Being a "Truth-Teller" in the Unsettled Period of Korean Journalism: A Case Study of
Newstapa and its Boundary Work

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Dedication

To my parents, 신형인 and 남길화.

Abstract

In this dissertation, I explore the negotiation between the journalistic community and members of the public of what constitutes "good journalism" in today's Korean society, with the news nonprofit *Newstapa* as an example of the transformation of the norms and practices of journalism through interactions with citizens. Utilizing ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I examine how *Newstapa* journalists do boundary work, attempting to rebuild and maintain their professional identities as "truth-tellers" in and through the use of journalistic practices.

These days, a significant number of Koreans have started to question what journalism should be, seeking to assess the performance of journalists. A gap between the range of journalists' actual behaviors and the range of behaviors that members of the public define as appropriate for journalists has become wider. By pejoratively calling journalists "*giraegi*s," literally meaning journalists who produce garbage rather than report news, Koreans have actively created and circulated journalism's meanings.

In this unsettled period of Korean journalism, *Newstapa* journalists strive to rebuild public trust and thereby to be distinguished from "*giraegi*-like" journalists. By reclaiming the elements of professional journalism and especially emphasizing the public service mission, these journalists try to form arguments determining what journalists' real self should be in Korean society. My participant observations and interviews with *Newstapa* journalists help understand how *Newstapa* journalists reconstruct their professional identities as truth-tellers in ways that justify themselves to other journalists, to the public, and to themselves. In the newsroom, *Newstapa* journalists develop a set of

journalistic dispositions, such as autonomy and endurance, associated with becoming a "good journalist." These journalistic dispositions are used as symbolic resources through which *Newstapa* journalists can guide their own boundary work.

In the daily and ongoing interaction with citizens, *Newstapa* journalists have chances to reexamine the roles that citizens can play in the newswork. *Newstapa* journalists start to embrace the core practices of participatory culture, such as participation, engagement, and collaboration, and then develop a modified version of truth-telling. *Newstapa*'s truth is different in a sense that it is collaboratively produced in the interaction with citizens. This conversational version of truth-telling leads to the development of mutually beneficial relationships between *Newstapa* journalists and citizens. In this indissoluble relationship with citizens, *Newstapa* journalists can confidently self-identify as truth-tellers in the unsettled period of Korean journalism.

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I. Introduction

In this dissertation, I will explore the negotiation among the journalistic community and members of the public of what constitutes good journalism in today's Korean society, with the news nonprofit *Newstapa* as an example of the transformation of the norms and practices of journalism through interactions with citizens.

For Korean journalists, the last decade has been a challenging time in which the nature and meaning of journalism have been negotiated and contested in Korean society. In particular, a wide range of Koreans have severely criticized the democratic deficits in journalism in which professional journalists have served as a puppet of the state rather than as a watchdog of it. According to a survey conducted by *Media Today* (2015), a fact-checking organization run by the Union of Media Workers of South Korea, virtually every mainstream news organization has seen its credibility marks decline. More than four-fifths (86.9%) of the survey respondents expressed skepticism about what they saw and read in the news media, indicating, "Most Korean journalists are unethical, unprofessional, and incompetent and thus are *giraegi*s," literally meaning journalists who produce garbage rather than report news.

In this situation, many Korean journalists start to doubt themselves and question their self-worth. A survey by the Journalists Association of Korea (2014), the country's largest organization of journalists, showed that more than two-thirds (68.7%) of those journalists having a membership in the association agreed that they deserved to be called *giraegi*s. A little over half (51.3%) of the member journalists indicated that they would

want to switch their occupation from journalism to other sectors, such as business, education, and politics, if they could. A series of surveys by the Korea Press Foundation, conducted among around 1,500 journalists, also indicated that the job satisfaction ratings for Korean journalists suffered continuous declines in recent years. The average job satisfaction rating (a 5-point scale) was 3.01, 2.69, and 2.53 in 2007, 2009, and 2013, respectively (Korea Press Foundation, 2013). According to the 2013 survey, only 15.2% of a total of 1,527 journalists indicated that they "play the journalist's role as watchdog and do journalism in the public interest."

Indeed, Korean Journalism has been entering an unsettled cultural period (Swidler, 1986), in which the naturalness of the existing culture is challenged while a large segment of society seeks to restructure or transform it. A range of social actors – both journalists and nonjournalists – question existing meanings, identities, and conceptual boundaries around journalism. Journalists particularly do "boundary work" (Gieryn, 1983), trying to rebuild and extend the limits of their cultural authority by producing and circulating journalism's sociocultural meanings. By engaging in this interpretive process, they seek to answer the questions of who they are and what they have to do to redevelop social trust and thereby restore cultural authority.

Not only in South Korea, but also in countries throughout the world, answering questions of "what is journalism," "who is a journalist," and "what is appropriate journalistic behavior" is becoming increasingly difficult. In many countries, journalism scholars have observed that while journalists try to maintain control over the interpretive process and resist change by external pressures, they also negotiate the boundaries of

journalism with nonjournalists (Carlson, 2015; Deuze, 2008; Downie & Schudson, 2009; Lewis, 2012; Robinson, 2011b; Singer, 2006). In this process, journalists attempt to justify themselves. They also evaluate, challenge, and modify their traditional practices and adopt nascent ones to strengthen cultural boundaries. This boundary work almost always and necessarily involves *moral judgments*. Diverse cultural assumptions of what is good and bad, right and wrong, and worthwhile and worthless for a journalist compete with one another. One of the key tasks for journalism scholars in this unsettled period is to trace the contours of the changing journalism and to assess the causes and outcomes of the competing modes of thinking about what is "good journalism."

In particular, this unsettled period has to be understood in terms of the historical and social contexts in which the journalistic culture is embedded. As Hallin and Mancini (2004), Starr (2004), and Williams and Delli Carpini (2011) comprehensively discussed, the development of journalism in any society is difficult to understand without taking the role of the state into account. Not only the state but also other social actors, such as other political organizations, citizens, and journalists, engage in this process of developing the press. Each nation-state has followed a distinctive path in developing its journalism depending on the landscape and the way these social actors are involved in the developing process. Each nation-state has consequently established a historically specific set of institutions, media laws and ethics, processes, and actors, which I will call *the logic of journalism*. In a settled period, this logic establishes legitimated styles or strategies of action (Swidler, 1986). Journalists in a given society organize their individual and collective action by selecting cultural codes, such as habits, skills, values, norms, and

practices, from the logic of journalism. During an unsettled period of journalism, however, while the legitimacy of the existing logic of journalism is contested, *constitutive choices* (Starr, 2004) – those social choices that create an alternative logic – are made, either by the state (which is the central actor in Starr's history) or by citizens at large and the journalists themselves, as I argue here. The shape of the emerging journalistic culture in a given society will be determined by the process of resolving the competition between the existing logic of journalism and the alternative one. In particular, which among competing logics will survive in the long run and finally become endemic in the society is largely determined – in a free society – by what the society's members demand of journalism and particularly how journalism practitioners deal with this request and then organize their moral lives. This dissertation engages in just this sort of inquiry with the South Korean case of *Newstapa.*

Why *Newstapa*?

 Newstapa is an independent, nonprofit online news organization based in Seoul, South Korea. The word *Newstapa* is a combination of news and *tapa*, the Korean word for abolition. As the title is meant to imply, *Newstapa* aims to "abolish old practices in Korean journalism" by "providing truly important stories for 99 % of Koreans" (*Newstapa*, 2012a). To achieve this goal, *Newstapa* produces investigative journalism with thirty-four news staff members and thirteen administrative staff members. *Newstapa* does not have a print publication or TV or radio broadcast. Rather, *Newstapa*'s investigations are published and broadcast on its website, as well as on its social media

sites and mobile platform. The newswork of *Newstapa* is largely organized around the

process of producing its weekly news magazine program titled, *Newstapa with Producer*

Choi Seungho. This online video news magazine is posted on *Newstapa*'s diverse

platforms every Thursday. *Newstapa* also randomly produces and published think pieces

analyzing and giving the background of news events. These think pieces mainly deal with

issues on exploitation of the weak by the powerful, especially the state and business. It

rarely produces breaking news content.

Although *Newstapa* declares that it does journalism "in a non-partisan and non-

ideological manner" (*Newstapa,* 2012a), *Newstapa* is often considered a democratic-

progressive news outlet in the media system of South Korea in which the majority of the

news outles lean conservative (Song, Choi, Park, Yun, & Son, 2012; I will provide an

analysis of the journalistic culture of South Korea in the next chapter).[1] *Newstapa*

journalists intend to provide coverage of important – from their perspective – but

overlooked news stories by mainstream news outlets, and this makes them to be seen as a

group of journalists who lean to the left, regardless of individual journalists' political

orientations and of the manifest mission of their work.

What attracts my attention about the case of *Newstapa* to study the unsettled

period of Korean journalism is its indissoluble relationship with its donors. *Newstapa* is

funded solely by individual citizens who make a monthly donation, between KRW10,000

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[1] In South Korea, those individuals or organizations who favor progress or reform, particularly in political matters, are referred to in a variety of ways, including progressives (*jinbo*), democrats (*minju*), pro-North Koreans (*jongbuk*), leftists (*jwapa*), commies (*ppalgaengi*), and democratic-progressives (*minju jinbo*). I will use democratic-progressive because this term is relatively less ideological and more inclusive and flexible.

(approximately USD10) and KRW100,000 (USD100), to sponsor *Newstapa*. Since

Newstapa started to request donations from the public in July 2012, the number of these

donors has gradually increased and, by April 2016, amounted to around 36,150. Among

the news nonprofits in Korea, the number of donors for *Newstapa* is the largest.

Compared to any other type of nonprofit organizations, this number is relatively large as

well.[2] According to the director of new media of *Newstapa,* Daeyong Park, this group of

Newstapa donors "looks pretty much like a scaled-down version of the 99% of the

Korean population" (personal communication, November 9, 2015). In this sense,

Newstapa identifies itself as "the independent news organization for the 99% of Koreans."

Newstapa borrows this phrase from the political slogan, "We Are the 99%," used and

coined by the Occupy movement, a series of protests against social and economic

inequality around the world in 2011. While the phrase "We Are the 99%" of the Occupy

movement has a variety of meanings, such as the lower 99% of the U.S. income

distribution, *Newstapa* journalists tend to use the phrase "the 99%" to describe ordinary

citizens. In terms of occupation, *Newstapa* donors include students, office workers,

clergy, housewives, scholars, politicians, and journalists working for other news

organizations. In terms of ideological and political stances, the average donor of

Newstapa has a "more middle-of-the-road orientation – slightly left-of-center, more

precisely – compared to other mainstream news outlets, such as the *TV-Chosun* and the

Channel A" (D. Park, personal communication, November 9, 2015). These donors not

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[2] For example, the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, one of the best-known nongovernmental organizations in Korea, is governed by around 15,200 members. The other largest nonprofit foundation called Roh Moo Hyun Foundation has approximately 47,800 members.

only financially support *Newstapa* journalism but, as I will show in this dissertation, they also contribute to the *Newstapa* journalists' moral project of becoming good journalists in Korean society.

The close relationship between *Newstapa* journalists and donors leads to the following questions: What creates this strong link between *Newstapa* journalists and donors in this unsettled period when the believability ratings for most news organizations have significantly fallen? What makes these donors choose *Newstapa* as the nonprofit organization where to invest their money? What are the differences between *Newstapa* journalists and many other Korean journalists who are being called *giraegi*s? What makes *Newstapa* journalists self-identify as "truth-tellers" and consider their newswork a "good work"? Among competing logics of journalism, what kinds of choices do *Newstapa* journalists make in designing their newswork? How do these choices and decisions anchor their identities as good journalists? What social forces constitute the moral orientations of *Newstapa* journalists?

To answer these questions, I was engaged in an ethnographic study of *Newstapa* journalists. Using participant observations and in-depth interviews, I closely looked at the negotiations among *Newstapa* staff members to select strategies of action, decide the role of each staff member, and to shape the operation of the entire organization. In the *Newstapa* newsroom, I observed their hopes and ideals in Korean journalism, their struggles and dilemmas to embrace emerging journalistic practices and to transform their old habits, and their relationships with other social actors, especially their donors. I hope this case study of *Newstapa* can suggest ways for journalists to construct and/or maintain

their professional identities in the unsettled period. Judging by the negotiation about the

meaning of "good journalism" among *Newstapa* journalists and their donors, this case

study will also allow us to partially answer such fundamental questions as "What should

journalism be?" "What should a journalist do?" "What kinds of news stories ought to be

produced by a news organization?" and "For whom should a journalist work?" in

contemporary society. My analysis of the daily practices of *Newstapa* journalists will

ultimately show a way of analyzing, from a sociocultural perspective, periods of change

in the journalism culture and also make a theoretical contribution to discussions in the

sociology of journalism concerning the relationships between journalistic practices,

values, moral attitudes, professional identity, and social forces.

In the following sections, by discussing practice theories in sociology, especially

focusing on new institutionalism, and integrating them into current studies in the

sociology of journalism, I suggest a theoretical and analytical framework through which

to study the case of *Newstapa*. In particular, I claim that we need to conceptualize

journalism as *practices in interaction with discourse* to better understand its changing

nature. I then elaborate my research questions and present the methods I used.

Theoretical Frameworks

The sociology of journalism is concerned about the social determinants of

journalistic output, that is, "those features of social life and organization which shape,

influence and constrain its form and content" (McNair, 1998, p. 3). Understanding the

meaning, impact, and role of journalism requires investigation not only of the social

context within which journalism is situated but also of the factors through which that context is shaped. Based on this sociological perspective, journalism scholars have examined journalism as an occupation, focusing on its professionalization in society (e.g. Deuze, 2005; Schudson & Anderson, 2008). These scholars have considered professionalization as an ongoing project through which people in an occupation build professional control (Freidson, 2001), so that they can rule themselves and outside interference can be diminished. This recent scholarship has emphasized that journalists could adopt a distinctive institutional logic (Friedland & Alford, 1991) through the process of professionalization during much of the mass media era.

Journalism as practices in interaction with discourses. The central terms of previous journalism studies in the sociology of journalism were "values" or "ideologies." According to Swidler (1986, 2001), this analytical focus on values and ideologies derives from Max Weber. Weber explained that people are motivated by *ideas*. According to Weber's model, what people want guides for their action, and thus people are generally ends-oriented (Swidler, 1986). Journalism scholars, such as Singer (2006, 2007) and Deuze (2005), for example, have defined journalism as a set of values, norms, and ideologies journalists collectively share. In his influential essay, "*What Is Journalism?,*" Deuze (2005) identified journalism as an ideology, defining it as "a collection of values, strategies and formal codes characterizing professional journalism and shared most widely by its members" (p. 445). He also wrote, "Conceptualizing journalism as an ideology … means understanding journalism in terms of how journalists give meaning to their newswork" (p. 444). The basic assumption behind this line of journalism studies is

that these cultural codes – such as values, ideas, norms, and ideologies – provide the ends toward which journalists or their organizations direct their action. Journalism scholars and critiques investigating "what journalists want" consequently try to understand the changing nature of journalism by identifying which values are threatened and sustained, which nascent values (e.g., transparency) are adopted by professional journalists, and ultimately how the adopted values influence journalists' behaviors (e.g., Hellmueller, Vos, & Poepsel, 2013; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Singer, 2007).

Although the widely shared journalistic values, such as objectivity, autonomy, and immediacy, are systemized in the self-understanding of the journalistic community, some scholars have had difficulty showing whether these cultural codes in journalists' heads really govern their action. For example, Schultz (2007) found that although there were five dominant news values – timeliness, relevance, identification, sensation, and conflict – serving as the "backbone of journalistic professional training" in Denmark (p. 197), Danish journalists often seemed to select news stories based on "implicit, very embedded, very implied" taken-for-granted feelings. Schultz showed that the five explicit journalistic values were often used as "a discursive resource or even as [legitimization] strategies" (p. 198) while journalists negotiated the news selection with their editors.

I suggest that practice theories in sociology contribute to better understanding of what journalists actually do with media and especially in the unsettled period. By setting journalism studies within a broader sociology of culture, practice theories suggest that journalism scholars need to replace an older view of journalism as *internal* ideas with a different analytical focus on *observable* processes in the journalistic culture. According to

Swidler (1986, 2001), practice theories provide two observable objects for the study:

practice and discourse.

First, while deemphasizing the significance of consciousness in actors' actions,

practice theories focus on *practices*, the routines of individual or collective actors.

Theories of practice view the body of an actor as a micro-cosmos reflecting the actor's

interactions with her/his social environment. Practices are inscribed in the ways of the

actors use their bodies, in their habits, and in their taken-for-granted sense of taste

(Swidler, 1986). In addition, practices are *trans-personal* and *trans-organizational*,

(Swidler, 2001) embedded in the routines of an organization (e.g., a news organization)

or a social institution (e.g., the journalistic community). Secondly, theories of practice

also emphasize *discourses*. A discourse is a cluster of symbolic practices constructed

within a given social sphere, such as journalism. A discourse is also considered a set of

interrelated meanings located in society involving multiple actors who have diverse

points of view (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). A focus on discourses, therefore, enables us to

study "the world of language, symbols, and meanings without having to focus on whether

particular actors believe, think, or act on any specific ideas" (Swidler, 2001, p. 75).

Users of a particular set of semiotic codes, or discourse, form an interpretive

community (Zelizer, 1992), united through a shared way of interpreting the meaning of a

sign or symbol and thereby of engaging in mutually understandable symbolic action. To

engage in practice is to "make use of a semiotic code to do something in the world"

(Sewell, 1999, p. 51). In this sense, discourse and practice are complementary concepts.

Each presupposes the other. In other words, while practice implies discourse, discourse

implies practice. The system of symbols and meanings can be constructed, reconstructed, and maintained because the users of the system put those semiotic codes into specific practices. The users can do so because the system of meanings is embedded in the users' daily lives.

As a member of the journalistic interpretive community, a journalist has the capacity to recognize the system of symbols and meanings of journalism and of using them to do newswork – creating and distributing diverse forms of media messages. A journalist is also capable of using these semiotic codes of journalism to construct cultural boundaries to legitimize their social role as journalists. In these cultural boundaries, journalists have some shared criteria that separate one category of person or thing from another, for example, a professional journalist from an amateur.

It is important to note that nonjournalists also have the capacity to recognize the semiotic codes of journalism and engage in interpretive processes in which they make definitions regarding journalistic actors, norms, and practices and challenge the symbolic boundaries of journalism. Journalists' practices and the kind and quality of their news products are used as symbolic resources to engage in this interpretive process, what Carlson (2015) called "metajournalistic discourses," of nonjournalists. Audiences, for example, recognize what the elements of professional journalism are and use them as a yardstick for assessing the performance of journalists and the quality of their news products. In addition, other sets of semiotic codes also can be used in the process of metajournalistic discourse. Robinson and DeShano (2011), for instance, found that bloggers in Madison, Wisconsin, developed their own value systems and ethics of

reporting and, by using those cultural codes, challenged the newswork of local reporters. Furthermore, journalists are also capable of using these "metajournalistic discourses" produced by other social actors. Journalists can assess different set of semiotic codes, such as the bloggers' norms and practices, and then elaborate and modify them, and finally use them to strengthen their social role (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012; Singer, 2005). In this way, journalists are able to adjust themselves to new circumstances.[3]

By conceptualizing journalism as practices in interaction with discourses, the study of journalistic culture can have definable, publically observable, and thus empirical objects. In this sense, the changing nature of journalism is also observable both by investigating publicly accessible (but possibly unnoticed) daily practices of journalists and by analyzing symbolic practices that are constructing and contesting the boundaries of journalism.

Journalism as an institution. By applying the theoretical framework provided by *new institutionalists* in sociology, several journalism scholars (e.g., Benson, 2006; Cook, 2006; Kaplan, 2006; Lowrey, 2009, 2011, 2012; Ryfe, 2006) try to elaborate this conceptualization of journalism as practices in interaction with discourse. The new institutional approach to journalism defines journalism as a *social institution*. According to new institutionalism, institutions refer to "social patterns of behavior identifiable across the organizations that are generally seen within a society to preside over a particular social sphere" (Cook, 2006, p. 161). New institutionalism scholars see a society

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[3] Of course, journalism scholars are also critical agents to engage in the discursive process of making definitions about journalism. This dissertation also attempts to participate in this process.

as an inter-institutional system. The contemporary capitalist western societies, for example, consist of several interrelated institutions, such as capitalist market, bureaucratic state, nuclear family, Christian religion, and professional journalism (Friedland & Alford, 1991).

In particular, new institutionalism scholars have viewed these institutions as simultaneously material practices and symbolic systems (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, pp. 22–27). Journalists in a society, for example, share taken-for-granted, culturally sanctioned routinized activities, language, rules, or repertoires of behaviors. By these practices, journalists "conduct their material life in time and space" (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 232). At the same time, journalists share a symbolic system through which they give meanings to those practices, understand their positions in society, and define social order. This set of material practices and symbolic constructions – what Friedland and Alford (1991) termed *institutional logic* – constitutes the journalistic culture in a society.

According to new institutionalism perspective, journalism is not a product of rational decision-making by independent organizations or individuals. This perspective disagrees with the idea that journalism is totally autonomous from the broader constraints, ideals, and inputs of its external environment. Nonetheless, this perspective also suggests that journalism is sufficiently independent of other social forces, so much so that we should think of it as distinct. For instance, although journalists are dependent on powerful officials for reliable information about political events, they are not mirroring exactly what the officials say or do. Journalists try to position themselves at the top of the news production process by exercising the final control over the news.

Indeed, journalism is a *semi-autonomous* social sphere influenced by political and cultural power but also governed by its own institutional logic. New institutionalism scholars, in this sense, have highlighted the cultural, economic, and political dimensions of journalism that result from their embedding in a broader societal context. Journalistic practices, both material and symbolic, emerge in interactions between journalists and external forces and gradually seem taken-for-granted and natural. Journalists do not necessarily take these actions according to calculations of self-interest. Instead, journalists' actions are guided more by considerations of what they ought to do, namely what they view as *appropriate*, in a particular time and place. Journalists, therefore, can *autonomously* serve the status quo in relation to the external forces.

New institutionalism scholars have encouraged us to see journalistic practices as crucial mediators of macro-level forces, such as economic forces, political pressures, and cultural constraints, on the behaviors of individual journalists (Ryfe, 2006). In particular, journalistic practices can reflect the journalistic community's conformity to the broader cultural codes and external pressures.

This view also contributes to understanding the nature of change in the journalistic culture. For new institutionalists, shifts in journalism imply both the transformation in social relationships and, as a result of that transformation, the modification (and/or creation) of material practices and symbolic orders. More specifically, according to new institutionalism, the change in journalism "must be caused by a shock to the system" (Ryfe, 2006, p. 141). This perspective requests us to pay

attention to the changing nature and dynamics of interactions between journalists and other social actors.

Kaplan (2006), for example, explained that, between the 19th and early 20th centuries, the ideals and practices of American journalism fundamentally shifted from partisan journalism to professional journalism, and this transformation was largely attributed to a shift in political culture. Specifically, in the 19th century, a partisan political culture dominated the United States, and two political parties led the public debate. Under this political culture, the newspapers gained a mass readership. As "a loyal party organ" (Kaplan, 2006, p. 178), the press viewed the world through a partisan lens. The news media performed a variety of political duties that proved their loyalty to the party. Neither the public nor journalists wanted to have an independent press. In other words, the partisan journalism culture was dependent upon the dominance of partisan political culture across the country. Kaplan argued that, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, the power of mass political parties to dominate the public sphere of the United States was drastically decreased under the emergence of social activisms, such as the Progressive Movement. This shift in political culture led to a transformation in the journalism practices and ideals as well. In particular, mainstream newspapers started to break from all party ties and quickly adapted elements of Progressive Movement's rhetoric for professional expertise and progressive reformers' notion of public service. Under this emergent political culture, journalism attempted to rebuild its legitimacy as a *professional, objective, balanced* mediator between politics and the public in the public sphere of the United States.

In the process of professionalization, American journalists established a professional logic of control (Lewis, 2012) that sought to hold a jurisdictional control over producing, filtering, and distributing news content on behalf of society. Professional journalists created professional journalistic practices, such as routine procedures in the newswork (Gans, 1979). They also collectively produced discourses about themselves and their professional work to assign themselves the role of professional spokespersons for society (Zelizer, 1992). This established institution is what is now called "professional journalism" in the United States.

Professional journalism has also functioned as the symbolic boundaries of who counts as a journalist and what are considered appropriate journalistic behaviors in the United States. By controlling information dissemination in and through the media system, journalists have taken for granted the status of a structured institution that operates with cultural authority. Although some variations in the degree of the authority and kind of professional practices exist among countries, journalists in most capitalist democracies have also established the boundaries of journalism by using the cultural codes of the logic of professional journalism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, 2011).

The competition between the logics of journalism in the digital era. New institutionalism provides an insight into how we can track the contours of the changing journalistic culture in an unsettled period. Today, the most significant "shocks to the system" may be the digitization of media and culture (Lewis, 2012). The jurisdictional space that journalists occupy has become challenged by the introduction and appropriation of digital technologies into the boundaries of professional journalism. In

particular, the technological development of digital media has accompanied a broad

cultural movement, namely participatory culture or open-source culture. As a set of open

participatory practices and symbolic meanings regarding those practices, this

participatory logic has strongly challenged the legitimacy of the logic of professional

journalism.

Members of the public produce open participatory practices that constitute bases

for doing media work in a networked environment. The most prominent example of these

participatory practices may be the practice of sharing among individuals (Jenkins, Ford,

& Green, 2012). The spreadability, which refers to "the potential – both technical and

cultural – for audiences to share content for their own purposes" (p. 3), of digital media

enables ordinary citizens to easily share and circulate both their own media products and

professional products created by media professionals. Individuals legally (and often

illegally) download, modify, remix, appropriate, and upload the news stories published

by professional journalists. The practices of engagement, participation, and collaboration

also become normative in this process. Along with the rise of these participatory practices,

many new forms of journalism, such as citizen journalism (Allan & Thorsen, 2009) and

"pro-am" journalism (Downie & Schudson, 2009), have emerged in the current

networked society. According to these emerging models of journalism, public

communicators can function not only as news sharers and as newsmakers but also as

partners of journalists. For example, Singer (2013) found that users of news websites

could help news media increase the visibility of their news stories published on the

websites. By playing this "secondary gatekeeping" role, users could influence the

decision-making process of digital news editors in designing their websites to facilitate public accessibility and engagement and thereby to promote the two-step gatekeeping process. Indeed, the emerging set of participatory practices has stimulated change in the practices of news media.

The public also exercises discursive practices that constitute new or alternative symbolic orders in the journalistic culture. The enhanced role of the public in journalism contributes to creating "a breadth of knowledge of the world" (Matheson, 2004, p. 460) and inevitably challenges the institutionalized version of reality provided by professional journalists. In addition, this public version of metajournalistic discourses is also competing with other versions of metajournalistic discourses, especially those discourses that occur *inside* journalism (e.g., those produced and circulated by the *American Journalism Review* and the *Columbia Journalism Review*), to build, reiterate, offend, or defend the symbolic boundaries of what can or cannot be done in journalism. In particular, newcomers in the boundaries of professional journalism, including bloggers and citizen journalists, produce stories about their journalistic work and also compare them with those about professional journalistic work. For example, Robinson (2009) found that while writing anniversary stories about Hurricane Katrina, American citizen journalists emphasized their personal experiences during Hurricane Katrina and incorporated these personal stories in the anniversary stories. In the coverage of Hurricane Katrina, citizen journalists undermined the mainstream news stories by providing an alternative version of the Hurricane Katrina story. In all, by exercising discursive practices that redefine meanings of journalism, namely by engaging in the

production of metajournalistic discourse, various actors inside and outside of journalism contribute to reorganizing symbolic orders in the journalistic culture.

In these days, whether journalists desire it or not, it seems obvious that the nature and contours of the authoritative boundaries of journalism have been challenged and continuously changed in the tension between the existing and emergent logics of journalism. While journalists have sought to maintain *control* over content and thereby to adhere to the mission of the Fourth Estate, they have been requested to do so *within* a networked environment, to work *with* "people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2008), and embrace participatory practices in the creation and circulation of media. While interacting with these external pressures, journalists may adjust their practices to fit the changing environment. They may reformulate journalistic practices by integrating nascent practices of participatory culture into existing practices. In addition, journalists, as well as their challengers, such as bloggers and citizen journalists, may endow these hybrid practices with meanings. In this process, although journalists can cling to old habits, they cannot completely control and resist the changing media environment in which they work and live. Therefore, we can assume that the daily structuring of journalists' labor and their relations with other actors will reflect what happens in the journalistic culture in the digital era.

Some journalism scholars (e.g., Lewis, 2012; Robinson, 2011b; Singer, 2007; Williams & Delli Carpini, 2011) have conducted this kind of inquiry. A consistent theme found in these studies is that professional journalists are negotiating between professional logic and participatory logic (Lewis, 2012). These scholars have also put efforts in

providing new concepts and theories – including a "socially responsible existentialist" (Singer, 2006) and "reciprocal journalism" (Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014) – to capture cultural dynamics in these negotiations. More specifically, Singer (2006) attempted to blend two competing normative notions, autonomy and accountability, to identify professional journalists in the current networked environment. She urged us to see the journalist as the "socially responsible existentialist." According to Singer, this framework of socially responsible existentialist is the only way distinguishing "the journalist from other information providers who are independent but not responsible, such as bloggers, or responsible but not independent, such as spin doctors of all stripes" (p. 14). Lewis, Holton, and Coddington (2014) also sought to suggest a new theoretical perspective, reciprocal journalism, to better understand the relational dynamics "through which journalists and audiences may exchange mutual benefit" (p. 230) in the current media environment. This framework emphasizes the centrality of the ethics of participation and reciprocity in professional newsrooms. Journalists are encouraged to work *for* and *with* audiences and consider what audiences expect from journalism as "inextricably bound with their own" (p. 238). By doing so, according to Lewis, Holton, and Coddington (2014), journalists can maintain their social roles as "community-builders" in the digital age.

These newly developed perspectives suggest a way of thinking about good journalism in the changing media environment. These theoretical lenses in the changing media environment almost necessarily include moral judgments of journalists' actions in the tension between competing logics of journalism. For example, according to the

framework of socially responsible existentialist, seeking ways to be autonomous and socially responsible is *good* and *right* for journalists in a networked society. The framework of reciprocal journalism also urges journalists, as well as journalism scholars, to avoid an either/or way of thinking in the tension between professional control and open participation.

These perspectives provide a set of analytical questions regarding the nature of journalists' relationship with audiences and the influence of this relationship on the journalists' moral project of becoming a good journalist in an unsettled period. In what ways can journalists reconcile the competing logics of journalism? How will this reconciling process influence the journalists' boundary work? Can journalists really maintain their roles in their communities when they emphasize the ethics of participation and reciprocity in newsrooms? What benefits are audiences expecting to receive from journalism in an unsettled period? Will these expectations of the public constitute the moral orientations of journalists? If so, to what extent are these expectations leading to the journalists' moral project?

These questions need to be empirically examined, especially in a specific context. Journalism is contextual. The aforementioned perspectives have been developed in the journalistic cultures in North America and Western Europe. Their findings cannot be just applied to other areas of the world without considerable adaptation, although the analytical framework – for example, existing logic vs. emerging logic – will be useful for those scholars working on other regions. Of course, the current shift in the journalistic culture fundamentally emerges from technological innovations, and this may be a global

phenomenon (Deuze, 2007, pp. ix–xii). Furthermore, the Western systems have long been the main reference points for the studies of journalism, and for global discourse about journalism and media culture in general. Nonetheless, they cannot fully explain trends in the journalistic culture in other countries because the preexisting logic of journalism varies depending on historical and social contexts. The journalistic culture in each country has been shaped and transformed by a complex combination of social relations that have taken shape in the national contexts (Curran & Park, 2000). The existing logic of journalism can either resist change or embrace it in a particular direction, and thereby the shape of the emerging journalistic culture will vary. For sociological understanding of the current unsettled period for the journalistic culture, the tension between the logics of existing journalistic culture and emerging one, together with the significance of digital media in that tension, needs to be analyzed by "grounded, contextualized (yet no less theoretically informed) empirical work" (Winchester, 2008, p. 1754).

The case of *Newstapa* provides a unique chance for doing this. Namely, this case study of *Newstapa* gives us an opportunity to examine how a particular group of journalists in a specific context is constructing their moral selves in the unsettled period, how these actors make their cultural choices among the competing logics of journalism, and what social forces govern their moral orientations. This dissertation will contribute not only to an understanding of Korean journalistic culture and of Korean journalists' moral project but also to discussions in the sociology of journalism concerning the changing journalistic culture by testing the relevance and usefulness of such theoretical frameworks as reciprocal journalism.

Research Questions and Methods

In this dissertation, I will explore these three sets of questions:

Research Questions 1: What does the preexisting logic of Korean journalism look like?

- How have the current journalistic culture and its logic of journalism evolved?

- In particular, what have been the roles of the state, other political forces, and civil society in these developing processes and what have been the reactions of journalists to them?

- What have been the public reactions to this existing logic of journalism and how have members of the public assessed journalists and their performance?

- How has the existing logic of journalism influenced the emergence of the *Newstapa* project?

To address the first set of questions, I traced the history of the development of the current Korean journalistic culture through an analysis of diverse journalism-related primary and secondary sources, including academic papers, books, newspapers, and journalism textbooks.

I also conducted a series of interviews with 10 veteran journalists to understand the organizational culture of mainstream media organizations and its impact on the development and maintenance of the logic of Korean journalism. I initiated contact with Lee Jung Han, a former colleague of mine at a private university in Korea, to ask if he would help recruit participants.[4] Lee was a mid-career journalist at a newspaper company. Based upon his help in recruitment for the study, I used snowball sampling and recruited

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[4] In this dissertation, I will use pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants.

nine more journalists. Three were newspaper journalists and seven were broadcast reporters.

Interviews were conducted between September and December 2014, using a combination of face-to-face, telephone, and email conversations. The average period of work experience of the interviewees was 13.5 years. Two journalists had started their career right after the collapse of the Chun Doo-hwan military regime in 1987 and thus were able to provide the details of the influence of democratization in their newswork. Six of the interviewees had begun their career under the two successive presidencies of democratic-progressive Presidents Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2004-2008). As I will explain in Chapter II, during these periods, these interviewees, as novice or junior journalists, enjoyed the maximum level of journalistic freedom from the state. However, after the beginning of the conservative Lee Myung-bak presidency in 2008, these interviewees, as mid-career journalists, experienced a decline in the freedom of expression. Thus, I expected that my interviews with these journalists could capture their reality perceptions of the impact of the turnover of political power on the newsroom culture, especially in their own language. I also interviewed two junior journalists with fewer than five years of journalistic experience. These two junior journalists helped me identify socialization mechanisms, such as annual entrance examinations and the *seonbae-hubae* system, through which novice journalists would acquire professional identities as Korean journalists.

In addition, to examine the public reactions to the existing logic of journalism, I analyzed a specific form of metajournalistic discourse – the discourse of *giraegi*. In this

dissertation, the discourse of *giraegi* refers to a set of communicative actions, including speech and writing by Korean citizens to express, discuss, object to, and challenge the cultural, social, and political significance of Korean journalists. The word *giraegi* is a combination of *gija*, the Korean word for a journalist or reporter, and *tsuraegi,* the Korean word for garbage. The word *giraegi* thus literally means a journalist who produces garbage rather than reports news. The discourse of *giraegi* occurred over the 2014 sinking of the Sewol ferry in which more than 300 people died. As I will explain in Chapter III, during the rescue process, the mainstream news outlets collectively mishandled the issue of the Sewol ferry tragedy, causing harm and especially performing their journalistic roles unethically. In particular, most mainstream journalists published the government's announcements and press statements without double-checking. Reflecting Koreans' anger over the performance of the journalists, the discourse of *giraegi* occurred over the Sewol ferry disaster and, currently, the term *giraegi* has become widely used by Koreans to describe any malpractice associated with journalism. Through the discourse of *giraegi*, members of Korean public may compete with other actors, especially those *inside* journalism, to construct and challenge the boundaries of journalism. I expected my analysis of the discourse of *giraegi* could reveal an important aspect of metajournalistic discourse produced by nonjournalists in Korean society.

To analyze the discourse of *giraegi*, I chose Twitter as the primary place for data collection because the Twitter's public streaming Application Program Interface (API) "makes it relatively easy to scrape, or download, massive numbers of tweets – literally hundreds of thousands of messages" (Lewis, Zamith, & Hermida, 2013, p. 41).

According to a survey by the National Information Society Agency (2015), in Korean

society, Twitter is particularly popular among young adults ages 18-29 and the college-

educated. Nearly three quarters of all Twitter users are between the age of 18 and 29. In

their analysis of Korean Twitter users, Chang and Ghim (2011) found that around 80% of

the most popular 1% of tweets were created by ordinary individual users instead of

traditional opinion leaders such as politicians and scholars. According to Park's survey

(2013), this Twitter opinion leadership often makes "a significant contribution to

individuals' involvement in political processes" (p. 1641). Since media activism – which

refers to grassroots efforts to influence media messages, practices, institutions and

contexts in a direction that promotes democratic values, such as equal participation in

meaning construction – has been led by those democratic-progressives in their 20s and

30s in Korean society, my analysis of the discourse of *giraegi* on Twitter would provide a

sketch of the discourse of *giraegi*.

I gathered 2,914 tweets containing the term 기레기 (*giraegi*) by monitoring the

Twitter API between December 2014 and March 2015. I chose this time frame because it

was analytically meaningful for the discourse of *giraegi*, which had occurred around the

middle of 2014. Between April and December 2014, several media outlets made public

apologies for their Sewol ferry disaster coverage and called themselves "*giraegis*" in their

apologies. Journalists' associations, such as the Journalists Association of Korea, also

conducted surveys among the public, as well as among journalists, asking if they

recognized the term "*giraegis*." A survey by the Journalists Association of Korea (2014),

for example, indicated that the majority of the survey respondents said, "Korean

journalists deserve to be called *giraegi*s." Based on these survey results, plus with the public apologies made by mainstream media outlets, I came to believe that the discourse of *giraegi* took form in the public sphere of Korea, with recognizable symbolic codes by December 2014.

Research Questions 2: What kind of logic, as a set of practices and symbolic constructions, has been produced by *Newstapa* journalists?

- Who are *Newstapa* journalists?

- What kind of journalism do they practice?

- What motivates them to do this kind of journalism?

- How do they perceive their role in the Korean journalistic community?

Research Question 3: How have been *Newstapa* journalists reconstructing and maintaining new identities as "good journalists" in the unsettled period?

- How do the "converts," namely *Newstapa* senior journalists, who previously worked for mainstream media, produce changes in journalistic practices and procedures?

- What are the roles of citizens, especially *Newstapa* donors, in the development of the logic of *Newstapa* journalism, if any?

- What are the roles for journalistic practices and discourses in becoming "good journalists"?

To answer the second and third sets of questions, following previous journalism scholars using ethnographic research in specific newsrooms (e.g., Gans, 1979; Paterson

& Zoellner, 2010; Pedelty, 2013; Robinson, 2011a; Schultz, 2007; Usher, 2014), I was engaged in ethnographic fieldwork at *Newstapa*.

The process of gaining the access to the newsroom was challenging because *Newstapa* journalists were initially unwilling to give long-term access to me. In particular, since I did not have prior professional experience as a journalist, it was difficult to negotiate access for the research in newsrooms. Although the researchers' lack of familiarity with the subject could be an advantage for them to distance themselves from what they study (Paterson & Zoellner, 2010), this advantage could realize only if the researchers would gain access for investigation. Given the anticipated difficulty, I attempted to negotiate access for my research in *Newstapa* during almost two months, between July and August 2014. In this period, I visited the newsroom four times and emailed the editor-in-chief Youngjin Kim five times. During the meetings, I continued to explain the significant role that *Newstapa* played in the changing media environment. I also emphasized to them that the resulting research would contribute to more accurate and comprehensive understanding about the future of Korean journalism. In this negotiation, *Newstapa* senior reporter Choi, who has a master's degree in journalism, understood what I was trying to accomplish and valued the significance of my research. In addition, I used a personal contact to support my access enquiry. A former colleague of mine at a private college in Korea had worked for *Newstapa* between 2012 and 2013. He helped me facilitate access to *Newstapa,* participating in my first meeting with *Newstapa* staff members at the newsroom. Finally, in the end of August 2014, I acquired access to the newsroom.

During the process of securing access, I also negotiated my role as an

ethnographer – somewhere between full-participation and full-observation – and the

range of access. In this process, I worked with *Newstapa* director of business Seong-geun

Kim. I signed an agreement that would keep the newsroom confident that I would not

leak any information about their news items or sources before the publication of the news

products. I was also asked not to use names in my dissertation, except for the editor-in-

chief Yongjin Kim, anchor Seungho Choi, and director of data and research Hyejin Gwon.

Thankfully, Seong-geun Kim encouraged me to "freely" and "actively" interact with any

staff member at the newsroom, as well as at lunch- and dinnertime, unless individual

journalists would ask me to give them the space to focus on their work. Furthermore, I

was allowed to observe the editorial meetings one time per month, every first Monday

between September 2014 and January 2015.

As for the actual process of information collecting, between September 2014 and

January 2015, I conducted participant observations and interviews. In this process, I was

observing the journalists' daily work routines and interactions, interacting with the

journalists, writing fieldnotes, and conducting interviews with twenty journalists.

In fieldnotes, I recorded verbal exchanges, practices, and interpretations about

them. This was intended to capture and represent the lived experiences of the journalists.

In the case of verbal exchanges (e.g., interviews, gossip, conversations, debates,

arguments, and negotiations), I first attempted to write down as precisely as possible

what they said and did. I also wrote down the descriptive and emotional details of the

observed episodes. These details guided me to reflect on the meaning of conversations and practices.

I also prepared a list of questions to write fieldnotes: What is the context (physical, economic, social, hierarchical, and political)? What is the nature of the relationship between speakers? What is the nature of the episode? What is being said? What are the likely influences of gender/race/ethnicity/class? How is it being said (e.g., rhythms, vocal tones, silences)? Where does the storyline come from (e.g., from personal history, from journalistic norms, from political situations)? How do I, as a researcher, participate in this conversation? What strikes me as "novel"? Why? Based on these questions, I then identified both explicit and implicit patterns in their practices and verbal exchanges.

My observations were also compensated for by the fact that I also drew on interview data. In particular, I was using semidirected interviews. This type of interview led me toward the most appropriate analytical categories. Semidirected interviews allowed me to understand how my interviewees drew boundaries by focusing on the implicit criteria of good or bad, right or wrong, and worthwhile and worthless at work during the interviews. My interviews were aimed at obtaining a more nuanced understanding of *Newstapa* journalists' worldview. I wanted to understand a picture of the labels *Newstapa* journalists use for describing themselves, their audiences and other Korean journalists. Furthermore, I asked them to describe the negative and positive traits of their co-workers and also to describe their perception of the cultural traits that are most valued in the *Newstapa* newsroom.

A total of twenty interviews were conducted between October 2014 and December 2014. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were confidential and recorded. They were held at a time and place chosen by the interviewee, mostly at a café near the *Newstapa* newsroom.

In addition, between September 2015 and February 2016, I conducted a second round of interviews with eleven *Newstapa* journalists. Right after the completion of my participant observations, I came back to the University of Minnesota in January 2015 and started to analyze the collected data and work on the manuscript. At the same time, I observed the *Newstapa* webpages daily and read each post, comment, and tweet. In this process, I noticed some changes in the practices of *Newstapa*, especially with regard to the use of digital channels and also the ways of interacting with its audiences. To clarify my observations, I decided to interview *Newstapa* journalists again. The interviewees were asked to describe their perception of the interaction with the audiences.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter II maps out the history of the development of the dominant logic of Korean journalism. Social actors, from the state and other political institutions to media leaders and individual journalists, have constructed the instrumental view of journalism. Based on this view, a large segment of Koreans tend to see journalism as an instrument used by another social institution merely as a means to some private end rather than as a self-interested institution. In particular, I discuss how this instrumental view of journalism has been incorporated into newsroom culture and how this newsroom culture

has affected the actual performance of journalists. Understanding this process of developing and maintaining the logic of journalism is important in that it provides a context within which the case of *Newstapa* is situated.

In Chapter III, I analyze the public reaction to the dominant culture of journalism by analyzing a particular kind of metajournalistic discourse, the discourse of *giraegi*. In addition, an emerging model of journalism – nonprofit, citizen funded journalism, is introduced. In the 2010s, several news nonprofits have emerged to revitalize the profession and identify a new direction for Korean journalism. In this dissertation, the challenge of Korean news nonprofits to the dominant logic of journalism is understood as a process of setting an alternative evaluation criterion for the performance of Korean journalists.

Chapters IV and V examine the case of the news nonprofit *Newstapa* to understand how journalists can maintain professional exclusivity and redevelop professional identities in an unsettled period of journalism. In Chapter IV, I start with a discussion of the specific ways in which the junior journalists of *Newstapa* construct moral selves in the newsroom. I first identify the news considerations of the senior journalists of *Newstapa*. I then demonstrate how the junior journalists come to internalize the seniors' news considerations and finally to resemble the seniors in and through the hierarchical organizational culture. By this socialization process, *Newstapa* juniors develop a set of journalistic dispositions, such as autonomy and endurance, associated with becoming a good journalist and finally construct their professional identities as truth-tellers. The commonality among *Newstapa* journalists functions as their moral

boundaries that they draw between themselves and other journalists. In Chapter V, I explore the processes in which *Newstapa* journalists transform their model of truth-telling and how this transformation in their journalistic practices ultimately contributes to their boundary work. In the daily and ongoing interaction with citizens, *Newstapa* journalists have chances to reexamine the roles that citizens can play in the newswork. *Newstapa* journalists start to embrace the core practices of participatory culture and then develop a modified version of truth-telling. *Newstapa*'s truth is different in a sense that it is collaboratively produced in the interaction with citizens. This conversational version of truth-telling leads to the development of mutually beneficial relationships between *Newstapa* journalists and citizens. In this indissoluble relationship with citizens, *Newstapa* journalists can confidently self-identify as truth-tellers in the unsettled period of Korean journalism.

The last chapter provides a summary of the findings, discusses the broader theoretical implications, and suggests directions for future research based on the limitations of this study.

II. The Boundaries of the Korean Journalistic Culture and its Logic

Chapter II discusses the history of the development of the dominant logic of Korean journalism. The logic of Korean journalism is a set of journalistic values, norms, practices, and organizational processes in the Korean journalistic culture. The development of the logic of journalism in Korean society, like any other society, is difficult to understand without taking the influences of other social actors – such as the government, other political actors, big businesses, and civil society – into account. South Korea has followed a historically distinctive path in developing the boundaries of its journalistic culture and its logic depending on the landscape and the way these social actors are involved in the developing process.

One of the central features of the dominant culture of Korean journalism is the development and maintenance of the *instrumental view of journalism*. The instrumental view of journalism refers to the way that social actors see journalism as an instrument to do something rather than as having its own reason for existence. This instrumental view of journalism is a joint product of diverse social actors, from the political and economic forces and the founders and owners of many news companies to individual journalists.

To show this distinctive characteristic in Korean journalism history, I analyzed around 20 books and reports written by Korean historians, journalists, civic organizations, and journalism scholars and also interviewed 10 journalists. The interviews with these veteran journalists who worked in mainstream news organizations helped me understand how the instrumental view of journalism has been constructed in professional newsrooms

and also how it has impacted the actual performance of journalists as well as of media leaders.

The Development of the Instrumental View of Journalism during the Military Regimes

The "instrumentalization" of journalism has been traced to an historical period of two authoritarian military regimes, the Park Chung-hee regime (1961-1979) and the Chun Doo-hwan regime (1980-1987). In this period, under the carrot-and-stick approach of the military regimes, the news media evolved as an industry and also developed as a tractable means for social integration and control over the public (Song, 2012, pp. 281–290).

During his eighteen-year rule (1961-1979), Park Chung-hee, who came to power through a coup d'état, repressed the news media in broad and fundamental ways. The Park military government carried out a strong repression of reporters through the government's military and security forces. This included illegal abductions, detentions, interrogations, and tortures (Song, 2012, pp. 271–272). The Park regime also imposed severe media restrictions through the Declaration of the State of National Emergency and the Martial Law Decree, which banned "all indoor and outdoor assemblies and demonstrations for the purpose of political activities and speeches, publications, press, and broadcasts" (Youm, 1996, p. 55). The regime also forced journalists who were critical of the government and its policy to resign. In particular, 134 reporters, who had been declaring their commitment to defend a free press and fighting against both the government and their employers, were fired from the *Dong-A* in 1975 (Dong-A Struggle

Committee for Defending a Free Press, 2005). The owner of the *Chosun* also forced 33

reporters to resign from their positions (Jidong Park, 2012, pp. 426–427).[5]

In addition, Park's successor Chun Doo-hwan also severely restricted the news

media. In July and August 1980, the Chun regime conducted a notorious "Purification

Campaign" against the news media, "focusing a sweeping structural reorganization of the

Korean news media" (Yang, 2005, p. 21). Under the Purification Campaign, in

November 1980, the Chun regime forcefully merged the newspaper companies, and

consequently, only one company was licensed to publish a newspaper for each province,

except in the Seoul area (M.-J. Park, Kim, & Sohn, 2000, p. 113). In addition, six private

news agencies were merged into the *Yonhap News Agency*. As a result of this purification

campaign, 172 periodicals were banned, and approximately 930 journalists were

dismissed from their positions based on charges of unethical conduct and a lack of

professional skills (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2010).

In particular, the public broadcasting system was more directly ruled by the

military regime. The Chun regime established a public broadcasting system of two

national networks, the *Korean Broadcasting System* (KBS) and the *Munhwa*

Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), by coercively abolishing existing broadcast networks.

In particular, it was common that politicians became key officers at the KBS and the

MBC. Dictator Chun Doo-hwan, for example, "made it a rule that his own hand-picked

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[5] The dismissed *Dong-A* and the *Chosun* journalists formed the *Dong-A* Struggle
Committee for Defending a Free Press and the *Chosun* Struggle Committee for Defending a Free
Press, respectively. These committees have become a symbol of the press freedom movement in
South Korea. Most members of the two committees have not been reemployed by their former
employers. Many members of the two committees played a leading role in establishing the
Hankyoreh, a democratic-progressive newspaper, in 1988.

personnel be appointed as presidents" of these two networks (Jae-kyoung Lee, 1997, p.

139). At almost half of these networks' regional stations, former army officers served as

directors.

Along with this structural reorganization of the mass media, the Chun regime

enacted the notorious Basic Press Act of 1980, which was the legal symbol of the Chun

regime's media control. The law justified the government's censorship and control over

newspapers, periodicals, and broadcast companies (Youm, 1996). The Ministry of

Culture and Information, in particular, had the authority to cancel or suspend registration

of any publications (Jae-kyoung Lee, 1997, p. 139). The Ministry also issued daily

"reporting guidelines" (*bodojichim*) with suggestions as detailed as the importance of

news items and the length of headlines (The Council for Democratic Press Movement,

1988). Through these measures, the state could weaken the critical functions of the press,

and the military regime's doctrines could filter down to the whole of the journalistic

community.

The relationships between the news companies and the military regimes were not

always in conflict. Many publishers and officers of news companies were less caught up

in the struggle for a free press than were the journalists (Y. Jeong, 2011, pp. 29–38;

Samung Kim, 2011, p. 147). While some were asked to assist the military regime, others

volunteered their services (Yun, 2012, pp. 481–485). In this cooperative relationship,

several founders and owners of newspaper companies actively used their papers and

employees as means to advance their interests and privileges. More specifically, the

military regimes' media suppression allowed several owners to expand their businesses

and gain more political power (Song, 2012, pp. 281–290). The *Chosun* and the *Joongang*, for instance, used the forced closure of other companies during the Chun Doo-hwan regime as opportunities for growth. They monopolized revenue from the advertising market, which rapidly expanded with the growth of the national economy (M.-J. Park et al., 2000, p. 114).

Indeed, this harmonious relationship between the news companies and the state, what the late journalism scholar, historian, and great journalist Song Geonho (2012, p. 283) called "the complex or assemblage of politics and journalism (*gwoneonbokhapche*)," consequently hampered the professionalization of journalism. In particular, after the launch of the Chun Doo-hwan regime's Purification Campaign, the struggle for a free press and efforts to research and promote journalistic values and skills were mostly led not by the journalists working inside newsrooms but by the journalists who had been fired from news media, especially the members of the *Dong-A* Struggle Committee for Defending a Free Press and the *Chosun* Struggle Committee for Defending a Free Press Struggle Committee (Samung Kim, 2011). Thus, this situation led to slow progress in developing professional practices of journalism, ethical standards, and a professional organization dedicated to encouraging those practices, stimulating those standards, and protecting journalism itself.

The Stigma of Having Been in the Shadow of Authoritarian Regimes: The Lack of Autonomy of the Journalistic Culture

South Korea started undergoing a transition to democracy in June 1987, when the military government yielded to the citizens' demands for direct presidential voting and constitutional amendment. The new 1987 Constitution explicitly prohibited censorship of speech and the press while guaranteeing freedom of expression. The notorious Basic Press Act of 1980 was abolished in November 1987 and replaced by the Act Relating to Registration of Periodicals (Periodicals Act) and the Broadcasting Act. Since then, most of the direct authoritarian surveillance mechanisms in the press have disappeared. The legacy of the authoritarian rule, however, still exists. As one *Newstapa* senior reporter who had worked for the KBS told me, "the stigma of having been in the shadow of authoritarian regimes has remained strong and pervasive."

In particular, the instrumental view of journalism still influences virtually every aspect of Korean journalism, including practices, values, professional identities, and the relationships with other forces. In other words, journalism and its practitioners are considered instruments to achieve something more related to other social forces, especially the political and economic forces. Some of newsworkers strive to be autonomous and actually believe that they are not controlled by the powerful. Nonetheless, against their wishes, a significant numbers of Koreans are still sharply divided on journalism issues based on their ideological orientations and then try to find "our journalists." As I will discuss later in this dissertation, for example, *Newstapa* donors want *Newstapa* to function as "the spokesman of the democratic-progressives,"

while *Newstapa* journalists believe that they have to do journalism in an entirely non-

partisan manner.

More specifically, first and foremost, the political forces still tend to view the

news media and newsmen as instruments to maintain their privileged positions in Korean

society. One of the recent examples is the case of then-Prime Minister nominee Lee Wan-

koo in February 2015. Lee came under severe criticism by opposition parties as one

reporter had disclosed voice recordings of Lee attempting to intimidate a group of young

reporters assigned to his office. In these recordings, Lee, the former floor leader of the

ruling Saenuri Party, told the reporters, "I have enough power to make any reporters get

fired from [H daily] … [because] one older brother of the owner of the paper is my very

close friend." "I have connections with all of your superiors. I can talk to your desk

reporters, editors, or bureau chiefs and tell them not to hire this guy or that guy," Lee

continued. Lee also said, "Your *seonbae*s [seniors] and I are a brotherhood standing up

for one another when need be."[6] In short, Lee was bragging to young reporters about his

influence on personnel decisions at newsrooms based on his personal connection with the

executives of the news companies. By doing so, he may have wanted to put pressure on

the reporters to rein in their reporting. Another example of the instrumental view of

journalism by political forces is the speech of the ruling Saenuri party leader Kim Moo-

sung at a meeting with foreign correspondents on February 9, 2015. In this meeting, Kim

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[6] The person who joins a group or organization earlier is called *seonbae*, and the person who joins the group or organization later is called *hubae*. The Korean journalistic community has adopted this *seonbae-hubae* hierarchical system. I will discuss the significance of this system in understanding the culture and practices of Korean journalism later in this chapter.

Moo-sung asked foreign correspondents covering South Korea to produce "favorable

stories about South Korea." Kim put it in this way:

> The world sees South Korea through your eyes. The more good news reported by
>
> you, the better the image of our country and the higher the national status. … We
>
> wish that the story you write about our country delivers not just the news but also
>
> your affection for South Korea to the outside world. This is out of our hope that
>
> you would put yourselves in the mind of Koreans since you are here with us in
>
> Korea regardless of the nationality. (Pearson, 2015)

After participating in this meeting, *Reuters* correspondent James Pearson (2015) posted

tweets with an image of the transcript of Kim's speech, saying, "Honestly speaking, this

part of Kim Moo-sung's speech sounds strange to foreign correspondents. … Journalists

do not want to be seen as aiding the government." Pearson added, "This is not unique to

South Korean conservative governments – progressive governments have used the same

tone. It doesn't work." As we can see in these two cases, many Korean politicians still

believe that journalism needs to serve the political and cultural aims of the state and/or of

the personal leader of the state.

Another significant form of the instrumentalization of journalism is the use of the

media by *chaebol*s as tools to intervene in the political sphere and to expand their

businesses (Son, 2012).[7] During and after the military regimes, *chaebol*s have given

political funds to the government and political parties "in exchange for monopolistic

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[7] A *chaebol* refers to a South Korean conglomerate of several companies clustered around one parent company. Company members of *Chaebol*s such as Hyundai, LG, and Samsung hold shares in each other and are usually managed by one single family based on authoritarian management and centralized decision making.

business privileges" and utilized public relations to avoid negative criticism of their close

relations with the government and business malpractices (S. Jo & Kim, 2004, p. 295).

Their in-house public relations departments have also attempted to maintain regular

communication channels with the mainstream news media to avoid unfavorable coverage

(Cho, 1997, pp. 67–75). Furthermore, after the collapse of the Chun Doo-hwan military

regime in 1987, *chaebol*s have excised their power over the news media through the

provision of advertisement revenues (Jae-kyoung Lee, 1997, pp. 143–144; M.-J. Park et

al., 2000, p. 116). In 1988, the government eased regulations on the establishment of

periodicals. Under this new media policy, the number of dailies increased from 30 in

1987 to 85 in 1990. In this situation, a few established newspapers, which had enjoyed

oligopoly status in the media industry during the military regimes, decided to liberalize

subscription fees and to increase the number of pages to obtain more advertisements.

They often delivered newspapers to readers free of charge to boost their circulations.

These aspects of unfair rivalry guaranteed the established papers secure advertising

revenue but made it difficult for newcomers to enter the market. To survive in this

situation, most commercial news media had to rely on advertising revenues from

*chaebol*s (M.-J. Park et al., 2000, p. 116; Son, 2012, p. 506).

In fact, the owners of commercial news companies are largely responsible for the

instrumentalization of journalism. The owners who enjoyed a harmonious relationship

with the military regimes seem to maintain the instrumental view of journalism and thus

are more committed to political and/or economic values rather than to the core

journalistic values. In particular, the owners of the nation's three biggest newspapers, the

Chosun, the *Joongang*, and the *Dong-A* (known as the "Big Three Newspapers" or "*Cho-Joong-Dong*"), have become what is called "media capital" (*eonron gwonryeok* or *eonron jabon*) (Son, 2012) and together play a decisive role in the political world, especially during presidential elections. Since democratization in 1987, these mainstream newspapers have been sarcastically called "kingmakers," contributing to the victories of right-wing conservative candidates in several presidential elections. For example, during the 1987 presidential campaign, which was the first presidential election under the new 1987 Constitution, the mainstream news media supported the then-ruling Democratic Justice party (*minju jeongui dang*) candidate Roh Tae-woo (Son, 2012, p. 507). After the election of Roh Tae-woo, the mainstream media acted as supporters of the Roh government and helped Roh and his party to solve many political problems (Chang, 2005, pp. 927–928; Son, 2012, pp. 520–523).

Jae-kyung Lee (2013) argued that, as a reward for acting as a "government organ," conservative governments and parties have often provided some commercial news companies with such institutional or business favors as granting permission for electronic information services and possible business rights for the emerging satellite and cable television broadcasting industries (p. 303). For instance, since the conservative Lee Myung-bak government and the governing Grand National Party (*hannara-dang*; currently known as Saenuri party) had ratified the new Newspaper Act and Broadcasting Act in 2009,[8] each of the Big Three Newspapers and the *Maeil Business Daily* obtained a

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[8] The 2009 Newspaper Act and Broadcasting Act allowed investment by newspaper companies in the broadcasting sector, which had been banned under the previous version of the acts.

broadcast license in December 2010 and launched a new comprehensive programming

channel (*jongpyeon*) in January 2011. This close relationship between the conservative

political forces and mainstream news companies has consequently helped maintain the

dominance of conservative ideology in the Korean journalistic culture.

Meanwhile, the conservative dominance in the media system has continuously

caused civil society to seek their own representatives in the media system. Korean

historian and sociologist Jangjip Choi (2010) explained that the democratization of South

Korea was a conservative process that failed to include the interests of the democratic-

progressive movements and of everyday citizens into mainstream politics (pp. 117-151).

After the transition to democracy, therefore, the democratic-progressive groups have

continued to attempt to break up the existing conservative oligopoly in the media system

to foster diversity in Korean society. The most significant example was the establishment

of a democratic-progressive newspaper *The Hankyoreh* in May 1988. The members of

the *Dong-A* Struggle Committee for Defending a Free Press and the *Chosun* Struggle

Committee for Defending a Free Press played a leading role in the establishment of *The*

Hankyoreh. According to its mission statement, *The Hankyoreh* was intended to provide

an independent, left-leaning, and nationalist alternative to mainstream conservative

newspapers. The money needed to start *The Hankyoreh* was collected from

approximately 27,223 citizens, and many of them still own *The Hankyoreh* as

shareholders. Along with the foundation of *The Hankyoreh*, several left-leaning news

media, such as *Media Today* published by the Union of Media Workers of South Korea,

have also emerged. In addition, since the internet has emerged as a new platform for

social interaction, several left-leaning online news media, such as the *OhmyNews*, the *Pressian*, and the *Ddanzi*, have also challenged the conservative dominant media system, especially in the 1990s and the early 2000s.

These democratic-progressive news media contribute to fostering diversity and advancing professionalism in the journalistic culture. For example, in 1988, for the first time in Korean journalism history, *The Hankyoreh* established and adopted its own code of ethics, particularly prohibiting the acceptance of *chonji,* literally meaning cash gifts in unmarked white envelops, from a news source (Samung Kim, 2011, p. 311). At that time, this so-called "envelop journalism" was an unwritten rule for Korean journalists rather than an exception (Youm, 1994, p. 118). The first president of *The Hankyoreh*, the late Geonho Song, also wanted to protect the editorial integrity of news staff and thus attempted not to cross the line between the news and the business sides. He also emphasized the mission of journalism, saying, "*The Hankyoreh*'s first loyalty is to the Korean public. *The Hankyoreh* must maintain an independence from any political parties, either right-wing or left-wing" (Samung Kim, 2011, p. 314).

Nonetheless, these serious efforts to advance professionalism by democratic-progressive news companies do not mean that they are completely freed from the logics of other social forces. Rather, these democratic-progressive news media, whether they recognize it or not, also inevitably operate *within* the historically politicized media system. In particular, they are expected to function as spokesman for civil society and especially democratic-progressive political groups, and they actually do so. Depending on the degree and nature of the connections between the news media and political parties,

each of these news media supports, in a regular manner, particular parties on a variety of

public issues, including economy, social welfare, education, national security, and social

movements (W. Shin, 2016). These political orientations of the news media have been

empirically identified with respect to news frames, pattern of word choice, selection of

sources, and the visibility of political actors in the news media (for a detailed review, see

Rhee & Kim, 2012). In short, the landscape of the Korean media system well reflects "the

major political divisions in society" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 21).

In the case of the public broadcasting system, the views of the President and the

ruling party on journalism have more directly influenced the appointments of the

presidents of the two national broadcasters, the KBS and the MBC, and thereby impacted

the overall performance and direction of the public broadcasting system. First, under the

Broadcasting Act, the president of the KBS is appointed by the President of the Republic

of Korea upon a proposal by the KBS board of directors. These KBS directors are

nominated by a government agency called the Korea Communications Commission

(KCC; *hankuk bangsongtongsin wiwonhoe*) and are finally appointed by the President of

the Republic of Korea. Furthermore, since the president of the KCC is also appointed by

the President of the Republic of Korea, the majority of the KBS board of directors usually

becomes pro-government. Secondly, the government also influences the appointment of

the president of the MBC. Under the Foundation for Broadcasting Culture Act, the KCC

has the legal authority to nominate the chairman and directors of the Foundation for

Broadcasting Culture. As the largest shareholder of the MBC, the Foundation for

Broadcasting Culture supervises the overall management of the MBC, including

nominating and removing the president of the MBC. Furthermore, since each of the KBS

and the MBC presidents has ultimate hiring and firing responsibility at each network, the

top editorial positions in each network tend to be staffed based on their loyalty to the

president of each network (e.g., Soojeong Kim, 2014; Jae-kyoung Lee, 2013, pp. 334–

335). Consequently, it is inevitable that from such procedures the two broadcasting

networks' editorial stances are largely dependent upon the perspectives of the President

and the ruling party.

Overall, the boundaries of the Korean journalistic culture are overlapping with or

nested within other social forces, especially the political sphere. Then, how have Korean

journalists contributed to the construction and maintenance of the boundaries of the

journalistic culture? Conversely, what has happened to Korean journalists when they stay

in this *nested* journalistic culture?

Journalists Embodying the Instrumental View of Journalism

What distinguishes the logic of the Korean journalistic culture from that of other

countries' journalistic cultures is the professional survival of those older journalists who

cooperated with the military regimes and the influence of their embodied practices on

younger journalists. In December 1988, around one year after the collapse of the military

rule, hundreds of the forcefully exiled journalists formed the National Committee for

Restoring the Honor of Exiled Journalists (*jeonkuk haejik eonronin wonsang hoebok

jaengchwi hyeopuihoe*) (Dong-A Struggle Committee for Defending a Free Press, 2005, p.

445). This committee demanded the government and the National Assembly take

responsibility to discover and reveal past wrongdoing not only by the previous military regimes and their former employers, but also by their former colleagues assisting the military regimes. Many of these military regime collaborators, at that time, served as key editors or producers. However, this demand broke down because of the political forces' indifference to the issue (Dong-A Struggle Committee for Defending a Free Press, 2005, p. 447).[9] Furthermore, in 1993, under the first civilian government, there was an increasing public demand for an investigation of human rights violations by the military regimes, including the cases of violations of press freedom.[10] However, the government declined the demand again because the government wanted to ensure the rights of "military regime collaborators who may still work as journalists" (Dong-A Struggle Committee for Defending a Free Press, 2005, p. 447).[11]

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[9] In 1988, in the political situation in which then-President Roh Tae-woo was a close comrade of previous dictator Chun Doo-hwan, any action to discover and reveal past wrongdoing by the previous military regimes may not have been able to be implemented. What is more, the then-ruling Democratic Justice party had been serving as the springboard for the coup d'état that had brought Chun Doo-hwan to power.

[10] Following the Roh Tae-woo administration, Kim Young-sam was elected to 14th President in 1992. Kim Young-sam enjoyed much more legitimacy than his predecessor Roh Tae-woo, since he had no association with the military dictatorship. Hence, Kim named his government Korea's first *civilian government*, drawing a distinction from the previous governments although he was elected from the same right-wing party.

[11] In 2005, under the democratic-progressive Roh Moo-hyun government, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission also investigated the military regimes' repression of journalists and their companies. As a result, in 2008, the Commission advised the government to issue a public apology for the violation of press freedom and especially for the Park Chung-hee regime's repression of the *Dong-A* journalists in 1974 and 1975. The Commission also advised the *Dong-A* to apologize to the former *Dong-A* reporters, producers, and announcers who had been forced to resign from their positions and to put appropriate effort into restoring their honor. The Commission acknowledged that the executives of the *Dong-A* had colluded with the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA, currently known as the National Intelligence Agency) to fire their news staff. In addition, in 2010, the Commission investigated the Chun Doo-hwan regime's wrongdoing and advised the

In 2003, the Citizens' Coalition for Democratic Media (CCDM; *minju eonron simin yeonhap*), a civic organization advocating a free press, published two reports on the collusive activities of the journalists collaborating with the Chun Doo-hwan military regime. By analyzing hundreds of news stories published by six mainstream newspapers and two national networks in the 1980s, CCDM revealed how older journalists had used the news media as instruments to advance their interests even if these interests had not been directly related to journalism and its values (Citizens' Coalition for Democratic Media, 2003a, 2003b).

According to CCDM, not only those directly engaging in the Chun regime's Purification Campaign, but also those playing concurrent government roles and thereby producing pro-military news reports have continuously stayed in power at several newsrooms, as well as in Korean society at large. During the Chun regime's Purification Campaign, the leadership of many news companies, such as publishers, editors-in-chief, managing editors, and chief reporters, voluntarily "purified" their newsrooms, acting as informants of the police and military agencies against their journalists who had had negative attitudes toward the state and its policies (Yun, 2012, pp. 481–488). For news staff, the safest and the most effective way to avoid pressure was to follow the leadership's editorial policy. Most of them therefore cooperated with the military regime, as reflected in the fact that the average rate of implementation of the regime's reporting guidelines by eight major newspapers was above 80 % (An, 2001).

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government to publicly apologize for the violation of press freedom and to restore the honor of the journalists who had been forced to resign from their positions in 1980. However, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not clarify whom the military regime collaborators had been.

Moreover, as a reward for cooperating with the military government, many became lawmakers or government officials, while others were promoted to the higher ranks in the news companies. The owners of commercial news companies particularly welcomed the recruitment of their employees to the government because they could provide a direct connection to politicians and officials who may have had stories and occasional scoops (M.-J. Park, Kim, & Sohn, 2000, p. 114). For example, Mundo Huh, a former *Chosun* reporter, became the Chun government's chief secretary, serving as the driving force behind the government's decision to merge and abolish news companies in 1980. Jinhee Lee, then-president of the MBC, also forced hundreds of MBC journalists to leave the company and then served as the Minister of Culture and Public Information.

During the decades of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, many of these military regime collaborators had held critical positions in many traditional news companies and therefore contributed to constructing the dominant newsroom culture in the Korean journalistic community. Media critics, scholars, and journalists have observed many cases in which these older journalists seek to control younger journalists and thereby to secure compliance with organizational policies when there is tension between professional and organizational standards in their companies (e.g., Center for Media Responsibility and Human Rights, 2013; K. Choi, 2010; Seungho Choi & Jie, 2014; Y. Jeong, 2011; Jie & Lee, 2012; Ju, 2012; Seongjae Kim & Kim, 2010; Seungsoo Kim, 2014; Jae-kyoung Lee, 2013; S. Lee, 2012; S. Park, 2014; Sim et al., 2013; Song et al., 2012). For example, investigative reporter Choi Kyungyoung (2010) defined these older journalists as "opportunists" (p. 66) or "submissive conformists" (pp. 181-182) who do

not assess the claims of the people whom they cover, but are willing to practice the policies of advancing their interests regardless of the sacrifice of journalistic excellence. He particularly emphasized that these older journalists' lack of experience in so-called "serious reporting" during the 1980s has led to the reliance of the news companies on press releases and resulted in the triumph of a stenographic view of journalism in the Korean journalistic community (pp. 66-75).

These days, those who either survived during the Purification Campaign in 1980 or begun their careers as journalists during the military regime are small in number at each news company. Many retired or changed their occupation. Nonetheless, the currently remaining military regime collaborators are still very influential in their companies because they are the highest on the organizational chart, as owners, presidents, vice presidents, editors-in-chief, or managing editors (K. Choi, 2010, p. 73; Seungho Choi & Jie, 2014, pp. 8–11). One journalist-turned-politician, Yunseong Lee, who had been a former KBS reporter and anchor during the Chun Doo-hwan military regime and a fourth term lawmaker between 1996 and 2012, even came back to the cable TV network *Maeil Broadcasting Network* (MBN) in 2014, serving as an anchor on the MBN evening news. In an interview, broadcast reporter Bowoon Seo told me that he felt so angry when he thought of these older journalists:

> The survival of these *buyeok eonronin* [literally meaning "slavelike journalist"] is
> the most obvious signal showing the lack of professionalism in Korean journalism.
> Can they maintain an independence from those they cover? Can their subordinates

serve as monitors of powerful forces? I don't think so. (personal communication, October 12, 2014)

One of the most obvious patterns that these older journalists have constructed and maintained is the internalization of the state-imposed, instrumental view of journalism. Newspaper reporter Deok Seo put it in this way:

What I felt about my former superiors' attitudes was that they have *embodied* the dominant ideology of authoritarian military rule. They seem to self-identify with certain ideas nurtured during the 1970s and the 1980s. For example, they seem to believe that public broadcasters should follow the state's order. For them, this is the right direction for furthering national interests. … They may have felt conscience-stricken about producing pro-military news reports – what is called "*ttaeng* Chun news" – back in the 1980s.[12] However, I am sure that what they do these days is what their consciences dictate. *They are fused with the old, nationalist sense of journalism*. (personal communication, November 23, 2014)

As a result of the internalization of the conventional view of journalism, the logics of the journalistic culture and other social forces are mixed and integrated into each other. More precisely, this hybrid logic *has become* the logic of Korean journalism. In this sense, many older journalists seem to perceive the interference by other social actors "as *natural* as breathing" (B. Seo, personal communication, October 12, 2014) or even "as chances to be *more successful*" (J. Kim, personal communication, November 11, 2014). In particular,

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[12] "*Ttaeng* Chun News" refers to the way every broadcast news programs began with a report on what President Chun Doo-hwan had done that day. "*Ttaeng*" is an onomatopoeic word referring to a tinging sound indicating the beginning of a news program.

the executives of many news companies take non-journalistic practices for granted as their newsroom policies. Recognition and promotions in newsrooms, for example, have more to do with politics than journalistic excellence. In newsrooms, they form cliques based on regionalism, school relations, or kinship (e.g., Soojeong Kim, 2014). Whether or not one joins any of these cliques can influence various decisions that are made in newsrooms.

In particular, since their career paths have solely depended on the decisions made by the older journalists, many news staff members try to join these cliques to prove their loyalty (Jae-kyoung Lee, 2013, pp. 297–300). Moreover, this can be enhanced by the rewards given in recognition of the news staff members' loyalty to the company and its leadership. These rewards include sponsoring training abroad programs and being promoted to a foreign correspondent (especially a correspondent in English-speaking countries), a chief reporter, or an anchorman.[13] Broadcast reporter Gwon Omin told me, "Many of my former superiors, especially the top of the structure (*gukjang-geup*), have worked and socialized in this way through their entire careers, and therefore this is the only way they know" (personal communication, December 5, 2014).

Socialization into the logic of Korean journalism. The attitudes of news staff toward the established logic of Korean journalism sometimes conflict with those of the executives. In some cases, younger news staff try to defy or bypass the rules set by the

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[13] Being promoted to a correspondent in English-speaking countries is particularly preferred partly because "journalists want their children to study abroad and learn the English language" (D. Seo, personal communication, November 22, 2014). This is related to the current "English boom resulting from the Korean education fever" (J.-K. Park, 2009, p. 50). These days, a number of children are being sent to English-speaking countries for the purpose of English education.

established journalists (Son, 2012, pp. 509–519; Yun, 2012, p. 477).[14] Nonetheless, the

established logic has been generally maintained in the Korean journalistic community. In

particular, younger journalists have played a critical role in the maintenance of the logic

by reproducing the logic in their everyday practice. There are some culturally specific

mechanisms by which Korean journalists are able to assimilate and thereby reproduce the

established logic of Korean journalism.

First of all, most news companies hire new reporters by their own annual entrance

examinations, called *eonron-gosi*, and these examinations can be used as a mechanism to

tame new journalists. These annual entrance examinations are extremely competitive. In

most cases, less than 10 % of the applicants are accepted. For example, in 2010, for the

reporter or producer positions of the public broadcaster KBS, there were 151 applicants

for each opening (E. Lee, 2010). When preparing for these extremely competitive

examinations, many journalism job seekers are faced with a dilemma: Should I self-select

only those news companies that are consistent with my values? Since there is a high

degree of "political parallelism" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) in Korean society,[15]

journalism job seekers are able to immediately identify the news media by their political

orientations (Rhee & Kim, 2012). According to former broadcast reporter Jungkuk Kim

who taught several journalism classes in a journalism school as an adjunct professor,

while some journalism job seekers self-select those news companies that are congruent

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[14] In Chapter II, "younger journalists" refer to those journalists who are younger than those who directly experienced the military regime as journalists.

[15] Political parallelism refers to "the degree and nature of the links between the media and political parties or, more broadly, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 21).

with their considerations about journalism, others decide to "find some ways to live

together with those who are different from themselves." He told me, "Two students I

taught called me and asked me whether they would have to conceal their true preferences

or identities, especially political, when they would be interviewed by news companies."

They seemed to want to "first get any job as long as it's a journalistic position and then

think later about how they can stick to their own principles" (personal communication,

October 11, 2014).

He continued, "I am not sure whether or not the news companies actually use any

systematic selective procedure. But, the point is, most journalism job seekers anticipate

that they will be asked to answer such questions to identify their political stance." Further,

many are aware of what they are doing while they prepare for the exam. Newspaper

reporter Junghan Lee who just started his journalistic career at a news startup told me

about his previous experience about preparing for job interviews for the reporter positions.

"I really felt unhappy when I found myself trying to prepare possible answers that could

reflect someone else, not myself," he said. "What I was trying to conceal was the most

valuable part of my life," he sighed, "I am always proud of being an *undongkwon*.[16] But,

I knew that the company would not value it" (personal communication, December 10,

2014). After all, the entrance examinations of the news media – together with the high

degree of political parallelism and difficulty in the job market – are a mechanism by

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[16] Literally meaning "the movement sphere," *undongkwon* refers to both an individual
activist and the democratisation movement in the 1980s as a whole (N. Lee, 2007, p. 8). These
days, this term *undongkwon* is often used by right-wingers to describe the progressives, especially
those who engage in any progressive social movement (see W. Shin, In press). When my
interviewee said he was an *undongkwon*, this means that he was a member of a civic organization
that former *undongkwon* activists had established.

which journalism job seekers are likely to be prepared to assimilate the news companies'

dominant culture. In particular, the key agents of this process are not the news companies,

but the job seekers themselves.

Another assimilation mechanism is a culturally unique hierarchical order system

called the *seonbae-hubae* system. The terms *seonbae* and *hubae* literally mean senior and

junior, respectively. The *seonbae-hubae* system is based on Confucian philosophy

emphasizing social harmony that is achieved by a hierarchical system of reciprocal

duties.[17] Almost every group or organization in Korean society – including a school, a

company, a professional sport team, and an occupational community – adopts the

seonbae-hubae system. The hierarchical order of rank between *seonbae* and *hubae* in a

group depends on the order of joining the group.

In any news organization, as well as in the journalistic community as a whole, this

seonbae-hubae system exists. Since most Korean news media recruit new reporters or

producers by their own annual entrance examinations, Korean journalists make very clear

the order among themselves according to the year they began their careers as

journalists.[18] One year's seniority can make a huge difference in the *seonbae-hubae*

relationship of a news company, which may be incomprehensible to other societies in

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[17] Confucian philosophy suggests that hierarchical relationships are necessary in order to maintain social harmony. Five ethics, *Oryun*, are particularly emphasized in social life: (1) *Gunsin Yuui*, emphasizing duty between king and subject, (2) *Buja Yuchin*, emphasizing the love between a father and a son, a father's authority, and a son's obedience, (3) *Bubu Yubyeol*, emphasizing the distinctive role between husband and wife, (4) *Jangyu Yuseo*, emphasizing precedence of the old over the young, and (5) *Bungu Yusin*, emphasizing faith between friends.

[18] A group of journalists who begin their careers together at a news organization is called a *donggi*, literally meaning "same order" or "same rank." The members of *donggi* share a high degree of camaraderie.

which people do not habitually use the year of entry to decide the social position in a group.

In this cultural system, certain duties arise between *seonbae* and *hubae* journalists. On the one hand, *seonbae* journalists have duties of caring for, protecting, and training their *hubae* journalists. On the other hand, *hubae* journalists feel obliged to their *seonbae* journalists for having hired them, trained them, bought them meals and drinks, or just for having been their *seonbae*s. Particularly, respect, silence, obedience, and conformity are believed to be key virtues for *hubae* journalists to maintain harmony in relation to their *seonbae*s. Furthermore, as expressed in the idiom "once a *seonbae,* forever a *seonbae*," a *seonbae-hubae* relationship is considered to be permanent in the same way as a parent-child relationship does. In other words, this cultural system can make journalists to be as loyal to their superiors as they would be to their parents. Every *hubae* journalist also becomes *seonbae* to someone more junior. A journalist is a father to his *hubae* and a son to his *seonbae*. In this way, every journalist in a seonbae-hubae system forms a family.

This *seonbae-hubae* system functions as a mechanism by which the practices of *hubae* journalists come to resemble those of their *seonbae* journalists. In this way, the established cultural patterns in a news company can be maintained. The training system of most Korean mainstream media takes a form of apprenticeship by which the embodied practices of *seonbae* journalists are transmitted to their *hubae* journalists. In particular, novice journalists (*suseub gija*) gradually learn and appropriate journalistic skills, jargon, know-how, and rules that constitute being a *qualified* journalist for their company and also for the Korean journalistic community at large. Almost every experienced journalist

I interviewed described this process of being a qualified Korean journalist as "training in a military-style boot camp." For example, during the first few months after being hired, novice reporters in most mainstream news media are assigned to police beats, in Korean journalists' jargon *sasseumawari* or *sasseumari*.[19] These police beats function as a social setting in which novice reporters begin to know what *doing journalism* means and especially what a *seonbae-hubae* relationship looks like.

A novice reporter usually works for a particular *seonbae* reporter called a *sasu* in order to learn journalistic skills and practices.[20] In this process, *sasu* reporters tend to inculcate absolute obedience in novice reporters, and novice reporters tend to obey their *sasu*s without second thoughts. Veteran newspaper reporter Hongjun Choi described his past experience as a police beat reporter as follows: "What I experienced every day was my *sasu*'s yelling, eating and sleeping at police stations, getting used to wearing squalid, foul smelling clothes, and finally crying." He continued, "Though it was extremely hard, this experience led me to have the spirit of 'just do it whatever it is.' This mentality is still one of the most valuable assets for me as a reporter" (personal communication, October 17, 2014).

What this *seonbae-hubae* system, together with the boot camp-like training system, tells us in terms of Korean journalism culture is the significance of the

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[19] This jargon *sasseumawari* or *sasseumari* originates from the Japanese word, 察まわり, literally meaning "patrolling police stations." Korean journalists have used many Japanese terms in everyday practice since the early 20th century when suffering from Japanese colonial rule (Jonggwon Park, 2003).

[20] The term *sasu* literally means a machine gunner. A *sasu*'s apprentice is called a *busasu*, literally meaning an assistant gunner. These terms of *sasu* and *busasu* are used not only in news companies but also business companies and university laboratories.

professional and moral standards of those journalists who are higher on the organizational chart. Depending on the ways in which *seonbae* journalists treat *hubae* journalists' work, the *seonbae-hubae* system can contribute to the construction of the journalistic methods and morality of the *hubae* journalists. In particular, the *seonbae-hubae* system can encourage self-censorship among those younger reporters whose *seonbae* reporters, especially editors or desk reporters, seem to value non-journalistic practices more highly than professional journalistic values or norms. Former newspaper reporter Changho Choi shared with me his experience at the site of the Sewol ferry disaster:

> In many occasions, peer reporters called me and gave me exclusive information. They also made way for me to videotape important scenes. Why? Every reporter who was on the site knew that this disaster was a terrible, terrible tragedy and that the government did really a poor job on its rescue operation. The peer reporters said that they would not be able to publish this information anyhow because they knew that their superiors would kill the stories displeasing the government. I thanked them. They were unprofessional, but I understand why they had to do so. In an organization like that, younger reporters do not have much choice but to just follow the rule. (personal communication, October 26, 2014)

Indeed, in the *seonbae-hubae* system, younger journalists come to self-limit their autonomy and then conform to the embodied practices of established journalists rather than to any personal belief, ethical standard, or knowledge that they initially brought to the job. This is also closely related to another socialization mechanism called *yama* practice.

The term *yama* originates from the Japanese word やま, literally meaning "peak," "climax," "godsend," or "estimate." In the Korean journalistic community, *yama* refers to the mechanism by which the whole process of news selection and production is enabled, as reflected in the idiom "*yama* is the first and the last of a news story" (C. Park, 2012, p. 27). According to journalism scholar Chang-sup Park (2012), in everyday practice, the term *yama* is arbitrarily used to indicate not only a journalist's worldview that shapes her or his understanding about an issue, but also a news company's strategic, tactical, and conventional direction determining and enforcing its news staff's news selection and production process (pp. 25-31). In this sense, *yama* shares many similarities with Gans's (1979) concept "considerations," which refers to those criteria helping "journalists avoid excessive uncertainty about whether they have made proper choices" (p. 83). Gans (1979) suggested that journalists judge the availability and suitability of news in terms of a variety of considerations, including the source-journalist relations, the level of the importance of an issue, and commercial and political pressures (pp. 81-83). Borrowing from Gans's term, *yama* practice can be defined as a process in which journalists apply various considerations to make news judgments.

Yama practice is *relational* and *hierarchical.* The *yama* of a news story is largely determined by the interaction between reporters and their desk reporters or editors. When a junior reporter briefs a possible news story and confers with her or his boss about whether s/he will further investigate and write the story, the boss virtually always asks, "What is your *yama*?" Depending on the context of this question, *yama* can have various meanings, including the subject of the story, the story line of the story, the intention of

the story, a core fact of the story, anything distinctive from other companies' news stories,

or anything unusual happening in the case. To evaluate whether the journalist's *yama* is

appropriate for the given news story, the boss uses his "journalistic gut feeling" (Shultz,

2007), which refers to "a seemingly self-evident and self-explaining sense of

newsworthiness" (p. 190). This journalistic gut feeling has been constructed, preserved,

and refined in the boss's mind and body through her or his whole career. Further, in many

cases, a desk reporter or editor sets the *yama* of a news story in advance and just assigns a

junior reporter the story. Korean journalists describe this as "being hit by a bullet"

("*chong majatta*") (C. Park, 2012, p. 38). When "hit by a bullet," the assigned reporter

does not have to have familiarity with the story, but has to yield to the boss's gut feeling.

In addition, according to Chang-sup Park (2012), each news company has its own pattern

of *yama* practice so that it can maintain its editorial policy (pp. 61-65). The difference in

this pattern of *yama* practice is what distinguishes news companies form one another. As

broadcast reporter Deok Seo told me, "Every veteran reporter [in Korean journalists'

jargon, *seonsu*] can immediately figure out why this newspaper excludes this, while that

newspaper emphasizes that" (personal communication, October 7, 2014). In other words,

the *yama* practice of a medium is its identity.

After all, while a junior journalist continues to experience the *yama* building

process with her or his boss over and over again, s/he just begins to know what *yama*

means, what kind of *yama* the boss prefers, and why story killings and cuts happen in her

or his news company. Indeed, one journalist's *yama* practice is constructed in the

hierarchical relationships with the colleagues and gradually internalized in the journalist.

In addition, the internalized "journalistic gut feeling" of each journalist of one news company inevitably comes to resemble one another's and finally represents the distinctive quality of the news company.

One additional mechanism by which journalists acquire the established logic of Korean journalism is the press club or press corps, commonly known as *gijadan*. The press club or *gijadan* is a group of journalists who are assigned to cover the same beat (*chulipcheo*). A press club exists in government branch organizations, political parties, city halls, police stations, and *chaebol*s (Korean conglomerates). Many of these sources provide the press club with an office called *gijasil*. The members of a press club are usually stationed at this *gijasil* to generate news from their beat.

The press club system can have either positive or negative functions depending on how the members of the press club utilize the system. First, as broadcasting reporter Changho Choi suggested, the press club system can "help junior journalists understand their relative strengths and weaknesses in relation to their peers who are responsible for covering the same beat" (personal communication, October 26, 2014). Furthermore, ideally, the members of the press club can collectively challenge the people or institution they are covering to release information withheld from them (Seungho Choi & Jie, 2014, p. 59).

In reality, however, Korean journalists do not dare do so, but they together rely on the government- or *chaebol*-provided information to produce news reports. In many cases, the members of the press club do not attempt to assess the claims of the sources. Instead, Korean journalists, especially beat reporters, have continuously come under criticism for

practicing what Brent Cunningham (2003) called "he said, she said" (*badasseugi*) style of

reporting.[21] Several media critics have argued that this style of reporting has been

transmitted from the older journalists who served the aims of the military regimes in the

1970s and the 1980s. In particular, Kyungyoung Choi (2010) argued that these older

journalists have misunderstood the notion of objectivity. As discussed above, the military

regime controlled the performance and direction of the news media, and the older

journalists were forced not to make judgments about the military rule. In this process,

they internalized the "stenographic" style of reporting. Consequently, according to Choi,

the older journalists still perceive the stenographic style of reporting as *objective* and

neutral because the reporting seems to exclude the reporter's point of view. For them, on

the contrary, investigative journalism that emerged in the late 1990s in Korean journalism

has been considered too subjective and therefore biased (pp. 68-69).[22] While exercising

yama practice, therefore, the older journalists tend to deemphasize journalistic skills to

verify the underlying assumptions of the sources' claims. On the contrary, non-

journalistic elements to deal with powerful sources are often emphasized. In particular,

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[21] Jay Rosen (2011) provides a definition of "he said, she said" journalism as follows:

> "He said, she said" journalism means…(1) There's a public dispute. (2) The
> dispute makes news. (3) No real attempt is made to assess clashing truth claims
> in the story, even though they are in some sense the reason for the story (Under
> the "conflict makes news" test). (4) The means for assessment do exist, so it's
> possible to exert a factual check on some of the claims, but for whatever reason
> the report declines to make use of them. (5) The symmetry of two sides making
> opposite claims puts the reporter in the middle between polarized extremes.
> When these five conditions are met, the genre is in gear.

[22] Michael Schudson (1981, 2001) provided an excellent discussion on the objectivity
norm in journalism in the US context. In addition, Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2014, pp. 101–106)
discussion about the meaning of objectivity is also useful for understanding the view of the older
Korean journalists on objective reporting.

according to Choi (2010), "building as many acquaintanceships as possible and having a strong network are considered critical to a successful journalistic career. The facts that 'I know this politician' or 'I had a drink with that politician' are sources of one's pride" (p. 74).

Of course, these close connections with power-holders can offer journalists a chance to get unofficial and secret information. However, these connections inevitably hamper what Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) called "independence of spirit and mind" (pp. 137-168) and therefore lead journalists to focus on stories that please their sources. Furthermore, because most power-holders want to maintain privileged access to the news media, they persistently feed their press club members (Seungho Choi & Jie, 2014, pp. 20–21). According to Jeong and Jo (2015), for example, one of the major roles of public affairs officials in each government branch organization is "serving the press club members breakfast in the refectory and buying them lunch at restaurants. If any reporter works late into night, the officials will also buy dinner. This is how the officials make journalists tractable." In addition, public affairs officials in *chaebol*s also often co-opt their beat reporters by providing them with traveling expenses, hotel vouchers, meal tickets to restaurants, shopping gift cards, and bottles of whiskey (C. Jeong & Jo, 2015).

This favor comes at a price. As long as beat reporters let their sources treat them to anything, they must be obliged to do something for the sources. This sense of obligation particularly results from a culturally specific virtue called *uiri*, literally meaning the rule of loyalty and benevolence. The virtue of *uiri* is based on the sense of *we-ness*, requiring "[unconditional] friendship, mutual altruism and exclusive favoritism"

(Sang-chin Choi & Kim, 2006, p. 357) among those who belong to the "we." To keep this

sense of we-ness with the sources, beat reporters must practice the virtue of *uiri*. They,

accordingly, can be practicing self-censorship to protect their sources and instead rely on

press releases to generate news stories. Additionally, in many press briefings, beat

reporters and spokesmen together decide whether to report a story or to withhold it "in a

pleasant atmosphere," according to network reporter Yeji Lee (personal communication,

December 12, 2014). Newspaper journalist Seonghyun Kim also stressed the negative

impact of the collusive relationship between beat reporters and their sources on the public:

> At The Ministry of Ocean and Fisheries press briefs [during the Sewol ferry
>
> incident in April 2014], only a handful of reporters challenged the spokesman,
>
> asking sensitive questions. The majority of reporters kept silent and just took
>
> down what the spokesman briefed. Though some asked questions, these were just
>
> unnecessary repetitions in checking the information the spokesman had just
>
> presented. Most of them were the Ministry's beat reporters. They instead tended
>
> to ask a question underhandedly after the press brief, without video and audio
>
> recordings. Several times, I was arguing that we had to have more Q&A sessions
>
> while videotaping. But, the spokesman was ignoring me, and the beat reporters
>
> seemed to consider me impertinent. I am not a beat reporter. I don't care about
>
> their rules. These reporters must not have published this kind of secret
>
> information. Their news would have been filled with only information provided
>
> during the press brief. These unpublishable secrets couldn't help the bereaved
>
> family and the public. (personal communication, October 29, 2014)

What is more, the virtue of *uiri* is also expected in the relationships among the members of the press club. The members of each press club enjoy an exclusive privilege to get access to the sources within their beat territory. The sources often deny non-club members access to information (C. Jeong & Jo, 2015). The powerful sources, including government branch organizations, let the press club members have their own rule for determining whether a new member, usually from a newly established news organization, will have access to the press club. Based on this exclusive privilege, while living in their beat, beat reporters make friends, develop *seonbae-hubae* relationships with one another, share gossips and secrets, and finally form a strong bond of camaraderie. This sense of we-ness among beat reporters often leads a beat reporter to act in an unprofessional way. According to Youm (1994), for example, they "are often concerned about a possibility that their enterprising reporting might embarrass their complacent peers by making them appear not to be living up to their professionalism" (p. 118). In this sense, if a beat reporter attempts to be more independent vis-à-vis her or his peer beat reporters, s/he can be considered breaking an unwritten rule in their press club that the members are practicing the virtue of *uiri* with each other. This press club system consequently can lead the members of the press club to share something in common in terms of the considerations to make news judgments, namely the *yama* building process. This commonality in the *yama* building process ultimately contributes to the maintenance of the dominant logic of Korean journalism.

Finally, the *seonbae-hubae* system can also damage the independence of the mind of a beat journalist. Public affairs officials in many government agencies are the beat

reporters' former superiors at the news media. Many government organizations have recruited former veteran journalists as top public affairs officials. Since President Park Geun-hye's inauguration in 2013, for example, the position of Senior Secretary for Public Affairs has been replaced four times. Among those four Senior Secretaries for Public Affairs, three are former journalists who worked for national TV broadcasters, such as the *Seoul Broadcasting System* (SBS) or the *Yonhap Television Network* (YTN). Another example is found in the recruitments of veteran journalists by *chaebol*s. In-yong Rhee, the current President and Head of the Communication Team at the Samsung Corporate Strategy Office, was working for the public broadcaster MBC from 1982 to 2005. More recently, Samsung also recruited several veteran journalists, including senior reporter Hyeongsup Lee who had been a Samsung beat reporter for *The Hankyoreh* (S.-K. Jo, 2014).

According to the *seonbae-hubae* system in the Korean journalistic culture, these former journalists are still *seonbae*s of beat journalists due to the tradition of "once a *seonbae,* forever a *seonbae.*" It would be no surprise if the political and economic power-holders tended to use the hierarchical relationships between former veterans and current beat journalists to support the achievement of the power-holders' purposes (e.g., S.-K. Jo, 2014). If a *hubae* beat reporter displeases a *seonbae* journalist-turned-bureaucrat, s/he must deal with the displeasure of multiple *seonbae* reporters who are her or his current superiors and the journalist-turned-bureaucrat's *hubae*s.

My analysis presented in Chapter II demonstrates that the dominant logic of Korean journalism is the product not just of the state's use of coercion and resulting obedience by Korean journalists, but also of a complex cultural and organizational process. In particular, the construction and maintenance of the instrumental view of journalism has resulted from mutual satisfaction between powerful social actors and journalists. This instrumental view has not only been deeply embedded in Korean society as forms of institutions, policies, and cultural codes, but it has also been embodied in the journalists' everyday roles and practices. In particular, by several socialization mechanisms, including annual entrance examinations, the *seonbae-hubae* system, *yama* practice, and the press club system, the established journalistic practices of the news media can be transmitted from established, older journalists to younger ones. Younger journalists are not passive in this socialization process. Rather, in many cases, they are self-selecting those news companies that are congruent with their needs and expectations. They are also prepared for whatever may happen after being recruited. Especially, the hierarchical organizational culture serves a socializing function for the news media by encouraging a continuing process whereby younger journalists learn the skills, know-how, values, and rules appropriate to their positions in the Korean journalistic community. By this process, they are acquiring new identities as Korean journalists and ultimately are becoming the main agents of reproducing the dominant logic of Korean journalism. In the next chapter, I will examine the reactions of Korean citizens to this established logic of journalism, focusing on the cases in the 2010s, and describe the impact of these citizens' reactions on the journalistic community.

III. A Constitutive Moment in the Korean Journalistic Culture

Over the last decade, the journalistic culture in South Korea has been entering an unsettled period (Swidler, 1986). In this constitutive moment of the journalistic culture, the naturalness of the dominant logic of journalism has been challenged. A large segment of Korean society has questioned the established role of Korean journalism and sought to transform it. In this process, the meaning of journalism has been contested in Korean society. In this chapter, I discuss the public reaction to the dominant culture of journalism, especially the instrumental view of journalism. The instrumental view inside and outside journalism undermines the stability of the journalistic community as well as the trust between journalists and the public. Chapter III also introduces an emerging model of journalism – nonprofit, citizen funded journalism. The challenge of Korean news nonprofits to the dominant logic of journalism is a process of setting an alternative evaluation criterion for the performance of Korean journalists.

To discuss these, I analyzed 10 books published by main actors of the Press Freedom Movement in the 2010s, including former journalists who were forced to resign by mainstream news media during the 2010s and bloggers. In addition, I collected a specific set of tweets containing the term 기레기 (*giraegi*), by monitoring Twitter's public streaming API between December 2014 and March 2015. By interrogating these tweets, I tried to show how Koreans Twitter users speak about journalism in this unsettled period.

"The Second Dark Age" of Korean Journalism

Korean journalism has become one of the most contentious issues in Korean society since the inauguration of the conservative President Lee Myung-bak in 2008. A wide range of citizens have explicitly revealed their antipathy to mainstream journalists, especially criticizing the democratic deficits in the media system. In particular, most of this criticism has been targeted at the performance of three national broadcasters – two public broadcasters, the *Korean Broadcasting System* (KBS) and the *Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation* (MBC), and the 24-hour news channel *Yonhap Television Network* (YTN).

Between the late 1990s and mid 2000s, before the beginning of the Lee Myung-bak presidency, the news staff of these national broadcasters enjoyed the maximum level of journalistic freedom both from the state and from the executives of their corporations in Korean journalism history. During the two successive administrations of democratic-progressive Presidents Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2004-2008), the views of the presidents on journalism were significantly different from those of the former presidents, especially the military dictators. In particular, President Roh Moo-hyun attempted to remove many conventional privileges that the government had enjoyed over the news media. For example, Roh Moo-hyun provided government officials with a not-to-do list to remove the conventional practices between the officials and journalists. Roh advised the public affairs officials not to offer any favor to beat reporters, as well as their editors, so that favorable news stories about the government would be produced. In addition, the Roh government decided to close the offices for the press clubs, called

gijasil, in government branch organizations, including the Blue House. As explained in Chapter II, these press club offices had been considered integral to the relations between the government and the news media. Roh believed that these top-down attempts to reform the journalistic culture could dismantle the existing collusion between government officials and beat reporters.

In this period, the public broadcasting system was largely insulated from government control and operated by broadcasting professionals. During the Roh Moo-hyun administration, for example, government officials were told not to underhandedly contact the public broadcasting corporations to complain about the stories of the government (K. Lee, 2003). According to the then KBS president Yeonju Jeong (2011), President Roh also promised Jeong that he would never call Jeong during his presidency because he wanted the KBS to be a fair and independent institution (p. 361-362). Senior broadcasting reporter Seo also emphasized that during the Roh Moo-hyun's term "it was possible that every news corporation could criticize and even insult the current President without fear of future reprisal for the first time in Korean history" (personal communication, October 5, 2014).

In this process of differentiation from the state, the growth of professional norms and practices was observed in the public broadcasting corporations. In 2005, for instance, an investigative reporting unit was established in the KBS. The founder of this unit was then-KBS reporter Youngjin Kim. Youngjin Kim and his unit members researched, upheld, and practiced the principles and methods of investigative reporting developed in other news organizations, such as Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. (IRE), and

consequently received dozens of prestigious national and international journalism awards during the Roh Moo-hyun presidency. Based on this increased degree of professionalism, several broadcasting journalists I interviewed identified the 2000s as "the golden age of Korean broadcasting journalism."

On the contrary, the degree of political parallelism of newspaper companies has become higher since the two successive democratic-progressive presidencies. The Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments attempted to reform the news media industry and in this process publicly criticized the performance of mainstream conservative newspapers, particularly the *Chosun*, the *Joongang*, and the *Dong-A* (Jie & Lee, 2012, pp. 266–267). For many Koreans, especially for the conservatives, these top-down efforts by the two governments were considered a severe violation of press freedom. Indeed, the term "press freedom" and the way to achieve press freedom have been instrumentalized by different political parties.

The golden age ended with the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak in 2008. As discussed in the previous chapter, in Korean society, the level of freedom of individual journalists of the public broadcasting corporations from the interference of the state is largely determined by the president's perspective on journalism. This is because the government has the policy measures to influence the personnel management of the national broadcasters (Seungho Choi & Jie, 2014, p. 22). The Lee government openly and secretly attempted to control the public broadcasting system. First, See-joong Choi, who was a close friend of President Lee's older brother and also President Lee's political mentor, was appointed as the president of the Korean Communications Commission

(KCC). As a media regulation government agency, the KCC has a legal authority not only to influence the appointments of the presidents of the KBS and the MBC, but also to manage and license the electromagnetic spectrum for commercial media companies and public media companies. The appointment of See-joong Choi, therefore, was considered "a tactical appointment" by the Lee government to control the broadcasting industry (Y. Jeong, 2011, pp. 92–94; Roh, 2012, pp. 86–89). Along with the appointment of Choi as the KCC president, in 2008, the chief executives and presidents of several media corporations – including the KBS, the MBC, the YTN, the *Korean Broadcasting Advertising Corporation* (KOBACO), the *Arirang TV*, and the *Sky Life* – were also replaced by supporters of President Lee Myung-bak (Amnesty International, 2009).[23]

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[23] There is some evidence that the Lee Myung-bak government monitored the appointment processes of the chief executives and presidents of the media corporations, especially the KBS and the YTN. The Bureau of Civil Service Discipline and Investigation (BCSDI), an agency monitoring public officials for possible corruption, carried out missions to monitor the inside affairs of the national broadcasters, especially the performances of the presidents of the national broadcasters (Choe, 2012). First, according to the BCSDI reports disclosed by the KBS union members, the KBS was under the BCSDI's surveillance. The BCSDI was monitoring the union's activities, evaluating the KBS president's performance, and predicting a possible result of the president's personnel management (Newstapa, 2012b). In particular, the BCSDI recommended that the KBS president Kim Ingyu had to be "more careful and modest in his behavior and speech" in order to "advance the unity and cohesion of the KBS employees and ultimately promote the reform of the KBS" (Newstapa, 2012b). Secondly, the BCSDI also engaged in the appointment process of the YTN president in 2009. The BCSDI, for example, evaluated the acting president Bae Seok-kyu as "loyal to the current government" and praised his enterprising spirit as follows: "Bae Seok-kyu is dedicated himself to reform the YTN…as shown in recent cases of personnel management … such as the abolition of the direct election of editor-in-chief … and the replacements of left-leaning editor-in-chief, anchormen, and pro-union executives" (Newstapa, 2012b). Based on this evaluation, the BCSDI recommended that "the government used its influence over the [YTN]'s major shareholders to help make [Bae Seok-kyu] president" (Choe, 2012). Although it is unclear whether the government had actually forced the YTN shareholders – the government enterprises – to elect Bae Seok-kyu as the president, Bae Seok-kyu was elected and was serving as the YTN president between 2009 and 2015. This BCSDI scandal was described by *The New York Times* as "Echoes of Watergate" on April 9, 2012 (see Choe, 2012).

In particular, three former aides of President Lee were elected as the presidents of three leading broadcasting corporations, the KBS, the MBC, and the YTN. KBS president Ingyu Kim and YTN president Bon-hong Ku had participated in the Lee Myung-bak's presidential campaign as the communications director and the special advisor on broadcasting, respectively. MBC president Jaecheol Kim was also known as a close acquaintance of President Lee Myung-bak since he had served as a MBC political reporter. These three presidents had experienced the military authoritarian rule as journalists and survived the Purification Campaign of the Chun military regime. KBS president Ingyu Kim, for example, began his journalistic career at the KBS in 1973. Kim has been criticized by media critics because he produced several news reports idealizing the authoritarian rule of the Chun regime. He served in many top positions at the KBS, such as a US correspondent and news director, and became a news executive in 2003. In 2007, Kim resigned from the executive position of the KBS to participate in the presidential campaign of Lee Myung-bak.

This situation particularly affected those journalists who had begun their journalistic careers after the collapse of the military regime and enjoyed the process of the progressive development of journalistic freedom. For these journalists, the comebacks of these older journalists-turned-politicians, whom they called "living fossils," were seen as a regression to the old, authoritarian measures of the state to control the news media industry. As former KBS investigative reporter Omin Gwon told me, "It seemed virtually impossible that these President's men, what we call 'parachute appointees,' could be independent from the Lee government. They would be seduced by President Lee,

intimidated by him, and finally compromised by their own political interests." He

continued to stress the potential consequences of the appointments of the "President's

men":

> The history of the military control over the news media caused permanent trauma
>
> to Korean journalism. This is a kind of *institutional post-traumatic stress disorder*,
>
> I think. We continuously suffer from the possibility of government interference in
>
> editorial independence. We learn from our history what will happen if journalists
>
> collectively experience the government's control. I really don't want to be part of
>
> that tragedy. I don't want to experience the situation in which I can't write a story
>
> that I like to write. In particular, I really don't want to be like those pseudo-
>
> journalists. (personal communication, November 28, 2014)

This fear provoked severe objections from the news staff of the public

broadcasters. In July 2008, the union members of the YTN went on strike to protest the

elected president Bon-hong Ku and call for guarantees of editorial independence. YTN's

struggle continued until April 2009. During this struggle, six journalists were dismissed

by the YTN in October 2008. Four of them, including YTN union chairman Jong-myun

Roh, were arrested for "interfering with business" in March 2009. Many peer journalists

both from the YTN and other news companies expressed their objection to the dismissal

decisions made by the YTN's executives. In particular, broadcasting reporters and

anchors conducted the so-called "Black Struggle" (Roh, 2012, pp. 62–66). They agreed to

all wear a black suit while recording a news program. A black suit symbolized the days

of the military dictatorship when color television broadcasting had not been introduced

yet.[24] In other words, by wearing a black suit, these journalists intended to express their objection to the conventional views of the Lee government and its aides on the news media (Roh, 2012, p. 65).

The reporters' dismissal and arrest drew international attention to the YTN strike (e.g., Amnesty International, 2009; International Federation of Journalists, 2009). Between 2008 and 2009, Amnesty International researchers met with the YTN union members to review their claims of unwarranted government interference in editorial independence. Frank La Rue, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, also undertook an official mission to the Republic of Korea in May 2010 and reported as follows:

> [The] Special Rapporteur expresses his concern that … there have been increased restrictions on individuals' right to freedom of opinion and expression, primarily due to an increasing number of prosecutions, based on laws that are often not in conformity with international standards, of individuals who express views which are not in agreement with the position of the Government. … The Special Rapporteur stresses the importance of ensuring that the independence of heads and management of broadcasting corporations be guaranteed through an effective appointment process (La Rue, 2011, pp. 1–2, 18).

This national and international attention given to the Lee government and Korean journalism, however, did not guarantee the independence of the news staff of the public

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[24] In South Korea, the Chun Doo-hwan military regime introduced color television on December 1, 1980, right after the mass dismissal of around 930 journalists under the Purification Campaign.

broadcasting corporations from their executives and also from the government.

Borrowing from Merrill's (1993) concepts, this situation in Korean journalism could be

seen as a lack of "journalistic freedom." Merrill (1993) argued that it would be important

to distinguish journalistic freedom from press freedom. According to him, "press freedom

concerns a relationship between the press and the government," while "journalistic

freedom concerns a relationship between the journalists working for a news medium and

the executives and editors of that news medium" (pp. 34-35). Korean journalism scholar

Jae-kyung Lee (1997) also suggested that a distinction needs to be made between

"publisher's freedom" and "reporters' freedom" (p. 137). In this sense, the veteran

broadcasting producer Seungho Choi evaluated the level of journalistic freedom in the

late 2000s and the 2010s as "almost comparable with that under the military regimes"

(Seungho Choi & Jie, 2014, p. 83). "This period will be called the second dark age in

Korean journalism history," Choi added (p. 82).[25]

In particular, since 2010 when Jaecheol Kim was appointed as the MBC president,

the MBC staff was faced with the most blatant interference by management with regard

to the news selection and production process. The MBC union was on strike between

April and June 2010 to protest the appointment of Jaecheol Kim as the MBC president.

However, the strike ended with the dismissal of the MBC union chairman Geun-haeng

Lee and pay cuts and/or the temporary suspension of the work of several union

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[25] Freedom House (2011), a US-based international NGO, also downgraded South Korea's media freedom rating from "free" in 2007 to "partly free" in 2011. According to Freedom House (2011), since the inauguration of President Lee Myung-Bak, "South Korea has experienced a noticeable decline in the freedom of expression for both journalists and the general public."

executives. After the end of the strike, the executives of the MBC abolished the Bureau of Current Affairs and Education that had produced investigative news magazine programs. As a result, the current affairs show *News Who* was cancelled. Several producers and reporters who had produced these news magazine programs were transferred to the sports department, the sales department, the traffic department, or the MBC's regional stations. In the MBC's primetime daily news program *MBC News Desk*, several current affairs stories, including the scandal of the Gyeonggi Province Governor Moon-soo Kim and the scandal of President Lee's private residence, were killed, censored, or modified by the pro-government executives (S. Park, 2014, p. 99). At this point, the MBC started to be called "*M-Bing-Sin*," literally meaning stupid MBC (S. Park, 2014, p. 99). In November 2011, at an anti U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) protest site, MBC reporters were denied access to the protesters and were finally expelled by the protesters from the protest site. The protesters believed that the MBC would twist the issue under government pressure or not be able to publish the issue anyhow (H. Jo, 2011).

After this incident, MBC reporters held votes of confidence in the general meeting of the association of reporters to remove the news editor-in-chief and news director from the newsroom. When the association of MBC reporters announced the result that a majority of MBC reporters issued a vote of no confidence, the executives of the MBC immediately penalized the head of the association of reporters. In response to this company's decision, on January 25, 2012, MBC reporters started to boycott news

production. This was the beginning of a series of strikes by the news staff of several news

companies.

A total of approximately 1,300 media workers of the MBC were on strike for 170

days between January 30 and July 17, 2012. The media workers of the KBS, the YTN,

the *Yonhap News Agency*, and the *Kookmin Ilbo* subsequently went on strike. The main

purposes of these strikes were to force the president of each company to resign from

office and to enhance the news staff's editorial independence. The news staff at the

public broadcasting networks also requested a revision of the procedures to appoint their

presidents to increase the autonomy of the networks. The KBS union members also

required the company to restore the investigative reporting unit that had been abolished

by the pro-government executives, while the YTN strikers called on the YTN executives

to reinstate the six dismissed reporters.

During the strikes, the union members also actively used digital media, such as

social networking sites and podcasting/vodcasting, not only to tell stories about the

strikes but also to produce news stories about current affairs. In particular, each of the

union members of the KBS, the MBC, and the YTN created their own podcasts to

criticize their news corporations. These podcasts produced by the strikers, such as *Angry

YTN, Reset KBS News 9, Real MBC News Desk* (*jedaero nyuseu deseukeu*)*,* and *Power-

Up PD Notebook* (*pawoeop pidi sucheop*), had an immense popularity among Koreans,

especially younger democratic-progressives.[26] Koreans also supported the strikers

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[26] This popularity of the strikers' vodcasts was in part attributed to the so-called "podcast phenomenon." As explained in the previous chapter, the civil society has continuously attempted to create and appropriate an alternative means of communication while most mainstream news media have maintained a collusive relationship with the state. In 2011, since a political satire

through petition drives, fundraising concerts, and candlelight vigils, which is one of the

most popular forms of collective actions in South Korea (J.-Y. Choi, 2012).

Nonetheless, the strikes failed to make any significant change in the news

corporations and especially in the corporations' relations with the government. While the

reporters continued to boycott news production, some news corporations hired temporary

reporters to fill the news hole rather than accepted the requirements of the strikers. The

pro-government presidents kept their positions, and several news staff members

following the corporations' order were promoted to higher positions. Meanwhile, 455

journalists were penalized not only for participating in the strikes and interfering with

business, but also for producing critical reports about their own news organizations and

publishing them online. During Lee Myung-Bak's presidency between 2008 and 2013, a

total of 21 journalists were fired from the MBC, the YTN, the *Kookmin Ilbo*, and the

Busan Ilbo (National Union of Media Workers, 2013a). This mass dismissal of journalists

by the news media was the first case since the end of the military dictatorship in 1987

(Roh, 2012, pp. 56–62).

During the 2012 general election and the 2012 presidential election, most

journalists who engaged in the strikes supported the democratic-progressive party and its

Presidential candidate Moon Jae-in. They expected that Moon Jae-in would appoint more

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podcast, The *Naneun Ggomsuda* – or the *I'm a Petty-Minded Creep* – gained huge popularity among Koreans, especially younger democratic-progressives, the podcast phenomenon began in early 2011. The *Naneun Ggomsuda* was the most downloaded podcast on *iTunes* globally in 2011 and 2012 (Jung, 2012), and each episode of this podcast was downloaded more than two million times (Choe, 2011). Since then, the podcasting medium has been employed as a form of alternative news. In particular, the current or former journalists who were fired or demoted from mainstream news corporations have actively appropriated the podcasting medium as needed to suit their particular objectives and values.

neutral, in their view, presidents of the public broadcasters. Since the state had continued

to have policy measures to govern the media system, these journalists may have had no

choice but to rely on political power to make a significant change in the structure of the

media system. However, in opposition to their expectations, in both elections, the

conservative Saenuri party won. In the 2012 general election, the conservative Saenuri

Party became the ruling party in the National Assembly again by winning 152 out of the

300 Assembly seats, while the liberal-progressive New Politics Alliance for Democracy

(*saejeongchi-minju-yeonhap*) won 127 seats. In addition, the conservative Presidential

candidate Park Geun-hye, who is a daughter of the former dictator Park Jung-hee and was

the former head of the conservative party, was elected as the 18th President of South

Korea.

The failure of the strikes, as well as the victories of the conservative party in both

elections, has led to intensifying the instrumentalization of journalism by the state. Under

the consecutive conservative governments between 2008 and the present, the mainstream

news media's, including public broadcasting corporations', support for the conservative

political force has become more conspicuous (Rhee & Kim, 2012). During the Park

Geun-hye's presidential campaign, the reform of the power structure between the

government and the public broadcasting system and thereby the securing of the public

broadcasting system's autonomy were Park's campaign promises. However, since her

inauguration in 2013, the media policy of the Park Geun-hye government has not been

significantly different from that of the Lee Myung-bak government. In particular, the

president and the ruling party still have policy measures to influence the appointments of

the presidents of public broadcasting corporations and therefore to impact their editorial stances (Jeongguk Lee, 2015).

An Unsettled Cultural Period of Korean Journalism

In this circumstance, the Korean journalistic culture has been entering an unsettled period, a period in which the dominant logic of Korean journalism is collapsing. These days, Korean journalists have been faced with an unprecedented challenge to their established roles as journalists.

This challenge to the journalistic system has been coming from ordinary citizens, especially from so-called "the members of the post-386 generation," equipped with digital technologies.[27] The post-386 generation is generally considered those Koreans who were born in the 1970s and the 1980s and entered the universities in the 1990s and the 2000s. The members of the post-386 generation have been regarded by older generations as an extremely egocentric and politically apathetic generation. However, through organizing and participating in a series of massive political and cultural events – such as the street cheering in the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup soccer match, the 2002 Candlelight Vigil after the deaths of two middle school girls, the 2004 Candlelight Vigil against the impeachment of President Roh Moo-hyun, the 2008 Candlelight Vigil against

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[27] Coined in the 1990s, the 386 generation refers to those who were in their 30s, entered the universities in the 1980s, and were born in the 1960s. The 386 generation had played a crucial role as the force of student power in the Minjung Movement in the 1980s and the June Democracy Movement that terminated decades of two military regimes in 1987. Members of the 386 generation have been considered more skeptical of the United States compared with the older generations. This is largely because the U.S. had "backed the same military regimes they had fought against" (Fairclough, 2004). Growing into their 40s by the 2000s, they began to hold important positions in politics and business.

the U.S. beef imports, the national funeral for the former President Roh Moo-hyun, and the 2014 Candlelight Vigil for the deaths of the victims of the Sewol ferry disaster – the members of the post-386 generation have constructed a collective generational consciousness and emerged as a crucial collective agent of political and cultural change in Korean society. They, in particular, have actively appropriated digital media to produce and share their opinions and to participate in political actions.

The desire of the post-386 generation for media reform has lasted long since they took the key role in political movements. In many political events, they have stood in opposition to mainstream news media, especially to the "Big Three Newspapers." These mainstream news media have been active agents in constructing meanings for the political movements, usually describing them as very different from how the participants of the movements understand their movements. For example, in the 2008 Candlelight Vigil, while the vigil participants identified the protest as a "peaceful," "democratic," and "nonviolent resistance," the Big Three Newspapers, namely the *Chosun*, the *JoongAng*, and the *Dong-A*, called it a "violent," "bad," and "illegal" protest (W. Shin, 2016). Thus, media activism has often become one of the main purposes of the political movements organized by the democratic-progressives. The aforementioned strikes by the news staff during the Lee Myung-bak administration were also widely supported by the members of the post-386 generation.

This grassroots efforts gained momentum during the Sewol ferry tragedy in 2014. During the rescue process, the coverage by the Korean media outlets was egregious. Right after the accident on April 16, 2014, most mainstream news outlets, including the

country's two largest broadcast television networks, reported breaking news based on the

government's announcement, saying that all the passengers were rescued. However, this

information was wrong. This caused not only confusion and pain to the public and the

families of the ferry victims in particular, but also slowed down the rescue process (Nam,

2014). Further, during the rescue process, the media outlets continued to report incorrect

and misleading information based on the government's announcements and press

statements without double-checking. The rules on disaster coverage suggested by the

Journalists Association of Korea were repeatedly and collectively ignored by most

mainstream media outlets. Inappropriate questions, for instance, were often asked by

journalists to just-rescued high-school students during interviews (Um, 2014).

These wrongdoings and moral failure of journalists triggered public anger over

Korean journalism and its collusive relationship with the political forces. Many Koreans,

even journalists themselves and the families of the victims in particular, believed that the

wrong and improper coverage of the incident hampered the rescue process and thereby

that the Korean journalistic community was responsible for the deaths of the passengers

(Nam, 2014). This reporting behavior of Korean journalists was considered a signal for

the collective incompetency of Korean journalists. A survey by the Asan Institute for

Policy Studies (as cited in Friedhoff, 2014), conducted in the end of April 2014, indicated

public confidence in the media had declined to a record low.

At this point, a particular type of metajournalistic discourse arose from the public:

The discourse of *giraegi*. The word *giraegi* is a combination of *gija,* the Korean word for

a journalist or reporter, and *tsuraegi,* the Korean word for garbage. The word *giraegi* thus

literally means a journalist who produces garbage rather than reports news. In this sense,

the discourse of *giraegi* can be seen as a particular set of symbolic practices defining,

evaluating, and offending Korean journalists and their established culture. In and through

the discourse of *giraegi*, a wide range of Koreans started to ridicule mainstream

journalists and their news products. They also actively assessed the quality of news

stories published by news companies and expressed their anger toward the conspicuous

support for the political forces. They have also started to create their own criteria to

identify *good* and *bad journalism* and *good* and *bad journalists*. In other words,

constitutive choices (Starr, 2004), those social choices that create a new logic for Korean

journalism, have started to be made.

  The discourse of *giraegi*. The term *giraegi* first emerged around 2010 in

response to the malpractices of Korean journalists online (W. Kim, 2013). At that time,

the term was used by a few internet users to identify those journalists who repeatedly

produce click-bait headlines and attention-grabbing stories to increase web traffic.[28]

However, since the disastrously poor, unethical performance of Korean journalists during

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[28] In many traditional news outlets, according to several journalists I interviewed, the positions in the online news department or the digital products department are considered "a place of exile." In many cases, once a journalist is assigned to the online news department, s/he immediately starts to think of moving to other first-line positions, such as political editors and reporters. Since the business performance of the online news department is evaluated by online advertising revenue, the staff members need to increase Web traffic if they will "successfully and quickly" move to other departments in which they want to work. Consequently, the staff members of the online news department competitively create click-bait headlines and attention-grabbing stories and even use "bots" to increase Web traffic. For more detailed information about this – what is called "abusing journalism" in Korea – visit the Korean blogger DoDo's blog (http://blog.newstapa.org/enki; accessed on March 7, 2015).

the rescue process of the Sewol ferry tragedy between April and May 2014, the term

giraegi has been widely used to name any journalist practicing bad journalism.

These days, *giraegi* is synonymous with a *bad* Korean journalist. Whenever

people become upset or uncomfortable by reading or watching a news report, they just

call the reporter producing that news report a *giraegi*. On Twitter, for example, by using

the hashtag *#giraegi*, tweets like "Working hard, *#giraegi*!," "Ugh! As expected, *#giraegi*

did it again," or "Stupid *#giraegi*," are easily detected. In particular, the following two

satirical scripts, tweeted everyday by an anti-*giraegi* Twitter account called @giraegi_bot,

well reflect the public perception of Korean journalists these days:

> Executive of a news company: How can I help you?
> Applicant: I want to be a reporter.
> Executive of a news company: Why should I hire you?
> Applicant: I can speak in Korean.
> Executive of a news company: You are hired!
> #giraegi
>
> Son: Mom?
> Mom: What?
> Son: I don't have a dream.
> Mom: OK, then, I encourage you to be a reporter.
> #giraegi

Then, what is specifically called a *giraegi*-like journalistic practice? According to

my analysis of the tweets containing the term *giraegi,* four interrelated patterns are

detected.

First, when journalists seem to be more loyal to their sources rather than to

citizens, Koreans call them *giraegi*s. In particular, Koreans criticize those journalists who

do not serve as an independent monitor of political and economic power-holders. For

example, the tweets like "Most news media are not able to investigate wrongdoing by the

current government. These disqualified media self-certify the fact that they are *giraegi*"

or "Hey *giraegi*! Your job is scrutinizing possible abuses of power by the National

Assembly in terms of its authority to decide the national budget, not serving as public

relations devices of the lawmakers!" were affective expressions aimed at emphasizing the

journalists' watchdog role. In addition, many Korean Twitter users assess possible

connotations of the words or sentences written by journalists and then address the

problem of political or ideological bias. For example, the use of an adjective by

journalists to describe the activity of President Park Geun-hye was ridiculed as follows:

"Have anyone seen the YTN's report about Park Geun-hye yet? This *giraegi* says,

'President Park has proven herself to be an *attractive* President at the summit conference.'

This *giraegi* even highlights the term 'attractive'! So ridiculous!" Furthermore, when

journalists seem to be used as a tool of powerful institutions, especially the government,

many Koreans call them "government-kept-journalists" (*eoyong-gija*), "politicized

journalists" (*jeongchi-gija*), the "parasitic press" (*gisaeng-eonron*), or the "slave-like

press" (*buyeok-eonron*). They also positively assert that these journalists accept "pocket

money" (*yongdon*) from powerful institutions. In particular, "accepting pocket money" is

often described as "a major means of a *giraegi*'s livelihood."

Second, unethical behaviors of journalists are described as *giraegi*-like behaviors.

The use and modification of a copyrighted work in a news story without permission from

the copyright owner is a crucial example. To call out and mock this unethical *giraegi*-like

behavior, one anonymous Korean created Twitter and Tumblr accounts, @giregi_giregi

and giregi (giregi.tumblr.com), respectively. This anti-*giraegi* Twitter account

@giregi_giregi aims to "permanently preserve embarrassing news stories by capturing and preserving them on online." On the Tumblr achieve, what is called "*giraegi* collection," @giregi_giregi has also "collected" the cases of the "absurd, unethical journalistic practices" (Jinhyeok Lee, 2014). On March 2, 2015, for example, @giregi_giregi posted a captured screen shot showing that a reporter of *The Korea Economic Daily* had illegally used and transformed a photo copyrighted by another news medium Bloter.com.

In addition, reporters who do not treat the victims of a tragedy with dignity and sensitivity are considered unethical and unprofessional and therefore called *giraegi*s. During the rescue operation of the Sewol ferry tragedy, in particular, many inexperienced reporters competitively attempted to conduct intrusive interviews with the victims' family members and friends dealing with extraordinary grief (Um, 2014). Further, for the purpose of increasing Web traffic, the executives of some news outlets even ordered their news staff to create attention-grabbing stories using such keywords as "the Sewol ferry disaster," "sinking," and "tragedy." As a result, one online news outlet posted a news story introducing disaster films, such as *Titanic* (1997) and *Poseidon* (2006), with a click-bait headline containing the phrase "the Sewol ferry disaster" (Y. Jo, 2014).

Third, Koreans identify a journalist as a *giraegi* when the journalist does not put enough effort into verifying unsubstantiated material. A crucial example is to exactly duplicate either the news reports provided by a news agency or press releases. In some cases, news stories published by multiple news media have exactly the same typos because all of them were just copied from a report provided by a news agency that

initially made the typos.[29] In addition, the "he said, she said" style of reporting is often

considered a *giraegi*-like journalistic practice. By relying on quotations from sources,

especially powerful institutions, journalists seem to evade their responsibility to

investigate the veracity of the news story. This was particularly true when most news

media gave the wrong information about the number of rescued passengers who were on

the Sewol ferry on April 16, 2014. Virtually every mainstream news outlet, including

national broadcasting networks and news agency, relied on the information provided by

the government spokesman briefing that every passenger would be safely rescued.

However, this information was later found to be inaccurate. This error collectively made

by Korean journalists is considered one of the crucial factors causing a serious delay in

the rescue operation and thereby mass casualties.

In the same vein, those reporters who do not provide appropriate sources for their

information and especially plagiarize another's work – such as academic papers, foreign

news stories, and blogs – are also labeled as *giraegi*s. In other words, people criticize a

lack of originality and of transparency in a news story, as expressed in the following

tweet: "This *giraegi* should be ashamed of his garbage-like news story. I am sure that this

garbage is simply copied from a Japanese news story I read before word for word." In

particular, news stories using multiple unnamed sources found online have been severely

criticized. For example, many news stories about the personal lives or conduct of

celebrities, television shows, or any kind of gossip tend to begin with such phrases as

"Recently, netizens (*nurikkun*) talk about XXX …" and then end with a series of

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[29] To see some examples of this stenographic practice of Korean journalists, visit the Tumblr page "*giraegi* collection" (http://giregi.tumblr.com; accessed on March 10, 2015).

references to comments, posts, or tweets posted by multiple anonymous netizens. In this case, reporters are barely transparent about and original in their investigative processes. Therefore, it is not easy to know how the reporters knew what they knew, who the sources were, and whether the reporters added anything that did not happen. Further, many reporters who produce this type of news stories do not disclose their names and e-mail addresses in their news stories.

In order to ridicule these reporters, Korean web developer Lee Junghaeng, called @rainygirl, developed the bot "*giraegi* button" performing a routine task to create a *giraegi*-like news story. A single click on the *giraegi* button, provided on an online community called *Daily Worst* (*ilgan-woseuteu*; ilwar.com), automatically produces a *giraegi*-like news story about any post produced by *Daily Worst* members.[30] The members of *Daily Worst* pejoratively define a journalist as "a person employed to compose fake reactions of netizens to popular search trends and then to write a story based on these fake reactions" (Junhaeng Lee, 2014). In a notice about the *giraegi* button, the members of *Daily Worst* also suggest that "journalists who are enthusiastically monitoring our community are welcome to use the *giraegi* button. … The *giraegi* button will automatically produce the netizens' reactions for you" (*Daily Worst*, 2014). In short, by satirically imitating the reporters' practices, these Koreans request reporters to be

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[30] For the detailed information about the "*giraegi* button," visit https://github.com/rainygirl/giregi or http://ilwar.com/notice/172108 (accessed on March 10, 2015). In addition, in the United States, there is a similar kind of bot called "clickbait headline generator." This bot performs a routine task generating such headlines as "51 Lies Some Northerners Won't Believe Actually Exist." To explore this bot, visit http://community.usvsth3m.com/generator/clickbait-headline-generator (accessed on March 10, 2015).

transparent in terms of their sources and methods and also to rely on their own original

reporting.

Lastly, a reporter using a click-bait headline (*naksi-geul*) is identified as a *giraegi*.

This click-bait headline is carefully crafted to create a "curiosity gap." According to

Derek Thompson (2013) from *The Atlantic,* "The idea is both to share just enough [so]

that readers know what they're clicking and to withhold just enough to compel the click."

Many Korean Twitter users share links to those news stories making them click and then

mock the reporters who wrote the news stories. For example, tweets like "Indeed,

#*giraegi* is in his office right now. Another click-bait headline is detected!," "Wow! Look

at this #*giraegi*'s wonderful creativity!," and "I really wonder how much money this

#*giraegi* earn by writing this garbage" are quite aggressive statements expressing anger

toward the click-bait headlines, like "You Won't Believe What Happened in Seoul Now"

and "Car Insurance Companies Hate This New Trick." The anti-*giraegi* Twitter account

@giregi_giregi is also collecting samples of click-bait headlines. In an interview with an

independent news startup called *Slow News* (Jinhyeok Lee, 2014), @giregi_giregi said,

"Twitter and Tumblr users keep sending messages to me to inform me about wrongdoing

by journalists. Further, finding click-bait headlines is an effortless task because there are

too many cases." "@giregi_giregi has continued to amass followers," @giregi_giregi

continued, "This is a sign that Koreans are increasingly irritated by Korean news media,

especially the click-bait culture."

In sum, these four patterns of the behaviors of Korean journalists – namely, being

loyal to power-holders, practicing unethical behaviors, lacking originality and

transparency, and creating the click-bait culture – contribute to the emergence and

consolidation of the discourse of *giraegi*. These *giraegi*-like journalistic practices can be

seen as the products of the instrumental view of journalism that has been developed and

maintained in the Korean journalistic culture. The media corporations, for example,

impose a "click-bait mentality" on their news staff due to profit demands caused by the

decrease in advertising (Um, 2014). In this situation, by the socialization mechanisms

discussed in Chapter II – such as the *seonbae-hubae* system, *yama* practice, and the press

club system – the news staff can internalize the "click-bait mentality" and start to use

page views as a key measure of journalistic success. This hybrid of journalistic standard

inevitably leads to sacrificing the quality of news stories provided to the public.

The discourse of *giraegi* is an active reaction of Korean citizens to this

instrumentalization of Korean journalism. In other words, the emergence of this discourse

of *giraegi* reflects how much Koreans care about journalism issues. In particular, the

offensive nature in the discourse of *giraegi* reveals how much Koreans are disappointed

by Korean journalism. The discourse of *giraegi* is powerful enough to impose a certain

meaning and coherence on various journalists' practices. Putting it differently, when

Koreans evaluate the quality of journalism and share their opinions about it, they now

have a modifier, "*giraegi*-like," to describe any kind of wrongdoing by Korean journalists.

Using the term *giraegi* to identify journalists enables a critical part of Koreans to

immediately understand and predict the nature of the journalists' news stories.

The discourse of *giraegi* influences the symbolic boundaries (Abbott, 1988) of

Korean journalism. The emergence of the discourse of *giraegi* leads Korean journalists to

reconsider their roles in Korean society. The discourse of *giraegi* influences the

emergence of metajournalistic discourse in the Korean journalistic community, attempts

by journalists to evaluate, negotiate, and/or defend their own significance in society. In

2014, for example, some younger journalists publicly apologized for their conduct during

the Sewol ferry tradegy, confessing "We were *giraegis*" (e.g., The KBS Union of Media

Workers, 2014; Um, 2014). Meanwhile, other journalists, for instance, KBS Digital News

director Sung Changgyeong, responded to these public apologies, arguing that the

younger journalists who had apologized may have been "instigated by the leftist union

executives" (Hyosil Kim, 2015). These journalists' reactions to the discourse of *giraegi*

may in turn compete with each other to define what Korean journalism should be in

Korean society.

The discourse of *giraegi* ultimately functions as "a shock to the [Korean

journalism] system" (Ryfe, 2006, p. 141), causing a renegotiation of who a journalist is

and what are considered good journalistic behaviors. Along with this shock, there has

been another shock to the Korean journalistic culture. In particular, this has come from

inside the journalistic community: *Nonprofit, citizen funded journalism.*

A Good Journalism: Nonprofit, Citizen Funded Journalism

While a large segment of Korean society has sought to challenge the dominant

culture of the journalistic community, a new model of journalism has been in the

spotlight due to its possibility of filling the void left by the absence of *good journalism* in

Korean society – nonprofit, citizen-funded journalism. At the end of 2014 and the

beginning of 2015, several media critics published reports on the performance of Korean journalists in 2014, especially during the Sewol ferry tragedy, criticizing their unprofessional performance and introducing the emergence of the discourse of *giraegi* (e.g., Hoseong Kim et al., 2015; Sewok Kim, 2014b). At the same time, these media critics emphasized the increasing public attention toward the performance of several digitally native news nonprofits, such as *GoBalNews* and *Newstapa*. These news nonprofits were established during the Lee Myung-bak administration by small groups of veteran journalists who had been fired or voluntarily resigned from the mainstream news media. These news nonprofits aim to "expose abuses of power by political elites and business leaders … [and] become the voices of the voiceless who are ignored by the mainstream news media" (*GoBalNews*, 2012). They also seek to "challenge routinized or institutionalized ways of journalism in the mainstream news media ... [and ultimately] revitalize the dying Korean journalism" (*Newstapa*, 2012a). In terms of journalistic method, these news nonprofits emphasize the significance of "the moral force of *investigative reporting* in the public interest" (*Newstapa*, 2012a; italics added).

These news nonprofits receive funding from individual citizens. Since each of the news nonprofits were established in 2012, the number of donors has steadily increased. For example, the investigative news startup *Newstapa* started to raise donations on July 6, 2012. In less than ten days, around 2,200 citizens signed up to be a donor and decided to make a monthly donation, at least KRW10,000 (approximately USD10) to sponsor *Newstapa*. The number of donors has continued to grow, and by April 2016, they amounted to around 36,100. According to *Newstapa* president Youngjin Kim, "the

financial soundness of *Newstapa* is strong enough to run *Newstapa.* Compared to the

business model of other newly established TV stations and online news media that relies

on advertising revenue, *Newstapa* model has achieved greater financial sustainability"

(personal communication, September 30, 2014). This business model funded solely by

individual citizens is different from that of other nonprofit news organizations in other

countries that are funded mostly by large foundations or international nongovernmental

organizations, such as the Knight Foundation and Open Society Foundations (Konieczna

& Robinson, 2014; Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014).

The sustainability of this distinct funding model of Korean news nonprofits shows

how much those Koreans who care about journalism look forward to the performance of

these news nonprofits. These Koreans rely on the news nonprofits for much of their

political information. They argue that the news nonprofits deserve support because they

are much more credible and trusted news source than the mainstream news media and

consequently contribute to the democratic development of Korea (S.-K. Jo, 2012). On

social networking sites, it is easy to find the posts expressing support for the news

nonprofits, as found in tweets like "#*Newstapa* and #*GoBalNews* are the last bastion of

Korean journalism. I hope that my donation will help them to continue to be a beacon for

ordinary people like me," "The truth will always be revealed by @*Newstapa*,

@*GObalnews*, and @*sisapapais,*" "In the current situation in which the quality of

journalism is below minimum standard, the number of the donors of the true news

organization @*Newstapa* should grow to 100,000," and "I increase the monthly donation

amount for #*Newstapa*. Why? *Newstapa* staff put every effort into producing 'real'

news! :-)" In particular, a contraposition between the mainstream news media and news

nonprofits is a noticeable pattern in the posts published by the supporters of the nonprofit

news organizations, as seen in such tweets as: "Listen *giraegi*s! You may not have

produced this kind of garbage http://t.co/cBYKRYc4Zk, if you had watched the special

issue of #*Newstapa* published in the early of 2015. Watch this: http://newstapa.org/22775"

and "Agreed, @MBC_PDChoi. The mainstream news media, especially the *Chosun*

jjirasi,[31] that routinely distort facts are shams! I am no longer patient with their

intolerable *giraegi*-like news. Go for it, #*Newstapa* and #GObalnews! You are my

havens!"

The quality of the news nonprofits' work is also acknowledged by many

journalism awards. Between 2012 and 2014, the journalists of *Newstapa* were awarded

25 prestigious journalism awards, including the Ahn Jong-phil Prize for Press Freedom,

the Song-Geon-ho Prize, and the Lee Young-hee Prize. In addition, in 2014, *GoBalNews*

journalist Lee Sangho was also awarded several professional awards, including the

Democratic Journalism Award and the Truthful Journalism Award. As one of the jurors

of the 2014 Democratic Journalism Award said, the journalists of these news nonprofits

"are awarded because they re-connect Koreans with the most important news about

public affairs, … which have been missed by mainstream journalists" (Sewok Kim,

2014a). At the award ceremony for the Ahn-Jong-phil Prize on October 24, 2012, Moon

Young-hee, the president of the Ahn Jong-Phil Prize as well as a former journalist who

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[31] "*Jjirasi*" refers to any document containing rumors and gossip. This term originates from unpublished documents containing business information about companies' prospects circulating around the Korean securities market.

had fought for press freedom during the military regimes in the 1970s and the 1980s, also said, "We don't need the mainstream news media, such as the KBS and the MBC, anymore because we now have the news nonprofits, especially *Newstapa*" (S.-K. Jo, 2012).

In short, the exploratory project of the news nonprofits is the process of contesting the conventional logic of Korean journalism – especially the instrumental view of journalism and the *giraegi*-like journalistic practices – and thereby reestablishing the professional boundaries of the Korean journalistic culture. The news nonprofits are challenging and denying the privileged position of the mainstream news media in Korean society. In the current situation in which the majority of Korean journalists are treated without respect, the emerging model of journalism that the news nonprofits are practicing seems to serve as an engine driving constitutive choices (Starr, 2004) for the Korean journalistic culture. The challenge of the news nonprofits to the dominant logic of journalism is a process of setting a new evaluation criterion for the performance of Korean journalists.

In the following two chapters, I will discuss how the journalists of the news nonprofits deal with this constitutive moment in more detail. In particular, based on one year of empirical research in the news nonprofit *Newstapa*, I will try to answer the following questions: Who are *Newstapa* journalists? What kind of journalism do they practice? What motivates them to do this kind of journalism? How do they perceive their role in the Korean journalistic community? By what methods are they trying to achieve

that role? What makes *Newstapa* different from the mainstream news media? More specifically, how do the shifts in organizational structure and working conditions, namely from a mainstream news corporation to a nonprofit news startup, affect the journalistic practices and procedures of *Newstapa* journalists? What kinds of conventional journalistic practices do *Newstapa* journalists, consciously or unconsciously, hold? In other words, if they have not been able to "abolish" (*tapa*) some part of the dominant logic of Korean journalism, what is that part (and why that part)? Are there any emergent journalistic practices and procedures in *Newstapa* journalists' daily work? If so, how do *Newstapa* journalists balance the remaining conventional practices and the emergent ones in their daily work? Ultimately, how does this hybrid form of journalistic practices influence the way in which *Newstapa* journalists perceive themselves as journalists?

IV. Embodying "Good Journalism" in the Hierarchical Social Space

The Way to Reach *Newstapa*

The Korean news nonprofit *Newstapa* is located on the sixth and eighth floors of the Byeoksong building that stands blocks away from the Gwangheungchang Station in northwestern Seoul. The Gwangheungchang Station is located close to the northern end of the Seogang Bridge over the Han River, which links two very different versions of Seoul, the Yeouido district and the Mapo district. On the one hand, life in the Yeouido district is hectic. The Yeouido district, which is a large island in the Han River, is the home of South Korea's stock exchange. Numerous big company buildings, the National Assembly Building, and the world's largest church, Full Gospel Church, are located in the Yeouido district. In order to get news from these economic, political, and religious power-holders, thousands of journalists are always stationed in the Yeouido district. In particular, since the main buildings of the country's two largest broadcasters, the *Korean Broadcasting System* (KBS) and the *Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation* (MBC), are located in the Yeouido district, the Yeouido district has been also considered the heart of South Korea's broadcasting system. On the other hand, most of the Mapo district is a residential area. In particular, the Gwangheungchang Station area, where *Newstapa* is located, is somewhat suburban in character, that is, no skyscrapers and not many pedestrians on the streets.

When I first visited the *Newstapa* newsroom to meet with *Newstapa* editor-in-chief Youngjin Kim to negotiate access to the newsroom on September 26, 2014, I did

not expect that *Newstapa*, which was known as adapting the techniques of the most up-to-date journalism, would be located in this kind of folksy atmosphere. To explore how the journalists of the news nonprofits could manage the unsettled period of Korean journalism, I planned to conduct an ethnographic case study of *Newstapa* journalists, interacting with them to identify their newsroom practices. On the way from the Gwangheungchang Station to the Byeoksong building, there was no sign of *Newstapa*, even on the external wall of the building. Furthermore, on the sidewalk in front of the Byeoksong building, a variety of construction materials and construction waste were spread. While one hospital located on the second, fourth, and fifth floors of the Byeoksong building moved to another building, these floors were under construction. While I went up the stairs to the sixth floor, where *Newstapa* was located, I wondered how *Newstapa* journalists could work with the constant disruption produced by the sound of drilling and hammering and the sight of dirt and debris.

This working environment and contrast between the Yeouido district and the Mapo district reminded me of the history of the establishment of *Newstapa*. *Newstapa* was started in late 2011 by the exiled journalists (*haejik gija*), who had been forcefully fired by the public broadcasters due to political pressure, and by the members of the Practice Committee of the Democratic Press (*minju eonron silcheon wiwonhoe; minsilwi*) of the National Union of Media Workers.[32] Several of these initial staff members of *Newstapa* previously worked for the KBS and the MBC located in the Yeouido district.

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[32] The mission of the Practice Committee on the Democratic Press is "to enhance the news staff's editorial independence, to practice democratic journalism, and to function as a watchdog of union members" (National Union of Media Workers, 2013b, p. 20).

As *Newstapa* senior reporter Gyeongrae Kim told me, "It is no exaggeration to say that every journalism student in Korea is either a KBS journalist wannabe or a MBC journalist wannabe" (personal communication, October 20, 2014). These broadcasting companies, for example, have attracted attention for the salaries they pay their employees. The average salary for the KBS employees in 2012 was more than KRW 112,000,000 (approximately USD112,000) (Kim & Lee, 2014), while the average salary for the top 11 Korean newspapers in 2012 was around KRW60,600,000 (USD60,600) (Huh, 2012). As "elite" mainstream journalists, these initial staff members of *Newstapa* were also able to use a wide variety of infrastructure for their newswork. On the contrary, living as the journalists working for the newly launched news startup *Newstapa* is different in many ways from what they enjoyed in their previous news companies.

At the beginning stage, *Newstapa* was considered a temporary project-based coalition. In late 2011, the Practice Committee on the Democratic Press discussed how the National Union of Media Workers could contribute to "the normalization of Korean journalism." One committee member, Jungseok Park, who was a KBS union steward, proposed a project aiming to "produce those news stories that had not been able to be seen in the mainstream news media during the Lee Myung-bak administration" (J. Park, personal communication, November 22, 2014) and, as a result of this proposal, the *Newstapa* project was launched. Seventeen staff members initially participated in this project. In particular, the exiled journalists and union officials played a leading role in the *Newstapa* project. Each of them served as an executive producer, an anchor, an editor, a reporter, or a camera crew member. "We [the exiled journalists] were fired from our

previous news companies because we had led strikes, fighting against the management

and the government," *Newstapa* senior reporter Park told me (personal communication,

November 24, 2014). "We just wanted not to stop doing something for the Korean

journalistic community and decided to produce news by organizing *Newstapa*," he

continued. "We agreed that we had to focus on what we were really good at, that is,

producing news. As journalists, we believed that doing journalism would be our means to

achieve meaningful changes in Korean journalism."

For the production costs, the *Newstapa* project was funded by the Press Reform

Fund created by the Practice Committee on the Democratic Press.[33] During the first seven

months, a total of KRW 20,000,000 (approximately USD 20,000) of the Press Reform

Fund was used to produce newscasts, and *Newstapa* staff members did pro bono work in

this period. After releasing the first news episode on January 27, 2012, however, a

considerable number of citizens started to ask *Newstapa* staff to accept financial support.

"I was struck by how desperately Koreans wanted to see *real* news," the director of new

media of *Newstapa* Daeyong Park said (personal communication, September 24, 2014;

emphasis added). According to him, the public's reaction to the first episode was

"sensational." "Several citizens sent direct messages on Facebook and Twitter asking me

– almost threatening me – to give my bank account number," he laughed. "They were

willing to make donations to *Newstapa*."

Nonetheless, *Newstapa* journalists hesitated to accept these offers. To them,

accepting citizens' donations and being paid for the *Newstapa* project by the donations

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[33] The Press Reform Fund is created by donations of the members of the National Union of Media Workers.

"would make [them] feel like they would be fettered by the *Newstapa* project" (J. Park, personal communication, December 16, 2014). At this moment, no staff members actually expected that *Newstapa* would become a news corporation. They did not think that they would work for *Newstapa* as full-time journalists. *Newstapa* staff members, especially the exiled journalists, "were not ready to leave their previous news companies" (J. Park, personal communication, December 16, 2014).

The resistance of *Newstapa* to the citizens' offers, however, could not last long. Newswork cost money. In particular, *Newstapa* pursued investigative journalism, requiring a great deal of time and labor to do well. The Press Reform Fund was out of money soon, and *Newstapa* staff members were exhausted. What was more, the reinstatement of the exiled journalists seemed far-off. The exiled journalists expected that the democratic-progressive parties would win in the 2012 general election, which was held on April 11, 2012, and thereby act to restrict the influence of the conservative Lee Myung-bak government on the public broadcasters. Contrary to their expectations, however, the conservative Saenuri Party won the election.

In July 2012, *Newstapa* journalists finally started to raise donations for continuing the *Newstapa* project. They posted an invitation letter on their weblog, saying, "Be a guardian of the truth. Join us." By December 2012, the number of "guardians of the truth" who signed up to make a monthly donation amounted to around 7,000.

Newstapa also gained momentum after the 2012 presidential election. In the 2012 presidential election, which was held on December 19, 2012, the conservative candidate Park Geun-hye was elected as the 18th President of South Korea in opposition to

Newstapa staff members' expectations. Many Koreans who had expected a transition of power attributed the defeat of the opposition democratic-progressive candidate Moon Jae-in to the conservative-dominated media system. The repercussions of the election were particularly evident as many signed up to be new donors of *Newstapa*. In less than two days after the 2012 presidential election, the number of donors of *Newstapa* was doubled from 7,000 to 13,500. In a month, it amounted to 27,000.[34] For *Newstapa* journalists, this was definitely unexpected. Senior reporter Park recalled that moment, saying, "Why *Newstapa*? There must be some meaning to this citizens' call. We couldn't ignore the citizens' wishes for our journalism. They forced us to continue to live as *Newstapa* journalists. We never chose this kind of life" (personal communication, December 16, 2014). The editor-in-chief Youngjin Kim also described it as follows:

> This is an unprecedented phenomenon in the journalism history of South Korea, maybe in the journalism history of the world as well. … We never intended to continue the *Newstapa* project after the presidential election. We planned to go back to the unions of our previous companies. (personal communication, December 16, 2014).

The amount of money donated by 27,000 monthly donors was enough for *Newstapa* to create an independent newsroom and promote organizational reform. In February 2013, *Newstapa* switched its organizational form from a temporary project-based coalition to a nonprofit organization. To emphasize the importance of investigative reporting as their journalistic method, *Newstapa* staff members registered the official

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[34] By December 2014, the number of donors amounted to approximately 35,500. Since then, it has plateaued at between 35,500 and 36,500.

name of the newly established news nonprofit as *the Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* (KCIJ) under Korean law. Furthermore, they rented an office located in the Gwangheungchang Station area of the Mapo district and then launched a new newsroom. This was where I would spend five months, between September 2014 and January 2015, interacting with *Newstapa* journalists. Compared to their previous newsroom, which had been a small room of the office of the National Union of Media Workers, this new newsroom in the Byeoksong building was "luxurious and spacious enough for an emerging news startup" (D. Park, personal communication, September 15, 2014).

At this stage, *Newstapa* also sought to strengthen its manpower. In the process of organizational renewal, *Newstapa* was staffed at "levels unprecedented for a news startup" (D. Park, personal communication, January 9, 2015). In particular, three of the nation's most distinguished journalists, Youngjin Kim, Seungho Choi, and Hyejin Gwon, were recruited as editor-in-chief and president, anchor and producer, and research director, respectively.

First, as the founder of the KBS investigative reporting unit, *Newstapa* editor-in-chief Youngjin Kim was one of the country's most highly regarded investigative reporters. After publicly criticizing the Lee Myung-bak government's media policy and especially its intervention in the management of the KBS, Kim was demoted to a reporter of a KBS's regional station. Between late 2011 and 2012, Kim unofficially participated in the *Newstapa* project as an editor, as well as an advisor. In February 2013, he resigned from the KBS and joined *Newstapa* as editor-in-chief and president.

Second, *Newstapa* anchor Seungho Choi was also one of the most highly esteemed investigative journalists in Korean society. He was the chief producer of the MBC's investigative news magazine program *PD Notebook*, which was the most-watched news magazine in Korea, and also the former chairman of the MBC union of Media Workers. Seungho Choi was fired from the MBC in June 2012 because of his leading role in the 2012 MBC strike. As soon as Choi was fired from the MBC, *Newstapa* staff asked Choi to join *Newstapa*. However, he refused to take the offer because he believed that "there would be a possibility of being reinstated to the previous position as a MBC producer depending on the result of the 2012 presidential election" (S. Choi, personal communication, December 19, 2014). When the election result did not turn out the way Choi expected, Choi decided to join *Newstapa* to continue to do journalism. "It seemed impossible that I could work for the MBC again for at least the next five years, President Park Geun-hye's term," Choi told me. "When Youngjin Kim asked me to work with him for *Newstapa*, there was no reason that I would refuse to accept it," he continued.

Third, *Newstapa* also recruited Dr. Hyejin Gwon as the director of research and data team. Dr. Gwon's career as a data journalist, as well as a technologist, was one of the most recognized in the investigative journalism field in Korea. The recruitment of these three veteran journalists led *Newstapa* to receive huge media attention.

Along with the strengthening of the leadership positions, several mid-career, award-winning journalists also joined *Newstapa* between 2013 and 2015. These veteran journalists with more than 10 years of professional experience in the mainstream news

organizations have been called "seniors" in *Newstapa*. These *Newstapa* seniors tend to

view journalism idealistically. Since they started their journalistic careers in the

mainstream news organizations, they have been stubborn in their refusal to be an

instrument of their companies or other powerful actors, especially the government. In

their previous companies, in particular, they tried to be committed to the standards of the

profession of journalism rather than those of their organizations. In other words, they had

a sense of mission in journalism that conflicted with the organizational standards. As a

result of this, most *Newstapa* seniors experienced dismissal or demotion from their

previous news organizations. Such idealistic views of journalism may also have led to

their decisions to join *Newstapa.* In *Newstapa*, the seniors enjoy significant autonomy in

their work. They believe that "there is no tension between organizational and personal

standards in *Newstapa* practices" (S. Kim, personal communication, September 26, 2014).

     Newstapa seniors have struggled to position themselves vis-à-vis mainstream

journalists in the Korean journalistic community. Engaging in the daily newswork in

Newstapa has been about the reconstruction of a set of moral dispositions – i.e., thoughts,

feelings, attitudes, desires, and beliefs – associated with becoming a *good journalist in*

Korean society. While they identify themselves as *real, good* journalists, they firmly

believe that their news products are better than any other Korean journalists'. Making

news in *Newstapa* thus leads *Newstapa* seniors to create normative boundaries separating

Newstapa from other news organizations. Within these normative boundaries, *Newstapa*

seniors can distinguish good from bad journalism, right from wrong journalistic practices,

and acceptable from unacceptable news stories in both *Newstapa* and the entire Korean journalistic community.

How the seniors desire to view themselves influences the socialization process of *Newstapa* juniors. Around 20 juniors – including reporters, camera crews, producers, web producers, data reporters, researchers, computer graphic designers, and administrative staff members – were recruited between 2013 and 2014. Among them, only a few had fewer than five years of previous experience, while most started their journalistic careers at *Newstapa*. While working with the seniors, these juniors learn how to make news judgments. Although there are always differences of opinion, several organizational mechanisms lead these juniors to fit their own performances to the news considerations set by the seniors and ultimately to embody the considerations. Indeed, practicing journalism in *Newstapa* forms something in common among *Newstapa* staff members: the moral dispositions associated with *becoming a good journalist in Korean society*.

Embodying Precarious Autonomy: Becoming Autonomous Journalists

The *Newstapa* newsroom was a large room with cubicles. No wall completely reached the ceiling in this room, except the glass partitions surrounding the meeting room and the recording room. This so-called "open-office model," which is known to increase productivity and promote collaboration (Kaufman, 2014), however, did not mean that *Newstapa* staff members frequently talked to each other. "The newsroom is very quiet," I wrote in almost every page of my field notes. When I first came to the newsroom, I

expected to see a crazier, hectic, busy-looking newsroom. This was my biased view of a newsroom.

"Silence does not mean that we are not busy," senior staff member Park said when I expressed my impression of the silence. This was true. They worked too hard, too much, and too long. In the daytime, the silence inside the newsroom was inevitable. Almost half of the reporters and most camera crew members were not there. They were "on the spot" to interview sources, collect documents, or investigate cases. Inside the newsroom, remaining reporters did their own work, identifying and evaluating sources, structuring interviews, or writing stories. Senior reporters and editors sometimes received a check-in call from other reporters on the spot.

From the most experienced reporter to the novice reporter, their work hours were flexible. However, this high degree of self-determination often turned into self-exploitation. Many reporters – especially the junior reporters – were frequently overworking themselves. Reporters usually arrived at the newsroom around 10 a.m., unless they started their jobs on the spot or already spent all night in the newsroom. Quitting time was irregular. Every night, including a weekend, several staff members worked late into the night, often continuing early into the morning and sleeping on a cot in the lounge.

This self-exploitation mainly arose from *Newstapa* seniors' emphasis on *autonomy*, which was the most prominent characteristic of the *yama* of *Newstapa*.[35]

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[35] As discussed in Chapter II, *yama* practice is a culturally specific journalistic practice. *Yama* practice refers to a process in which a news organization applies diverse considerations to make news judgments.

Compared to other Korean news companies' reporters, individual reporters of *Newstapa* had a greater degree of autonomy in news production. In particular, none of the *Newstapa* reporters was assigned to cover a particular beat. They thus did not engage in any press club (*gijadan*). They had to think about what they would investigate, unless a major news event or tips from sources or strangers would guide them into an investigation.

The type of journalism pursued by *Newstapa* seniors was "what they've dreamed of doing for a long time" (G. Kim, personal communication, November 14, 2014). As veteran journalists, each senior already had multiple possible topics that they were eager to tackle in an investigation. In particular, each veteran journalist had a long list of connections with diverse social actors, including other journalists, politicians, scholars, and activists, who could provide them with a tip. If these seniors stayed at their previous news companies, they would be an editor-in-chief, an executive editor, an editor, a bureau chief, or a chief reporter. In most news companies, these top-ranked journalists usually stay in their offices, managing people and overseeing news quality. In *Newstapa*, however, most seniors were still assigned to full-time reporting positions. They actively engaged in suggesting, selecting, investigating, presenting, and editing news stories. These seniors tended to believe that this career path – namely, continually pursuing so-called "shoe-leather reporting" rather than staying in their offices – should replace the dominant model of success in Korean journalism, which is discussed in Chapter II. This was well exemplified by the case of *Newstapa* anchor Choi Seungho, who won several journalism awards for his influential investigative series at the MBC and *Newstapa*:

Before joining *Newstapa*, at the MBC, I served as a desk editor and chief

producer. I didn't want to be an editor or executive. In public broadcasting

corporations like the MBC or the KBS, journalists are not trained to be editors or

leaders. They are promoted to those positions based on the years of experience

rather than their abilities. If I had not been fired by the MBC, I'd have been the

head of the Bureau of Current Affairs and Education. … I believe there is a type

of person growing up wanting to be an editor who prefers to sit indoors at a desk.

But, I'm not that type of person. Being an executive of a big company like the

MBC means that one has to deal with *improper* businesses, I mean, something

unrelated to journalism itself. One has to play politics to survive at the company

and especially to protect one's team members. … I was not good at this. … I am

a type of journalist who is most happy when I am on-the-spot (*hyeonjang*),

walking from place to place, observing things, speaking to people, and

investigating documents. This kind of reporting makes me feel *alive*. … In this

sense, I truly thank the Lee Myung-bak government and the then-MBC president

Kim Jaecheol. [He laughed] If they had not fired me, I would not have had this

sense of satisfaction. … And, I believe, many younger journalists anywhere, not

just *Newstapa* juniors, want to be following in my career path. (personal

communication, December 9, 2014; emphasis added)

Like Choi, most *Newstapa* seniors wanted to play a role as a reporter or producer rather

than an executive. There were only a few seniors, including the editor-in-chief, research

director, and executive editor, who stayed in the newsroom to manage news staff. Further,

these managing executives were also eager to produce their own news stories. The editor-in-chief Youngjin Kim told me as follows:

> I know my role should be focused on making our organization settle down into a stable state. But, these days, I want to write news stories. [PROBE: Feeling stuffy, when staying in the office?] No, I mean, I just don't want to lag behind. I just want to improve my skills in journalism. And, I have several topics that I want to tackle in an investigation. (personal communication, December 16, 2014)

In most cases, the seniors' desires to produce their own stories and to polish their journalistic skills were fulfilled. The seniors acted not only as "story suggesters" but also as "story selectors" (Gans, 1979, p. 88). The seniors made a final decision in terms of which of the suggested topics deserved further investigating and ultimately reporting as news stories. Whenever one senior needed a news spot for his own story, he could get it without too much difficulty. In this sense, *Newstapa* seniors considered *Newstapa* "a journalist's heaven," as administrative staff member Kim told me.

The seniors also gave the juniors a significant degree of autonomy to find news items. *Newstapa* did not have a systematic training system for the development of the juniors' journalistic skill to select proper news items. Rather, the seniors tended to believe the value of "learning from experience" (G. Kim, personal communication, October 23, 2014). In particular, the seniors maintained that the juniors could be productive and effective only if they would internalize the "independence of mind" (G. Kim, personal communication, October 23, 2014). For *Newstapa* seniors, this independence of mind was what they had fought for over the past decades and was

therefore one of the most valuable elements of their lives. They thus had no doubt that

giving the juniors authority to make a decision about their own work would be the best

way to train the juniors. The seniors were also very proud of the high level of autonomy

given to the juniors in selecting news items.

Contrary to the seniors' expectations, the juniors had mixed feelings about the

autonomy given to them. The seniors' principle of minimum intervention led to

maximizing the responsibility of the juniors in daily newswork. Without enough expertise

and experience, however, too much responsibility could be a burden. In other words, as

story suggesters, the juniors struggled to find an appropriate news item. Junior producer

Kim looked back upon her beginning at *Newstapa*, "I started my career at *Newstapa* in

2013. My first *sasu* had 15 years professional experience, knowing everything from A to

Z about journalism, while I didn't know even A and B" (personal communication,

November 10, 2014).[36] She said that her *sasu* reporter had seemed to have expectations

which were too high for her ability and just let her do whatever she had wanted to do.

"However, once I made a mistake, he scorched me," she added. Another junior said, "I

don't want the seniors to directly control my work by close supervision. Nonetheless, I

feel like it would be much easier if I'd just have to do what they want me to do." "I am

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[36] As explained in Chapter II, a *sasu* is a particular *seonbae* [senior] reporter who is paired with a *busasu* (apprentice or assistant) reporter. The *busasu* works for the *sasu* to learn journalistic skills, knowhow, and rules. At the beginning stage, *Newstapa* adopted the *sasu-busasu* system and paired a senior with a junior. However, when I conducted my research at *Newstapa* between 2014 and 2015, *Newstapa* no longer used the *sasu-busasu* system. Instead, it divided the news staff into two teams. Reporting Team 1 consists of veteran journalists with more than 15 years of professional experience. This Team focuses on long-term investigative projects. Reporting Team 2 consists of three mid-career journalists with 10 to 15 years of professional experience and the junior reporters. Reporting Team 2 is responsible for covering current affairs.

sometimes afraid of having too much autonomy," she sighed (G. Park, personal communication, October 24, 2014).

Ironically enough, the concerns of the juniors generated by autonomy were aroused by their aspirations to maintain the very autonomy given to them. No juniors wanted to give up their responsibility to organize their own work. Due to the very autonomy given to the juniors, maintaining the autonomy became the juniors' responsibility. In order to keep control over their work, the juniors must achieve the status of story designers by finding good news items and then successfully selling them to the seniors. Whether or not the seniors acknowledged the merit of the juniors' news ideas, the boundary of the junior's autonomy was determined.

Once a junior came up with a story idea, this idea had to be evaluated by the *sasu* reporter who was paired with the junior or the chief reporter of Reporting Team 2, to which every junior belonged. If the junior's subject was killed, the junior would be assigned to assist others, mostly the seniors. While the juniors struggled to find a new news item, they never knew when their autonomy would be jeopardized. Since most senior reporters focused on investigative reporting, they usually spent several months researching, preparing, and investigating a topic. These projects required multiple team members, and the seniors tended to assign the juniors to their projects, especially those juniors who were currently looking for a new news item. If that was the case, the juniors preferred to work within the less constrained boundary of autonomy. In other words, they preferred to participate in a just-launched project in which they could contribute to at least part of the *yama* building process of the project. While participating in this type of

project, the juniors did not feel that their autonomy was completely endangered.

Nonetheless, in many cases, the *yama* of the assigned news project had already been

developed by the seniors. The juniors who were assigned to this kind of project often

viewed their roles as too narrow and too technical because their roles were limited to

commonplace, redundant tasks. Junior reporter Hong shared her experience as follows:

> I am currently assigned to assist Senior Reporter A. Senior Reporter A has been
>
> giving me orders one after another. For example, he said, "Go and interview this
>
> guy and that guy!" But, I sometimes have no idea why he may need these
>
> interviews. [PROBE: How can you interview a source without the context of the
>
> story?] That's my point. I mean, of course, I have interview questions and know
>
> who the source is. But, I don't know why Senior Reporter A wants to obtain this
>
> particular information from this particular source in this particular moment. I just
>
> want to contribute to the entire process of the project. But, I've been assigned to
>
> this project in the mid stage. … Of course, I have to admit that assisting him is
>
> one of the best ways to learn what he knows. And, I know, a news broadcast
>
> should be a product of teamwork rather than an individual achievement. However,
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> I really prefer to do what I want to do. I like to be more like an architect rather
>
> than an engineer. (Y. Hong, personal communication, November 4, 2014)

The experience of this junior reporter certainly illustrates the juniors' *personal*

attachment to their own news products. *Newstapa* juniors clearly distinguished their own

stories from others' and strongly wanted to devote themselves solely to their own work.

They had a strong attachment to their own news products because they *earned* the

opportunities to create them. When an idea suggested by a junior was accepted, the seniors' principle of minimum intervention would be again applied in the news production process. The junior was allowed to build the *yama* of the news item, designing the storyline of the news broadcast, finding and interviewing human sources, presenting the story to the public, and assigning her or his name to it. In particular, since *Newstapa* was dedicated to investigative reporting, *Newstapa* allowed the reporters to stay with an issue as long as necessary to maximize the story's impact. "I can stay with my issue so long as there is something to be detected," one junior told me. "Normally, two to three weeks are required to investigate one item." "My two previous news companies never gave a reporter this amount of time to investigate one issue," she added. "As far as I know, no one does so, except *Newstapa*" (H. Jo, personal communication, November 3, 2014).

Several juniors I interviewed pointed out a high degree of *self-realization* by creating their own stories. During a drinking party, one junior reporter showed me her diary in which she kept a record of the dates that each of *her* news stories was broadcasted and said, "These are what *I* did in 2014. *I* did 20 stories." She smiled, "This is so satisfying" (H. Jo, personal communication, November 3, 2014; emphasis added).

This sense of self-realization served as a basis for the juniors' self-exploitation. Their deep pleasure in completing their own news stories caused them to remember why they initially wanted to be journalists. When I stayed late into the night in the newsroom with several reporters, I asked junior producer Kim why she was overworking herself. She answered as follows:

I've investigated an issue related to the privatization of the medical market, in

which I've long been interested. While I'm focusing on this issue, *I nearly forget*

the fact that it's a task. You know what I mean? I've been staying up nights to do

this. I really want to make an excellent story. (S. Kim, personal communication,

November 10, 2014)

This junior reporter's experience seems what psychologist Csikszentmihalyi

called "being in flow." According to Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014), when one

enters a flow state, one experiences "[intense] and focused concentration on what one is

doing in the present moment," "merging of action and awareness," and "distortion of

temporal experience (typically, a sense that time has passed faster than normal)" (p. 240).

Junior reporter Hong's words showed that the juniors were continuously aware of

themselves in their bodies when in flow:

These days, I've been really tired, having a crick in my neck and feeling drowsy.

At nights, my hands and feet are getting chilly.[37] But, over time, my physical

endurance (*maetjip*) is being trained. This makes me feel like "I am a good

journalist." Living as a journalist should be tough, right? [She giggled] So, I'm

OK. (personal communication, November 3, 2014)

Her words clearly illustrate a trade-off between bodily experience and a sense of

self-realization. The repeated performance of journalistic practices over the night led the

juniors to produce and enhance their bodily memory related to becoming an autonomous

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[37] The Byeoksong building, where the *Newstapa* newsroom is placed, is a centrally heated building. In November 2014 when I interviewed the junior, the central heating system of the Byeoksong building stopped working after around 9 p.m. until 7 a.m. The reporters who stayed in this period used portable heaters in order to warm the newsroom.

journalist. Junior reporter Jo also pointed out this organization of bodily memory in much of a similar way:

> My working hours in *Newstapa* are much longer than those in my two previous news companies. I'm not just working late into the night. I'm working continually during an entire night, over and over again. Every weekend in the last month, I was also at the newsroom because I was working on my investigative story. I know, I am working too much and too long. But, I feel that my satisfaction with work is very high. No one forces me to work like this. I just don't want to miss any chance to cover what I want to investigate. I eagerly desire to achieve a high standard of performance because journalism is my vocation. I am getting used to overworking myself (personal communication, November 3, 2014)

Achieving the opportunities to produce their own news stories led the juniors to intensively concentrate on what they were doing in the present moment and, in turn, to dream of a desired future, that is, being good journalists. In this process, working excessively and enduring it became part of the juniors' daily routines. The juniors' bodily experience, in this way, formed within the juniors a particular moral disposition, *endurance*.

Experiencing the sense of self-realization by creating their own news stories also could cause the juniors to be bored when they assisted other reporters' projects. While repeatedly completing their news products, each junior overcame the challenges that stretched their journalistic skills and therefore perceived her- or himself as making progress in their professional growth. Consequently, when the juniors were assigned to

play a mere supporting role in the seniors' projects, these tasks could feel more tedious than those that they did themselves.

Regardless of boredom, however, the juniors became resigned to their roles as the seniors' supporters, work excessively within the limited boundaries of autonomy, and persevered through the hardships of the situation. Autonomy again functioned as a control mechanism to encourage the juniors to take responsibility. The juniors believed that they must achieve further autonomy by their highest level of performance. They consequently competed with each other to grasp the limited opportunities to concentrate on their own stories. They then accepted any difficulty in this competition as necessary to be an autonomous journalist and especially blamed the temporary loss of autonomy on their lack of exertion. When asked how he felt when he had to do commonplace, redundant tasks, junior producer Lee said, "What can I say? I'm lacking in expertise." He said that his ideas had often been killed by the seniors because he did not have enough experience yet:

> The seniors want me to persuade them why my news idea is important to our society and democracy. They are very critical. I should be well prepared when I present my idea to them. … Maybe, I am not prepared enough. I may need more experience to do better. It's up to me. (personal communication, November 4, 2014)

The juniors, in this way, took their precarious autonomy for granted. As a control mechanism, autonomy enhanced the juniors' commitment to the highest standards of journalistic performance without direct intervention. Autonomy also encouraged the

juniors to adapt to hardship at work. What could be happening here, then? The juniors

were undergoing the reorganization of everyday experience in a manner by which they

were becoming *autonomous journalists who could endure hardship*. As junior reporter Jo

told me, "[their] work is mingling with the rest of [their] life" (personal communication,

November 3, 2014). Whenever I went for lunch, dinner, or drinks with them, they were

continuously talking about the news. Finding a good news item seemed the most

important thing on their minds. They were having small talk about the news and taking a

break with the news. They were tweeting and posting the news. They often slept in the

newsroom and washed up in the restroom of the Byeoksong building. While practicing

these embodied routines and habits, autonomy and endurance became the foundation for

the *yama* of *Newstapa* by which the whole process of newswork was enabled. In other

words, *Newstapa* journalism was accomplished by a group of journalists who voluntarily

and willingly drove themselves to the limits of their physical and emotional endurance.

**Working with the Respected Journalists in the Hierarchical Social Space: Keys to
the Boundary of the Juniors' Autonomy**

The juniors knew that the seniors' projects to which they were assigned would

end and, then, that the chances to sell their news ideas would always come. In order to

grasp these limited chances, the juniors followed the seniors, listened to what the seniors

said, did what the seniors prescribed, and ultimately were being like the seniors. This

tendency of the juniors demonstrates the moral effects of the culturally specific

hierarchical system, the *seonbae-hubae* system. The *seonbae-hubae* system existed in

significant parts of *Newstapa* journalists' daily lives. It continued to provide policies and

narratives that determined each journalist's role in the newsroom. It also supplied bodily

practices, especially *nunchi* (defined below), by which the juniors learned to conduct

themselves as the pupils of the seniors. Engaging in these practices on ongoing, everyday

basis helped the juniors to incorporate certain attitudes and behaviors toward the

hierarchical culture.

The juniors had a deep respect for their seniors and trusted their news judgment.

Several juniors told me that they entered *Newstapa* because they wanted to work with

Newstapa seniors. They first respected the seniors' excellence in journalistic performance.

As epitomized by numerous prestigious journalism awards, each *Newstapa* senior has

been recognized by their peers as being exceptionally competent journalists. Supporting

the seniors' projects allowed the juniors to learn the seniors' polished journalistic skills,

such as how to write precisely what they mean, how to effectively interview sources, and

how to research and produce a story. In addition, the juniors held in high esteem the

seniors' lives. Before joining *Newstapa,* several seniors played a leading role in the

struggle to enhance press freedom and endured hardships. They then established

Newstapa and designed it to embody the values for which they had fought. Junior

producer Lee said, "*Newstapa* seniors, especially Producer Choi, are model journalists,

the kind of journalists whose lives might be used as exemplary stories in any journalism

textbook" (personal communication, November 4, 2014). Junior reporter Choi also said:

> From the seniors, I learn what a journalist should know. For example, from
>
> executive producer Choi *seonbae*, I learn when a journalist should feel anger

[outrage in response to social injustice]. From Anchor Choi, I learn what calm judgment is. These are the elements of journalism. Working for *Newstapa* is almost like attending a top journalism school. I feel like I'm receiving specialized training that allows me to be a good journalist. Whenever working with them, I also feel that I am influenced by their sincerities of purpose. They are focused on a truth-seeking mission. They are true journalists. (personal communication, October 23, 2014)

In *Newstapa*, the relationship between the seniors and the juniors was an exemplary embodiment of the Korean traditional form of teacher-student relationship. As the first verse of a song titled "The Grace of Teachers" (words by Gang So-cheon and music by Gwon Gil-sang in 1965) shows, teachers are called the "heavens" in Korean society. Teachers are expected not only to teach knowledge and skills. They are also expected to develop their moral nature and then to serve as models for their students. If teachers properly carry out their roles as the "heavens" for the students, the students will have models of what constitutes morality. Students then owe their teachers filial obedience and respect. Koreans, in particular, are taught and socialized to humbly listen to their respected teachers. Just before their children go to school in every morning, for example, Korean parents habitually say, "Listen carefully to your teacher" (*Seonsaengnim malsseum jal deutgowa*). In *Newstapa*, the seniors held the moral high ground in relation to the juniors, acting in moral ways and providing care for the juniors. *By the grace of their seniors*, the juniors gained the moral discipline necessary for becoming a journalist.

The seniors' journalistic gut feeling. Working with the respected veteran journalists was, however, a double-edged sword for the juniors. The juniors especially had trouble to find those news ideas that met the criteria set by the seniors. The newsworthiness of the juniors' ideas was determined by the seniors' *gut feeling*. This gut feeling was "an embodied set of durable yet flexible dispositions" (Winchester, 2008, p. 1758) that the seniors had developed and internalized over the course of their professional careers. Since this gut feeling was neither clear-cut nor easy to define, the juniors struggled to identify the seniors' news criteria. However, while continually trying to sell their news ideas to the seniors and then repeatedly experiencing success or failure, the juniors gradually came to understand what the news criteria of the seniors were. Junior reporter Hong's experience well illustrates the seniors' gut feeling as news criteria:

> I think the seniors may have feelings. [PROBE: What do you mean by feelings?] The seniors seem to almost immediately know whether my idea will be a good story. They just say, "This is not a good story" or "That's a good idea." Last year, honestly, I really struggled to understand why my idea was rejected or accepted. Fortunately, over time, I begin to know what they want to see from me. (personal communication, November 3, 2014)

In the middle of my fieldwork, I also could not fully appreciate this junior's point in describing the seniors' feelings. The seniors' news criteria seemed too blurred. As I later returned to my fieldnotes and interview transcripts and read them over again, I became aware that the seniors tended to evaluate the newsworthiness of the juniors' ideas *in a way that they could maintain their identities as excellent journalists*. In other words,

the seniors' news standards were based on their experiences as respected, veteran journalists. Further, by controlling the quality of the news ideas suggested by the juniors, the seniors strongly sought to build and preserve social recognition of *Newstapa* as the news organization established by a group of top-notch journalists.

More specifically, the seniors' gut feeling was relative and relational. The news ideas suggested by the juniors were evaluated and then were positioned in relation to those stories published by other news media. The seniors especially preferred *exclusive* and *superior* ideas. The seniors depreciated the issues that had already been aired or printed in other news media. Although a news issue was not an exclusive one, if it could be presented in a manner that revealed the superiority of *Newstapa* – in terms of angle or source to choose – the seniors would pay more attention to the story. In this sense, what I most frequently heard from the seniors when observing the selling-buying transactions were "Others already did it before," "I can't see any difference between yours and their stories," and "There is no newer fact." The seniors then encouraged the juniors to find different ideas, saying, "We have to focus on more important issues." If that were the case, then the juniors' news ideas would be postponed until the needed information would be available or just be killed. Simply put, the seniors tried to produce high-quality news stories that were worthy of being featured on the front pages of top newspapers or the top of evening news programs.

What was more, the seniors perceived their roles as the leaders of the Korean journalistic community, and, therefore, they tended to believe that there would be "truly important stories that the leaders must cover." This belief was developed and internalized

through their entire careers. In particular, for them, *Newstapa* was the very organization

designed to embody their life histories. In the current situation in which many Korean

journalists could not maintain an independence from those they would cover, therefore,

the seniors took the responsibility to the journalistic community for granted. In this sense,

by producing those news stories that were necessary but were not possibly covered by the

mainstream news media, they attempted to fill the void in Korean journalism. When the

seniors evaluated the newsworthiness of the juniors' ideas, this criterion was often

signaled by the phrases, "This is a *Newstapa* story" or "This idea deserves to become a

Newstapa story." These "*Newstapa*-like" news stories included those news stories that

could reveal a failure of the social system and expose the wrongdoing of power-holders,

especially the government, government agencies, political parties, and big businesses.

When I stayed at the newsroom in 2014, for example, anchor Choi and three project team

members focused on so-called "Korean CIA's Scandal: Spy Evidence Forgery" project.[38]

Since July 2013, anchor Choi's team reported 72 news stories uncovering buried stories

within the National Intelligence Service (NIS). *Newstapa* also focused on the critical

functions of big businesses, such as Samsung. They included stories on a secret Swiss

bank account opened under Samsung, industrial accidents in Samsung chip factories, and

possible tax evasions by Samsung's owner family. *Newstapa* seniors believed that

exposing abuses of power by big businesses was their duty granted by citizens.

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[38] To see the English version of *Newstapa*'s investigation into the scandal of the National
Intelligence Service (NIS), visit http://project.newstapa.org/nis/about.html (assessed on April 26,
2015).

As a byproduct of advancing to these news criteria, *Newstapa* inevitably seemed politically partisan. Since the close relationship between the conservative political forces and mainstream news media still existed in the Korean journalistic community, these mainstream news media tended to set the agenda from the Korean conservative perspective. On the contrary, *Newstapa* provided coverage of under-reported news stories from the Korean democratic-progressive perspective regardless of individual journalists' different political orientations.[39] *Newstapa*, for example, revealed problems in several infrastructure projects conducted by the conservative Lee government and Park government. They included the Four Rivers Restoration Project (episodes 3, 4, 5, and 23) and the construction of the naval base on Jeju Island (episodes 6, 7, and 8). A series of episodes (8, 9, 10, and 11) *Newstapa* broadcasted in 2012 on the government's violation of the human rights of citizens – including illicit surveillance, an attempted cover-up, and destruction of evidence – ignited a public furor, forcing prosecutors to reopen a 2010 investigation. *Newstapa* also reported about the government's violent suppression of labor unions, especially the case of SsangYoung Motor employees (episodes 4 and11), and it helped trigger a parliamentary hearing in September 2012. These topics were barely covered by the conservative mainstream media (Kwak, 2013). The journalists of *Newstapa* firmly believed not only that these *Newstapa*'s news contents revealed the reality of the topics, but also that citizens were eager to know about the reality.

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[39] In South Korea, democratic-progressives are generally described as follows: democratic, nationalistic, and humanitarian. They generally advocate a democratically planned economic model that enlarges welfare and promotes fair participation of all citizens in production processes (Steinberg & Shin, 2006). They are also known to prefer an independent foreign policy and especially show opposition to the US involvement in the politics of the Korean peninsula (Chae & Kim, 2008).

Newstapa seniors, however, emphasized that they did not ally with the democratic-progressive group. They recognized the possibility of being viewed as "a partisan or alternative news organization that advocates a certain political position" (G. Choi, personal communication, October 23, 2014). They argued that their news selection was an inevitable consequence of the current media environment in Korea:

> If the news stories of *Newstapa* seem to focus on a particular political or social position, it may result from the biased media environment in Korea dominantly favoring the conservative political group and big businesses, the two biggest centers of power in Korea. (G. Choi, personal communication, October 23, 2014)

Senior reporter Choi also described the negative influence of this conservative-dominated media system on the public as "a contagious disease that spreads widely through every news channel" (email interview, November 13, 2012). *Newstapa* journalists believed that the truth in society could be realized only within a more balanced system which could foster diversity in media discourse and that their news could contribute to it (Youngjin Kim, 2013).

The seniors' news criteria also reflected their efforts to compensate themselves for the loss of social status they had possessed when they had worked for the mainstream media. In their previous news companies, they did not need to wait for others' responses to their news reports. They also did not need to actively manage their companies' reputations. Rather, in many cases, newsworthy sources wanted to have and maintain access to the seniors' previous news companies. "The fact that I was a KBS reporter was a sort of voucher, an authorization of access to high rank in all government agencies,"

one senior reporter told me. "However, in *Newstapa,* this advantage is now no longer

available" (G. Kim, personal communication, November 14, 2014). Simply put, for

Newstapa seniors, the reputations of their previous news companies served in part as a

means to reach a higher social position. On the contrary, the fact that they belonged to the

news startup *Newstapa* could not give the seniors that kind of power in Korean society.

Instead, their existence in *Newstapa* gave *Newstapa* a more respectable image. The

reputation of *Newstapa* could be enhanced by the fact that a bunch of the famous, skilled

journalists left other companies for *Newstapa.*

In order to maintain and extend their social boundaries, the seniors had to

continually produce exclusive and superior news stories. By selecting and producing

these kinds of "overlooked but important" news stories with great potential for major

impact on society, the seniors could remember who they were and what their role was in

society. These stories were the yardstick they could use to self-evaluate their performance,

control, and abilities. In other words, producing excellent news stories and receiving

social attention in response to the news stories were the best ways of reconstructing their

professional identities as respected journalists.

In this sense, *Newstapa* seniors were pleased when their news stories were

referenced by other news media. They called this "*badasseugi,*" literally meaning,

"dictating one's speech or letter to others." By forcing other news organization to

transcribe their news stories, *Newstapa* seniors were reminded of their social status as the

leaders of the Korean journalistic community. For instance, as the sole partner news

organization of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) in Korea,

Newstapa collaborated with the ICIJ and produced a series of news stories about politicians, celebrities, and business leaders using secret companies in tax havens, such as the British Virgin Islands, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. These news stories were picked up by virtually all of Korean news companies. Several *Newstapa* journalists, including the editor-in-chief and anchor, choose May 22, 2013 – the day when *Newstapa* had held the first press conference to reveal the list of Koreans using secret hideaways in tax havens – as one of the best days of their lives.

Another crucial resource for the maintenance of social status was a reaction from powerful social actors. After covering those issues about the high status of individuals or organizations, *Newstapa* seniors tended to *look forward to* having a phone call from the individuals or organizations. For instance, on the day when junior reporter Lee released a series of news stories about the National Pension Service, the editor-in-chief approached her and asked, "Have you heard from the National Pension Service yet?" As the junior reporter answered, "Not yet," the editor-in-chief said, "I can't wait to hear what they'll say."

The juniors' assimilation into the seniors' gut feeling. The seniors' pursuit of excellence influenced the practices of the juniors. *Newstapa* juniors were often frustrated by the seniors' news criteria. Junior reporter Hong explained her frustration, "I can't understand the seniors' standard. They are killing my item, saying, 'That's not a good story.' What is a good story? Should I always find a page-one story?" (personal communication, November 4, 2014). Hong said that the seniors tended to focus too much on the eliteness of news issues, which refers to a news criterion assessing the

newsworthiness of a news issue based on whether the high status of individuals and organizations are involved in that issue. Junior producer Kim was also dissatisfied with the seniors' emphasis on the exclusivity as a news criterion:

> I want to further investigate some issues covered by others because their news stories didn't make any positive change. A problem is still out there. I believe there will be something deeper I should investigate. I believe I can produce a more meaningful story than others. And, I think this is why investigative reporting is needed. But, the seniors often question, "What is difference between yours and others?" In many cases, I can't answer that question because I do not yet know what I will ultimately deliver in the form of a news story. I just want to have a chance to further examine the case. However, in many cases, I am not allowed to do so. (personal communication, November 10, 2014)

The juniors' frustration was amplified by the inconsistency of the seniors' news criteria. These seniors' criteria were not applied to assess the newsworthiness of the news items suggested by other senior reporters. A high degree of trust existed among the seniors. Senior editor Choi told me as follows:

> Honestly, I'm sometimes not satisfied with other seniors' news ideas. Of course, I guess, others also might think my item seems not newsworthy. … For example, these days, one senior reporter has investigated the case of premium outlets. I don't think his item is newsworthy. But, I let him do that. I know he is a veteran reporter. He has 18 years of experience in this field. He will do well, and, in the end, his story will be good. (personal communication, October 24, 2014)

Indeed, trust, which was allocated on the basis of experience and expertise, functioned as an evaluation criterion in situations where uncertainty existed. Mutual trust allowed the seniors to work together in a constructive manner. As senior editor Choi said, "The seniors respect each other. We are competent at what we do." This, of course, included a sense of self-respect. Conversely, how the seniors dealt with news ideas suggested by the juniors reflected how much the seniors trusted the juniors' performance. In other words, the seniors tended not to fully trust the juniors' performance. A lunchtime chat between two senior reporters and me well illustrates this:

> "Junior reporter Hong's recent story was really interesting," I begin. "I mean, I thought it was great in terms of the quality of documentation and analysis. You should be proud of her." Administrative staff member Kim smiles and agrees with me, "Yes, Hong has improved a lot lately." Senior Reporter Kim, however, is opposed to Kim. "Her skill is still far from that of a professional. I think at least three to four more years of experience will be necessary before she can call herself a 'professional.'" (adapted from fieldnotes, January 13, 2015)

Based on the low level of trust in the juniors' abilities, the seniors became more wary of the quality of the juniors' news ideas. In this sense, the newsworthiness of a suggested idea was not just determined by the quality and kind of the news idea itself. Instead, it was also a matter of *whose* idea it was. Thus, in many cases, no matter how hard the juniors worked, their performance could not satisfy the seniors.

In fact, the seniors' treatment toward the juniors did not necessarily mean that they ignored the juniors. Rather, this carried a cultural message associated with the

reciprocal duties of the seniors and the juniors. Since the seniors considered the juniors

their pupils rather than fellow professionals, they tried to play roles as teachers. Their

roles were to become models whom their juniors could emulate. In addition, they

invested a great amount of time and effort to create a work environment where the juniors

could develop journalistic skills. Creating such a work environment – including setting

news criteria, controlling news quality, and developing work procedure – was the duty, as

well as the right, of the seniors, not of the juniors.

However, this clear hierarchical role was not what the juniors initially expected

when they began their careers at *Newstapa*. Junior Hong said that she expected that she

would work in an "exceptionally democratic environment" (personal communication,

November 3, 2014). Her expectation mainly came from *Newstapa*'s mission of

"abolishing old practices in Korean journalism." In her mind, the *seonbae-hubae* system

and its related practices were the very old practices that the seniors might want to nullify.

Contrary to her expectation, abolishing the *seonbae-hubae* system was not in the "not-to-

do list" of the seniors. Although some seniors agreed with the juniors that they needed to

produce "a less hierarchical and authoritarian organizational culture in the *Newstapa*

newsroom" (G. Kim, personal communication, November 14, 2014), they were not able

to be completely free from the *seonbae-hubae* system deeply embedded in their minds

and bodies. Senior reporter Kim put it, "the hierarchy (*sang-myeong-ha-bok*) in a

newsroom is a necessary evil to increase accountability of individual reporters and

productivity of the entire organization" (personal communication, November 14, 2014).

In this sense, while conducting interviews, I was asked by several juniors, multiple times, to be a "mediator" or "messenger" between the juniors and the seniors, carrying their messages to the seniors. They particularly wanted me to explain my observation of the patterns in conversations between the seniors and the juniors to the seniors. The juniors expected that the seniors would listen more carefully to my opinion than theirs. When asked why she could not tell this with her own lips, she looked at me with an accusatory expression and said, "What have you observed so far?" (Y. Hong, personal communication, November 3, 2014).

According to my observation, in the daily newswork, the juniors learned what their expected roles were in the hierarchical structure and then gradually came to accept the roles. Particularly, the selling process was one of the most continuing and powerful learning mechanisms. One junior indicated that she began to know how the seniors would want her to behave if the seniors might kill her ideas. She said that she felt that there might be an "insurmountable gap" between the seniors and her:

> Last year, one senior told me that he wanted me to challenge his perspective on newswork if I would believe he might be wrong. He said, "I don't want you to lose your nerves. That's a no-no." He encouraged me to be a wild and aggressive lone wolf-like journalist. … But, over time, I just began to know what he does contradicts what he says. He is especially intolerant of appeals or complaints. He is not open to challenge or constructive debate. When he kills my idea, I'm expected to be a passive listener. … And, honestly, in most cases, he is right. Although, in his communication style, he is likely to be authoritative, I know he

cares about me. If I'm doing well, I may not need to deal with that kind of

authoritative situations. So, it's up to me. (Y. Hong, personal communication,

November 4, 2014)

As this junior indicated, these repeated contacts with the seniors in the selling process led

the juniors to assimilate their roles and specific attitudes about the hierarchy.

Consequently, the juniors tended not only to avoid a dispute with the seniors but also to

ascribe the seniors' authoritarian attitudes to them.

More fundamentally, the bodies of the juniors were the places where the hierarchy

was performed. When the juniors sold their news ideas to the seniors, for example, the

juniors usually stood politely with their hands behind their backs, while the seniors sat at

their desks. The juniors also continuously used *nunchi*, literally meaning "eye measure"

in that *nun-* refers to "eye" and *-chi* refers to "measure."[40] *Nunchi* is one's ability to

estimate another person's mood, feeling, and state of mind by using her or his senses (J.

Kim, 2009, p. 4). During a conversation between a senior reporter and a junior reporter,

this culturally specific ability was often used by the junior to understand the senior's

mood, feeling, and state of mind. The junior kept using *nunchi* to communicate

effectively, especially to avoid hurting the senior's mood and to keep the senior's feeling

in a satisfactory state. While reading the senior's face and listening carefully to his tone

of voice, the junior was prepared to deal with any reaction of the senior. By using *nunchi*,

the junior found appropriate forms of politeness in a given situation. This was embedded

in the junior's use of language and also in the junior's facial expression and gestures. The

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[40] Vegdahl and Hur (2008) wrote that they could not find exact English equivalent for the Korean culture-laden word *nunchi* (pp. 36-37).

words and grammar that the junior used also revealed her or his respect toward the senior's opinion.

The juniors believed that having good *nunchi* enabled them to work closely with the seniors. Their wishes for status achievement then caused them to be silent and conform. One junior producer told me, "A few days ago, when Senior A killed my idea, I tried to persuade him. But, as soon as I felt that he looked displeased, I immediately accepted his decision" (S. Kim, personal communication, November 10, 2014). She added that her silence would improve her relationship with Senior A. She said, "Each senior seems to have their favorite junior. When they launch a news project, they prefer to work with their favorite ones. I am afraid that these relationships will take root in *Newstapa*." This junior producer was concerned about whether she would feel a sense of alienation at work and, then, whether this would influence her status in the newsroom. "I don't want to be disengaged. I am ashamed of myself, but I sometimes decide to keep silent, conform to what the seniors want me to do, and use *nunchi* (*nunchi bonda*) to please them." She sighed, "I don't want to be stigmatized." She believed that this silence, conformity, and diligence would help her later to work with less constraint and also achieve higher status within the junior group. In this way, the juniors, consciously and unconsciously, acted as maintaining and recreating the hierarchical structure in the *Newstapa* newsroom.

The juniors were expected to behave in a way that maintained harmony in the *Newstapa* newsroom, and, therefore, any attempt to challenge the established roles of the

seniors was not allowed for them. One junior reporter told me about another junior's experience:

> Last year, when we had lunch together, he often said, "I want to do this" and "We should do this." But, these days, he rarely suggests these kinds of ideas. [PROBE: Why does he change his character?] The seniors did not accept his ideas. Any attempt to suggest new policies or modify existing rules is not allowed. They said, "That would not work. We already tried it before." … I know that they have a great amount of experience. For these veterans, we may seem like babies. When babies want to try something, caregivers can just say, "Don't do that," because they already know what will happen. This is like our relationships with the seniors. … I sometimes feel like I'm living in a *germ-free laboratory*. (G. Park, personal communication, October 24, 2014)

Newstapa seniors' emphasis on the autonomy of individual reporters needed to be understood in this context. The autonomy of the juniors may be little more than their freedom to exercise choice within the "germ-free laboratory" designed by the seniors. Based on their life experiences, the seniors mobilized all their resources, material and moral, to produce this "germ-free laboratory" and then considered this "a journalist's heaven." They also took the juniors' silence for granted. The juniors, as pupils, were required to cultivate excellence *within* the work environment established by the seniors.

Then, what is journalistic excellence in *Newstapa*? The juniors had to, and ultimately wanted to, *be like their seniors*. In particular, the hierarchical structure between the seniors and the juniors in the "germ-free laboratory" was mixed with the

juniors' aspirations to maintain autonomy. The more the juniors did journalism in the

ways the seniors thought, felt, and behaved, the more chances to focus on their own news

stories they could have. For the juniors who sought to "be in flow" within the hierarchical

social space, seeking to be like the seniors was an unavoidable result. One junior reporter

described this assimilation process as "a process that occurs over time":

> When I first joined *Newstapa*, I didn't want to be a journalist excessively looking
>
> for exclusive stories. … But, recently, I'm aware of my change in attitude toward
>
> the values of a news story. … I think this change began after I participated in the
>
> ICIJ team.[41] … I feel a little strange because I now can't find many differences
>
> between the seniors' news criteria and mine. I think the seniors also realize this.
>
> These days, I can do almost whatever I think is right. (Y. Lee, personal
>
> communication, November 28, 2014)

While they followed the seniors' news criteria and selected and produced "*Newstapa*-like"

news stories, the embodied elements of journalism of the seniors became transformed

into their journalistic dispositions.

In the end, *Newstapa* juniors voluntarily sought to produce those news products

that deserved to be called "the hope of Korean journalism." For the juniors, the fact that

"these news criteria are different from [their] original ones" (Y. Lee, personal

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[41] The ICIJ team is a special unit in *Newstapa* investigating the "Offshore Leaks Project" and the "Luxembourg Leaks Project," which were initiated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ; http://www.icij.org), a global network of around 180 investigative journalists in more than 60 countries. The ICIJ team in *Newstapa* has investigated those Koreans using secret companies and bank accounts created in offshore jurisdictions – including the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and Singapore – and Luxembourg for tax evasion. *Newstapa* is the sole partner news organization of the ICIJ in Korea, and *Newstapa* editor-in-chief Kim Youngjin is the sole Korean member of this network.

communication, November 28, 2014) was no longer a big deal. The juniors, of course,

talked about better working conditions and a better organizational culture. Nonetheless,

news had priority over other things. As one junior reporter told me, *Newstapa* journalists

"may be too busy to deal with other issues because the news is always out there" (Y.

Hong, personal communication, November 4, 2014). Producing "truly important stories

for 99 % of Koreans" was a continuous challenge, and the juniors' sense of self-

realization was enhanced by their satisfaction of fulfilling this challenge. The juniors

eventually felt alive while they committed to being the best they could be in the Korean

journalistic community. In this way, the journalistic values, norms, and practices of the

juniors came to resemble the seniors'. They were becoming like their seniors. Indeed, the

raison d'être of every *Newstapa* journalist became journalism itself.

Newstapa Journalism as Moral Boundaries

The commonality in journalistic dispositions among *Newstapa* journalists

became the basis for their morality. Based on their moral boundaries, *Newstapa*

journalists produced a particular type of metajournalistic discourse targeting the practices

of mainstream journalists, especially pro-government journalists. By exposing the

landscape of the Korean media system, which was a conservative-dominated one,

Newstapa journalists challenged the social authority of pro-government journalists

through adapting the values and principles of *Newstapa* journalism. In the

metajournalistic discourse produced by *Newstapa,* pro-government journalists were not

considered *real* journalists. This was not only because "they abuse their authority to

decide 'what's news' without professionalism and thus disguise the truth from the public,"
but also because "their primary loyalty is not to citizens but to the government and
businesses" (S. Jo, email interview, September 30, 2013). In the *OhmyNews* podcast talk
show on August 2, 2013, for example, *Newstapa* senior reporter Choi severely criticized
the pro-government journalists:

> I feel bad when journalists of mainstream media call themselves journalists. They
> keep producing a good-for-nothing story. They don't care about what citizens
> want to know and can do. They just ignore citizens. They are just reporting either
> the weather or traffic as top stories even when thousands of citizens hold a rally
> in downtown Seoul to protest the government. Many news organizations are
> barely engaged in original reporting. Rather, they just rely on news releases
> provided by the government and businesses. They should stop being afraid of
> criticizing their bosses who may force them to produce pro-government stories.
> They should stop self-censoring their coverage. (Im, 2013)

As *Newstapa* senior reporter Choi ambitiously stated on his Facebook feed on
October 7, 2014, *Newstapa* journalists argued that "Koreans do not need the public
broadcasting networks – such as the KBS and the MBC – anymore because they now
have *Newstapa*." In the news contents of *Newstapa,* the social position of *Newstapa*
journalists was often described as higher than that of the mainstream journalists. The
titles of episodes 28 and 29 of *Newstapa,* for example, were "It's Not News, But Public
Relations for the Government" and "Fact? It Don't Make Me [pro-government journalists]
No Nevermind," respectively.

Newstapa journalism may not seem revolutionary or radical but traditional in a sense that it reflects the core values and practices held by "professional journalism," namely creating an independent newswroom, committing to truth-telling, and seeking to stimulating positive change by focusing on original reporting. Further, *Newstapa* journalists' desire for autonomy is also not exeptional. As Splichal and Sparks (1994) showed, the desire for autonomy is one of the most universal traits shared by journalists around the world (also see Deuze, 2005). Nonetheless, it is also true that *Newstapa* journalism definitely challenges the dominant logic of Korean journalism – the instrumental view of journalism. In a society in which social actors sees journalism as an instrument of the powerful rather than as having its own reason for existence, sticking to the essence of journalism can be reformative.

Further, the assimilation process in the *Newstapa* newsroom reveals the journalists' agency in negotiating their organizational culture. *Newstapa* seniors were not able to free the organization from some of the old practices of Korean journalism, especially the *seonbae-hubae* system. This system seemed to be an inevitable part of the seniors' daily work. Unlike other news organizations, however, the *seonbae-hubae* system in the *Newstapa* newsroom did not function as transmitting the instrumental view of journalism. Rather, it helped the juniors be like their seniors who strove to be reliable, useful, and worthy journalists in Korean society. Indeed, journalistic cultural elements, such as the seonbae-hubae system, are powerful enough to guide journalists' action. Nonetheless, it is also evident that journalists have agency in organizing their own strategies of action. These strategies may be selected by journalists when defined as

appropriate for the maintenance of the contours of the journalists' selves. In other words, depending on what kind of life a journalist has lived and what kinds of activities s/he has engaged in so far, the intensity and direction of the influence of journalistic culture may vary.

The socialization process in the *Newstapa* newsroom also shows how significant the roles of the senior reporters of a Korean news company, namely the *seonbae*s, are in creating and maintaining good journalistic practices in the news company. Those younger journalists whose superiors are professionally and morally responsible in doing journalism are more likely to be good journalists. Even if freedom or autonomy for younger journalists can be limited by the *seonbae-hubae* system, their news organization itself can still remain serious about the mission of journalism if the leadership of the news organization pursues journalistic work that is of high quality and socially responsible.

Chapter V will show how *Newstapa* journalists could maintain their professional identities in the changing media environment. The time when I interacted with *Newstapa* journalists in their newsroom was an "unsettled period" (Swidler, 1986) for them, as well as for any other Korean journalists. *Newstapa* journalists, especially the seniors, became alert, actively examining their media environments for clues about how to act. In this unsettled period, they selected differing pieces of journalistic beliefs and behaviors both from the traditional logic of professional journalism and the nascent logic of participatory journalism. In Chapter V, I will discuss how this hybrid model of *Newstapa* journalism led to the boundary work of *Newstapa* journalists on behalf of other journalists, as well as

of citizens, and ultimately helped them maintain their identities as excellent journalists

contributing to the Korean journalistic community.

V. Being a "Truth-Teller" in the Networked Society

On a black wall just next to the outside of the entrance to the *Newstapa* newsroom, the *Newstapa* signs were hung (Figure 1). A shining, silver-colored *Newstapa* logo in a distinctive font first caught visitors' eyes. Right below the *Newstapa* logo, the official name of *Newstapa* registered under Korean law, the *Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* ("한국탐사저널리즘센터"), was written in a simple modern font. On the left side of the *Newstapa* logo, the signs of three web addresses, including the *Newstapa* website (http://newstapa.org), its Twitter page (http://twitter.com/newstapa), and its YouTube page (http://youtube.com/newstapa), helped me to identify *Newstapa* as a digitally native news organization. Based on five months of ethnographic fieldwork in the *Newstapa* newsroom, I came to realize that the combination of these signs symbolized the missions of *Newstapa* and the methods by which *Newstapa* achieved these missions.

First, the logo of *Newstapa,* which was made up of bold, energetic, spirited calligraphic letters, symbolized *Newstapa*'s mission of *truth-telling*. Every consonant (ㄴ, ㅅ, ㅌ, and ㅍ) and vowel (ㅠ, ㅡ, ㅏ, and ㅏ) of the word *Newstapa* (뉴스타파) was in the form of a straight line, not a circle or curve. These lively straight lines seemed to embody the idiom "*jeongronjikpil*" (정론직필 in Korean; 正論直筆 in Chinese), literally meaning "constructing a sound argument and writing in frank language," which is

considered one of the ideal practices of every individual engaged in producing

knowledge.[42]

Figure 1. The *Newstapa* signs on a wall next to the outside of the entrance to the

Newstapa newsroom located in the Mapo district, Seoul. This picture was taken by the

researcher on September 29, 2014.

Doing *jeongronjikpil*, namely committing to the value of truth, was the most

visible aspect of *Newstapa* journalism. For *Newstapa* journalists, "truth-telling" has more

than one meaning. First, for them, truth-telling literally means "telling the truth,"

reporting all stories objectively and factually, without any personal opinion or slant.

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[42] The Korean letter "jik" (직 in Korean) also literally means straight.

Secondly and more importantly, truth-telling also means telling the truth as in uncovering true things that powerful people, institutions, or corporations want to keep hidden. This second meaning is somewhat akin to the phrase "speaking truth to power," revealing something no matter the cost and in the face of opposition.

The value of truth provided stories about and rationalization for *Newstapa* journalists' role as crucial democratic actors, namely *truth-tellers*. One junior reporter, for example, wrote in her profile on the *Newstapa* website as follows: "A truth-teller standing up boldly against abuses of power and against injustice." In its news releases, *Newstapa* also called itself a truth-teller in Korean society, while it identified its viewers as the guardians of the truth. Furthermore, between January 27, 2012 and February 18, 2013, a total of thirty-eight episodes of *Newstapa* started with a comment by the late journalist Lee Young-hee, who was also a leading journalism scholar and democratic activist: "As a journalist, the only thing worth dying for is neither a nation nor a country. It should be truth."[43]

Newstapa's mission of truth-telling was also expressed in the entryway to the newsroom. Entering into the newsroom, I was always welcomed by two big photos of the late journalists Lee Young-hee (Figure 2) and Song Geon-ho (Figure 3), who was another leading journalism scholar. Each photo was printed on the glass partition in front of the entrance to the newsroom and the glass door to the meeting room, respectively. These images of these great journalists, who were committed to the value of truth despite the threat by the military regimes, were intended to signal the promise of *Newstapa* to follow

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[43] Because of this intro, the late journalist Lee was called "Papa *Newstapa*" by *Newstapa* donors (D. Park, personal communication, September 30, 2014).

the great lives of the past. In these ways, the value of truth was used as a crucial symbolic

material for constructing the professional identity of *Newstapa* and defining its role in

society.

Figure 2. A photo of the late journalist Lee Young-hee printed on the glass partition in

front of the entrance to the *Newstapa* newsroom. The photo was taken by the researcher

on October 12, 2014.

Figure 3. A photo of the late journalist Song Geon-ho printed on the glass door to the

Newstapa meeting room. The photo was taken by the researcher on October 12, 2014.

Secondly, the signs of three web addresses on the black wall next to the entrance to the *Newstapa newsroom* symbolized how the truth could be attained in *Newstapa* journalism in these days. *Newstapa*'s truth-telling was a collaborative process in which both *Newstapa* journalists and other social actors, such as *Newstapa* donors, amateur journalists, and researchers, could make a vital contribution. The desire for being a truth-teller led *Newstapa* journalists, particularly *Newstapa* seniors, to embrace nontraditional ways of doing journalism embedded in the participatory culture of digital media.

More specifically, *Newstapa* created a hybrid model of truth-telling, which was a combination of the traditional professional model of journalism and the participatory model of journalism. The desire for continuously serving as truth-tellers in the digital era led *Newstapa* journalists to embrace the core values of the participatory model of journalism, such as transparency, openness, engagement, and collaboration. Put differently, *Newstapa* journalists used the relatively nascent practices of open-source culture as the path through which they could pursue the mission of truth-telling in a networked environment. In this way, *Newstapa* journalists relinquished their professional autonomy to their audiences, especially to their donors, to a significant degree. As a result of the relinquishment of professional autonomy in their newswork, the professional boundaries of *Newstapa* journalists were negotiated with audiences but at the same time enlarged relative to the professional journalists working in the pro-government news organizations. In other words, allowing audiences' participation in *Newstapa*'s work could meet a traditional public service obligation of journalism (cf., Glasser, 1999), and this allowed *Newstapa* journalists to achieve distinctiveness and status as *real journalists*

compared to other professional journalists who were being called "*giraegis*." *Newstapa* then could ultimately perceive itself as getting closer to an ideal news organization in the digital era.

Chapter V will explore these processes in which *Newstapa* journalists transformed their model of truth-telling and created a hybrid one. In addition, I will also show how this hybrid model of truth-telling contributed to the development of mutually beneficial relationships with audiences and ultimately helped *Newstapa* journalists being called *truth-tellers* in a networked environment.

Getting away from the Past

After working for *Newstapa*, *Newstapa* seniors who had been broadcast and newspaper journalists were forced to adopt digital media as their main news platforms for continuously doing journalism. As the signs of three web addresses on the wall next to the entrance to the newsroom indicated, *Newstapa* particularly used multiple online channels – including the *Newstapa* website, social networking sites (SNSs), and video-sharing websites, especially YouTube – to distribute its news products.

It is important to note that the journalists' use of digital media does not always link to the embracing of the emerging values of digital culture, such as transparency, engagement, participation, and collaboration. In fact, during the first two years of their careers at *Newstapa* between 2012 and 2014, *Newstapa* seniors tended to use online channels merely as alternatives to traditional media channels, especially television, on which they had previously relied for distributing their news products. In other words, the

seniors were "normalizing" (Singer, 2005) digital news platforms to fit their embodied journalistic knowhow and skills.

In particular, *Newstapa* seniors hesitated to change the format of news stories or to adopt new genres. The daily newswork of *Newstapa* was largely organized around the process of producing its flagship news magazine program titled, *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho*. Until January 2015, this twice-a-week news magazine was the only program produced by *Newstapa*. This news magazine was placed under the category of "TV" on the *Newstapa* website, indicating how the seniors considered *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho*, and was distributed online for viewers to stream the program.

Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho was designed to maximize *Newstapa* seniors' importance as broadcast journalists in the program. In terms of program format, for example, *Newstapa* borrowed the format used in news magazine programs of public broadcasting corporations, such as the MBC *PD Notebook*. Each episode of this program contained three to four individual "news packages."[44] A *Newstapa* news package resembled in most ways other news media's news packages, except the length of running time of individual news package.[45] For each news package, anchor Choi Seungho read an introduction, and then the pre-recorded story was shown. This type of news was what the seniors had produced through their entire careers and thus was most familiar to them.

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[44] As a story format, news package is "[a] self-contained taped report," including "all the elements of a report (sound, video, etc.) in a complete 'package.'" (B. Schultz, 2004, p. 41).

[45] While news packages of most Korean public broadcasting corporations run for approximately one minute and thirty seconds, *Newstapa* news packages run for 8 minutes or longer.

In this earlier period, the weekly work schedules for *Newstapa* staff members –

especially for junior reporters and producers, camera crew members, and video editors –

were "optimized to produce the highest-possible quality of *Newstapa with Producer Choi*

Seungho" (G. Choi, personal communication, November 10, 2014). Several juniors

consequently experienced that their creativity was limited within the framework set by

the seniors. Junior producer Shin, for instance, expected that he could contribute to the

development of new news formats that would attract younger viewers who might be

much less likely to express interest in traditional hard news stories. In doing so, he

proposed a "newstainment" program, using rap music to provide political and social

issues. Nonetheless, the seniors killed his proposal because "they could not be sure

whether it would work" (D. Shin, personal communication, November 4, 2014).

Although the seniors also sought to make their news "as interesting as possible," they

tended to stick to "hard news," emphasizing the significance of investigative reporting.

As senior reporter Choi told me, *Newstapa* seniors believed that "people would be

attracted to an investigative story, if the story would be well researched, well written,

well structured, and well edited" (personal communication, November 10, 2014).

Nonetheless, the overall ratings of *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho* were

not as high as expected. Most *Newstapa* seniors, especially former network reporters,

greatly cared about the reach and impact of their work. In particular, these seniors tended

to evaluate the popularity of *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho* depending on the

YouTube view count of each episode of the program. Whenever *Newstapa* uploaded a

new news episode to YouTube, the seniors counted its views for a period of four to five

days past the initial posting of the video. In 2012 when the *Newstapa* project was

launched, *Newstapa* was one of the most viewed news programs on YouTube Korea, and

each episode of *Newstapa* news program was viewed around 350,000 times. Over time,

however, the number was gradually decreased, and, by September 2014, it reached

around 30,000. The times when I stayed at the *Newstapa* newsroom were a sort of

transitional period during which *Newstapa* journalists sought to understand how they

could break through this situation. *Newstapa* was pressured to innovate.

In this transitional period, *Newstapa* journalists sought to move from a broadcast-

news-mindset to another. A crucial driving force of this transition was the increasing

number of "the guardians of the truth" – *Newstapa* donors. While the number of the

viewers of *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho* was decreased from 2012 to 2014, the

number of *Newstapa* donors was continuously increased during the same period. In

September 2014 when I started my research at the *Newstapa* newsroom, it amounted to

35,200. As the number of these donors was increased, the interactions between *Newstapa*

journalists and the donors became richer, and this led *Newstapa* journalists to consider a

new model for thinking about news and also the role of their audiences.

"Good pressure" from audiences. On the right side of the inside of the entrance

to the *Newstapa* newsroom, there was a shelving unit. This shelving unit, displaying tens

of medals and trophies awarded by numerous journalism societies or foundations, was

Newstapa's symbolic place of its journalism. The medals and trophies included the Ahn

Jong-phil Prize for Press Freedom, the Song-Geon-ho Prize, and the Lee Young-hee Prize,

which are considered the country's most prestigious professional awards. Among them

stood a dried walleye pollack. A dried fish among the decorations of honor looked strange. When I first saw this dried fish and tried to understand the meaning of the lack of harmony among the decorations, senior reporter Park was approaching me. "That fish was used in a *gosa* when *Newstapa* first moved to this newsroom," Park told me.[46] "A dried walleye pollack in front of the entrance of an office is believed to protect the office from evil spirits day and night because the dried fish never close its eyes," he added. "This is a kind of lucky charm" (personal communication, August 3, 2014). According to him, this lucky charm also constantly reminded him of how and by whose support *Newstapa* could launch the *Newstapa* newsroom. Because of the citizens' donations, *Newstapa* created an independent newsroom in the Mapo district. Before having this newsroom, *Newstapa* journalists did not have their own newsroom but did temporarily use a small room of the office of the National Union of Media Workers as their office. For *Newstapa* journalists, the dried fish, thus, was a symbol of their indissoluble tie with citizens who mentally and financially supported *Newstapa* journalism. Indeed, the dried fish deserved to be placed with other medals and trophies on the shelving unit in the *Newstapa* newsroom. They together served as the evidences of *Newstapa* journalists' achievements in journalism made possible with the help of their donors.

　　Newstapa journalists knew that their journalism was based on the trust between them and donors. Around 36,000 individual donors were willing to donate their money every month. Their donations helped the exiled journalists, who had been fired from the mainstream news companies during the Lee Myung-bak administration, to continue to do

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[46] When Koreans start a new business or move to a new office, they often practice a *gosa* ceremony.

journalism – what they most want to do. Because of these donations, *Newstapa* journalists could also eat and drink together, purchase office equipment and broadcasting equipment, and lease cars and the newsroom space.

Furthermore, *Newstapa* supporters sent gifts to *Newstapa* journalists. Virtually every week I stayed in the *Newstapa* newsroom, several parcels were delivered to *Newstapa* journalists. These included boxes of persimmons, oranges, apples, herbs, rice cakes, king crabs, and canned coffee. Oftentimes, handwritten letters with checks or cash were delivered. In these interactions with citizens, *Newstapa* journalists were continually reminded that their work could contribute to the common good. For them, this citizens' support served as visible evidence of the positive consequences of their work and thus as resources for their satisfaction with work. When asked what made her feel like she was doing well as a journalist, junior producer Park answered as follows:

> You know, *Newstapa* identifies itself as a news organization only for citizens. This is very abstract, I think. Oftentimes, we receive handwritten letters from our supporters. They write letters with their whole hearts. These days, sending a handwritten letter requires great efforts, right? They think of us and translate their thought into action. This touches my heart. … When reading their letters, I realize how much Koreans care about journalism. And, I realize how carefully they watch the news stories I've produced. The interactions with citizens, especially by a handwritten letter, most inspire me to greater efforts. This is much more influential than the seniors' reprimands. (personal communication, October 24, 2014)

Indeed, this feeling of creating good products compensated for any difficulty in living as *Newstapa* journalists. It led *Newstapa* journalists to further push themselves harder to achieve excellence and also to tolerate hard work.

Furthermore, *Newstapa*'s business model, funded solely by individual citizens, enabled *Newstapa* to create an independent newsroom, which frees them from the likelihood of pressure either from the government or from business over the practices of journalism. Instead, *Newstapa* journalists were continuously pressured by the fact that *Newstapa* could not exist without the citizens' support. The editor-in-chief described this as follows:

> Journalists in today's society are inevitably influenced by the pressure not only from the owners of their organizations but also from the advertisers. I also always care a lot about my employers – citizens. The fact that everyday citizens donate their money to *Newstapa* every month makes me feel pressured, but this pressure definitely benefits me. It's a *good pressure*. (Y. Kim, personal communication, October 20, 2013; emphasis added)

This "good pressure" from citizens led *Newstapa* journalists to seek to find a way to provide *better* journalism for citizens. "Citizens choose us. Oftentimes, we deliberate on the meaning of their support for *Newstapa* journalism," the editor-in-chief Kim Youngjin told me. He continued, "We have to think of how we can repay their love. Maybe, doing excellent journalism would be what they most want from us. But, what else we can do? Finding answers for this question should be our continuing priority" (personal communication, December 16, 2014).

In December 2014, *Newstapa* conducted a survey of its 35,000 donors aimed at "understanding the way the donors watch *Newstapa* news and thereby providing them with a better news service" (Newstapa, 2015a). According to the editor-in-chief Kim, over 4,000 donors responded to the survey. This response rate amazed *Newstapa* staff members. "4,000 out of 35,000. This was much higher than we expected. We realized again how much *Newstapa* donors care about *Newstapa*," the editor-in-chief Kim wrote (email interview, March 12, 2015).

However, *Newstapa* journalists, particularly the seniors, seemed to be struck by the results of this "Survey: Making *Newstapa* Better." Not many respondents watched a full episode of *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho* without a pause. Instead, they tended to selectively watch certain news segments in the news magazine depending on the topic of each segment. In addition, web traffic from SNSs – especially from Facebook, Twitter, and KakaoStory – to the *Newstapa* website kept rising. The majority of respondents watched *Newstapa* news stories on their SNS feeds. They then visited the *Newstapa* website only when they wanted to get an in-depth perspective on these stories. In particular, not surprisingly, the respondents' mobile devices seemed to be "their most frequent portal to *Newstapa*, as they surf SNSs … often on their subway ride to … and from work" (D. Park, personal communication, January 9, 2015). These survey results provided a new sense of opportunity and purpose across the organization.

***Newstapa*'s Experimentation across Digital Media Platforms**

At this point, *Newstapa* started to "rethink [its] broadcasting-centric traditions" (S. Choi, personal communication, June 10, 2015) and then planned and implemented diverse strategies for strengthening journalistic practices in the digital era. "Although we've been greatly concerned about the impact of our work, we haven't done well to do that in today's changing media environment," the director of data and research team Dr. Gwon Hyejin said (email interview, March 20, 2015). She emphasized, "We might be falling behind in some critical areas, especially the way we distribute our news products to audiences." Based on the survey results, "with the expectation that *Newstapa* will serve as a public sphere to promote open debate and thereby to contribute to healthy democracy" (Newstapa, 2015b), *Newstapa* attempted to experiment across digital media platforms, including its website, SNS pages, and smartphone application.

Newstapa seniors especially sought to reexamine "mobile devices as *Newstapa*'s main platforms" (Y. Kim, personal communication, November 10, 2014). Right after analyzing the survey results, *Newstapa* "began working right away on creating the web development team" (H. Gwon, email interview, April 30, 2015) by recruiting a web developer, a web designer, and a web producer. This team produced smartphone-optimized content and also developed mobile applications for *Newstapa*. As a result of this, in January 2015, *Newstapa* released a new version of smartphone application.[47] "As our survey results indicated, mobile is becoming critical to our newswork, especially disseminating our news to audiences and interacting with them," the Director of New

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[47] The first version of *Newstapa* mobile application was developed by a pro bono developer.

Media Park told me. "We really want our viewers to have a good experience on our app. While developing a new version of mobile app, our goal was to make our audiences' news consumption easier" (email interview, May 9, 2015).

In addition, *Newstapa* attempted to make its mobile application "more than a just simple container for the same news stories published on our website" (D. Park, email interview, May 9, 2015). After the development of this mobile application, *Newstapa* reduced the publication schedule of *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho* from twice a week to weekly. Instead, on the newly released application, *Newstapa* audiences could watch news segments on demand, view slide shows, and download any of these news segments. "For those who do not have enough time to watch a full news segment," *Newstapa* also provided "Quick View" function and "Slide Show" function on its app. These functions helped users save time when watching news clips because they allowed users to read the main information of the news clips in advance. *Newstapa* application users could also experience diverse interactive features. They, for instance, could share news stories through Facebook, Google Plus, Twitter, KakaoStory,[48] and email. The mobile application also enabled them to save news stories to revisit later, to submit their photos directly to *Newstapa*, and to share information or files with *Newstapa*.

Newstapa also designed content for digital devices, especially targeting youth and young adults. First, the news show *Tapas* (http://newstapa.org/tapas) covered "serious subjects, such as politics and economics, that have significant implications for youth … in a more entertaining way" (*Tapas*, 2015). As the title *Tapas* indicated, "this new show

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[48] KakaoStory is a photo sharing social network for KakaoTalk users. KakaoTalk is a multi platform texting application used by 95% of smartphone owners in Korea.

is intended to serve as a snack or appetizer before the main course – namely, *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho*" (S. Choi, personal communication, July 1, 2015). Secondly, *Newstapa* produced a "newstainment" program titled *Seol Pa* (설파 in Korean, 說破 in Chinese；http://newstapa.org/category/program/seolpa), literally meaning "expressing clearly" or "elucidating." This program, directed by junior producer Shin Dongyun, was "using rap music to address serious social issues that people are unwilling to discuss" (D. Shin, Choi, & Shin, 2015). Each episode of these two new programs was downloadable from *Newstapa* mobile application, as audio or video files.

When junior producers initially proposed these two programs targeting younger audiences, *Newstapa* seniors disregarded their value as *Newstapa* programs. Nonetheless, *Newstapa* seniors finally acknowledged "the potential for unorthodox forms of news to provide information and then create a public forum" (D. Park, personal communication, December 10, 2015). *Newstapa* juniors' daily work was consequently reorganized around the processes of producing these new programs.

Furthermore, *Newstapa* seniors also started to experiment in various ways of storytelling, such as animations, coloring books for children, and situation comedy. Anchor Choi, for example, used animations in his "Korean CIA's Scandal: Spy Evidence Forgery" project:

> There are certain stories you can tell in a very powerful way with animations that … may be you can't tell because someone doesn't want to be on camera…someone doesn't want to be voice-used but they're willing to talk to you. Of course, you can write that and then read it. But, people like cartoons. So, if you

use animations, you can kill two birds with on stone (*iltassangpi*). (personal

communication, October 15, 2014)

The process through which *Newstapa* moved toward a truly digitized journalism

also led *Newstapa* to have a new insight into its news-making process. By accepting and

actively responding to changes arising from interactions with audiences, as well as with

amateur journalists and other professionals, *Newstapa* began to see journalism as a more

conversational process through which journalists work for and with members of the

public.

Journalism as a conversational process. *Newstapa*'s data and research team

initiated this move toward a new version of the framework on which *Newstapa*

journalism was based. This team consisted of four "data and research journalists." These

team members had a mix of formal education in library and information science,

computer science, and journalism. The director of data and research team Dr. Gwon

Hyejin identified her team members as "half-programmers and half-journalists."

When Dr. Gwon was first offered a job as *Newstapa*'s director of data and

research team, she negotiated "the title of journalist" for her team members with the

leadership of *Newstapa*. She believed that "being called journalists" would confer

authority and legitimacy on her team members in the *Newstapa* newsroom:

When I first joined *Newstapa*, I didn't negotiate my salary. The only request I

made was that my team members – they were researchers and data analysts –

should be positioned as a journalist in *Newstapa*. At first, for some seniors, my

offer might be unexpected and even unpleasant. But, I strongly asked that I would

be willing to reduce my annual salary if I could hire my team members as journalists. [PROBE: Why did you do so?] From my previous experience at two mainstream newspaper companies, I learn how the title "journalist" can influence the staff members' organizational status or rank in a news company. … In most Korean news media, there are a clear hierarchy between news staff members and others, and power derives from the personal position … Researchers or programmers are not treated as news staff members. Instead, they are still treated as low-ranking employees – the journalists' assistants. It's like the relationship between nurses and doctors in hospitals. … Many of them inevitably feel isolated from the rest of the newsroom. (personal communication, September 4, 2015)

As a result of her negotiation, her team members were officially called "data and research journalists" at *Newstapa.* Dr. Gwon said that her 20-year career as a *journalist* at mainstream news companies was certainly critical to persuade the leadership of *Newstapa* to confer the title of journalist upon her team members. "They couldn't simply ignore my request. According to the *seonbae-hubae* system, I am a *seonbae* [senior] of some *Newstapa* seniors in the Korean journalistic community," she giggled. According to her, this might be the first case in the Korean journalistic community that researchers and data analysts were being called "journalists" at a newsroom.

This case consequently benefited the data and research team members, as well as the organization at large. First, the title "journalist" motivated the data and research team members to think much more seriously about journalism, while "being treated as assistants could not help researchers to develop a sense of belonging to a news

organization" (H. Gwon, personal communication, November 4, 2014). Data and

research journalist Lee Boram told me that "being called journalist" helped her to

"develop a certain attitude toward [her] job." "I've not trained or got an expertise in

journalism, especially in investigative reporting. As an archivist, I tend to 'let data tell the

story rather than using data combined with a journalistic sense," Lee said. "But I'm now

a journalist. So, I think I have to bring a more journalistic spirit into my work. … Being a

journalist means one has to be curious about everything and wonder why things happen –

always and earnestly," Lee added (personal communication, November 11, 2014).

 Newstapa news staff members also treated the data and research team members

like their "colleague journalists." As data and research journalist Choi described, each of

data and research journalists often played a supporting role as part of investigative

reporting team:

> Almost all stories at *Newstapa* are team-based. I am the reporter having data skills.
>
> We also have reporters having interviewing skills and other great investigative
>
> skills. We work together as a team. … There is no such story only based on data
>
> work. My work…I like to say… reporting just begins. … Because data often can
>
> tell you how things happened. Data can tell you where, when, and…what's
>
> happening. But data isn't very good at why. Why did this happen? That's where a
>
> lot of traditional investigative skills really come in and are necessary. So, after my
>
> data work is done, I'm passing over the data results to investigative reporters.
>
> That's when the fun begins. (personal communication, November 12, 2014)

The data and research team also did its own data-reporting project. Junior data and research journalists were especially asked to participate in editorial meetings every week, presenting the findings from data as other junior reporters do in these meetings. Dr. Gwon said, "My team members already did '*ipbong*.'[49] Allowing them to focus on their own news projects means … their abilities as journalists are publicly appreciated" (personal communication, November 4, 2014).

Working with these "half-programmers and half-journalists" also made *Newstapa* leaders move closer to the influence of "open-source culture." The editor-in-chief Kim Youngjin, anchorman Choi Seungho, and editor Choi Gyeongyeong had a connection with the University of Missouri and Investigative Reporters & Editors (IRE). They attended these institutions as fellow journalists, studying computer-assisted reporting (CAR) and also investigative journalism techniques. Nonetheless, CAR is different from data journalism. While CAR is based on a professional journalistic culture that has emphasized the exclusive role of journalists in the news-making process, data journalism has arisen from "the intersection of professional journalism with open-source culture" (Coddington, 2015, p. 344). Data journalism thus prefers the process of collaboratively sharing data in order to achieve investigative success (Lewis & Usher, 2013). Data journalism also encourages members of the public to engage in the data analysis process. *Newstapa* leaders were primarily *journalists* practicing CAR who had been accustomed to the "we write, you read" dogma of modern professional journalism (Deuze, 2003, p.

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[49] *Ipbong* is a Korean journalistic jargon meaning that a reporter finds and selects an event, transforms it into any form of journalistic writing (in this case of *Newstapa*, a broadcast news story), and publishes it under the reporter's name for the first time.

220). Furthermore, *Newstapa* seniors were familiar with a competitive news media landscape in which scoops and exclusive news were highly valued. Thus, they "really didn't like to share what they know about" (H. Gwon, personal communication, November 15, 2014).

In this atmosphere, therefore, it was not surprising that Dr. Gwon and her team members encountered resistance from some *Newstapa* seniors when they first planned to disclose several sets of data gathered from their investigative reporting projects to other journalists, as well as to the public. This resistance was particularly coming from their distrust in mainstream journalists. According to senior reporter Choi, "sound practice not to provide exact citations exists in the Korean journalistic community." He talked with his brows knitted, "As long as other reporters credit *Newstapa* for *Newstapa*'s original contribution, I may be more willingly allow them to use *Newstapa* data sets." However, as he added, "it seems highly possible that many of them may just download, tweak, and build upon our data without credit to *Newstapa*" (personal communication, November 10, 2014). Another senior reporter Hwang also worried that "*Newstapa* does all the work and others get the credit" (personal communication, December 2, 2014).

However, there was one thing these veteran professional journalists and "half-programmers and half-journalists" shared in common. They tended to believe in news nonprofits as the future of journalism. "I firmly believe nonprofit news centers, such as *Newstapa* and *ProPublica,* using the force of investigative journalism with innovative ideas are becoming a critical part of the emerging media ecology around the world," the editor-in-chief Kim Youngjin told me. He convincingly maintained, "In Korea, *Newstapa*

has pioneered this new type of journalism" (personal communication, November 4, 2014).

Dr. Gwon also said as follows:

> *Newstapa* has to be a base camp of good journalism, providing supplies, shelter, information, data, and strategies for every journalist who wants to learn investigative journalism and changing the ecosystem of Korean journalism by creating a virtuous circle in the system. We should work for Korean journalism, not just for *Newstapa*. (personal communication, November 10, 2014)

Based on this shared perspective on the future of journalism, *Newstapa* leaders recalled what values they must look for while approaching innovations. In a staff meeting on October 4, 2014, Dr. Gwon said, "*Newstapa* is a nonprofit public service organization funded by citizens, so we have to work only for them. Rivalry is not necessary for us to pursue our mission in journalism. We don't need a competitive spirit." Data and research journalist Choi responded to her by emphasizing the role that *Newstapa* should play in enhancing the citizens' right to know and also in providing a space for resolving social problems. Based on his 10 years of working as data analyst, Choi maintained as follows:

> In Korea, there is no such place, both online and offline, that journalists can find the government's open data to conduct research. Although the government has maintained that it improves citizen engagement through open and big data, the data provided by the government are really poor. … We call our organization the Korea Center for Investigative Journalism. We use the term Korea in our name. So, I believe *Newstapa* should do more than other news companies. …

Newstapa needs to open the data we have collected and refined, and this will build public trust. And, this will be good for Korean journalism. Other Korean news media cannot invest time and money into this kind of work. The members of the journalistic community are always using the information produced by others, but, ironically enough, they are very stingy about providing their own information to others.

The ways that these data and research journalists framed *Newstapa*'s role as a *catalyst* or a *problem solver* were well connected to the way that *Newstapa* leaders perceived their roles as the leaders of the Korean journalistic community. In other words, the embracing of the core practices of open-source culture helped them maintain their self-perception as the leaders helping the industry.

Furthermore, providing the public, as well as other journalists, with a place where they could find useful information and ultimately working with them were what other news nonprofits with a long-standing reputation for excellence were doing. While *Newstapa* staff members discussed whether *Newstapa* would share and disclose data sets, they investigated how news nonprofits around the world, especially in the United States, had dealt with issues related to data journalism. *Newstapa* interviewed several US investigative journalists working at nonprofit news centers, such as Paul E. Steiger at *ProPublica*, Robert J. Rosenthal and Thomas R. Burke at *The Center for Investigative Reporting*, Bill Buzenberg at *The Center for Public Integrity*, Gerard Ryle at *The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists,* David Sassoon at *InsideClimate*

News, Edwy Plenel at *Mediapart*, Christopher Hird at *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, and Gavin MacFadyen at *The Centre for Investigative Journalism*.

Newstapa then published the collection of these interviews under the title "The Force to Change the World."[50] This series particularly focused on how the news nonprofits were doing up-to-date journalism in the changing media environment. It also suggested what Korean news organizations, including *Newstapa*, could learn from their experience. For example, the second episode of the series, titled "Bringing Creativity and Innovation into Journalism," introduced the strategies of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) to engage in media innovation. In this episode, CIR executive director Robert Rosenthal shared his ideas for the future of journalism and especially encouraged news nonprofits to adapt to the "evolving technology":

> The technology has a sort of creating ability for small news organizations, like ours [the CIR], to create content that can reach very very big audiences … around the world. … I think any organization really has to think that way. You are not just a content creator. You are creating as technology evolves … creating for the evolving technology.

Based on this interview with Rosenthal, *Newstapa* spotlighted the "increasing significance of the synergistic effect of nonhuman technologies and audiences on innovation in journalism" in the second episode of the series. Furthermore, this episode also introduced CIR's collaborative project titled "The I Files" and thereby paid attention

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[50] To watch this series, visit http://newstapa.org/category/every_news/news/world/change-world (accessed on March 2, 2016).

to the potential advantages of "working with other news organizations."[51] In the third

episode of the series, *Newstapa* also interviewed Bill Buzenberg at *The Center for Public*

Integrity (CPI), highlighting the importance of openness and collaboration with like-

minded professionals in achieving the fundamental purpose of investigative journalism.

According to Dr. Gwon, the series "The Force to Change the World" was "a sort

of proclamation, promising that we would be like these innovative organizations" (email

interview, October 10, 2015). Indeed, while this series identified the news nonprofits that

Newstapa investigated as "the world's most distinguished nonprofit news centers," it also

positioned *Newstapa* as one of those. It concluded, "news nonprofits, including *Newstapa,*

are seen as leaders contributing valuable skills, knowledge, and insights to journalists

around the world" (Sungsoo Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2015).

Newstapa's practices, in many aspects, actually reflected what was proclaimed.

Their shared belief in the role of news nonprofits motivated *Newstapa* leaders to attempt

to incorporate the core of open-source culture into *Newstapa* journalism. Particularly, the

ways that *Newstapa* seniors thought about the public contributions to the news production

process were drastically changed. The notions of transparency, engagement, and

collaboration were thus translated into specific practices. *Newstapa* was not only being

open about the process of news selection and production but also inviting ordinary

citizens and amateur journalists to participate in that process.

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[51] The I Files is "the first channel for investigative journalism on YouTube. Working
with major contributors such as The New York Times, Al-Jazeera, ABC, BBC, Vice, Univision,
NPR, PBS, Investigative News Network and many more, The I Files selects and showcases the
best stories from around the globe" (The Center for Investigative Reporting, 2016). To explore
"the I Files," visit http://cironline.org/ifiles (accessed on March 2, 2016).

Newstapa started to disclose information about the journalists' jobs, such as details about editorial meetings (e.g., location, date, participants, and meeting results). *Newstapa* website, for instance, had a sub-category "Sources of Information." In this sub-category, *Newstapa* opened its source materials to the public, such as survey questionnaires, response data and secondary sources that *Newstapa* journalists had referenced in the news stories, and investigative data. These were visible to anyone who wanted to access them. *Newstapa* also shared information about its working cycle through its SNS feed. Many *Newstapa*'s tweets, for example, included links to just-taken images of the *Newstapa* newsroom with detailed descriptions about "how they are hard at work right now."

Furthermore, *Newstapa* leaders finally decided to disclose sets of data gathered from their investigative reporting projects. *Newstapa* then encouraged audiences to participate in what it calls "Data Journalism Project." In *Newstapa*'s definition, data journalism refers to "a process of analyzing numerical data for the purpose of finding a news item" (H. Gwon, personal communication, November 4, 2014). After launching this project via its website, *Newstapa* started to provide interactive infographics and also called for the citizens' involvement in collaborative data analysis. In episode 40 of *Newstapa with Producer Choi Seungho*, *Newstapa* introduced "Data Journalism Project" to audiences: "*Newstapa* will provide basic information with raw data. Finding new meanings in the data is up to you as a citizen."

A crucial example was the so-called "Offshore Leaks Project." *Newstapa* collaborated with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) to

investigate those Koreans and Chinese who had used secret companies and bank accounts created in offshore jurisdictions – such as the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and Singapore – for tax evasion. The list of 181 Koreans included in the ICIJ Offshore Leaks Database was publicly available on the *Newstapa* website, and it allowed audiences, as well as other journalists, to search through covert companies, trusts, and funds owned by Koreans. According to editor-in-chief Kim Youngjin, after disclosing the data set, more than 200 individuals contacted *Newstapa* to share story tips and documents about this issue and then participated in investigations.

During this Offshore Leaks Project, *Newstapa* regularly reported the results of collaboration with audiences on its website, and audiences also used the website as a place where they shared their ideas about the resulting products. "Our audiences were part of our stories. For example, because of their participation, we discovered how four business leaders had run secret companies in the British Virgin Islands," the director of new media Park told me. "We tried to be as responsive as possible. I thought being responsive is the simplest way to appreciate their contributions to our projects," Park said (personal communication, January 10, 2015).

According to him, "letting participants know what happens to their contributions" was critical to facilitate greater participation in the collaborative project. In fact, being interactive and being transparent made *Newstapa* website "sticky." "We always wanted to make our website sticky, I mean, making audiences more frequently visit and stay on our website. But, we didn't know how to do that," Park told me. "But, since disclosing data sets with interactive news applications and interacting with audiences on our website,

our audiences have started to stay on our website. They play with data and join the

discussion on our website."

Indeed, this Offshore Leaks Project shaped *Newstapa* journalists' expectations on

the roles that ordinary citizens could play in their newswork. In a news release

introducing this collaborative data project, *Newstapa* appreciated that "the collaborative

data project with citizens has led to better journalism and helped achieve tax justice in

Korea." Particularly, as senior editor Choi said, *Newstapa* journalists acknowledged,

"selecting and reporting what citizens want and need to know could be one of the best

ways of getting close to the truth" (public speech, December 22, 2015). Opening the

professional boundaries of journalism to audiences and especially involving them in the

news-making process could be viewed as a good way to achieve the desire for being a

truth-teller. In other words, the self-identification of *Newstapa* journalists as truth-tellers

could be realized through its adaptation and appropriation of the core practices of

participatory journalism. In this way, *Newstapa* built its own approach to media

innovations, which was a combination of the core of professional journalism – the value

of truth – and of participatory journalism – the values of transparency, openness, and

engagement.

Along with the experiment with data journalism, in early 2015, *Newstapa* also

launched a online forum, titled "*Newstapa* Forum." This collaborative forum, ran by

Newstapa donors, guest writers, and *Newstapa* journalists, offered *Newstapa* journalists

greater chances for the sharing of content and also for interactions with audiences. In

February 2015, by sending email invitations to every *Newstapa* donor, *Newstapa* asked

them to create their own blogs published on the *Newstapa* Forum. *Newstapa* also invited

around 30 guest writers – such as scholars, lawyers, human rights activists, film directors,

and media critics – to share their thoughts on current issues. "We'd expect blog postings

published by guest writers, who have great insights into their own work and the

profession, would spark debate," the director of new media Park told me. "We also intend

to use their celebrity to bring attention to our newly launched forum. Their high quality

postings will initiate quality discussion and raise significant questions for society," he

added (personal communication, May 21, 2015). These forum participants' blog posts

were displayed in reverse chronological order not only on the main page of the *Newstapa*

Forum (http://blog.newstapa.org), but also on the main page of the *Newstapa* website

(http://newstapa.org). The director of new media Park explained, "One-third of the space

of the main page of the *Newstapa* website is devoted to the *Newstapa* Forum. So, forum

participants' postings will be simultaneously shown with our news stories on the same

web page" (email interview, February 21, 2015). *Newstapa* journalists believed that this

sharing of the web space would help them to build greater trust with their donors.

What was more, this collaborative forum was used as a crucial place where

Newstapa donors, as well as any forum visitor, met with *Newstapa* journalists. In the

Newstapa Forum, some *Newstapa* journalists provided commentary on a particular

subject, such as real estate issues, on their own blogs, while some others used the blogs as

more personal online diaries. In particular, *Newstapa* journalists admitted that "the donors

have the right to know how well their money is being spent" (D. Park, personal

communication, June 5, 2015). To guarantee the fulfillment of the donors' right, they

believed that *Newstapa* "must strive toward being as transparent as possible in sharing

what is known so far about the truth" (G. Choi, personal communication, June 13, 2015).

In this sense, several *Newstapa* journalists often published blog posts extending news

conversations with contextualization of news events. They also published review articles

about their newswork, including behind-the-scene information about *Newstapa*

journalists' jobs.

While they attempted to be "not emotional" but "cool" in tone in their news

stories (G. Choi, email interview, November 13, 2012), they tended to expose their

feelings and revealed their needs in these blog posts. On February 18, 2015, for instance,

junior reporter Hong wrote a blog post discussing a case of a guard who had worked at

one of the richest villages in Korea and had committed suicide by burning himself to

death (Hong, 2015). This post was a sort of follow-up story of what happened to the

guard's family after she had covered the guard's death two months earlier. In this blog

post, junior reporter Hong wrote how much she had struggled to schedule an interview

with the policeman who had investigated the case and how sad she had felt when she had

met the guard's family again. As reactions to Hong's blog post, numerous forum

participants posted comments, analyzing the cause of the guard's death, criticizing a

possible collusive relationship between the rich and the police, and complimenting Hong

on her sense of justice and sense of duty as a journalist. Hong acknowledged that these

interactions with citizens could be beneficial to her newswork:

> As journalists, we should work for the public interest. I will continue to disclose
>
> information obtained during the reporting process to the public as long as it

coincides with public interest. My blog is a perfect space where I can do this. And,

actually, citizens often provide follow-up information after reading the disclosed

information. It is definitely useful and beneficial. (personal communication,

December 15, 2014)

In addition, *Newstapa* staff members also planned and executed several offline

events facilitating dialogue and engagement with *Newstapa* donors. Since 2014, for

example, *Newstapa* has held a year-end party titled "The Force More Powerful to Change

the World: The Guardians of the Truth," inviting *Newstapa* donors to "give big thanks to

them [*Newstapa* donors] and thereby "build a sense of loyalty and partnership between

Newstapa and them" (E. Gwon, personal communication, November 10, 2014). On

December 5, 2014, the editor-in-chief Kim sent an email invitation to each donor and

explained the party's primary purpose as follows: "Please come and see how your

donations have contributed to changing our society." In the 2014 year-end party,

Newstapa presented "Top 10 *Newstapa* news stories of 2014," which were selected by

Newstapa donors via a survey conducted between November and December 2014. While

presenting this list, *Newstapa* editor Choi introduced "the impact of *Newstapa* stories"

and said, "Thanks to your donations, *Newstapa* stories produced change in a wide range

of important areas. We together have changed our society to become a better place." In

this party, *Newstapa* also explained how it would use donors' money in 2015, and party

participants were involved in discussing their thoughts about the spending plan.

Newstapa also used this party to unveil three newly launched projects designed to

stimulate civic engagement: the collaborative documentary film project *Witnesses*

(*mokgyeokjadeul*), an investigative journalist training program, and a UGC (user-generated content) contest for adolescent. First, *Witnesses* was created by *Newstapa* to collaborate with independent producers to create videos on issues of contemporary social concern.[52] These programs were broadcast on *Newstapa* website and also on other video streaming sites, such as YouTube. For this project, *Newstapa* was working with around 20 independent film and video producers. *Newstapa* actively invited them to engage in the *Witnesses* project because "they are qualified and capable to do high-quality journalism" (J. Park, personal communication, July 7, 2015). "The fact of whether or not they had been working for mainstream news media organizations didn't matter. Pursuing the truth is much more important than one's past career," *Witnesses* program manager and *Newstapa* senior editor Park told me. Thus, while *Newstapa* journalists were labeling many mainstream journalists as unqualified, unprofessional, unethical, and thus non-journalists, these independent producers' contributions were appreciated in *Newstapa*'s journalism – namely "real journalism" – because they were perceived as "truth-tellers" (J. Park, personal communication, July 7, 2015). Once a "qualified" independent producer selected a documentary item and then became involved in a project, *Newstapa* supported the project to successfully complete and distribute it. *Newstapa* worked with these independent producers at all stages of projects from providing project funds to offering technical support. Since the first episode was broadcast on April 4, 2015, *Witnesses* has won several awards and has been distributed to educational institutions around the country.

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[52] You can watch full episodes of *Witnesses* on http://newstapa.org/witness.

Second, *Newstapa* started to educate community journalists and future journalists. By attending this training program, attendees could learn the latest techniques of investigative journalism. In particular, *Newstapa* training program was designed to "share *Newstapa*'s knowhow and skills with journalists working for locally oriented news media" and thereby to "build a sustainable relationship with these local independent news media" (Newstapa, 2015c). *Newstapa*, in April 2015, accepted the first journalist fellow, Lee Sangwon from the *Ulsan Journal*, and then offered hands-on trainings for him. Between April and December 2015, Lee Sangwon joined an in-depth feature team and worked with *Newstapa* senior reporters. His resulting news stories were published both in *Newstapa*'s news magazine and in the *Ulsan Journal*. In addition, a one-month investigative journalism training program was offered twice in 2015. This program was especially targeted to "future journalists who are interested in investigative journalism" (Newstapa, 2015d). *Newstapa* veteran journalists offered mentoring and support for young attendees, and these attendees together conducted a final investigative project. Their final project was published on *Newstapa* website.

Newstapa staff believed that these trainings were "ways of giving back to the community" (Newstapa, 2015d). In a news release introducing events and training at *Newstapa*, *Newstapa* wrote, "This is our social responsibility as a news nonprofit funded by citizens. As we're seen as the country's leaders helping the journalistic community, we must contribute to our up-to-date skills to any journalist who wants to be socially responsible" (Newstapa, 2015d).

Third, in the 2014 year-end party, *Newstapa* also introduced *Newstapa* UGC

Contest for Adolescents.[53] This competition was conducted in honor of the late Park Su-

hyeon, who was killed on April 16, 2014, in the Sewol ferry disaster. After his death at

the age of 17, Park's parents found video of his last moments saved on his cellphone and,

on April 29, sent this video and also around 40 photos to *Newstapa*, asking *Newstapa* to

"truthfully broadcast the historical moment without any distortion" (Y. Kim, personal

communication, November 10, 2014).[54] On July 2, 2014, Park's parents donated KRW

529,220 (around USD 440) saved in Park's bank account to *Newstapa*, writing on

Newstapa website:

> After my son passed away, we decided to donate KRW 529,220 of my son's bank
>
> account to *Newstapa*. This is not a huge amount of money. But, we hope this
>
> donation will help the truthful news organization, *Newstapa,* keep doing what it is
>
> doing. (Yongjin Kim, 2014)

Newstapa staff discussed "the meaning of KRW 529,220" and "[asked] citizens for

advice how to use the money more wisely" (Yongjin Kim, 2014). *Newstapa* then

organized public discussions several times and ultimately decided to use Park Su-hyeon's

money as seed money for *Newstapa* UGC Contest for Adolescents. *Newstapa* staff hoped

this competition would "provide a space where adolescents – namely, Su-hyeon's friends

– can discuss social issues, engage in the society around them, and express their opinions

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[53] To explore the 2015 *Newstapa* UGC Competition for Adolescent, visit
http://teen.newstapa.org.

[54] To watch this video, visit either http://newstapa.org/10594 or
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/01/world/asia/korean-ferry-students-captured-sinking-on-video.html?_r=0.

freely and openly by creating their own media content like Su-hyeon's video" (Newstapa, 2015). To organize the 2015 *Newstapa* UGC Contest for Adolescents, *Newstapa* invited 10 teens as the organizing committees for the contest. These teen committees, working with *Newstapa* staff members, defined the core goals of the contest, set the rules of the contest, and determined the topic for video content. Based on the ideas brought by the committee members, the 2015 contest was especially designed to promote "teenagers' right to freedom of expression."

These diverse attempts to "get away from a broadcast-news-mindset" consequently enabled *Newstapa* to facilitate dialogue and collaboration with members of the public. By embracing the core values of digital culture, such as transparency, openness, participation, and collaboration, into specific practices, *Newstapa* was building its own approach to media innovations. *Newstapa*'s emerging approach was clearly associated with making itself more connected and engaged with members of the public.

Conversational Truth-Telling as Reciprocal Journalism

Newstapa sought to mix the nascent norms of participatory journalism with the traditional professional norm of truth-telling. According to *Newstapa*'s emerging model of truth-telling, seeking the truth was considered an ongoing task that had to be conducted in a more collaborative manner. Senior editor Choi described this as "conversational truth-telling":

> Journalists may have data skills and investigative skills. But, if I can say the truth as a mosaic, a journalist can only discover a piece of the mosaic. As a journalist,

my entire life has been devoted to discover this one piece of the truth, following

the dictates of my conscience as a journalist. The mosaic – the whole truth – can

be completed only when we – journalists, researchers, and you as citizens – work

together … by forming a network of truth-tellers. … For example, story ideas can

come from anyone. Sometimes, you, as an ordinary citizen, can see something no

one can see. That's often how truth-telling begins. Truth-telling costs lots of time

and effort. This has to be done together. (G. Choi, public speech, December 22,

2014)

This new version of truth-telling practiced by *Newstapa* with their audiences may

best be described as what Lewis, Holton, and Coddington (2014) called *reciprocal*

journalism, "a way of imagining how journalists might develop more mutually beneficial

relationships with audiences" (p. 229; also see Holton, Coddington, Lewis, & Zúñiga,

2015; Lewis, 2015). According to the framework of reciprocal journalism, in a networked

environment, journalists can function as "community-builders" depending on how they

are related with their audiences, as well as the community at large in which they live.

More specifically, Lewis and his colleagues introduced three types of reciprocity: direct,

indirect, and sustained types of reciprocity.

Firstly, direct reciprocity involves exchanges of benefits between journalists and

audiences (Lewis et al., 2014, pp. 233–234). This one-to-one type of reciprocity can be

either unilateral (journalists give to audiences or audiences to journalists, without

expecting anything valuable in return) or bilateral (journalists and audiences mutually

exchange benefits with each other according to prior agreement). Unilateral – or non-

negotiated – direct reciprocity is considered especially essential for journalists in building social bonds and trust with audiences because of its nature of unselfishness.

Secondly, indirect reciprocity refers to patterns of generalized reciprocal exchange within a larger network (Lewis et al., 2014, pp. 234–235). In indirect reciprocity, participants tend to define themselves as a collective entity and give benefits to one another in more of a one-to-many fashion. In particular, this indirect reciprocity is often "intended for community benefit" (Lewis, 2015, p. 2).

Lastly, sustained reciprocity is developing when patterns of direct and indirect types of reciprocity are continued and thereby when trust between journalists and audiences is maintained over time (Lewis et al., 2014, pp. 235–236). In this sustained type of reciprocity, both direct and indirect reciprocal exchanges occur continuously over time, and this can be "repeated, structured patterns of giving" (p. 235). Based on the expectations of future interactions and benefits, both journalists and audiences value the continuation of their relationship. This sustained type of reciprocity is considered "a necessary ingredient" of "genuine community" (p. 235).

The relationship between *Newstapa* journalists and their audiences, especially *Newstapa* donors, demonstrates what benefits journalists can give to audiences and vice versa and ultimately how journalistic practices can actually form the sustained form of reciprocity. First of all, the launch of the *Newstapa* project was a crucial example of the effectiveness of non-negotiated direct reciprocity in trust building. At the beginning of the *Newstapa* project in 2012, the exiled journalists initiated the project without expecting anything in return. They "just started the *Newstapa* project because [they] were

eager to do their job as journalists, continuing to produce news" (J. Park, personal

communication, November 24, 2014). In this initial period, the exiled journalists of

Newstapa did pro bono work. Their attitudes toward journalism ultimately functioned as

the foundation of trust and connectedness with citizens. Individual citizens were willing

to donate their money just because they "trusted the sincerity of *Newstapa* journalists

toward their job as a journalist" (Youngjin Kim, 2013). The fact that the veteran

journalists were exiled or voluntarily resigned from pro-government mainstream media

and then chose to work for a nonprofit newsroom may also serve as a basis for this trust.

Furthermore, as we can see in the case of *Newstapa*, doing journalism itself can

be perceived by citizens as a significant benefit journalists can give to them. More

precisely, when journalists try to fulfill their task as best they can, rigorously apply the

elements of journalism to the way they think about the task, and practice them every day,

the resulting news products would be recognized by citizens as *good products* providing

them tools and information that help improve their capacity for self-government. In a

turbulent time when most journalists were ridiculed and criticized by the public, sticking

to the core principles of journalism could be viewed as extraordinary.

By producing good news, *Newstapa* journalists received benefits in return,

whether they were expecting to receive these benefits or not. These benefits included the

growth of the number of donors and feedback and words of appreciation from them.

From their donors and other audiences, *Newstapa* journalists also received handwritten

letters with a variety of gifts. These gifts and donations made *Newstapa* journalists feel

like "we are doing a good job for society" (K. Park, personal communication, October, 20, 2014).

These exchanges of mutual benefits were further enhanced when *Newstapa* journalists started to actively embrace the values of participatory journalism into their newswork. The "good pressure" from their audiences, especially from *Newstapa* donors, led the journalists of *Newstapa* to rethink their relationship with audiences. Of course, *Newstapa* journalists still wanted to take the strongest position in this collaborative truth-telling process. They firmly believed that "a journalist should know better about what's important to the society and about what's right or wrong than the public do" (G. Choi, personal communication, October 23, 2014). They also thought that "[their] roles as journalists should not be replaced or displaced by citizens" (Y. Kim, personal communication, November 14, 2014). Nonetheless, it was also true that their perception of the roles of audiences in their work was clearly reconfigured. Audiences were considered not just those whom they worked for. Instead, audiences were asked to engage in the processes of discovering and telling the truth with *Newstapa*.

Indeed, *Newstapa* journalists recognized that they may not be able to become "truth-tellers" without the role of donors as the "guardians of the truth." *Newstapa* staff members and donors together formed a collective identity as "*Newstapa* community" (*Newstapa gajok*). This collectivity was symbolically represented in the 2016 *Newstapa* Desk Calendar. Since 2014, every December, *Newstapa* has created and sent a desk calendar to its donors. For the 2014 and 2015 calendars, *Newstapa* staff members were putting special effort in order to "express [their] appreciation for the donations" (S. Kim,

personal communication, November 20, 2014) by adding photos of selected donors and their messages in the calendars. However, in the 2016 calendar, a sense of togetherness between *Newstapa* journalists and donors was emphasized. Between November and December 2015, *Newstapa* journalists visited where selected donors lived or worked, spent a day with the donors, and interviewed them. Each page of the 2016 *Newstapa* Desk Calendar featured pictures of one to two *Newstapa* journalists *and* a donor and conversations between them. As one donor who appeared in the 2016 calendar expressed it, by planning and executing this 2016 calendar project, *Newstapa* journalists and donors were "celebrating being a family together."

The trust and social bond shared within the "*Newstapa* community" were ultimately developing into the sustained type of reciprocity. As one *Newstapa* donor wrote in his letter to *Newstapa* staff members, "I cut down on my expenses for drinking to donate to *Newstapa.* I believe, 'Many a little makes a mickle' (*ugongisan*). My abstinence from alcohol will make a meaningful change in society." Many other *Newstapa* donors believed that their donations or gifts to *Newstapa* would help *Newstapa* to continue to do good journalism and ultimately contribute to the well-being of Korean society. They also believed that "maximizing *Newstapa*'s impact would be the fastest way to fix Korean journalism's problems," as one donor said in his public speech at the 2015 *Newstapa* year-end party. These donors' beliefs in *Newstapa* journalism were directly connected to the way *Newstapa* journalists were framing their role in the Korean journalistic community. By working and thinking collectively over time, *Newstapa* community members hoped they could "create and maintain an independent newsroom,

… expand its ability to uncover the truth, … and enable it to act as a preservative against social corruption in Korean society" (Newstapa, 2015f).

In the end, the mutually beneficial relationships with audiences helped the boundary work, which refers to the efforts to construct and extend the limits of social authority (Carlson, 2015; Lewis, 2012), of *Newstapa* journalists. By embracing the emerging practices in the news-making process, *Newstapa* relinquished professional autonomy – which is a vital premise of all "professional projects" (Sarfatti Larson, 1977) – to members of the public to a great degree. Ironically enough, however, as a result of the relinquishment of professional autonomy, *Newstapa* could eventually perceive itself as getting closer to an *ideal news organization* seeking to "unite ideas of democracy, responsibility and truth-telling" (Singer, 2007, p. 83), according to the social responsibility theory of journalism (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). The exceptional support from audiences, plus other journalists' reactions on the support, provided *Newstapa* journalists with symbolic rewards, such as pride. These symbolic rewards enabled *Newstapa* journalists, especially the exiled professional journalists, to rebuild and maintain their professional identities as *real journalists*.

Newstapa's emerging model of truth-telling also guided the boundary work of *Newstapa* against other Korean news organizations. The reciprocal relationships with the donors helped *Newstapa* distinguish itself from other organizations. The enhanced practices of participatory journalism in the news-making process could be a means of giving credit to *Newstapa* journalists, leading them to fulfill their perceived obligations in terms of serving citizens and consequently enriching democracy. While many Korean

professional journalists failed to fulfill their duty in the current Korean media

environment and thereby were being called "*giraegi*s" producing garbage rather than

reporting news, *Newstapa* journalists' reciprocal relationship with citizens enabled them

to have greater distinctiveness. The fact that around 36,000 individual citizens were

willingly donating their money every month to support *Newstapa* was a clear evidence

for the distinctiveness. Further, being more transparent and collaborative could be closely

related to the *Newstapa* journalists' perceived accountability to civic society. By being

honest about the nature both of the truth that they uncover *and* of the uncovering process

itself, *Newstapa* journalists could be more accountable for their actions and decisions

than any other professional journalists. This, in turn, helped *Newstapa* journalists to

maintain their identities as the leaders contributing to the Korean journalistic community.

The next chapter will proceed in two parts. First, I will summarize the major

findings of this dissertation, in order to discuss what these findings suggest about

journalistic practices, morality, embodiment, professional identity, boundary work, and

Korean journalism. Second, I will reflect upon the limitations of the dissertation and,

based on this reflection, suggest future research directions.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

In this dissertation, drawing from the perspective provided by practice theories in cultural sociology, I explore the cultural aspect of journalism, focusing on how journalistic culture develops and is modified. Utilizing ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews, I examine the ways in which a group of journalists working for the independent, news nonprofit *Newstapa* rebuilt and maintained their professional identities as excellent journalists in and through the use of journalistic practices.

This study defines journalism as a system of symbols and meanings *and* practices, such as language, stories, and rituals of daily life. On the one hand, journalistic culture in society has a semiotic structuring principle, namely the logic of journalism. Because the society's members share the logic of journalism, they are capable of recognizing the symbols of journalism and their meanings and thus of engaging in mutually understandable symbolic actions regarding journalism. On the other hand, the logic of journalism is not fixed but malleable depending on how the society's members use the cultural codes of the logic, such as journalistic values, norms, and routines. They are capable of putting these cultural codes into specific practice. To engage in journalistic practices means to make use of the cultural codes to do newswork in society. Since the society's members, both journalists and non-journalists, are capable of elaborating, modifying, or adapting the cultural codes to novel circumstances, the logic of journalism is likely to be contradictory and changeable.

This definition of journalistic culture as system and practice thus denies a unified journalistic logic. Rather, it suggests multiple journalistic logics, each socially constructed within specific social contexts, which are in dynamic tension. Each logic of journalism can be viewed as a "toolkit" or "repertoire" of journalistic behaviors that supplies behavioral options for the journalists' performance of action.

This tension between journalistic logics is particularly evident in contemporary Korean society. In these days, Korean journalism has undergone rapid change and structural strain. The dominant logic of Korean journalism has been contested. One of the main codes of the dominant journalistic logic is the instrumental view of journalism. Many social actors tend to see journalism as an instrument to solve problems or achieve goals rather than see it as an independent social institution. This instrumental view of journalism has been developed over the past several decades by collusive relationships between political and economic power-holders and media companies. The socialization mechanisms, including such as the *seonbae-hubae* system, *yama* practice, and the press club system, have contributed to the fact that journalists internalize this instrumental view and then embody it in their daily practices. This tendency has markedly accelerated since Lee Myung-bak became President of the Republic of Korea in 2008.

A significant number of Koreans have started to question what journalism should be, seeking to examine the performance of journalists. A gap between the range of journalists' actual behaviors and the range of behaviors that members of the public define as appropriate for journalists has become wider. The Sewol ferry disaster in April 2014

was the incident that exposed the gap between news and reality in Korea to the average citizen.

By pejoratively calling journalists "*giraegi*s," Koreans have actively created and circulated journalism's meanings. My analysis of the discourse of *giraegi* on Twitter highlights how these Koreans assess the journalists' positions, their performance, and its resulting products. Korean Twitter users have criticized the performance of mainstream news companies, particularly emphasizing their lack of autonomy and their acting on behalf of political and economic power-holders. The poor quality of news products produced by mainstream journalists, as well as their unethical, unprofessional behaviors, has also led to the disappointment of the public. Indeed, the discourse of *giraegi* has arisen not only because journalists put the instrumental view of journalism into specific "*giraegi*-like" practices but also because the public actively engaged in interpretive processes challenging these "*giraegi*-like" practices. Journalists, therefore, cannot just force society to recognize their social authority and role as a fourth estate.

While the discourse of *giraegi* is an active reaction of members of the public to the instrumentalization of Korean journalism, some professional journalists also strive to rebuild public trust and thereby to be distinguished from *giraegi*-like journalists. By reclaiming the elements of professional journalism and especially emphasizing the public service mission, these journalists working for news nonprofits try to form arguments determining what journalists' "real self" should be. They, in other words, do "boundary work" (Carlson, 2015; Lewis, 2012), seeking to delimit the boundaries of valid journalistic practices in this unsettled period.

To understand the ability of these journalists to reconstruct their professional identities in ways that justify themselves to other journalists, to the public, and to themselves, I conducted an ethnographic study in the *Newstapa* newsroom. In this case study of *Newstapa*, I learned how the competing logics of journalism could be negotiated in *Newstapa*'s daily practices and also how these practices could eventually lead to the development of a hybrid logic of journalism promoting mutually beneficial exchanges between journalists and audiences.

Given the organizational rearrangements that *Newstapa* journalists faced, their unsettledness was inevitable. In particular, as they were forced to use digital media as their major news platforms, *Newstapa* seniors, who had been broadcast and newspaper journalists, had to adopt unfamiliar ways of news production and distribution. They perceived rapid change not only in the process of producing and distributing news but also in the perceived impact of their work. This circumstance led *Newstapa* seniors to assess their own position, identities, and behaviors.

Newstapa seniors had a sense of superiority. They viewed themselves as better investigative journalists than any other journalist and strongly believed that their career paths were exemplary. Moreover, *Newstapa* seniors strove to exercise their conscience. As journalists, they knew that "[they] must differ with owners, advertisers, and politicians" (G. Choi, personal communication, November 20, 2014). They actually put their conscience into practice. This led them to launch the *Newstapa* project and work for the news nonprofit rather than choose to work for other privileged news companies. They were continually reminded of this by around 36,000 *Newstapa* donors who mentally and

financially supported *Newstapa* journalism, and this social acceptance contributed to the maintenance of their professional identities as good, respected journalists.

In the unsettled period, *Newstapa* seniors shaped their actions in light of what kind of choices they had made in their careers, what kinds of lives they were expecting now, what they were hoping the future would be like, and what all of these meant for their products and services. Their identities were constituted in and through their journalistic practices. In particular, the *yama*, or news considerations, of *Newstapa* was organized in the specific ways in which the seniors could maintain and enhance their identities. The newswork, especially finding an exclusive and superior item and producing an excellent news story, was woven into their very being. *Newstapa* seniors, for example, selected and produced "truly important stories that the leading journalists must cover."

In the *Newstapa* newsroom, junior journalists were also gradually assimilating the journalistic skills, know-how, and rules of the seniors. The socialization mechanisms used in the *Newstapa* newsroom were not completely different from what most Korean journalists practiced in their newsrooms. The *seonbae-hubae* system also existed in *Newstapa*. In this system, *Newstapa* juniors, like most novice or junior journalists in Korean news organizations, had to tailor their own performance to the standards set by their superiors. Yet, there was one critical difference between *Newstapa* juniors and others. They chose life *in Newstapa*, even though they had had other options. Because they self-selected *Newstapa* that was congruent with their needs and expectations, they got the chance to work with *Newstapa* seniors, not with other senior journalists

embodying the instrumental view of journalism. In the Korean journalistic community where the seonbae-hubae system exists as a strong socialization mechanism whereby junior journalists acquire professional identities, it has to be emphasized that junior journalists need to make a *right* career decision initially rather than needing to change if the working environment of their job differ in any way from what was expected.

The working environment of *Newstapa* also functioned as a kind of "architecture of choice" (Illouz, 2012) for the juniors, a means by which the juniors internalized the news considerations of *Newstapa* seniors. Although *Newstapa* seniors encouraged the juniors to autonomously determine news judgments, they did not just let the juniors do whatever they wanted to do. Instead, the seniors designed a limited environment and then allowed the juniors to make their own news judgments *within* the boundaries of the environment. Within the boundaries, the juniors came to learn not only the news criteria with which their superiors evaluated the quality of news products, but also the ways in which they could consult their emotions, knowledge, and formal reasoning to make decisions in the *Newstapa* newsroom. Consequently, *Newstapa* juniors were gradually becoming like their seniors, who were living as those fully engaged in news, voluntarily and willingly driving themselves into the limits of their physical and emotional endurance to do journalism.

Over time, *Newstapa*'s *yama* did take root in every *Newstapa* journalist. The longer they practiced, the more single-minded they became. By repeatedly making judgments according to the shared news considerations, they together were able to avoid uncertainty about whether they made appropriate choices. They then just worked hard to

produce "*Newstapa*-like" news stories. *Newstapa* journalists wanted to investigate and then expose abuses of power by powerful actors, especially business and government. By focusing on "truly important"– from their perspective – but overlooked stories by many other mainstream news organizations, they strove to fill the void in Korean journalism.

In contemplating the ways to maximize the impact of these "*Newstapa*-like" news stories, *Newstapa* journalists negotiated their exclusive roles as truth-tellers with audiences. In the networked environment, *Newstapa* was forced to establish a suitable mode of truth-telling linked to the increased technological capacity. They also realized that there was "general expectation for a dialogical conversation rather than a one-way lecture" (Lewis et al., 2014, p. 230). Although *Newstapa* journalists were reluctant to abandon the gatekeeping authority so central to their social status, their attitudes toward the roles of members of the public in their newswork were ultimately changing.

In the process of modifying their journalistic practices, *Newstapa* journalists used both the logic of professional journalism and the logic of participatory journalism as the behavioral repertoires from which they could select. The norm of truth-telling, which has been considered the "first obligation" of professional journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 49), still guided *Newstapa* journalists to make choices that created *Newstapa*'s foundation, upon which everything else was build. *Newstapa*'s truth was different in a sense that it was collaboratively produced in the interaction with citizens. *Newstapa* journalists understood truth as a goal or a process rather a thing. While striving to achieve that goal in the context of Korean society, the strategic directions of *Newstapa* were determined. In particular, some of the critical principles of professional journalism, such

as the "we write, you read" dogma, that they had previously relied upon were

deemphasized.

Instead, *Newstapa* embraced the core norms of participatory journalism, such as

transparency, engagement, and collaboration, and attempted to use them appropriately to

continue to serve as the truth-tellers in the digital age. The details of newswork and also

databases, tools, and graphics were disclosed. *Newstapa* was not only interacting with

amateur journalists and producers, future journalists, technologists, and ordinary citizens,

but also training them. These members of the public were also invited to engage in the

media activities of *Newstapa*. *Newstapa* journalists called this *Newstapa*-public

collaboration the "conversational truth-telling" and ultimately came to realize that this

hybrid model of truth-telling could be beneficial not only to them and their audiences but

also to the Korean journalistic community and Korean society at large. In this way, the

norm of truth-telling, although revised or newly adopted, tended to become more

definitive in *Newstapa* journalism.

Then, at what point did *Newstapa* journalists acquire the knowledge of the use of

those behavioral repertoires, and when and why did they take specific behaviors, values,

and beliefs out of the repertoires? Why reciprocal journalism? What made them have the

perspective of reciprocal journalism in the end? There was neither a will to change nor a

dramatic event. Further, the cultural codes embraced by *Newstapa* journalists were

neither innovative nor original. Rather, the behavioral repertoires from which *Newstapa*

journalists selected elements to modify their practices, namely the logics of professional

journalism and of participatory journalism, already existed in society. As Kovach and

Rosenstiel (2014) comprehensively discussed, "…the core elements of journalism …

never came from journalists in the first place. They flowed from the public's need for

news that was credible and useful" (pp. X-XI). The elements of professional journalism

belonged to the Korean public. They were capable not only of recognizing the logic of

professional journalism but also of using it. Koreans, for example, contributed to the

maintenance of the logic of professional journalism by applying it to the interpretive

processes of the discourse of *giraegi*. In addition, participatory culture or open-source

culture also arose from outside journalism (Jenkins, 2006; Lewis & Usher, 2013). The

significance of the norms, values, and routines of participatory culture in journalism was

also suggested by popular communicators, especially bloggers (Singer, 2007).

Yet, it was also true that the shift in the journalistic practices of *Newstapa*

journalists did not just happen to them by chance. In the daily and ongoing process of

putting the logic of professional journalism into practice, *Newstapa* journalists were

developing and solidifying human agency toward the journalistic culture that surrounded

them, alternately accepting and rejecting some cultural codes over others. They, in

particular, were the very agents – i.e., people who were consciously and willfully acting

on their own behalf (Sewell, 1992) – who understood and owned the logic of professional

journalism and thereby formed the meanings around professional journalism in Korean

society. In doing so, *Newstapa* journalists were *being prepared for* the change. Their

daily journalistic practices were key factors in the process of maintaining and enhancing

their moral commitment and identities as excellent professional journalists over time.

Conversely, their morality was implicit in why they selected particular types of

journalistic conduct over others. The logic of professional journalism, in this process, was being embodied in them. It thereby continued to provide relevant narratives and belief systems that guided *Newstapa* journalists' moral judgments.

As explained previously in Chapter III, there was the public's need for journalists' professionalism in Korean society. While many mainstream journalists failed to meet this public need, the boundaries and legitimacy of *Newstapa* journalists were accepted by a significant part of the public. Their moral commitment contributed to the development of trust and social bonding between them and citizens. In the relationships with these citizens, also with other professionals, especially technologists, *Newstapa* journalists had access to the behavioral repertoires of participatory journalism. They then came to learn that open participation became an unavoidable fact of life for them and developed the hybrid model of truth-telling promoting the sustained type of reciprocity. These practices, in turn, produced within *Newstapa* journalists the journalistic dispositions associated with becoming the truth-tellers *in* the networked society. In the end, in the unsettled period, by practicing reciprocal journalism, *Newstapa* journalists successfully maintained their professional identities as excellent journalists. The moral characters of *Newstapa* journalists, as well as their exceptional relationships with citizens, were used as forms of cultural capital to accrue status, prestige, and distinction in Korean society.

Theoretical Implications

This case study of *Newstapa* is important in that it helps improve our understanding of the critical roles for embodiment and journalistic practices in constructing, transforming, and reconstructing the journalistic dispositions associated with becoming a *good journalist* in the changing media environment. Many journalism scholars have understood journalism as a cultural practice, positioning it somewhere between ways of doing journalism (i.e., material practices of journalism) and ways of understanding journalism (i.e., semiotic system of journalism). Nonetheless, not many previous studies in the sociology of journalism have attempted to provide the details of the relationship between journalistic practice and system. In particular, the distinct ethical power of journalistic practices has been overlooked by the literature. As I explained through the case study of *Newstapa,* the journalistic practices are key components in embodying the logics of journalism in the minds and bodies of journalists. Their minds and bodies become the very places on and through which the logics of journalism are performed.

The case study of *Newstapa* also partly answers the question of why some journalists' moral conduct is relatively steady, while others' is ephemeral. By ongoing, daily practices, journalists' moral attitudes can become converted into their dispositions. In particular, considering the impact of hierarchical organizational culture on the socialization process, the stability of moral attitudes of younger journalists may depend on whom they are working with. In any Korean news organization, in particular, the

moral judgments of *seonbae* reporters are likely to influence the process of developing

the moral dispositions of their *hubae* reporters.

Furthermore, the analysis in Chapter IV particularly points to the influence of

journalists' moral attitudes on the kind and quality of their news products. Editors and

desk reporters tend to rely on their gut feelings to determine the newsworthiness of news

items. The criteria of news selection are manifest indicators of a journalist's moral

dispositions. During the *yama*-building process in a Korean newsroom, in particular, a

news story is likely to include *hidden intention* or *motive* of a journalist in relation to

other actors, from his boss to his news organization, politicians, or advertisers. For

example, some journalists may intend to generate online advertising revenue and thus

write click-bait headlines, while others may intend to help a political party solve a

political problem by selecting certain aspects of the problem while excluding other

aspects. Meanwhile, another journalist is more likely to exercise moral intention to

protect her or his own dignity and therefore monitor abuses of power by political and

economic forces.

In particular, ongoing, daily interactions with citizens are also central to the

development and ongoing reproduction of journalists' moral commitment to citizens.

Journalists can exchange benefits not only directly with their audiences but also indirectly

with the community in and for which they work. Further, such reciprocity between

journalists and community members can take the form of a sustainable virtuous circle, if

journalists can develop deeply ingrained habitual patterns of trust. As we saw in the

relationship between *Newstapa* journalists and donors, incoporating the cultural codes of

participatory journalism – such as engagement, collaboration, and transparency – into specific journalistic practices may be the key factor contributing to the development of that level of trust. Indeed, audience engagement and participation in newswork can provide "not only a challenge but also an opportunity for journalists to strengthen their norms, to publicly articulate them – even to use them to differentiate themselves from those who do not follow them" (Singer, 2007, p. 90).

This case study of *Newstapa* also shows the significance of the role of the journalist-audience relationship as a central resource in constructing professional identities of journalists. What we can learn from the relationship between *Newstapa* journalists and their donors is that to be a good journalist is to be interconnected with citizens. For journalists, citizens are not just the group of listeners, viewers, or customers. They are those whom journalists work for. They are what makes a journalist significant in society. In other words, what journalism, as a social institution, is for is to serve citizens. Those journalists who remember this and put this into practice can maintain cultural authority as journalists.

Journalists and journalism scholars, in this sense, need to listen to what kind of sense citizens make of the journalists' performance in this unsettled period. Citizens are active participants in producing metajournalistic discourses in society, justifying and challenging the quality of news content and the practices that produce the content. By producing the meanings of journalism, citizens continue to provide journalists and journalism scholars with descriptors of whether journalism functions well and also what journalism should be for.

Finally, the reciprocal-minded journalism of *Newstapa* defined in this dissertation, as well as the conversational model of truth-telling, provides answers to questions concerning how journalists around the world deal with their "identity complex" (Robinson, 2011b, p. 141) brought on by the digitization of media and culture. More broadly, the analysis of the relationship between *Newstapa* journalists and donors contributes to a better understanding of the sociocultural meaning of *good journalism* and its boundaries in the digital era. Today, the boundaries of journalism are inevitably negotiated and challenged. Journalists need to rethink where their position should be in the unsettled period and how they work with others within this unsettledness. In this unsettled period of journalism, journalists are encouraged to remember that there are core principles that have not changed over time: "Journalism's first obligation is to the truth" and "[its] first loyalty is to citizens" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 9). In a networked environment, "there is no value in isolation" (Singer, 2008, p. 74). By adapting and appropriating this change, keeping in mind whom they work for and where their priority should lie, and then negotiating their boundaries as they work to sustain mutual trust between them and citizens, journalists may be able to reconstruct their norms and practices and thereby maintain and even reinforce their status, prestige, and identities. The bodies and minds of journalists are the very terrain in which journalism is constructed, operated, maintained, contested, and modified. The future of journalism will depend on what strategies of actions are selected, negotiated, and ultimately practiced by the members of the society's journalistic community. If they perform this well, the public will recognize journalism as good.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Some limitations of this study provide directions for future research. First, I did not investigate how Korean journalists working for other news organizations actually react to the practices of *Newstapa.* The facts that *Newstapa* has continuously won prestigious journalism awards and become a benchmark for many mainstream news organizations to develop a dedicated investigative/data journalism team partly prove that *Newstapa* journalists gain prestige as journalists in the industry. Nonetheless, future research is needed to elaborate the boundary work of *Newstapa within* the Korean journalistic community. How do the members of the Korean journalistic community react to this growing genre of journalism, especially to its emphasis on particular values and ideals? If the logic of *Newstapa* journalism provides symbolic codes to make definitions regarding actors, norms, and practices for Korean journalism, who will use these codes as symbolic resources to build up their behavioral repertoires in what purpose? These questions could be fodder for future research.

In the same vein, this dissertation could not answer how sustainable such a journalism model would be in Korean society. Although the case of *Newstapa* shows that the civically minded news nonprofit could build trust relationships with citizens, this does not guarantee its sustainability. In particular, as a Korean news organization, *Newstapa* has inevitably been affected by political parallelism between political parties and news organizations. Regardless of *Newstapa* journalists' intent, ordinary citizens tend to categorize *Newstapa* as a left-leaning news outlet. The initial *Newstapa* project arose from the specific need of Korean democratic-progressives to have their own spokesman

while most of mainstream news outlets acted as conservative spokesmen. The growth in the number of *Newstapa* donors has also been influenced by the results of political events, such as the 2012 general election and 2012 presidential election. Due to the serial defeats of the democratic-progressive parties in both elections, the number of *Newstapa* donors skyrocketed. This reveals that a significant part of *Newstapa* donors are those Koreans who lean to the left. These left-leaning donors may want *Newstapa* to contribute to the change of government from the conservative party to the democratic-progressive parties and thus be sensitively reacting to the editorial direction of *Newstapa*. In fact, in July 2014, *Newstapa* lost almost 1,000 donors, from 36,000 to 35,000, when it published a series of stories exposing the wrongdoing of democratic-progressive politicians. This can happen again so long as *Newstapa* exists within Korean society.

   Newstapa's existence may also depend upon the relative permissiveness of the political system, which could change and become more repressive. If the media policy of the upcoming government stands apart from that of its predecessors, the expected role of *Newstapa* in Korean society can change. Depending on the relative importance of *Newstapa* in the democratic-progressive community and also on *Newstapa* journalists' reactions to the public expectations of journalism, *Newstapa*'s donor dynamics can be changing. *Newstapa* may be able to maintain its independence from the government even if there is a turnover of political power from the political right to the political left. Otherwise, *Newstapa* can possibly serve as a spokesman for the government because it cannot ignore the pressure from their owners – namely the donors. The fact that everyday citizens donate their money to *Newstapa* can be a double-edged sword. As citizens get

more involved in *Newstapa* journalism, it will be difficult for *Newstapa* journalists to maintain independence from citizens. A longitudinal study would help understand whether and how *Newstapa*'s reciprocal model would become sustainable.

Further, this study could not answer whether the model of *Newstapa* journalism, especially its funding model, could be applicable to cases in other countries. As we saw in this dissertation, *Newstapa*'s funding model was a byproduct of the conservative-dominated media system. Can it be possible that news organizations in other countries develop such a business model funded by individual citizens? In other words, can individual funding become another way to fund public interest journalism beyond the advertising model or philanthropic funding? If so, how can news organizations raise funds from the public? A few journalism scholars have already tackled these questions. According to Carvajal, García-Avilés, and González (2012), for instance, crowdfunding could be an alternative model to promote public interest journalism if news organizations are aware of the importance of "transparency, user involvement and control over where their money goes" in their newswork (p. 638).

Finally, since I focused on how *Newstapa* journalists could reconstruct and maintain their professional identities as good journalists and thus studied their newsroom practice, I could not answer how their practice did actually translate into content. While I relied on my observations together with the analysis of the interviews with *Newstapa* journalists, future research using content analysis methods, especially comparative work, would help us understand how the reciprocal model of *Newstapa* journalism could impact the quality of news coverage as well.

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