The Institutionalization of Solutions Journalism

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Dedication

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I hope my life—this project as a part of that—is an inspiration for you to pursue your dreams and to always remember that, because of Jesus's death and resurrection, we can rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:3-5).

Abstract

This dissertation provides a theoretically driven empirical investigation of the emerging institution of solutions journalism. Solutions journalism is a journalistic approach defined as rigorous reporting on responses to social problems. This project uses a triangulated qualitative methodology comprising 52 in-depth interviews; netnography of solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners' digital communities; and qualitative content analysis of solutions-oriented journalistic texts. This dissertation presents three major arguments. The first argument is that solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form with a central mission and decentralized hubs and spokes that carry out the practice worldwide. The second argument is that emerging institutions gain legitimacy through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values, as seen in the legitimation of solutions journalism. The third and final argument is that solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion worldwide, with various factors contributing to and constraining its success. Drawing from foundational roots in sociological and managerial literature, this dissertation project expands the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices. This dissertation also answers calls for clarity of the theorization and conceptualization of solutions journalism.

Keywords: solutions journalism, journalism, news values, institutional theory, networks

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The Institutionalization of Solutions Journalism

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There has been a crisis facing the institutional press for decades (Reese, 2021). This dissertation thus utilizes new institutional theory—a theory that defines journalism as a cultural institution with a dynamic set of practices and expectations (Deuze & Witschge, 2018; Lowrey, 2012, 2011; Vos, 2020)—as a tool to empirically examine the ways journalists, editors, and practitioners are cultivating legitimacy for the idea of solutions journalism as an emerging institution in journalistic practice.

Due in part to the recent rise of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation online, and the increasing popularity of social media platforms for sharing and attaining news in the 21st century (Bode & Vraga, 2015; Tandoc et al., 2020), journalistic authority and trust in the news has come into question (Carlson, 2017). Many people are avoiding the news altogether (Toff & Nielsen, 2018). Challenges have come to traditional journalism institutions' power positions relative to technological institutions such as Facebook in Silicon Valley in particular (Hindman, 2018; Vos & Russell, 2019; Wang, 2020).

In addition to questions about journalism's authority, credibility, and power, there are over 130 types of journalism in practice worldwide and that number is rising (Loosen et al., 2020). Beyond recognizing their existence, the development of hundreds of new journalistic approaches including data journalism (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021), automated journalism (Carlson, 2018), foundation-funded journalism (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019; Scott et al., 2019), brand journalism (Serazio, 2021), and collaborative and cross-

border journalism (Heft, 2019) indicates a dissatisfaction with conventional journalistic values, norms, and practices.

Enter solutions journalism, a journalistic approach defined as "rigorous reporting on responses to social problems" (Solutions Journalism Network, 2022). Solutions journalism is related to investigative journalism (Walth et al., 2019) with the potential to "win back" trust (Wenzel, 2020), provide financial stability for media organizations worldwide (Crosse, 2019; Solutions Journalism, 2019), and engage communities in journalistic consumption and production (Crittenden & Haywood, 2020; Wenzel et al., 2018).

Solutions journalism is a novel journalistic approach gaining traction in practice worldwide. Scholars categorize solutions journalism as one of several journalistic approaches that report news "beyond the typical problem-based narrative" while upholding journalism's "professional values" (Hopkinson & Dahmen, 2021, p. 1). Alongside approaches including civic, constructive, explanatory, participatory, engaged, peace, and slow journalism, solutions journalism upholds the social responsibility theory of the press and seeks to make the world a "better place through reporting that seeks meaningful impact–with an appropriate level of context, complexity, and journalistic rigor" (Hopkinson & Dahmen, 2021).

However, the theoretical underpinnings of the solutions journalism approach have not been fully developed. This study attempts to theorize solutions journalism with a threefold argument: First, that solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form with a central mission and decentralized hubs and spokes that carry out the practice worldwide. The second

argument is that emerging institutions gain legitimacy through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values, as seen in the legitimation of solutions journalism. The third and final argument is that solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion worldwide, with various factors contributing to and constraining its success. Before developing the theoretical framework for this study, I will provide a couple of examples of solutions journalism in practice in the section below.

Solutions Journalism: Rigorous Reporting on Responses to Social Problems

A journalist in rural India was "shaken to her core" when she encountered a five-year-old girl who had been living in abject poverty as a prostitute before she'd been rescued from her traffickers in part due to work carried out by nongovernmental organization Free a Girl India (J8). This freelance journalist followed Free a Girl India for three years before developing a solutions-oriented story about anti-trafficking efforts in India that was ultimately published in the British newspaper *The Guardian* in 2020 (Pinto-Rodrigues, 2020).

This story didn't come together overnight. Solutions journalists often adhere to a thorough code of conduct that encourages journalists to "complicate the narrative" and "tell the whole story" rather than providing a "silver bullet" solution or "hero worship" within their articles (Solutions Journalism Network, 2022). In addition to telling the story of Free a Girl India's School for Justice (SFJ) programme that fights the sexual exploitation of children in partnership with local nongovernmental organization Sanlaap and a law school, this journalist integrated data and statistics about trafficking and conviction rates in India from the National Crime Records Bureau. In addition to

providing data and context around trafficking in India, the journalist also wrote about the opportunities and challenges that face trafficking survivors including various social stigmas and psychological and emotional challenges. Amid the efforts various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) take to integrate survivors into society, these structural constraints and challenges sometimes lead trafficking survivors to drop out of rehabilitation programs for various reasons. This solutions story, like many others, took years to formulate (Pinto-Rodrigues, 2020).

This story is an example of solutions journalism, a journalistic approach that dovetails with and complements the well-established practice of investigative journalism (Walth et al., 2019) and is supported financially by global foundations including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, corporations like Google, and nonprofit organizations including the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN). SJN is a network of thousands of journalists, editors, scholars, and practitioners worldwide dedicated to providing grants and support for journalists to cover social problems and the responses to those problems (Solutions Journalism Network, 2022). Solutions journalism is a form of journalism that evaluates and analyzes responses to social problems related to human trafficking, the climate crisis, educational inequity, public health, urban planning, and more.

Specific examples of solutions journalism stories include how hip-hop is being used to combat gang violence in Medellin, Colombia (Gordon, 2019); how shipping containers (Morabito, 2020) and tiny homes (Rudisill, 2020) are being used to provide affordable housing for the homeless in U.S. cities; how video games are used to engage communities in urban planning (Scruggs, 2018); how hydroponics (Nwafor, 2020) and aquaponics are being used to transform the agricultural industry (Behar, 2019); how grassroots initiatives

launched by residents of three favelas in São Paulo, Brazil, are battling COVID-19 (Pacheco, 2019); and how public-private partnerships are helping hospitals in Nigeria provide more efficient maternal healthcare (Adebulu, 2020).

Another example of solutions journalism in practice is a solutions story called "Breach of Honor" (Cordell, 2017). This story is about solutions to challenges that face United States military veterans who leave the military with other-than-honorable discharges, oftentimes due to mental health challenges including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or traumatic brain injuries (TBI) (Cordell, 2017). This story highlights how tens of thousands of U.S. military veterans that are discharged from the U.S. military with other-than-honorable discharges are often denied Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits, GI bill benefits, and health care. This lack of access to benefits forces many veterans who have been discharged with other-than-honorable distinctions–many with mental health challenges–into joblessness, homelessness, and poverty. In addition to highlighting structural constraints, this journalist chose to analyze solutions to this problem including how classes and legal clinics like the University of Denver's Veterans Advocacy Project (VAP) provides legal assistance and advocates for veterans seeking help with their VA benefits or appealing disability ratings. In its inaugural year, the VAP won the equivalent of $1.5 million in VA appeals (Cordell, 2017).

"Solutions stories help improve the world in some way, and that doesn't mean that they're all happy stories," the journalist said in an interview. "The Breach of Honor story is not happy at all–it's an ugly story that discusses war, which is generally ugly, and negative circumstances impacting individuals struggling with mental health challenges. But in Larry's case, the subject of that story, he eventually had his discharge status

upgraded. Ultimately, I think in helping highlight how the Veterans Advocacy Project is adjusting the system and evaluating how their approach to these types of cases has a positive impact for individuals and, collectively, society" (J16).

Because the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of solutions journalism and numerous other new forms of journalism have not been fully developed, this dissertation will build on and draw from new institutional theory, defined as the study of standard routines and practices to do so (Sparrow, 2006; Vos, 2020). New institutional theory defines journalism as a cultural institution with a dynamic set of practices and expectations (Deuze & Witschge, 2018; Lowrey, 2012, 2011; Vos, 2020). Also, in line with Reese's argument that "any discussion of the institutional press must consider the vastly more complex networked public sphere" (2022, p. 16), this dissertation also evaluates solutions journalism as a networked organizational form. This dissertation will thus leverage new institutional theory to examine the ways journalists, editors, and practitioners are cultivating legitimacy for the idea of solutions journalism as an emerging institution.

From Theorization to Diffusion: Solutions Journalism as a Networked Organizational Form

Part of solutions journalism's pursuit of legitimacy involves its embodiment as a networked organizational form. This study utilizes the definition of a networked organizational form as a set of nodes–also known as persons or organizations–linked by social and economic relationships and messages comprising data, information, knowledge, and strategic alliances (Gulati et al., 2002; Laumann et al., 1978; Monge & Contractor, 2003). Networks have been proven to play an integral role in the process of

institutionalization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and solutions journalism is carried out by a global network of journalists, editors, and scholars. This dissertation thus expands the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices by providing multilevel analysis (Smets et al., 2012) of an emerging journalistic institution as a networked organizational form.

Solutions journalism functions as a networked organizational form with a central mission and decentralized groups of media organizations, editors, journalists, and practitioners that carry out the practice worldwide. Solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners have various degrees of connection and collaboration with each other. Connections are made between editors, journalists, and practitioners through shared commitments to a set of rules, norms, and values; economic connections; and communication networks on social media platforms.

As a networked organizational form of journalism, solutions journalism as a journalistic approach is between emergence and stabilization on a global scale (Fligstein, 2013). It is also between theorization and diffusion (Greenwood et al., 2002). This is also known as the phase of semi-institutionalization (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996).

According to Greenwood et al. (2002), there are six stages of institutional change: First, precipitating jolts; second, deinstitutionalization; third, preinstitutionalization; fourth, theorization; fifth, diffusion; and sixth, reinstitutionalization. For new practices to become widely adopted, they have to be "theorized." Theorization is accomplished by developing and defining new practices and explaining the outcomes they produce. In theorization, justification of abstract possible solutions or innovations comes through establishment of moral and/or pragmatic legitimacy. Moral legitimacy is achieved “by

nesting and aligning new ideas within prevailing normative prescriptions" (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suchman, 1995; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Pragmatic legitimacy is defined as assertion of "functional superiority" (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suchman, 1995). The transition from theorization to diffusion happens when moral legitimacy and/or pragmatic legitimacy is attained.

The diffusion stage comprises increasing objectification and pragmatic legitimacy. "Objectification" is defined by Greenwood et al. (2002) as "gaining social consensus concerning…pragmatic value" (p. 61). As ideas become objectified or begin to gain social consensus about their pragmatic value, ideas gain legitimacy. As ideas become objectified during diffusion, they diffuse even further and continue to gain pragmatic legitimacy. Greenwood et al. noted that "diffusion occurs only if new ideas are compellingly presented as more appropriate than existing practices" (p. 60).

This dissertation addresses how solutions journalism as a case study is moving through the theorization and diffusion process–stages four and five of Greenwood et al. (2002)'s process of institutionalization–in practice. This study builds on literature that has examined why various semi institutionalized ideas fail to become institutionalized (Abrahamson, 1991; Strang & Soule, 1998) by examining solutions journalism as a case study.

This dissertation thus provides a theoretically driven case study of the undertheorized practice of solutions-based journalism by exploring solutions journalism as a networked organizational form of journalism characterized by a shared commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values.

Rules, Norms, Values, and Institutional Legitimacy

Journalism is a cultural institution (Lowrey, 2011). As such, this dissertation answers calls for scholarship grounded in the lived experience of journalists that examines journalism as a dynamic set of practices and expectations (Deuze & Witschge, 2018). As Vos (2020) writes, all institutions—including the institution of journalism—are constituted by "routinized practices, implicit and explicit rules, and explicit norms" (p. 736). Institutions provide a "historically rooted and deeply embedded framework of practices and relationships through which social life is conducted" (Reese, 2021, p. 1). Related, legitimacy is directly correlated to the stability of the institution of journalism (Vos, 2020, p. 745).

Theoretically, this dissertation shows how patterns of isomorphism and path dependence are creating stability for solutions journalism within news media organizations and environments worldwide. Isomorphism is defined as "similarity among organizations" (Baum & Rowley, 2002, p. 12), or a "constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 66; Vos, 2020, p. 741). Path dependence is defined as "the tendency of institutions or technologies to become committed to develop in certain ways as a result of their structural properties or their beliefs and values" (Greener, 2019). Path dependency also "explains how institutional power is created and maintained" (Vos, 2020, p. 740). Isomorphism accounts for the "relative sameness in beliefs and norms, informal rules and routines, and explicit rules across news organizational settings" (Vos, 2020, p. 741). Path dependency helps us to see how paths

that institutions have taken over time can both shape and constrain future decision-making (Bailo et al., 2021, p. 3).

Endogenous and exogenous forces contribute to the institutionalization process (Vos, 2020). Exogenous forces are often economic and technological in nature, while endogenous forces often comprise new normative outlooks like a shared commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values (Vos, 2020). This dissertation thus explores exogenous and endogenous forces–including the roles data, technology, funding, rules, norms, and values play in shaping and forming the institution of solutions journalism.

This dissertation thus examines solutions journalism as an emerging institution through stakeholders' attempts to attain legitimacy by shared commitments to a set of rules, norms, and values. As the practice evolves, it is evident solutions journalism functions as a networked organizational form of persons, organizations, and relationships characterized by shared commitments to a codified set of rules, norms, and values that keep rigorous reporting on responses to social problems at the center of their journalistic coverage.

The Rise and Scope of Solutions Journalism in Scholarship and Practice

Solutions journalism has been recognized in academic literature as early as the 1990s. One of the earliest mentions was in 1998, when Susan Benesch defined solutions journalism as:

> worthwhile precisely because it promises no magic bullets, and it doesn't paint by the numbers. It differs from other good journalism in one simple way: instead of pointing out what's wrong in the hope that someone will fix it, solutions journalism points out what's right, hoping that someone can imitate it. (Benesch, 1998, p. 39)

Within her article, Benesch discussed how journalists tend to write about social problems and then let "other institutions, like government, worry about the solutions," but noted a shift was underway in journalists' approach to reporting—that "more and more journalists are enthusiastic about solutions stories" (Benesch, 1998, p. 37).

Benesch also quoted David Bornstein, freelance journalist who eventually became cofounder of the Solutions Journalism Network in 2013 and cofounder of "Fixes," *The New York Times*' solutions-oriented opinion column, in 2010. In the article, Bornstein discusses how writing solutions stories takes "a lot more time" (Benesch, 1998, p. 39). This is a structural constraint and challenge that will be explored throughout this project as it was a topic that came up consistently throughout interviews with journalists, editors, and practitioners worldwide.

Beyond print and digital journalism, solutions journalism also appears in podcast formats. In partnership with Google's Creative Lab team, SJN staff members curated "a 2-3 sentence news summary about people who are working to solve problems for our communities and our world" (Google, 2018). They then rolled out the "Hey Google, tell me something good" feature through Google Assistant on smartphones, made accessible via Google Home and Google Home Mini in the U.S. in 2018 (Chowdhry, 2018). The initiative has now expanded to include weekly podcast segments available via Google Assistant and on Soundcloud (Hotz, 2020).

As of 2021, solutions journalism was practiced in at least 54 global newsrooms including the BBC, Politico, *The New York Times*, and Fast Company (Hotz, 2021). NextCity is a news site that has been practicing solutions journalism since 2003 (J5). Also, *The New York Times* published an opinion column from 2010 to 2022 titled

"Fixes." "Fixes" is described on the NYT website as: "Fixes looks at solutions to social problems and why they work." *The Washington Post* also sends out a weekly email newsletter called "The Optimist." This newsletter is focused on sharing positive news from around the world. *Fast Company* has a section called "Impact," which is described on their website as "the big ideas that are changing the world."

In light of these advances in solutions journalism practice, this dissertation demonstrates that solutions journalism is an emergent form of journalism that has become an important topic of study. Scholars have examined solutions journalism's relationship to investigative journalism (Walth et al., 2019) and photojournalism (Dahmen et al., 2019). Scholars have also operationalized it conceptually (McIntyre & Lough, 2021) and questioned whether or not it is journalism, "soft news," or a form of marketing (Amiel & Powers, 2019; Dodd, 2021). Others have investigated the relationship between solutions journalism and trust (Thier et al., 2019; Wenzel, 2020). Solutions journalism is also a potentially effective way to engage communities—especially marginalized communities—in journalistic production (Crittenden & Haywood, 2020; Wenzel et al., 2018).

Its importance has also been shown through the rise of networks of academics and practitioners worldwide. Scholars and news media practitioners define solutions journalism as a journalistic approach that "points out what's right, hoping that someone can imitate it" (Benesch, 1998, p. 39). It is also defined as "rigorous reporting on responses to social problems" (Solutions Journalism Network, 2022). One way solutions journalism has been sustained and supported is through funding, collaborations, and

partnerships between granting organizations, news media organizations, and civic institutions worldwide.

Funding, Collaborations, and Partnerships

Partnership and collaboration are integral to solutions journalism's pursuit of legitimacy. As one example: Solutions journalism is becoming institutionalized in part through the rise of the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN). SJN is a network of hundreds of scholars and practitioners worldwide dedicated to covering social problems and the responses to those problems. As of April 2020, the SJN had trained over 15,000 journalists through live training or online curriculum, partnered with 208 global news organizations on solutions-oriented projects, and provided 17 journalism schools with SJN curricula for use in undergraduate and/or graduate classrooms. The SJN launched in 2013 as a network of scholars and practitioners dedicated to "train journalists to cover the whole story — what's wrong and the responses to those problems" (Solutions Journalism Network, 2022).

SJN facilitates partnerships with news organizations and journalists worldwide through the SJN Mentorship Program and LEDE Fellowship program. Partnerships are important to examine from an advocacy perspective yet they may conflict with journalistic production practices and norms. For example, *The New York Times* recently partnered with the Fuller Project for International Reporting on an article about safe homes for trafficked youth in Miami (Sharma Rani, 2019). Also, an online publication called Zora partnered with the Solutions Journalism Network about trafficking in refugee camps in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2019).

In addition to academic research and media production, solutions journalism is supported financially by nonprofit funding partners and SJN, the Knight Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to name a few. SJN is a network of thousands of journalists, editors, scholars, and practitioners worldwide dedicated to covering social problems and the responses to those problems. As of April 2020, the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) had trained over 15,000 journalists through live training or online curriculum, partnered with 208 global news organizations on solutions-oriented projects, and provided 17 journalism schools with Solutions Journalism Network curricula for use in undergraduate and/or graduate classrooms. The SJN launched in 2013 as a network of scholars and practitioners dedicated to "train journalists to cover the whole story—what's wrong and the responses to those problems" (Solutions Journalism Network, 2022).

Theoretically, as an institution evolves, variations materialize (Benson, 2006). Optimal forms of the institutional form will be replicated, and less successful forms will fail to gain legitimacy and phase out (Tracey et al., 2011). There are numerous variations of solutions journalism funded by nonprofit organizations. One example is Guardian Upside, a vertical within *The Guardian*'s news section defined as "Journalism that seeks out answers, solutions, movements and initiatives to address the biggest problems besetting the world" (The Guardian, 2020). Guardian Upside is funded in part by the Skoll Foundation (GNM Press Office, 2018). Based in Palo Alto, California, Skoll is dedicated to "Driving large-scale change by investing in, connecting, & celebrating social entrepreneurs & innovators dedicated to solving the world's most pressing problems" (The Skoll Foundation, 2020). Another example of solutions journalism in practice is a

partnership between Fundación Gabo, "the Latin American region's preeminent journalism training organization," and the SJN (Tinker Foundation, 2020). Thanks to funding from the Tinker Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting "economic and social development in Latin America by supporting 'people, projects, and ideas,'" SJN and Fundación Gabo have partnered "to bring solutions journalism to reporters and newsrooms across the region" by providing solutions journalism training for journalists, editors, and newsrooms in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela (Tinker Foundation, 2020).

Another form of solutions journalism in practice are local collaboratives comprising newsrooms and civic organizations across mediums and platforms dedicated to sharing solutions-oriented stories and coverage. The Charlotte Journalism Collaborative (CJC) is one example of this. The CJC was founded in 2019 as a group of media companies and local institutions including a public library that focus on "issues of major importance to the Charlotte region" (Charlotte Journalism Collaborative, 2020). The CJC's mission is to "strengthen local journalism and encourage greater connection between reporters and Charlotte residents" by providing solutions-oriented news coverage to the city of Charlotte, North Carolina (Charlotte Journalism Collaborative, 2020). CJC was launched in 2019 thanks to $150,000 in funding from the SJN as a subgrantor of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, who have a $300 million commitment "to rebuild the future of local journalism, essential to a functioning democracy" (Knight Foundation, 2019).

Resolve Philadelphia ("Resolve Philly"), based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is another example of a solutions-oriented collaborative. Resolve Philly serves as a hub for

the city's general interest, community and ethnic news organizations "to produce collaborative solutions reporting and community engagement activities that address urgent social challenges" (Resolve Philly, 2020). Resolve Philly has three main journalistic initiatives: Broke in Philly, a project that focuses on producing solutions-oriented stories on the topics of poverty and "the push for economic justice in Philadelphia" (Broke in Philly, 2020); Reframe, an initiative that "aims to help journalists improve the accuracy and authenticity of their coverage of mis- and under-represented individuals and communities and thus build trust with their audiences through precise, human-centered language" (Reframe, 2020); and Equally Informed Philly, a "community info-line" and "personalized Q&A service" answering questions from community members with expertise from newsrooms, independent journalists, and community organizations affiliated with Resolve Philly (Equally Informed Philly, 2020).

These funders, supporters, and collaborations seek to help solutions journalism diffuse to and through news organizations worldwide. They showcase the growth of solutions journalism as a journalistic practice, raise questions about the nature of these partnerships, and call for clarifications of what exactly solutions journalism is and what it is not. To provide context for solutions journalism in the media landscape today, the following section will discuss solutions journalism's relationship to constructive journalism. This relationship is significant as constructive journalism is a journalistic approach some argue is the European counterpart to or umbrella over solutions journalism.

Relationship to Constructive Journalism

Constructive journalism is a journalistic approach that shares numerous similarities with solutions journalism. The Constructive Institute at Aarhus University in Denmark defines constructive journalism as "a response to increasing tabloidization, sensationalism and negativity bias of the news media today and offers an add on to both breaking and investigative journalism" (Constructive Journalism, 2022). The Constructive Institute also defines constructive journalism as "journalism for tomorrow" with an ambition to "contribute to democracy through critical, constructive journalism" by upholding three pillars of practice: a focus on solutions; coverage of nuances; and promoting democratic conversation.

Scholars define constructive journalism as "the application of positive psychology techniques to news processes and production in an effort to create productive, engaging and comprehensive coverage, while holding true to journalism's core functions" (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018). McIntyre and Gyldensted (2018) argue that constructive journalism is an umbrella over several branches or styles of journalism including: "Solutions journalism (and its offshoot, problem-solving journalism), prospective journalism, peace journalism, and restorative narrative" (p. 24). Other scholars and practitioners place solutions journalism alongside constructive journalism, arguing they are "interchangeable" in practice (Dagan Wood, 2014). Dodd (2021) differentiates constructive journalism from solutions journalism. He defines constructive journalism as "positive psychology as a rationale and method for reporting solutions" and solutions journalism as "empirical rigor in the identification and reporting of scalable solutions" (Dodd, 2021, p. 6).

Similar to SJN's role in supporting global solutions journalism practice through funding and training largely in the U.S., constructive journalism is supported in Europe by the Constructive Institute at Aarhus University in Denmark and the Bonn Institute, housed in Germany. Constructive and solutions journalism both exist in Europe, and one example of a trans-Atlantic solutions-oriented partnership is the "Solutions Journalism Accelerator," a formal partnership between SJN and the European Journalism Centre. Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Solutions Journalism Accelerator will provide more than $2.8 million of grants to journalists in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom through 2025 (Solutions Journalism Accelerator, 2022). The program will also provide "mentoring, coaching, resources, skills development and knowledge transfer for solutions-focused development journalism in European media organisations" (Solutions Journalism Accelerator, 2022).

Taking these definitional similarities and differences into consideration, this dissertation focuses on solutions journalism as an emerging journalistic institution. Solutions journalism's relationship to constructive journalism comes up in and throughout the results chapters and conclusion as it is relevant, utilizing a thorough sampling and methodological process.

Research Objectives

Solutions journalism lacks clarity regarding its objectives (McIntyre & Lough, 2019), and would benefit from metrics to measure its impact (Powers & Curry, 2019). In part to answer these calls for more clarity, conceptualization, and impact of solutions journalism, this dissertation seeks to answer three research questions with corresponding arguments in proceeding chapters.

This dissertation project provides a contribution to the new institutional theory body of literature within the field of journalism studies by providing an empirical examination of solutions journalism in practice worldwide. Drawing from foundational roots in sociological and managerial literature, this dissertation project expands the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices by providing multilevel analysis of an emerging journalistic institution as a networked organizational form. This dissertation provides a micro-level analysis of journalist, editor, and practitioners' daily habits; meso analysis of journalists, editors, and practitioners' interactions through in-depth interview questions and netnography; and a macro-level analysis of solutions-oriented media organizations' financial statements, mission statements, and annual reports.

To accomplish this multi-level analysis of the emergence of solutions journalism with a focus on new institutional theory, this project utilizes three main research questions:

RQ1: What role do collaborations and partnerships play in the institutionalization of networked organizational forms of journalism?

RQ2: How do social actors working within networked organizational forms of journalism establish shared understandings and promote legitimacy?

RQ3: What mechanisms limit a networked organizational form of journalism and how do organizational actors seek to overcome those restrictive barriers?

For the purposes of this study, a social actor is defined as "anyone who engages in intentional action which is shaped by internalized expectations about how others will interpret its meaning;" further, social actors' choices are "limited by structural constraints

in the form of social norms and values: social actors are thus neither 'free agents' nor structurally determined subjects" (Chandler & Munday, 2020; Goffman, 1959). Journalists, as social actors, publish news that describes, defines, and shapes events for readers and consumers (Tuchman, 1978, p. 184).

Similar to the concept of social actors, Montgomery and Dacin (2019) argue that institutional "custodians" are "active, powerful, and motivated guardians of institutional arrangements" motivated by "passions for outside causes" (pp. 36-37). In this way, custodians are institutional actors that cultivate "formal and informal coalitions over interconnected yet diverse interests" and are just as capable of driving institutional renewal as they are to act as agents of stability (p. 36). Two concepts that relate to varying degrees of conformity and/or change include "identity enhancement" and "identity refinement" (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2019, p. 61). In these ways, the social actors interviewed for this study can also be identified as institutional custodians that play integral roles in the enhancement and refinement of solutions journalism in theory and practice. As solutions journalism is adopted in practice worldwide by social actors and custodians including journalists, editors, and practitioners, it is important to evaluate how its identity is being enhanced and refined.

Scholars who have examined solutions journalism called for more scholarship about the impact of solutions journalism and about reporters' goals in writing solutions-based stories (Lough & McIntyre, 2018; McIntyre, 2019; McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018). This study seeks to provide insights and a response to this call with a triangulated qualitative methodological approach described below.

Method

Solutions journalism has been examined ethnographically, through focus groups, experiments, and in-depth interviews with reporters and editors in the field (Amiel & Powers, 2019; McIntyre & Sobel, 2018). Lough (2019) studied solutions-oriented photographers in the field and on Facebook as an ethnographer. Wenzel et al. (2018) hosted six focus groups with South Los Angeles residents to measure responses to solutions-oriented stories produced by a local media project. McIntyre (2019) conducted an experiment testing the effects of solutions journalism on audiences. McIntyre and Sobel (2019) interviewed solutions journalists in Africa about their solutions-oriented journalistic practices using mobile technology and apps including WhatsApp. Solutions journalism has also been found to have positive impacts on brand recall when published alongside digital advertisements of various kinds (Li, 2021). Thier et al. (2019) conducted a between-subjects factorial design experiment to show that solutions journalism could have positive impacts on the news industry and democracy. And Ciftci (2019) coded strategic communications messages utilized in Somalia's 2016 electoral process, which showed that solutions journalism has infiltrated United Nations peacekeeping operations with positive impacts.

Building on this work with a triangulated qualitative methodological approach, this dissertation examines how solutions journalism is becoming institutionalized and is gaining legitimacy as a specialized journalistic practice. This exploration is conducted through in-depth interviews with journalists who write solutions-based stories; netnography of journalists, editors, and practitioners on social media platforms including Facebook and Slack; and qualitative content analysis of solutions journalism articles,

financial documents, and annual reports published by solutions-oriented media organizations. This triangulation of interviews, netnography, and qualitative content analysis provides rich and thick descriptions of the practice of solutions journalism as it is emerging in practice worldwide. The methodology for this study is outlined in detail in Chapter 3. A list of interviewees is included in Appendix A. In-depth interview questions utilized for each interview are available as part of Appendix B.

Scope and Expected Contributions

Findings from this dissertation answer a call from journalism studies scholars to examine both the internal and external / endogenous and exogenous forces that shape journalism (Carlson et al., 2018; Vos, 2020). This dissertation also seeks to expand the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices. This dissertation refines current understandings of journalism as a cultural institution through an examination of the emerging institution of solutions journalism. Journalism is a field of practice or interpretive community characterized by shared discourse and collective interpretations of key public events (Zelizer, 1993), and solutions journalism is an approach that carries with it an implicit—and sometimes explicit—critique of traditional journalism.

This dissertation provides generalizable findings about the opportunities and challenges of creating and sustaining specialized journalism institutions backed by nonprofits and funding agencies. It provides a framework for analyzing journalistic approaches in various stages of institutionalization as networked organizational forms. It also provides insights about opportunities and challenges facing journalists that produce journalism that covers social problems including the climate crisis and various human

rights abuses including human trafficking. Solutions-based news coverage provides a novel approach in journalistic practice that enhances understandings of pressing social problems by leveraging the strategic ritual of emotionality (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). Beyond providing explanations of social problems, solutions journalism evaluates the effectiveness of proposed solutions. As long as there are social problems, there will be a place for solutions journalism.

Theoretical Arguments and Chapter Outlines

This study presents three major theoretical arguments. The first argument is that solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form characterized by collaborations and partnerships. The second argument is that rules, norms, and values play a central role in helping networked organizational forms of journalism gain legitimacy. Solutions journalism represents this relationship as an emerging institution gaining legitimacy in practice worldwide through support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values that relate to and build upon traditional and contemporary news values. The third and final argument is that solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion worldwide, with various factors contributing to and constraining its success. Social actors that support the practice of solutions journalism are claiming to attempt to gain cognitive legitimacy, also known as taken-for-grantedness, in the midst of challenges, tensions, restrictions and restraints. The theoretical chapter, Chapter 2, will unpack this framework further.

Chapter 3 explores the methodology for this study: a triangulated qualitative analysis utilized for this study comprising in-depth interviews, netnography, and qualitative content analysis.

Chapter 4 explores the theorization of solutions journalism as a networked organizational form by presenting it as a network of hubs and spokes with various connections to each other. Solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners maintain various degrees of connection to solutions journalism's "central hub"—also known as the rules, norms, and values that characterize the institution of solutions journalism in practice—via communication networks on social media platforms and in practice worldwide. Major hubs that support solutions journalism in practice are the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN), news media organizations, higher education institutions, and solutions-oriented collaboratives worldwide. The connections between these hubs are interpersonal, economic, and technological in nature. Connections vary in degree and are made between editors, journalists, and practitioners through communication networks on social media platforms, through online and mobile correspondence, and in practice in countries worldwide. In this way, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners seek to create local networks that can transcend geographic boundaries on a global scale.

Chapter 5 shows how solutions journalism is strategically working toward attainment of moral legitimacy due to social actors' nesting solutions journalism within existing normative prescriptions of investigative, watchdog, and accountability roles. This chapter also explores how social actors share commitments to a codified set of five rules, norms, and values that are consistent across international boundaries.

Chapter 6 examines constraints to solutions journalism's emerging legitimacy. These constraints include a lack of awareness or taken for grantedness among industry professionals including journalists and editors. Journalists and editors alike also argue that there is a large lack of time to commit to the practice of solutions journalism, and a

lack of financial resources to dedicate to solutions journalism in practice. In the face of these constraints, social actors seek to leverage technology, data, collaborations, partnerships, and social media to overcome these restrictive barriers.

This project concludes with Chapter 7, a conclusion chapter that summarizes this study's major theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretical implications are to showcase solutions journalism as an exemplar of the pursuit of cognitive legitimacy in practice. This study also provides a snapshot of how journalistic institutions are seeking to gain legitimacy worldwide. Practically, this dissertation explores the opportunities and challenges that face journalistic forms and business models in their pursuit of recognition and legitimacy. This project emphasizes analysis of the tensions and constraints that keep solutions journalism from thriving as solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners attempt to figure out what projects to pursue so that they achieve their goal of recognition while remaining loyal to their value to provide thorough analysis of solutions to social problems.

This dissertation provides a generalizable analysis of how an emerging journalistic approach is gaining legitimacy in practice worldwide. While solutions journalism is a developing journalistic approach with emerging rules, norms, and values, there are also numerous other emerging journalistic approaches vying for legitimacy in a fragmented media economy. What sets solutions journalism apart from all these other kinds of journalism and what opportunities and challenges face the approach as it seeks to gain traction in the 21st century? This question has practical and theoretical implications that will be unpacked in proceeding chapters.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

In the midst of economic uncertainty, various journalistic approaches are vying to maintain cognitive legitimacy, or "taken for grantedness," in a rapidly diversifying media landscape (Colyvas & Powell, 2006; Sparrow, 2006; Suchman, 1995; Tong, 2018). Without a taken-for-granted perception of the institutional press, societies worldwide may very well succumb to tribalism and fear (Reese, 2021). As Reese (2021) argues: "The institutional press still matters, and the argument must be communicated to the public that depends on it" (p. 176).

New institutional theory is a theory that defines journalism as a cultural institution with a dynamic set of practices and expectations (Deuze & Witschge, 2018; Lowrey, 2012, 2011; Vos, 2020). Using new institutional theory as the theoretical framework, this study provides a theoretically driven empirical investigation of how solutions journalism is attempting to attain cognitive legitimacy in the midst of economic, professional, and informational uncertainties and pressures (McIntyre & Lough, 2021; Ryfe, 2006). This project does so by evaluating solutions journalism's legitimacy, understanding legitimacy as an analytic concept with multiple levels of analysis based in sociological and managerial literature. Legitimacy is also directly correlated to the stability of the institution of journalism (Vos, 2020).

As news media outlets worldwide are struggling to maintain cognitive legitimacy as readers and stakeholders alike question the legitimacy of the institution of journalism, solutions journalism provides an exemplary case study about how a journalistic approach cultivates and establishes formative elements of legitimacy including shared

understandings, connections, collaborations, partnerships, and exercise of and commitment to various rules, norms, and values.

In line with Reese's argument that "any discussion of the institutional press must consider the vastly more complex networked public sphere" (2021, p. 16), this study also presents solutions journalism as a networked organizational form in the context of journalism. Networked organizational forms have been examined in corporate, managerial, and sociological literature for at least two decades (Baker & Faulkner, 2002; Cravens et al., 1996; Monge & Contractor, 2003), but have yet to be explored in-depth within journalism studies. One exception to this is Konow-Lund's (2019) study of routines, practices, and networks within and between collaborative investigative journalists.

This study's threefold argument is outlined in detail below, followed by detailed descriptions of new institutional theory, legitimacy, and networked organizational forms to lay the foundation for the analysis of results provided in proceeding chapters.

A Threefold Theoretical Argument

Solutions journalism is important for civic life and engagement because it raises awareness about the reality of social problems and analyzes proposed solutions to those problems. However, the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the solutions journalism approach have not been fully developed. This dissertation thus seeks to expand current understandings of new institutional theory by providing a theoretically driven analysis of solutions journalism to reveal how economic, political, and cultural factors influence the production of solutions-based news.

Journalistic authority has come into question due to the rise of fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and the increasing popularity of social media platforms for sharing and attaining news in the 21st century. Solutions journalism provides an important case study to examine how journalists, editors, and practitioners are seeking to attain legitimacy for this specialized journalistic practice by presenting and evaluating solutions to social problems as an integral part of journalistic coverage while operating as a network of hubs and spokes connected by shared commitments to the practice of solutions journalism worldwide.

Journalism studies is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary field that draws methodologically and theoretically from sociology, political science, cultural studies, and similar disciplines (Ahva & Steensen, 2019; Zelizer, 2004). According to Ahva and Steensen (2019), journalism studies scholars tend to publish scholarship driven by practice-based questions rather than building theoretical frameworks. On the other hand, scholars including Tong (2018) and Vos (2020) have utilized new institutional theory and legitimacy frameworks to ask significant questions about the field of journalism in recent years. This dissertation seeks to build on theory-driven research to apply new institutionalism as a theoretical framework that focuses on macro conceptions to explain and explore the role that journalism plays in societies, why it matters, and what sets journalism apart from other forms of communication (Ahva & Steensen, 2019).

Beyond the field of journalism, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate about what constitutes legitimacy in fields of sociology, organizational communication, and management studies.

The framework of new institutional theory is utilized to provide a theoretically driven empirical investigation of how solutions journalism is attempting to attain legitimacy in the midst of economic pressures and financial constraints, an increasingly diversified information landscape, and declining levels of trust in the news. In the face of environmental pressures, solutions journalism provides a case study of how media organizations broadly are seeking innovative collaborations and partnerships; leveraging new normative outlooks; and utilizing data, technology, and social/mobile platforms to create networks that transcend geographic boundaries and build resilience for the future of journalism in practice worldwide.

This dissertation's theoretical argument is threefold: First, emerging institutions gain legitimacy through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values, as seen in the legitimation of solutions journalism. Second, solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form with a shared commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values. Third, solutions journalism is in a moment between expansion and stabilization, or theorization and diffusion, worldwide, with various factors contributing to and constraining its success.

To support this threefold argument, this chapter will discuss several themes: the origins of new institutional theory; the role of rules, norms, and values in new institutionalism; the theorization of solutions journalism; the roles of moral and cognitive legitimacy in the theorization of solutions journalism; the conceptualization of solutions journalism as a networked organizational form characterized as a network of hubs, spokes, and global connections; and finally, the environmental factors constraining solutions journalism in theory and practice.

New Institutional Theory

Institutions such as journalism are "the foundation of social life" (Campbell, 2004, p. 1). Going all the way back to Emile Durkheim's exhortation to study social facts as things, institutional analysis has evolved in various disciplines ranging from political science to economy and sociology.

Institutions are social structures created by actors through a history of negotiations that lead to "shared typifications" or "generalized expectations and interpretations of behaviour" that "gradually acquire the moral and ontological status of taken-for-granted facts which, in turn, shape future interactions and negotiations" (Barley & Tolbert, 1997, p. 94). This concept is related to Max Weber's "ideal types," which serve as a synthesis of various individual phenomena into a unified analytical construct (Weber, 1947, 1949).

Institutions come to become institutionalized in a variety of ways. Berger and Luckmann (1967) argued that reality is constructed by social interactions that create shared knowledge, belief systems, and cognitive systems, and that language and cognition mediated by social processes work together to build stable meanings between individuals.

New institutionalism is a macro-level theory that seeks to explain and explore the role that journalism plays in societies, why it matters, and what sets journalism apart from other forms of communication (Ahva & Steensen, 2019, p. 44). New institutionalism provides a theoretical lens through which scholars can empirically examine emerging journalistic approaches by providing analysis of individual behaviors and explanations of "cross-organizational structures" (p. 44).

New institutional theory also positions journalism as a cultural institution with a dynamic set of practices and expectations (Deuze & Witschge, 2018; Lowrey, 2012, 2011; Vos, 2020). The institution of journalism is a combination of routinized practices, implicit and explicit rules, and explicit norms that "generally hold across place and time" (Vos, 2020, pp. 736-37). Additionally, there are internal and external, or, endogenous and exogenous forces that shape the field and practice of journalism (Carlson et al., 2018; Vos, 2020).

Vos also argues that rules and norms play key roles in the cultivation of an institution, including "informal rules" crafted by best practices adopted by journalists and "explicit rules" that relate to ethical codes of conduct (like the Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics) and mission statements and policies published by news organizations and trade and professional associations.

As such, to evaluate solutions journalism as an emerging institution, this dissertation project empirically evaluates the rules, norms, and values related to the practice of solutions journalism to explain the opportunities and challenges that come with establishing solutions journalism within news media organizations worldwide.

This study will identify and utilize rules, norms, and values as a key way to define and identify the core of the institution of solutions journalism in theory and practice. The relationships between rules, norms, values, new institutional theory, and legitimacy are described below.

Rules, Norms, Values, and Institutional Legitimacy

New institutionalists evaluate how rules, norms, and values influence entire organizational fields, recognizing that institutions "cannot be understood completely

without an understanding of the environment" (Galasckiewicz, 1991). There are several environmental influences on daily news production's rules, norms, and values worth mentioning. Citing a model first presented by Shoemaker and Reese (1996), Lawrence (2006, p. 227) argued the institutionalized news process can be visualized as a set of concentric circles expanding outward. These circles can be labeled in sequence from the center expanding outward as:

- "Daily news product" as "individuals," or the attitudes, biases, and reporting skills of individual journalists;
- "Organizational" influences, such as the "beat" system;
- "Interinstitutional" actors, labeled as officials and others positioned in other organizations and institutions who vie to provide information and to frame issues and events;
- "Economics" of the media industry and the imperatives for profit maximizing and cost controls that structure imposes;
- "Legal structure" to represent the public policies and constitutional rulings that provide structure for the economic and newsgathering game; and,
- The outermost ring of influence as "cultural" boundaries around news content and the news industry.

Because journalism studies, management studies, and organizational studies tend to leverage institutional theory tend to evaluate the rules, norms, and values of institutions after they've become established (Barley & Tolbert, 1996; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996), this study provides an examination of a journalistic approach as it's becoming established and gaining credibility globally. In the interest of providing a theoretically informed empirical

analysis of solutions journalism, all of these elements are examined in detail in proceeding results chapters.

Solutions journalism provides an important case study about the formative elements of legitimacy. Consistent rules, norms, and values contribute to solutions journalism's cognitive legitimacy and institutionalization. While this study is not capable of answering whether or not solutions journalism has cognitive legitimacy, it provides a thorough examination of a journalistic approach as it is becoming established.

To explore solutions journalism's formative elements of legitimacy, this study employs Greenwood et al. (2002)'s six stages of institutionalization. As such, solutions journalism as a journalistic approach is in between theorization and diffusion on a global scale (Greenwood et al., 2002). This state is also known as semi-institutionalization (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). These six stages and their application to solutions journalism's institutionalization are described below.

From Theorization to Diffusion: The Theorization of Solutions Journalism

According to Greenwood et al. (2002), there are six stages of institutional change: first, precipitating jolts; second, deinstitutionalization; third, preinstitutionalization; fourth, theorization; fifth, diffusion; and sixth, reinstitutionalization.

Stage one in the institutional change process is precipitating jolts, which comprise social upheaval, technological disruptions, competitive discontinuities, and/or regulatory change. The second stage, deinstitutionalization, involves the emergence of new players, ascendance of current actors, and institutional entrepreneurship in the interest of introducing new ideas and thus the possibility of change.

Stage three, preinstitutionalization, involves organizations innovating to seek "technically viable solutions" to problems (2002, p. 60). According to Greenwood et al. (2002), for new practices to become widely adopted, they have to be "theorized." Stage four, theorization, is accomplished by developing and defining new practices and explaining the outcomes they produce. Theorization involves three things: First, specifying a "general organizational failing;" second, introducing an innovation as "a solution or treatment" to this failing; third, "justification of the innovation" (p. 60).

In theorization, justifications of abstract possible solutions or innovations comes through establishment of moral and/or pragmatic legitimacy. Moral legitimacy is achieved "by nesting and aligning new ideas within prevailing normative prescriptions" (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suchman, 1995; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Pragmatic legitimacy is defined as assertion of "functional superiority" (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suchman, 1995). When moral legitimacy or pragmatic legitimacy is attained, the transition from theorization to diffusion happens.

Stage five, diffusion, comprises increasing objectification and pragmatic legitimacy. "Objectification" is defined by Greenwood et al. (2002) as "gaining social consensus concerning…pragmatic value"(p. 61). As ideas become objectified or begin to gain social consensus about their pragmatic value, ideas gain legitimacy. As ideas become objectified during diffusion, they diffuse even further and continue to gain pragmatic legitimacy. Greenwood et al. noted that "diffusion occurs only if new ideas are compellingly presented as more appropriate than existing practices" (p. 60).

Reinstitutionalization, or full institutionalization, involves the attainment of cognitive legitimacy. Cognitive legitimacy is defined as when "the ideas themselves

become taken-for-granted as the natural and appropriate arrangement," something that can "survive across generations and become uncritically accepted as the definitive way of behaving" (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996, p. 184; Greenwood et al., 2002, p. 61).

Scholars have called for more theoretical work of what brings institutions from stage three, preinstitutionalization, to stage six, reinstitutionalization (Greenwood et al., 2002). This dissertation answers this call in part by addressing how solutions journalism as a case study is moving through the theorization and diffusion process–stages four and five–in practice. This study builds on literature that has examined why various semi-institutionalized ideas fail to become institutionalized (Abrahamson, 1991; Strang & Soule, 1998) by examining solutions journalism as a case study. Formative elements of legitimacy explored throughout this study are defined and introduced in the following section.

Moral and Cognitive Legitimacy

Legitimacy is defined as "justification of an organization's right to exist" (Maurer, 1971, p. 361); "the endorsement of an organization by social actors" (Deephouse, 1996, p. 1025); "acceptance of the organization by its environment" (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999, p. 64); and "the level of social acceptability bestowed upon a set of activities or actors" (Washington & Zajac, 2005, p. 284). Legitimacy can be socially constructed (Bitektine, 2011). Legitimacy also comes from "an ongoing process of replication of features" as well as "recognition from adjacent populations," which is usually attained as "popularity" of the form increases (Weber et al., 2016, p. 324).

Legitimacy, status, and reputation "share many antecedents, consequences, measures, and processes" (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008, p. 60). Legitimacy is an

analytic concept with multiple levels of analysis. This is one reason the concept of legitimacy needs to be clarified and disentangled (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008). As such, in the interest of clarifying this study's intentions, this dissertation focuses on evaluation of solutions journalism's *cognitive* legitimacy.

Cognitive legitimacy comprises "constitutive suppositions about definitions and meanings" (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008, p. 68). Cognitive legitimacy also refers to "affirmative backing for an organization or mere acceptance of the organization as necessary or inevitable based on some taken-for-granted cultural account," and comprises elements of "comprehensibility" and "legitimacy based on taken-for-grantedness" (Suchman, 1995, p. 582).

This study also examines the formative elements of the moral legitimacy of solutions journalism. Moral legitimacy comprises "judgments about whether the activity is 'the right thing to do,'" which reflect "beliefs about whether the activity effectively promotes societal welfare, as defined by the audience's socially constructed value system" (Suchman, 1995, p. 579). Empirically, evaluation of moral legitimacy comprises evaluation of four things: outputs and consequences; techniques and procedures; categories and structures; and evaluation of leaders and representatives (Suchman, 1995, p. 579).

Analyzing solutions journalism's pursuit of cognitive legitimacy is enhanced by evaluating solutions journalism as a networked organizational form. The rise of the networked public sphere as it informs the evolution of solutions journalism is described in detail below.

The Rise of a Networked Public Sphere

In the early 21st century, scholars began to recognize that social network analysis can enhance organizational and institutional theories (Gulati et al., 2002). To properly evaluate solutions journalism as a networked organizational form, it is important to introduce and analyze the origins of the networked public sphere. Theoretically, the origins of the networked public sphere draw connections between institutional theory and social network analysis (SNA). In 1996, Manuel Castells wrote his manifesto about the networked public sphere, and defined the emergence of networked forms of organization as an integral part of an emerging network society.

Networks are organizational and social forms "built around material and symbolic flows that link people and objects both locally and globally without regard for traditional national, institutional, or organizational boundaries" (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 3). Similarly, communication networks are defined as the "patterns of contact that are created by the flow of messages among communicators through time and space" (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 3).

The rise of the internet in the 1990s—including email, blogs, large-scale, collaborative-content production systems, and wikis comprised a "radically distributed network" based in hypertext markup language (HTML)—played a key role in the rise of the networked public sphere (Benkler, 2007, p. 214). The rise of the internet created two effects: first, "the abundance and diversity of human expression available to anyone, anywhere, in a way that was not feasible in the mass-mediated environment;" second, the reality that "anyone can be a publisher, including individuals, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations, alongside the traditional speakers of the mass media environment, government and commercial entities" (Benkler, 2007, p. 214).

Being a publisher is about more than creating content—it has implications for the formation and composition of the public sphere. Benkler (2007) argued that "the networked public sphere is not made of tools, but of social production practices that these tools enable" (pp. 219-20). Through the dissemination of information in a decentralized network by individuals and collectives including journalists, editors, citizens, and practitioners, "the social practices of information and discourse allow a very large number of actors to see themselves as potential contributors to public discourse and as potential actors in political arenas, rather than mostly passive recipients of mediated information who occasionally can vote their preferences" (pp. 219-20).

One major perk of the internet is that it facilitates "distributed information coordination" for political and collective action, something Howard Rheingold has called "smart mobs," large collections of individuals who are able to coordinate real world action through widely distributed information and communication technology" (2003; Benkler, 2007, p. 265).

While networked activism and advocacy are possible in this sort of environment, networked communication capabilities are also available to dark networks of criminal activity (Castells, 1996). Weber (2018) called these dark networks "another instance of new organizational dynamics" (p. 2). Thanks to "advances in social network analysis paired with improved access to digital databases," Weber (2018) pointed out a silver lining of the darker side of these networks: That by mapping criminal networks like drug trafficking syndicates, researchers have "provided new insights into the "mechanisms of resiliency and control" that make up organizational structures (Weber, 2018, p. 2).

This context on the networked public sphere helps to inform the creation and cultivation of networks in the 21st century, especially as it pertains to journalism practice. The following section will describe the networked organizational form of solutions journalism as a network of hubs and spokes linked by interpersonal, economic, and technological global connections.

Hubs, Spokes, and Global Connections: Solutions Journalism as a Networked Organizational Form

As discussed above, at the turn of the 21st century, scholars began to point to networks as the "interorganizational form of the future" and the "emerging form of society" (Baker & Faulkner, 2002, p. 520). At the same time, new institutional theory has evolved to involve consideration of social actors, resources, and technology (Fligstein, 2013). Thus, a network paradigm is one way to measure and qualify the emerging institution of solutions journalism.

A social network can be defined as "a 'set of nodes (e.g., persons, organizations) linked by a set of social relationships (e.g. friendship, transfer of funds, overlapping membership) of a specified type'" that originally focused on understanding how the embeddedness of individuals influences their behavior (Gulati et al., 2002, p. 281; Laumann et al., 1978, p. 458). In sociological literature, types of communication networks can include "personal contact networks, flows of information within and between groups, strategic alliances among firms, and global network organizations" (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 3).

In this way, solutions journalism is a global social network of hubs and spokes. A hub and spoke model is characterized by a focal organization that operates as the central

node with relationships to external groups that "have a stake" in the focal organization's operations (Kuhn, 2012; Lewis, 2006).

Based on sociological and management literature, the connections between the hubs and spokes of solutions journalism are interpersonal, economic, and technological in nature. Connections within networked organizational forms often comprise a "pattern of relationships with other organizations in the same network" (Gulati et al. 2002, p. 281). These relationships can include data, information, knowledge, images, and symbols (Monge & Contractor 2003, p. 3). Building on organizational literature, "patterns of contact…are created by the flow of messages among communicators through time and space" (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 3). Connections between organizations are often social and economic, and include strategic alliances (Gulati et al., 2002). Similarly, connections can comprise "flexible, dynamic communication linkages" (Monge & Contractor, p. 18) and news and information shared via hyperlinks between actors including online news sites (Weber & Monge, 2011).

Networked journalism is one attempt scholars have made to make sense of how news spreads on social media within the networked public sphere. Networked journalism is characterized by changing relations between journalists and publics (Napoli, 2010); the tension between professional control and open participation (Lewis, 2012); data driven practices (Diakopoulos, 2019); and the networked public sphere (Russell, 2016, p. 3).

Benefits of participating in a network include gaining financial benefits, knowledge, and information, while challenges include limited access to opportunities and information outside of the network (Gulati et al., 2002). According to Burt (2005), "people and groups who do well are somehow better connected" (p. 5). These arguments

support this study's findings presented in proceeding chapters that there are pros and cons to solutions journalism's networked organizational structure. Close ties and connections between hubs and spokes that support solutions journalism contribute to the strength of the network.

The case study of solutions journalism provides an example of a networked organizational form in journalistic practice that demonstrates the legitimacy and importance of this networked organizational form for the journalism studies field. As such, this study shows how a dense, well-connected network with codified rules, norms, and values provides more opportunities for a journalistic approach to gain legitimacy in practice, while a more diffuse network provides less ability for a journalistic practice to gain legitimacy. Connections, collaborations, and shared understandings between solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners may help cultivate more legitimacy for specialized journalistic practices.

The final part of this dissertation's threefold theoretical argument relates to how many innovations struggle to attain cognitive legitimacy—also known as becoming taken for granted, or reinstitutionalized—due to various environmental constraints. This study seeks to illuminate some of the barriers keeping solutions journalism from attaining full institutionalization, or reinstitutionalization, in practice. The roles of environmental constraints, isomorphism, and path dependence as vehicles of theorization and diffusion are described in detail below.

Environmental Constraints, Isomorphism, and Path Dependence as Vehicles of Theorization and Diffusion

Oftentimes, environmental constraints keep ideas from diffusing into practice. Within environments, organizations must "respond effectively to the demands of the environment or environments if they are to acquire information and resources they need to survive," but to do so, they must be aware of environmental conditions and constraints (Baum & Rowley, 2002, pp. 9-10).

New institutionalists pay attention to "entire fields or populations of organizations within an institutional environment" (Campbell, 2004, p. 18). Environments can be characterized by uncertainty and rapid technological or market change, or they can be stable—each type of environment places different demands on organizations and are important to consider when evaluating organizational evolution and characteristics (Baum & Rowley, 2002). Organizations must also seek legitimacy from their environments to ensure their survival (Campbell, 2004). As described above and studied extensively by scholars, the news media environment is in a state of relative chaos due to economic challenges and headwinds (Hindman, 2018; Reese, 2021).

As stated by Ryfe (2006), one new institutionalist argument is that regimes tend to emerge chaotically, out of states of uncertainty in an attempt to create new institutional norms (p. 141). One example of this in the journalism studies field is in the rise of hundreds of journalistic approaches cataloged in the "X journalism" project, solutions journalism being one of these journalistic approaches (Loosen et al., 2020). In an information economy characterized by fragmented attention and declining revenues (Hindman, 2018; Reese, 2021), solutions journalism is one such journalistic approach that is striving to achieve sustainable funding models and to attain legitimacy with donors and audiences (Carlson & Usher, 2016).

In the institutional approach, organizational environments are conceptualized as "fields" within which interacting organizations are constrained by regulative, normative, and cognitive structures (Palmer & Woolsey Biggart, 2002, p. 259). Organizational environments can also be defined as task or technical environments. Task environments are closely related to "goal setting and goal attainment" (Dill, 1958, p. 410), while technical environments are environments "in which organizations produce a product or service and are rewarded in the market for outputs for high-quality and efficient performance" (Baum & Rowley, 2002, p. 8).

Solutions journalism cultivates both of these elements: Social actors that carry out solutions journalism set aspirational goals and seek to attain them in addition to producing products and services consumed by global audiences. As Dodd (2021) notes, solutions journalism is characterized in part by reporting on public and government officials' goal setting and goal attainment. This places solutions journalism in the center of a task-oriented organizational environment.

So how can solutions journalism become theorized, diffuse, and attain legitimacy in an evolving media landscape rife with challenges to its institutionalization? Meyer and Rowan (1991) argue that integration of "societally legitimated rationalized elements" maximize organizations' attainment of legitimacy and increase access to resources (p. 49). Scholars also note that schools, hospitals, and welfare organizations in the U.S. are examples of organizations that "show considerable ability to survive, precisely because they are matched with, and almost absorbed by, their institutional environments" (Meyer & Rowan, 1991, p. 49).

Three mechanisms of institutionalization defined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) are mimetic, normative, and coercive. Institutionalized forms are adopted by organizations through "coercive pressures...when organizations comply with powerful actors' requirements to avoid punishments;" "normative processes...when organizations conform to other actors' expectations to obtain their approval;" and "mimetic processes...when organizations mimic practices assumed to be successful" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Palmer & Woolsey Biggart, 2002, p. 259).

As one example, with regard to mimicry, solutions journalism, as a journalistic approach, is related to various established journalistic approaches including investigative journalism and accountability journalism. This relationship is described in detail in Chapter 5. Also, given the media landscape is currently rife with environmental constraints and challenges, this study leverages concepts of isomorphism and path dependence to investigate how solutions journalism seeks to attain legitimacy.

Isomorphism is defined as "similarity among organizations" (Baum & Rowley, 2002, p. 12), or a "constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 66; Vos, 2020, p. 741). As one example of isomorphism, DiMaggio's (1991) study of the isomorphism of the organizational field of U.S. art museums is based upon and shaped by "conformity to the requirements of federal funding agencies" (Baker & Faulkner, 2002, p. 528). As it relates to the institutionalization of solutions journalism, solutions journalism is conducted in part due to pursuit of foundation funding opportunities. Because isomorphism also accounts for the "relative sameness in beliefs and norms, informal rules and routines, and explicit rules across news organizational

settings," (Vos, 2020, p. 741) solutions journalism's commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values contributes to its institutionalization.

Path dependence is defined as "the tendency of institutions or technologies to become committed to develop in certain ways as a result of their structural properties or their beliefs and values" (Greener, 2019). Path dependency also "explains how institutional power is created and maintained" (Vos, 2020, p. 740). Path-dependent institutional change is based upon consistent and continuous exchanges constituted in part by the environment in which organizations operate (Baum & Rowley, 2002; Campbell, 2004). Path dependency helps us to see how paths that institutions have taken over time can both shape and constrain future decision-making (Bailo et al., 2021, p. 3). In these ways, the results of this study show how structural properties, beliefs, and values are evolving in a path dependent manner to shape the institution of solutions journalism.

As described above, organizational and institutional continuity and change is influenced by a variety of factors. One of these factors is relational, and another is categorical (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2019). These relational and categorical factors influence pressures to conform to the expectations of other individuals or organizations to varying extents (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2019). This study seeks to investigate solutions journalism's institutional evolution in a way that bridges the gap between technological innovation and institutional logics (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Yousefdehi & Nason, 2020) by showing how social actors support solutions journalism's evolution through the lens of new institutional theory. This relationship is discussed in this study's results chapters, described in detail below.

Research Questions and Objectives

This dissertation will expand current understandings of new institutional theory by providing a theoretically driven empirical analysis of solutions journalism to reveal broadly how it is becoming institutionalized as a networked organizational form in the face of environmental constraints. This dissertation also looks at how networks, partnerships, rules, shared norms, and values are shared and upheld through investigation of best practices and perceptions shared by journalists, editors, and practitioners.

This dissertation's theoretical argument is threefold. First, emerging institutions gain legitimacy through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values, as seen in the legitimation of solutions journalism. Second, solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form with a shared commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values. Third, solutions journalism is in a moment between expansion and stabilization, or theorization and diffusion, worldwide, with various factors contributing to and constraining its success.

Theoretically, this study shows that solutions journalism as a journalistic approach is in between emergence and stabilization, or theorization and diffusion, on a global scale. This study seeks to expand the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices and to explore constraints keeping new journalistic approaches from gaining legitimacy and/or thriving. Practical contributions of this study include exploring the benefits of solutions-oriented news coverage and analyzing the opportunities that come from commitment to a shared set of rules, norms and values; partnerships and collaborations; and data and technology in an increasingly fragmented media economy.

This study focuses on unpacking three research questions that build on findings in the field of journalism studies to date. These three research questions present three arguments that relate to the institutionalization of solutions journalism.

First, this study will discuss how partnerships and collaboration contribute to the institutionalization of solutions journalism as a networked form of journalism:

RQ1: What role do collaborations and partnerships play in the institutionalization of networked organizational forms of journalism?

Second, this study will describe how journalists, editors, and practitioners create and support shared understandings of solutions journalism and contribute to its pursuit of legitimacy:

RQ2: How do social actors working within networked organizational forms of journalism establish shared understandings and promote legitimacy?

Finally, this study will explore the mechanisms that limit solutions journalism's growth alongside opportunities that exist for solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners to overcome those restrictive barriers. The final research question of this study is:

RQ3: What mechanisms limit a networked organizational form of journalism and how do organizational actors seek to overcome those restrictive barriers?

The research questions above will be explored through the lens of new institutional theory in proceeding results chapters, after an in-depth explanation of the methodological approach in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodologically, institutional theory can explain journalism's "enduring features" and "ongoing changes" through empirical observation and interpretation in the form of content analysis, newsroom ethnographies, and direct observation of journalists' practices and products (Vos, 2020, p. 737). This study used a triangulated qualitative approach to observe and analyze solutions journalism as an emerging institution in journalistic practice worldwide. This study takes a qualitative approach to provide a meaningful contribution to the literature. This approach is based on Patton (1990)'s definition of qualitative inquiry contributions, meaning that it will:

- *illuminate the meaning* of solutions journalism at local, national, and global levels;
- *study* how social problems including homelessness, human trafficking, and the climate crisis are covered in news media;
- dissect news media stories to *understand individuals' perspectives and experiences*;
- *elucidate* how the system of news production functions with regard to solutions-oriented coverage of various social problems and its consequences at micro and macro levels;
- help to understand how and why *context* about solutions journalism production matters;
- *identify unanticipated consequences* that may come from solutions journalism coverage; and

- *make case comparisons to discover important patterns and themes across cases* by presenting analysis of content and in-depth interview material from 52 journalists, editors, and practitioners located in 17 countries worldwide.

A weakness to a qualitative approach is that a purely qualitative approach does not set itself up for replicability and may not be generalizable due to its customization. But methodological triangulation, which involves a variety of data and methods "for data gathering and analysis around a single object of study" (Jankowski & Wester, 1991; Denzin, 1978, p. 301), bolsters this study's validity and reliability. Namely, this study uses in-depth interviews, netnography, and qualitative content analysis to triangulate the results. Triangulation of both methods and data points provide rich and thick descriptions as the background and context of action. Thick descriptions are crucial to the reliability of qualitative research, and can be defined as descriptions that provide "the background and context of action" to "interpret the meaning(s) of all these gestures and help predict whether we are likely to see the behavior again" (Tracy, 2012, p. 4). This study's triangulated qualitative exploration of the institutionalization of solutions journalism comprises in-depth interviews with journalists who write solutions-based stories; netnography of journalists, editors, and practitioners on social media platforms including Facebook and Slack; and qualitative content analysis of solutions journalism articles, financial documents, and annual reports published by solutions-oriented media organizations.

With regard to validity, this study follows eight criteria of quality in qualitative research outlined by Tracy: It is a worthy topic, is rich in rigor, has sincerity, attains credibility, has resonance, makes a significant contribution, upholds ethics, and has

meaningful coherence (2010, p. 839). Using multiple methods of qualitative analysis will allow different facets of the research questions to be explored and will deepen understanding of the emerging institution of solutions journalism, an innovative approach for journalistic coverage of systemic social problems.

Reliability in qualitative research relies largely on any given study's reference to theory (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Thus, this study utilizes new institutional theory to build on existing literature and methodologies to examine how solutions journalism is becoming institutionalized and is gaining legitimacy as a specialized journalistic practice.

This chapter will explain this study's methodology. Lewis and Westlund's four "A's" (2015) is a helpful way to map spaces of media production. Using this framework, this chapter will examine the actors, actants, audiences, and activities involved in the production of solutions journalism worldwide. This chapter will begin with an explanation of how I used netnography to observe actors online. I will then discuss how I carried out an in-depth interview process including sampling and constructing an in-depth interview guide. I will also provide a description of media systems and my global sample of actors. I will go on to describe my qualitative content analysis process, and conclude with a reflexivity section reflecting on my experience carrying out this project.

The "4A's" of Solutions Journalism

The "4A's" approach argues for more emphasis in journalism studies scholarship on two things: first, the "interplay of humans and technology;" second, "the interplay of editorial, business, and technology in news organizations" (Lewis & Westlund, 2015, p. 19). Each of these elements have implications for the rules, norms, and values upheld by solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners.

Actors

As it pertains to this study, actors can be defined as the humans involved in the production of solutions journalism, including journalists, technology specialists, and businesspeople (Lewis & Westlund, 2015). For the purposes of this study, a social actor is defined as "anyone who engages in intentional action which is shaped by internalized expectations about how others will interpret its meaning;" further, social actors' choices are "limited by structural constraints in the form of social norms and values: social actors are thus neither 'free agents' nor structurally determined subjects" (Chandler & Munday, 2020; Goffman, 1959). There are three distinct categories of actors interviewed for this study: journalists, editors, and practitioners. Journalists, as social actors, publish news that describes, defines, and shapes events for readers and consumers (Tuchman, 1978, p. 184). Editors negotiate journalistic production between audiences, organizations, journalism as practice, and society (Duffy, 2021). For the purposes of this study, editors comprise interviewees that hold hierarchical roles of authority within for profit and nonprofit media organizations and spend a majority of their time overseeing journalists and journalistic projects. The third category of actors or interviewees are practitioners, defined as professional communicators (Clementson, 2019) that carry out solutions journalism in nonprofit, higher education/university, governmental, and public relations contexts. All three types of these actors define and legitimize the boundaries of solutions journalism.

Actants

As described in Latour's (2005) actor network theory (ANT), the term actant may refer to "any actor, human or nonhuman, that is engaged in a networked system under

scrutiny" (Lewis & Westlund, 2015, p. 23). For the purposes of this study, actants are technological in nature, and include algorithms, networks, and content management systems (Lewis & Westlund, 2015). In this way, this study evaluates how technological objects including a content management system (CMS), application programming interface (API), and/or set of software code influence the production of solutions journalism worldwide. This study will explore how social actors that support solutions journalism production worldwide utilize social media networking sites including Facebook, Slack, and Twitter; what networks exist among and between solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners; and how solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners leverage content management systems in the production of solutions-oriented content.

Audiences

Audiences are typically distinct to certain platforms, devices, or applications (Lewis & Westlund, 2015). Audiences have historically been understood as passive recipients of media content, with moves in recent decades toward more active recipients that engage with or participate in consumption and creation of media content on social media platforms (Jenkins et al., 2013). Lewis and Westlund (2015) argued that audiences can be "simultaneously treated as recipients, commodities, and active participants by news media, thereby serving normative, commercial, and cultural functions alike" (p. 26). The roles of solutions journalism audiences, actors, and actants will be explored throughout the results section.

Activities

Media activities comprise “routinized” and “institutionalized” patterns of practice including “professional roles, working rules, and shared principles” (Lewis & Westlund, 2015, p. 27). These activities are discussed in detail in the results chapters through analysis of in-depth interviews with solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners. Contents of the interview questions that reveal these patterns and themes are discussed below.

Actors, Actants, and Activities: Netnography and the Role of Social Media Platforms in Solutions Journalism Practice

This study utilizes netnography as originally defined by Kozinets (2015):

> ethnography conducted on the Internet; a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of the online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications (CMC). (Kozinets, 2006, p. 194)

Netnography is “ethnography of data in the form of social media posts and communications provided freely in a context that is not prompted or elicited by the researcher” (Kozinets, 2015, p. 1). Netnography is related to other terms used to describe ethnographic research on digital platforms and social media sites, including digital ethnography, online ethnography, or virtual ethnography (Bélair-Gagnon, 2015; Hine, 2000). However, this study’s method will be referred to as netnography, as it involves no hybrid or physical ethnographic elements like virtual ethnography sometimes does (Kozinets, 2019; Hine, 2000).

Social media has become integral to leading newsrooms’ daily operations in the 21st century (Meese & Hurcombe, 2020; Newman et al., 2021) and increasingly influences how people experience news (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018). As a result, virtual newsrooms and journalistic communities have emerged in recent years,

facilitated by the use of "online collaborative software (OCS)" including platforms like Slack (Bunce et al., 2018).

This study's methodology is guided in part by scholars including Bunce et al. (2018), who examined a global digital news outlet that used Slack for correspondence and collaboration. They found that the use of Slack "deepened relationships and enabled new creative practices across geographic regions" while contributing to "the erasure of the line between private and professional spheres for workers" and "introducing new opportunities for management to shape newsroom culture" (Bunce et al., 2018, p. 3381). Bunce et al. (2018) noted that Slack provides a virtual newsroom that "may increase collaboration between remote journalists" (p. 3384).

Kozinets argued that qualitative researchers can "no longer adequately understand social and cultural life without incorporating the internet and computer mediated communications into our ethnographies" (2015, p. 1). Thus, to become familiar with the online context that solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners operate in, I spent months exploring solutions journalism in online spaces. In this study, I found that solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners often seek to cultivate connections with each other on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Slack. Actors also leveraged social media platforms including Twitter and LinkedIn, in addition to databases to optimize their reporting and sourcing practices. Due to these mediated connections, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners often take part in activities that transcend geographic boundaries and become global practice.

Gaining Access and Informed Consent to Observe Actors Online

When it comes to conducting netnography, it is important to distinguish between access and informed consent, which are two stages of the process of conducting ethical fieldwork. There are ethical implications with conducting netnography and it is important to distinguish and clarify each step of the process. This study's method is built upon the reliability and validity provided by the qualitative studies described below.

Lough (2019) evaluated concert photographers' work and conversations as shared on Facebook. In addition to making observations, Lough also recruited interviewees on this platform.

Chuter (2018) observed a "Whole Food Plant-Based Aussies" Facebook group to evaluate the role of the online community in facilitating dietary adoption and adherence through provision of social support. Farkas and Neumayer (2017) examined how Danish Facebook users organized to combat fictitious Muslim profiles that spurred hatred against ethnic minorities. Lough (2019, pp. 47-48) attained access to a closed Facebook group of concert photographers from two group administrators by discussing his experience in the field of concert photography as his main measure of credibility along with research as an added interest and qualification. They granted Lough permission to monitor the Facebook page as a passive observer, with the understanding that if he were to use any post or comment directly in his work, that he would reach out to the appropriate individual members for informed consent. He went on to make an introductory post to the Facebook group to introduce himself and let the group members know about his observation plans. This introductory post also served as a recruitment tool for interviews.

Johnson et al. (2018) attained access to a "secret" Facebook group from the group administrators but then were rejected from obtaining informed consent. When the

researchers asked for approval to attain informed consent from individuals to include their posts electronically with individual private messages on Facebook, the researchers were rejected and accused of joining the group under false pretenses (p. 105). Chuter (2018) attained access to a Facebook group from group administrators and pursued informed consent from individual members that posted content relevant to her research questions. Chuter also sent out a post introducing herself and posted specific questions about her research project on the page along with a link to an informed consent document and asked for comments from group members in addition to recruiting interviewees who wanted to talk further. Farkas and Neumayer (2017) attained access to a closed Facebook group from the page administrator. They obtained informed consent by asking the administrator to post a statement in the group for all members to see, disclosing their research agenda and requesting permission to do fieldwork.

Building from this work, this study followed guidelines set by scholars that attained access and informed consent for observation on social media platforms including Facebook (Chuter, 2018; Farkas and Neumayer, 2017; Johnson et al., 2018; Lough, 2019) and Slack (Bunce et al., 2018) in particular. The process I undertook to attain access and obtain informed consent from social actors that support solutions journalism is described below.

Observation of Solutions Journalism Actors Online

I built on the reliability and validity established by the studies above for this study. I first attained access to the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN)'s public Slack channel in May 2020. At that time, the Slack channel included 474 members, with 5,028 messages sent across 13 channels since its origin in 2017. The SJN's channels at the time

of data collection included: #ask_sjn, #collaboration, #cov-19, #engagement, #freelancing, #general, #impact, #international, #jschools, #opportunities, #podcast_radio, #revenue, and #sojoexchange. By February 2021, SJN Slack channel membership had increased to 541 members.

I was also granted access to the SJN's Facebook group in May 2020. The Facebook group channel included 3,899 members in May 2020. New members are vetted by group administrators, to confirm their association with solutions journalism. This administrative validation process ensures that outsiders are not included, leaving the group with a clear "peer-support focus" (Johnson et al., 2018). By February 2021, SJN's Facebook group membership had increased to 4,300 members.

I attained access to the SJN's closed Facebook group and Slack channel in May 2020 to conduct netnography and obtain interviews with members of each group. First, I gained access to the SJN's closed Facebook and Slack channels from the program and operations associate. Second, I asked the Facebook group and Slack channel administrators for permission to publish a post on each platform asking if anyone might be interested in being interviewed as part of my dissertation data collection. I also asked if it would be all right to begin to reach out to group members individually to ask to use excerpts from their posts / dialogue in the dissertation project as they might be relevant. Each administrator agreed to allow me to gain informed consent from members of each group as it was relevant. All three administrators also agreed to participate in in-depth interviews about their work with SJN's social media platforms and communities.

As soon as I obtained permission to post on Facebook and Slack, I posted statements in the Facebook group and on the Slack channel in which I introduced myself,

described my research project, requested interviews from any group members that might be interested in being interviewed, and opened myself up to inquiries from anyone at any time. I also asked if any group members had links to solutions-based news stories about human trafficking as that is one of my interest areas. The posts were received positively on each platform.

After gaining access to these social media platforms, I collected three types of data proxied by Kozinets (2015): archival data, elicited data, and fieldnote data. Data was posted by solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners on Facebook and Slack platforms. I collected this data from May 2020 through the conclusion of the data collection portion of the project in 2021. Archival data was posted by social actors before May 2020 and served as a "historic record and a cultural baseline" of solutions journalism in practice on social platforms (Kozinets, 2015, p. 4). It is important to note that I had no involvement in creating this data–it existed before the project began. Elicited data is "co-created through personal interactions between the netnographic researcher and relevant community members" (Kozinets, 2015, p. 4). The only elicited data I collected was connections to in-depth interview subjects. I took notes reflecting on interactions within the social media platforms observed in addition to reflections about each in-depth interview. The in-depth interview sampling and interview process is described below.

Actors and Activities: The In-Depth Interview Sampling Process

This sample was cultivated in a purposive manner based upon journalists, editors, and practitioners that write about and engage with solutions-oriented topics and networks that inform the study's research questions, goals, and purposes (Tracy, 2012). This

purposive sampling took place through me contacting interviewees active on the SJN's Facebook and Slack channels. I also sent emails to journalists identified as part of the SJN's Solutions Story Tracker, a database that, as of 2022, contains more than 12,000 solutions-oriented stories fact-checked and vetted by several SJN staff members.

I interviewed 14 journalists, editors, and practitioners as a direct result of interest in and response to my initial Facebook and Slack posts from July to December 2020. I identified 38 additional interviewees from July 2020 to January 2021 through a combination of snowball sampling (33 additional interviewees found this way) and a search of the SJN's Solutions Story Tracker for journalists that specialize in coverage of human trafficking (5 additional interviewees identified this way).

Snowball sampling is a method that involves the sample expanding in size. I participated in snowball sampling as I asked study participants to recommend other participants from my initial purposive sample (Tracy, 2012). The SJN's Solutions Story Tracker is a public database that contains thousands of journalistic articles that have been categorized by SJN staff as solutions-oriented articles. The Solutions Story Tracker contained 8,467 stories produced by 1,059 news outlets from 171 countries in April 2020, and included 11,182 stories produced by 1,384 news outlets from 180 countries in February 2021 (Solutions Story Network, 2021). I leveraged the Story Tracker to conduct a search for articles on the topic of "human trafficking." This search returned 46 articles on the topic of "trafficking," and I emailed several of those authors to hear more about their solutions-based reporting.

Five journalists accepted interviews with me based upon this search of the Solutions Story Tracker, bringing the in-depth interview sample to 52 journalists, editors,

and practitioners. Overall, from May 2020 to February 2021, I cultivated a purposive 52-member sample comprising 29 journalists, 10 editors, and 13 practitioners in 17 countries worldwide: Nigeria (4), Pakistan (1), Germany (1), India (2), Nepal (1), Heathcote, Victoria, Australia (1), Amsterdam, Netherlands (1), France (3), Costa Rica (1), Brazil (1), England (2), Mexico (1), Philippines (1), South Africa (1), South Korea (1), United States (29), and Ukraine (1). Twenty-nine journalists, editors, and practitioners worked within the U.S.; twenty-three worked outside the U.S. Twenty-seven interviewees worked primarily with for profit news outlets, while twenty-five worked primarily with nonprofit news outlets and organizations. Interviewees are also listed as part of Appendix A.

Media Systems and a Global Sample of Actors

The sample for this project is global in scope. Globalization has led to the proliferation of media systems worldwide. For the purposes of this study, a media system is "embedded within wider social, political, economic, and cultural systems" and is defined as "a set of media institutions and practices understood as interacting with and shaping one another" (Hallin, 2016, p. 2). This matters for solutions journalism because the network of journalists, editors, and practitioners is global in nature.

Solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners interviewed for this project are each part of a local community in their practice given their geographic locations, and also a global network by nature of their involvement with social and mobile media platforms. Nation-states are still central to media operations worldwide (Flew & Waisbord, 2015). However, due to the rise in journalistic professionalism, the globalization of work, and the prevalence of social and mobile media platforms in media work worldwide, media

partnerships and processes have been increasingly mediated by technological platforms in the 21st century (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2017; McIntyre & Sobel, 2019).

An understanding of global media systems helps lay the foundation for the data analysis contained within this study in chapters four, five, and six. For example, several journalists interviewed work for French and German news outlets. In these national contexts, news media is a hierarchical system where only those licensed by the government to report the news can officially do so. This presents some unique challenges to European journalists that seek to present a new way of doing journalism within a media system where change within media organizations, to a certain extent, can only occur with governmental approval. Also, journalists in Latin America and Asia mentioned that news organizations are incredibly slow to adapt to change and adopt new practices like solutions journalism. This hesitancy to adopt new changes may play a role in constraining solutions journalism's diffusion worldwide.

Based on the results of this study, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners are using social media platforms as a means to an end—to connect with sources and to verify facts. Also, social and mobile media platform policies and usage varies worldwide depending on national policies and regulations. For example, privacy is more important in Europe than in the U.S.; in China, you can only access Facebook with a VPN (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2017); and there is country-specific usage of social and mobile platforms in particular, with Africa and Latin America being more inclined to use chat apps including WhatsApp (McIntyre & Sobel, 2019). Thus, while journalists may use different types of social media platforms across the world, they all congregate around the idea of a new form of journalism, namely solutions journalism.

Technonationalism and platformization also play roles in the emergence of solutions journalism. Technonationalism is defined as "technological developments that support national economic and security interests" (Shim & Shin, 2016). Platformization is defined as platforms like Google, Facebook, and WeChat that "restructure economic activity and sociability to the advantage and profit of the companies that own them" (Plantin & de Seta, 2019). These innovative forces influence the endogenous and exogenous development of solutions journalism's rules, norms, and values. Exogenous forces are often economic and technological in nature, while endogenous forces often comprise new normative outlooks. These forces will be explored in proceeding chapters.

Interviewees freelanced and worked full-time for news outlets and media organizations including: *5280* magazine; ABBTAKK TV; American Press Institute; Arab News; Are We Europe; *Boulder Weekly*; *Business Insider*; Catalyst Journalism Project; Charlotte Journalism Collaborative; *Christian Science Monitor*; Columbia University; *Ensia*; France24; Germantown Info Hub; *The Guardian* (UK and US); Help Your Neighbour Project; *High Country News*; *Hindustan Times*; *INKLINE*; *Jackson Hole News and Guide*; *La Nacion*; *The New York Times*; *Next City*; *Nigerian Health Watch*; *Nigerian Tribune*; National Public Radio (NPR); Outriders; OZY; ParCitypatory.org; *The Philadelphia Citizen*; *The Philadelphia Inquirer*; Rooted; SJN; South Asia Check; Struggles From Below; The Telegraph; *Time Nigeria Magazine*; VICE; Vox; *Wall Street Journal*; WCNC-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina; and *WESER-KURIER*. These are a combination of for-profit and nonprofit news media organizations.

Of the 52 journalists, editors, and practitioners interviewed, 18 worked as part-time freelancers that work on solutions journalism "part of the time." Thirty-two of the

total sample worked on solutions journalism full-time. These part-time freelancers had full-time corporate jobs to support their part-time pursuit of solutions journalism and had aspirations that eventually, someday, they would be able to commit all of their time to solutions journalism.

In-Depth Interviews and Interview Guide

I carried out in-depth interviews with 52 journalists, editors, and practitioners following a semi-structured interview guide. In-depth interviews are an important element of qualitative research because it helps researchers to report the voices of participants, look at how processes unfold, and explores research questions in an open-ended way (Creswell, 2016). In-depth interviews also help to provide narrative insights, factual accuracy, and holistic scope to research questions (Erickson, 2011).

The content of 52 in-depth interviews enabled me to take part in an interpretive and inductive research synthesis Tracy (2012) calls "bricolage," or analyzing a variety of viewpoints and multiple perspectives to construct a "meaningful, aesthetically pleasing, and useful research synthesis" (p. 26).

Interviews carried out for this project are informant interviews. Journalists, editors, and practitioners were approached as experts in the field. Interviewees were prompted to provide open-ended narrative elements with the intention of encouraging and stimulating the participant to tell biographic stories rather than just answer questions (Tracy, 2012, pp. 154-55).

Interviews followed a systematic process. To build on theory, the interviews focused on the ways solutions journalism stakeholders define the practice and on how journalists envision their reporting practices in light of a solutions-based approach to

reporting and the opportunities and challenges of doing so. This approach allowed me to focus on the roles of institutions (e.g., legacy news media, digital native news outlets, nonprofit news media) in solutions journalism and in shaping solutions-based news articles. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions are used in rigorous studies in numerous fields including journalism studies (Usher, 2014) and healthcare (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Semi-structured interviews intend to stimulate participants to "tell stories rather than just answer questions" (Tracy, 2012, pp. 140-141). The stakeholders, journalists, and editors I chose to interview are experts in reporting, and the interviews took a pedagogical and responsive interview stance to study the interviewees' knowledge, experiences, expertise, and viewpoints (Tracy, 2012).

Structurally, in-depth interview questions for this study began with demographic questions about each interviewee's name, occupation, place of employment, and daily routines and practices. The proceeding three categories of interview questions aligned with each of the study's research questions. The first major category of questions inquired about various elements of solutions journalism's legitimacy. These questions asked interviewees to define solutions journalism; to describe the core function of solutions journalism; to discuss the rules, norms, and values of solutions journalism; and to summarize funding models involved with the journalistic outlets they were a part of.

The second category of interview guide questions asked about how journalists doing solutions-based news differentiated their reporting from other forms of journalism. These questions included questions about story generation, story structure, pros and cons of utilizing solutions journalism as a journalistic approach, the role of technology in their reporting processes, and the role of social change in their work.

The third and final category of interview questions explored interviewees' involvement with various collaborations and partnerships. This category included questions about each interviewee's network, projects they'd completed as part of a partnership, and what implications partnerships have on the journalistic industry.

A complete list of interviewees is included in Appendix A. The interview guide is available as Appendix B.

In part due to social distancing protocols, lockdowns, and the international disruption of COVID-19, all interviews were conducted via virtual video conferencing platforms Zoom and Skype. As qualitative scholars have noted, while virtual conferencing and interview platforms including Zoom and Skype have limitations including lack of access to nonverbal communication, they do provide opportunities to conduct interviews that are more cost effective, secure, and thorough than face-to-face in-depth interviews might be (Archibald et al., 2019; Lobe et al., 2020). Zoom and Skype, as virtual meeting platforms, made it possible for me to conduct interviews in 17 countries at the convenience of all interviewees.

At the beginning of each interview, I asked for permission to record the interview to transcribe later. I informed the interviewee that I would be taking notes during our conversation. Every interview was recorded using Zoom's cloud recording feature, and was immediately uploaded to a secure, password-protected cloud storage platform hosted by the University of Minnesota at the end of each interview. I shared each of these secure video recordings with a professional, automated, confidential, paid transcription service, "Rev." The interview transcription service ensured reliability and validity of the data collected for importing into qualitative analysis software.

Some scholars have expressed skepticism about the validity of automated transcription services due to the risk of automated services misrepresenting individuals, populations, or communities (McMullin, 2021). Further, as Christin (2020) notes, it is important to include methodological reflections on the process of doing fieldwork "in order to interrogate how our presence and perspective situate our findings" (2020, p. 163).

To address this, I typed notes during every Zoom interview and took comprehensive field notes following every interview as a focused participant observer, or "an observer who enters a scene with an explicit researcher status and a clear agenda of what data to gather in the scene" (Tracy, 2012, pp. 111-12). These field notes included general impressions of the interviewee and main points that came up during conversation. In addition to field notes, I wrote down hyperlinks to any articles the interviewee mentioned during their conversation and names of any journalists, editors, or practitioners the interviewees recommended through snowball sampling. I have also included a reflexivity section below.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is a reflexive, open and iterative process characterized by developing codes, categories, and themes in a variety of texts (Creswell, 2016; Patton, 1990; Saldaña, 2009). Practically, I imported each of the 52 interview transcriptions, pages of field notes from netnography observations, and articles published by interviewees into NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software with content analysis, annotation, and data visualization capabilities. Using NVivo 12, I developed codes, subcodes, categories, and themes about the motivations, opportunities, and challenges

journalists experienced in their performance of solutions-based reporting on various topics in an iterative fashion. Codes developed comprise attributes like date published, author, and organization that published the content; emotions; discursive attributes of the text(s); and attributes related to relevant elements of new institutional theory (Creswell, 2007).

I coded the data in an open, iterative, and reflexive process (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Iterative data analysis is defined as analysis that alternates between "emic, or emergent, readings of the data and etic use of existing models, explanations, and theories" (Tracy, 2012, p. 184). My iterative analysis alternated between emic analysis of interview data informed by an etic use of new institutional theory as described in Chapter 2. Iterative data analysis also involves saturation in and revisiting data informed by theoretical understandings to "progressively refine…focus and understandings" (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77).

My etic data analysis was driven by the application of new institutional theory with elements of networked organizational forms and moral, pragmatic, and cognitive legitimacy. Etic elements of my iterative analysis involved continually revisiting my theoretical framework and applying elements of networked organizational forms, new institutional theory, and moral, pragmatic, and cognitive legitimacy to my data and interpretation.

Etic analysis of my qualitative data analysis helped me to interpret and analyze interviewees and organizations as hubs and spokes in the evolving network of solutions journalism. It also allowed me to interpret interviewees' responses inductively while referencing theoretical definitions of moral, pragmatic, and cognitive legitimacy. I also

applied theorization and diffusion, two theoretical elements of Greenwood et al. (2002)'s six stages of institutionalization, described in detail in Chapter 2, to give meaning to the rules, norms, and values that emerged from data analysis.

Over the course of 18 months, I used an iterative and reflexive coding strategy to triangulate interview data with content analysis of stories and documents with netnography to refine this study's focus and understandings (Tracy, 2012; Saldaña, 2009). I conducted this analysis reflexively, taking careful consideration of "the ways in which the researcher's past experiences, points of view, and roles might impact their interactions with, and interpretations of, the research scene" (Tracy, 2012, p. 3). An in-depth analysis of my self-reflexivity is included in the following section.

It is worth noting that, because scholars have called for a more thorough investigation of reporters' intentions in publishing solutions-based news stories, a number of interviews for this project comprised elements of reconstruction interviews defined by Reich (2006) and Reich and Barnoy (2016). Reconstruction interviews require reporters to walk through the process of reporting their stories from ideation to sourcing to execution (Reich, 2011; Reich & Barnoy, 2020). This approach allows interviewers to attain information about sourcing and story structure in the interest of understanding why reporters made the decisions they did in the composition of their stories on various topics. The in-depth reconstruction interviews carried out for this project help illuminate the rules, norms, and values of solutions journalism in practice by leveraging the voices of journalists who write solutions-based stories on topics including climate change, human trafficking, affordable housing, human rights, and urban development in 17 countries worldwide.

Reflexivity

In a style similar to Angèle Christin (2020), this section discusses how I became interested in solutions journalism and how this project came to be.

In January 2013, I covered the Passion Conference in Atlanta, Georgia as a freelance journalist. When I boarded the train headed for the airport, I met two college students headed to Minneapolis where they lived and where I was headed to visit family. As we discussed my freelance work on human trafficking and live coverage of the Passion Conference that highlighted the human trafficking industry and what the global church and nonprofit organizations can do to end it (#enditmovement), I discovered that they had an adopted sister who had been trafficked for sex by her biological father in Coon Rapids, a suburb of Minneapolis—five minutes from where I grew up. They said that, in the process of healing, she had come to a place where she would be willing to share her story in hopes of helping others struggling to get out of bondage, and wanted to know if I may be able to meet with her and hear her story.

At Caribou Coffee in St. Louis Park, I met Brittany* (*anonymous pseudonym). Brittany and her adoptive mother and two brothers talked with me for two hours about the atrocities and abuses she endured at the hands of her biological father, who was at one time a deacon at his church and a white-collar businessman. He and his friends abused her, repeatedly selling her for sex. Enraged at the injustice of her story, I was eager to share it in a responsible way. I published her story using an anonymous pseudonym as a series of articles for *Christianity Today* magazine. Her story is only one of thousands of individuals trafficked worldwide on a daily basis and was heartbreaking for me to hear, yet her desire to share her story to help those suffering in silence filled me with hope.

Over the next few years, I thought more about Brittany's story. Was there more to it than her single story? What were the systemic and societal forces at play in propagating trafficking? How could we use digital and social media channels to pursue justice worldwide?

As a full-time magazine editor and freelance journalist, I was passionate about covering and following trends in anti-trafficking and how faith-based institutions help those marginalized in society. As Wheaton College's journalism certificate program coordinator, I sought to educate and mentor college students through the process of producing responsible, accurate journalism and strategic communication. But was there more to the story? And how could I find out?

In 2015, my youngest sister, Jennifer, brought me to one of her strategic communication classes at the University of Minnesota's Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication. It was there that I met Dr. Brendan Watson, a professor at HSJMC, who I discovered had some mutual connections to Wheaton College. I told him a bit about my interest in the anti-trafficking movement, and he asked if I'd ever considered pursuing a Ph.D. He gave me a packet of information about the University of Minnesota's Ph.D. program and told me to think about it. A year later, Jennifer set up a coffee meeting with another one of her professors, Dr. Betsy Anderson. Betsy also encouraged me to consider applying for the University of Minnesota's Ph.D. program, and connected me with Professor Kathy Hansen, who connected me with Dr. Valérie Bélair-Gagnon. Valérie helped me put together my application packet, and I became a Ph.D. student at the University of Minnesota in 2017. I began the program with Valérie

and Kathy as my co-advisers, and when Kathy entered retirement, Dr. Matthew Weber became my Ph.D. co-adviser.

As a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota, I desired to craft compelling research that will change the way we utilize social and digital media channels to bring justice to those suffering around the world. In my Ph.D. coursework, I found that human trafficking is one of the largest criminal industries in the world, with recent statistics finding that "an estimated 40.3 million people are in modern slavery, including 24.9 in forced labour and 15.4 million in forced marriage" (International Labor Organization, 2017). The ILO has also valued human trafficking as a $150 billion industry, with $99 billion coming from commercial sexual exploitation and the remaining $51 billion coming from forced economic exploitation or labor trafficking (2017).

While trafficking is a global issue, Brittany's story brought trafficking "close to home" for me. For this reason, it was my goal to better understand human trafficking locally, nationally, and globally to optimize news gathering and sharing practices. I always thought of trafficking as occurring frequently in highly populated and impoverished urban centers until I met Brittany, who was trafficked in the suburbs of the United States. I also used to think "traffickers" were characterized as criminals within highly populated urban centers—not as suburban fathers also involved in church and business.

The articles I published sharing Brittany's story to raise awareness of the trafficking industry comprised a small portion of broader questions that I have been able to pursue as part of my doctoral research agenda. It's my desire to craft compelling research that will optimize the way news organizations tell stories and utilize social and

digital media channels to bring justice to people like Brittany suffering from oppression around the world.

I love working with people, learning their stories, and telling and shaping narratives. That's why I became a journalist. I also love diving deep to understand the roots of problems. I am passionate about advocating for what's right. I am committed to these things to help make the world a better place. That's why I've found my home as a researcher in mass communication–I am able to combine my passion for people and problems and investigate proposed solutions to systemic social problems in a rigorous, evidence-based fashion.

In addition to publishing and presenting projects about human trafficking and social justice, I'm especially interested in studying innovation in journalism and strategic communication. That's why I've pursued projects on emerging types of journalism that challenge traditional understandings of objectivity including social justice journalism and solutions journalism. I have completed projects about thought leadership and innovation in the journalism studies field. New institutional theory is the framework I'm using to frame my dissertation. This project thus evaluates the qualities that comprise and build new and innovative institutions.

In line with these interests, initially, I wrote a dissertation proposal to investigate journalistic coverage of human trafficking. My committee challenged me to make it more concise and targeted, and to consider building on my findings from my social justice journalism project(s) to make solutions journalism the sole focus of my dissertation project. I emailed some thought leaders in the field of solutions journalism–Dr. Kyser Lough and Dr. Karen McIntyre Hopkinson–who encouraged me to pursue a theoretically

driven investigation of solutions journalism. With their and my committee's input, advice, and encouragement, I rewrote my dissertation proposal and my committee enthusiastically approved my revised project.

As explained throughout this chapter, as part of gaining access and informed consent from interviewees, I revealed my identity to each interviewee. I identified myself as a researcher at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. I confirmed that access checks would be extended to each interviewee to ensure the data is reflected accurately. Rather than becoming a "cheerleader" for solutions journalism, as my dissertation chair Dr. Matt Carlson warned me I might become, it is my hope that, through rigorous and triangulated data collection and analysis, that I have gathered and presented as reliable, valid, and generalizable results as are possible throughout this manuscript.

At the same time, I very much enjoyed the perspectives of the social actors that practice solutions journalism. They opened my eyes to what's possible in a world rife with structural limitations and financial constraints. In a world full of conflicting values and rampant injustice, they encouraged me as their stories shed light on the hope in the hearts of societal changemakers and policies that seek to make the world a better place. I follow the work of each of the interviewees I talked with, and am connected to many of them that have social media accounts and followings. I am subscribed to their email lists and continue to be inspired by the ways they leverage the voices of those whose ideas and actions continue to make change at local, national, and international levels.

All of the interviews I conducted started with an email, Twitter direct message, or Facebook messenger exchange. These conversations started in one of two ways: I either emailed the interviewee cold, introduced my project, and let the interviewee know I

noticed their work in the Solutions Story Tracker and would like to talk further as part of my project; or, if an interviewee had already expressed interest in my project as a result of my introductory posts shared within the SJN's groups I gained access to on Facebook or Slack, I thanked them for reaching out to me as a result of my inquiries and asked if they'd be interested in talking further. Interviews conducted were voluntary with no compensation.

I then attained each interviewee's availability and let them know the interview would be virtual, on Zoom or Skype, and would last between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were semi-structured, based on an IRB exempted interview guide located in Appendix B.

To prepare for many of my interviews, I read several articles published by each interviewee to better understand their topical interests and approaches to conducting solutions journalism. This analysis involved micro elements of writing style and narrative approach in addition to macro elements of media outlets published in and geographic location they chose to publish in.

I followed up with interviewees after several interviews by sending thank you emails and asking if they could provide follow-up information based on what we talked about: Names of additional interviewees to pursue via snowball sampling, articles they'd written or recommended I read, and/or other resources they recommend I look into. I also followed journalists on Twitter and subscribed to their email newsletters as they had them available. These points of interest became helpful data points in my methodological and data triangulation. At the end of each interview, I also let each interviewee know I'd be

reaching out to them for member checks. I conducted member checks to ensure the accuracy of my transcription(s) before my final dissertation defense.

Conclusion

This study provides a theoretically informed qualitative analysis of solutions journalism in practice worldwide. I accomplish this by providing rich and thick descriptions and analysis of 52 in-depth interviews; field notes from 18 months of netnography; and qualitative content analysis of various financial reports, annual reports, and solutions-oriented news articles. This study leverages elements of both emic and etic analysis.

Because this study comprises in-depth interviews and evidence presented by individuals that work within the solutions journalism space, this leads to results from insiders and stakeholders who support the practice of solutions journalism wholeheartedly. While this is not elite interviewing, it is related in the sense that the social actors interviewed for this project have power and influence in creating and cultivating the network (Empson, 2018; Moyser, 2006). This could also be perceived as a limitation, as I did not contact disempowered individuals that practice solutions journalism. A helpful next step to expand and build on this line of research may be to conduct a survey or series of interviews among journalists, editors, and practitioners who identify as generalists and are not affiliated directly with solutions journalism organizations to measure whether or not they perceive solutions journalism as a taken-for-granted journalistic approach. A similar survey or interview process could be conducted with news audiences.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 provide an in-depth analysis of data as it relates to networks and partnerships; rules, norms, and values; and various mechanisms limiting solutions journalism's growth and opportunities to overcome those restrictive barriers. Chapter 7 provides a conclusion of this study as an argument for the social construction of solutions journalism's legitimacy and credibility as an emerging institution in practice worldwide.

Chapter 4: Solutions Journalism as A Networked Organizational Form

Collaborations and partnerships play an integral role in the media industry worldwide in the 21st century. One reason for these partnerships and collaborations is that they are necessary for news organizations' survival. Headwinds and challenges are facing emerging forms of journalism in the form of tech giants dominating advertising revenues in the media market. The four largest internet firms and sites—Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Yahoo!—capture over a third of all web visits; Google and Facebook together capture more than 73 percent of digital advertising in a $60 billion-a-year industry (Hindman, 2018). Given their large market shares, Google launched a $300 million Google News Initiative in 2018 (Ha, 2019). Facebook followed suit in 2019, also choosing to invest $300 million in news programs, partnerships and content (Brown, 2019).

In part due to these tech giants' financial commitments to partnering with local news organizations, news organizations are more likely to partner than ever before, which has economic and institutional benefits (Reese, 2021). Facebook's partnerships with news organizations and research institutes at local levels help to cultivate and legitimize journalism for audiences (Jurno & d'Andréa, 2020). Openly cooperative journalistic practices have become normative in an attempt to repair the field of journalism, improve journalism, and even save journalism (Graves & Konieczna, 2015).

Because collaborations and partnerships have the potential to renew the economic vitality of news outlets in a fragmented and competitive media landscape, it's more important than ever before to examine journalistic approaches as networked organizational forms that involve elements of partnership and collaboration in their

pursuit of legitimacy. This chapter thus shows how solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form. Networks have been proven to play an integral role in the process of institutionalization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Solutions journalism functions as a networked organizational form with a central mission and decentralized groups of media organizations, editors, journalists, and practitioners that carry out the practice worldwide.

As such, solutions journalism serves as a case study to illuminate how a journalistic approach can be illustrated as a network of hubs, spokes, and global connections that facilitate and sustain its institutionalization.

This chapter also explores the pros, cons, and implications of collaborations and partnerships between news organizations worldwide. Because no scholars to date have investigated solutions journalism as a networked organizational form of networked journalism and theoretical inquiries relating to solutions journalism are few and far between, this chapter seeks to address the following research question:

RQ1: What role do collaborations and partnerships play in the institutionalization of networked organizational forms of journalism?

Based on triangulated data analysis of in-depth interviews with 52 social actors that support solutions journalism worldwide, netnography, and qualitative content analysis of solutions-oriented texts, this section of the results chapter will thus discuss the various networks, collaborations, and partnerships that support solutions journalism in theory and in practice as a network of hubs and spokes.

The first part of the results section of this chapter will explain the networked organizational structure of solutions journalism as a network of hubs and spokes. The

second section will discuss the economic and technological connections between nodes within the networked organizational structure of solutions journalism.

The Hubs and Spokes of Solutions Journalism

This results section begins by conceptualizing the hubs and spokes model, followed by examples of those hubs and spokes that make up solutions journalism in practice. The results section will then discuss the nature of connections between spokes within the network facilitated by social media and technology.

A hub and spoke model is characterized by a focal organization that operates as the central node with relationships to external groups that "have a stake" in the focal organization's operations (Kuhn, 2012; Lewis, 2006). In this way, major hubs or focal organizations that support solutions journalism in practice are the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN), news media organizations, higher education institutions, and solutions-oriented collaboratives worldwide. Spokes that practice solutions journalism include journalists, editors, and practitioners worldwide. The connections between these hubs and spokes are interpersonal, economic, and technological in nature and will be explored in the results presented throughout this chapter.

Solutions journalism is practiced by thousands of journalists, editors, and practitioners worldwide. Solutions journalism would not exist if it weren't for its expansive global network of journalists, editors, and practitioners committed to the practice and to each other. In this way, solutions journalism can be best understood as a networked organizational form of journalism, characterized by hubs and spokes.

A key part of the hubs and spokes model is the fact that solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners have various degrees of connection and collaboration with each

other. Connections are made between editors, journalists, and practitioners through shared commitments to a set of rules, norms, and values; economic or financial funding connections; and communication networks on social media platforms.

Networked journalism is one way scholars conceptualize how journalists leverage technology to create and spread news within the networked public sphere. Networked journalism is characterized by changing relations between journalists and publics (Napoli, 2010); the tension between professional control and open participation (Lewis, 2012); data driven practices (Diakopoulos, 2019); and the networked public sphere (Russell, 2016, p. 3). Networked journalism was first defined by scholars and practitioners in the mid-2000s. Russell (2016) defined it as a "diversity of collaborations" between newsroom employees and "everyone else, all digitally connected" (p. 2). Haak et al. (2012) defined the networked journalist as a "node in a network" that collects, processes, and distributes information (p. 2927). As Jarvis (2006) wrote:

> "Networked journalism" takes into account the collaborative nature of journalism now: professionals and amateurs working together to get the real story, linking to each other across brands and old boundaries to share facts, questions, answers, ideas, perspectives. It recognizes the complex relationships that will make news. And it focuses on the process more than the product...We're all in this together. Journalism is a collaborative venture. Journalism is a network.

Networked journalism developed its share of advocates and critics. Some have divided editors and journalists into the camps of traditionalists and convergers, the former being those who are passionate about maintaining traditional journalistic authority and distance between readers and editorial work, while the latter make attempts to integrate consumers into the news process (Robinson, 2010). Scholars have also described a "producer-user tension" that exists between journalists and consumers, suggesting that

there is a possibility that adaptability, openness, and participation may resolve this tension (Lewis, 2012).

While digital technology provides affordances for more audience interactivity than ever before in news work, traditional newsrooms were initially hesitant to adopt innovative practices for a variety of reasons including fear of increased cost, loss of editorial control, and hesitancy to challenge traditionally held news values (Ryfe, 2012; Lowrey, 2012; Nel & Westlund, 2012). However, it is a fact that the news ecosystem in the 21st century cannot be defined apart from its existence as part of a networked public sphere (Castells, 1996). In this way, scholars including Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012) began to explore the field of journalism as a "networked public" capable of enabling activists and journalists to create news together. Similarly, Hermida et al. (2014) found that social media made it possible for journalists to leverage voices of "nonelite" citizens and sources that traditionally had no place in shaping news narratives.

In part because 21st century journalists rarely set foot inside of traditional newsrooms (Deuze, 2019), networked journalism is a pattern of interactivity and collaboration scholars have argued is necessary to contextualize and help define the boundaries of the profession of journalism (Russell, 2016; Waisbord, 2013). To build in part on this framework and understanding, this study argues that solutions journalism operates as a networked organizational form of journalism on a global scale, illustrated below.

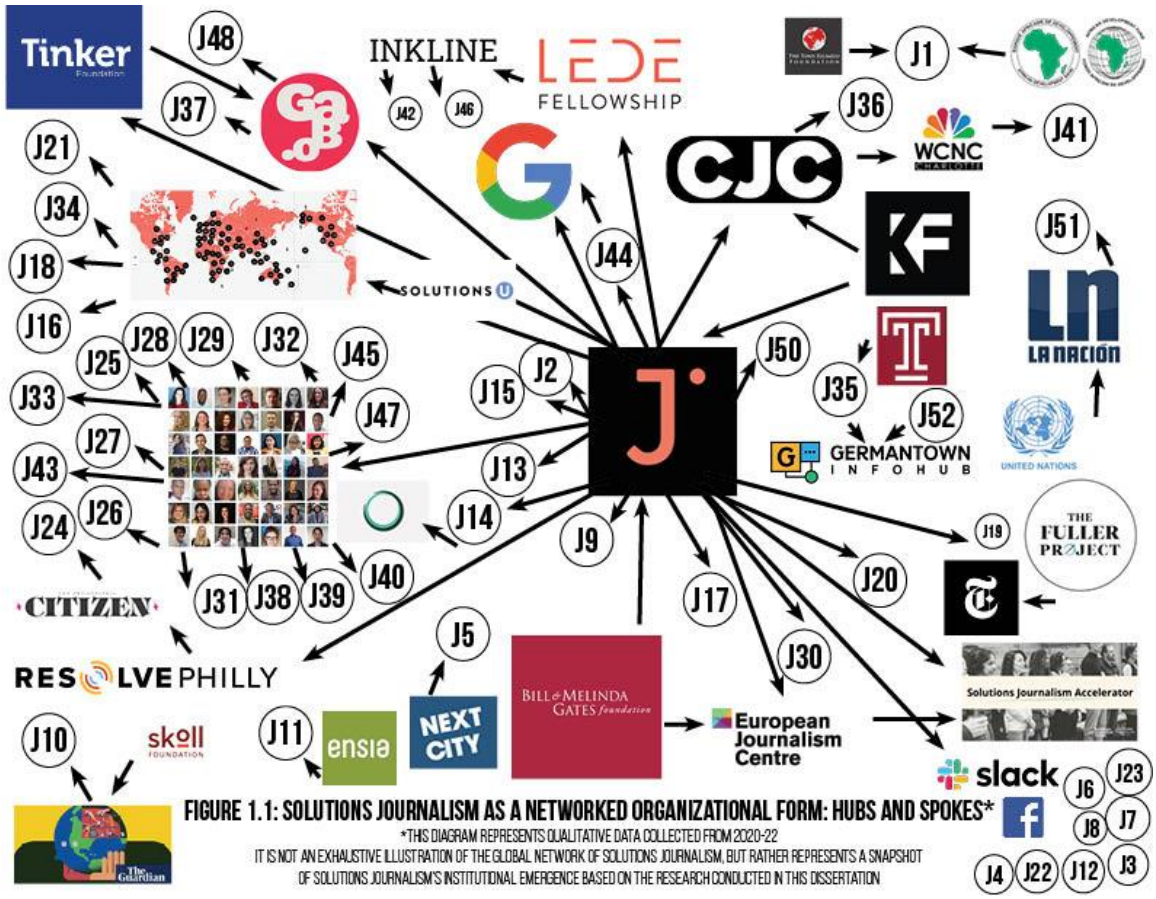

FIGURE 1.1: SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM AS A NETWORKED ORGANIZATIONAL FORM: HUBS AND SPOKES*

*THIS DIAGRAM REPRESENTS QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED FROM 2020-22
IT IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE ILLUSTRATION OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM, BUT RATHER REPRESENTS A SNAPSHOT
OF SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM'S INSTITUTIONAL EMERGENCE BASED ON THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN THIS DISSERTATION

Figure 1.1: Solutions Journalism as A Networked Organizational Form: Hubs and Spokes*: This diagram represents the hubs, spokes, and global connections of solutions journalism based upon qualitative data collected from 2020-22. Major hubs that support solutions journalism in practice are the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN), news media organizations, higher education institutions, and solutions-oriented collaboratives worldwide. Spokes that practice solutions journalism include journalists, editors, and practitioners worldwide. The connections between these hubs and spokes are interpersonal, economic, and technological in nature. Figure 1.1 is not an exhaustive illustration of the global network of solutions journalism, but rather represents a snapshot of solutions journalism's institutional emergence based on the research conducted in this dissertation.*

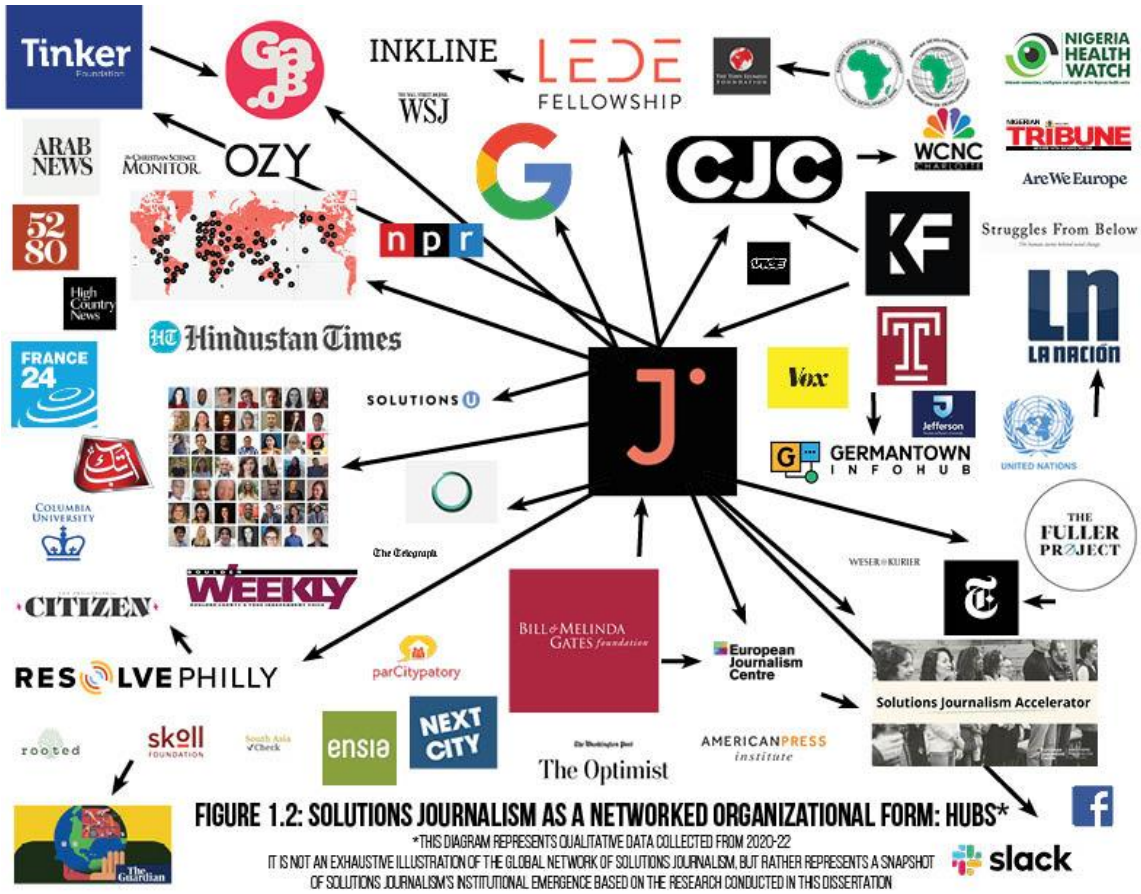

FIGURE 1.2: SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM AS A NETWORKED ORGANIZATIONAL FORM: HUBS*

*THIS DIAGRAM REPRESENTS QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED FROM 2020-22
IT IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE ILLUSTRATION OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM, BUT RATHER REPRESENTS A SNAPSHOT OF SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM'S INSTITUTIONAL EMERGENCE BASED ON THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN THIS DISSERTATION

Figure 1.2: Solutions Journalism as A Networked Organizational Form: Hubs*: This diagram is a simplified version of Figure 1.1 and represents the major hubs and global connections of solutions journalism based upon qualitative data collected from 2020-22. Major hubs that support solutions journalism in practice are the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN), news media organizations, higher education institutions, and solutions-oriented collaboratives worldwide. The connections between these hubs are interpersonal, economic, and technological in nature. Figure 1.2 is not an exhaustive illustration of the global network of solutions journalism, but rather represents a snapshot of solutions journalism's institutional emergence based on the research conducted in this dissertation.*

Hub #1: The Solutions Journalism Network (SJN)

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 (above) show how solutions journalism functions as a networked organizational form. These diagrams represent the hubs, spokes, and global connections of solutions journalism based upon qualitative data collected from 2020-22. Major hubs that support solutions journalism in practice are the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN), news media organizations, higher education institutions, and solutions-oriented collaboratives worldwide. Spokes that practice solutions journalism include journalists, editors, and practitioners worldwide. The connections between these hubs and spokes are interpersonal, economic, and technological in nature. While Figure 1 is not an exhaustive illustration of the global network of solutions journalism, it serves as a snapshot of solutions journalism's institutional emergence based on the research conducted in this dissertation.

When asked "What role do partnerships and collaborations play in the practice of solutions journalism?," interviewees referenced several different kinds of partnerships, organizations, and collaborations. Professional associations play a key role in the process of institutionalization (Greenwood et al., 2002). As such, solutions journalism is becoming institutionalized in part through the rise of the SJN. SJN is a network of hundreds of scholars and practitioners worldwide dedicated to covering social problems and the responses to those problems. As of April 2020, SJN had trained over 15,000 journalists through live training or online curriculum, partnered with 208 global news organizations on solutions-oriented projects, and provided 17 journalism schools with SJN curricula for use in undergraduate and/or graduate classrooms. The SJN launched in 2013 as a network of scholars and practitioners dedicated to "train journalists to cover the

whole story — what's wrong and the responses to those problems" (Solutions Journalism Network, 2020). Founded in 2013, SJN:

> Works to define, legitimize and spread the practice of "solutions journalism" - rigorous, unbiased reporting about credible responses to social problems. The organization's mission is to establish solutions journalism as a core function in journalism, conforming to the profession's highest standards of independence and accuracy. In keeping with journalism's historic responsibility to spotlight and contextualize significant activity in the public interest, solutions journalism will circulate reliable information about how society is confronting and adapting to major social, economic, and environmental challenges. (Solutions Journalism Network, 2019)

SJN is dedicated to providing grants and support for journalists to cover social problems and the responses to those problems by providing education, workshops, and financial resources to newsrooms, journalists, editors, and scholars worldwide. As of April 2020, the SJN had 20,833 journalists engaged in their network through workshops, trainings, and on social media networks; had trained 218 journalism educators to teach solutions journalism; shared over 10,000 stories in their Solutions Story Tracker; and helped fund 7 solutions-focused collaboratives comprising newsrooms and other community and professional organizations (Solutions Journalism Network, 2019, 2020). Further, SJN spent $7,449,795 in 2020 on staff salaries, sub-grants, program consulting, and restricted project grants; $1.9 million of this was spent on newsroom partners (Solutions Journalism Network, 2020).

One SJN representative said that "network" is important to what SJN does, and so is "training" (J9). This staffer noted SJN has not "copyrighted" or "trademarked" solutions journalism (J2), but instead seeks to provide resources and push the idea of solutions journalism out in the same way Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) does for investigative reporting (J2). Resources and opportunities interviewees cited as expanding the network of solutions journalism include the SJN Solutions Story Tracker,

SJN Mentorship Program, and a SJN Facebook group and Slack channel where social actors can correspond, network, and support each other.

As a hub connected to SJN, SJN's Solutions Story Tracker is a database that comprises more than 10,000 solutions-oriented news stories published by outlets and journalists worldwide. Stories are included based on SJN's specific criteria for what comprises a solutions story: that it focuses in-depth on a response to a problem and how the response works in meaningful detail; focuses on effectiveness, not good intentions, presenting available evidence of results; discusses limitations of the approach; and seeks to provide insights that others can use (Solutions Journalism, 2018). Many interviewees had work picked up by the Solutions Story Tracker and noted how it reinforces the integrity of solutions journalism practice in its commitment to upholding the rules, norms, and values solutions journalism is committed to.

In addition to funding initiatives and the Solutions Story Tracker, SJN hosts an annual mentorship program that connects journalists to mentors that meet with them and help provide publishing opportunities at outlets worldwide. The mentorship program provides global connections for mentees. Various interviewees were connected to SJN as members of the SJN Mentorship Program cited expanding their network as a major reason they applied for the opportunity in the first place (J29, J43). One journalist mentioned their newsroom began "dabbling" in solutions journalism four years ago following a training presentation given by an SJN staff member, then they decided to join the mentorship program (J43). In addition to the SJN Mentorship Program, they also pursued involvement with a solutions-oriented collaboration with Wyoming Public Radio. "Because our region is really rural, most of our communities have a lot of the

same problems. And so, it's nice to have that sort of interconnected regional reporting" (J43).

The Facebook group and Slack channel are additional spokes in the networked organizational form of solutions journalism where journalists, editors, and practitioners can tap into and share resources and support others' production of solutions journalism worldwide. An active member of the SJN Facebook group has participated in numerous SJN training sessions and courses, and submits every one of their solutions stories for inclusion in the Solutions Story Tracker (J1). A broadcast television journalist that also freelances for newspapers in Pakistan is connected to SJN via the Facebook group and has participated in various SJN training programs (J3). They note that the SJN provides them with access to journalists who cover topics in different ways and allows them to think about issues from different perspectives and angles:

> SJN is providing a good opportunity to journalists like me who are working for TV channels, who are working for newspapers as a freelancer, especially for different countries' newspapers...I have learned a lot with different journalists who are working in different countries, with different tools. They share their experiences. They share their points of view. They share new ways of working...it's very helpful. It's really good. That's why I am attached to this group, with these solutions and all the training programs. (J3)

Another journalist that is connected to SJN as a member of the SJN Facebook group said: "The Solutions Journalism Network Facebook group has been very helpful in creating connections and helping me become aware of others who are doing solutions-oriented work" (J6).

A full-time SJN staff member said that two main ways SJN attempts to disseminate knowledge and practice are through the Solutions Story Tracker and through partnerships and providing solutions story services for stakeholders, markets, and organizations that would find solutions stories helpful (J15). They described "Solutions

U," an arm of SJN, as a supportive node that comes alongside SJN to "help build a network of journalists and news outlets in particular, building that supply and thinking about what resources, tools, connections can we supply to help strengthen journalists' habits in asking the question: 'Who's doing it better, and what's working?' in a way they feel is connected to what their audience knows and what they're looking for" (J15).

These are a few examples of how SJN functions as a major hub within solutions journalism as a networked organizational form. Additionally, on an organizational level, SJN is connected to major technology companies including Google. Google's Creative Lab team and SJN staff members rolled out the "Hey Google, tell me something good" feature through Google Assistant on smartphones and accessible via Google Home and Google Home Mini in the U.S. in 2018 (Chowdhry, 2018). The initiative has now expanded to include weekly podcast segments available via Google Assistant and on Soundcloud (Hotz, 2020).

"We got really lucky with Google," an SJN staff person said. "One of the creative producers there was just really interested in the idea of solutions journalism...then they brought in real people, and then they brought in products" (J44).

Partnerships with major tech companies provide access to broader audiences and financial support for production of news with various ethical implications regarding whether or not news organizations will become dependent upon "Big Tech" companies for audience attention and distribution (Meese & Hurcombe, 2021).

In addition to SJN, there are other major hubs that exist within the network of solutions journalism, including news media organizations that publish solutions journalism; higher education institutions; and local collaboratives. These hubs are

described in detail below, followed by descriptions of the economic, interpersonal, and technological connections that bond the hubs and spokes together.

Hub #2: News Media Outlets

Solutions journalism exists in newsrooms worldwide, and has existed long before the formation of the SJN in 2013. As one full time SJN staff person said, "We never copyrighted or trademarked solutions journalism…we don't have a monopoly on it" (J2).

As an example of solutions journalism existing long before the foundation of SJN, a staff member at NextCity noted that NextCity has been publishing solutions stories since its origin in 2003 (J5). Interviewees also cited The Marshall Project, Kaiser Health News, ProPublica, and the *Texas Tribune* as nonprofit news outlets that "are all doing an incredible amount of solutions journalism" (J49). According to interviewees, solutions journalism is prevalent in nonprofit newsrooms more than it is in for-profit newsrooms. One journalist said: "I think it's [solutions journalism] being driven through nonprofit newsrooms more than anything...I also think nonprofit newsrooms are more likely to do solutions journalism because they have the time and resources to do it...because they don't have the pressure of clicks and ad revenue and stuff like that. They're allowed to collaborate with whoever they want" (J49).

SJN facilitates and supports many news media outlets that publish solutions work. Others exist without SJN's explicit financial support. A couple of examples of partnerships between foundations and news organizations include a partnership between *The New York Times* and the Fuller Project for International Reporting on an article about safe homes for trafficked youth in Miami (Sharma Rani, 2019). Also, an online

publication called Zora partnered with the SJN about trafficking in refugee camps in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2019).

As described in chapter 1, solutions journalism is practiced in at least 54 global newsrooms including the BBC, Politico, *The New York Times*, and Fast Company (Hotz, 2021). For example, *The New York Times* has published an opinion column since 2010 titled "Fixes." "Fixes" is described on the NYT website as: "Fixes looks at solutions to social problems and why they work." *The Washington Post* also sends out a weekly email newsletter called "The Optimist." This newsletter is focused on sharing positive news from around the world. And Fast Company has a section called "Impact," which is described on their website as "the big ideas that are changing the world."

To provide a few examples of solutions journalism outlets funded by foundations, *Guardian Upside* is a vertical within *The Guardian*'s news section defined as "Journalism that seeks out answers, solutions, movements and initiatives to address the biggest problems besetting the world" (The Guardian, 2020). *Guardian Upside* is funded in part by the Skoll Foundation (GNM Press Office, 2018). Based in Palo Alto, California, Skoll is dedicated to "Driving large-scale change by investing in, connecting, & celebrating social entrepreneurs & innovators dedicated to solving the world's most pressing problems" (The Skoll Foundation, 2020).

Another example of solutions journalism in practice is a partnership between Fundación Gabo, "the Latin American region's preeminent journalism training organization," and the SJN (Tinker Foundation, 2020). Thanks to funding from the Tinker Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting "economic and social development in Latin America by supporting 'people, projects, and ideas,'" SJN

and Fundación Gabo have partnered "to bring solutions journalism to reporters and newsrooms across the region" by providing solutions journalism training for journalists, editors, and newsrooms in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Venezuela (Tinker Foundation, 2020).

Sharing and distributing knowledge is a big part of collaboration at solutions-oriented outlets. For example, an editor of a solutions-oriented magazine in the Midwest said that "a big part of what we do is around partnerships with other media outlets" (J10). To amplify the stories their publication produces, they publish all of their stories under Creative Commons, which makes all of their content available for larger media outlets to reuse and repurpose.

In addition to these outlets that produce solutions journalism in collaborative ways, solutions journalism is supported and taught within higher education institutions worldwide. Solutions journalism in higher education institutions is supported by SJN and other foundations in addition to originating with faculty in those institutions.

Hub #3: Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions have been training students in solutions journalism with increasing prevalence in recent years. As of 2020, SJN had trained 218 journalism educators (Solutions Journalism Network, 2020). Beyond SJN's support, according to interviewees, journalism programs in higher education institutions worldwide teach principles of solutions journalism.

Some full-time SJN staffers work extensively with higher education institutions to ensure they have up to date solutions journalism curriculum to offer students (J17). Other

interviewees that work in higher education argued that solutions journalism should be a tool in every student's toolbox (J14).

One SJN staff member said that cultivating partnerships among higher education institutions is a major goal of SJN:

> We're still coming up with new ideas about how to cross-pollinate those partners...one thing is called 'Journalist in the Classroom,' where you might be a professor of climate science, and you're using solutions journalism stories alongside your other course materials. How cool would it be to actually have the reporter who reported that story from a solutions lens come into your classroom and talk with your students about their own expertise in that particular field? (J13)

Some interviewees cited formal training as part of their college careers that introduced them to the practice of solutions journalism. For example, solutions journalism encouraged one journalist to innovate and pursue journalism as a profession (J22). In journalism school, this journalist remembers being disillusioned with the journalistic profession as a whole until a professor affiliated with the SJN presented solutions journalism to this student as a pathway that was "pivotal in planting this idea that there are alternatives to traditional legacy journalism that we see out there" (J22):

> I was just like, "Oh man, journalism sucks as an industry to try to get into. And a lot of the models out there don't work." I remember we had a breaking news reporter come and visit us in J school, and I was hearing some things that were extremely problematic to me, like the fact that they never discussed the sum total of their crime coverage. I was just like, "Where are the people that are thinking about this differently?" If it weren't for that, I probably would not have always had the perspective that I do about doing things differently or innovating in the world of journalism. (J22)

Other interviewees said solutions journalism was an approach they were always inclined to pursue, regardless of level of training they'd received. One journalist said: "I always did solutions journalism, I just never had any formal training" (J16).

Higher education institutions and research institutes also help solutions journalists gain skills in data and technology. One journalist is an Open Society Foundation fellow at Wits University in South Africa (J34). Their fellowship equips them with resources to

carry out data journalism in addition to gaining skills with multimedia formats, cartoons, videos, and data visualizations. These tools, they said, help to increase audience engagement in addition to helping audiences understand complex topics like health disparities. “I know the power of multimedia and data. Going forward, that's what I will be doing with my stories” (J34).

In addition to news media organizations and higher education institutions, solutions-oriented collaboratives exist and support solutions journalism practice. Those hubs are described below.

Hub #4: Local Collaboratives

Another form of solutions journalism hubs in practice are local collaboratives comprising newsrooms and civic organizations across mediums and platforms dedicated to sharing solutions-oriented stories and coverage. The Charlotte Journalism Collaborative (CJC) is one example of this. The CJC was founded in 2019 as a group of media companies and local institutions including a public library that focus on “issues of major importance to the Charlotte region” (Charlotte Journalism Collaborative, 2020). The CJC’s mission is to “strengthen local journalism and encourage greater connection between reporters and Charlotte residents” by providing solutions-oriented news coverage to the city of Charlotte, North Carolina (Charlotte Journalism Collaborative, 2020). CJC was launched in 2019 thanks to $150,000 in funding from the SJN as a subgrantor of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, who have a $300 million commitment “to rebuild the future of local journalism, essential to a functioning democracy” (Knight Foundation, 2019).

Two interviewees affiliated with the CJC argued that the solutions-oriented collaborative is embedded in community (J36, J41). With higher education partners, advocacy organization partners, and civic organization partners including local libraries, the CJC cultivates voices from various audiences to combine journalism, community work, and nonprofit work in a way that "tells stories to different audience members in a way that impacts change" (J36). In a similar way, the Germantown Info Hub is another local collaborative with partnerships with higher education institutions and local community organizations cited by interviewees as a way for community members and organizations to partner, collaborate, and share solutions at the local level (J35, J52).

According to interviewees, less formal partnerships and collaboratives than those noted above exist worldwide. A SJN staff member mentioned there is an SJN-sponsored "toolkit dedicated to forming collaboratives around solutions journalism" that explains why solutions-oriented partnerships and collaboratives are important. They also said that collaboration is a great way to "pool" and "share" resources (J13). They also said that sharing resources "allows better reporting to get done from the newsroom standpoint" because "journalism as an industry hasn't been doing so well for a while" (J13).

One practitioner works in local and state government community media and noted that collaborations are key to their initiatives. Through involvement with a project called "Help Your Neighbour," they said their major priorities are to share positive news and stories in the community and to develop "connective tissue between our community groups" to "work with them in a collaborative way to understand how they can stand up and make their own changes" through writing and connecting in meetings (J12).

When asked to describe any solutions-oriented collaborations or partnerships they were aware of, one journalist mentioned a nonprofit public media collaboration called the Mountain West News Bureau. “It covers Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, maybe New Mexico and Arizona…they do some solutions reporting. I have not personally been a part of communicating with other people about doing solutions stories, but I think that the connections exist and they're really cool. They do a lot of really good regional reporting...it's a well of news to be able to draw on for some of these news organizations around the region” (J43).

One practitioner said that partnerships and collaborations are “definitely” key to the success of solutions journalism (J14). They mentioned that SJN has “a lot of examples of partnerships and collaboratives they have done” that have provided financial support for projects within smaller newsrooms in particular:

> I think it would probably been very difficult for those smaller newsrooms, especially in today's budget-poor newsroom environment, to have created some of the really special and meaningful projects that have come out of those collaboratives, as well as the training and support SJN provides to individual newsrooms and to higher ed. I think those are really crucial to what SJN is doing. A few years ago I heard Andrew Haeg of GroundSource say: ‘If you want to change journalism, you have to change the journalists.’ And that really was my guiding mission when I was teaching solutions journalism. (J14)

In addition to inter-organizational news media partnerships, some interviewees discussed how collaboration and partnerships within their own newsrooms are integral to their success. One journalist referenced how it is a normal practice for them to collaborate with various colleagues across the newsroom to distribute solutions journalism stories: “When I do these stories on solutions journalism, I sit with my colleagues on the digital desk, and with the community manager, and we try to design how we're going to give this to the audience” (J51). This finding falls in line with

Westlund et al. (2021)'s argument that collaboration between business, editorial, and information technology (IT) departments is more important than ever in providing newsrooms with technological innovation that makes it possible for them to thrive in volatile market conditions.

In conclusion, hubs that support solutions journalism in practice include SJN, news media outlets, higher education institutions, and local collaboratives. The next section of this results section will discuss the nature of connections between hubs and spokes that practice and support solutions journalism including foundation funding, interpersonal relationships, and connections made possible on social media platforms.

Connections and Links Between Hubs and Spokes

At the turn of the 21st century, technological advancements and innovations began to facilitate global connections in the news media industry. Catalyzed by the advent of the internet, journalists and newsrooms alike started to adopt decentralized approaches to news production, involving blogs and citizen reportage (Bruns, 2008; Lowrey, 2012), mobile apps (Steinke & Bélair-Gagnon, 2019), and social media platforms of various kinds (Bélair-Gagnon, 2015). Newsrooms also welcomed new technological players including web analytics companies and technologists—also known as "interlopers"—into their organizations to help news organizations quantify and engage their audiences (Bélair-Gagnon & Holton, 2018). In addition to the presence of web analytics companies and technologists, scholars have identified open-source technology as a key element of contemporary news work (Lewis & Usher, 2013).

As described in detail in Chapter 2, social network analysis can enhance organizational and institutional theories (Gulati et al., 2002). As such, networks comprise

persons and organizations linked by a set of social relationships (Gulati et al., 2002). The links between these persons and organizations–also known as hubs and spokes–are made up of social relationships, economic relationships, and "material and symbolic flows that link people and objects both locally and globally without regard for traditional national, institutional, or organizational boundaries" (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 3).

In line with these definitions of social actors and their network connections leveraged in large part thanks to social media and various forms of technology, the results of this study show that connections between the hubs and spokes of solutions journalism as a networked organizational form comprise social and economic connections made possible through mediated connections on social media platforms and networks. These connections along with their implications for other forms of specialized journalism practice are explored below.

Economic Connections Between Hubs and Spokes: Foundation Funding

Exogenous or external forces (Vos, 2020) that contribute to the cultivation of journalism's legitimacy include funding from foundations and nonprofit organizations that support the practice of journalism in newsrooms worldwide. For example, in an analysis of manifestos published by for-profit digital news startups, Carlson and Usher (2016) found that digital news startups backed by large investors, venture capital, and technology entrepreneurs present themselves as organizations that seek to "make journalism better for the public" (p. 576).

Solutions journalism serves as an example of how foundation funding facilitates economic connections between journalistic actors. As one example of how economic connections are fostered, funding organizations provide various opportunities for

solutions journalism to be picked up in disciplines outside of journalism. Social entrepreneurship and anthropology students at Fordham University applied for funding from the SJN to launch a publication called *The Innovator* that examines solutions to social problems. The students weren't journalism majors, but applied for funding for the initiative, and produced the publication accordingly (J17).

In areas like Africa where solutions journalism is a relatively new phenomenon, foundation funding is prevalent. Interviewees articulated desires and intentions to attain funding for solutions-oriented initiatives and to partner with like-minded journalists, editors, and practitioners to raise awareness for solutions journalism. As one example, one journalist applied for funding from The Tony Elumelu Foundation, an organization that supports entrepreneurial initiatives in Africa, and was selected from more than 10,000 proposals for funding in partnership with the African Development Bank (J1). This journalist said this financial support is encouraging as it complements positive responses the journalist had received about starting a solutions journalism outlet in Nigeria (J1). This is one example of how journalists worldwide attempt to increase the legitimacy of solutions journalism through word-of-mouth spread and through application for sponsorship by foundations and funding organizations.

Funding from philanthropic foundations is one way newsrooms pursue economic sustainability (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019). Studies show that news organization employees don't always agree with their funding foundation's beliefs about journalistic practice, which could lead to foundations having "more control over news production processes than advertising ever did" (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019, p. 53). In line with this finding, this study's results show that solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners argued that

foundation funding that supports solutions journalism in practice has the potential to influence coverage. However, interviewees insist it is crucial to pursue funding opportunities even if there could be a potential conflict of interest. For example, a journalist argued that, "It is my personal opinion, but in *The Guardian UK*, it seems like they're always defending the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that funds them" (J1). At the same time, direct recipients of funding insist their funding won't impact or influence their coverage "because I can do with the funds whatever I want" (J1).

Another journalist said it's easy for stories funded by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to become an "advertorial" (J26). To avoid editorial conflicts of interest, this journalist said it's important to maintain balance in a story by including more than one perspective on every topic or issue (J26).

Regardless of their thoughts on editorial freedoms or lack thereof that come from solutions journalism's funding models, journalists and editors argue that funding is crucial to solutions journalism's continued success. One editor cited their solutions-oriented publication's statement of ethics that states clearly how their publication "has complete editorial independence from all funding agencies that it partners with and is supported by" (J11).

A journalist worked on a story about single-use plastics in Costa Rica that was financially supported by the United Nations (Le Lous, 2019). Published by a mainstream news outlet, this article leveraged data to evaluate three things. First, personal solutions for people to be more responsible with single-use plastics. Second, political solutions based upon what laws or legislations exist about single-use practices and which ones are most effective based on official data. Third, solutions for companies to be more

resourceful with their production practices. This journalist said their story took a month and a half to report. After reporting was complete, the newsroom got to work designing a distribution and marketing strategy for the story to optimize its reach. Part of the distribution plan included publishing the story on social media, via newspaper, and on their website. Another part of the distribution plan included seeking sponsors to help publicize the article. According to the journalist, the United Nations came forward and provided a $5,000 stipend to support distribution of the story. The Coca-Cola Company came forward as well, but the newspaper could only commit to one sponsor for this one story in particular. According to this journalist, because "they already had the work in their hands" when the funding came through, editorial independence was maintained throughout the reporting process (J51).

Foundation funding can enhance the quality of reporting. A Nepalese journalist wrote a story about renewable energy with funding from a Canadian nonprofit called Discourse Media (Adhikari, 2016). Thanks to funding received from this nonprofit, the journalist was able to rent a Jeep to travel to remote areas to speak to people who were suffering from energy poverty. This funding helped to produce a story covering renewable energy from a solutions and geopolitical angle that the journalist said was "really well done" (J23).

Based on results of this study, economic connections help solutions journalism to diversify in fields outside of journalism, provides some economic stability, and enhances the quality of solutions journalism. At the same time, foundation funding introduces some questions about editorial freedom that have been raised in scholarship (Ferrucci & Nelson, 2019; Scott et al., 2019). The next section of the results section will discuss the

technological and interpersonal nature of the links between the hubs and spokes of solutions journalism in practice. Interviewees' technological connections range from membership within Facebook groups and/or Slack channels, participation in events and/or mentorship programs, receipt of grants, and inclusion within SJN's Solutions Story Tracker.

Technological Connections Between Hubs and Spokes: Social Media

Scholars have examined how various kinds of news outlets including public service media and print media interact with social media platforms and what sort of path dependencies these create (Bailo et al., 2021). Results of this study build on these findings to show that social media makes it possible for social actors and news organizations worldwide to correspond, collaborate, and cultivate community. This study thus seeks to advance discussions about path dependencies in the networked organizational structure of solutions journalism by showing how social media facilitates network connections and the impacts they have on the institutional development of the solutions journalism approach.

Social media helps journalists, editors, and practitioners seek to create local networks that can transcend geographic boundaries on a global scale. Based on results of this study, platforms used to connect and share solutions news include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Slack, and WhatsApp.

When asked about the role of partnerships and collaborations in solutions reporting, interviewees noted that "solutions journalism is about drawing global connections" (J7). Another journalist calls themselves a "serial collaborator" committed to partnering with academics, community members, and journalists to "brainstorm what

we can do to make things better" (J35). As a researcher-practitioner, they noted that "when the connection between those nodes [local media, residents, and community groups] are strong, there tends to be higher levels of participation, higher levels of and a sense of shared belonging to the community, and a sense of we can try to solve these problems together" (J35).

In addition to leveraging social media in practice, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners–the spokes that carry out solutions journalism worldwide–are part of various communities on social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram. These communities support their solutions journalism around the world. One journalist mentioned that being part of solutions journalism groups on Facebook is an important part of raising awareness for solutions journalism and for connecting with others about their solutions journalism practice:

> I am part of the Solutions Journalism Network's Facebook group on Facebook, and then I also started Solutions Journalism Philippines, just to focus on a hodgepodge of things. So events, or whoever else wants to share their events or grants and other pieces, or if I've submitted stories, not only my stories, but also submit stories of other reporters on the Solutions Story Tracker so I would share that on the group. Then, "Oh, here's another one." For example, I would chance upon a solution journalism story in the Philippines, but that reporter didn't realize that it was actually a solutions story or something. I would take a comment and then share it with the group. (J42)

Early on in their career, one full-time solutions journalist gained expertise and a professional network through social media. They began their career in international development "to actually go out into the industry and get some experience to understand what it was like" (J5). They published their reporting and writing "on the side"—often times unpaid—while working in institutions and nonprofits in Washington DC to "get to know and understand what that web of institutions and rules, and regulations, and policies and programs are like...just to get a sense of what it's like to actually work in the

world of organizations who are supposedly doing something to address global poverty." One of the main things they took away from that experience was that they encountered "plenty of talented and hardworking journalists in other countries, thanks in part to social media" (J5).

Solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners are part of various communities on social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram to support their solutions journalism around the world. One journalist said the #solutionsjournalism hashtag is what led them to the SJN's Instagram page, Facebook page, and website:

> I went and joined their Facebook page, and I realized, 'Oh, this is a whole community of people who think just like me. This is really great.' And so the Facebook page was really kind of the door opener for me into the whole thing...for me, what's really valuable is just the connection with people around the world. The network is what I find interesting and valuable. (J6)

Social media also plays a role in bringing together communities of journalists and editors. One editor's newsroom at one time was involved with an initiative called "Voting Rights Day" that involved collaborations between a number of newsrooms:

> We got them talking to each other around the voting rights and issues that they were experiencing in their communities, what they were seeing this year, and so not only did we have stories coming in from that, but they also connected with each other to be like, 'Oh, that's happening in Texas. This is also happening in New Mexico. It's actually the same organization: True the Vote.' 'Oh yeah, we saw them too.' There's that kind of thing, and that was all through social media and through Google Groups or through things like that. (J49)

According to a journalist who works with partners and funding agencies in Latin and South America, social media platforms are a popular way for journalists to connect with each other in the Global South (J37). Instagram is an especially common app for journalists to share news stories, and WhatsApp is integral to journalists sharing ideas and collaborating.

“It's such a social media-friendly part of the world. I mean, I think Brazil is quantified as the world's biggest user of social media,” one practitioner said. “Not only do they just use WhatsApp to stay in touch, but I noticed very quickly that they began collaborating. As a freelancer who just doesn't work a lot in social media, it was an interesting window for me into at least how some outlets are more aggressively using tools like Instagram and that sort of thing” (J37).

Social media can also facilitate organizational partnerships. In the United States, a director of a major solutions-oriented media collaborative on the East Coast said they use social media to “raise awareness” for their solutions-oriented collaborative and to share solutions-based news on topics like affordable housing with audiences in innovative ways (J36).

“I'm becoming an Instagram person, but not by choice,” they said. “I really should like Instagram more, because Instagram specifically gives us an opportunity to reach people that are not always focused on the news” (J36). They also gave the example of how Instagram facilitated a major partnership between journalism and local artists and arts organizations to showcase a journalistic graphic novel that tells the story of community-level responses to COVID-19 (J36).

In addition to raising awareness for solutions news and facilitating partnerships between like-minded community organizations, social media makes it possible for solutions collaboratives to reach audiences across sectors. The CJC is seeking to create widgets on the City of Charlotte’s affordable housing website to raise awareness for CJC partners’ news coverage on those topics (J36).

Social media helps journalists to cultivate community among news producers and audiences while facilitating partnerships and collaborations. In these ways, social media helps tie together the hubs and spokes that support solutions journalism in practice worldwide.

Discussion: Evolving Role of Networks, Collaborations, and Partnerships in Journalistic Practice

News organizations are more likely to partner than ever before, which has economic and institutional benefits (Reese, 2021). News organizations publish nonprofit and foundation-supported investigative projects to offset expenses, and collaborations between news organizations means they can "do more than less" (Reese, 2021, p. 137). Economic pressures "have forced greater institutionality" (Reese, 2021, p. 137). This chapter shows how this institutionality is created in part through partnerships and collaboration facilitated by economic and technological connections.

The first part of this chapter theorized solutions journalism as a networked form of journalism in practice. The second section of this chapter presented this chapter's research question and theoretical argument: That solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form characterized by hubs and spokes. These hubs and spokes have various degrees of connection and collaboration with each other. Connections are made through economic connections and communication networks on social media platforms.

Hubs that support solutions journalism include the SJN, news media organizations, higher education institutions, and local solutions-oriented collaboratives. Spokes include the social actors–journalists, editors, and practitioners–that support

solutions journalism in practice. Connections between these hubs and spokes are economic, technological, and interpersonal, mediated online by social media platforms.

Connections are made between solutions' editors, journalists, and practitioners through communication networks on social media platforms, through online and mobile correspondence, and in a shared commitment to a shared set of rules, norms, and values in countries worldwide. In this way, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners seek to create local networks that can transcend geographic boundaries on a global scale.

This study's findings carry implications for various journalistic approaches worldwide. It argues that a dense, well-connected network provides more opportunities for a journalistic approach to gain legitimacy in practice, while a more diffuse network provides less ability for a journalistic practice to gain legitimacy. The results presented in this chapter support the argument that the network of solutions journalism is global in scope and committed to seeking connections, partnerships, and collaborations that support its institutionalization worldwide.

Solutions journalism is in a moment of expansion in the midst of challenges including a global pandemic, systemic injustices, fragmented attention economies, and decreasing financial resources. In the face of these endogenous, exogenous, and environmental pressures, solutions journalism's stakeholders are leveraging collaborations, partnerships, data, technology, and social/mobile platforms to create networks that transcend geographic boundaries and build resilience for the future of journalism in practice worldwide.

Solutions journalism provides an exemplary case study about how a journalistic approach cultivates and establishes formative elements of legitimacy including shared

understandings, connections, collaborations, partnerships, and exercise of and commitment to various rules, norms, and values. Through the conceptual lens of new institutional theory, solutions journalism as a journalistic approach is in between theorization and diffusion on a global scale.

Other questions that relate to the institutionalization of solutions journalism include the establishment and evolution of solutions journalism's rules, norms, and values; and exploration of the mechanisms limiting solutions journalism's growth and diffusion.

Chapter 5 will explore the role rules, norms, and values play in providing opportunities for a journalistic approach to gain legitimacy in practice, while a more diffuse network provides less ability for a journalistic practice to gain legitimacy. In this way, connections, collaborations, and shared understandings between solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners as a networked organizational form helps cultivate more legitimacy for specialized journalistic practices.

The following chapters will address questions of legitimacy in-depth, beginning with exploration of solutions journalism's rules, norms, and values as articulated by interviewees.

Chapter 5: Cultivating Cognitive Legitimacy: The Rules, Norms, and Values of Solutions Journalism

Solutions journalism scholars have recently called for a more clear conceptualization of solutions journalism (McIntyre & Lough, 2019). Through the theoretical lens of new institutional theory, this chapter seeks to address this call in addition to clarifying how journalistic rules, norms, and values are articulated and understood in practice.

A dense, well-connected network with codified rules, norms, and values provides more opportunities for a journalistic approach to gain legitimacy in practice, while a more diffuse network provides less ability for a journalistic practice to gain legitimacy. In this way, connections, collaborations, and shared understandings between solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners may help cultivate more legitimacy for specialized journalistic practices.

New institutionalists evaluate how rules, norms, and values influence entire organizational fields, recognizing that institutions "cannot be understood completely without an understanding of the environment" (Galasckiewicz, 1991). As Vos (2020) writes, all institutions—including the institution of journalism—are constituted by "routinized practices, implicit and explicit rules, and explicit norms" (p. 736).

Legitimacy is directly correlated to the stability of the institution of journalism (Vos, 2020, p. 745). As it relates to the cultivation of solutions journalism's legitimacy, new normative outlooks are an endogenous force that contribute to the institution of journalism's legitimacy. One of those new normative outlooks is a commitment to a

consistent definition and shared set of codified rules, norms, and values outlined in the results section below.

The study of journalism as an institution involves examining the beliefs and norms, informal rules and routines, and explicit rules of journalism (Vos, 2020). These norms and rules are unique to journalism and set it apart from other forms of human activity and thus as a distinct social institution.

Legitimacy is directly correlated to the stability of the institution of journalism. Rules, norms, and values play integral roles in sustaining that legitimacy. This chapter empirically evaluates the rules, norms, and values related to the practice of solutions journalism to explain the opportunities and challenges that come with establishing solutions journalism within news media organizations worldwide.

Building on scholarship conducted to date on the evolution of journalism's rules, norms, and values, the second research question of this study is:

RQ2: How do social actors working within networked organizational forms of journalism establish shared understandings and promote legitimacy?

The argument that pertains to this research question is that rules, norms, and values play a central role in helping networked organizational forms of journalism gain legitimacy. Solutions journalism represents this relationship as an emerging institution gaining legitimacy in practice worldwide through support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values that relate to and build upon traditional and contemporary news values. Thus, this study seeks to capture and evaluate a moment in solutions journalism's emergence in the interest of contributing to a more general theoretical argument: That

emerging institutions gain legitimacy through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values, as seen in the legitimation of solutions journalism.

Rules, Norms, Values, and Institutional Legitimacy

As discussed in Chapter 2, for new practices to become widely adopted, they have to be "theorized" (Greenwood et al., 2002). As part of the theorization process, solutions or innovations must establish moral and/or pragmatic legitimacy. Pragmatic legitimacy is defined as “functional superiority,” while moral legitimacy is achieved by nesting and aligning new ideas within prevailing normative prescriptions (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suchman, 1995; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Moral legitimacy also comprises “judgments about whether the activity is ‘the right thing to do,’” which reflects “beliefs about whether the activity effectively promotes societal welfare, as defined by the audience's socially constructed value system” (Suchman, 1995, p. 579).

In line with this definition of moral legitimacy, this chapter seeks to show how solutions journalism is developing formative elements of moral legitimacy in two ways: first, by nesting within existing normative prescriptions of investigative, watchdog, and accountability roles; second, in its shared commitment to five main rules, norms, and values:

- accountability;
- advocacy and social change;
- objectivity;
- emotion; and
- hope.

Empirically, evaluation of moral legitimacy comprises evaluation of four things: "outputs and consequences; techniques and procedures; categories and structures; and evaluation of leaders and representatives" (Suchman, 1995, p. 579). Evaluation of these four elements is accomplished in this study through triangulated iterative analysis of 52 in-depth interviews, over a year of netnography, and hundreds of solutions journalism texts shared by interviewees.

According to Vos (2020), there are two types of rules journalists follow: informal and explicit. Informal rules and routines that are "generally accepted as guides for practice but do not carry the same moral, prescriptive potency as do norms;" explicit rules include ethical codes of conduct and organizational mission statements and policies (p. 738). To reveal what informal and explicit rules, norms, and values comprise solutions journalism in practice, the researcher asked interviewees: "What rules and norms do you follow when writing/reporting solutions journalism?" and "What values are prioritized in the process of producing / practicing solutions journalism?"

Based on results of this study, solutions journalism comprises traditional news values including accountability and objectivity, with implications for better understanding what objectivity is and does in coverage of social problems in particular. Solutions journalism also provides a case study to better understand contemporary news values including advocacy and emotion. And, as Dodd (2021) argued in his recent study of solutions journalism in New Tasmania, solutions journalism introduces a new news value of hope.

This chapter will evaluate how solutions journalism is strategically working toward attainment of moral legitimacy by first discussing how solutions journalism supports traditional news values of accountability and objectivity. Second, this chapter

will explore how solutions journalism advances contemporary news values including advocacy and emotion. Third, this chapter shows how solutions journalism introduces hope as a new news value. In conclusion, this chapter will discuss the implications these rules, norms, and values have for solutions journalism's theorization and diffusion in pursuit of cognitive legitimacy.

Solutions Journalism Reinforces the Traditional Journalistic Norm of Accountability

Journalistic norms can be explored by observing journalists' practices and products (Vos, 2020). Journalists' normative roles are often expressed through legitimizing or delegitimizing "scripts"—like the role of a "watchdog" or "gatekeeper" (Vos, 2020). Journalists arrive at normative roles "by expressing those roles through scripts that emerge from legitimizing and delegitimizing discourses" (Vos, 2020).

In the Western world, journalism upholds democratic ideals including existence as the "Fourth Estate" in holding government officials accountable (Schudson, 2018). Professional journalism is a "keystone" institution because it is "through the news that the public learns of the work of all the other accountability institutions—from the litigation undertaken by various advocacy organizations in civil society to the audits of government agencies conducted by government inspectors-general" and "it is through what appears in the news media and particularly in the news outlets with prestige and presence in Washington and in state capitals that government leaders are forced to respond" (Schudson, 2018, pp. 18-19).

In line with this rationale, according to interviewees worldwide, accountability is a desired outcome of solutions reporting in two ways: as a watchdog function, and as a

value exercised on social media platforms. Interviewees defined accountability as a mechanism to call out problems, hold politicians to account for policies they support, to verify facts and information, and to hold fellow journalists, editors, and practitioners accountable to the content they publish. This section will unpack the value of accountability through the perceptions of solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners worldwide: First, as a watchdog function; second, through verifying facts and information.

Watchdog Function

In the words of an editor that has reported on topics including human trafficking and military veterans' affairs, solutions journalism asks: "Why are things the way they are? Why aren't things prosecuted as often the way they ought to be?" (J16). In addition to asking these questions, solutions journalism seeks to help answer them: "Solutions journalism helps solve the question, why doesn't the city or state seem to be doing anything? They are, but might be hamstrung by the law…solutions journalism also provides potential paths forward" (J16).

This study's findings support the argument that accountability is a key part of solutions journalism. Interviewees also correlated solutions journalism to the longstanding practice of investigative journalism, which "reifies and vivifies enduring values and evokes among the public indignation at their violation" (Glasser & Ettema, 1989, p. 17). In these ways, interviewees argued that solutions journalism is a "style of investigative reporting" (J19), that investigative and solutions journalism "complement each other" (J4), and that solutions journalism "works in partnership" with investigative journalism (J2). Accountability journalism, in an American context, encompasses

"traditional investigative reporting, but much more" (Anderson et al., 2016, p. 112). It includes:

> fact-checking political speech, digging into digital data, and aggressive beat coverage to reveal as much as possible about what is really going on in every aspect of American society – from national security, government, politics, business and finance to the environment, education, health, social welfare, sports, and the media industry itself. (Anderson et al., 2016, p. 112)

Based on the results of this study, solutions journalism exercises an accountability mechanism. Interviewees also referred to themselves as "watchdogs" that seek to keep government entities accountable. Watchdog journalism unveils wrongdoing, scrutinizes elites, fosters accountability, delivers justice, causes the downfall of wrongdoers, and sparks change in legislation and policies (Márquez-Ramírez et al., 2020; Waisbord, 2000). As such, an interviewee argued that accountability and watchdog functions are desired outcomes of solutions reporting in practice. For example:

> I think in general when you write a story, if you're writing about some corrupt politician, you're hoping that politician comes down. If that politician gets fired, you're going to be sharing that on your social media talking about how you brought that politician down. . .maybe not in those words. But I feel like, in general, as a journalist, I think it's sort of disingenuous to be like, 'We write these stories and then we don't hope for anything afterwards.' I kind of think that's B.S. I don't think any journalist does that. We're all doing this for a purpose. (J19)

While news organizations' embeddedness in civic society is a key component of liberal democratic societies in holding the powerful accountable—a concept that goes back to de Toqueville's 19th century argument that the circulation of newspapers are influential and important to fostering a functional and effective democracy—news can also reinforce institutions of power in society, for better or for worse (Gitlin, 1980). Solutions journalism is a key way interviewees sought to combat government officials' misuse of power. Interviewees in developing countries in Africa and Asia including India, Nigeria, and Pakistan argued that solutions journalism's accountability mechanism

helps to raise awareness for readers' human rights and also holds government entities and community leaders accountable to help develop local community infrastructure. For example, a journalist in India said that solutions journalism is "something that we just have to do. We just have to get into it because it's a question of survival" (J10). A journalist in Pakistan agreed that one of the reasons for this necessity is to raise awareness for readers' basic human rights (J3). Not only is it "a very rewarding kind of journalism to do," but it's something that journalists feel the need to do "since we live in a developing country and we can't really depend on our government for everything...it's a question of moving forward and progress" (J3).

Interviewees also articulated an interest in using social media as a tool to help their solutions journalism keep government institutions and organizations accountable. A journalist in Nigeria and South Africa said that they do solutions journalism to help communities develop by calling out problems and evaluating the effectiveness of proposed solutions. They argued that part of healthy community development involves holding governments accountable via tagging on social media:

> I don't think we can develop without holding the government to account. Without highlighting these problems, these issues that these communities are facing, doing a story on it and publishing it and tagging the government, engaging them on Twitter and social media for them to actually stand up to their responsibilities...if you don't do that, they will just pretend that you never published a story. The primary responsibility of the government is to provide for the communities, is to provide for the people...to protect them and provide social services and all that...When the government fails in that regard, then we are as good as not having a government at all. (J34)

As part of holding government officials accountable, solutions journalism also provides information for government officials to develop more effective policies and legislation. According to a full-time SJN staff member, solutions journalism is "a combination of policy and journalism." They took a job with SJN "because I was

frustrated with academia and frustrated with journalism, but this provided a way forward because solutions journalism is like a journalistic version of a white paper" (J9).

Holding the government accountable through calling them out on social media and providing recommendations for policy and legislation are important parts of solutions journalism. Solutions journalists also seek to hold other journalists and editors accountable to the content they publish. One interviewee discussed the importance of accountability on social media:

> I think social media and cancel culture, while cancel culture is certainly toxic in many ways, helps to hold people more accountable for the content they're putting out. I've seen photographers get called out, like, 'Why did you, as a white man, tell this story?' Or, like, 'You're showing a rape victim? Why are you showing her face? She's underage?' I've seen these discussions happening on social media. For that, I am hopeful that people are going to be more conscious with their storytelling and not just be in it for their own personal fame, or something like that. (J25)

In addition to keeping government officials and fellow journalists and editors accountable to the content they publish, interviewees discussed how an important part of the accountability element of solutions journalism is fact checking and combating misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms in particular. These elements of accountability are described in detail below.

Fact Checking and Combating Misinformation

Another key element of exercising accountability in solutions journalism practice is fact checking and combating misinformation and disinformation. Studies show that online disinformation poses a challenge to democratic societies (Saurwein & Spencer-Smith, 2020). Newspaper journalists in the Global South argue that fact-checking online information is not a part of their job and is also "beyond their capacity given the amount of information being published online every day" (Haque et al., 2020, p. 130). On the other hand, results of this study show that solutions journalists in countries worldwide are

passionate about and committed to verifying facts and information in solutions journalism practice include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Slack, and Instagram.

"If I try to track someone down or verify something about them, I'll look at Facebook," one U.S. journalist said. "I think Facebook's search tools are really good. I'm still trying to figure them out a little bit more…if you practice it, there's so much you can find out about people using the Facebook search tool" (J41).

Similarly, in Nigeria, an editor noted information "flying around on social media" can be "very helpful" (J33). At the same time, this editor noted it is important to "make sure I do my fact checking to be sure I'm passing the right information and I'm not misleading my readers. I have to be sure my facts and information are accurate" (J33). Social media is also a way for journalists to hold themselves accountable to quality journalistic standards. For example, one journalist uses social media to ensure their "perspectives are varied" and to "put calls out to the community to make sure that the voices that are in a story are reflective of their actual experience" (J39).

Interviewees that are passionate about verifying facts sometimes avoid social media to do so. "In terms of gathering the data and the facts, that is mostly off social media," a French journalist based in the United Kingdom said (J46). Instead of social media, this journalist prefers to gather facts from annual reports, infographics, and statistics published by organizations including the United Nations.

Results for this study show that solutions journalism carries out an accountability function in two major ways. First, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners perceive themselves as watchdogs across the world in the interest of fostering community development worldwide. In addition to highlighting issues and raising awareness for

social problems in communities, social actors involved with solutions journalism often seek to engage the government and fellow journalists using social media.

In conclusion, by presenting and evaluating solutions to social problems, accountability is upheld as a "necessary" part of solutions journalism in practice, especially outside of Western contexts. Accountability is a traditional value upheld as a cornerstone of watchdog journalism. Interviewees for this study discussed holding government officials accountable to their policies, words, and actions. In this way, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners related their practice of solutions journalism to accountability journalism. Because solutions journalism is aligned with the longstanding journalistic approach and normative prescriptions of accountability journalism, it is attaining formative elements of moral legitimacy.

The traditional norm of accountability is also inextricably linked to a new news value of advocacy, which will be unpacked in proceeding sections, following an in-depth analysis of how interviewees described objectivity.

Solutions Journalism Reinforces the Traditional Journalistic Norm of Objectivity

Objectivity is defined by Schudson (2001) as a norm that "guides journalists to separate facts from values and to report only the facts" (p. 150). Objectivity is "supposed to be cool, rather than emotional, in tone" and "takes pains to represent fairly each leading side in a political controversy" (Schudson, 2001, p. 150). Ettema and Glasser (1989) argue that "a commitment to enduring and consensual social values…makes journalistic objectivity possible" (p. 2).

Objectivity was separated into two camps by Schudson (2018) as "Objectivity 1.0" and "Objectivity 2.0" (p. 8). Objectivity 1.0 was established in the 1920s and is

characterized by “verifying facts, of matching a quotation from a Democrat with a quotation from a Republican, a balancing to keep their news from capture by the sharks of state propaganda and corporate public relations” (p. 8). Objectivity 2.0 emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s, and built upon the standards of Objectivity 1.0 by becoming “more enterprising, investigative, more analytical, and more negative” in a way that brought about what today is called “accountability journalism” (Schudson, 2018, p. 9). Waisbord (2013) places this evolution in context by saying the press in the 18th century had its roots as an integral part of the political system and drew its lifeblood from bipartisan politics. The balance that Schudson describes as a key part of objectivity is a key part of the objectivity that interviewees presented in the results section below, along with objectivity supported by the use of data and evidentiary claims.

Fairness and Balance

When asked, “How do you feel that solutions journalism approaches objectivity?,” journalists answered in various ways. Similar to studies that have found a majority of journalists uphold objectivity as an “important and indispensable professional value” (Donsbach & Klett, 1993), there are slight differences between respondents’ description of the term. U.S. respondents in particular give the highest significance to the norm.

At the same time, it is important to recognize at the outset that some interviewees discussed how objectivity was an unrealistic and unattainable concept. Some interviewees have done away with the norm of objectivity altogether. One interviewee went so far as to say “objectivity is fake” (J2). Many journalists, editors, and practitioners interviewed argued there is “no such thing” as objective journalism, because journalism

is “always subjective” (J40). According to another journalist, “No writing is objective” (J6). A journalist in Nepal argued that objectivity is “subjective” and a “myth…because of the topic you choose, because of the people you speak to, your sources, your ideas, you're framing your angle” (J23).

For those interviewees that held to the norm of objectivity, they argued that objectivity is characterized by elements including fairness and balance. Fairness and balance are qualities that journalism educators in the U.S. attempt to teach to seek and explore the “middle ground” of objectivity (Weber, 2016, p. 163). According to an American editor, “Objectivity doesn't exist in my mind because we’re all flawed, subjective humans. But fairness exists. The idea is to be fair and thorough in your reporting to tell a solutions story” (J18).

Sourcing plays a role in maintaining fairness and balance in solutions reporting. Ideally, interviewees said that, to maintain fairness and balance in reporting, it is important to include as many voices as possible as sources in the story: “It’s imperative to be inclusive in the types of sources that you are bringing to the table when you're producing solutions journalism,” a practitioner said. “To me, this isn't social change, it's just good journalism. You can't say that you're doing good journalism when you're not taking care of your entire ecosystem” (J52).

Other ways interviewees expressed the pursuit of objectivity in their writing was to provide context and balance. According to a U.S. journalist, solutions journalism balances out news coverage of "what's broken/what's going wrong" with news coverage of "what's working" (J13). Similarly, another journalist argued that solutions journalism

exists to create a balance "so that it's not all so negative" and "that there's also a focus on the answers" (J39).

Three elements of objectivity pointed out by scholars are that it contains true assertions; is not misleading; and is thorough (Andrén & Veirup, 1979; Wien, 2005). According to a journalist in Germany, one way this thoroughness is attained is by providing balance and "dimension" (J20). Solutions journalism does this by giving audiences "a fuller picture of what's going on in the world and in their society" (J20). A U.S. journalist and practitioner said that, in addition to "contributing to having a more balanced narrative circulating," solutions journalism "has a lot of potential to repair the damage that has been done by local journalism historically, and communities that have been stigmatized" (J35).

Another part of the thoroughness of objectivity described by interviewees is providing context. According to interviewees, context is an important part of providing balance in objective solutions reporting. One journalist said that "context is important in all solutions reporting" (J9). Another journalist argued that "solutions journalism tells the full story" (J20).

Studies show that journalists and editors perceive fairness as synonymous with objectivity (Jønch-Clausen & Lyngbye, 2007). This study supports these findings, and takes the understanding of objectivity a step further to include elements of data and evidentiary claims.

Data and Evidentiary Claims

Reich and Barnoy (2021) point out that reliance on evidence is considered a desired practice in journalism. Hopkinson and Dahmen (2022) define solutions

journalism as “a journalistic approach that reports on workable responses to societal problems, with emphasis on evidence, insights, and limitations” (p. 8). This study’s findings, explored in-depth below, support these findings: that data and evidentiary claims are cornerstone qualities of solutions journalism in practice. A South Korean solutions journalism practitioner said “One of the four pillars or components of solutions journalism is to include evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative. It’s always better to have data” (J50). Another solutions journalism practitioner asserted that “having the ability to digest and interpret data, hard raw data, is very important” (J52).

Further, the use of data and evidentiary claims supports and refines the norm of objectivity in practice. The relationship between data and objectivity has been explored in journalism studies scholarship worldwide. Some scholars argue that “data's objectivity, when collected, interpreted and disseminated by journalists, cannot be taken as a given” as “the inherent facticity of data is itself problematic” given that it is “technologically, organizationally and symbolically mediated through discourses and practices for its collection” (Lesage & Hackett, 2014, p. 52). However, interviewees argued that “the data-driven component [of solutions journalism] is what makes it objective” (J37).

Providing data-driven evidence that a solution is working—or isn’t working—is integral to solutions journalism in practice. One journalist said that “you can't know if something isn't working if you don't have numbers to back where the trend is” (J21). Another journalist said that including “data, evidence, and facts” is “the best way” to maintain objectivity in solutions journalism stories (J39). They also said that data and evidence help solutions reporting to go “one step further” than any given individual’s experience or story (J39).

The extent to which evidentiary claims must be included in solutions-oriented coverage is a bit in flux according to interviewees. One journalist argued that "even if there's not substantial evidence it can be a story" (J5). Scholars are curious to know what constitutes data and what implications this has for how objectivity is produced through journalism (Lesage & Hackett, 2014). According to results of this study, evidence can be qualitative or quantitative, and can contain numerical data or words. According to a journalist, "I think that I'd describe solutions journalism as looking at solutions that have a scope beyond just the individual and that have been proven to show that they work. Usually that's data driven evidence. But it can also be anecdotal, depending on, I think, what the solution is that you're looking at" (J43). They also said that "Finding evidence is easiest when there are numbers connected to it," and that "data...is the strongest way to prove that something is working" (J43).

Data also plays a key part in journalists' desires to write stories that present replicable solutions relevant for communities worldwide. Also, evidence can show how any given solution is working or not working. Data can provide "context" for solutions reporting (J19), and generalizable solutions for problems around the world. As a German journalist said, "solutions journalism is a way to find solutions to problems across the world—a solution in Europe may be relevant to America and vice versa" (J20).

In addition to commitments to data and evidentiary claims, interviewees articulated various commitments to objectivity and advocacy. The nuances between those two values are explored in detail below, leading into a detailed discussion of how solutions reporting advances contemporary values of advocacy and emotion.

Objectivity vs. Advocacy

In journalism studies, the relationship between objectivity and advocacy has come into question (Fahy, 2018; Fisher, 2016). Others argue the norm of objectivity is crumbling in favor of open bias (Broersma & Peters, 2013). Fisher (2016) found that all forms of journalism fall on a spectrum with varying degrees of advocacy and objectivity. Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2021) argued that many journalists see themselves as community promoters, advocates, and cheerleaders, and that journalism values can be put into three main buckets: traditional journalism values (hard news); crisis journalism values (saving lives); and community journalism values (promoter, advocate, cheerleader). According to interviews with community journalists and practitioners, they found that "most interviewees don't see objectivity as conflicting with being an advocate or cheerleader" and that there was "no tension between upholding objectivity and being an advocate for their community" due to the fact that "community journalists often come from backgrounds in community empowerment, advocacy, and activism" (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2021). In line with these findings, a journalist interviewed for this study said: "Are objectivity and advocacy mutually exclusive? I don't think they are" (J16).

On the other hand, some interviewees seek to stay away from advocacy altogether in the interest of upholding the traditional news value of objectivity. "I just don't feel comfortable in that space of rooting for a cause. As a young journalist, I have an agenda: To show the whole picture. Of course I have my ideas, but my ideas are more personal, and I don't want to share them with people in my reporting" (J27). Similarly, another journalist "struggles" with the relationship between objectivity and advocacy because "it's hard when you're rooting for the groups that you're reporting on" (J39).

To further explore this tension, this study seeks to build on Hallin's argument that there are consensus values at play in the journalistic profession (1989). Hallin (1989) argued there are three spheres of journalistic standards that vary in their exercise of objectivity and advocacy. The very center of Hallin's model is the "Sphere of Consensus," within which "the journalist's role is to serve as an advocate or celebrant of consensus values;" the middle ring, known as the "province of objectivity" or "Sphere of Legitimate Controversy," where "objectivity and balance reign as the supreme journalistic virtues;" and the outer ring, known as the "Sphere of Deviance," where "views which journalists and the political mainstream of the society reject as unworthy of being heard" (pp. 116-117). This study identifies the values that comprise the core of solutions journalism in practice. Identifying these "consensus" values helps to define what rules, norms, and values comprise solutions journalism in practice and maintain its legitimacy in the public sphere.

It is important to note that, while objectivity and neutrality have been adopted as normative understandings of the role of journalism in Western societies, that is not always the case in nations elsewhere in the world. For example, in populist countries including Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, "professional journalism" is often pitted against "militant journalism" promoted by neo-populist governments and their sympathizers "as a necessary corrective against commercial, professional journalism practiced by mainstream news corporations" (Waisbord, 2013, p. 2). This militant journalism movement "proudly displays its political position to report the news" and has critical implications for the freedom of the press in societies in the Global South (Waisbord, 2013, p. 2). This is an important comparative point to make in

any discussion about journalistic norms: Remembering objectivity and neutrality are cornerstones of maintaining the health of liberal democratic societies is important in light of the fact that there are nations worldwide who use members of the press as tools to promote militant propaganda. Even in Western societies, the notion of objectivity has come into question. Engagement with journalism in Western society enhances civic participation (Prior, 2007), but what roles do objectivity and neutrality have in the practice of solutions journalism?

Some interviewees think objectivity is fake. For interviewees who think objectivity is an attainable news value upheld by solutions journalism practice, objectivity integrates elements of context, credibility, fairness and balance through leverage of data and evidentiary claims. Other interviewees argued that advocacy is as integral to solutions journalism as objectivity is. Solutions journalism's consensus, or core values, contain what some would define as competing priorities: Objectivity, advocacy, and emotion. These competing worldviews and priorities contain tensions and nuances that will be unpacked in the following sections of this study.

Contemporary News Values of Advocacy and Social Change

Journalists have been shown to be embracing contemporary news values including commitments to social justice, advocacy, emotion, and emotional labor (Steinke & Bélair-Gagnon, 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). These values are a bit different than what historically have been proxied as values that constitute legitimate journalistic practice including commitments to public service, objectivity, autonomy, neutrality, immediacy, and ethics (Deuze, 2005; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Merritt, 1995; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Further, Usher (2021) argued that, "to remain a valued social

institution, mainstream journalism needs to...embrace core values that are explicitly antiracist and committed to social justice, approaching journalism with the goal of making life better than it is at present for all Americans. Journalism must use its power wisely and be informed by tolerance, compassion, authenticity, and rigorous inquiry to inspire a collective narrative" (p. 243).

In line with these arguments, advocacy and emotion are playing significant roles in journalistic coverage of disasters, crises, and human rights abuses. Solutions journalism is no exception to this rule. Given that authority is always open to contestation and change (Carlson, 2017), it is important to discuss the roles of activism, advocacy, emotion, and social change–especially as they inform a changing understanding of objectivity in 21st century journalism.

Advocacy journalism is defined as "journalism that takes a point of view" (Thomas, 2018, p. 393). When asked "What rules and norms do you follow when writing/reporting solutions journalism?" and "What values are prioritized in the process of producing / practicing solutions journalism?," interviewees argued that solutions journalism is journalism that seeks to advocate for solutions to social problems. Solutions journalism does this in three ways: first, by asserting that advocacy is not activism; second, by raising awareness for solutions to social problems; third, by cultivating or creating social change in communities worldwide.

Advocacy is Not Activism

When prompted to discuss the similarities and differences between objectivity and advocacy in the practice of solutions journalism, journalists were clear in their beliefs that "solutions journalism is not activism" (J2). At the same time, it is evident that solutions

journalism is more toward the advocacy side of practice than the objectivity side. However, journalists and editors were adamant that "solutions journalism is not just cheerleading or marketing for a solution, but being critical in the way you are reporting on potential solutions or something happening on ground. It's still critical reporting. It's not all sunshine and rainbows" (J11).

Journalists played out the nuances of advocacy by articulating that solutions journalism can be dangerous when it becomes more of an advertising pitch than a factual account and narrative. As an American journalist stated: "I think where people might think solutions journalism becomes advocacy is if you get too 'cheerleader' about it. But that's a problem that we constantly have to grapple with in our industry as a whole. Even if it's something that you're excited about, you need to make sure that it's rooted in fact, logic, reason and truth. And if it's not, you're doing your reader a disservice, at least in my opinion. Is your journalism just cheerleading? Because if that's the case, I wouldn't even call it solutions journalism. I'd call it advertising" (J21).

A journalist in Nepal explained how frustrated they have become after years of writing stories that result in no action being taken to solve the problem(s). They said that a journalist should not be an activist, but that journalists should collaborate with activists to carry on after the story is over to accomplish social change: "I increasingly think that although I don't think that a journalist should be an activist, I feel that you should collaborate with activists. Your job ends after you write the story, after you report it and you follow up, but you should ally with activists who would sort of carry over from you and then do the activism" (J23).

In addition to differentiating advocacy from activism, interviewees argued a key part of advocacy is raising awareness for solutions to social problems.

Raising Awareness

Advocacy is important to solutions journalists. Some journalists argued that "it's okay to advocate for those who are subject to wrongdoing to raise awareness and provide resources for them" because "that is part of the mission and goal of journalists" (J4).

A journalist in the U.S. said they go into all of their stories "hoping that it adds something useful to the world" (J19). This usefulness manifests in opportunities for readers to be inspired and educated about opportunities to make a difference in their communities. For example, raising awareness for various social problems and their solutions is a foundational norm in solutions journalism practice and is the "main goal" of why some journalists pursue solutions-oriented stories (J7).

While social change was upheld as a priority for interviewees, what that looked like differed slightly. For example, some journalists said that raising awareness qualified social change, while others quantified social change as governments taking action on solutions presented to them. Other journalists argued that "creating a solutions story doesn't have to mean the problem is solved; rather, simply letting people know about someone doing something on the trajectory toward fixing the problem is helpful" (J6). Another journalist argued that "solutions journalism doesn't have to be about a problem that's solved, but about someone helping it along the way" (J7). Others argued that concrete social and policy change are desired outcomes of solutions journalism as discussed below.

Social Change

Advocacy was inextricably linked to the process of social change. Interviewees defined advocacy and social change as raising awareness for social problems; broadening perspectives within stories to include individuals and community members impacted by the problems themselves in addition to public officials; and seeking and seeing social change occur as a direct result of solutions reporting.

One American editor said that they hope for social change in the form of policy change as a direct outcome of the stories they produce (J16). They used the example of a solutions-oriented series their publication published about hate crimes as a concrete example of advocacy in practice:

> Sometimes I do hope for social and policy change as an outcome of my stories. I don't think I'd write a story if I didn't...it's always good to highlight issues like hate crimes, but I never want to stop there. It's important to also highlight ways you can fight that on a personal level, and at an organizational level. Our stories take the next step. If our stories stopped a hate crime or encouraged someone to speak up even anonymously and gave the FBI additional data to find more resources to fight this I'd hope so. (J16)

On the other hand, according to another journalist in Pakistan, social change is a key component of solutions journalism and raising awareness for basic human rights is important (J3). For example, they wrote an article for Arab News called "Visas for the dead: ashes of Pakistani Hindus can't get to the Ganges" (Ali, 2019) that raised awareness among Hindus in Pakistan about their rights to bring loved ones' ashes to a temple across the border in India. Thanks to this article, readers became aware of rules for visa regulations that they weren't aware of before. Readers didn't previously think they could travel across the border to a temple in India. As a result of this reporting, they found out they could (J3).

An African journalist identifies story ideas on social media, but frequently travels to the community in person to "confirm the problem really exists." For example, they published a story in Nigeria with a local publication about a government organization that promised to renovate a local library but never took action. They gave an example of how pushing out the story on social media and tagging government agency handles enabled them to create change in their local community by drawing the attention of activists and advocates in such a way that caused the government to take action and follow through on the renovations that were promised to the library:

> I published with the local publication in Nigeria and engaged the government on social media, Twitter. I tweeted this and I was steadily engaging them, tweeting and tagging government handles. The story drew a lot of attention and activists and educational advocates started engaging and tagging the government and calling out the government on social media. Of course the government is on Twitter, so I believe they all saw that and immediately after they saw that, they went back to the library and told the library director that they were going to be coming next week to start renovation. (J34)

This story is just one example of social change taking place in a community as a result of reporting and advocacy on social media. Sure enough, after the journalist tagged the government on social media and drew the attention of activists and advocates, the government sent officials to renovate the library. "I had to come from where I was to come to the library and I actually saw them working," the journalist said. "I had to do a follow up story on that" (J34).

Another journalist said one "danger" of solutions journalism is that it can advocate for solutions for only one segment of the population: "If you are focused on social change, social change for whom?" (J52). To ensure solutions journalism is representative of the full population, a journalist said that it is important to broaden

perspectives of stories to "hear from people who are affected by the potential solution or the existing problems." For example:

> Air pollution, you don't only get to hear from government personnel or the head of the innovative company. You don't just get to hear about the potential solution from a PR person, but you actually make sure to hear from people who are suffering from the existing problem and who are expected to benefit or who are in a better case, who are already benefiting from the solution on the ground. (J50)

Solutions journalism upholds the value of advocacy in three ways: first, by asserting that advocacy is not activism; second, by raising awareness for solutions to social problems; third, by cultivating or creating social change in communities worldwide. In these ways, another reason solutions journalism is working toward moral legitimacy is because interviewees agreed that advocacy–not activism–is the right thing to do as it promotes societal welfare.

In addition to advocacy, emotion has challenged traditional understandings of journalism as objective as well as the liberal democratic ideal of the "rational, dispassionate and informed citizen" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, p. 21). Solutions journalism's commitment to upholding and carrying out the strategic ritual of emotionality is described below.

The Strategic Ritual of Emotionality

Due to an "affective turn" that has taken place in society in recent decades, Wahl-Jorgensen argues that emotion now comes alongside and informs rationality in political life (2019). Wahl-Jorgensen argues that, because journalism was born out of a role to act as a key mediating institution of liberal democracy, it has traditionally upheld a "strategic ritual of objectivity" (Tuchman, 1978).

However, given the affective turn, Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) notes an "institutionalized and systemic practice of journalists narrating and infusing their reporting with emotion" leads to a "strategic ritual of emotionality" that is just as essential to journalistic practice as objectivity is (p. 38). Further, scholars have found that international reporting has shifted from being completely objective in tone to adopting more emotion in their coverage (Chouliaraki, 2013; Powers, 2016).

When asked "Do you use emotion in your reporting and if so, how?," interviewees explained how emotion in solutions journalism work is "inevitable" (J3). Emotion was defined by interviewees as an opportunity to "get people to care," to create "human connection," and "getting people to realize that you are not this far removed from some of the world's most challenging issues" (J31). Emotion helps journalists tell stories more accurately, helps draw readers into the narrative(s), and helps to change systemic problems by first attempting to change or influence readers' attitudes about social problems.

Emotion emerged as a cornerstone value throughout the data analysis process. According to a Pakistani journalist, the use of emotions in solutions journalism work is inevitable: "Sometimes you have to use your emotions. If you have emotions, you can write in a different way—you can write with your heart" (J3).

Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) argues that emotionality is often proxied through emotion that appears in quotes from sources, or "outsourcing emotional labor" (p. 39). In this way, a journalist said that "solutions reporting can be kind of dry" with "so much focus on evidence and the limitations" (J43). To combat this dryness, they choose to draw out

emotion by focusing on “people that are affected by the problem” because emotion helps to shape compelling solutions-oriented narratives (J43).

In addition to combating dryness in reporting, emotion can help individuals have hope that there are solutions to social problems that might otherwise seem insurmountable.

“When people believe that the only option is falling off the cliff, they've resigned themselves to fatalism,” a journalist based in Ukraine said. “‘It doesn't matter what I do, because it's not going to make a difference. Why should I go to the effort to do anything? I feel like I'm the only person in the world that's actually looking for a solution to this problem.’ I really think solutions journalism is completing that circle, that emotional circle that we desperately need in the world today” (J31).

Interviewees were careful to distinguish between using emotion in their stories and forcing emotion on readers. One American editor said they “don't think you can tell a story about people without bringing up emotion,” but that they “don't try to force that emotion on people” (J36). “I see my role as more of telling someone's story versus influencing how someone feels about it,” they said (J36).

On the other hand, an education reporter in India argued that it is important to use emotion in solutions reporting to “change people’s attitudes” and to “change things in existing power structures” that are problematic (J38). When it comes to topics including education inequality, it’s important to include emotion to “change a system.” This journalist described a story they were working on about education inequality exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. “If you educate one girl, you change a whole family,” they

said, but “there's a lot of injustice and cruelty that keeps girls from being educated” and “there’s emotion in that.” They went on to describe the value of emotion in detail:

> You have to appeal to people's emotions, say, ‘Look, this is wrong. I mean, look at this girl. Look at her life, and look how unfair this is. You have a pandemic, and you talk about inequality, and now you have everything online? Look how skewed it's getting.’ The poorer children are just falling back even more…Today you're talking about people who have access to online laptops and everything. I mean, a lot of the kids actually are studying on a little phone, on a small, tiny little screen. What is that kind of learning? They have sporadic access to it, often. I'm living here in Manali, and this is a valley town in the Himalayas. One person in the family has a smartphone, the father. And, he leaves the phone behind, and he goes to work because the kids have to study. They're studying with the father's smartphone. I mean, you have to appeal to the emotional angle of things to be able to change a system. (J38)

Humanizing narratives with the strategic ritual of emotionality is one way that interviewees utilized emotion in their journalistic coverage. Another way is fostering cosmopolitan citizenship among readers, as described below.

Cosmopolitan Citizenship

From a sociological perspective, Peters (2011) proposed that emotion should be interpreted in journalism studies as an “experience of involvement,” an approach borrowed from Barbalet (1998). To this end, emotion in crisis journalism has been studied extensively. Pantti et al. (2012) examined the role of anger in media coverage of disasters, finding that “emotion discourses in media narratives are crucial for negotiating the meaning of disasters as well as making moral judgments that involve deciding on a course for political action” (p. 162). Further, they identify emotion as existing in direct quotes from sources expressing their anger, through indirect descriptions of anger which describe individual and/or collective emotions with reference to the public mood, and when reporters write about their own emotions—known as “authorial emotions” (Pantti et al., 2012, p. 164).

Emotion has also been shown to be an integral part of how journalists portray crises that involve trauma, including human trafficking, which involves health trauma including post-traumatic stress disorder (Farley, 2004). Marcus et al. (2000) suggested that it is affective and impassioned responses that make readers, viewers, and listeners into citizens who care about distant disasters. They call this "cosmopolitan citizenship," which is held as an ideal for informed living in global societies by directing emotion, reason and thoughtful attention toward global injustices. Further definitions of this "cosmopolitan citizenship" have been characterized as a "spectatorship of suffering" (Chouliaraki, 2006), "distant suffering" (Boltanski, 1999), and "globalization from within" (Beck & Sznaider, 2010). While news coverage of social problems ideally turns readers and listeners into cosmopolitan citizens, "compassion fatigue" can also result from exposure to social problems in the news, defined as a "numbing of public concern toward social problems" (Kinnick et al., 1996, p. 687).

An American journalist facilitates this experience of involvement by utilizing emotion to help audiences connect to their stories. "I use emotion…I think it helps an audience find ways to relate," they said. "It helps them find an ability to place themselves in a situation" (J39). Emotional discourse in journalistic coverage of social problems and crises has been shown to help people feel closer to a crisis in a geographically distant location (Franks, 2014). As such, a journalist in Ukraine insists emotions help to bring distant crises like the climate crisis closer to readers:

> I'm all about integrating the emotion. There's too much removal from news today. It's too distant. It's like the climate emergency feels very easy to push away because it's very data driven and very raw and no man, that stuff is real. Let's bring that in, let's bring the emotion in, let's make it personal. (J31)

Emotion also helps to “humanize” sources (J27) and show how sources in stories process emotion in response to a problem. For example, a French journalist wrote a solutions article about nonpartisan political discussions in Lebanon called “Drinking coffee, talking politics” (de Lapparent Alvarez, 2019). This journalist reported on a series of interactive, nonpartisan political conversations that occurred among community members in a cafe in Beirut, Lebanon. “In Lebanon, there's a lot of strain in civil society, and it's huge to have those types of nonpartisan political discussions,” they said. “A lot of Lebanese people just want to leave, but there are also a lot of opportunities, and I think it's important to give people a more accurate representation of where they live” (J27).

As part of providing this accurate representation of the community, this journalist noted that “emotions are a really strong indicator to the success or the failure of a relationship of solutions, even if they're not statistically significant” (J27). This journalist sought to transmit the “awe” and a positive “vibe” to readers using the strategic ritual of emotionality:

> Discovering this place and solutions produces some awe. It feels like...there's a vibe in the air, and I really want to transmit that to the audience and the reader, this kind of awe to be in that place, and to transmit this emotion that I was having that I thought they would have too. This dreamy or postal card, and what's behind this, and how people are keeping it alive. (J27)

At the same time, interviewees noted it is important to balance the use of emotion with facts. An American journalist took a class at Columbia University Graduate School called “Writing for International Affairs” taught by Solutions Journalism Network (SJN) co-founder Tina Rosenberg. In this course, Rosenberg emphasized the importance of including anecdotal leads in every solutions story followed by the facts. In this way, they

try to use emotion in all of their reporting because it's a "key way to get people to care about what you're writing" (J19).

Journalists also said emotion in reporting is "all about checks and balances" (J39). This journalist argued they draw readers in with emotion, and then make them aware of "the reality of the challenges" by using numbers and data. "Emotions have a really valuable role to help your reader relate," they said, "as long as you're not only using emotion to tell a story" (J39).

A broadcast journalist uses emotion in their reporting to present the most "authentic" version of a story as is possible and has been encouraged by their news director to do so (J41). "I don't like manufacturing anything, I like to be authentic," they said. "If there is emotion in an interview, then there's emotion…but if I do a story about something and someone's not emotional about it, I'm not going to insert emotion into it" (J41).

Some interviewees argued that emotionality "doesn't always serve objectivity, but can paint a more real picture" (J16). For example, in a story about affordable housing that Congress had gotten involved with, this broadcast journalist said that their news director encouraged them to use emotion on air in a broadcast to present the most accurate version of the story:

> When we did our housing voucher story, my news director before I went live that night said, 'It's okay to show a little bit of frustration on TV, on the air, over this topic, because there are people you've talked to that are actually hurting and emotional about it.' But I don't manufacture it. That's the bottom line. If it's there, it's there. If it's not, it's not. (J41)

In summary, emotion is used by solutions journalists to humanize problems and their solutions and to draw readers into narratives about distant crises–also known as

cosmopolitan citizenship. With these developments in the affective turn and emotion in media and politics, solutions journalism provides an exemplar of a journalistic approach that involves emotion and suffering with implications for policymaking worldwide. Interviewees' shared commitment to the strategic ritual of emotionality in solutions reporting helps to show how solutions journalism is strategically working toward attainment of moral legitimacy. In addition to emotion, hope was articulated by interviewees as a key element of solutions journalism in practice. The new news value of hope is introduced below.

A New News Value: Hope

Dodd (2021) found that hope is an integral component of solutions journalism in practice, alongside values including leadership and expertise. Studies show that hope, fear, and anger utilized in climate change news coverage evoke various responses from audiences (Feldman & Hart, 2018a, 2016). Hope has been found to "increase support for climate policies for all ideological groups but particularly conservatives" (Feldman & Hart, 2018, p. 585).

Hope is associated by scholars "with the desire for and impetus for goal-directed action, especially in the face of adversity" (Nabi & Myrick, 2019, p. 465). Scholars suggest that "framing the situation as an opportunity" could be another way to evoke hope in news narratives about social problems in particular (Chadwick et al., 2016; Nabi & Myrick, 2019). Also, McIntyre (2017) found that solutions-based stories could "positively impact readers' attitudes and engagement" and "might mitigate some harmful effects of negative news stories, such as compassion fatigue" (p. 14). This study seeks to

develop the news value of hope by examining how solutions journalists leverage hope in their coverage of various social problems.

When asked "What rules and norms do you follow when writing/reporting solutions journalism?" and "What values are prioritized in the process of producing / practicing solutions journalism?," hope emerged as an integral part of solutions journalism. Hope is manifest in solutions journalism in two ways: Providing optimism to readers and journalists alike, and producing goal-directed action.

Optimism

To contextualize the role of hope as a new news value, it's important to provide responses from interviewees about the gaps that solutions journalism fills in the news industry. When asked "What gap(s) does solutions journalism fill (in the news media industry)?," journalists explained how, broadly speaking, the news industry as a whole generally provides information that is "depressing" (J32), "disempowering" (J28), "anxiety inducing" (J31), and "negative" (J21). Some journalists likened the news industry to "falling off a cliff" (J10, J31). As one journalist said: "In many countries in the world, people just open their news and it's been one bleak incident after the other. Why should anyone read papers at all? Why should people consume news if all they're going to hear is going to depress them all day long?" (J10).

Some scholars argue that negative events are more "salient, contagious, dominant, and efficacious compared to positive events" (Van der Meer et al., 2020). In line with this understanding, news audiences have an inherent negativity bias and are drawn toward negative news in part as an evolutionary survival characteristic (Van der Meer et al., 2020). Interviewees noted this negativity bias phenomenon as a reason some readers

avoid the news altogether. “As human beings, we are primed to look out for disasters,” a journalist in India noted. “That's an evolutionary characteristic, and it makes sense, right?..but some people actually don't read news because it makes them so anxious” (J38).

According to a journalist in the U.S., this negativity bias is manifest in “analytical evidence and web traffic” that shows that “people don't read solutions journalism stories nearly as much as they do stories about problems, at least when we write them” (J18). This journalist noted that readers often “express a common interest in solutions journalism” and “provide anecdotal evidence that they want to read solutions journalism,” but web traffic says otherwise. “There is an expressed desire for more good news, or more solutions centric stories, but clicks still gravitate toward controversy and bad news,” they said (J18). This statement reflects scholarly findings that show that, regardless of what news consumers might say, they prefer negative news content (Trussler & Soroka, 2014).

Instead of playing into readers’ negativity biases, interviewees noted that, “with so much coverage coming across as negative,” they’ve perceived “an appetite for something that can give us hope that there are fixes out there” (J21). Sure enough, scholarship has supported this anecdotal finding as well, arguing that joy–defined as a “deep and resonant approach to life’s challenges”—is a news value that has the potential to reorient the minds of journalists and audiences “toward affective characteristics of people and events that evoke well-being, delight, and courage” (Parks, 2021, p. 820).

Similar to positing joy as a new news value, interviewees argued that solutions journalism provides a “counterbalance” to negative stories (J38). Solutions journalism

also provides “a positive outlook on the world” and a “glimmer of hope and light in between all the very dark and negative news we get” (J32). In the words of solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners, “sojo” is journalism that provides “hope” and “optimism” (J21). It is also known as “journalism that heals” (J8). Solutions journalism also gives people “a sense of faith in the world” (J38). Data helps solutions journalists to provide optimism in their narratives, as “data is a great way for solutions journalists to find stories of ‘positive variants,’ or stories where there was a big improvement in something” (J19).

For these reasons, even though it takes a large amount of time and resources, interviewees argued that traditional news organizations would be well served to implement and adopt solutions-oriented practices to their everyday operations (J35). In this day and age, solutions journalism provides an engaging way forward for newsrooms to re-engage readers and provide hope in a culture inundated by “toxic negativity” (J41). Similarly, a journalist said that “solutions journalism fills a ‘hope gap’ in society” (J20).

On a macro level, a journalist in India expressed the belief that the hope solutions journalism provides has the ability to combat the politicization of the press in India (J10). In India, the journalism industry is under “tension” and “shock,” and “there are barely any centrists left”—but solutions journalism can “save the news industry” by “providing hope” and “directing attention” to communities and people who “deserve attention” (J10).

Journalists who recognized news consumers’ negativity biases argued that the press has a “moral responsibility” for the psychological well-being of their readers (J12).

A practitioner in Australia described hope as a key value of solutions journalism in practice:

> Honestly, I feel solutions journalism gives people hope that the world we're living in is not complete shit. In fact, it is a fantastic world. And while the human brain might be wired to click on negative headlines, the media has got a responsibility. Yeah, I get that it's about clicks and money, but the media has a moral responsibility for the psychological impact on their audience. (J12)

Hope is not just a value for news audiences. Interviewees noted that the "hope" solutions journalism provides is "rewarding" and keeps them "sane" while reporting on topics like changing rape laws (J10). "Sometimes the news cycle is relentless, and there are topics that are hard to take," they said. "I think solutions journalism gives you that little bit of hope…it's nice to know that people are touched by your stories in a nice way, in a good way. It's very rewarding" (J10).

Data also plays a key role in facilitating optimism in the solutions reporting process. In France, a journalist noted that not only is data "the future of journalism," they also said that data can be used to find the "best" or "good" examples to report on:

> Usually journalists look at data, and say, "Oh, what is the worst?" Instead, in solution stories, we look at the data and say, "Ooh, who are the best? And why are they the best?" Data gives us ideas of solution stories, and we use it differently from classical journalists. For example, classical journalists might see, oh, the city is really bad in this area. Okay. Let's do a report.' But, no, with solutions, we see which cities are really good. Let's do a report because it's interesting how this city can be so good.' That's interesting also. (J45)

In addition to cultivating an optimistic outlook, interviewees noted how hope is characterized by goal-directed action as described below.

Goal-Directed Action

Hope is associated by scholars "with the desire for and impetus for goal-directed action, especially in the face of adversity" (Nabi & Myrick, 2019, p. 465). As such, interviewees connected the news value of "hope" with qualities of social change and

action. “We know that when people feel a sense of hope or a sense of optimism, that they believe there is opportunity for a better tomorrow and that there is an opportunity for positive change in the world,” one journalist said. “We know then that we are actually moving the needle forward” (J31).

Another journalist argued that solutions reporting is “hope with teeth” by taking a “critical eye to a response and how it didn't work” (J13). Similarly, others said pessimism, or negative outlooks, can also be a “driving” force in production of solutions journalism:

> I think most people who do focus on solutions journalism are optimistic. But if you are pessimistic that also can be used in that sense. Like if you can tailor your pessimism to identify the problems in society, and then also do the reporting necessary to show where the solutions are. But pessimism can be a driving factor too. (J21)

As an example of hope as goal-directed action in solutions journalism stories, a journalist described solutions journalism as “hope for the future” and as a “real and practical way of looking at the world's problems and not always just pointing at what is going wrong, but also suggesting what needs to happen for it to become right” (J21). For example, this journalist wrote a series of articles about “older, white farmers in Maine” whose children are leaving farming for other occupations in suburban and urban areas. To ensure their land and crops are properly cared for going into the future, these farmers are passing their land on to members of the Somali American refugee population in rural Maine, who in turn are becoming the next generation of farmers in Maine (J21).

One journalist said that solutions journalism can be “inspiring” and “educational” (J10). Similarly, another journalist said that solutions journalism fills the “knowledge gap” by “telling people, okay, I want to inform you about that so our readers and

audiences can make informed choices of how they feel and what they want to do and that there are possibilities to maybe live a better life" (J20). Hope also lends itself to confidence, which lends itself to progress.

Hope as goal-directed action gives journalists and audiences confidence and a sense of purpose. According to a journalist in Africa, "without confidence, no progress can be made" (J1). A European journalist that covers the climate crisis argued that solutions reporting is a driving force that gives them a sense of purpose: "There is so much stress and chaos, but solutions journalism gives us a reason to continue the work we're doing, to continue to hope, to continue to say no to the plastic straws, to continue to vote" (J31).

As described above, based on accounts from interviewees, hope comprises two major components: optimism and goal-directed action. Alongside accountability, advocacy and social change, objectivity, and emotion, hope drives solutions journalists to action and catalyzes readers to respond in kind. This shared commitment to a new news value of hope shows how solutions journalism is developing formative elements of moral legitimacy. It is also an aspiration that, if adopted by enough social actors, has the potential to help move it toward the reinstitutionalization phase of institutionalization, or attainment of cognitive legitimacy.

Discussion: Solutions Journalism's Core Values

This chapter answers a call to investigate the news institution and its core values (Reese, 2021). Results show how interviewees negotiate and reformulate the practice of solutions journalism as a collaborative commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values. It does so by answering the following research question: How do social actors

working within networked organizational forms of journalism establish shared understandings and promote legitimacy?

Results of this study show that rules, norms, and values play a central role in helping networked organizational forms of journalism gain legitimacy. Solutions journalism represents this relationship as an emerging institution gaining legitimacy in practice worldwide through support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values that relate to and build upon traditional and contemporary news values. As a representative case study, solutions journalism is theorized, or defined by, traditional journalistic norms of accountability and objectivity along with contemporary norms and values including advocacy, emotion, and hope. This theorization presents a model of journalistic practice committed to traditional norms and values while bringing in contemporary elements.

Historically, Tuchman (1978) defined rules around the professionalization of journalism as a collaborative effort between newsworkers including editors, reporters and bureau chiefs. She characterized professionalization as a "negotiation and reformulation" about who covers a story, how a story is covered, how reporters relate to sources, and how sources are selected (p. 212). Tuchman also found that routinization was an integral part of journalistic practice, both in how editors assign reporters to various stories and in how journalists source stories with politicians and leaders, a practice that "invokes legitimated authority" (p. 212).

As outlined throughout this chapter, this composition of traditional and contemporary news values in coverage of social problems introduces a fair share of tensions and opportunities for better understanding effective journalistic coverage of social problems. Ultimately, this chapter shows how solutions journalism is strategically

working toward attainment of moral legitimacy: By nesting within traditional and longstanding journalistic approaches and through shared commitment to values of accountability, objectivity, advocacy, emotion, and hope.

The Nuances of Advocacy and Objectivity

Objectivity is produced through journalism "as a set of ideals, epistemologies, practices, institutional relationships, and public discourses" (Lesage & Hackett, 2014, p. 52). Similar to how Fisher (2016) argues that all journalism falls on a spectrum between objectivity and advocacy, some interviewees sought to reconcile the norms of advocacy and objectivity. On the other hand, interviewees also argued that the norms of objectivity and advocacy are polar opposites. While contested by some, the nuances of objectivity as an evolving value comprising elements of data and evidentiary claims are outlined throughout this chapter.

Historically, benefits of a normative model of objectivity and neutrality in journalism is that it helped to disseminate fair and balanced reporting to wire services around the world in the 1800s and gave rise to a variety of types of journalism production in the 20th and 21st centuries that have been cataloged and analyzed extensively by scholars. In 2010, Loosen et al. (2019) began to attempt to catalog all of the emerging types of journalism–including solutions journalism–in an "X journalism project." They have identified over 130 types of journalism to date, with the goal of turning the collection into "an open, crowdsourced, and constantly growing database that helps trace and research developments in the field" (Loosen et al., 2019). Recognizing the existence of various types of journalism and categorizing them accordingly is important to fully understand how they are formed and shaped by the norms, values, and boundaries of the

profession and vice versa. Beyond categorizing the various types of journalism, it is important to analyze and evaluate these approaches in-depth.

Using solutions journalism as a case study, this study seeks to explore the nuances of objectivity in addition to its "contrary" value, advocacy. Social actors that support solutions journalism in for-profit and nonprofit spaces argue that advocacy and social change are emerging as values that make up solutions journalism alongside more traditional values of objectivity, fairness, and balance.

Just as Anderson et al. (2016) argued that objectivity is "an often misunderstood journalistic value," many interviewees wrestled with the validity of objectivity as a normative claim (p. 110). Anderson et al. (2016) also argued that credibility matters more than objectivity and can be defined by concepts including "accuracy, fairness, open-mindedness, independence of power and ideology, and transparency about sources and methods whenever possible" (Anderson et al., 2016, p. 111). Using solutions journalism as a case study, the traditional value of objectivity is contested and supported by social actors that support solutions journalism. This study furthers Anderson et al.'s argument by showing how objectivity is supported by fairness, balance, data, and evidentiary claims in practice. Others said objectivity was an unrealistic aspiration. Those that disagreed with commitments to objectivity preferred descriptions of solutions journalism as an advocacy-oriented approach.

As such, solutions journalism serves as a blend of advocate and gatekeeper models introduced by Janowitz (1975). Janowitz defined the gatekeeper category as a commitment to the values of accuracy, factuality, and balance, while the advocate category is a form of journalism that seeks to remedy social ills. Types of journalism that

have evolved in line with the gatekeeper category include accountability journalism (Anderson et al., 2016), adversarial journalism (Eriksson & Östman, 2013), algorithmic journalism (Zamith & Lewis, 2017), mainstream journalism (McIntyre, 2017), and reciprocal journalism (Lewis et al., 2014). On the other hand, as an extension of Janowitz's (1975) category of the advocate journalist, types of journalism that have emerged in line with those qualities include solutions journalism (Benesch, 1998; McIntyre, 2017), ambient journalism (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2016), advocacy journalism (Fisher, 2016; Janowitz, 1975), alternative journalism (Atton, 1990; Cottle, 2006), developmental journalism public service / civic journalism (Ferrucci, 2015; Rosen, 1996), constructive journalism (Beckett & Deuze, 2016), social justice journalism (Steinke & Bélair-Gagnon, 2020), and ethnic / community journalism (Deuze, 2006).

Renewed commitments to traditional journalistic norms of accountability, fairness, and balance in solutions journalism along with the introduction of contemporary norms and values including advocacy, emotion, and hope presents a model of journalistic practice committed to traditional norms and values while bringing in contemporary elements. In this way, solutions journalism is a litany of nuance as actors that support it adhere to a combination of gatekeeper and advocate roles.

Building on Hallin's argument that the journalist's role within the sphere of consensus is to serve as an advocate or celebrant of consensus values, this study seeks to identify what values comprise the core of solutions journalism in practice. This study argues that consensus values of solutions journalism fall in line with traditional journalistic norms and values including fairness, accuracy, and accountability. At the same time, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners also seek to expand current

understandings of journalistic norms and values by introducing explicit desires for social change and advocacy as a direct result of their reporting. Also, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners often relate solutions journalism's normative outlook to the longstanding and legitimate practice of investigative journalism, while expanding their practice beyond investigating problems to critical analysis of proposed solutions infused with elements of emotion and hope.

This commitment to values of accountability, objectivity, advocacy, emotion, and hope presents an experience of involvement or cosmopolitan citizenship for readers and journalists alike, especially in coverage of international affairs and social problems like homelessness, poverty, and human trafficking. These are all complex social problems with various elements of prevention including education campaigns, national action plans, information exchange among authorities, and cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Yoo & Boyle, 2015).

In these ways, solutions journalism is developing formative elements of moral legitimacy, helping to theorize it as a journalistic approach and enabling it to diffuse in practice worldwide. Beyond nesting within normative prescriptions and sharing a commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values, the following chapter will show how solutions journalism is diffusing worldwide thanks to a set of endogenous and exogenous factors. These endogenous and exogenous factors influence solutions journalism's theorization and diffusion while providing opportunities for solutions journalism's continued expansion and growth. These factors will be examined in light of the various factors constraining solutions journalism in practice including lack of time, resources, awareness, and buy-in.

Chapter 6: From Theorization to Diffusion: Mechanisms Limiting Solutions Journalism's Growth and Opportunities to Overcome Those Restrictive Barriers

Solutions journalism is a networked organizational form of journalism characterized by hubs and spokes. As a networked organizational form of journalism, solutions journalism serves as an example of an emerging institution seeking legitimacy in a fragmented media landscape. Audiences' attention spans are shorter than ever (Wu, 2016), and social media platforms like Facebook are playing central roles in providing information to local communities (Thorson et al., 2020). To better understand how journalistic approaches can adapt and thrive in the face of these environmental challenges, this chapter seeks to show how solutions journalism, as a networked form of journalism, serves as a case study to show how various journalistic approaches seek to gain legitimacy to overcome restrictive barriers and environmental constraints facing its expansion.

Theoretically, new institutional theory provides helpful tools to understand how various forms of journalism attain legitimacy. Institutional scholarship shows that, over time, "innovative news forms and practices emerge in variation, flock together in a selection process, stabilize, and then demonstrate retention" (Lowrey, 2012, p. 216). Taking this argument into account, based on the results of this study, solutions journalism as a journalistic approach is in between emergence and stabilization on a global scale (Fligstein, 2013). To unpack this framework further, solutions journalism as a journalistic approach is not only in between emergence and stabilization on a global scale–it is also between theorization and diffusion (Greenwood et al., 2002). This is also known as the phase of semi-institutionalization (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996).

It is important to utilize a theoretical framework to understand various stages of the institutionalization process. This study applies Greenwood et al. (2002)'s six stages of institutional change: first, precipitating jolts; second, deinstitutionalization; third, preinstitutionalization; fourth, theorization; fifth, diffusion; and sixth, reinstitutionalization. These stages are described in detail in Chapter 2 and will be unpacked throughout this chapter to illuminate the challenges that face these journalistic approaches and the opportunities they have to attain legitimacy in a fragmented media landscape.

This chapter builds on the argument that solutions journalism is in between theorization and diffusion on a global scale. Theorization is the process of developing and defining new practices (Greenwood et al., 2002). Diffusion is defined as the spread of institutional principles or practices to a population of actors, and often leads to "isomorphic or homogenous outcomes in populations of organizations" (Campbell, 2004, p. 77). The third and final research question of this study is:

> RQ3: What mechanisms limit networked organizational forms of journalism and how do organizational actors seek to overcome those restrictive barriers?

Based on in-depth interviews with 52 solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners in 17 countries worldwide, the argument that relates to RQ3 is that solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion worldwide with various barriers to its attainment of cognitive legitimacy, or reinstitutionalization (Greenwood et al., 2002). The case of solutions journalism serves as an example of how networked organizational forms of journalism can attempt to gain legitimacy in a fragmented media landscape.

Theoretically, the first part of this results chapter explains the justification of solutions journalism through discussion of its core function as articulated by interviewees: That solutions journalism fills a gap within the news industry worldwide by informing audiences, engaging and empowering individuals to make positive differences in their communities, and building trust. The second part of the results section describes exogenous and endogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's theorization and diffusion. Exogenous forces include the use of data, technology, and social media. Endogenous factors include new normative outlooks including audience engagement, multimedia / audio-visual production, and a relationship to constructive journalism. The third and final part of the results section explains structural constraints solutions journalism faces. These constraints include: lack of time, lack of resources, lack of buy-in, and lack of awareness.

The conclusion of this chapter shows that solutions journalism is working toward attainment of moral and pragmatic legitimacy, but the diffusion and reinstitutionalization of solutions journalism in practice is limited due to lack of time, resources, awareness, and buy-in. This dissertation thus explores those constraints alongside opportunities that exist for solutions journalism to attain a competitive advantage in the media landscape.

Solutions Journalism's Core Function

Scholars have called for more theoretical work of what brings institutions from stage three, preinstitutionalization, to stage six, reinstitutionalization (Greenwood et al., 2002). This chapter thus addresses how solutions journalism as a case study is moving through the theorization and diffusion process–stages four and five–toward the sixth and final stage of institutionalization, reinstitutionalization. This study builds on literature that

has examined why various semi-institutionalized variations fail to become institutionalized (Abrahamson, 1991; Strang & Soule, 1998) by examining solutions journalism as a case study.

For new practices to become widely adopted, they have to be theorized (Greenwood et al., 2002). Theorization is accomplished by developing and defining new practices and explaining the outcomes they produce. Theorization involves three things: first, specifying a "general organizational failing;" second, introducing an innovation as "a solution or treatment" to this failing; third, "justification of the innovation" (p. 60).

As discussed in Chapter 5, interviewees defined the news media's organizational failings as providing information that is "depressing" (J32), "disempowering" (J28), "anxiety inducing" (J31), and "negative" (J21). In response to this general organizational failing, theoretically, interviewees justified solutions journalism as a solution or treatment to the news media industry's failings by answering the interview question: "How do you describe the primary mission or core function of solutions journalism? Can you give me an example?"

Interviewees argued that solutions journalism seeks to fill a gap in the news media industry by functioning as an innovative form of journalism that leads to holistic, systemic changes in societies worldwide. Solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners seek to accomplish these systemic changes by informing the public, engaging and empowering audiences, and building trust.

Solutions journalism gives people information they need to "live, function, and make decisions in a democratic society" (J19). Solutions journalism shows audiences "evidence of what's working, as well as what isn't, and not just evidence, but showing

them how it works" (J14). In addition to evaluating, presenting, and analyzing solutions to various problems (J8), as a journalistic form, solutions journalism provides information to audiences about solutions that are replicable (J1, J25).

Interviewees argued that solutions journalism should "instill some agency in audiences" (J22), empower audiences "to take ownership" (J12), and engage audiences in productive conversations about how to fix problems in society (J11, J27). For one journalist in France, "solutions journalism is really about audience engagement. Solutions journalism is just such a great way for people to understand the problem, and to want to speak about the problem, and to have conversations" (J27).

Beyond engaging audiences, interviewees sought to empower audiences to take action to affect positive change in their respective communities (J16). According to a British journalist, solutions journalism is "all about empowering people to act" (J46). A U.S. journalist argued that solutions journalism is "awareness that leads to change" (J7). One practitioner gave the example of how solutions journalism helped residents of a rural community in Australia learn how to "empower themselves to affect change" (J12). One example they gave about how solutions journalism can accomplish this is by using media outlets to share "positive news, stories in the community, and how people are contributing during COVID-19 and sharing resource information about food relief" and by "developing that connective tissue between our community groups and working with them in a collaborative way to understand how they can stand up and make their own changes" through writing and informal meetings on Zoom (J12).

One British journalist said the core function of solutions journalism is a combination of informing and engaging. "The mission of solutions journalism is to

inform, inspire, and engage," they said (J28). This British journalist wrote a story about how break dancing provides an outlet for youth in Medellin, Colombia, to inspire change in the community and communities like it around the globe:

> So you're going to have people who'd never read stories about youth delinquency in Medellin because it's gratuitous and violent and depressing. But I wrote a story about someone doing something, some organization putting something together, because it makes you, I think, more inclined to either participate in something like that or even create something like that yourself. It's like you have something tangible to go with where you're not getting completely depressed by it and you're not feeling it's completely futile to be engaging with that subject. (J28)

On a broad scale, an interviewee in Africa said solutions journalism "sets the agenda for societal growth and development" (J29). A European journalist that covers tourism sees solutions journalism as an opportunity to provide a "blueprint and guide" for ways out of problems, and provides "optimism," "hope," and an "inspirational idea that we are not stuck where we are, and that we can see solutions and ways of moving forward" (J31).

Journalists in the U.S. and Africa agreed that the core function of solutions journalism is to hold authorities and those in power accountable (J33, J34, J44). In addition to accountability, U.S journalists said the mission is about "building trust" (J35) and "connecting audiences" (J22).

Ultimately, according to interviewees, solutions journalism's core function is to raise awareness for and help to create holistic, systemic social change in societies worldwide by informing audiences about replicable, scalable, effective–and sometimes failed–solutions.

This study shows solutions journalism's core functions to inform and engage audiences are related to the concept of engaged journalism, a journalistic approach that embeds interactions with audiences in the heart of news practices and production

(Batsell, 2015; Wenzel, 2019; Wenzel & Nelson, 2020). In addition to being related to the engaged journalism approach–a journalistic approach that "places public experts and participants as equal partners in the reporting process in order to achieve the shared mission of providing accurate information for an informed and thriving community" (Hopkinson & Dahmen, 2021)—findings in Chapter 5 that show how solutions journalism is related to longstanding accountability and investigative journalistic approaches. In these ways, solutions journalism is building moral legitimacy. Moral legitimacy is integral to the theorization stage of institutionalization, and is achieved "by nesting and aligning new ideas within prevailing normative prescriptions" (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suchman, 1995; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996). Pragmatic legitimacy is defined as assertion of "functional superiority" (Greenwood et al., 2002; Suchman, 1995). When moral legitimacy or pragmatic legitimacy is attained, the transition from theorization to diffusion happens.

The fifth stage of institutionalization, diffusion, comprises increasing objectification and pragmatic legitimacy (Greenwood et al., 2002). "Objectification" is defined by Greenwood et al. as "gaining social consensus concerning…pragmatic value" (p. 61). As ideas become objectified or begin to gain social consensus about their pragmatic value, ideas gain legitimacy. As ideas become objectified during diffusion, they diffuse even further and continue to gain pragmatic legitimacy. Greenwood et al. noted that "diffusion occurs only if new ideas are compellingly presented as more appropriate than existing practices" (p. 60). Diffusion is defined as the spread of institutional principles or practices to a population of actors (Campbell, 2004).

Oftentimes, diffusion "leads to isomorphic or homogenous outcomes in populations of organizations" (Campbell, 2004, p. 77).

The rest of this chapter shows how, theoretically, exogenous and endogenous forces are creating patterns of isomorphism and path dependence for solutions journalism within news media organizations and environments worldwide, thus enabling a codified definition and shared commitment to a set of rules, norms, and values described in Chapter 5. As this shared definition and commitment takes form worldwide, the practice becomes theorized. Solutions journalism has also begun to diffuse to a population of social actors that support solutions journalism worldwide. Isomorphism and path dependence thus contribute to the diffusion of solutions journalism.

The final stage of the institutionalization process, following theorization and diffusion, is reinstitutionalization, or full institutionalization (Greenwood et al., 2002). This stage involves the attainment of cognitive legitimacy. Cognitive legitimacy is defined as when "the ideas themselves become taken-for-granted as the natural and appropriate arrangement," something that can "survive across generations and become uncritically accepted as the definitive way of behaving" (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996, p. 184; Greenwood et al., 2002, p. 61).

Chapter 4 discussed exogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's attainment of moral and pragmatic legitimacy through collaborations, partnerships, and economic factors like funding from foundations and nonprofit organizations. Chapter 5 discussed solutions journalism's development of formative elements of moral legitimacy in detail. This chapter, Chapter 6, seeks to more explicitly define the theorization and diffusion of solutions journalism by explaining the exogenous and endogenous forces that

support the theorization and diffusion of solutions journalism. Based on results provided in this chapter, exogenous forces that support the theorization and diffusion of solutions journalism include the use of data and social media. Endogenous forces include new normative outlooks of audience engagement, multimedia / audiovisual production, and a relationship to constructive journalism. This chapter concludes with an explanation as to why solutions journalism has not yet attained cognitive legitimacy: because it is constrained in practice by mechanisms including lack of time and resources; lack of awareness; and lack of buy-in.

Exogenous Forces and Opportunities for Growth: Data

This study seeks to investigate solutions journalism's institutional evolution in a way that bridges the gap between technological innovation and institutional logics (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2020; Yousefdehi & Nason, 2020). Results of this study show that technological innovation through utilization of data in the reporting process is a key way social actors that support solutions journalism are cultivating path dependent institutional change (Baum & Rowley, 2002; Campbell, 2004). According to interviewees, data and technology contribute to the theorization and diffusion of solutions journalism as these elements are integral to solutions journalism's network strength and development. As solutions journalism evolves in practice, its network is taking form thanks in large part to the roles and influences of social media, data, and technology. Collaboration is integral to solutions journalism in practice, and social media, data, and technology help these connections be stronger.

According to interviewees, there are three major elements of leveraging data in solutions journalism practice: first, that data-driven evidence is a main component of

solutions journalism; second, that databases and public records are key for mining solutions-oriented story ideas and sources; third, that data helps solutions journalists fact check stories and their evidentiary claims. These shared commitments to leveraging data in solutions journalism contribute to patterns of isomorphism and path dependence that contribute to solutions journalism's pursuit of legitimacy.

The first part of this section will discuss how interviewees argue that data is integral to solutions journalism practice; the second part will discuss how solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners use databases and public records to find solutions-oriented story ideas and sources; followed by how data helps to fact check solutions reporting.

Data as a Main Component of Solutions Journalism

Path-dependent institutional change is based upon consistent and continuous exchanges constituted in part by the environment in which organizations operate (Baum & Rowley, 2002; Campbell, 2004). Results of this study show that data-driven evidence is a "pillar" and "main component" of solutions journalism in practice. Interviewees insisted data enhances their solutions reporting practices, and that data is "the strongest way to prove that something is working" (J43). These findings support scholarship that argues digital media and technology enhance objectivity in practice (Okwudili & Kazaure, 2020).

A U.S. practitioner said that solutions journalism and data journalism are both "tools" that are "necessary to do journalism" (J52). Interviewees expressed interest in providing readers with a balance between including numerical data and anecdotal quotes from interviewees. As an example of this balance in a data-based solutions story they

wrote, they explained how they were interested in pursuing a story about federal housing vouchers distributed in Charlotte, North Carolina (J41). In addition to providing context with official federal data and numbers, they made an intentional effort to include stories of the people impacted by proposed solutions or policies:

> I did a story about federal housing vouchers distributed in Charlotte, North Carolina. I did a story about why Charlotte got so few vouchers to begin with and I compared the per capita rate of vouchers in every city in the country and Charlotte using federal data. To me, that was important because really, Charlotte was underperforming when it came to vouchers. That went back decades. I always look for that for context...and I like to find the people to tell the story that the numbers support, oftentimes. (J41)

Another journalist said data is important to both explaining a problem and evaluating the effectiveness of its solution (J47). “If you're going to do solutions effectively, you have to have data in there, or at least some sort of statistic or metric by which you're measuring the efficacy of that solution,” they said. “When you're looking into the efficacy of a solution, you have to have some sort of data and statistics to back up whether or not it's working” (J47).

Data can help explain and show the breadth of a problem by explaining how many people are impacted and the number of people any given solution could help (J47). A journalist cited a series of solutions-oriented articles their news outlet published about eviction moratoriums and eviction relief: “Does it have to be data specific reporting where you're really just mining spreadsheets? It doesn't have to be that, but it can be” (J47).

A SJN staff member said that data and technology is central to their full-time staff role (J13). On a daily basis, they manage social media, websites, IT, databases of stories and SJN members, and SJN curriculum in an attempt to identify patterns and themes that

show the positive impact of solutions journalism. Grounded in data-driven evidence, it is their goal to illustrate a broader narrative about the impact of solutions journalism:

> I am in charge of trying to turn everything that we're [SJN] doing into an actual narrative that we can then share with the world at the end of the day. And talking about not just our impact, but the impact of our partners, and even the impact of solutions journalism itself as a concept. (J13)

As data is an integral part of solutions reporting in practice, interviewees discussed how various databases make it possible for them to access data for their articles in a valid and reliable way described below.

Using Databases for Story Ideas and Sourcing

Accessing databases and public records are two key ways interviewees said they seek to provide evidence and look for data to include in their solutions-oriented stories. One journalist "always" uses tech and databases to inform their reporting (J43). They find data especially relevant when it comes to writing stories about health or education-based solutions. This journalist often cites the U.S. Department of Education as a source to discover where the numbers point to an exemplar of different kinds:

> The U.S. Department of Education has just a bunch of different databases on high school graduation rates, or test scores on the Nation's Report Card (NAEP) for different demographics. And so, when you're looking for places that are doing better, often starting in the data is a good place to do that, because you can sort of see, "All right, I've got all these places that have 30 point differences between Latinx students and White students. And then all of the sudden, you've got this place that consistently runs 8 to 10 percentage points different." Where their achievement gap is much smaller…and so you can use those really to find places that seem to be doing better and then from there, I'll often go and read primary sources like the newspaper in those communities to see if that's something they've reported on. (J43)

A U.S. journalist (J43) used databases to write solutions stories about the COVID-19 pandemic. "Some databases aggregate COVID-19 data...you could really look and you could see, okay, this state doesn't have a lot of deaths. Can I think about why that is? That could be a jumping off point to say, 'Why does this county have fewer deaths than the ones surrounding it?'" (J43).

In addition to looking for solutions in much of their reporting, a U.S. journalist considers themselves a data journalist. “I have a love of public records, I use public records constantly, and I use data constantly. I love databases. I'm always accessing Excel spreadsheets and looking for data” (J41).

Some interviewees leveraged databases to find sources and mentioned resources like email newsletters and sourcing on social media as ways they gathered data for their stories. A journalist explained how they use databases like Help a Reporter Out (HARO) in their solutions stories:

> I use databases like HARO to source good people to write about. It's a source database essentially. I also subscribe to a number of newsletters, organizations that are doing social impact work, like Ashoka, Catalyst, a variety of things like that. (J31)

Other interviewees discussed databases including SJN’s Story Tracker (J22, J50) and the Society of Professional Journalists’ Journalist Toolbox (J26) as a huge opportunity for finding and researching story ideas. SJN’s Solutions Story Tracker is a searchable database of over 12,000 solutions-oriented news articles published by outlets around the world. The database is run by over 12 SJN staff members that hand-pick, code, and select all articles that are included in the Story Tracker. Stories are included based on SJN’s specific criteria for what comprises a solutions story: that it focuses in-depth on a response to a problem and how the response works in meaningful detail; focuses on effectiveness, not good intentions, presenting available evidence of results; discusses limitations of the approach; and seeks to provide insights that others can use (Solutions Journalism, 2018).

Data and networks are understood by interviewees as contributing to or painting a narrative. Some journalists, editors, and practitioners referenced data and databases like

SJN's Solutions Story Tracker as a key component of their reporting processes. Given the rigorous vetting and fact-checking process stories go through to be included in the Story Tracker, interviewees called the Story Tracker a "trusted database" that makes the background research necessary to create a solutions story "less of a hassle" (J50). A journalist called the SJN Story Tracker "invaluable" and "pivotal" to their solutions practice:

> I can't count the number of times where I've been like, 'Hey, there's this thing that I'm working on, look at this story that I found through the Story Tracker that we should consider using as framing or as an alternative way of thinking.' (J22)

Where databases don't exist, some journalists sought to overcome their lack of access to an ample amount of data by seeking to create a database and/or collaborative comprising regional newspapers and news outlets:

> I've thought about trying to create a database that would be regional...it would be...solutions focused. The idea is I'd like to do a database and get as much information about COVID-19 as possible from every state. And then have a database that regional reporters could pull from to look at other states. So, you could look at if this database had all the comorbidities of every death in Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado, you could start to look at: Does one of these states have a healthier population? And so were they better equipped to handle COVID-19? And then, are there solutions stories that you can tease out of that? So that's one thing I've been thinking about how to instate. (J43)

In addition to using databases to mine story ideas and find sources, interviewees said that data is a key way to verify facts in solutions reporting. The following section will discuss how fact checking is held up as a priority for solutions journalism practice.

Fact Checking

While gathering data from databases is a key priority for solutions journalism, presenting verified data in a story is of the utmost importance to interviewees. Fact-checking is a proven accountability mechanism and key way to ensure transparency in reporting (Rivera Otero et al., 2021). Interviewees argued it's important to cross-check

data that comes from public records and databases. These cross-checks function as a safeguard against sharing false or misleading information. This effort informs the journalistic value of accountability that, in part, makes up solutions journalism and contributes to its theorization and diffusion (Greenwood et al., 2002).

As one example, a journalist in Nigeria reported on the relationship between poverty and Nigeria's official response to COVID-19 using data points from several sources. This journalist said they referenced official government data from Nigeria's Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs alongside data from the United Nations to ensure the accuracy of their reporting:

> Official data has really helped me a lot. For the data on poverty, I reached out to the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. I checked that data in more than two places, including from the UN. So getting more than one source has been a way for me. Although, sometimes it's quite difficult when you try to get one thing and you're seeing something else. That's why sometimes when people say certain things then I check and the data doesn't match what they say, I can keep looking for verification. (J40)

Another journalist insisted that, in addition to using statistics and data "a lot," they fact-check their data on a regular basis "to be sure I'm passing the right information on and I'm not misleading my readers. I have to be sure my facts and information are accurate" (J33).

In addition to cross-checking data, interviewees do their best to provide checks and balances in their reporting by providing a variety of perspectives in all of their stories. "The two big things are making sure that I have a variety of perspectives, and then making sure, if there's data, that it holds up to what they're saying it holds up to" (J39). Another journalist uses databases to fact check information and data they find on social media (J29).

Based on results of this study, data is a key component of solutions journalism's theorization. Data is an institutional principle spreading throughout the population of social actors interviewed for this study as well, which thus contributes to solutions journalism's diffusion. In addition to data, social media is a contributing factor to solutions journalism's theorization and diffusion in various ways presented below.

Exogenous Forces and Opportunities for Growth: Social Media

Frequent use of social media is a key component of solutions journalism's theorization and provides opportunities for diffusion. As shown in Chapter 4, social media is a key way networked organizational forms of journalism stay connected. Findings from this study show that solutions journalists use social media to accomplish routine tasks including gathering information, monitoring sources, and developing story ideas (Powers & Vera-Zambrano, 2018). Further, social media news readers prefer to read and share overwhelmingly positive news (Al-Rawi, 2019).

As such, social media is a prime opportunity for solutions journalism's diffusion. In line with this possibility, interviewees noted positive affordances of social media included the ability to share stories (J16), identify trends (J19), and find story ideas (J19). Strengths of social media also included reaching out to people (J32), finding sources (J19), and verifying sources and facts (J16). Some journalists also mentioned that social media metrics help to verify the quality of their stories. One journalist said: "I wrote this story and...I think it worked out. I got a really great response on social media from our readers" (J20).

Major ways social media contributes to the theorization and diffusion of solutions journalism in practice include raising awareness for solutions journalism and providing

avenues for sourcing practices on technological platforms. Both are described in detail below.

Social Media Awareness

Social media is a resource that interviewees said enhanced their reporting and organizational practices overall. Social media is a major way interviewees became aware of solutions journalism in practice (J23, J29). Social media also creates awareness, accessibility, and adds value to the mission of solutions journalism.

Based on interview data, social media has pros and cons for journalists, editors, and practitioners worldwide. Pros include the ability to share stories, identify trends, and find story ideas. Strengths of social media also included finding sources and verifying sources and facts. Some journalists also mentioned that social media metrics help to verify the quality of their stories. Cons include challenges to solutions journalism's legitimacy, credibility, and authority. Current journalists, editors, and practitioners expressed occasional mudslinging and toxic behaviors on social media platforms from and between users.

Some interviewees came across solutions journalism through the hashtag #solutionsjournalism or #sojo, and others stumbled upon the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN)'s official Facebook page(s) or Twitter handle.

"In the last six months, I recently thought, 'Oh, okay, this Solutions Journalism Network Facebook page is so great, but I really should go back to the main website and see what's happening there,'" a practitioner said. "I find the Facebook group to be more interesting" (J6).

According to journalists, sharing solutions stories widely on social media platforms should be integral to the practice of solutions journalism:

> In the news organizations that I am aware of that have decided to make solutions journalism, why not try to expand that and to multiply that by using all ways you can distribute it, right? That's actually what we have done in my newsroom. (J51)

This journalist provided a specific example of successful promotion of a solutions news story about a recycling challenge their newsroom produced. They wrote a series about recycling and sustainability in Costa Rica. As part of the story, they challenged readers to take part in the recycling challenge, and asked some social media influencers to take part in the effort as well, which led to a boost in traffic for their news outlet. In addition to increased traffic from influencers, the news outlet put out Instagram stories, Facebook stories, and tweets, which helped to boost the story, as well. This example showed that solutions journalists are intentionally interested in using social media to promote solutions stories and also think solutions journalism should "grow in that way" (J51).

Beyond individuals' experiences with solutions journalism on social media platforms, social media is central to all that SJN seeks to accomplish. Not only did several interviewees become aware of SJN on social media, but it is also a key part of several interviewees' daily responsibilities and time. One journalist first became aware of solutions journalism when they applied for a paid opportunity as a "Community Intern" with SJN. They found shortly after starting that social media was going to be a key part of their daily responsibilities in a way that enhanced their experience as a journalist (J20). During their experience as a community intern, they found that social media was "super valuable" for their "moving forward as a journalist" (J20).

Some journalists noted that they had a dedicated staff team at their news outlets that participate in social media promotion of stories (J24). Among staff members at SJN, several dedicated a majority of their time to social media. One full time staff person said they "run all our [SJN] social media." In addition to social media, they are in charge of direction, strategy, and editing of SJN's newsletters. They said that social media, data, and technology help to cultivate awareness, create accessibility, and add value to the practice of solutions journalism (J2).

In addition to raising awareness for solutions journalism in practice, social media platforms make it possible for journalists to find sources for solutions journalism stories worldwide. This process is described below.

Social Media Sourcing

Social media and technology play integral roles in the sourcing process in Western (Heravi & Harrower, 2016) and non-Western contexts (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2018; Zhang & Li, 2020). This study supports these findings as social media platforms are instrumental for social actors that practice solutions journalism to find, identify, and interview sources and attain valuable engagement with audiences (J31, J32).

"I will just kind of do call-outs on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, to try to find people for the projects that way," one journalist said. "I think that the most effective way to get people is social media" (J25).

Not only does social media help solutions journalists find sources—it also helps them "find people that aren't prepped or affiliated with the organization I'm reporting on" (J39). Social media also makes it possible for journalists to market themselves and to conduct interviews in a flexible manner.

“I try to be as undemanding as possible with the people that I interview,” one journalist said. “I try to offer them that either I could come to their place or we could talk on the phone or we could do WhatsApp or the minimally invasive thing would be to write them an email with questions and they can come back to me whenever it's convenient. And a lot of people prefer that because they've got time to think and to write out their answers. So usually, I tend to offer them a bunch of options which is nice also because I'm a bit of an introvert” (J32).

An African journalist described a solutions story they wrote in Nigeria that involved searching for sources, verifying facts, and conducting interviews on social media / technological platforms including Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Zoom.

“I can't remember the last time I went to an office to interview a source. It's been Zoom, it's been WhatsApp video calls and all that. Technology has really played a huge, huge, huge role. Huge role” they said (J40).

Reddit is also a social media platform solutions journalists use to find sources for their stories. Anonymity is a key affordance of message board social media platforms that can corrode the quality of discourse (Miro & Toff, 2022). At the same time, interviewees for this study argue that Reddit, as a message board platform, enables transparency through anonymity:

> People on Reddit are really transparent about their experiences, because they have that veil of...like, you don't have to disclose who you are. And it's not like, "Here's my name. Here's my age. Here's a picture of me." I mean, it's anonymous. And so, forming those relationships with people who start off as anonymous, and then forming those into people who do have names, faces, and stuff like that, has been fantastic. (J39)

A national reporter based in New York City mentioned how social media plays a key role in broadening their stories into a national scope. “When you're based in one city

and report on the entire country, technology is key," they said. "I can walk my neighborhood, but then I'm only getting the perspective of Brooklyn, New York. I use technology to find people across the country, and it's nice to have that access to widen my perspective, or widen the perspectives that are in my stories" (J39). In a story they wrote about school lunch shaming, this journalist found sources on social media who had experienced it and paired that information with what nonprofits were doing and legislation emerging on the topic.

Two platforms used to widen perspectives include Twitter and Facebook groups. One journalist uses Twitter to "see what public officials are saying," and uses Facebook groups to start conversations with sources on specific topics including education. They referenced Facebook groups being especially helpful in finding sources related to state-wide homeschool education (J43). Another journalist mentioned they "find people to interview through social media, Twitter in particular." Solutions journalists also access Facebook groups and Instagram to find experts on various topics. One journalist gave a specific example of a solutions story they were writing about pop-up bike lanes in Milan, Italy:

> I've been having a lot of good experiences lately with Facebook groups...I was writing an article about pop up bike lanes in Milan, in Italy, but I've never been, and of course I couldn't go with the corona crisis going on. And then I found a Facebook group of Italian architects who work in Milan, and I sent them a message in English. I requested to be part of the group, which only had like 6,000 members, and I sent them a message in English saying, 'These are a couple of questions I have about these pop up lanes, what do you think?' They were extremely helpful, and I've been trying to do this same thing in a few other cases. (J32)

One journalist mentioned that cultural norms are important to take into account with regard to connecting with sources on social media. For example, in Germany, one

journalist found that urban planners and architects are especially responsive on Instagram:

> I also get in touch with people on Instagram quite a bit. Because, well, in my case, I use Instagram professionally...I follow all these other urban planners and architects. So some of the solutions they present sometimes just in the form of a picture pop up on my feed and then sometimes I just drop them a message going, 'Could I write about this?' Or, 'I have a few questions for you.' That also tends to work out pretty well, better than emails in some cases I think. But also it depends quite a bit on nationality, because some people prefer emails...email is more official, right? So sometimes it's not ideal. Sometimes it is good, but you might have to wait longer for them to reply. (J32)

Specific cultural norms that a journalist mentioned include comments about social media apps including WhatsApp. In Germany, "if you have the phone number of someone, you should never send them a WhatsApp uninvited because we don't like that." With regard to sources in Mexico and some other Latin American countries, "everyone wants your WhatsApp number all the time. And they do not hesitate to use it all the time, which I personally don't like as much, but it can work very well in terms of quick answers and all of that" (J32).

A journalist in the Philippines said that chat apps including Facebook Messenger, Viber, and Telegram are popular platforms to find sources and connect with community members:

> Through Facebook Messenger, people respond quickly, definitely quicker than email. So yeah, I actually would say 80% of the sources probably that I've had have been through Facebook Messenger. Because like Facebook pages, I would just message them or like an organization or a person. And sometimes I think other people advise against that, because it's like ... What do you call it, invading people's privacy? These are private profiles that I would just message basically. I mean, so far, I haven't received violent reactions...Viber also, and Telegram. But most, I would say, most people really are on Messenger. (J42)

In addition to data and social media contributing to solutions journalism's theorization and diffusion, there are numerous endogenous forces and opportunities contributing to the theorization and diffusion of solutions journalism as well. These

endogenous forces and opportunities for growth include new normative outlooks of relationship to constructive journalism and a commitment to multimedia / audiovisual production and audience engagement. These opportunities are described in detail below.

Endogenous Forces and Opportunities for Growth: New Normative Outlooks

Endogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's institutionalization include commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values that are outlined in Chapter 5 and new normative outlooks including relationship to constructive journalism, audience engagement, and multimedia / audiovisual production. All three of these endogenous forces and their roles in contributing to solutions journalism's theorization and diffusion are explored below.

Relationship to Constructive Journalism

Interviewees' commitments to values including "positivity" and "optimism" presented in Chapter 5 align solutions journalism closely with its European counterpart of constructive journalism, defined as "a journalistic approach that draws from positive psychology and ultimately aims to improve societal well-being by covering stories about progress, achievement, and collaboration as much as stories about devastation, corruption, and conflict" (Hopkinson & Dahmen, 2021, p. 8). To contextualize this relationship further, according to interviewees based in Europe, more journalists have heard of constructive journalism than solutions journalism—but that solutions journalism is the "best approach" (J20). In Europe in particular, journalists understand constructive journalism as an umbrella over a number of journalistic approaches, and that solutions journalism is one column underneath that umbrella (J20, J45). Some interviewees also

argued that “solutions journalism” is a bad name for what it seeks to accomplish and argue that it is too “simple” to define all that it stands for and sets out to do (J9, J15).

“It's funny, because in France, we use both,” an editor said. “We use solutions journalism along with constructive. But for me, constructive journalism is bigger. It's an extension of solution journalism for me” (J45).

One way that solutions and constructive journalism are related is in their commitment to audience engagement. According to interviewees, audience engagement plays out in solutions journalism through community involvement with building and constructing solutions-oriented narratives. For example:

> Audience engagement is something that is promoted by both constructive journalism and solutions journalism. I think solutions journalism goes hand in hand with audience engagement because you have to listen to what they're really concerned about first and then have them maybe help you identify solutions and then discuss if the solutions that you're reporting on are the ones that are good for them. So there are multiple ways in solutions journalism to engage with your audience and that's also something that constructive journalism is promoting. (J30)

Beyond its relationship to constructive journalism, solutions journalism seeks to engage audiences in the interest of improving community involvement and cultivating social change. This norm of audience engagement is described in detail in the following section.

Audience Engagement

In line with scholarship that shows engagement enhances civic participation (Prior, 2007), findings from this study show that solutions journalism invites audience engagement. Not only do results of this study show that audience engagement with solutions-oriented work helps to sustain democracy, it also fosters engagement and accountability at the community level. Social media platforms help foster this engagement online and offline.

According to a journalist, “the news is important for sustaining democracy” and “for bringing about democracy in countries that are less democratic” (J27). Further, in this journalist’s experience, solutions journalism is a “great way for people to understand the problem, and to want to speak about the problem, and to have conversations” (J27). A key part of audience engagement in solutions journalism is “reciprocity” with community members. “You have to have reciprocity with all parts of the community you’re reporting on,” an American practitioner said. “You have to hold yourself accountable to the community and make sure that you're representing the community in a fair manner” (J52).

Solutions journalism is accessible to authors and audiences alike on social media platforms and beyond. One journalist said that solutions journalism has an “inviting nature” that offers pathways for readers to connect during the process of reporting the story and after the story is written. This journalist also noted that social media provides opportunities to engage and connect with audiences, and to “shine a spotlight on people who don't normally get the airtime that the problems themselves receive” (J22).

Facebook Live and Zoom are two platforms that interviewees expressed as areas they had used or desired to use to create conversations in a hybrid format with community members—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only do Facebook Live and Zoom facilitate debate and conversation, but it helps to ease polarization by focusing on responses in an inspirational way (J45). An editor referenced specific community events they were able to host with journalists, readers, and publishers during the COVID-19 pandemic by leveraging technology and social media platforms to connect with audiences via Zoom. In the words of this editor, these events helped to

break down walls between the public and journalists by putting them in the same room and allowing them to talk, albeit virtually, during the pandemic (J36).

Audience engagement can also lead to social change and advocacy at the community level. A journalist mentioned that people reach out to them on social media platforms including Twitter and LinkedIn with words of encouragement and proof that their stories are resonating with readers (J31). Interviewees also mentioned direct contact with readers as signs of audience engagement and that, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, technology has played an integral role with engagement with audiences. “Especially with our current pandemic, I use technology as a tool to have people bring their problems and solutions to me,” they said. “Having little lines at the bottom of my article that just say, ‘You can reach me here. I'm open to both the problems and the solutions.’ I'm accessible, and I'm willing to listen to them all” (J39).

As described throughout this section, results of this study show that audience engagement facilitated in large part through social media is a key part of solutions journalism’s theorization. In addition to commitments to audience engagement, interviewees expressed desires to produce solutions journalism characterized by multimedia and audiovisual elements. In the midst of the desires to create multimedia content, restrictions to time and resources emerge. These restrictions will be discussed in further detail following this next section.

Multimedia / Audio-Visual

At the turn of the 21st century, media institutes, scholars, and research organizations began to point to convergent media and multimedia as the journalism of the future. In January 2022, Reuters Institute pointed toward social video on platforms

including Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and streaming services like Twitch as a potential boon for media organizations and publishers in the Western world (Newman, 2022). Drawing from Harcup and O'Neill's (2017) proxy of news values, interviewees said that multimedia including pictures, videos, data visualization, and audio elements enhance solutions journalism in practice. There are several examples of interviewees' desires to utilize multimedia elements in their reportage. Some are purely aspirational, and others provided concrete examples of multimedia reportage.

One example of an aspirational claim is from a journalist in Costa Rica, who said any use of audiovisual or multimedia elements would be "amazing:" "If you can include pictures, videos, data visualization, and audio podcasts to your solutions journalism story, of course, it's amazing, and it will grab attention when it's used appropriately and when it's needed" (J51).

While many solutions journalists said that utilizing multimedia in solutions journalism would be "ideal," with some interviewees, lack of time played a role that limited them in this capacity:

> Ideally, I would use multimedia more, but it just takes more time to produce. I would say most of my pieces are really just photos and text. But I mean, obviously, it would be ideal for a piece to have a lot of interactive media, but yeah, just I guess, just logistically, not the easiest for me. (J42)

One Brazilian journalist discussed a project they produced in Brazil about COVID-19 that took the form of an interactive graphic novel with video, pictures, and comic strips on their website. That story became one of their most popular stories that year, but it was rare because of how expensive it was to produce. This journalist said they use technology "sometimes," but it depends on whether or not there are financial resources available.

“Technology needs time and money. It's expensive,” they said. “But it's possible to do some things with technology that are simple things—like graphics” (J48).

This journalist also articulated an aspiration to produce a solutions-oriented podcast in Brazil, that would be modeled after a solutions podcast they’d heard in Colombia: “I’ve never done it, but I would like to, because I love podcasts. I listen to podcasts a lot. Brazilian podcasts and Spanish podcasts—Haja Bulont—for example. I believe that it’s possible to do solutions journalism in podcasts, too” (J48).

On the other hand, a journalist said that, even though podcasts and video are surging in popularity among media consumers, there is a place for text just as there is a place for video (J49).

“It's very powerful to have a one-minute video of somebody working on something speak straight to the camera in the way that a 2,000-word article may lose people along the way,” they said. “And in the same way, it's a lot easier to give the full context of something happening in a 2,000 word article than it is in that one-minute video. I still think people primarily read their news...no matter how many pivots to video I've been forced to make in my life, people still end up reading stuff, and I think all platforms can do this equally. I don't think multimedia's the future, I think it's the present. I think that we have to take every story and see the best way to report it out. I've worked in all mediums, but I tend to work mostly through text. I think that if I see a really obvious story that should be a video, that's easy to say, too” (J49).

Similarly, one journalist said that when they worked at a nonprofit newsroom, “we had a small team with video, with two videographers. And so I worked with them a little bit more,” but in their major mainstream media organization now, “there's not a lot

of overlap with video and text" (J39). They "don't use a lot of multimedia" in their solutions reporting, but they "would love to be able to photograph my sources or have a photographer who could come out and help me with that" (J39).

A journalist in Costa Rica said that, after spending a month and a half reporting a story about single-use plastics, the newsroom committed to figuring out how to distill complex information into digestible form digitally. Because mobile consumption is a key way readers consume news (Nelson & Lei, 2017), they "wanted to report in a very minimalist way for the audiences…to navigate on cell phones and on desktop computers" (J51).

This trend to adopt more multimedia in solutions journalism practice is replicated globally. A journalist in Nigeria began to take classes in multimedia journalism, data journalism, and visualization to make solutions journalism stories they write more "meaningful:"

> Multimedia, videos, audio, datasets, and visualization help in audience engagement...using illustrations and maybe cartoon visualization to drive home your point. I think it will help in making more meaning for solutions journalism especially in Nigeria. Whatever you're doing reporting, using multimedia, using videos of these people, of the people you're talking about, using data to visualize the problem and to show how there is a gap in learning, in public learning system or how lack of access to health facilities is depriving mothers from accessing good healthcare and all that. (J34)

Interviewees argued that multimedia and audio-visual elements were a desired part of solutions journalism practice, but production of such stories are constrained due to the time and resources it takes to produce such content. This aspiration to produce more solutions-oriented multimedia and audiovisual content is a notable part of interviewees' descriptions of solutions journalism practice, and is worth further examination as it contributes to the practice's theorization and diffusion. The restrictions to time and

resources that keep actors from producing multimedia and audiovisual solutions content are discussed below.

Barriers to Diffusion: Structural Constraints and Challenges

According to interviewees, exogenous forces including data, technology, and social media are integral parts of the theorization of solutions journalism. New normative outlooks including audience engagement and multimedia elements assist with solutions journalism's theorization and diffusion. As a networked organizational form, solutions journalism is in the midst of the theorization and diffusion process and is moving toward reinstitutionalization. At the same time, solutions journalism is restrained from attaining cognitive legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, by various structural factors. Open-ended survey responses from 1,543 journalists, journalism educators, and journalism students from eighteen countries in Latin America showed that crime and corruption, state violence against the press, and the lack of a free-speech culture pose structural constraints to investigative reporting in Latin America (Saldaña & Mourão, 2018). Similarly, results of this study show constraints facing solutions journalism including lack of time, resources, awareness, and buy-in. Results show that structural factors keeping the networked organizational form of solutions journalism from attaining cognitive legitimacy include that it takes more time to develop a solutions story than general assignment or breaking news reporting. Results also show that freelance pay available for solutions journalism articles is low, and that a number of part-time freelancers work in corporations or nonprofits full time in addition to picking up or creating part-time solutions journalism projects. Further, some editors and journalists are skeptical of solutions journalism and think of it as fluff. Others write off the practice of solutions

journalism as too simple. There is a general unawareness of solutions journalism in newsrooms in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in particular; a resistance to adoption of solutions journalism among decision makers in the Asian news industry; and skepticism about solutions journalism among established journalists and editors. This skepticism among journalists and editors is due in part to the dark side of social media, comprising negative elements of misinformation, toxicity, and instant gratification. These structural constraints and their implications for keeping the networked organizational form of solutions journalism from attaining cognitive legitimacy are described in detail below.

Lack of Awareness and Buy-In

Social actors that support solutions journalism claim it is well known in journalistic and academic circles. In this way, in the words of interviewees, solutions journalism is developing formative elements of moral and pragmatic legitimacy. As an example of solutions journalism's recognition by SJN and journalism professionals, when asked "Do you feel that others you know think of solutions journalism as an emerging or established form of journalism?" a full-time employee of SJN responded:

> Yes, at this point, the term is well-known (anecdotally, when we're at journalism conferences and ask for a show of hands, 'who's heard of solutions journalism?,' consistently most of the room raises their hands), and in fact we can point to hundreds of news organizations that do solutions journalism and call it that. There are also dozens of journalism schools teaching courses in solutions journalism to the next generation of journalists. (J13)

Similarly, another full-time representative of SJN said that SJN is now focused on spreading the practice of solutions journalism after spending its early years legitimizing it and establishing its credibility (J9). In this way, interviewees confirmed solutions journalism is in between theorization and diffusion in its institutionalization process.

At the same time, according to some interviewees and online observations and conversations, solutions journalism is still relatively unknown in newsrooms in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in particular. Even though organizations like SJN have helped newsrooms in America in particular become more aware of solutions journalism as a practice, there is a general unawareness of solutions journalism worldwide. Additionally, structural constraints exist among editors who aren't aware of solutions journalism as a practice and think of solutions journalism as "fluff" or more inclined toward "public relations" or "advocacy" work than traditional journalism.

According to a U.S. practitioner, "established journalists and editors are more skeptical of solutions journalism as a journalistic approach, and solutions journalism may face some of those challenges for a while" (J4). Similarly, in an Asian context, journalists with 5 to 10 years' experience in the industry have a "shared understanding about the term of solutions journalism" while decision makers in the news industry–publishers, editors, chief editors–have "ongoing resistance" to the concept (J50). Yet, within this tension, a South Korean practitioner asserts that solutions journalism is "on track to change the media practice and media landscape in general in the East Asia region" (J50).

Another U.S. practitioner mentioned that the most skepticism they received about solutions journalism was from academics—until they come to fully understand all of solutions journalism's rules, norms, and values: "Until I tell them the criteria, if I just say the one statement, people are like, 'Okay, this is just fluff'" (J13).

One practitioner explained the importance of adhering to solutions journalism's rules, norms, and values to prevent the perception of a solutions-oriented piece appearing as "fluff:" "If you don't focus on the 'How,' you're not really giving good information. If

you don't have evidence or limitations, then you're going to end up with a fluff piece or just a feature" (J14).

In addition to skepticism, or lack of buy-in among "outsiders" to solutions journalism, several social actors that support solutions journalism expressed a bit of skepticism about solutions journalism as well. For example, a journalist mentioned that "you should never approach a story and attempt to make it a solutions story, it's doing a disservice to the story, instead you should let it emerge naturally" (J18). Similarly, another journalist argued: "You shouldn't always do solutions journalism. It should be 50/50 solutions journalism / problem focused news" (J15).

Lack of buy-in also came in the form of interviewees' concerns about the lack of editorial freedom available to them when funded by various organizations. One journalist said solutions outlets funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation seem to defend them in their content (J1). Other interviewees said that, when funding agencies are quoted in the story, they become an "advertorial" (J26).

On the other hand, editors of publications funded by various agencies insisted their publications maintained "complete editorial independence from all funding agencies that it partners with and is supported by," a practice supported by their statement of ethics (J11).

This lack of awareness and buy-in of solutions journalism keeps it from diffusing into newsrooms throughout the U.S. (J14) and Asia (J50). This lack of buy-in keeps it from attaining cognitive legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, as there is a healthy amount of phenomenological skepticism at leadership levels and among social actors that support the practice as well. This skepticism exists with regard to social media as well, as social

media burnout and lack of time and resources to share solutions stories on social media leads to a lack of the diffusion of solutions journalism on social media platforms in particular. This phenomenon is explored in detail below.

The Dark Side of Social Media

The dark side of social media involves cyberbullying, trolling, fake news, and privacy abuse (Baccarella et al., 2018). The social media honeycomb is one framework that lays the foundation for understanding the bright and dark sides of social media, which both involve elements of conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, groups, and identity (Baccarella et al., 2018). Results of this study show that, while there are many positive affordances of social media in the solutions journalism sphere, some interviewees recognized the darker side of social media in practice. These elements include the ability to spread misinformation, create toxic environments, and provide instant gratification that could be misleading to readers and viewers. This study supports findings that journalists are experiencing social media fatigue and burnout largely due to increased anxiety about social media's negative impacts on their personal and professional reputations and well-being (Bossio & Holton, 2021). This study provides insights about how social media platforms and practices contribute to and create "toxic environments" (J21). Interviewees in this study also noted that social media can challenge solutions journalism's legitimacy, credibility, and authority.

Social media news readers prefer to read and share overwhelmingly positive news (Al-Rawi, 2019). Even though this is a proven phenomenon that could help with solutions journalism's diffusion, some interviewees resist the idea of attempting to

produce “viral stories” because they “seem somewhat shallow and surface-level, a lot of the time” and “instant gratification…can be dangerous” (J41).

One journalist said that a major downside to social media is that “anyone can post anything and then claim anything” (J40). Another journalist pointed out that social media enables “anyone to be a journalist—good, bad, or indifferent” (J12). A journalist also said that, anecdotally, they had seen conversations on social media challenge solutions journalism’s legitimacy and credibility: “I'm certain and know, just from reading social media, that pieces that I would consider to be solutions journalism stories are classified as fake news all the time” (J16). However, they also said they never experienced this skepticism personally: “I'm sure there's skepticism out there. I just didn't experience it personally that I can think of” (J16).

While digital technology provides affordances for more audience interactivity than ever before in news work, traditional newsrooms were initially hesitant to adopt innovative practices for a variety of reasons including fear of increased cost, loss of editorial control, and hesitancy to challenge traditionally held news values (Ryfe, 2016, 2012; Lowrey, 2012; Nel & Westlund, 2012). A U.S. editor said their news organization is “not terribly invested” in social media in part because they often experience “mudslinging” on platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. When asked about their digital strategy, they replied: “We're not good at instrumentalizing digital media or online tools to bring in new audiences. We have a Twitter, and a Facebook, and an Instagram, but that's about the extent of our digital strategies” (J18). Another journalist mentioned they are still “coming around to social media,” but that they are “trying to figure out what the formula is” (J41). Another editor in the U.S. said that “social media is

not our [editors'] strong suit...we don't know how to love it…but it definitely plays into reporting for sure. Kind of has these days" (J47).

Another journalist noted they used social media regularly to find story ideas, sources, and trends, but recognized they were "pretty basic when it comes to technology" (J19). Another journalist described how their news organization operated as "luddites" while leveraging the website to reach new audiences:

> As an organization we're pretty much luddites...the bread and butter financially of our publication is still a paper magazine, it comes once a month...but you know, we have definitely reached new audiences online. We do have a younger, more diverse online subscriber base. So that is one way that technology has played out, is that we've been able to reach a different subset of readers through our website, even though our website sucks. (J18)

One journalist said they are "not very social media savvy" because "it's a rabbit hole:" "I get stuck in a Facebook scrolling hole sometimes. I don't need, for myself, I don't need another way to do that" (J43). They did note, however, that if they were in a larger, urban media market, that social media may be more compelling to them:

> I just don't find it necessary to interact with readers or get our stories out there. Just because of the news market we're in. I think I would use it if I was in a bigger place. If I lived in a city, I think I would use it because I think that there's more competition for information in a place like that. And having that as a tool, I think would be helpful. But it just doesn't really serve me in a community this size. (J43)

Studies show that "many new professional relationships are forming—from technologists, to videographers, from social media management staff to iPad editors" in newsrooms worldwide (Sacco & Bossio, 2017, p. 189). As such, it is important to understand the relationships between editorial, business and technology teams and elements in news organizations, especially as it relates to social media production (Sacco & Bossio, 2017). One example of this relationship is journalists expressing the

importance of teamwork within newsrooms and delegating social media promotion to staff focused on that task in particular. As one journalist mentioned:

> I've never been super involved with social media. Once my stories are out, I try to share things on my personal accounts, but I sometimes neglect that. I'm a little bad at it. But I do appreciate the people and staff who do the social media promotion because I do think that's super important in reaching a wider audience and I really respect what they do. (J24)

For journalists that own their own publication outlets, it's difficult to dedicate a large amount of time to social media promotion. One British journalist came from a traditional newspaper newsroom but now publishes stories on a feature-oriented solutions outlet and says they do not use social media as "heavily" as they did when they worked for a newspaper when it was "part of the job" (J28).

In addition to the dark side of social media, interviewees expressed a lack of buy-in to data and technology that others leveraged as a key part of solutions journalism in practice. While data and technology are integral elements of solutions reporting in practice, some skepticism exists around its efficacy. One journalist recognized that both numerical data and words can be manipulated to serve whatever means a news outlet might desire: "You can manipulate static, fixed scientific objective data to serve your own means. You can do that with words, too. So, what's your goal?" (J6).

According to another journalist, including "evidence for impact" in solutions stories is important, but some solutions journalists write stories that aren't based in data-driven evidence (J5). This journalist said that "redlining and segregation were not evidence-driven policies," and yet they were crucial concepts to report on. Further, in their own reporting, they said: "Evidence is something that I look for, but it's not something that will keep me from doing a story. If I don't have evidence for it, I'm like,

‘Well, neither do racists for what they do, so why am I applying that standard here?’” (J5).

A U.S. practitioner pointed out that it’s important to be critical of the data points leveraged to ensure all segments of the population are represented fairly: “You can’t present all the data on a solution to X problem that only includes this corner of the population while you never talk to people over here” (J52).

Reese (2021) argued that an “institutionally organized forum is needed more than ever to resist the dark side of the internet” (p. 1). Solutions journalism is becoming theorized and has begun to diffuse to social actors worldwide, but the dark side of social media is contributing to environmental constraints keeping solutions journalism from diffusing and attaining cognitive legitimacy, or becoming taken for granted. The dark side of social media and limited opportunities resulting from lack of awareness and buy-in from media industry professionals due to skepticism about solutions journalism’s rigor keeps solutions journalism from diffusing. Lack of time and resources, described below, pose similar challenges to solutions journalism’s diffusion.

Lack of Time

Scholarship shows that a lack of time is a major structural barrier for newsroom staff to take on new tasks and roles (Paulussen, 2012). Similarly, results of this study show that a lack of time limits the diffusion of solutions journalism in practice. For example, interviewees inside and outside of the U.S articulated interests in pursuing public records, but expressed frustration over not being able to receive the data in a timely manner. In Pakistan, a Right to Information law enables journalists to file “RTIs” for data from government agencies, but they don’t often return the requests in a timely

fashion (J3). Reporters in the U.S. discussed frustrations with the amount of time it takes journalists to attain access to data through FOIA requests. One practitioner is a solutions practitioner at a higher education institution in the U.S. that sought to remedy this in part by participating in a research project that analyzed data about COVID-19 and made that information available to reporters for free:

> A lot of local reporters are stretched so thin that they don't have time or resources to do FOIA requests...all of the documents we get back are available on our website for any reporters to use in their reporting. So to me, it's presented as an investigative project...that makes this information available to local newsrooms all over. And we'll even do some data analysis for them and share with them. (J4)

It also takes more time to develop a solutions story than general assignment or breaking news reporting, which leads to solutions-oriented articles appearing less frequently than other types of reporting. For example, one editor took five years to publish a story about human trafficking survivors in Colorado, USA, to capture all the intricacies, context, and emotion involved with helping survivors work their way through the legal system (Singer, 2014). As another example, a journalist in Costa Rica said they were not sure if solutions journalism would become normative in their newsroom due to the time it takes to produce a solutions-oriented project—up to a month at a time (J51). Yet another journalist took three years to produce a story on anti-trafficking efforts in India (J8).

A journalist in Costa Rica said that solutions journalism projects take over a month to produce on average. Even though they take more time than breaking news reporting to produce, the four solutions journalism projects they developed in 2019 were "very much read and discussed on social media," each project was a "debate generator,"

and the projects “also sell subscriptions” (J51). This is one example of solutions journalism creating economic vitality for news outlets worldwide.

The amount of time it takes for solutions journalism to be produced is a key part of its theorization but also limits its diffusion. In addition to solutions journalism taking up more time than traditional reporting, solutions journalism faces a lack of resources in practice, as well.

Lack of Resources

Results of this study show that there is a lack of financial support for solutions journalism in practice. Social actors interviewed for this study are often dedicated to pursuing corporate careers that support their practice of solutions journalism, which many referred to as a passion project that they would do full time if they could support themselves doing so (J28, J32).

In addition to lack of financial support for solutions journalism, interviewees expressed frustrations with macro-level limitations to access to data in countries including Pakistan, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. For example, a journalist was elected governor of the Karachi Press Club in Pakistan for 2020 and 2021, and noted that data is hard to come by in Pakistan, especially about issues including COVID-19, human trafficking, refugees, and environmental issues. “In Pakistan, and in other countries, there is a big issue of getting data,” they said. “Nobody wants to provide you the data…these resources would be very helpful for journalists” (J3).

Similarly, a Costa Rican journalist said limitations to accessing data make it difficult to produce high quality reportage. “In countries like Nicaragua, it's very difficult to make good solutions journalism, because you have no access to official data, and also

it's a country where it appears that there is no immediate end of the tunnel...which is very much like Venezuela. Right? There is a military dictatorship that apparently is very well settled" (J51).

Including data and evidence for impact in solutions-oriented stories is important to solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners. Most interviewees described favorable attitudes toward data and technology, and saw technology as a positive contribution to their daily practice. However, many interviewees said that a lack of information and education about social media, data, and technology limited them in their professional practice (J24, J25, J29). Those that expressed a lack of information, education, and experience with data and technology said they desired more education and information but often lacked time to commit to learning about those new tools. Journalists that lacked time and resources expressed desires to learn how to utilize data and technology including algorithms (J16), data mining (J16), social media (J18), and multimedia (J19) in their reporting practices. Reasons they did not implement these technological tools in their reporting practices included lack of time to use technological tools and platforms in addition to their daily workload, lack of resources available to learn new skills, and challenges to adopting and implementing technology at an organizational level.

One example of a lack of time keeping journalists from using technological skills came from a journalist in France who desires to use data visualization more often, but does not feel prepared or equipped to do so. "Journalists like me that have been doing this job for 20 years are not very technologically prepared to use these new tools," a French journalist said. "Visual data is something amazing, and I think we have to learn from them. We have in France some entrepreneurs who create visual data things, and I think

we need to use that more to work with them...visual data specifically, as I'm working for French television, is something that will be more and more useful" (J45).

Westlund et al. (2021) found that coordination and collaboration between business, editorial, and information technology (IT) departments within media organizations is a key way for news organizations to adopt technological innovations that will help them adapt to volatile market conditions. Another one of their findings is that IT departments are becoming a central part of innovation in the news industry worldwide. At the organizational level, this has implications for the utilization of data and technology in practice. For example, when there is a breakdown in communication between the editorial and IT departments at any given news organization, that can keep ideas and stories from diffusing in practice. This breakdown in communication was described by interviewees with regard to failed adaptation of their newsroom's content management system (CMS):

> Our website has a really woeful CMS that's like, just sucks...we can't adapt it. We're supposed to get a new CMS, we've been supposed to be getting a new CMS for the last three years, as long as I've worked here. (J18)

This is one example of the potential breakdown between journalistic actors and technology or IT professionals within news organizations. In a worst case scenario, breakdowns in communication will contribute to news organizations' closures. As Casado et al. (2022) discovered, it's crucial for traditionally minded media organizations to adapt or die–i.e., reorient their strategies to reach audiences captivated by technological innovations including internet-distributed short form videos. One way to adapt is to collaborate (Westlund et al., 2021).

A lack of resources contribute to the constraints facing the diffusion of solutions journalism practice. In addition to lack of time and resources, interviewees discussed lack of awareness and buy-in as key factors limiting the diffusion of solutions journalism globally. In the ways described above, restrictions to time, resources, awareness, and buy-in keep solutions journalism from diffusing and ultimately attaining cognitive legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, in practice. These limitations and restrictions are shared by other journalistic approaches worldwide, and aren't necessarily exclusive to solutions journalism. Implications these environmental constraints have for the diffusion and proceeding legitimacy of networked organizational forms of journalism worldwide will be unpacked in the conclusion to this chapter.

Discussion

The justification of solutions journalism in practice is proliferation through networks and partnerships (Chapter 4) and a shared commitment to various rules, norms, and values (Chapter 5). As solutions journalism becomes theorized and begins diffusing, it is constrained by various mechanisms discussed in this chapter. According to analysis of data collected in this study, solutions journalism is developing formative elements of moral legitimacy due to its placement within existing normative prescriptions of investigative, watchdog, and accountability roles. At the same time, solutions journalism faces limitations to diffusion due to limitations to pragmatic legitimacy or functional superiority due to lack of time, resources, awareness, and buy-in. While much of this dissertation has focused on endogenous forces at play and opportunities contributing to solutions journalism's theorization, this chapter highlighted mechanisms limiting its diffusion in practice.

This chapter shows that solutions journalism is an emerging global institution between theorization and diffusion with various factors contributing to and constraining its success. This analysis provides insights as to how solutions journalism is developing formative elements of moral and pragmatic legitimacy, and investigates why it has not yet attained cognitive legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, in practice.

Patterns of path dependence are creating stability for solutions journalism within news media organizations worldwide via exogenous and endogenous forces (Vos, 2020). Exogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's institutionalization are external funding, collaborations, and partnerships (discussed in detail in Chapter 4); data; and social media. Endogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's institutionalization include new normative outlooks of audience engagement, multimedia and audiovisual production, and a relationship to constructive journalism; a consistent definition; and codified rules, norms, and values (discussed in detail in Chapter 5).

Scholars have called for more theoretical work of what brings institutions through the institutionalization process. Building on Greenwood et al. (2002)'s framework, more scholarship is needed to examine what brings institutions from stage three, preinstitutionalization, to stage six, reinstitutionalization. This chapter thus addressed how solutions journalism as a case study is moving through the theorization and diffusion process–stages four and five–toward the sixth and final stage of institutionalization: reinstitutionalization, or attainment of cognitive legitimacy. To illustrate solutions journalism's journey through the theorization and diffusion process, the question asked at the beginning of this chapter was: What mechanisms limit networked organizational

forms of journalism and how do organizational actors seek to overcome those restrictive barriers?

The argument that pertained to this question was: Solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion worldwide, with various factors contributing to and constraining its success. This chapter first outlined how, according to interviewees, solutions journalism's core function is to inform the public; engage and empower audiences; and build trust. These core functions are supported by endogenous and exogenous forces that support its institutional development and theorization. Exogenous forces that support its theorization and diffusion include external funding, data, and leverage of social media in various ways. Data is key to solutions journalism in practice. First, data-driven evidence is a main component of solutions journalism; second, databases and public records are key for mining solutions-oriented story ideas and sources; and third, data helps solutions journalists fact check stories and their evidentiary claims.

Social media raises awareness for solutions journalism in practice and enables sourcing practices to be more efficient with the help of technological platforms and affordances. Other pros of social media include the ability to share stories, identify trends, and find story ideas. Strengths of social media also included finding sources and verifying sources and facts. Some journalists also mentioned that social media metrics help to verify the quality of their stories.

Endogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's institutionalization include new normative outlooks of audience engagement, multimedia and audiovisual production, and a relationship to constructive journalism; a consistent definition; and

codified rules, norms, and values. Audience engagement is characterized by interviewees' willingness to make themselves available to readers and to invite conversation, dialogue, and debate on topics they publish stories about. Coverage provided in solutions-oriented stories is meant to not only inform readers but also to raise awareness for solutions that can be carried out at the community level. According to results of this study, audience engagement with solutions-oriented work can help sustain and cultivate democracy in countries that are less democratic. It can also cultivate community engagement on social media platforms and foster conversations with community leaders in online and offline contexts.

Commitments to multimedia and audiovisual production are aspirational. Many interviewees desired to use multimedia and audiovisual elements more frequently, but are constrained by limitations to financial resources, skills, and time it takes to produce multimedia and audiovisual content. However, when multimedia and audiovisual stories are doable, results of this study show that they're effective at cultivating clicks and attention from audiences.

A relationship to constructive journalism is a significant endogenous force at play given it connects solutions journalism to a related journalistic counterpart in Europe. Resources continue to aggregate around constructive journalism in Europe while solutions journalism gains traction and awareness as well. Constructive journalism has some distinctions from solutions journalism but is also related in their normative outlooks and have similar goals: to report on solutions to social problems in a positive or optimistic way. Funding organizations in particular have taken form to support solutions and constructive journalism as has been shown in the establishment of the Bonn Institute

in Germany in 2022 as well as the Solutions Journalism Accelerator as discussed in Chapter 1.

At the same time, there are forces constraining solutions journalism's diffusion in practice. Forces constraining solution journalism's diffusion include lack of time, lack of resources, and lack of awareness and buy-in. While data is an integral part of creating solutions journalism stories, there is some skepticism about the efficacy of data and how it's used in solutions reporting. There are also constraints to resources that make it challenging to access data in an efficient manner. Cons to social media include the ways social media can challenge solutions journalism's legitimacy, credibility, and authority. Current journalists, editors, and practitioners expressed occasional mudslinging and toxic behaviors on social media platforms from and between users. There are also constraints and concerns about the time it takes to publish and share content on social media.

With regard to lack of time, it takes more time to develop a solutions story than general assignment or breaking news reporting. With regard to resources, freelance pay for solutions journalism is low. With regard to lack of awareness and buy-in, some editors and journalists are skeptical of solutions journalism; think of it as "fluff" or "PR;" and some "write off" the practice as too "simple."

To make a way forward, building on previous results chapters and in the face of these constraints, this chapter shows how solutions journalism has attained some formative elements of moral legitimacy due to social actors' justifications for its existence and nesting solutions journalism within existing normative prescriptions of investigative, watchdog, and accountability roles. Pragmatic legitimacy is based in part on economic returns and alignment with normative prescriptions or ideas (Greenwood et

al., 2002). Based on the results of this study, solutions journalism is strategically working toward pragmatic legitimacy by providing economic vitality for news outlets. In these ways, solutions journalism is developing formative elements of moral and pragmatic legitimacy. However, it faces limitations to diffusion due to limitations to pragmatic legitimacy–also known as functional superiority–due to lack of time, resources, awareness, and buy-in. Unless solutions journalism can overcome these barriers, it will never attain cognitive legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, in journalistic practice.

The following chapter will summarize findings from these three results chapters; discuss this study's limitations; and describe this study's practical and theoretical contributions for the fields of journalism, mass communication, sociology, management, and organizational studies.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Seeking Sustainability: The Socially Constructed Legitimacy of Solutions Journalism

Drawing from foundational roots in sociological and managerial literature, this dissertation project expands the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices. This dissertation also answers calls for clarity of the theorization and conceptualization of solutions journalism.

Because a "strong and robust institutional press dedicated to responsible newsgathering" plays a "crucial role in the health of democratic societies worldwide," it is important to identify the "essential aspects and character of the journalistic institution and the threats that confront it" (Reese, 2021, p. 4).

This dissertation does not seek to provide an analysis of the economic viability of solutions journalism. Nor does it critique solutions journalism practice. Rather, this dissertation seeks to provide a theoretically driven empirical investigation of the emerging institution of solutions journalism based upon the aspirations of social actors that support solutions journalism. In the interest of providing a generalizable road map for evaluating journalistic approaches in various stages of institutionalization, this dissertation also seeks to identify the threats that confront solutions journalism.

Since solutions journalism is in a moment of expansion worldwide, this study provides a theoretical contribution to journalism studies, organizational, and management studies by providing thorough analysis of an emerging institution's formative elements of legitimacy. This study also provides a generalizable case study that evaluates the mechanisms that contribute to the legitimacy of an emerging journalistic approach by

conceptualizing solutions journalism as a networked organizational form in pursuit of cognitive legitimacy.

This dissertation utilizes triangulated qualitative analysis of 52 in-depth interviews; netnography of solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners' digital communities; and qualitative content analysis of solutions-oriented journalistic texts to support three major arguments: First, emerging institutions gain legitimacy through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values, as seen in the legitimation of solutions journalism. Second, this dissertation demonstrates that solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form of hubs and spokes with a shared commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values. Third, this dissertation demonstrates that solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion worldwide, with various factors contributing to and constraining its success.

These arguments are unpacked below in a summary of this study's main theoretical and practical contributions. This chapter will conclude with limitations to this study and opportunities for future research.

Theoretical Contribution

This study seeks to expand the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices and to explore constraints keeping new journalistic approaches from gaining legitimacy and/or thriving.

This dissertation expands understanding of new institutional theory in journalism studies by arguing three things. First, that evaluating journalism as a networked organizational form will enhance an institutional understanding of the press in theory and

practice. Second, it is important for any form of journalism to commit to a shared set of rules, norms, and values that benefit democratic society. Third, solutions journalism as a journalistic approach is in between theorization and diffusion on a global scale. There are various environmental constraints limiting journalism's diffusion, but these constraints can be overcome by committing to new normative outlooks including audience engagement.

Rather than providing a critical analysis of solutions journalism, this study captures the aspirations of social actors that support solutions journalism in the interest of expanding what is possible for building credibility and legitimacy for journalistic practice worldwide. These theoretical contributions are described in detail below, followed by a summary of this study's practical contributions.

Evaluating Journalism as a Networked Organizational Form

Monge and Contractor (2003) define networked organizational forms as "communication networks that share common features or patterns across a large number of organizations" (p. 17). This study explored the common features and patterns shared by social actors committed to the practice of solutions journalism worldwide as a network of hubs and spokes linked by economic, technological, and interpersonal connections.

In Chapter 4, this dissertation discussed how partnerships and collaboration contribute to the institutionalization of solutions journalism as a networked form of journalism by answering the following question:

RQ1: What role do collaborations and partnerships play in the institutionalization of networked organizational forms of journalism?

The argument that pertains to this research question is that collaborations and partnerships are integral to the institutionalization of networked organizational forms of journalism. As a representative case study of this phenomenon, solutions journalism is a journalistic approach that functions globally as a networked organizational form comprising decentralized hubs and spokes that carry out the practice worldwide.

Hubs that support solutions journalism include the Solutions Journalism Network (SJN), news media organizations, higher education institutions, and local solutions-oriented collaboratives. Spokes include the social actors–journalists, editors, and practitioners–that support solutions journalism in practice in addition to the dyadic relationship between the social actors and hubs. These hubs and spokes have various degrees of connection and collaboration with each other. Connections between these hubs and spokes are economic, technological, and interpersonal, mediated online by social media platforms. Connections also comprise shared commitments to a codified set of rules, norms, and values.

In this way, solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners create local networks grounded in codified practice that can transcend geographic boundaries on a global scale.

The implications of the networked organizational structure of solutions journalism for various journalistic approaches worldwide include the premise that a dense, well-connected network provides more opportunities for a journalistic approach to gain legitimacy in practice. On the other hand, a more diffuse network provides less ability for a journalistic practice to gain legitimacy.

In addition to economic, technological, and interpersonal connections between these hubs and spokes, the network of solutions journalism is held together by

commitments to a codified set of rules, norms, and values. The nature of this commitment and its implication for journalistic practice is described below.

Rules, Norms, Values, and Institutional Legitimacy

Reese questioned whether or not it is possible to identify the institutional core of journalism (2022). This study's results show that the institutional core of journalism requires a shared commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values that uphold the health of a democratic society. The rules, norms, and values of journalism have been investigated for decades, and this dissertation confirms the importance of them bonding the practice together.

This study described how journalists, editors, and practitioners create and support shared understandings of solutions journalism and contribute to its pursuit of legitimacy by posing and answering the following research question:

RQ2: How do social actors working within networked organizational forms of journalism establish shared understandings and promote legitimacy?

The argument that pertains to this research question is that emerging institutions gain legitimacy through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values, as seen in the legitimation of solutions journalism. Solutions journalism is an emerging institution gaining legitimacy in practice worldwide through shared support for a codified set of rules, norms, and values that relate to and build upon traditional and contemporary news values worldwide. Thus, this study captures and evaluates a moment in solutions journalism's emergence.

Media sociologists including Tuchman (1972) and Schudson (1978) laid the foundation for this inquiry in newsrooms in the mid-20th century. This investigation

continued into the 21st century with in-depth studies of how the advent of various technology and platforms have shifted the media landscape worldwide. The chronological evolution of media sociology is described masterfully by Bélair-Gagnon and Revers (2018) with mention of the defining work of scholars including Waisbord (2014), Usher (2014), and Lewis (2013). This study seeks to build on these lines of research by investigating how various rules, norms, and values are expanded and challenged by the advent of solutions journalism.

To evaluate solutions journalism as an emerging institution, this dissertation project empirically evaluated the rules, norms, and values related to the practice of solutions journalism to explain the opportunities and challenges that come with establishing solutions journalism within news media organizations worldwide. Consistent rules, norms, and values contribute to solutions journalism's cognitive legitimacy and institutionalization. Emotion and hope (Dodd, 2021) are two such values that enhance the legitimacy of solutions journalism worldwide.

Beyond hubs and spokes that carry out solutions journalism in practice, solutions journalism has a central mission characterized by consistent rules, norms, and values. These rules, norms, and values include commitments to accountability; advocacy and social change; objectivity; emotion; and hope.

This study provides an exemplar of a journalistic approach characterized by a commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values. In this way, solutions journalism serves as an example for any number of journalistic approaches that comprise commitments to various rules, norms, and values. It also raises the question of what sets

solutions journalism apart epistemically from other forms of journalism. This question is explored in the conclusion.

In light of the networked organizational form and structure of solutions journalism characterized by codified rules, norms, and values and economic, technological, and interpersonal connections, solutions journalism is a journalistic approach in between theorization and diffusion on a global scale. Its pursuit of cognitive legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, has not yet been actualized due to limitations to time, resources, and awareness and buy-in as described below.

From Theorization to Reinstitutionalization: Pursuing Cognitive Legitimacy

Patterns of path dependence are creating stability for solutions journalism within news media organizations worldwide via exogenous and endogenous forces (Vos, 2020). Exogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's institutionalization are funding, collaborations, and partnerships; data and replicability; and use of social media. Endogenous forces that contribute to solutions journalism's institutionalization include new normative outlooks of audience engagement, multimedia and audiovisual production, and a relationship to constructive journalism; a consistent definition; and codified rules, norms, and values.

The existence of college courses, professional organizations, and a global network of hubs and spokes dedicated to solutions-oriented media show formalization over time of the networked organizational form of solutions journalism. These elements build toward the legitimacy of solutions journalism. Analysis of data collected in this study makes a strong case for the moral legitimacy of solutions journalism as "the right thing to do" (Suchman, 1995, p. 579). Results show that solutions journalism is filling a gap in

the news media industry (Chapter 6). Additionally, interviewees aligned solutions journalism with accepted and legitimate practices of investigative and accountability journalism (Chapter 5).

Pragmatic legitimacy is based in part on economic returns and alignment with normative prescriptions or ideas (Greenwood et al., 2002). While not the primary finding of this study, journalists, editors, and practitioners provided several examples of how solutions journalism can catalyze economic vitality for global news outlets through audience engagement and subscriptions. Further, professional associations or hubs like SJN are influential players in the processes of institutionalization, deinstitutionalization, and reinstitutionalization (Greenwood et al., 2002; Schudson, 2001). Professional associations can create change and negotiate and manage debates within various professions in addition to reframing professional identities to individuals and organizations inside and outside various professions (Greenwood et al., 2002). The support of numerous professional associations that support solutions journalism–including SJN, Fundacion Gabo, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to name a few–provides a promising trajectory for the practice worldwide. More studies can be done to show and prove the economic viability of solutions journalism for media outlets.

This dissertation's results show that solutions journalism is in a moment of expansion in the midst of challenges including a global pandemic, systemic injustices, fragmented attention economies, and decreasing financial resources. In the face of these endogenous, exogenous, and environmental pressures, solutions journalism's stakeholders are leveraging collaborations, partnerships, data, technology, and social/mobile platforms to create networks that transcend geographic boundaries and

build resilience for the future of journalism in practice worldwide. This body of work explored the mechanisms that limit solutions journalism's growth alongside opportunities that exist for solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners to overcome those restrictive barriers. The final research question of this dissertation is:

RQ3: What mechanisms limit a networked organizational form of journalism and how do organizational actors seek to overcome those restrictive barriers?

Thus, solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion worldwide.

The results presented in this dissertation support the argument that solutions journalism is in a moment between theorization and diffusion with various factors contributing to and constraining its success. Though there are some restraints and restrictions to solutions journalism's emergence, solutions journalism's network is global in scope and committed to seeking partnerships and collaborations that support its institutionalization worldwide.

In these ways, this study shows that solutions journalism is strategically working toward moral and pragmatic legitimacy. However, solutions journalism faces limitations to diffusion due to lack of time, resources, awareness, and buy-in. Time, awareness, resources, and buy-in are core resources, but are also scarce. This scarcity of time, awareness, resources, and buy-in are problematic and constrain the diffusion of solutions journalism.

While solutions journalism has become taken for granted by social actors that buy into the practice, it has not become taken for granted by a majority of mainstream news outlets and there are limitations to its diffusion in the Global South and Asia in particular.

The geographic diffuseness of the social actors that support solutions journalism is one challenge to its cultivation of cognitive legitimacy. Various environmental pressures and differing worldviews present a challenge to the centrality of solutions journalism in practice as well. Unless solutions journalism can overcome these barriers to diffusion, it will never attain cognitive legitimacy, or taken for grantedness, in journalistic practice.

The following section will describe the practical contributions of this dissertation. Findings support the epistemic differentiation of solutions journalism as a form of journalism that upholds hope as a new news value; economic benefits that can come from partnerships, collaborations, and audience engagement; and cultivation of trust that comes from audience engagement as well.

Practical Contribution

Based on the results of this study, it is evident that a shift is underway in news production worldwide—away from problems, toward solutions. As an interviewee stated, "Maybe solutions journalism is just good journalism…it should be. So I really want to support journalists in doing a better job at telling the whole story" (J30).

This study's main contribution supports the argument that success for solutions journalism is not to become a flagship, mainstream media organization. Rather, based on interviews with social actors that support solutions journalism in practice worldwide, solutions journalism is suited to spur community-based movements that engage and equip readers to be informed and create positive change in communities worldwide. As one interviewee (J30) mentioned, solutions journalism is, quite simply, good journalism.

Practical contributions of this study include exploring the benefits of solutions-oriented news coverage. These benefits include the epistemic differentiation of solutions

journalism characterized by upholding hope as a new news value; economic benefits that can come from partnerships and collaborations; and how commitments to audience engagement can catalyze economic vitality and help to cultivate trust in the news.

Boundary Work and the Epistemic Differentiation of Solutions Journalism: Hope as a New News Value

Solutions journalism sets itself apart from other types of journalism by characterizing itself as holding "hope" up as a key news value. While it shares accountability and watchdog functions and mechanisms with other journalistic approaches, hope is a value unique to the practice of solutions journalism. Hope is an important new news value to consider because per the results of this study, hope is goal-directed action provided by journalists in solutions stories. Hope in solutions stories manifests by framing coverage of social problems optimistically and upholding commitments to advocacy and social change.

Because solutions stories often cover topics related to policy and political action, the presentation of a story matters. The press often serves as the basis for policy and action (Dell'Orto, 2013) and the media set up the frame by which members of the public and policymakers understand many issues (Baum & Potter, 2008; Dell'Orto, 2013; Entman, 1993). Further, stories framed in terms of problems rather than solutions have been found to contribute to "compassion fatigue," a concept defined as "stress resulting from exposure to a traumatized individual" (Cocker & Joss, p. 1). Moeller (1999) explored this phenomenon as it relates to media coverage of disaster, arguing that human tragedy and suffering is often presented as a commodity in news media.

Results of this study show that by upholding hope as a new news value, solutions journalism evaluates and analyzes solutions to social problems in a way meant to equip and empower audiences to make and support positive change in their communities. Further, this study attempts to clearly define hope as a new news value that seeks to remedy the compassion fatigue among journalists and readers that produce and consume news about social problems.

Given that this new news value of hope comprises elements of "positivity" and "optimism," solutions journalism is thus closely aligned with its European counterpart of constructive journalism. Constructive journalism is a journalistic approach defined as "the application of positive psychology techniques to news processes and production in an effort to create productive, engaging and comprehensive coverage, while holding true to journalism's core functions" (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018). Solutions journalism sets itself apart from constructive journalism in its implementation of rules, norms, and values including accountability. As such, this study aligns with Dodd (2021) who argues that solutions journalism sets itself apart from constructive journalism by providing "empirical rigor in the identification and reporting of scalable solutions" rather than "positive psychology as a rationale and method for reporting solutions" (p. 6). In addition to identifying hope as a new news value, this study of solutions journalism shows various nuances of objectivity and advocacy and seeks to build on the work of Fisher (2016) to discuss how advocacy and objectivity exist on a spectrum.

The Nuances of Advocacy and Objectivity

Results of this study show that advocacy and objectivity can go hand in hand within the same story. This is an element unique to solutions journalism. Fisher (2016)

pointed out that advocacy and objectivity exist on a spectrum. This study similarly argues that advocacy and objectivity, rather than being mutually exclusive, can exist in the same news story. This is made possible by the nuanced definition of objectivity that interviewees articulated as comprising elements of fairness, balance, and credibility, context, data, and evidentiary claims. At the same time, solutions journalism seeks to advocate for solutions to social problems by hoping for social and policy change as an outcome of stories (J16). Anderson et al. (2016) argue that objectivity is an often misunderstood journalism value. This study seeks to clarify the definition of objectivity while arguing that advocacy is just as important as objectivity is. Advocacy also coexists along with objectivity in solutions journalism narratives.

In addition to the epistemic differentiation of solutions journalism from other forms of journalism, revealing journalism's core values has implications for economic viability (Reese, 2021). Additional economic benefits are described below.

Economic Benefits: Partnerships and Collaborations

Institutional stability in journalism requires elements of commitment, predictability, and professional training (Reese, 2021). Media organizations' institutional stability is also supported by professional credibility and making money (Reese, 2021). This dissertation thus seeks to articulate the aspirations solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners have for establishing and maintaining these institutional elements of the press worldwide.

New funding models have emerged in the U.S. context in particular. In the U.S., historic funding for media include advertising-supported models, while in the 21st century, philanthropic, university-based, nonprofit and public service journalism are more

prevalent than ever (Reese, 2021). Based on results of the study, solutions journalism is an exemplar of how these funding models are playing out in the 21st century.

Based on results of this study, social actors that support solutions journalism in practice have numerous aspirations and are often supported financially by various foundations and funding organizations including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Google, and SJN. Lack of transparency with regard to funding models can lead to manipulation within media organizations (Reese, 2021). This study seeks to illuminate the nuances of receiving funding from philanthropic organizations, which brings to mind questions about editorial independence and media ethics. This study's results show that, while some skepticism around solutions stories funded by foundations and philanthropic organizations exists, for social actors that carry out solutions journalism, the pros of receiving funding from various sources far outweigh the cons.

Beyond receipt of foundation funding, in a media economy where legacy media and traditional subscription models are in crisis, results of this study show that positive change can be achieved through local collaboratives as a subform of journalistic practice. Collaborations and partnerships between news media organizations and civic organizations are integral to the vitality of community-based local news in particular, as evidenced by collaboratives including Resolve Philadelphia and the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative. Solutions journalists, editors, and practitioners would be well served to continue to create these local collaboratives to maintain sustainability heading into the future. Scholars should continue to study the positive outcomes of local journalism and media collaboratives as well.

Results of this study also show that solutions journalism has the potential to catalyze economic benefits for news outlets. Audience engagement is also a key way to cultivate trust. These relationships are described in detail below.

Cultivating Economic Vitality and Trust Through Audience Engagement

Audience engagement is a potential way forward in building trust and providing financial sustainability for local news outlets in the U.S. in particular (Wenzel, 2019). Lack of trust in the news is one of the biggest challenges facing journalism today (Fink, 2019). In a study of community-centered journalism in the U.S., Wenzel (2020) conceptualized trust as a relational concept. She focused on how actors in local storytelling networks, media, and community groups talk about their relationships with each other in terms of trustworthiness factors including perceived accuracy and credibility, respectful and equitable representations, and benevolence of motives.

Similar to Wenzel's interpretation of trust as a relational concept, this study's findings support the argument that trust can be attained through establishment of legitimacy and credibility while pursuing opportunities for audience engagement. According to findings of this study, audience engagement is an integral normative outlook upheld by solutions journalists worldwide. In turn, as audiences engage with solutions journalism, legitimacy and credibility is attained. According to interviewees, multimedia and audiovisual production–especially on social media platforms–plays an integral role in fostering this engagement.

The Reuters Institute's 2022 predictions for journalism, media, and technology point toward short-form social video on platforms including Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and streaming services like Twitch as a potential boon for media organizations

and publishers in the Western world in particular (Newman, 2022). In light of these findings, one way to potentially press into the audience engagement side of media production is to utilize social influencers and platforms in a proactive way.

Another way to lean into audience engagement is to pay attention to networked flows of conversation on social media channels, especially with the influence they have to catalyze political action and transform journalistic norms and values (Hermida et al., 2014; Papacharissi & de Fatima Olivera, 2012; Russell, 2016). Engagement with audiences and sources on social media is one area where alternative and sometimes traditional news outlets are willing to innovate. Ambient journalism takes place when "users become part of the flow of news, reframing or reinterpreting a message through networked platforms that extend the dissemination of news through social interaction, introducing hybridity in news production and news values" (Hermida, 2014, p. 361).

In this way, results of this study show that, while solutions journalists seek to engage with audiences on social media platforms in particular, they are restrained by limitations to time and resources in practice. However, those who have engaged audiences on social media platforms have found it is possible to foster constructive dialogue and catalyze social change in communities worldwide.

Further ideas for future studies are outlined below following a summary of this study's limitations.

Limitations

Methodologically, a limitation to this study is that the researcher was unable to do in-person ethnography due to global constraints and lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, all of the in-depth interviews and evidence presented in this study are

presented by individuals that work within the solutions journalism space. This leads to results from insiders and stakeholders who support the practice of solutions journalism wholeheartedly. While this is not elite interviewing, it is related in the sense that the social actors interviewed for this project have power and influence in creating and cultivating the network (Empson, 2018; Moyser, 2006). This could also be perceived as a limitation, as the researcher did not contact outsiders that do not practice solutions journalism. A helpful next step may be to conduct a survey or series of interviews among journalists, editors, and practitioners not affiliated directly with solutions journalism to measure whether or not they perceive solutions journalism as a taken-for-granted journalistic approach. A similar survey or interview process could be conducted with news audiences to gauge their perceptions of solutions journalism as a credible or legitimate journalistic approach.

Another limitation is the positive interpretation of solutions journalism contained within this study. Solutions journalism could benefit from a more critical perspective to balance the enthusiastic interpretation of the practice presented in this study.

Theoretically, the period of time this study examines does not capture the full breadth of the evolution of solutions journalism. As such, this study is likely missing some key moments in the institutionalization of solutions journalism. From an evolutionary perspective, this study evaluates solutions journalism over a brief window of time compared to some similar studies that have looked at substantially longer periods of time in various forms of journalism's history. Also, other theories that may be helpful to expand understanding of solutions journalism include competitive strategy and/or resource-based frameworks (Spanos & Lioukas, 2001). These frameworks could shed

light on the forces that enable and/or constrain the market performance and profitability of solutions journalism.

The following section will discuss future research opportunities that relate to solutions journalism.

Future Research Opportunities

As Loosen et al. (2020)'s "x journalism" project shows, there will always be different kinds of journalism emerging in the media landscape. News nonprofits, collectives, collaboratives, and local media are emerging and are arguably serving communities better than mainstream or legacy news outlets have been. More experiments and studies examining the impact and economic returns possible through solutions journalism would be well merited. Further study of nonprofit organizations that rely on grants would be beneficial to better understand how journalism can serve the interests of democracy.

Methodologically, ethnography is an area of opportunity for future research on solutions journalism. Geographically, more studies on solutions journalism should be conducted in the Asia-Pacific and Global South regions of the world. Studies of the effectiveness of solutions journalism on short-form social video platforms including Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and streaming services like Twitch could be a potential boon for media organizations and publishers, as well.

There are a lot of unknown factors about solutions journalism's potential to drive revenue and impact within media organizations. While anecdotal case studies support the fact that solutions journalism can drive revenue (Hammonds, 2018; Solutions Journalism, 2019), the economic importance of solutions journalism warrants further examination:

Could solutions journalism save local news? Further, what is the role of the journalist in coverage of social problems? Is it to advocate on behalf of community members for specific solutions? Or to present information as objectively as possible? These questions would be well served to be investigated by journalism studies scholars in future research.

This study shows that further evaluation of solutions journalism's pursuit of moral, pragmatic, and cognitive legitimacy is needed. Empirically, evaluation of moral legitimacy comprises evaluation of four things: outputs and consequences; techniques and procedures; categories and structures; and evaluation of leaders and representatives (Suchman, 1995, p. 579). In these ways, future studies of the moral, pragmatic, and cognitive legitimacy of solutions journalism should examine the legitimacy of the networked organizational form of solutions journalism by evaluating various formative drivers of legitimacy described below.

Partnerships, collaborations, and connections are key drivers of legitimacy to consider. Connections are important to the success of a new organization's emergence in a network (Aldrich & Ruef, 2006). Diverse connections help to foster public engagement (Saffer et al., 2019). Future studies could examine the nature of partnerships and collaborations within the networked organizational form of solutions journalism to illuminate the influence various partnerships, collaborations, and connections have in the emergence and formalization of the network. For example, Shumate and O'Connor (2010) discuss NGO-corporate alliances and hyperlinks among organizational websites as representational networks. In a similar way, Shumate and Lipp (2008) evaluate how actors within representational networks function as reciprocators, brokers, authorities, and initiators online. Future studies could evaluate how hubs and spokes within the

networked organizational form of solutions journalism function in these ways while furthering the connective good (Shumate & Lipp, 2008).

Centrality is a key driver of legitimacy related to partnerships and collaborations, defined as how closely connected a firm is to the rest of the firms in the network both directly and indirectly and as the degree to which the firm has a strategically important position in the network (Freeman, 1978; Gulati et al., 2002). Centrality has long been held as an indicator of power, authority, and influence within a network (Borgatti et al., 2013; Gulati et al., 2002). Through an evaluation of what hubs, spokes, or social actors are most central to the networked organizational form of solutions journalism, it may be possible to discover which institutions and organizations are most powerful and influential within the networked organizational form. Measuring centrality of actors within the networked organizational form of solutions journalism can be discovered in part by a study of the frequency and nature of news media mentions (Kennedy, 2008; Malinick et al., 2013) and mentions of solutions journalism on social media platforms (Yang & Saffer, 2018). Examining the centrality of hubs, spokes, and social actors within the networked organizational form of solutions journalism in these ways would be helpful to provide insight about the moral legitimacy of solutions journalism in particular by providing external evaluation of its leaders and representatives presented in news media outlets and on social media platforms (Suchman, 1995). Evaluating the frequency and nature of social media mentions about solutions journalism would also help inform evaluation of its pragmatic and cognitive legitimacy.

This study thus lays the foundation for future studies by evaluating and presenting the emergence of the network of solutions journalism, discussing the importance of

partnerships and collaborations to the process of institutionalization, and acknowledging the influence of funding organizations that support solutions journalism practice (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

A Way Forward

This study is an answer to calls for theoretically driven empirical analyses of solutions journalism, defined as rigorous reporting on responses to social problems. This dissertation answers these calls by providing a theoretically driven empirical examination that shows the formative factors for the theorization and diffusion of solutions journalism: The establishment and cultivation of networks and partnerships (Chapter 4); a shared commitment to various rules, norms, and values (Chapter 5); and a desire to overcome various environmental constraints with new normative outlooks (Chapter 6).

This dissertation theorizes solutions journalism as a networked organizational form of hubs and spokes characterized by shared commitment to a codified set of rules, norms, and values. It is a journalistic approach that is pursuing cognitive legitimacy but is stuck in a loop between theorization and diffusion. By presenting solutions journalism as a networked organizational form between theorization and diffusion on a global scale, this study seeks to lay a foundation for understanding the importance of rules, norms, and values on journalistic approaches. This study also seeks to expand the applicability of new institutional theory to empirical questions about emerging news practices.

Results of this study show that evaluating journalism as a networked organizational form will enhance an institutional understanding of the press in theory and practice. It is also important for any form of journalism to commit to a shared set of rules, norms, and values that benefit democratic society. Finally, solutions journalism as a

journalistic approach is in between theorization and diffusion on a global scale. There are various environmental constraints limiting journalism's diffusion, but these constraints can be overcome by committing to new normative outlooks including audience engagement.

This study serves as an example of how the press can find a way forward in providing compelling and effective coverage of social problems. More broadly, it seeks to lay the foundation for future studies that will bolster the chances of the news media's survival in an increasingly fragmented attention economy.

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Appendix A: Interview Sample

J#	Role	Area of Focus / Expertise / Beat	Type of News Outlet	Location
1	Journalist	Healthcare, human rights	For profit	Nigeria
2	Practitioner	Criminal justice	Nonprofit	USA
3	Journalist	Politics, healthcare, environment	For profit	Pakistan
4	Practitioner	Healthcare	Nonprofit	USA
5	Journalist	Economics	Nonprofit	USA
6	Journalist	Environment, lifestyle, international development	For profit	USA
7	Editor	Human trafficking	For profit	USA
8	Journalist	Human trafficking, environment	For profit	Netherlands
9	Practitioner	Policy	Nonprofit	USA
10	Journalist	Human rights	For profit	India
11	Editor	Environment	Nonprofit	USA
12	Journalist	Local and state government	Nonprofit	Australia
13	Practitioner	Peace and conflict studies	Nonprofit	USA
14	Practitioner	Local news, health and science communication	Nonprofit	USA
15	Practitioner	Social innovation	Nonprofit	USA
16	Editor	Environment, immigration, politics, criminal justice, veteran affairs, lifestyle	For profit	USA
17	Practitioner	Business, philanthropy, environment	Nonprofit	USA
18	Editor	Politics, immigration, human trafficking	Nonprofit	USA

19	Journalist	Immigration, human trafficking, health	For profit	USA
20	Journalist	Local news	For profit	Germany
21	Journalist	Politics	For profit	USA
22	Editor	Politics	Nonprofit	USA
23	Editor	Human rights	Nonprofit	Nepal
24	Journalist	Environment	For profit	USA
25	Journalist	Local news, public health	For profit	USA
26	Journalist	Business, politics, lifestyle	For profit	USA
27	Journalist	Lifestyle, culture, healthcare	For profit	France
28	Journalist	Business, lifestyle, arts and culture, sustainability, development, environment	Nonprofit	England
29	Journalist	Human rights, food shortages, hunger	For profit	Nigeria
30	Practitioner	Human rights, policy	Nonprofit	France
31	Journalist	Travel, environment	nonprofit	Ukraine
32	Journalist	Urban planning	Nonprofit	Mexico / UK
33	Editor	Local news, politics	For profit	Nigeria
34	Journalist	Politics, human rights, social justice, marginalized communities	Nonprofit	Nigeria / South Africa
35	Practitioner	Global affairs, marginalized communities, engaged journalism	Nonprofit	USA
36	Editor	Local news, affordable housing, public health	For profit	USA
37	Practitioner	Urban planning, human rights	Nonprofit	USA
38	Journalist	Business, lifestyle	For profit	India
39	Journalist	Business, travel, environment, education	For profit	USA
40	Journalist	Local news, healthcare, environment	For profit	Nigeria

41	Journalist	Local news, housing	For profit	USA
42	Journalist	Environment, human rights	For profit	Philippines
43	Journalist	Healthcare, education	For profit	USA
44	Practitioner	Healthcare	Nonprofit	USA
45	Journalist	Local news, environment	For profit	France
46	Journalist	Environment, sustainability	Nonprofit	England
47	Editor	Social justice, homelessness, public health	For profit	USA
48	Journalist	Environment, politics, economy, public health	Nonprofit	Brazil
49	Editor	International development, healthcare	For profit	USA
50	Practitioner	Education, lifestyle, social justice	Nonprofit	South Korea
51	Journalist	Politics, environment, social justice	For profit	Costa Rica
52	Practitioner	Local news, community journalism	Nonprofit	USA

Appendix B: Interview Guide

IRB Interview Guide: The Institutionalization of Solutions Journalism

Opening Questions: *Informed Consent*

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today! I am Allison Steinke, a researcher from the University of Minnesota's Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication, and we have 30-60 minutes of time scheduled to talk today. Does that still work for you? I want to be sure to honor our time commitment.

[attain approval]

First of all, I'd like to make sure: Is it ok if I record our conversation today to transcribe later?

[attain verbal consent]

Great, thank you!

Second, I have prepared a number of questions, but before we get started, I'd like to begin by confirming I can use our conversation as part of a research project at the University of Minnesota. I would like to be able to use your name and byline as part of the project. Is it all right for me to use your name and byline, or do you need to be confidential for any reason? I will be sure to send you any direct quotes used in the research project before publication. It is all right for me to identify you by name and place of employment, or would you like your identity to remain confidential?

[attain verbal consent of anonymity / identification]

Great—thank you. Now, do you have any questions before we begin?

[answer any questions they have]

Thank you. Now, to open our interview…

Opening Questions: *Rapport Building and Experience*

1) What is your name, occupation, and place of employment?
2) How long have you been employed at _____?
3) Why did you decide to work at _____?
4) Can you describe your work on a daily basis?
5) How would you describe your "beat?"
6) When did you start practicing / working with solutions journalism?
7) What led you to begin to practice / work with solutions journalism?

Questions about solutions journalism

1) How do you describe the primary mission or core function of solutions journalism? Can you give me an example?
2) How would you describe solutions journalism as legitimate?
    - Cognitive legitimacy: Do you feel that others you know think of solutions journalism as an emerging or established form of journalism?
3) What is the relationship between funding and the practice of solutions journalism?
    - Have you produced any stories funded by an organization or nonprofit? If so, do you have any examples? How did your stories that were funded by various organizations differ from other journalistic endeavors?
4) How do you feel that solutions journalism approaches objectivity?
5) How is solutions journalism different from other kind of journalism?
6) What rules and norms do you follow when writing/reporting solutions journalism?
    - Do you have guidelines that you could share with me?
    - Can you give me examples of how these guidelines came about?
    - And do you have examples of when those guidelines were put into action?
7) What values are prioritized in the process of producing / practicing solutions journalism?
8) What gap(s) does solutions journalism fill (in the news media industry)?
9) Do you have partnerships with other newsrooms? Higher education institutions? Nonprofits? Other organizations?
10) Can you tell me more about partnerships (define)? Do you have concrete examples?
    - Is your work funded by any organization other than your employer?

How do journalists doing solutions-based news differentiate their reporting from other forms of journalism?

1) **Questions about story generation**
    - How do solutions-based stories come about?
    - How do you select sources for your stories?
2) **Questions about story structure**
    - How did you decide to write the story in this way? Discuss the choices you made with regard to story structure.
    - Do you use emotion in your reporting and if so, how?
    - Describe the "ideal" solutions-based story. What elements would it involve?
3) **Questions about solutions journalism**
    - How would you describe solutions journalism as a journalistic approach?
    - What are the pros and cons of solutions journalism as a journalistic approach?

- Describe how social change fits into your work: Do you ever hope for policy change or legislation occurring due to your solutions-based reporting? Do you have any examples of this occurring?
- Who would you describe as your audience?
- Who is your ideal audience?
- Do you have any examples of stories that you have written that have gone exceedingly well with regard to audience feedback/interaction?
- Can you explain how it turned out and why you think it did?

Questions on journalistic sourcing

1) **Questions about story sourcing**
   - How do you source your stories?
   - Who are the ideal sources to include in a solutions-based story?
   - Are the sources you select for stories influential? If so, why? If not, why not?
   - How do you assess the credibility of sources you select?
   - Can you give me some examples?
2) **Questions about partnerships**
   - Did this story involve a partnership and if so how did this partnership come about?
   - What are the pros and cons of pursuing a journalistic story with a partner like this?
   - What implications do partnerships have on the journalistic industry?

Closing questions

1) Are there any closing thoughts you have?
2) Are there any other questions that you think researchers should look at when exploring solutions-based journalism and solutions-based news?
3) Are there two to three additional reporters or editors who cover and work with solutions-based news that you'd recommend I reach out to?

Closing Script: Thank you for your time today. I will send you any direct quotes I use in my research manuscript for accuracy and appreciate your time and consideration!

Figure 1.1: Solutions Journalism as a Networked Organizational Form: Hubs and Spokes

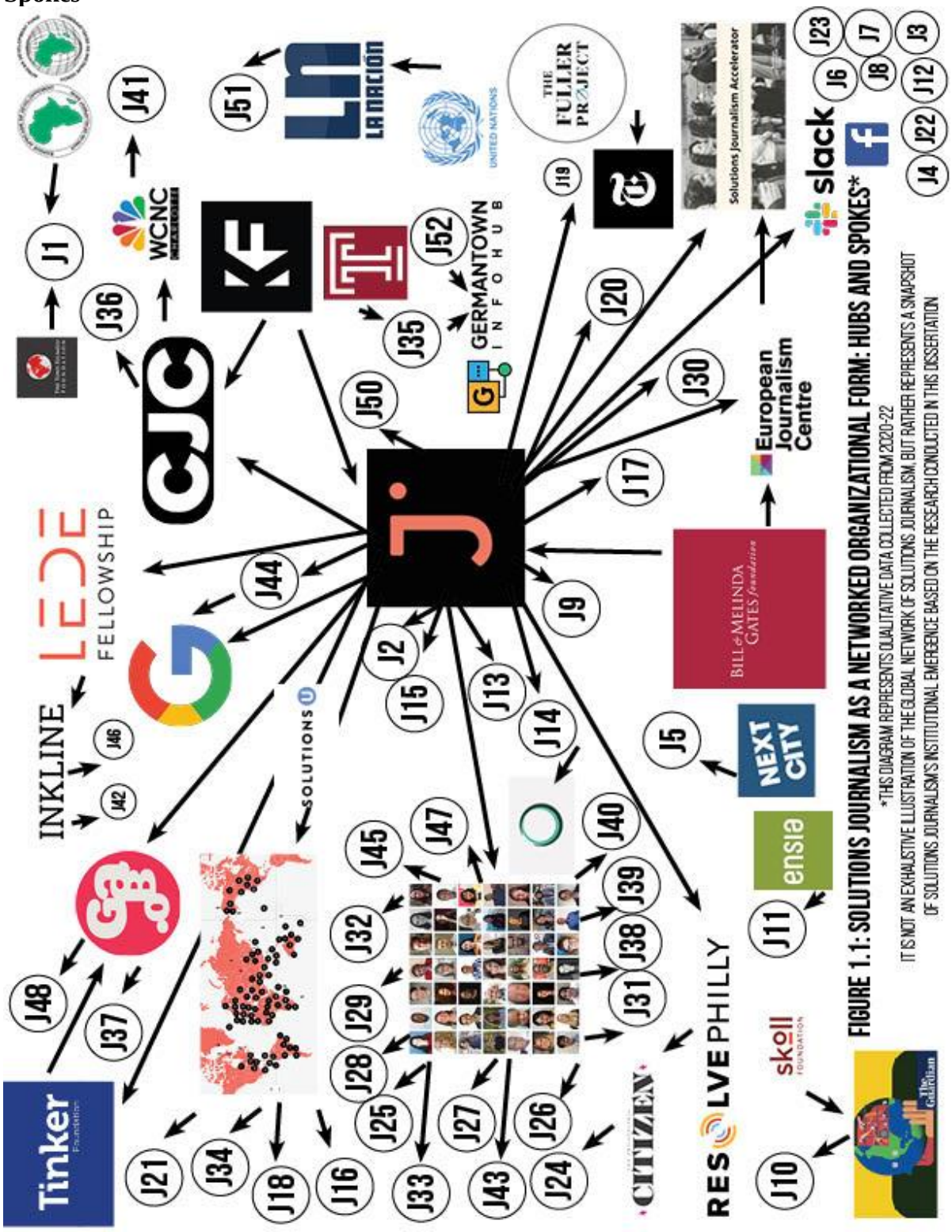

Figure 1.2: Solutions Journalism as a Networked Organizational Form: Hubs