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Version: Accepted Version

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Title:

Hero or anti-hero?: Narratives of newswork and journalistic identity construction in complex digital megastories.

Abstract:

Exploring constructions of journalistic identity in a digital age has been a lively area of scholarship as the field of digital journalism studies has grown (Franklin 2013, 2014; Steensen and Ahva 2015). Yet despite many approaches to understanding digital change, key avenues for understanding changing constructions of identity remain underexplored. This paper addresses a conceptual void in research literature by employing semiotic and semantic approaches to analyse performances of journalistic identity in narratives of newswork facilitated by and focused on digital megaleaks. It seeks to aid understanding of the way narratives describe changing practices of newsgathering, and how journalists position themselves within these hybrid traditional/digital stories. Findings show news narratives reinforce the primacy of journalists within traditional boundaries of a journalistic field, and articulate a preferred imagination of journalistic identity. Methodologically, this paper shows how semantic and semiotic approaches lend themselves to studying narratives of newswork within journalistic metadiscourses to understand journalistic identity at the nexus of traditional and digital dynamics. The resultant portrait of journalistic identity channels a socio-historic, romantic notion of the journalist as "the shadowy figure always to be found on the edges of the century's great events" (Inglis 2002, xi), updated to accommodate modern, digital dynamics.

Keywords: *WikiLeaks, Snowden, journalistic field, journalistic identity, boundary work, metadiscourse.*

Introduction

Colourful portrayals of newswork by journalists have long played a role in shaping understandings of what a journalist is. Historically, exposition of dogged journalistic work in news content provided the public an image of journalists as hardworking, yet "shadowy figures" telling tales of history's great events (Inglis 2002, xi). Newspapers, magazines, and other platforms served as outlets where journalists could describe gritty, but necessary, newswork at the core of their identity (Sims 2007). Alongside narratives of hard work, less-admirable portraits can also be found. In Andrew Marr's *My* Trade (2004), he describes the image of the journalist as an alcohol-soaked and nicotine-stained 'hack', now less prominent in modern digital environs. Yet despite modernizing, Marr defines journalists historically and contemporarily as adhering to a "blurred social status, a foggy range of skills, an ill-defined purpose and a ludicrously romantic haze where a professional code would normally be" (2004, 5). Fred Inglis describes this as an amalgamation of cynicism and ambition:

> A profession celebrated less for celebrity and more for a unique mixture of raffishness and glamour, drunkenness and the kind of knowledge usually classified as being on the inside, cynicism and the caustic freedoms it confers, recklessness, discretion, strange working hours, even stranger friends, courage and cowardice. (2002, 23)

Historically, this assemblage of good and less-good character traits came to stand as *de facto* definers of the journalist when it advantaged members of the field, especially when it allowed journalists to present themselves as non-elite servants to democracy and 'the people' (Donsbach 2010; Hanitzsch 2011; Williams 2006, 56-57), and this 'real world' identity impacted public understandings of journalism. Doug Underwood argues journalists are defined by a blurred 'imagined' and 'realistic' portrayals of the journalistic field: "One can argue that a profession that traffics in stereotypes has, in a sense, been captured by its own techniques, and the stereotype of the journalist" (Underwood 2013, 163). Bonnie Brennen describes this as a "cultural discourse of journalists", shaped by "representations and misrepresentaitons of actual lived experiences" (1995, 77). Brennen explicates the blur between imagined and realistic portrayals by journalists-turned-novelists, interweaving factual and fictional accounts, in providing "tangible accounts of culture" (Ibid.), including of journalistic cultures.

In his history of twentieth century literary journalism in the United States, Norman Sims (2007) locates such a cultural identity cultivated by newspaper reporters in Chicago as "a hard-drinking, cynical style of modern urban reporters" (Sims 2007, 72), an identity that "survived through the twentieth century in the mythology of *The Front Page*" (Ibid, 75). Meryl Aldridge (1998) finds a similar mythology in the eulogising of a hard-living UK magazine editor, describing journalists as "enthusiastic (auto)biographers, mythmaker and myth-feeders" (Ibid.,110), drawing on "allegedly shared values and characteristics"(Ibid., 110-111) to define their identities. These are not unproblematic mythologies, as they promote a journalistic ideal around an urban male identity (Inglis 2002, 10). When women do stand out, historically in the case of Martha Gellhorn (Inglis 2002), or contemporary cases like Laura Poitras, they are seen as outliers, and their journalistic identity is often based on matching the existing masculinity of the field. (Djerf-Pierre 2007; van Zoonen 1998a; 1998b).

Aldridge points to a "near obsession with autonomy" (1998, 114), which is also in focus here as autonomy becomes somewhat muted in stories where megalleaks facilitated by digital actors or focused on digital technologies drive journalistic endeavours (Lynch 2013).

Where Jane Singer (2004) argues digitally-converged journalists as "more than ink-stained wretches" in real terms as they adopt new skills and journalistic routines, this paper explores whether that gritty romanticised anti-hero – the 'wretch' – persists in journalists' amplified identity discourses. To do so this paper explores journalistic metadiscourses of newswork as reorienting the primacy of the journalist as central to newswork beset in digital technologies. Approaching metadiscourses as public-facing performances of journalistic identity, it focuses on performances of newswork and journalistic identity by journalists at elite newspapers alongside the stories they tell (Eldridge 2014: 3; cf. Carlson 2014, Conboy and Eldridge 2015). Looking at newswork in newspapers at the centre of these two prominent stories, it purposefully addresses these dynamics when in the spotlight of public attention, asking:

> **Guiding Research Question:** How is newswork and journalistic identity performed in news discourses within megastories focusing on digital aspects of society and digitally-informed news?

As the artefacts of journalistic stereotypes built on clattering typewriters and ink-stained shirtsleeves have faded in real terms, and notions of the journalist as a hard-drinking urban denizen have given way to sleek promotions of journalistic work in digital forms (see: MacAskill 2014), it remains unresolved whether romanticised portrayals have been adapted to more modern dynamics. This paper argues they have, and a modern journalistic identity continues to be informed by narratives of journalism-as-work, including gritty and risky aspects. Approaching coverage of Edward Snowden and the NSA leaks and WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, this paper argues projected images of contemporary journalists have swapped cynicism, gin and ink for narratives of technological nous and digital risk against over-reaching governments within elite newspapers. Yet amid discourses which emphasise newswork, romantic narratives of difficulty and public service persist.

This paper asks further whether modern narratives of journalistic identity within technologically imbued journalism still invoke historic markers of traditional anti-heroic narratives including: Visible character flaws that are, on balance, more positive than negative (McNair 2010, 116); ambiguous moral codes that are often cynical, work that is sometimes polemic, and narratives of self-as-story to articulate journalistic identity (Aldridge and Evetts 2003; Carlson and Berkowitz 2014); a counter-narrative to the 'Great Man' portrayal embedded in Carlyle's 'Fourth Estate' (Hampton 2010).

Journalistic Identity and the 'what-a-story'

News events that go beyond routine journalism – what Gaye Tuchman (1976, 1978) terms 'what-a-story' coverage – provide a useful lens into the ability of journalists to construct their own identity narratives (cf. Berkowitz 1992). Such news garners so much attention that the journalism itself becomes a focus in news coverage; as such what-a-stories provide avenues for journalists to promote their work prominently. Dan Berkowitz describes this as "the process of taking extraordinary occurrences and reporting on them in a way that makes journalistic work appear competent to news media audiences" (2000, 129). From Berkowitz and Ron Bishop (1999, 91), we see these discourses reinforcing boundaries around the journalistic field by projecting 'good' journalistic work "in ways meant to be seen".

For understanding journalistic identity, these discourses address two audiences. First, there is a public audience for whom the performance of journalistic practice is articulated, "to maintain and restore the core tenets of the culture's beliefs" (Berkowitz 2000, 125) in the work of journalists. Second is an audience of journalists, so as "to bind together the interpretive community of journalists during times of stress" (Ibid., 127). For defining the parameters of the journalistic field, this paper engages with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (2005) as well, to assess this dual-facing discourse as boundary work by members of the journalistic field that maintains societal distinction. As fields coalesce on shared principles of vision and division (*nomos*) and as narratives of newswork reflect experiences of socialization that define journalistic identity (*habitus*), performances of belonging and distinction become key definers for journalists (Benson 2006; Bourdieu 1984, 1994, 2005). As journalists resolve their identity through ideal-typical portrayals and lauded values within what-a-story coverage, metadiscourses allow journalists to offer their own best self to the public – their "dominant vision" (Bourdieu 2005, 44).

This paper looks at the coverage of Snowden and Assange as megastories as a type of what-a-story coverage focused on non-routine news, with wide-reaching revelations, and involving prominent discussions around digital technologies and journalism. For reaffirming a cultural belief in the work of journalists in a digital era, both provide rallying points for the democratic identity narratives of the journalistic field, particularly watchdog roles, and both continue to fuel public discussions of their disclosures (Thorsen, et al. 2013). Whereas what-a-story news is defined by unexpectedness – Princess Diana's death explored by Berkowitz (2000) and Bishop (1999), or Lyndon Johnson's announcement that he would not seek re-election in the study defining what-a-story as "routinization of the unexpected" by Tuchman (1978) – these megastories demanded significant advanced planning and while surprising to audiences, releases were methodically rolled out by news organisations. However, prominence and public attention with what-a-story coverage offer opportunities to rebuild public appreciation in the form of positive role performances.

Even as narratives of journalistic identity within coverage emphasise newswork, they also reflect a journalistic field that dithers between professionalised and de-professionalised forces. This can be seen in contexts where journalistic identities rest on an everyman or even anti-heroic portrait that belies any elite sense of professionalism. Historically this is embodied in descriptions of the journalist as an, 'ink-stained wretch', 'muckraker', 'hack', or 'grubbie' (Conboy 2013, 5; Singer 2004, Underwood 2008, 19) and hints at tensions between being broadly respected as 'professional', while bristling at the notion of journalism as 'a profession' with all of the formality that implies (Singer 2003). Instead, journalists flaunt grittier aspects of their work to distinguish newswork as labouring in service to the public (Høyer and Lauk 2003, Örnebring 2010).

Arguably performances of newswork are more obscured in a digital age. While digital affordances enhance opportunities for information gathering and sharing, newswork making use of new avenues for sourcing is less obvious. In response, journalists articulate that work explicitly by emphasising the challenge of processing digital data, or contending with 'amateurs' working online (Conboy and Eldridge 2015). Henrik Örnebring's (2010) explores aspects of journalism as labour in an increasingly digital space, including a review of journalists' propensity towards articulating labour in the face of advancing technologies. Örnebring points to articulations of newswork as narratives of skills necessary for being a

journalist, tying these to the labour environment journalists work within. Narratives of newswork fit within larger discussions of labour (Örnebring separates journalistic labour processes from journalistic work), emphasised in response to critiques of journalists as increasingly deskbound and lazy (Örnebring 2010: 66; cf. McNair 2010, van Zoonen 1998b). In response to implicit or explicit critiques, newswork becomes a differentiating criterion between journalists and digital interlopers who are perceived as amateurs, less appreciative or uninvolved in the labour journalism requires (Coddington 2014).

Journalistic newswork as narrative construction

Liesbet Van Zoonen notes our imaginations of journalistic identity often rest on seeing journalists through a "stereotyped dichotomy" (1998b, 124), appreciating both positive and negative attributes when they emerge. In both academic and popular discussions, this image of 'the journalist' wavers between the journalist as a "heroic individual fighting for justice and truth", and the journalist as fighting the "laziness, narcissism and silliness" of their peers (Ibid.). Mark Hampton (2010) and Örnebring (2009) note how public assessments of journalism also reflect this dichotomy, particularly the latter, negative aspects. To counter such perceptions, articulations of newswork identify the journalist as 'professional hero', unencumbered by structural constraints or other nuisances in ways that valorise journalists' work. As cultural actors, however, journalists seem less bothered by problematic stereotypes, and identity performances transition easily between that of a distant witness and more subjective space at the centre (or near-centre) of news stories (van Zoonen 1998b, 128). In this latter stance, the news story itself becomes a performative space where preferred narratives of journalistic identity emerge (Graber 2003). As van Zoonen notes, these are "a constitutive and necessary element of these organizational identities in all genres of journalism" (1998b, 123).

The result of these dynamics can be a simplified and mythologised narrative of journalistic identity that suggests a unified picture of journalism. It can also inform a complicated dimension of boundary work. In what-a-story coverage, for instance, identity-building narratives emerge when dispassionate distance is surrendered in favour of narrative subjectivity that emphasises the journalist as performing its work under pressure (Berkowitz 2000, 126). For boundary building, metadiscourses of journalistic role performance allow journalists to present themselves as popular heroes, argues van Zoonen (1998b), and promote their centrality in democracies (Steel 2013, 8). While this particular argument – that journalism is intrinsically involved in information-sharing and sense-making for the sake of democracy – adopts a normative basis warranting critique beyond the focus of this piece (cf. Bardoel, 1996), its normalisation within metadiscourses shapes our understanding of journalistic self-perceptions, even if they seem to be tropes built on under-interrogated values and presented as *de facto* definers of what it is to be a journalist (Berkowitz and TerKeurst 1999, Zelizer 2010).

As Bishop, Berkowitz, and others (Coddington 2014, Wahl-Jorgensen 2014) argue, discussions of journalism by journalists can perform outsized boundary-building by drawing attention to core values of journalistic belonging. Wahl-Jorgensen (2014) argues such metadiscourses are used to promote traditional over digital newswork with WikiLeaks, despite evident similarities in both their work. The data discussed here engages with journalistic

identity performance and boundary building in 'overt' discussions of journalistic identity found within sign-posted media discussions, however nuanced journalistic identity narratives can also be found within news texts where metadiscourses are otherwise not obvious (Eldridge 2014, 13-14).

Journalistic metadiscourses, even within elite news texts, walk a finicky line between presenting journalistic identity as a real-world and objective performance and engaging in more romanticised portraits of journalism. This is particularly evident when they rely on analogies to familiar portrayals of journalism in popular culture to illustrate 'real world' newswork (and vice versa). Underwood calls this the "cross-pollinating effect of journalism" and fiction (2008, 13). Similarly, metadiscourses can rely on historic cross-pollination, where source material for identity creation in a digital age draws on the cultural resonance of city reporters in dark bars and boisterous newsrooms, or of escapades of journalists evading government agents. While such archetypal constructions of journalistic identity reinforce idealised visions of the field and amplify certain criteria of belonging along traditional dimensions, they can also revert complex realities of the world and actors within it to caricatured dynamics of 'good' and 'evil'; 'hero' and 'villain'.

Methodology

Methodologically, this paper draws on the work of Algirdas Greimas (1983[1966], 1971) to explore metadiscourses of journalistic identity. Focusing on megastories, semantic and semiotic analysis allow us to explore both the semiotic position of news actors and the overall narrative of news stories for identity discourses. Where newswork and journalistic identity is distinct, this can aid understanding of boundary work by journalists to reinforce their perception of the journalistic field.

Within structural semantic research, Greimas' (1973) actantial model for narrative analysis offers a schema that can be applied to news discourses to explore the roles of actants within those stories. While this approach borrows from literary studies, Greimas' models have been employed for analysis of news texts, including by Pauliina Aarva and Marja Pakarinen (2006). For making sense of the relational position of news actors within journalistic coverage, Greimas' work offers us two schemata through which we can assess the role of journalists within the stories they are telling.

The 'Semiotic Square' or 'Greimas Square' (1983[1966]) allows us to explore the symbolic position of news actors within news narratives through mapping their relationship with other actors along oppositional, contradictory, and complementary axes. Semiotic mapping, this paper argues, allows us to position the symbolic identity of journalists and other news actors (including subjects and objects of news, and sources) in relation to one another.

Within this model, an actor at S_1 sits along an oppositional axis from S_2 and $\sim S_2$ – or 'Not S_2' – works in contradiction, as do S_1 and $\sim S_1$. S_1 and $\sim S_2$ have a complementary relationship on the left-hand side of the schema, as do S_2 and $\sim S_1$ on the right-hand side.

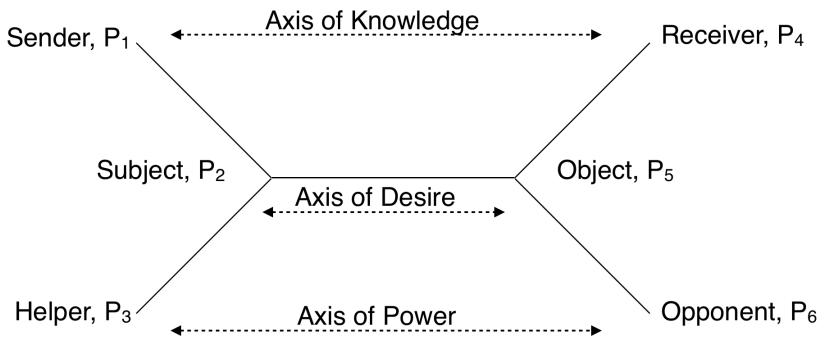*4-point figure*
[Figure 1 About here]
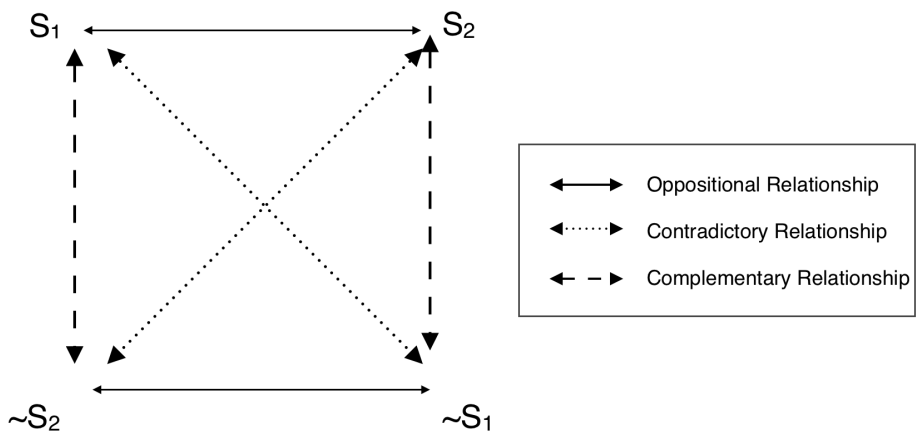
Based on Greimas (1983[1966])

The second level of analysis in this study adopts a structured semantic analysis approach to look at how actors within news narratives are positioned to tell particular news stories (Greimas 1971, 1973).

Semantic Analysis: Greimas' (1971, 1973) Actantial model
[Figure 2 here]

Where the first schema allows us to explore the positioning of actors within news narratives through their oppositional or complementary relationships, this second level of analysis helps us to understand how newswork is narrated and how a journalistic 'helper' identity emerges. For this analysis, the axes of knowledge reflects the dynamics of knowledge possession, between source and audience, along the axis of desire is the intended outcome from information-as-news to publication, and along the axis of power is the ability to enable the desired outcome, or oppose it.

Using these schemata, analysis focuses on coverage in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Guardian* for elite narratives of newswork that followed disclosures of WikiLeaks (*Times* and *Guardian*) beginning in July 2010, with further coverage in 2011, and coverage of Snowden (*Post* and *Guardian*) in 2013. As the disclosures were championed by journalists at each outlet the sample is purposive, focused on 'overt' discourses where a

discussion of newswork is sign-posted (Eldridge 2014: 3). In total, 36 stories, columns, and Q&A features that accompanied the launch of the WikiLeaks and Snowden stories in the respective publications were analysed using Greimas' schemata, with many of these offering a series of individual narratives and metadiscursive interventions.

Data and Analysis

This first section will offer examples of complementary, oppositional and contradictory relationships within news stories that map onto the 'Greimas Square' to explore journalistic identity and boundary building, with markers ascribing the reference point from the Greimas square (noted in < > brackets). In the second section the broader narrative of journalistic identity performances will be developed using semantic analysis.

Filling the Greimas Square: Structural Semiotic Analysis of News Actors

In the coverage explored here, we can see WikiLeaks, Assange, Chelsea Manning, or Snowden as occupying the S_1 position. There they are portrayed as information sources, and further defined through their opposition to the governments, at S_2. Exploring two examples, here we have a reference to Snowden in an early launch story:

> "He <S_1> is deeply worried about being spied on<S_2>." (*Guardian*, 9 June 2013)

In this example we can map a clear oppositional axis between 'He', referring to Snowden, and the implied governmental actors – 'spied on'. Invoking similar fears, an earlier profile of Assange that ran in the *New York Times* with the first WikiLeaks' releases draws the oppositional axis between Assange (S_1) and 'Western intelligence agencies' (S_2):

> Julian Assange <S_1> moves like a hunted man. In a noisy Ethiopian restaurant in London's rundown Paddington district, he pitches his voice barely above a whisper to foil the Western intelligence agencies <S_2> he fears. (*New York Times*, 23 October 2010)

For news narratives that position Snowden or Assange at S_1, semiotic mapping identfies the relation of subjects in terms of their agency and contribution. This positions the agent behind the leak as a key actor, with clear oppositional directions towards governments whose activity they are exposing, and in these cases being pursued by:

> He [Snowden] < S_1> is deeply worried about being spied on <S_2>. He lines the door of his hotel room with pillows to prevent eavesdropping. He <S_1> puts a large red hood over his head and laptop when entering his passwords to prevent any hidden cameras <S_2> from detecting them. (*Guardian,* 9 June 2013)

Semiotic mapping, can be applied to any aspect of a narrative. When roles are reversed and the subject actor is the government(s), the oppositional axis is still drawn between the same sets of actors. Where S_1 is the government, and S_2 WikiLeaks, we can see

the incorporation of 'individuals' along a contradictory axis with the government ($\sim S_1$), and a complementary axis with WikiLeaks:

> "We [U.S. State Department] <S_1> deplore WikiLeaks <S_2> for inducing individuals <$\sim S_1$>to break the law, leak classified documents and then cavalierly share that secret information with the world, including our enemies," he [U.S. State Dept. Spokesman] <S_1> said. (*The New York Times,* 22 October 2010)

For understanding journalistic identity, semiotic mapping illustrates the perceived limits of journalist-as-subject. When analysis shows journalists at the $\sim S_2$ position, for instance, they are brought into closer focus through their own subjectivity (van Zoonen 1998b), even when limited to a near-central position. This can be seen in this example from Snowden coverage where the S_1 position is defined by a motivation to reveal, yet ability to make this information public – "in order to expose" – rests with journalists at the complementary position ($\sim S_2$):

> Firsthand experience with these systems, and horror at their capabilities, is what drove a career intelligence officer <S_1> to provide PowerPoint slides about PRISM and supporting materials to *The Washington Post* <$\sim S_2$> in order to expose what he believes to be a gross intrusion on privacy. "They [NSA, GCHQ] <S_2> quite literally can watch your ideas form as you type," the officer said. (*Washington Post*, 7 June 2013)

Newswork and journalistic intervention are necessary for S_1 actors to gain attention. By remaining to the side of focused attention within coverage, journalists abide by "the structural constraints posed by the organization of the profession" (van Zoonen 1998b, 128) – remaining near-centre without *becoming* subjects of the story themselves.

Narratives that articulate the $\sim S_2$ position include discursive performances of newswork as a necessary criterion for the role fulfilment of actors at S_1. The complementary <$S_1 + \sim S_2$> relationship – journalists enabling leakers' revelations – also reflects the normative roles of journalists as critical watchdogs, structuring the <$\sim S_2 + S_2$> relationship:

> "the *Guardian's* Nick Davies <$\sim S_2$> brokered an agreement <with WikiLeaks; complementary>" (*Guardian,* 28 November 2010)

> "a *Guardian* team <$\sim S_2$>, has been spending months <newswork; journalism-as-labour> combing through the data <newswork>" (*Guardian,* 28 November 2010)

In coverage of both stories, narratives define journalists in an independent watchdog and contextualising public interest roles, as seen in this *Washington Post* story on Snowden's revelations:

> We <$\sim S2$> did interviews <newswork> on our own initiative <independent>. For official responses the government <S_2> chose its own interlocutors <contradictory relationship>. (*Washington Post*, 24 April 2014).

As with the quote from the government spokesman explored above, it is worth noting that semiotic mapping within coverage of Snowden, Assange, Manning, and journalists is not constrained to these positions and can change from narrative to narrative. For example, when Chris Blackhurst of the *Sunday Independent* writes, "If the security services insist something is contrary to the public interest, and might harm their operations, who am I (despite my grounding from Watergate onwards) to disbelieve them?" (*Sunday Independent,* 13 October 2013), the 'security services' would be mapped at S_1 through their contrast with Snowden and by implication the *Guardian* at S_2. In this example, Blackhurst would be in the position of $\sim S_2$, complementing the security services and contradicting Snowden and the *Guardian*. This also emerges in foregrounded narratives of journalistic independence, with contradictory symbolic relationships to government actors. This is evident when journalists adopt near-subjectivity, positioned as complementing prominent subject actors at S_1 (in this case, referring to WikiLeaks), while working professionally with government actors at S_2:

> *The New York Times* <$\sim S_2$> told the Pentagon <S_2> which specific documents it planned to post <independence> and showed how they had been redacted <$\sim S_2$; contradiction, not opposition>. The Pentagon <S_2> said it would have preferred <contradictory, non-oppositional> that *The Times* <$\sim S_2$> not publish any classified materials but did not propose any cuts. (*New York Times,* 22 October, 2010)

Across coverage news narratives operate as boundary devices as well, reflecting the $\sim S_2$ position as often more complex than either S_1 or S_2 as the relationship between traditional journalism and governments relies on maintaining a critical but non-oppositional axis, even while complementing the central actor within a narrative (S_1):

> **Afghanistan war logs: Story behind biggest leak in intelligence history**
> Behind today's revelations lie two distinct stories: first, of the Pentagon's <S_2> attempts to trace the leaks with painful results for one young soldier <S_1>; and second, a unique collaboration between the Guardian, the New York Times and Der Spiegel magazine in Germany ($\sim S_2$) to sift the huge trove of data <newswork> for material of public interest <journalistic values> and to distribute globally <newswork> this secret record of the world's most powerful nation <S_2> at war. (*Guardian* 25 July 2010)

For journalists, this can be seen as demonstrating public interest and social responsibility roles as a key delimiter between their work and that of Assange, Manning, or Snowden. The maintenance of this contradictory/non-oppositional axis pushes back against the way some politicians (and even some other journalists) described *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Post* journalists, and the fraught nature of the oppositional relationship between S_1 and S_2 actors. However, that sense of opposition – when presented as part of the overall metadiscourse – contributes to the narrative of newswork as risky, but necessary:

> The U.S. intelligence community <S_2>, he <S_1> wrote, "will most certainly kill you if they think you are the single point of failure that could stop this disclosure <newswork; journalistic role performance> and make them the sole owner of this information." (*Washington Post*, 9 June 2013)

The fourth corner of the schema is particularly pronounced in the Snowden/NSA story, where corporations emerge at $\sim S_1$, contradicting the work of Snowden (complicit in mass surveillance) but not openly opposing his actions. These were consistent in coverage where Snowden is presented as the subject actor (S_1) behind the leaks:

> The [surveillance] order <*government;* S_2>, a copy of which has been obtained by *the Guardian* <newswork, $\sim S_2$>, requires Verizon <$\sim S_1$> on an "ongoing, daily basis" to give <complementary relationship> the NSA <S_2> information on all telephone calls in its systems (*The Guardian,* 6 June 2013).

Through applying semiotic structural analysis, Greimas' schema helps identify boundary work as part of an overall narrative when the attention is drawn not only to journalistic subjects, but to journalistic performance as well, particularly where journalistic identity remains contested (Eldridge 2014, 14). This first level of analysis explores the relationships journalists perceive with other news actors. As a reflection of the contestation that shapes the journalistic field, particularly around noteworthy and complex news stories with traditional and digital aspects, it offers insights into a 'dominant vision' of the journalistic field through performances of newswork (Benson 2006; Bourdieu 2005). For an initial understanding of journalistic identity around these stories, semiotic mapping locates the performance of a preferred identity of the journalist that is:

> a) necessary for the telling of news stories built on digital-enabled leaks,
> b) engaged in normative roles (such as being a watchdog) in service to a public and challenging those in power
> c) adhering to the organizational structures of the journalistic field (and avoiding being at the centre of these news stories and relationships).

Expanding analysis: Semantic structural analysis

Greimas' (1973) actantial model and semantic structural analysis (Greimas 1983) provide a further analytical lens through which narratives of journalistic identity and exposition of newswork can be explored. Semantic analysis expands our understanding of the performance of journalistic identity as a referential criterion for belonging and non-belonging to the journalistic field through narratives of its practice. In terms of narrative roles, and following on the model above (Fig. 2), journalists emerge in 'helper' roles, aiding the 'sender' of the 'object' (information, in this context) to a 'receiver' with an awareness, and against, an 'opponent'.

In launch coverage of the WikiLeaks-informed 'Iraq War Logs', we can see such narratives in the *Guardian's* presentation of its journalistic identity. Narratives of newswork in this coverage includes treatment of WikiLeaks data that position the journalists in a helper <P_3> role along the axis of power, able to facilitate the role performance of WikiLeaks <$S_1 P_1$>:

> While opposing **publication**, the **US administration** has acknowledged that the involvement of **news organisations** has not only given protection to many sources, but

has also given a context to information which, had it been simply dumped, would have been both overwhelming and free of any such context. (*Guardian,* 22 October 2010)

We could map this example as:

[Fig. 3 here]
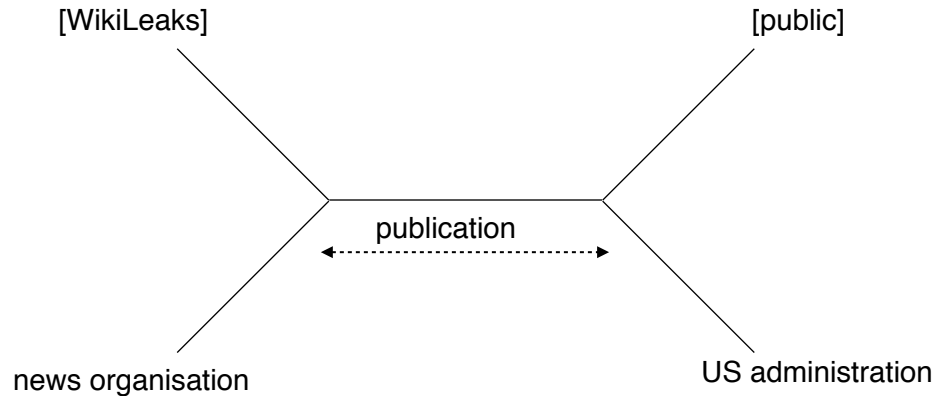
Alongside the exposition of newswork, the oppositional axis between S_1 (Assange) and S_2 (governments) is also clear when considering an alternative illustration of Greimas' (1983[1966]) semantic schema, with axes of knowledge, power, and desire:

> The move testifies to Assange's <sender> determination to cause a splash <desire>. But it also represents a further challenge to the US administration <opponent>: how to close down <axis of power> WikiLeaks <sender> without turning its charismatic spokesman into a global free speech <subject> martyr? (*Guardian*, 22 October 2010)

Mapped as:

[Fig. 4 here]
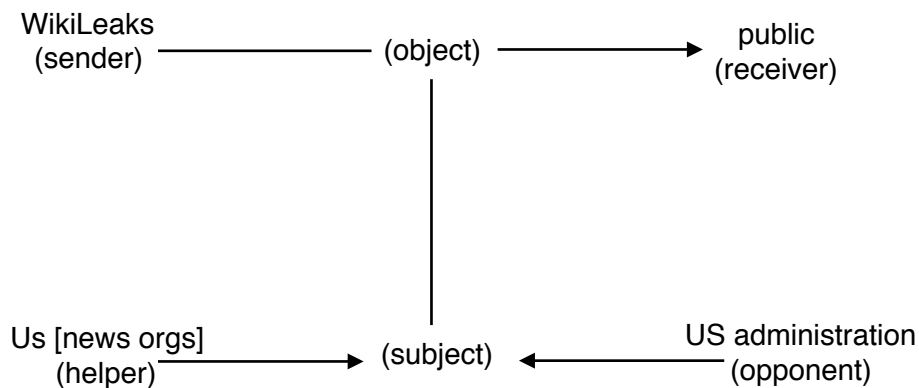
Journalists working at $\sim S_2$, complementing work of actors at S_1, and contradicting at S_2, can be found in the amplification of newswork by key journalists:

We're grateful <helper> to WikiLeaks <sender> for making the material available to us. That was a sensible thing to do considering that we have reporters who have spent years in the relevant countries <axis of power> and have studied the subjects that are covered in the documents. (*New York Times*, 25 October 2010)

And in the case of Snowden's earliest NSA releases:

Firsthand experience with these systems, and horror at their capabilities, is what drove <axis of desire> a career intelligence officer <sender> to provide PowerPoint slides about PRISM <subject> and supporting materials to *The Washington Post* <helper> in order to expose <object-receiver[implied]> what he believes to be a gross intrusion <opponent> on privacy. (*Washington Post,* 7 June 2013)

These examples are indicative of the newswork narrative within metadiscourses analysed here. Such discourses position journalistic identity but also draw boundaries between news actors with political motivations and journalists own detachment within stories in ways that a) enhance the role of newswork, b) make obvious journalistic contributions, and c) reassert the role of journalists within digital what-stories that are otherwise focused on digitally native news sources.

Within news stories, narratives of surveillance (and avoiding it), of cyber security and cryptography, and of risk are amplified not only in pressures on Assange, Snowden, or Manning, but also in the presentation of newswork by journalists. The portrayal of journalists as enveloped in similarly risky positions emerges through a subtle engagement that articulates their activity in the near-centre of megastories, without superseding the subject position of leakers or whistleblowers:

After several days trying to make contact through intermediaries, the *Guardian* $<\sim S_2>$ finally caught up with Assange $<S_1>$ in a café in Brussels where he had surfaced to speak at the European parliament. (*Guardian,* 25 July 2010)

And:

"He $<S_1, P_1>$ would place the first tranche of data in encrypted form on a secret website and the Guardian $<\sim S_2, P_4>$ would access it with a user name and password constructed from the commercial logo on the café's napkin." (*Guardian*, 9 August 2010)

Through narratives of technological threat and looming government intrusion, this dynamic is captured well in this description from the *New York Times*, wrapping 'mundane' newswork within a romanticized risk narrative (26 January 2011):

The adventure that ensued over the next six months combined the cloak-and-dagger intrigue of handling a vast secret archive with the more mundane feat of sorting, searching and understanding a mountain of data. (*New York Times,* 26 January 2011)

And:

Eventually, the tallest of the three picked up a cheap yellow napkin, laid it on the flimsy modern café table and started to scribble.[…] Julian whipped out this mini-laptop, opened it up and did something on his computer. He picked up a napkin and said, "Ok you've got it." We said: "Got what?" He said: "You've got the whole file. The password is this napkin." (*Guardian,* 31 January 2011)

There is, however, an appropriation of the risk and technology with news narratives of journalistic performance. Texts frequently incorporate the same reference points to cryptography and 'hacking' and spycraft, such as code names:

He [Snowden] called me BRASSBANNER, a code name in the double-barreled style of the National Security Agency, where he worked in the signals intelligence directorate. Verax was the name he chose for himself, "truth teller" in Latin. I asked him early on, without reply, whether he intended to hint at the alternative fates that lay before him. (*Washington Post,* 9 June 2013)

Finally, in this example we see a succinct reflection of van Zoonen's (1998b, 128) argument that journalists place themselves and their newswork, when advantageous, within certain types of news coverage:

Neither Greenwald nor Poitras even knew what Snowden looked like. "He had some elaborate scheme to meet," Greenwald said. Snowden told him to go to a specific location on the third floor of the hotel and ask loudly for directions to a restaurant. Greenwald assumed Snowden was lurking in the background, listening in.

They went to a room that, Greenwald recalled, contained a large fake alligator. Snowden made himself known. He had told Greenwald that "I would know it was him because he would be carrying a Rubik's Cube". (*Guardian*, 11 June 2013)

Conclusion: A romanticised journalistic narrative

This paper has shown how semiotic and semantic analysis within news narratives can help explore the positioning of journalists within news stories, where discourses draw newswork to our attention. Such discourses reinforce journalists' public position and the distinction of the journalistic field. Mapping the semiotic portrayal of news actors in relation to one another and the semantic construction of newswork within coverage of Edward Snowden and WikiLeaks allows us to analyse performances of journalistic identity in situations where multiple actors are in focus and digital dynamics of newswork risk overwhelming the contribution by journalists. Through analysis of megastories as what-a-stories we can isolate articulations of journalistic role performance at its most prominent, as well as in cases where multiple societal actors attract attention. Through articulations of newswork, journalistic metadiscourses make clear the distinction between their performance and that of those facilitating megaleaks.

I argue this performance channels historic archetypes of the journalist as an 'anti-hero', or a flawed (but well-intentioned) labourer in the public interest (McNair 2010), working in support of the 'true heroes', the whistleblowers at the heart of each revelation. In this I am

not suggesting journalists are effectively villains (or non-heroes), but rather this categorisation reflects narrative efforts to differentiate journalists' activities from those of the politically-motivated 'hero' actor, within the limits of organizational and professional structures of journalism (van Zoonen 1998b, 125). Alongside 'heroes', , journalists still emphasise their own levels of risk, and own abilities to irritate those in power through watchdog-oriented newswork. This use of 'anti-heroic' draws the romanticised portrayals of journalists, built on portrayals of the journalist as cynical, as sometimes deplorable, but altogether committed to investigative and revelatory contributions to society (Inglis 2002, Sims 2007). Within the narratives explored here we see the journalist necessarily balanced against the heroic portrayals of Assange, Snowden, and Manning, foregrounded as, "heroic, selfless individuals" (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt, 2012, 399). Or, as put by the *Times*:

> History is punctuated by spies, defectors and others who revealed the most inflammatory secrets of their age. Mr. Assange has become that figure for the Internet era, with as yet unreckoned consequences for himself and for the keepers of the world's secrets. (*New York Times*, 23 October 2010)

Whether intentionally or as an instinctive reflection of the structural limits of the profession, this anti-hero positioning guards against the critical cries of subjectivity that would meet any news text where the journalist was made central, as van Zoonen (1998b) identifies. Inglis notes: "In making of themselves what they can, getting on and going on, each generation of journalists acquires the ethics of what Max Weber tells us […] is a highly ambiguous profession, now admired and applauded, now criticised and disparaged" (2002, x). However, within the coverage here we see journalists maintain a non-central position and an allegiance to detachment, even as they draw their laudatory newswork into similar frames of risk more heroic subjects face. In an age of hacking, leaking, and computer-enabled whistleblowing fueling prominent news stories, journalistic work can be muted as digital operators take centre stage in news. Yet within this modern discourse we find a continuation of a certain type of journalistic identity. Wrapped around digitally-oriented reportage of WikiLeaks, Snowden, and other 'hack-based' stories, a new mythology of the journalist as a complex anti-hero is emerging. This paper has outlined how this new mythology is at once unique, particularly in its digital orientation, while drawing on archetypal formations of the journalist as uniquely capable to enhance this information as news. This paper has shown that narrative analysis through semiotic and semantic analyses can help understand the identity and boundary work journalists in a modern era as news narratives orient discussions of journalism towards a laudable identity that balances competing dynamics along three points:

(1) Providing a portrait of an ideal journalist that reinforces those roles and traits seen as most *favourable* to the self-perception of the journalist.

(2) Offering an outward-facing portrayal that reinforces idealised and self-perceived notions of journalistic identity around journalists as uniquely suited to perform such newswork.

(3) Resonating with historic journalistic archetypes, and provides a counter-narrative to trends of formal professionalisation.

In doing so, journalistic metadiscourses provide avenues for analysis of journalism's sometimes-hard-to-define identity. In news stories that attract significant attention these narratives draw attention to the journalist as an actor engaged in notable revelatory work. Importantly, such metadiscourses also provide a corrective to tarnished portrayals of journalists as elite or lax in their pursuit of information, and in doing so reinforce the journalist as a 'man of the people' serving a public interest. Narratives that foreground journalistic work and distinguish the journalist as contributing meaningfully to society while simultaneously de-emphasising elite associations also reinforce ideal-typical perceptions of journalism, emphasising the boundaries that separate journalists from governments, publics, and other actors (Berkowitz 2000). Beyond offering colourful narratives of enwswork within modern stories, this paper has argued the anti-heroic mythology crafted within contemporary investigative journalism emerges allows journalists to simultaneously professionalise and de-professionalise their identity by reasserting highly normative journalistic values that re-establish journalists as idealised societal actors, while emphasising work and risk in the interest of the public.

Narratives of news work are one part of the larger coverage of Snowden or WikiLeaks, but they play an outsized role within such coverage when they draw attention to journalism itself. However, these portrayals are not without their problems. Where attention to the both the news being reported *and* the journalism behind the newswork is all but guaranteed, the presence of journalistic mythologies shape narratives of the journalist around typically masculine attributes. Through descriptions that invoke archetypes of the ideal of journalism described as an urban-based, male reporter (Inglis 2002, 10; Sims 2007), modern identity narratives risk replicating constructions of journalists as 'male heroes', emphasising risk and action over more nuanced aspects of reportage (cf. Djerf-Pierre 2007; van Zoonen 1998a, 1998b).

Without taking away from the ambitious work of investigative journalism now or in previous eras, we should focus a critical lens on those identity discourses that promote narrow or overly-romanticised notions of the journalistic field for what they leave out. Within accounts of journalists decrypting files with secret codes written on cocktail napkins or using sophisticated software to evade surveillance, left out is a much needed discussion of journalism's assumed-as-integral roles in democratic society, as well as larger questions about the way such stories can leave whistleblowers isolated as news sources within digital megastories (Thorsen et al. 2013).

Romanticised notions of journalists can also be inaccurate simplifications of journalism as an us-versus-them endeavour, and through the particular roles and practices that are invoked they can reinforce an identity that poorly reflects journalism's wider dynamics and public commitment (Donsbach 2010; van Zoonen 1998b). That these narratives 'cross-pollinate' across real and fictional portrayals (Underwood 2013), overly romanticised portrayals also advance a view of journalists that "hovers between stereotyped dichotomies" as either "fighting for justice and truth against the odds of bureaucratic social powers, but battling also with the laziness, narcissism and silliness of their fellow journalists" (van Zoonen 1998b, 124). Such portrayals and their historical predecessors mythologise journalism around role performances that, absent much needed critique, become de facto reference points for understanding the journalist.

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