – the answer is another matter.

First, the centers help students develop their personal knowledge through real-world problem solving (reflection-in-action), direct supervision (reflection-in-action together with an experienced guide), and story meetings/seminars (reflection-for-action and reflection-on-action).

Second, the supervision of the students and the story meetings/seminars seem to force reporters to codify more of their personal knowledge and the cultural knowledge of the newsroom. According to the leader of the Washington Post Practicum, John Sullivan, many of the external reporters state that mentoring students offers them an opportunity to learn – as the interaction with the students about what they're doing makes them “think about what they're doing from a higher view” (J. Sullivan interview September 26. 2014). Hence, the teaching of the centers might be a step

towards demystifying the practical knowledge of investigative reporting – making future instruction easier.

Third, through actually practicing investigative reporting, the students and the reporters, as mentioned above, have to reflect-in-action. This means that they might develop new techniques and methods better suited to solve professional problems. Through various forms of reflection, all four centers do in other words help advance the *practice-oriented* knowledge of the journalism profession. Again, the more teaching-oriented centers do however seem to have the better structure as they tend to have *more* room for reflection.

### **7.3.3 Legitimacy building**

Both the knowledge view of the interviewees and the actual teaching methods of the centers are also central when discussing the legitimating potential of the centers' classroom role. Since having a practice-oriented knowledge view, the interviewees do not favor disciplinary, theoretical knowledge over practical knowledge. As a result, the preferred knowledge base is both heterogeneous and fragmented – containing theory, various practical skills, analytical skills, professional values and professional ways of thinking. To academics with a more theoretical-oriented knowledge view, this lack of homogeneity and integration has been interpreted as a lack of formal knowledge. As a result, journalism has been accused of being a “mere trade and a technique” instead of a “real profession”. The knowledge view of the interviewees can thus lower the status and legitimacy of journalism within fields known to prefer and advocate theoretical knowledge. This can of course be a problem as the postindustrial society, and universities in particular, are said to be dependent on theoretical knowledge. As put by Freidson (2007): “The connection of training with the high culture valued by the elite and often respected by the masses, [...] establishes an essential part of the ideological foundation for the occupation's status” (p. 96).

One could claim that the interviewees need a more theoretical-oriented knowledge view in order to help increase the status of the journalism profession. According to the practice-oriented knowledge view, the legitimation of a profession is however

best obtained through actually fulfilling the professional task in the best possible manner. Moreover, the students cannot learn how to fulfill this task with the help of theory alone. Through focusing more on theory – increasing the status of the profession within certain fields – the centers could thus risk educating students with a lot of professional “knowing that” – but little professional know-how. This could in turn lower the profession’s capability of producing “responsible and engaging community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful”.<sup>270</sup> To the practice-oriented centers, this is most likely not a desired development. To them, the “extraordinary knowledge” legitimating the profession (referred to in the beginning of this chapter) is not theory – but professional “capability” derived from theory and other “depths of understanding”.

#### **7.3.4 The centers as necessary, practice-oriented counterweights**

Summarizing the findings of this chapter, one could state that the centers represent necessary, practice-oriented counterweights to the theoretical-oriented universities they are part of. Through teaching students professional capability, helping advance the *practice-oriented* knowledge of the journalism profession, and legitimating the profession through educating students with professional know-how, all the centers seem to resemble practice-oriented “teaching laboratories”. Sometimes, these teaching laboratories appear to offer both practical and theoretical knowledge in “a unique marriage”, which is seen as the ideal of professional education (Freidson, 2007, p. 121). In these cases, the centers’ teaching seems to function “like a bridge between the worlds of university and practice” – connecting “the knowing- and reflection-in-action of competent practitioners to the theories and techniques taught as professional knowledge in academic courses” (Schön, 1988, pp. 309-312). The centers can thus be said to have created an unique educational environment where the “school world” and the “real world” are blending seamlessly (Roberts, 2012, p. 62). Other times, practice seems to have taken over, with the centers’ teaching resembling former practitioner-controlled forms of education like apprenticeships. In some of these cases, the “product oriented teaching culture” appears to limit how students

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<sup>270</sup> The aim of the profession as defined in section 2.2.5.

“learn to think” (Hanna, 2008, p. 163). However, as they cooperate only with prestigious investigative newsrooms, there does not appear to be a danger of students only learning “quick story turnaround, single sourcing, newsroom-based reporting, brand journalism, and native advertising”, becoming “Jacks and Jills of all platforms, masters of none” (Gasher, 2015, p. 106). Although the width of the training varies from single tools to full capability, all the students are trained in various forms of investigative reporting. Hence, all the centers appear to represent arenas where students “learn to think like journalists” and begin to take the first steps of professional practice (Dzur, 2008, p. 269). To various degrees, all the four centers’ can therefore be said to fulfill their classroom role. This does not however mean that all the centers have fulfilled their full *educative potential*. Those centers that cooperate most closely with the news industry can sometimes seem to be on the verge of exploiting students as free labor, as very little supervision is given in return for the students’ work efforts. In the long run, such a marginalization of supervision and guidance could weaken the education of new reporters, and thus journalism’s jurisdiction over news.

## 8. Summary and conclusion

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss the overall research question – *What potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?* – and to debate what the findings of the study can say about the journalism profession in general. Why, for instance, it is so hard for the journalism profession to gain autonomy? The chapter also comments on the study’s transferable value to non-U.S. contexts, and suggests topics for further research. However, to begin, the answers to the study’s five sub-questions are summarized.

### 8.1 The five sub-questions

#### *1. What is considered professional, and what is quality journalism?*

The ideal-typical profession is in this study understood as an autonomous occupation holding special knowledge and having special obligations towards society (see section 2.1). As an extension of this understanding, the underlying normative standards used to define the term “quality journalism” are derived from the dominant occupational ideology of journalism. In short, quality reporting is described as democratically relevant, in line with the public it serves, and as close to the truth as possible. Moreover, it holds the powerful accountable, and is meaningful, relevant and engaging. The precise definition of quality journalism used in this study is “responsible and engaging community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful” (see section 2.2.5).

#### *2. What characterizes the four university nonprofits?*

All four centers of this study can be described as professional-oriented nonprofits (PONs), characterized by the attempt to build a parallel, independent news production system in response to the perceived failure of commercial news outlets. Moreover, all four centers are 1) supported by a philanthropic sector focused on the crisis in journalism, 2) part of a mother-university, and 3) working closely with traditional news outlets that are co-producing and distributing their stories. All are led by renowned investigative reporters, have won several prestigious journalism awards, and have stated that their goal is saving investigative reporting.



Through the relationship to their “mother-university”, the centers become hybrids: part newsrooms and part classrooms. As newsrooms, their goal is producing quality journalism. As classrooms, they aim to educate the next generation of investigative reporters. While all four centers both produce and teach, three of the centers mainly focus on producing (the IRP Berkeley, the Workshop, and the New England CIR), while one center describes itself as a “teaching center” (the Stabile Center). All four centers, however, seem to function as “hubs”, connecting the journalism schools to the practice field.

### *3. How autonomous are the centers?*

As their existence is reliant upon the goodwill and support of foundations, universities, and external newsrooms, the centers of this study can be said to be triple dependent. For now, none of the three partnering groups seems to challenge the centers’ journalistic autonomy. First, most of the foundational influence seems to consist of encouraging the centers to produce society-improving journalism in line with the journalism profession’s own ideals. Second, the journalism schools that the centers are part of seem to value the aims, norms, and special knowledge of the journalism profession. Third, the centers are only collaborating with a carefully selected part of the commercial news industry that shares their aims and values. The centers have thus chosen partners with values and norms coinciding with their own. However, if one or more of the partnering groups were to stop valuing and defending ideals that support the principles of journalism, the centers’ independence could be threatened. Hence, the centers’ autonomy seems fragile.

In addition to the potential influence of the three partnering groups, the largest threat to the centers’ autonomy appears to be their weak economy. In spite of being the largest university nonprofits in the world, all four centers can be described as small and fragile. The two centers without endowments to rely upon (the Workshop and the New England CIR) seem especially to be engaged in an everyday struggle to survive – constantly searching for new foundation support, partnership agreements, and alternative ways to earn revenue. As a result, the editorial staff is more involved in the financial aspects of the centers than what has been the standard within the

traditional news industry. This can in turn lead to insufficient time to conduct reporting, and the mixing of market and professional values. Altogether, the “new path” towards professional autonomy (nonprofit reporting) thus seems both narrow and rocky.

#### *4. What kind of journalism are the centers idealizing and producing?*

Through their connection to 1) investigative reporting, 2) professional education, and 3) professional-oriented nonprofits, a majority of the study’s interviewees can be described as triply professional-oriented. Hence, it might not be surprising that their personal perception of quality journalism (their professional identity) closely corresponds with the quality definition derived from the dominant occupational ideology of journalism (the profession’s identity). In sum, the interviewees describe quality reporting as “true, new and effectively communicated information changing society for the better”.

Due to the strong emphasis on classic professional values, the interviewees’ professional view seems to resemble what Dzur (2008) calls “the public trustee model”. From a professional perspective, this view – focusing on the traditional core values of journalism – can be helpful in order to distinguish journalism from other occupational groups. Moreover, it effectively connects journalism to the cultural value of democracy (Abbott, 1988, pp. 184-187). In line with the findings of other recent studies (Hovden, 2016; Willnat & Weaver, 2014), the inner cohesion of journalism thus seems to increase with the external threat (in this study, exemplified by the journalism crisis). Due to its high symbolic value, investigative reporting in particular seems to gain an increasingly central position within the ideology of journalism.

When it comes to the production of the four centers, most can be described as quality reporting if applying the quality definition of the journalism profession itself.<sup>271</sup> The average story analyzed, for instance, consisted of more than 30 specified sources, 80 percent of the stories focused on democratically relevant topics, such as social issues

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<sup>271</sup> The quality definition (found in section 2.2.5) is derived from the current dominant occupational ideology of journalism.

and politics, and 90 percent of the stories were exclusive or had an exclusive twist. Moreover, in spite of only ten to twelve stories a year being produced, they seem to reach a large audience and gain much attention through awards and citations. More negatively, the centers seem to favor male elite sources, they have a domestic focus, and 90 percent of the stories can be classified as highly- or slightly elitist-oriented.

#### 5. *What characterizes the centers' knowledge base and teaching methods?*

The interviewees of the study seem to hold a complex, practice-oriented knowledge view. Hence, their ideal-knowledge base consists of various practical skills, analytical skills, theoretical knowledge, professional values and professional ways of thinking. As professional knowledge is not seen as the application of theory but, rather, the development of professional expertise/capability, classroom teaching alone is perceived insufficient. Only through doing something “a thousand times” and making “all the mistakes you’re going to make” can professional expertise be developed, a majority of the interviewees state – thus strongly emphasizing the value of learning by doing.

When it comes to the centers’ actual teaching, it does for the most part fulfill the ideals of practice-oriented professional education. For the centers with the closest collaborations with the practice field, however, the requirements of performance and productive work can create challenges for the learning environment. Hence, some of the teaching of some of the centers (like parts of the Workshop’s Washington Post Practicum) appears to have more in common with apprenticeships than with the ideal professional education.

## 8.2 The main research question

To answer the overall research question of this study, *what potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism?*, I will start with the three key concepts of the question – namely “alternative”, “professional platform” and “quality journalism”.

First, are the nonprofit university centers an *alternative* to the traditional news industry? According to the findings described above, the answer can be both yes and

no. Yes, because the centers seem to represent a new way of organizing newsrooms where professional ideals and norms are central. Through selecting partners with values and norms coinciding with their own, the university nonprofits appear to have united accomplices from various fields, all seeing the production of professional-oriented, quality reporting as an indispensable societal good. No, because the economic reality of the centers make them small and fragile. As the most prominent and successful university nonprofits are not producing more than ten to twelve large productions a year, the field as a whole cannot be seen as an alternative to the news industry. Until more viable sources of income can be found, the “nonprofit path” thus do not seem like an alternative to the “market path” and the “broadcasting path”. As later discussed in more detail, it can however be described as an important *supplement*.

Second, what potential do nonprofit university centers have as *professional platforms*? The answer to this question seems to be “high”. The quality perceptions and the knowledge view of the centers’ staff and partners, and the centers’ production and teaching seem to have high legitimating – and thus profession-strengthening – value.<sup>272</sup> As described above, the quality aspects most often referred to by the interviewees directly relate journalism to the public good. In addition, the centers actually seem to produce quality reporting as defined by the profession itself – meaning that they counteract the growing gap between realities and ideals in journalism, which in turn can increase the public’s trust in journalists. As the majority of the center stories are investigative, they can also be said to represent the *prototype* of quality reporting – an aspect greatly adding to their symbolic and legitimating value. Since only a small amount of good journalism is needed for the ideology-building of journalism to be effective (Eide, 1992, p. 31), the centers can thus be described as important cornerstones in the journalistic belief system, despite only producing ten to twelve stories a year.

Regarding the centers’ classroom role, the practice-oriented knowledge view and the teaching of the centers can lower the status and legitimacy of journalism within fields

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<sup>272</sup> The only exception being the centers’ elite orientation, a theme described thoroughly in Chapter 6.

known to prefer and advocate theoretical knowledge. According to the practice-oriented knowledge view, the legitimation of a profession is however best obtained through actually fulfilling the professional task in the best possible manner. From this perspective, focusing on learning by doing can be an effective way of strengthening the journalism profession, as it can help advance the practice-oriented knowledge of the profession, and teach new practitioners the necessary know-how. In some cases, the centers also seem to offer both practical and theoretical knowledge in “a unique marriage” (Freidson, 2007, p. 121), creating a rare educational environment where the “school world” and the “real world” meet, thus fulfilling the ideal of professional education. Combined, the newsroom role and the classroom role of the centers thus seem to strengthen what Abbott (1988) labels “the internal forces” of journalism (pp. 91-96). Through 1) producing content that live up to the ideals of what journalism claims to be, 2) emphasizing ideals corresponding with the ideology of professionalism, and 3) helping improve and develop the professional knowledge base, the centers can be said to strengthen journalism’s jurisdiction over news.

Third, what potential do nonprofit university centers have as alternative platforms for *quality journalism*? Here, the answer seems to be “low”. As emphasized by the interviewees, quality journalism is more than investigative reporting; it also includes “really solid beat reporting”, “feature stories”, “good legislation working its way through Capitol Hill”, and “enterprise reporting”. Although not being investigative reporters, White House correspondents, business reporters, theater critics, and orbit writers offer information that serves vital social and democratic functions. According to the content analysis, the typical center production is a hard-news story, concerning social issues, politics, economy or crime. During a period of approximately twelve months, none of the centers had produced stories on culture, everyday life, sport or accidents. Due to their small size, the centers are in other words not able to provide the full breadth of information included in the term quality journalism.

In summary, the overall answer to the main research question seems to be “low”. Nonprofit university centers do not seem to have much potential as alternative, professional platforms for quality journalism. They do however seem to be important

*ideology builders*. In addition to strengthening the jurisdiction between journalists and news reporting, they can function as standard-bearers to the rest of the profession. As the centers are teaching the next generation of investigative reporters, their standard-bearing role can have an especially strong effect.

### **8.2.1 Not the solution to the journalism crisis**

As described in the introduction, the starting point of this study was a simple question. Could university nonprofits be part of the solution to the journalism crisis? From the above, the answer seems to be “yes”. Functioning as “ideological lighthouses”, the centers can be of great importance to a profession struggling with ongoing challenges and change. As the centers cannot substitute the production of quality reporting traditionally provided by the commercial news industry, they are however not *the* solution. According to the social contract of the press, journalists must provide citizens with essential societal information. As described above, this includes journalism of lower symbolic value than investigative reporting, such as regional and local reporting. Without reporters covering municipal councils and court hearings, for instance, on a daily basis, citizens could struggle to keep themselves updated on what happens in society and in political processes. This would in turn give them a weak foundation to act upon politically. Following from this, the somewhat grey, everyday “middle class” of journalism – situated between the investigative, elite reporting and the “rogue” underclass reporting – can be described as extremely important and of high democratic value. Today, neither the market nor the nonprofit model seems to be able to provide sufficient funding to sustain the continuous and broad local and regional reporting. Hence, the “middle class” of reporting seems to be gradually disappearing.<sup>273</sup> Citizen reporters, activists, and politicians could of course provide information directly. However, as previously discussed, professional reporters trained in information-gathering and effective communication are most likely better equipped than the average citizen at providing

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<sup>273</sup> At least according to the many reports referred to in this study, among others the Pew Research Center’s State of the News Media reports.

the fact-based, critical, impartial, and proportional information needed as a foundation for political action.

### **8.2.2 Investigative reporting as *not* especially threatened**

As discussed in section 2.2.3, many see investigative reporting as especially threatened by “the economic troubles that have diminished so many newspapers”, as it often is resource demanding, time-consuming, and accusatory of character. In addition, the research process typically has an uncertain outcome. According to the findings of this study, investigative reporting, however, seems to have a higher market value than many other forms of reporting, as it is highly symbolic in character. Put simply, news outlets, foundations, universities, journalists themselves, and other societal actors often want to show that they can make the world a better place. As investigative reporting often strives towards an immediate societal effect and includes disclosures about those with power, supporting or conducting investigative reporting can be particularly favorable. Hence, it seems likely that investigative reporting is a journalistic subcategory that will continue to receive support during periods of financial recession. Moreover, investigative reporters themselves seem highly dedicated to their work, seeing it as a “secular calling”. As put by one of the interviewees: “As long as the desire is there, there’s a way”. The existence of the university nonprofits themselves, especially the ones without endowments to rely upon, seems to be a firm proof of this enthusiasm. Through a patchwork of ever-changing partnerships and sponsors, these centers’ manage to obtain enough funding to keep it going. What seems to hold the patchwork together is the strong dedication of the centers’ staff. Hence, the normative aspect of investigative reporting appears to secure that the reporters perform their work as well as possible (Freidson, 2007, pp. 110-122). Combined, the symbolic value of investigative reporting, and the dedication of investigative reporters thus seems to make a strong safety net.

Following from the above, the many concerns about investigative reporting expressed in the public debate in the wake of the journalism crisis might not be caused by it being especially threatened. The exposure in the debate can also be caused by

investigative reporting being especially *visible* due to its strong symbolic value. In Norway, several newsrooms have for instance created multiple positions for investigative reporters in the aftermath of the journalism crisis – despite reducing the general editorial staff dramatically<sup>274</sup>.

### 8.3 What the findings say about journalism in general

As described in Chapter 2, the history of journalism has been an ongoing struggle for autonomy. First, journalism was conceived in the context of politics. As reporting became more profitable, publishers could however declare independence from political control. Instead, the press became “firmly embedded in capitalist dynamics” (Waisbord, 2013, p. 54). The establishment of nonprofits is often seen as a new attempt of gaining autonomy, as a central aspect of the nonprofit project is to declare independence from market control. However, despite the fact that the four centers of this study provide content that lives up to the ideals of what journalism claims to be, are led by experienced and respected investigative reporters, have formed partnerships with well-known universities, and cooperate with some of the most esteemed newsrooms in the world – they do not seem to be able to gain the intended independence. Instead, all the centers are triple-dependent – relying upon the goodwill of foundations, universities, and external newsrooms. Moreover, although having the best prerequisites for succeeding, some of the centers seem to be living from hand to mouth. Why does it seem so hard for the centers – and the journalism profession in general – to gain autonomy/find sufficient financial solutions?

Four aspects seem to stand out when comparing journalism with other professions. First, the outcomes of reporting are not always immediately positive. Compared with doctors who make the sick well, teachers who educate our children, engineers who build bridges, and lawyers who ensure justice, journalists might require an acquired taste. Even when fulfilling its highest standards, the confessions of a familiar politician, the harsh critique of a local school, or the damaging information about a community’s cornerstone business might not always be perceived as changing society

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<sup>274</sup> The regional newspaper *Stavanger Aftenblad* for instance increased the number of investigative reporters from three to five in 2016. At the same time, the editorial staff had been cut by one third during the last 32 months (Johansen, 2016).



for the better. As put by one of the interviewees: “Journalism makes people uncomfortable routinely”. Because of its social mandate, journalism has never been a popularity contest. Schudson (2008) puts it like this:

[S]ome of the greatest service the media provide for democracy lies in characteristics that few people regard as very nice or enchanting about the press. These features of journalism, and perhaps these features more than others, makes news a valuable force in a democratic society, and this means that – if it all goes well – we are saddled with a necessary institution we are not likely ever to love. (p. 62)

Following from this, journalism’s low standing with the public (see section 6.1.2) might not only be the result of so called treatment failures – where the actual journalism conducted does not live up to the ideals and societal aims of the profession. The low standing can also be caused by the very *ideals* of the profession. Being “unlovable” might not be the best guarantee for financial, political, or moral support. This can explain why it seems harder to finance journalism than more “lovable” professions.

Second, the liberal values of journalism are in many cases incompatible with state financing. In several countries, the government is the natural guarantor of important societal functions – financing hospitals, fire departments, schools, courts, etc. Along with many academics, one could argue that journalism is such an important part of a functioning democracy that newsrooms should be financed by the state. Such interference would however be unthinkable for many journalists – especially within the liberal press system of the U.S. where any form of external control or regulation is seen as a possible threat to the freedom of expression. For doctors, teachers, and firefighters, who do not have government monitoring as one of their main professional tasks, receiving government support is far less problematic. Hence, the liberal-oriented press seems forced to remain reliant on other, more unstable, financing forms. Worrying about the sustainability of the nonprofit news network, some of the center leaders are now reconsidering the possibility of government aid. As put by Sheila Coronel of the Stabile Center in section 6.4.3: “Maybe it’s time to

have a real debate on whether journalism funded by the government can be independent, and if so, what safeguards can be built to insure journalistic autonomy” (Coronel, 2013). Given the choice between government-funded journalism and no journalism at all, some are in other words prepared to abandon the staunchest liberal principles.

Third, the journalism profession has a practice-oriented knowledge base with a strong normative orientation. Unlike professions with a more formal knowledge base, like medicine and engineering, journalistic knowledge is not organized by theories and abstract concepts, or divided among specialized disciplines. Instead, it is relatively diffuse, unstable, and insecure. In addition, the theoretical aspects of journalism are mainly obtained from humanitarian disciplines, while professions like medicine and engineering to a greater degree rely upon scientific disciplines. Hence, journalism has fewer definitive answers, meaning that, to a greater degree, its practitioners have to rely upon assessment. This gives the journalistic knowledge base a normative orientation, which, as described above, can be a great advantage. To groups with a different value set than expressed through journalistic norms, values, and reporting, the normativity can be alienating. If it becomes too narrowly normative, journalism thus risk building echo chambers which, in turn, can lead to a fragmented public discourse. Overall, the normative and unstable-knowledge base can give the impression of an unprofessional, activist group. This can in turn lead to lower status and fewer privileges. As shown in section 2.2.6, the suggestion of financing journalism through a national fund based on money from a federal commission was for instance characterized as “a tin cup” for an industry that “has to rethink what it is and what it teaches”. However, if journalism do not advocate any norms or values, it can risk becoming invisible and insignificant.

Fourth, conducting quality reporting is complicated, hard, and resource demanding. Hence, many small newsrooms have neither the resources nor the appropriate staff to conduct “responsible and engaging community journalism, testing the liability of the powerful”. In contrast, conducting low quality journalism is relatively easy. If the journalism profession is to survive, it has to convince society that its members are

expert providers of news, and that these experts produce better news than ordinary citizens do. If too many practitioners conduct low quality reporting that “everyone” can do (described by the interviewees as “junk” or “empty calories”), it can be hard to understand why journalists are needed at all. As stated by one of the interviewees, newsrooms should prioritize “videos that help people understand the new property tax system and accounting” over “kitty videos”. If too many newsrooms produce “empty calories” too often, journalism risks losing its jurisdiction over news. Moreover, if everybody can do the work of a reporter, there is no need for reporters. Not having sufficient resources, or not having a properly educated staff aiming to fulfill the ideals of the journalism profession, can thus result in a vicious circle: Many would not see the use of supporting a profession of low societal value. This could lead to even scarcer resources and fewer reporters holding traditional professional ideals.

Combined, the four complicating aspects described above can make it hard to finance journalism – which in turn can make the striving towards autonomy troublesome. The profession does however have one great advantage: The professional task has not disappeared (Abbott, 1988, p. 91). There is still a need in a democracy for reporters producing quality content for citizens. From this perspective, the “standard bearing” and ideology-building role of the four university centers of this study can be of great value. While the profession is searching for new ways to encounter its economic challenges, the centers can help safeguard journalism’s core values and “best practices”. Being part of universities, described as “voices of the long run, of what really matters”, can thus be a great advantage. According to Jeff Leen, investigations editor in the *Washington Post*, the profession is currently experiencing “a very dark time”, with people trying to figure out how it is possible to “stay informed as a society” and “how we are gonna pay for news”. During this dark time, the centers and their partners are, as he sees it, “preserving, protecting and extending the art like the monks in the Middle Ages keeping Latin alive” (interview October 2. 2014).

## 8.4 Transferability

As briefly described in the introduction, the combination of a liberal media system, numerous private universities and a strong philanthropic tradition is rarely found outside North America. European reporters are for instance more likely to accept government funding than U.S. reporters, as the liberal media system generally is more “anti-state” than most other media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Moreover, in most North European countries, the media is not simply seen as a private commercial enterprise but as a social institution for which the state has an important responsibility (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 161). In these countries, an increase in government subsidies would probably be a more likely outcome of the journalism crisis than a growing nonprofit sector. Hence, most of the findings of this study relating to structural aspects in general, and funding in particular, might have little transfer value to non-U.S. countries. Regarding the more overarching topics – quality aspects, professionalization, differencing knowledge views and teaching methods – the findings and discussions are probably of higher value. If journalism schools in Norway want to establish partnerships with the news industry, knowledge of the varying strengths and weaknesses of the four centers’ collaboration models could be of great worth. To secure the best possible learning environment, it is for instance important that both the journalism schools and cooperating newsrooms acknowledge that students are learners and not free labor. Hence, an overall structure securing sufficient guidance and appropriate tasks is necessary.

## 8.5 Suggestions for further research

This study is broad and exploratory, including a number of topics and disciplinary fields ranging from economics to pedagogy. The possibilities for further study and research are thus many.

When it comes to the structure of the nonprofit university centers, it would be interesting to study models of university-industry cooperation in Europe, and what challenges they meet compared to the U.S. centers. The British Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ) based at City University in London for instance is a fascinating candidate as it seems to have many of the same characteristics as the U.S.

nonprofits, cooperating with external newsrooms like al Jazeera English, the *Independent*, the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian* while teaching students investigative reporting (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, n.d.).

In considering journalistic norms and ideals, it would be interesting to take a closer look at the tension between traditional core values and the ideals of innovation found in most newsrooms and journalism schools. Which underlying ideals and views upon journalism characterize the two camps? Moreover, which of the two views seem to be dominant at which institutions? Are media leaders for instance more likely to endorse an innovative view than reporters and educators?

In the field of journalism education, one idea would be to compare journalism schools with a theoretical-oriented knowledge view to more practice-oriented schools. What are the students at the different institutions learning, and how? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various teaching models, and what do the students say they learn? Furthermore, is the experienced learning outcome changing as the students gain work experience after graduation?

It is of course also possible to conduct further research on U.S. university nonprofits. Will the field increase or decrease? What happens to the students after graduation? Are they able to conduct investigative reporting when entering the “real world”? Moreover, what happened in the cases where the cooperation between journalism schools and nonprofit newsrooms did *not* work out – for instance in the cooperation between Emory University and Georgia News Lab in Atlanta? What the future brings for the four centers of this study is also interesting. Dependent upon whether the profession finds acceptable and sustainable new sources of income or not, they can either end up as the last resting place for the idealists of a dying profession – or as successful ideological power fields managing to safeguard the core values of journalism for generations to come.

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### The Investigative Reporting Workshop (IRW)

Center staff:	Most relevant position:	Date:	Location:	Persons:	Interviews:	Duration (m):
Charles Lewis 1	Executive editor and founder	Oct. 07. 2014	Office	1	1	54.1
Charles Lewis 2		Dec. 10. 2014	Office		1	66.51
Charles Lewis 3		May 12. 2015	Office		1	58.5
Wendell Cochran	Retired senior editor/co-founder	Oct. 08. 2014	Phone	1	1	69.55
Lynne Perri 1	Managing editor	Sept. 14. 2014	Office	1	1	63.55
Lynne Perri 2		Oct. 01. 2014	Office		1	53.58
Lynne Perri 3		May 28. 2015	Office		1	27.13
John Sullivan 1	Senior editor IRW/investigative reporter	Sept. 10. 2014	Office	1	1	16.19
John Sullivan 2	Washington Post	Sept. 26. 2014	Office	1	1	54.08
David Donald	Data editor	Oct. 21. 2014	Office	1	1	38.08
Barbara Schecter	Development director	Oct. 07. 2014	Office	1	1	36.37
Kris Higgins	Financial operations manager	Sept. 26. 2014	Office	1	1	62.57
<b>University staff</b>						
Jeffrey Rutenbeck	Dean, American University's School of Communication	Oct. 22. 2014	Office	1	1	35.47
Jan Schaffer	Executive director J-Lab	Oct. 17. 2014	Office	1	1	40.51
<b>Students:</b>						
Christina Animashaun 1	Researcher IRW/part of the Washington Post Practicum	Sept. 14. 2014	Hallway	1	1	20.55
Christina Animashaun 2		April 29. 2015	Hallway	1	1	56.14
Mariam Baksh 1	Researcher IRW/part of the Washington Post Practicum	Sept. 14. 2014	Hallway	1	1	17.37
Mariam Baksh 2		April 29. 2015	Hallway	1	1	44.53
Ke (Amber) Liu 1	Researcher IRW/part of the Washington Post Practicum	Sept. 14. 2014	Hallway	1	1	17.51
Ke (Amber) Liu 2		June 08. 2015	Hallway	1	1	23.29
Pietro Lombardi 1	Fellow IRW/part of the Washington Post Practicum	Sept. 14. 2014	Hallway	1	1	11.24
Pietro Lombardi 2		April 28. 2015	Hallway	1	1	35.45
<b>Alumni:</b>						
Hoai-Tran Bui	Previous IRW researcher/Washington Post capstone	Sept. 26. 2014	Hallway	1	1	27.57
Alexia Campbell	Previous IRW fellow	Sept. 23. 2014	Office	1	1	35.14
Cathaleen Qiao Chen	Previous IRW researcher	Sept. 22. 2014	Phone	1	1	33.36
Aaron Gregg	Previous IRW researcher/part of the Washington Post Practicum	Sept. 18. 2014	Café	1	1	53.05
Jessica Shulberg	Previous IRW researcher/part of the Washington Post Practicum	Sept. 30. 2014	Café	1	1	32.26
<b>Representatives from partnering newsrooms:</b>						
<b>PBS Frontline:</b>						
Rick Young	Producer	Oct. 28. 2014	Campus	1	1	47.23
Fritz Kramer	Associate producer	Oct. 22. 2014	Hallway	1	1	30.17
Emma Schwartz	Associate producer	Oct. 22. 2014	Hallway	1	1	25.51
<b>The Baltimore Sun:</b>						
Catherine Rentz	Investigative reporter	Oct. 06. 2014	Office canteen	1	1	34.46
<b>WAMU 88.5</b>						
Patrick Madden	District reporter	Oct. 20. 2014	Meeting room	1	1	23.05

*The Washington Post (WP):*

Jeff Leen	Editor, Investigations unit	Oct. 02, 2014	Office	1	1	25,16
Scott Higham	Reporter, Investigations unit	Oct. 02, 2014	Meeting room and café	1	1	32,57
Dana Priest	Reporter, Investigations unit	Oct. 14, 2014	Office, University of Maryland	1	1	39,41
<b>Total:</b>				<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1341,2</b>

**Average duration:****37,8****The New England Center for Investigative Reporting (NECIR)****Center staff:****Most relevant position:**

		<b>Date:</b>	<b>Location:</b>	<b>Persons:</b>	<b>Interviews:</b>	<b>Duration (m):</b>
Joe Bergantino	Executive director and co-founder	March 10, 2015	Office canteen	1	1	42,34
Clara Germani	Managing editor	March 09, 2015	Office canteen	1	1	57,04
Beth Daley	Senior investigative reporter and senior trainer	March 09, 2015	Office canteen	1	1	37,08
Jennifer Mckim	Senior investigative reporter and senior trainer	March 09, 2015	Office	1	1	33,45
Jill Safteil	Training manager	March 12, 2015	Office	1	1	26,49

**University staff:**

Thomas Fiedler	Dean, Boston University's College of Communication	March 13, 2015	Office	1	1	48,03
Maggie Mulvihill	Co-founder NECIR	March 12, 2015	Office	1	1	46,43

**Students/Interns:**

Andrea D'Eramo	Intern	March 09, 2015	Office	1	1	47,41
Christina Jedra	Intern	Feb. 23, 2015	Skype	1	1	26,06
Shan Wang	Intern	March 09, 2015	Office	1	1	30,49

**Representatives from partnering newsrooms:***The Boston Globe (BG):*

Scott Allen	Editor, Spotlight Team	March 13, 2015	Office canteen	1	1	36,07
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*WGGB Radio:*

Phil Redo	General manager	March 10, 2015	Office	1	1	42,36
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**Total:****12**      **12**      **473,3****Average duration:****39,4**



## Appendix B: Interview guide, example

### Interview guide Joe Bergantino, New England CIR

#### About the center:

1. Please describe your role at the center
2. Please tell me how it all started.
  - a. Why was the center launched?
3. What do your three partner groups, the University, the students, and news organizations, get out of the partnership?
4. What works?
5. What does not work as well?
6. Is the center mostly a newsroom or a classroom? Teaching or producing?
  - a. Why?
  - b. Conflicts between producing and teaching?

#### Collaborating newsrooms:

7. How do you get into partnerships with news organizations?
  - a. Always after finishing the stories, like freelancers?
8. Why do you not collaborate with news organization from the beginning, or is that what you do with WGBH? (Workshop: The Post)
  - a. Easier to get published if partnering earlier?

#### Teaching:

9. What do you think is the most important things to teach students?
  - a. What is the best way to teach it to them?
10. Why try to teach student's investigative journalism?
  - a. Investigative reporting considered the hardest thing to do. Something you do in a newsroom after serving 10-15 years?
  - b. Can journalism be taught at a university at all?
  - c. What can and cannot be taught?
11. Some say that partnering with traditional news outlets and teaching students is the same as making puppies bark like old dogs. What do you think? (innovation)

#### Reporting:

12. Can you describe the process behind a typical NECIR story?
13. What is a good investigative story?
14. Is there a future for investigative journalism?
15. What is quality journalism?
16. Can universities help save and develop quality journalism?



## Appendix C: Interview and observation overview

<b>Total number of interviews:</b>	
IRP Berkeley:	10
Stabile Center:	12
Workshop:	35
New England CIR:	12
<b>Total:</b>	<b>69</b>

<b>Total number of interviewees:</b>	
IRP Berkeley:	10
Stabile Center:	12
Workshop:	26
New England CIR:	12
<b>Total:</b>	<b>60</b>

<b>Interview length:</b>	
<i>Total length per center (minutes):</i>	
Workshop:	1341,21
IRP Berkeley:	338,8
Stabile Center:	428,5
New England CIR:	473,25
<b>Total length of interviews all centers:</b>	<b>2581,76</b>
Total length of interviews all centers in hours:	43

<i>Average duration per center (minutes):</i>	
Workshop:	37,8
IRP Berkeley:	33,9
Stabile Center:	35,7
New England CIR:	39,4
<b>Average duration all centers:</b>	<b>35,61</b>

<i>Longest (L) and shortest (S) interviews (minutes):</i>	
L: Wendell Cochran, Senior Editor IRW, co-founder IRW	69,55
S: Pietro Lombardi, graduate fellow IRW	11,24

<b>Observation:</b>	<b>Days:</b>
Workshop, center office at American University*	80
Workshop, practicum taught inside the Washington Post:	4
IRP Berkeley, center office	4
Stabile Center, the Investigative Seminar:	1
New England CIR, center office at Boston University:	1
New England CIR, center office at WGBH News:	2
<b>Total:</b>	<b>92</b>

\* In average two days a week for ten months (40 weeks)



## Appendix D: Codebook, content analysis

### Codebook

#### 1. Story number

- A IRW American University
- B IRP UC Berkeley
- C SC Columbia University
- D NECIR Boston University
- 1-10 The number of the news story within the group

#### 2. Where published

Name of outlet where the analyzed story is published.

#### 3. Other publishing outlets

- 0 None
- 1 One
- 2 Two or more

#### 4. Part of series

- 0 Story not part of series
- 1 One story
- 2 Two stories
- 3 Three stories
- 4 Four or more stories

#### 5. Main format

- 0 NA
- 1 Writing (web)
- 2 Video
- 3 Audio

#### 6. Byline/credit

- 0 NA
- 1 Journalist from center
- 2 Student(s) contributed
- 3 Student(s) shared byline/main credit
- 4 Student(s) byline/main credit alone

#### 7. Crediting of center and university

- 0 NA
- 1 Neither center nor university
- 2 Just university
- 3 Center and university
- 4 Just center

#### 8. Audience

- 0 NA
- 1 Under 50,000
- 2 50,000-500,000
- 3 500,000 - 2 mill.
- 4 2-5mill.
- 5 5-10 mill.
- 6 Over 10 mill.

#### 9. Proportion

The physical proportion of the story recalculated into a number of A4 pages.

#### 10. Primary content categories

- 1 Politics
- 2 Culture
- 3 Everyday life
- 4 Sport
- 5 Business and economy
- 6 Social issues
- 7 Crime
- 8 Accidents
- 9 Other

#### 11. International or domestic

- 0 NA
- 1 Only domestic
- 2 Mainly domestic
- 3 Domestic and global
- 4 Mainly global
- 5 Only global

#### 12. Specified sources

The total number of specified written and oral sources in each story.

#### 13. Written sources

The total number of specified written sources in each story.

#### 14. Oral sources

The total number of specified oral sources in each story.

#### 15. Elite sources

The total number of written and oral elite sources in each story.

#### 16. Ordinary sources

The total number of written and oral ordinary sources in each story.

#### 17. Male sources

The total number of written or oral male sources in each story.

#### 18. Female sources

The total number of written or oral female sources in each story.

#### 19. Children

The total number of written or oral sources under the age of 16 in each story.



**20. Male elite sources**

The total number of written or oral male elite sources in each story.

**21. Male ordinary sources**

The total number of written and oral male ordinary sources in each story.

**22. Female elite sources**

The total number of written and oral female elite sources in each story.

**23. Female ordinary sources**

The total number of written and oral female ordinary sources in each story.

**24. Groups of sources**

- 0 None referred to
- 1 Large amount of written sources/documents
- 2 Large amount of oral sources
- 3 Observations over time
- 4 A combination of two or more of the group sources oral, written and observation

**25. Soft news/hard news**

- 0 Neither
- 1 Soft
- 2 Hard

**26. Level of originality**

- 0 NA
- 1 Quoting other story
- 2 Non-exclusive story
- 3 Non-exclusive story with exclusive twist
- 4 Exclusive story

**27. Level of conflict**

- 0 No conflict
- 1 Weak conflict
- 2 Strong conflict/accusation

**28. Number of viewpoints in conflict**

- 0 No conflict
- 1 All or mostly one viewpoint
- 2 Mostly two viewpoints
- 3 More than two viewpoints

**29. Multimedia**

The number of elements the story consists of, from one to seven.

**30. Video**

- 0 No video
- 1 Contains video

**31. Graphics**

- 0 No graphics
- 1 Contains graphics

**32. Still pictures**

- 0 No still pictures
- 1 Contains still pictures

**33. Audio**

- 0 No audio
- 1 Contains audio

**34. Observations/scenes**

- 0 None
- 1 One
- 2 Two to five
- 3 Six to ten
- 4 More than ten

**35. Focus on person(s)**

- 1 None
- 2 Low
- 3 Medium
- 4 High

**36. Elitist/popular orientation**

- 0 NA
- 1 Popular-oriented
- 2 Slightly elitist-oriented
- 3 Highly elitist-oriented

**37. Citations**

- 0 No citations
- 1 Cited by one to five news outlets
- 2 Cited by more than five news outlets

**38. Journalistic awards**

- 0 No awards
- 1 One award
- 2 Two to five awards
- 3 More than five awards

## Detailed codebook

### Variable 1: Story number

A	IRW American University
B	IRP UC Berkeley
C	SC Columbia University
D	NECIR Boston University
1-10	The number of the news story within the group

#### A. IRW American University

Stories produced by or in partnership with the Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University.

#### B. IRP UC Berkeley

Stories produced by or in partnership with the Investigative Reporting Program at UC Berkeley.

#### C. IRP UC Berkeley

Stories produced by or in partnership with the Stabile Center at Columbia University.

#### D. NECIR Boston University

Stories produced by or in partnership with the New England Center for Investigative Reporting at Boston University.

#### 1-10 The number of the news story within the group

Ten stories from each center have been analyzed. Which story that corresponds with each number is listed in the overview of selected stories. Example: A3 is the third of 10 analyzed stories from IRW at American University.

### Variable 2: Where published

Name of collaborating outlet that published the analyzed story. If more than one outlet has published the story, the outlet with the largest audience number is chosen. The outlet has to use English as the main language; if not the outlet with the second largest audience number is chosen etc.

### Variable 3: Other publishing outlets

0	None
1	One
2	Two or more

Number of collaborating outlets that have also published the story.

### Variable 4: Part of series

0	Story not part of series
1	One story
2	Two stories
3	Three stories

4	Four or more stories
---	----------------------

If the story is part of a series, this variable registers how many stories in the series that are produced by or in partnership with the center. All stories where students or staff of the centers are mentioned in the byline/the credit field, or as contributors, are registered. The story must be presented as part of a series by the outlet.

### Variable 5: Main format

0	NA
1	Text
2	Video
3	Audio

Registers if the original story is produced in mainly text, video or audio. If in doubt, the proportion of the different formats are measured as in variable 9.

### Variable 6: Byline/credit

0	NA
1	Journalist from center
2	Student(s) contributed
3	Student(s) shared byline/main credit
4	Student(s) byline/main credit alone

#### 1. Journalist from center

No students from the center are mentioned in the byline/credit or as contributors to the story. The journalist(s) is part of the staff at the center or a fellow at the center.

#### 2. Student(s) contributed

Students from the center are mentioned as contributors to the story.

#### 3. Student(s) shared byline/main credit

Students from the center share a byline/main credit with other journalists on the story. In audio and video stories, the students must be credited as reporters or producers.

#### 4. Student(s) byline/main credit

Students from the center have an unshared byline/main credit. In audio and video stories, the students must be credited as reporters or producers.

### Variable 7: Crediting of center and university

0	NA
1	Neither center nor university
2	Just university
3	Center and university

#### 4 Just center

Registers if the center and/or the university are mentioned as contributors to the story in the collaborating outlet.

#### Variable 8: Audience

0	Not available
1	Under 50,000
2	50,000-500,000
3	500,000 - 2 mill.
4	2-5mill.
5	5-10 mill.
6	Over 10 mill.

To be registered the audience numbers need to be published by the outlet itself, or by a known quality publication. The numbers with a timeframe closest to the publication date are registered. If the number cannot be found, it is categorized as 0 (not available). If the story is published by more than one outlet, only the audience numbers of the outlet that has published the analyzed story (see variable 2) are registered.

#### Web stories:

The number of unique visitors a month at the time of publication.

#### Print newspapers/magazines:

Daily circulation for daily's, weekly circulation for weeklies.

#### Broadcasted stories:

The average of listeners/viewers per program.

#### Multi-platform stories:

If the story is published on more than one platform within one outlet, all known numbers will be summarized. Example: *Frontline* documentaries have a combination of approximately 2.8 mill. viewers per broadcasted story, while the *Frontline* webpage has 1 mill. unique visitors a month, which makes the total audience number 3.8 mill. If in doubt about the number of publication platforms, only the web numbers are registered.

#### Variable 9: Proportion

Text, photographs, video, audio and graphics recalculated into a number of A4 pages to get a sense of the story's proportions – and thus the workload behind the story.

#### Text:

The number of A4 pages after copying the text or transcription into a Word-document using the font Calibri, 12 point, single-spaced. Blank lines before and after quotes are not removed.

#### Photographs and illustrations:

Counts for 0.5 A4 page each.

#### Video and audio:

- Edited video and audio containing new information: 1 minute equals 2 A4 pages. The video or audio has to contain knowledge or sources not mentioned in the text. In multimedia stories, with both text and video, the video might fall into this category.
- Edited video and audio containing some new information: 1 minute equals 1 A4 page. The video or audio has some new knowledge or sources, but the story is mainly the same as in the text.
- Edited video or audio without new information: 1 minute equals 0.5 A4 page. The video or audio does not add new knowledge or sources, but repeats the content of the text.

#### Graphics:

- Simple graphics: Counts for 0.5 A4 page each. Simple graphics means graphics without large amounts of information that can be read and understood without much interpretation, like tables, pie- and bar-charts.
- Advanced graphics: Counts for 1 A4 page each. Advanced graphics means graphics with large quantities of information that needs some interpretation to be understood, and that often reveals more information through links etc.

Example: Four pages of text, five minutes of video with new information and one advanced graphics constitute 15 A4 pages (4+10+1). For extensive video documentaries, like *Frontline* productions, transcripts are used to measure text length. In addition, the video itself is registered in the category "Edited video or audio without new information".

#### Variable 10: Primary content categories

- Politics
- Culture
- Everyday life
- Sport
- Business and economy
- Social issues
- Crime
- Accidents
- Other

Primary content categories refer to categorization of the news content. There are nine primary

content categories that are intended to be mutually exclusive. Hence, each story is only registered in one category. If a story can be placed within more than one category, it is categorized by the category/theme that occurs in the headline and/or is listed first in the story.

#### 1. *Politics*

National and international politics, state administration, war and terrorism. All stories where the main theme is politics. Politicians are named and political decisions are mentioned and/or discussed.

#### 2. *Culture*

Stories from the cultural sector, including arts, popular culture, curiosities, royalty, media stories and time-specific stories such as anniversaries.

#### 3. *Everyday life*

Consumer issues, leisure and tourism, traffic and construction, weather, religion and family life.

#### 4. *Sport*

News about sports results, sport personalities, activities of sports people and sport news in general.

#### 5. *Business and economy*

Any content that concerns business, economy, finance, property, industry or markets. This includes the activity of companies, the stock market, personal finance and business deals of any kind, transactions between companies, private business people or any economic actor.

#### 6. *Social issues*

Work, health, education, immigration, minority aspects, environmental issues and global social issues

#### 7. *Crime*

Any content that concerns criminal activity. This includes serious crime such as murder, general violence and gang violence, smuggling, sex crime, financial crime (white-collar crime) and petty crime or minor criminal activity.

#### 8. *Accidents*

News about sudden incidents where people, property or nature has suffered damage.

#### 9. *Other*

News about any other issue that cannot be logged within the above categories.

*The above categories are based on Sjøvaag (2014).*

### **Variable 11: International or domestic**

0	NA
1	Only domestic
2	Mainly domestic
3	Domestic and global
4	Mainly global
5	Only global

#### 1. *Only domestic*

Stories that only refer to events, persons and institutions within the U.S.

#### 2. *Mainly domestic*

Stories that mainly refer to events, persons and institutions within the U.S., with few global examples.

#### 3. *Domestic and global*

Stories that focus on both U.S. and global events, persons and institutions, where both the global and domestic aspects are equally important to the story.

#### 4. *Mainly global*

Stories that mainly refer to global events, persons and institutions, with few U.S. examples.

#### 5. *Only global*

Stories that only refer to events, persons and institutions outside the US.

### **Variable 12: Specified sources**

The total number of specified written and oral sources in each story, where a specific source of information is named.

Only specified sources that are quoted directly or indirectly as sources are registered. Example: In the sentence “some employees protested against the ruling”, “some employees” are not registered as a source. But if the sentence says “according to some employees, they protested against the ruling”, “some employees” are counted for as a source.

In video stories longer than 30 minutes, like *Frontline* productions, only sources that are visible in the transcriptions are registered (not, for instance, written sources in the video that is not part of the transcription).

#### *Written sources:*

All specified sources where the source is not interviewed by the journalist(s) in real time. Example: Email interviews, different documents, statements, minutes, social media, sources quoted in other media, like TV programs, etc.

Both specific references and more general collective terms are registered. Example: The general referral "court documents show that" is considered a source the first time it is mentioned. If the story later refers to specific written sources within the category, like for instance specific court documents, these are registered as separate sources in addition to the collective term. A media production can be considered a collective term, with sources quoted within the production as additional sources.

Photographs shown in video stories to document different events are categorized as written sources. Groups of photographs showing the same event/the same thing are counted as one written source.

In texts, sources are only registered in the actual story. Sources found in links etc. are not registered.

#### *Oral Sources:*

Oral sources are all sources where it is evident that the source has been interviewed by the journalist(s) in real time. All oral interviews, like phone, Skype and face-to-face interviews, fall under this category. Most of the time, these are people sources where the method of the information gathering is not mentioned. Example: If the source is answering questions over email, most of the time the source would be referred to as "said Johnson in an email". If interviewed, the source would be referred to as "said Johnson". If in doubt, the source is registered as written.

If the story refers to a collective oral term, like "a series of interviews," the term is registered as one oral source the first time it is mentioned.

If named persons are talking in a scene/observation, it is considered an oral source.

#### **Variable 13: Written sources**

The total number of specified written sources in each story.  
See definition of written sources under variable 12.

#### **Variable 14: Oral sources**

The total number of specified oral sources in each story.  
See definition of oral sources under variable 12.

#### **Variable 15: Elite sources**

The total number of written and oral elite sources in each story.

Elite sources are defined broadly and include politicians, leaders, experts/professionals and other persons at the top of their field. Elite institutions, or documents from elite institutions/elite sources, are also regarded as elite sources. Elite institutions are all institutions with power and expertise: Federal authorities, political institutions and judiciary institutions. Leaders, experts and professionals from private companies, larger NGOs and public institutions are also considered elite sources. Former employees/people who have retired from elite positions are considered elite sources as long as the former elite position is the reason for the interview. All media outlets, products of media outlets, journalists and writers are also considered elite sources.

If a source holds more than one role in the story, and is, for instance, both a father and a politician, the first mentioned role is registered.

If a source is described without a title, like "critic" or "supporter" – or it is hard to decide if a source is elite or ordinary – it is registered as an ordinary source.

*The elite definition is based on Øvrebø (2012)*

#### **Variable 16: Ordinary sources**

The total number of written and oral ordinary sources in each story.

Ordinary sources are all sources that are generally used as examples/cases in a story. Ordinary sources can be consumers, activists, family members, relatives, witnesses, victims, etc. They are mainly interviewed because of their experiences, and are not leaders, hold power or have special expertise.

All private blogs and social media profiles are registered as ordinary sources. Celebrities that are not interviewed because of their expertise – but are used as examples, or are in the story simply because of their fame – are registered as ordinary sources.

See variable 15 for categorization if a source holds more than one role in the story, if a source is described without a title, or if it is hard to decide if a source is elite or ordinary.

*The ordinary definition is based on Øvrebø (2012)*

#### **Variable 17: Male sources**

The number of specified oral male sources.

If it is unclear if the source is male or female, the name is googled. If it is still unclear, the gender of the source is not registered.

Written sources cannot be registered as male, female or children, even if a man, woman or child has written the document/is being quoted in other media outlets/has posted something on their social media profile etc.

**Variable 18: Female sources**

The number of specified oral female sources.

If it is unclear if the source is male or female, the name is googled. If it is still unclear, the gender of the source is not registered.

Written sources are not accounted for in this variable (see variable 17 for details).

**Variable 19: Children**

The total amount of oral sources under the age of 16 in each story.

- 0 None
- 1 One to five
- 2 Six to ten
- 3 Eleven or more

If in doubt about the age of the source, it is reckoned as an adult.

Written sources are not accounted for in this variable. See variable 17 for details.

**Variable 20: Male elite sources**

The total number of oral male elite sources in each story.

See definition of male under variable 17. See definition of elite under variable 15.

**Variable 21: Male ordinary sources**

The total number of oral male ordinary sources in each story.

See definition of male under variable 17. See definition of ordinary under variable 16.

**Variable 22: Female elite sources**

The total number of oral female elite sources in each story.

See definition of female under variable 18. See definition of elite under variable 15.

**Variable 23: Female ordinary sources**

The total number of oral female ordinary sources in each story.

See definition of female under variable 18. See definition of ordinary under variable 16.

**Variable 24: Groups of sources**

If the story refers to the journalist(s) using a large number of documents, doing a large amount of interviews or observing a person/scene/community etc. over time, it is registered as a source group. The registration is done to uncover especially resource demanding source work that will not show in the counting of sources.

- 0 None referred to
- 1 Large number of written sources/documents
- 2 Large number of oral sources
- 3 Observations over time
- 4 A combination of two or more of the group sources oral, written and observation

*0. None referred to*

The journalist does not refer to any source groups.

*1. Large number of written sources/documents*

If the story refers to the journalist(s) using a large number of documents, like “thousands of property records” or “a large amount of court documents”.

*2. Large number of oral sources*

If the story refers to the journalist(s) doing a large amount of interviews, like “we did dozens of interviews all around the country” or “our reporters talked to more than 30 people in the little town”.

*3. Observations over time*

If the story refers to the journalist(s) doing individual, scattered observations over a period that extends three months and/or where the journalist has been present to observe in more than three full days.

*4. A combination of two or more of the group sources oral, written and observation*

If the story refers to the journalist(s) using more than one group source within the story. Example: “An investigation by the UC Berkeley Investigative Reporting Program, relying on thousands of property records, court documents and dozens of interviews with bidders show that [...]” refers to both a large number of documents, and a large

number of interviews, and will therefore be registered in this category.

**Variable 25: Soft news/hard news**

- 0 Neither
- 1 Soft
- 2 Hard

The categorization is based upon three dimensions: Topic, focus and style.

a) Topic:

Hard news: Has a high degree of political relevance and contains three or more of the following indicators: 1) The mentioning of societal actors 2) The mentioning of decision-making authorities 3) The mentioning of a proposed plan or program 4) People concerned by a decision.

Soft news: Low degree of political relevance. Contains one or less of the above indicators

b) Focus:

Hard news: Focuses on the public or social relevance or consequences of an event. Thematic framing.

Soft news: Focus on personal and private matters, single events and exemplars (episodic framing).

c) Style:

Hard news: Unemotional news. Matter-of-fact style, not using emotionally arousing verbal, visual or auditive means.

Soft news: Includes verbal and/or visual emotion-arousing elements like the dramatizing of events, the use of affective wording and speech and the presenting of explicit expressions of emotion. A more personal or emotional style.

*0. Neither*

If the story is categorized as different in topic than in both focus and style. Example: If the topic is hard, and both focus and style is soft -- or if the topic is soft, and both focus and style is hard.

*1. Soft:*

If the story can be categorized as soft in the topic-dimension and one of the other dimensions (focus or style)

*2. Hard:*

If the story can be categorized as hard in the topic-dimension and one of the other dimensions (focus or style).

*The above variable is based on Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, and Legnante (2012)*

**Variable 26: Level of originality**

- 0 Not available
- 1 Quoting other story
- 2 Non-exclusive story
- 3 Non-exclusive story with exclusive twist
- 4 Exclusive story

The categorization is based upon googling keywords from the story and the story's title in a period of six months prior to the publication. Search tools: Google's news category combined with dates.

*1. Quoting other story:*

The journalist(s) is quoting other published stories without doing any work of his/her own considering examinations, sources etc.

*2. Non-exclusive story*

The story is commonly known and published by a number of big news outlets at the same time, and the journalist has not added any significant new information or sources to the story.

*3. Non-exclusive story with exclusive twist*

Originally a non-exclusive story, but the journalist has added their own twist through significant new information or sources.

*4. Exclusive story*

The story is not commonly known, and no big news outlets have published anything similar to the story in a period of six months prior to the publication of the story.

**Variable 27: Level of conflict within story**

- 0 No conflict
- 1 Weak conflict
- 2 Strong conflict/accusation

*0. No conflict*

Story based on facts where no particular disagreement or conflict can be traced within the story.

*1. Weak conflict*

Weak conflict or disagreement. An expressed dissatisfaction with an individual or organization can be found within the story, but the discontent is not very explicit or aggressive -- and it is not mentioned in the headline and/or the first two paragraphs of the story/the first 30 seconds of the story.

## 2. Strong conflict/accusation

The story or its sources accuse individuals or organizations for wrongdoing, morally or legally. The accusations are specific, and the conflict/accusations are mentioned in the headline and/or the first two paragraphs of the story/the first 30 seconds of the story.

*This variable is based on Holcomb et al. (2011)*

### Variable 28: Number of viewpoints in conflict

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 0 | No conflict                 |
| 1 | All or mostly one viewpoint |
| 2 | Mostly two viewpoints       |
| 3 | More than two viewpoints    |

If the story contains a conflict (category 1 or 2 in variable 27), how many different viewpoints on the conflict can be found in the story?

*This variable is based on Holcomb et al. (2011)*

### Variable 29: Multimedia

Number of how many different components the story consists of, from one to seven.

Components that can be registered: photograph, video, audio, text, graphics, comment fields and links (links has to be placed inside the story text, not in other parts of the webpage).

Example: If the story contains text, stills and links, the number of components will be three. The variable registers the number of different components, but not how many of the same component the story consists of. Example: If the story has six photographs, they will be registered as one component.

### Variable 30: Video

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 0 | No video       |
| 1 | Contains video |

### Variable 31: Graphics

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| 0 | No graphics       |
| 1 | Contains graphics |

### Variable 32: Still pictures

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 0 | No still pictures       |
| 1 | Contains still pictures |

### Variable 33: Audio

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 0 | No audio       |
| 1 | Contains audio |

### Variable 34: Observations/scenes

Observation scenes in the text, or video/audio scenes, where it is obvious that the journalist has been at the site and observed what happens. If the scene is interrupted by interviews etc., and returned to later in the text/story, it will not be

registered as a new scene as long as it is obvious that it is the same scene described earlier in the story. If in doubt, the scene will be registered as a new scene.

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| 0 | None          |
| 1 | One           |
| 2 | Two to five   |
| 3 | Six to ten    |
| 4 | More than ten |

### Variable 35: Focus on person(s)

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| 1 | None   |
| 2 | Low    |
| 3 | Medium |
| 4 | High   |

#### 1. None

The story does not have a case (person that works as an example of what the story is about).

#### 2. Low

The story has a case (person that works as an example of what the story is about), but the case is not the main illustration or part of the first three paragraphs/first 30 seconds of the story.

#### 3. Medium

The story has a case in one of the first three paragraphs/first 30 seconds or has a case as the main illustration, but the case does not characterize the story/the case is not the story/there is still a story without the case.

#### 4. High

The story has a case in one of the first three paragraphs/first 30 seconds, the case is the main illustration of the story and the case characterize the story/the case is the story/without the case there is no story left.

### Variable 36: Elitist/popular orientation

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 0 | Not available             |
| 1 | Popular oriented          |
| 2 | Slightly elitist oriented |
| 3 | Highly elitist oriented   |

Registers if the story is oriented towards an elite audience, or a more general audience (popular oriented). The categorization is based on how many of the following indicators the story fulfills:

- Sources: Elite sources constitute 2/3 or more of the story's total specified sources (based on variable 12: Specified sources A and variable 15: Specified sources D: Elite sources).
- The story is considered "hard news" (based on variable 26: Soft news/hard news).



c) The story has none, low or medium focus on persons (based on variable 34: Focus on person(s)).

*1. Popular-oriented*

One or none of the above indicators are accurate.

*2. Slightly elitist-oriented*

Two of the above indicators are accurate.

*3. Highly elitist-oriented*

Three of the above indicators are accurate.

**Variable 37: Citations**

- 0 No citations
- 1 Cited by one to five news outlets
- 2 Cited by more than five news outlets

The number of citations is based on googling various combinations of the story title, keywords from the story, and the name of the news organization that published the story. Timeframe: From publication date until 90 days after publication. Search tools: Google's news category combined with dates. A news outlet is defined as a news organization that produces its own content, like newspapers, broadcast news programs and news websites. Social media and other actors that only copy other's content is not considered a news outlet.

**Variable 38: Journalistic awards**

- 0 No awards
- 1 One award
- 2 Two to five awards
- 3 More than five awards

The number of journalistic awards is based on googling various combinations of the story title, keywords from the story and the name of the news organization together with the phrases "award" and "awards". Timeframe: At least one year after publication. Search tools: Google's general category combined with dates. The websites of the different centers and news outlets are also searched for any mentioning's of journalistic prizes. All journalistic prizes, local, regional, national and global are counted for at an equal level.

**References codebook**

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- Øvrebø, T. (2012). Nyheter i konkurranse: dekonstruksjon av 558 nyheter i avis, på TV og på nett [News in competition: a deconstruction of 558 news productions in papers, on TV, and online]. Kristiansand, Norway: IJ-forlaget.

## Appendix E: List of stories, content analysis

### *The Investigative Reporting Program, UC Berkeley*

<b>Story number:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Published by:</b>	<b>Date of publication:</b>
B1	Firestone and the Warlord	Frontline	18.11.2014
B2	Rare illness in California Afflicts Children with Polio-Like Symptoms	National Geographic	06.10.2014
B3	US bankrolled anti-Morsi activists	Al Jazeera English	10.07.2013
B4	How deft bid-riggers harmed ex-owners of foreclosed homes	SFGate/San Francisco Chronicle	15.08.2014
B5	Does the NCAA Rule College Sports Like a "Cartel"?	Frontline web only	11.06.2014
B6	Rape in the Fields	Frontline	25.06.2013
B7	Sitting on a Gold Mine: Will Mining Make or Break the Philippines?	Time.com	13.09.2012
B8	American 'Pivot' to Asia Divides the Philippines	Time.com	23.07.2012
B9	After Package From Yemen, Questions About Worker Illness and Government Response	Florida Center for Inv. Rep.	13.05.2012
B10	The Contestant	The California Sunday Magazine	05.10.2014

### *The Stable Center for Investigative Journalism, Columbia University*

<b>Story number:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Published by:</b>	<b>Date of publication:</b>
C1	Is it right to pay ransoms?	BBC News Magazine	06.10.2014
C2	Subsidies for deadbeat adoptive parents	New York Daily News	02.09.2014
C3	The murky world of hostage negotiations: is the price ever right?	G2, the Guardian	25.08.2014
C4	Faulty sanctions plague city welfare recipients	The New York World	30.07.2014
C5	A High Price to Pay	Texas Observer	09.07.2014
C6	Should We 'Fix' Intersex Children?	The Atlantic	08.07.2014
C7	Payday Nation	Al Jazeera America	17.06.2014
C8	Dairy dangers: As production rises, so do concerns about farm workers' safety	Albany Times Union	08.06.2014
C9	Teachers Are Losing Their Jobs, but Teach for America's Expanding [...]	The Nation magazine	15.04.2014
C10	Returning War On Terror Military Veterans Find Promised Jobs Are Gone [...]	International Business Times	12.06.2013

### *The Investigative Reporting Workshop, American University*

<b>Story number:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Published by:</b>	<b>Date of publication:</b>
A1	Doing well by doing good: The high price of working in war zones	Washington Post	04.05.2014
A2	D.C. school buses racked up traffic-camera violations	Washington Post	24.05.2014
A3	Workplace secrecy agreements appear to violate federal whistleblower laws	Washington Post	29.06.2014

A4	Stop and seize	Washington Post	06.09.2014
A5	The Trouble With Antibiotics	Frontline	14.10.2014
A6	The Cost of D.C. Council's Power Over Contracts	WAMU-FM	14.10.2014
A7	Whistleblowers say USAID's IG removed critical details from public reports	Washington Post	22.10.2014
A8	Broken by the bubble	Washington Post	25.01.2015
A9	Prosecutors build murder cases on disputed Shaken Baby Syndrome diagnosis	Washington Post	20.03.2015
A10	In DC, wiggling while handcuffed counts as assaulting an officer	Reveal	09.05.2015

*The New England Center for Investigative reporting, Boston University*

Story number:	Title:	Published by:	Date of publication:
D1	Developers fall short on 'green' LEED certification, report says	Worcester Telegram & Gazette	14.02.2015
D2	A call to cull homes threatened by the sea	Boston Globe	08.02.2015
D3	Homeowners billed for houses lost in foreclosure	Boston Globe	18.01.2015
D4	Report: Broken promises, Mother Nature snag state's wetland construction	Worcester Telegram & Gazette	22.12.2014
D5	Oversold prenatal tests spur some to choose abortions	Boston Globe	14.12.2014
D6	Private companies help local towns, cities collect unpaid taxes	Boston Globe	24.11.2014
D7	FDA to regulate tests for Lyme disease, other illnesses	Boston Globe	31.07.2014
D8	Mass. Law Makes Flood Insurance More Affordable — Yet Some See Risks	WGBH News	28.07.2014
D9	Frustration rankles Lyme disease patients over test results	Worcester Telegram & Gazette	22.06.2014
D10	State Medical Examiner's delays hamper autopsies, toxicology findings	Worcester Telegram & Gazette	09.06.2014

## Appendix F: Inter coder reliability check, coding results

	Variable 10	Variable 12	Variable 15	Variable 16	Variable 25	Variable 27	Variable 28	Variable 34	Variable 35
<b>Story number A1</b>									
Coder a	5	42	40	2	2	2	2	0	1
Coder b	5	37	36	1	2	2	2	0	1
<b>Story number A5</b>									
Coder a	6	38	25	13	2	2	2	4	3
Coder b	6	40	32	8	2	1	2	4	3
<b>Story number A7</b>									
Coder a	1	46	45	1	2	2	2	0	1
Coder b	1	40	40	0	2	2	2	0	1
<b>Story number A9</b>									
Coder a	7	62	47	15	2	2	2	3	3
Coder b	7	43	32	11	2	2	2	3	4
<b>Story number B6</b>									
Coder a	7	51	24	27	2	2	2	4	4
Coder b	7	52	28	24	2	2	2	4	4
<b>Story number B7</b>									
Coder a	5	19	16	3	2	2	3	1	2
Coder b	5	13	12	1	2	2	2	1	2
<b>Story number C4</b>									
Coder a	6	15	12	3	2	2	2	0	3
Coder b	6	18	14	4	2	2	1	2	4
<b>Story number D8</b>									
Coder a	1	7	7	0	2	1	2	0	1
Coder b	1	9	9	0	2	1	2	0	1
<b>Percent agreement</b>									
	100	na	na	na	100	88	75	88	75
<b>Range agreement</b>									
	na	75	88	75	na	na	na	na	na



## Appendix G: Nodes NVivo

Name	Sources	References	
<b>1. Descriptions</b>		0	0
1.1 <i>Description of own center</i>		0	0
1.1.1 Startup		11	14
Background for starting center		6	19
1.1.2 Structure		56	152
1.1.3 Employees		0	0
Biographies		10	16
Mentioning of co-funders		1	2
Staffs role		30	77
Students		38	75
1.1.4 Goals		7	11
Are the goals achieved		4	8
1.1.5 The future		5	8
New projects		2	4
Wanted improvements		18	30
1.2 <i>Mentioning of other centers</i>		5	12
Atlanta		1	1
IRP Berkeley		3	4
New England Center		2	2
Schuster		1	2
Stabile Center		2	3
Wisconsin		1	2
Workshop		3	3
1.3 <i>Pros and cons</i>		0	0
Cons		0	0
Cons for the centers		15	29
Cons for the established newsrooms		13	21
Cons for the students		15	32

Cons for the university	3	3
Pros	0	0
Pros for the centers	17	38
Pros for the established newsrooms	27	58
Pros for the students	35	70
Pros for the university	22	35
<b>2. Economy</b>	22	47
Downsizing	5	15
Editor and publisher	1	1
Fundraising	14	41
<b>3. Partners and production</b>	0	0
<i>3.1 On partnerships</i>	18	37
3.1.1 Partners	0	0
Boston Globe	2	6
CIR	2	6
Frontline	9	16
NYT	1	1
The Post	25	67
WAMU	2	5
WGBH	1	4
3.1.2 Editing	8	8
3.1.3 From beginning or not	18	22
3.1.5 Conflicts and autonomy	26	38
<i>4.2 Production and publishing</i>	12	17
3.2.1 How much is produced	3	4
3.2.2 Webpage	4	7
3.2.3 Examples productions	22	32
Data journalism	2	2
<b>4. Views on journalism</b>	0	0
4.1. Quality journalism	57	58

4.2 Investigative reporting	19	28
4.3 The future of journalism	36	53
4.4 Universities and nonprofits role	42	80
<b>5. Teaching research and innovation</b>	1	1
5.1 Teaching and students	0	0
5.1.1 What are students learning and doing	38	90
5.1.2 How is journalism best taught	52	126
Interaction student and Journalist	39	95
Teaching hospital	1	1
5.1.3 The students role	59	171
Elite	17	23
Free labor	26	41
How to use the education	21	28
5.1.4 What is the most important thing to teach and learn	41	51
5.2 Research and innovation	34	43
5.3 Academia vs practice and learn vs produce	39	71
<b>6. Research Design</b>	3	6





Appendix H: Coding scheme, content analysis

1. Article	2. Published	3. Copublishe	4. Partseries	5. Format	6. Byline	7. Crediting	8. Audience	9. Proportion	10. Content	11. Global	12. Sources	13. Swritten	14. Soral	15. Selite	16. Sordinary	17. Smale	18. Sfemate	19. Schildren	20. Melite	21.Mordinary	22. Felite	23. Fordinary	24. Sourcegr.	25. SoftHard	26. Originality	27. Level conf	28. Viewpoint	29. Multimed	30. Video	31. Graphics	32. Stills	33. Audio	34. Observ.	35. Personfoc	36. Elitistic	37. Citations	38. Awards		
A1	Washington Post	0	0	1	3	2	6	11	5	3	42	21	21	40	2	13	0	0	13	0	0	0	4	2	2	2	2	5	1	1	1	0	0	2	3	0			
A2	Washington Post	0	0	1	4	3	6	7.3	7	1	43	31	12	35	8	6	2	0	2	4	1	1	4	2	4	1	2	5	1	1	1	0	0	2	3	0			
A3	Washington Post	0	0	1	3	3	6	4.5	6	1	28	7	21	23	5	8	2	0	7	1	1	1	0	2	4	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0			
A4	Washington Post	0	2	1	2	3	6	30	7	1	63	29	34	47	16	22	3	0	14	8	3	0	4	2	3	2	2	6	1	1	1	0	4	2	3	2	0		
A5	Frontline	0	0	2	2	3	4	48	6	2	38	9	29	25	13	12	12	0	10	2	7	5	0	2	3	2	2	5	1	0	1	0	4	3	2	0			
A6	WAMU-FM	0	0	3	2	3	3	40	1	1	37	17	20	25	12	8	3	0	5	3	2	1	1	2	4	2	2	6	0	1	1	1	0	3	3	1	0		
A7	Washington Post	0	0	1	2	2	6	9.5	1	3	46	27	19	45	1	6	3	0	6	0	3	0	4	2	4	2	2	5	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	1	0		
A8	Washington Post	0	1	1	2	3	6	17	5	1	35	21	14	22	13	7	4	0	2	4	5	2	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	2	5	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	
A9	Washington Post	0	2	1	2	3	6	28	7	2	62	37	25	47	15	12	10	0	8	4	4	6	1	2	4	2	4	0	1	1	1	0	3	3	1	0			
A10	Reveal (IR)	1	0	1	2	3	3	18	7	1	25	12	13	20	5	7	3	0	3	4	2	1	4	2	4	2	4	0	1	1	1	0	2	3	1	2			
B1	Frontline	1	0	2	1	3	4	66	1	3	57	31	26	50	7	20	4	0	19	1	3	1	4	2	4	2	3	5	1	1	1	0	4	2	3	2	3		
B2	National Geographic	0	0	1	4	3	6	7.5	6	1	9	5	4	6	3	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	4	2	4	2	4	0	0	5	1	0	1	0	4	4	1	0	
B3	Al Jazeera English	0	0	1	1	3	3	8	1	3	50	35	15	39	11	6	1	0	6	0	1	0	4	2	4	2	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	0	
B4	San Fran. Chronicle	0	0	1	4	3	6	7	7	1	23	10	13	14	9	5	1	0	1	4	1	0	4	2	4	1	2	4	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	1	0		
B5	Frontline web	0	0	1	1	3	3	2.5	7	1	7	1	6	6	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	4	0	0	1	0	2	1	3	0	0		
B6	Frontline	2	0	2	2	2	4	46	7	2	51	14	37	24	27	13	22	0	9	4	2	20	4	2	4	2	2	5	1	0	1	0	4	4	1	2	3	0	
B7	Time.com	0	0	1	4	4	6	3.5	5	4	19	10	9	16	3	5	1	0	4	1	1	0	2	3	2	3	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	2	0	
B8	Time.com	0	0	1	4	3	6	2.8	1	4	11	7	4	6	5	1	3	0	1	0	1	2	0	2	3	2	3	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	2	0	0	
B9	Fi. Center for Inv. Rep	2	0	1	3	3	0	9	6	2	20	8	12	12	8	4	5	0	3	1	2	3	0	1	4	2	2	6	1	0	1	1	2	4	1	2	0		
B10	Cal. Sunday Magazine	0	0	1	1	1	3	2	14	7	1	27	21	6	21	6	3	0	2	1	0	3	0	1	3	1	2	3	0	0	1	0	1	4	2	1	1	0	
C1	BBC News Magazine	0	0	1	4	1	6	9	1	4	22	14	7	18	4	4	2	0	3	1	1	1	0	2	3	1	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	2	0	
C2	New York Daily News	0	0	1	4	3	6	17	1	1	26	7	19	16	10	3	7	0	0	3	3	4	0	2	4	2	2	6	1	1	1	0	2	3	2	0	0		
C3	Guardian US	0	0	1	4	1	5	5	5	3	19	12	7	15	4	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	2	3	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	0		
C4	New York World	0	0	1	4	1	0	6.5	6	1	15	8	7	12	3	4	2	0	3	1	1	1	0	2	3	2	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	3	2	0	0	
C5	Texas Observer	0	0	1	4	3	0	11	5	1	45	21	24	34	11	9	5	0	7	2	2	3	4	2	3	1	2	3	0	0	1	0	2	3	3	0	0		
C6	The Atlantic	0	0	1	4	3	6	8	6	2	48	29	19	39	9	7	5	2	6	1	2	3	4	2	0	3	2	3	4	0	0	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	
C7	Al Jazeera America	0	4	1	4	3	8.5	5	1	18	8	10	13	5	6	2	0	5	1	1	1	1	0	2	3	1	2	4	0	1	1	0	2	2	3	1	1	0	
C8	Albany Times Union	0	0	1	4	3	4	12	6	1	25	12	13	15	10	6	4	0	2	4	0	4	4	2	3	2	2	5	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	
C9	The Nation Magazine	0	0	1	4	2	6.5	6	1	31	21	10	21	10	3	5	0	2	1	3	2	0	2	3	2	2	4	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	3	3	0	0
C10	Int. Business Times	0	0	1	4	1	6	8	6	1	32	20	12	24	8	8	2	0	4	4	1	1	0	2	3	2	2	4	0	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	0		
D1	Worcester Tel. & Gaz.	1	0	1	4	3	3	10	5	1	29	16	13	17	12	5	4	0	3	2	3	1	0	2	4	1	3	4	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	0	0		
D2	Boston Globe	1	0	1	3	3	3	7	1	1	25	9	16	20	5	5	3	0	5	0	1	2	3	4	2	3	1	2	5	0	1	1	1	0	1	3	3	0	0
D3	Boston Globe	0	0	1	3	3	3	10	5	1	31	5	26	22	9	9	6	0	6	3	3	3	4	2	3	2	3	5	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	4	2	0	
D4	Worcester Tel. & Gaz.	1	0	1	3	3	3	6	6	1	25	10	15	20	5	8	2	0	5	3	2	0	0	2	4	1	3	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	1	3	0	0
D5	Boston Globe	1	0	1	2	3	3	12	6	1	44	20	24	29	15	4	7	0	3	1	5	2	0	2	4	2	2	6	1	0	1	0	2	4	1	1	1	0	0
D6	Worcester Tel. & Gaz.	2	0	1	3	3	3	5.5	5	1	28	13	15	20	8	7	2	0	4	3	2	0	4	2	3	1	3	4	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	
D7	Boston Globe	1	0	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	7	2	5	7	0	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	2	1	2	3	4	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	
D8	WGBH News	0	0	1	4	4	2	1.5	1	1	7	4	3	7	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	2	2	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	

D9	Worcester Tel. & Gaz.	1	0	1	2	3	3	5	6	1	20	5	15	14	6	5	1	0	5	0	1	0	0	2	4	1	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	0
D10	Worcester Tel. & Gaz.	1	0	1	2	3	3	8	1	1	20	6	14	18	2	6	2	0	5	1	0	2	0	2	3	2	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	2	0

## Appendix I: Project assessment, the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research

**Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS**  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Gunhild Ring Olsen  
Institutt for informasjons- og medievitenskap  
Universitetet i Bergen  
Fosswinckelsgate 6  
5007 BERGEN

Vår dato: 24.11.2015

Vår ref: 45245/3/LB/LR

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 19.10.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

45245

*En ny plattform for kvalitetsjournalistikk? En studie av samarbeid mellom journalistutdanninger og pressen*

*Daglig ansvarlig*

*Gunhild Ring Olsen*

Det fremgår at datainnsamlingen ble igangsatt i august 2014 og allerede er gjennomført. Prosjektleder opplyser om at hun ikke var klar over meldeplikten før nå. Personvernombudet finner dette beklagelig, og minner om at prosjekter som omfattes av meldeplikten skal meldes senest 30 dager før oppstart. Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger omfattes av meldeplikten iht. personopplysningsloven § 31.

#### **Prosjektvurdering**

Utvalget består av tidligere og nåværende studenter, samt ansatte ved universiteter og ansatte i mediebedrifter.

Utvalget er informert skriftlig og muntlig om prosjektet, jf. epost mottatt 19.11.2015. Informasjonen som er gitt er imidlertid noe mangelfull. Prosjektleder Gunhild Ring Olsen opplyser per telefon 24.11.2015 at tilleggsinformasjon kan gis utvalget. Ombudet forutsetter derfor at tilleggsinformasjon gis både de ansatte og studentene, og at da følgende er informert om/innhentet samtykke til:

- hvilken institusjon som er ansvarlig
- prosjektets formål / problemstilling
- hvilke metoder som skal benyttes for datainnsamling
- hvilke typer opplysninger som samles inn
- at opplysningene behandles konfidensielt og hvem som vil ha tilgang
- at det er frivillig å delta og at man kan trekke seg når som helst uten begrunnelse
- dato for forventet prosjektslutt
- at data skal lagres med personidentifikasjon ved Universitetet i Bergen på ubestemt tid i påvente av evt. oppfølgingsstudier og til undervisningsformål
- at enkeltpersoner vil kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjoner
- kontaktopplysninger til forsker.

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47 22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no  
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TROMSØ: NSD, HSL, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 61 53. solvi.andersen@uit.no

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Universitetet i Bergen sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet. Vi anbefaler at man i stedet for dropbox vurderer andre lagringsformer for backup. Dersom dropbox benyttes, skal det inngås skriftlig databehandleravtale med leverandøren av nettskytjenesten, iht. personopplysningsloven § 15. Dersom eksterne transkriberingsassistenter benyttes, skal det også foreligge en databehandleravtale mellom transkriberingsassistentene og Universitetet i Bergen.

Det oppgis at personopplysninger skal publiseres. Personvernombudet legger til grunn at det foreligger eksplisitt samtykke fra den enkelte til dette. Vi anbefaler at det vurderes hvorvidt deltakerne bør gis anledning til å lese igjennom egne opplysninger og godkjenne disse før publisering.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 30.06.2017. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da lagres videre på ubestemt tid i påvente av eventuelle oppfølgingsstudier og til undervisningsformål. Ombudet vil ved prosjektslutt ta kontakt med prosjektleder for en avklaring av status/videre lagring ved Universitetet i Bergen.

Vi gjør oppmerksom på at lagring/bruk av data til undervisningsformål kan innebære en selvstendig meldeplikt til Datatilsynet.

#### **Avslutning**

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med personvernombudet, samt personopplysningsloven med forskrifter.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Ta gjerne kontakt dersom noe er uklart.

Vennlig hilsen

  
Katrine Utaaker Segadal

  
Lene Christine M. Brandt

Kopi: Institutt for informasjons- og medievitenskap, UiB



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