The Evolution of Story: How Time and Modality Affect Visual and Verbal Narratives

Abstract

A majority of Americans distrust the news media due to concerns over comprehensiveness, accuracy, and fairness. Since many interactions between journalists and their subjects last only minutes and can be published within seconds, if not live, research is needed to explore how journalists' understandings of their subjects' narratives evolve over time and how much time is necessary to avoid surface-level coverage. Also, since people are now exposed to more image-based rather than text-based messages, additional research is necessary to explore how the verbal narratives spoken by subjects compare to their nonverbal narratives as captured by news photographers in visual form. Through a longitudinal, interview-based approach, a photojournalist working on a 30-plus-day picture story was interviewed weekly for six weeks over the course of his project to track perceptions of how his subjects' verbal narratives changed. At the conclusion of the project, the photojournalist's subjects were also interviewed to explore how their verbal and nonverbal narratives compared. Informed by literature in role theory, narrative, and visual journalism, the findings explore how news media narratives can be more nuanced and how people shape their visual and verbal narratives consciously and unconsciously. Additional findings suggest that comprehensiveness, accuracy, and fairness are intimately related to interaction duration and that visual narratives can highlight role conformity and conflict in ways not possible through verbal narratives alone.

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Introduction

Humans could not survive without comfortable disclosing their occupational stories. They spend their earliest days reciting them as a means of imitation and, by the time they are 3 to 5 years old, they start creating variants on these stories through selective repetition, juxtaposition, or alteration to make a story more personally relevant (McNeil, 1996). This process continues through elementary years and, in cultures where innovative thinking is valued, through adulthood, though often in subtler ways. People use their repository of story types to craft their own narrative—verbal or visual—and concurrently cement their own identities.

Humans craft different stories for different audiences and different occasions. When meeting strangers, for example, people might feel more identities than their personal ones and often forego nuanced details about how these identities differ from stereotypes or diverge from popular mass media conceptions. If a person is the subject of an oral history, though, s/he might organize his or her narrative differently and shed light on the multiple and sometimes conflicting roles and identities that inform his or her narrative. One's visual narrative online or on social media often looks quite different than one's reality (Stephens-Davidowitz, 2017). For example, people are more likely to post pictures they think will increase their social capital or "coolness factor" than they are to document the more

routine and banal tasks, such as cleaning or commuting, that make up a larger majority of their lives.

People's narratives are perhaps most visible and static when they are preserved by journalists and added to the "first rough draft of history." This study proposes an exploration of two major and intersecting streams involving narrative and journalism. First, considering widespread media criticism in the United States over accuracy, context, and fair representations (Riffkin, 2015), scholarly attention is needed to understand how understanding of narratives evolves over time in a journalistic context and how much time practitioners need to spend to accomplish coverage that transcends the surface level. Second, considering that humans are now exposed to more visual-based than text-based messages (Lester, 2011) and that narratives can be both verbal and nonverbal, both words and actions—in this case those documented by visual journalists—need to be studied to explore how these compare and if differences exist.

While much research has explored narratives, narrativizing, and how journalists portray their subjects, no research has yet explored how the narratives of journalists' subjects evolve and shift over time or how their verbal narratives differ from those captured visually by photojournalists. Informed by literature in visual journalism, narrative, and role theory, this study explores this gap through a longitudinal, interview-based approach with a photojournalist and his subjects in a Midwestern city of 115,000.

Literature Review

Journalists and Their Subjects

Journalists and their subjects is an understudied topic (Palmer, 2017). More focus is often placed on one group or the other, and both groups are seldom studied concurrently. These two groups most often interact during short, day-turn projects where journalists take a story and condense it into a bite-sized segment suitable for the printed page or the attention spans of those who consume digital news. Such short, context-poor interactions are often necessitated by economic constraints or outlets' concern for profit margins (Weinberg, 1998). Journalists are not wholly responsible for this reductive process, though. By adopting roles and using these as shorthand to easily and and quickly communicate essential aspects of their occupations, identities, and behaviors, subjects also lessen the potential for context-rich and complex depictions. Anecdotal evidence of the tension that sometimes exists between photographers and those they photograph exists. A high-profile example is Pulitzer Prize-winner Manny Crisostomo, Detroit Free Press photographer, who in the 1980s was suspended after his employers determined he had become too close to his subjects and had facilitated their drug addiction while concurrently documenting it (Lester, 1991).

Modality, too, affects context and representation. Visual journalism, for example, has distinctly different characteristics than text-based journalism, which influences how it is perceived. Because the public perceives text as more constructed than images, its members are more likely to put greater trust in the veracity of visuals (Adatto, 1993; Messaris & Abraham, 2001; Perlmutter, 1998). While the perception still exists that photojournalism is an unbiased, complete, attention-getting form of storytelling, the reality is more complex. A modern photojournalist, according to Newton (2013), has one foot firmly planted "within

the visual pursuit of objective reality as we now know it—the most accurate recording of life events a human being can make" and the other firmly planted "within subjective experience . . . often with a clear point of view" (p. 50). A photojournalist assumes the role of "covert artist with an acute social conscience," somehow intent on "revealing the contradictions of life" (p. 50).

Narratives and Narrative Subjectivity

Human narrativity is essential to social survival and adaptation (McNeil, 1996). Early understandings of narratives were "factist," while later understandings, influenced by constructivism, emphasized the fluid, dynamic, and evolving nature of narratives (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 207). That is, narratives are subjective and relativist rather than markers of a fixed and objective reality. Narratives are organizing principles (Sarbin, 1986) that rely on conscious or unconscious selection from among alternatives in one's life history (Rosenthal, 2004). Stories allow humans to engage in meaning making, both on personal and social levels, and are critical elements of identity formation (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988). Many narrative scholars (Kim, 2015; Riessman, 2008; Spector-Mersel, 2010) recognize the subjectivity of narratives.

> All narratives are, in a fundamental sense, co-constructed. The audience, whether physically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said, how things should be expressed, what can be taken for granted, what needs explaining, and so on. (Salmon & Riessman, 2008, p. 78)

Thus, sufficient context about those involved in the interaction and their environments is necessary so that a more nuanced understanding of narratives can be achieved.

Narrative Evolution

Humans understand recurrent events by organizing them into scripts, and narrative scripts arise from routinized behavior (McNeil, 1996).

> A script is a structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context. A script is made up of slots and requirements about what can fill those slots. The structure is an interconnected whole, and what is in one slot affects what can be in another. Scripts handle stylized everyday situations. They are not subject to change, nor do they provide the apparatus for handling totally novel situations. Thus, a script is a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation. (Schank & Abelson, 1975, p. 151)

Humans understand situations using frameworks that include characters, settings, event sequences, connections, goals, and more (Schank & Abelson, 1975). Innovative narrativity, that is, the differentiating, combining, and recombining of stories, is an inherent part of a narrative's life cycle (McNeil, 1996). Narrative innovation occurs after exposure to sufficient scripts. After such exposure is obtained, humans select elements from these scripts through which to fashion their own narratives. This narrative innovation serves dual roles as both a sense- making process and an identity creation and maintenance one. Put more simply, one's stories evolve as one first recites narratives; second, makes them one's own; and

third, revises and alters them as needed to maintain one's evolving identities under new physical and cultural contexts.

Since narratives evolve over the course of one's life span, it is logical to assume that they might also evolve over the course of one's interactions with someone:

> Public accounts tended to be offered in the first interview when rapport between the interviewer and interviewee was minimal. That is, the interviewee had a tendency of offering an account that he or she thought the interviewer wanted or expected to hear. However, the interview participants tended to offer their private (more interesting and meaningful) accounts in a second or subsequent interview because trust and familiarity with the researcher had been established. (Kim, 2015, p. 162)

In a journalistic context, the initial narrative that is presented might differ based on a number of intrinsic or extrinsic factors between the subject and the journalist, and this narrative is likely to grow more nuanced as the interactions progresses over time.

Role Theory

Role theory is a sociological and social psychological concept that attempts to explain behavior patterns, known as roles (Biddle, 1986). Roles are scripted actions carried out by people in social positions who have expectations for their own behavior and that of others. Role theory exists under five assumptions:

1) some behaviors are patterned and are characteristic of persons within contexts;
2) roles are often association with sets of persons who share a common identity;
3) persons are often aware of roles, and, to some extent, roles are governed by the fact of their awareness (i.e., by expectations);
4) roles persist, in part, because of their consequences (functions) and because they are often embedded within larger social systems; and 5), persons must be taught roles (i.e., must be socialized) and may find either joy or sorrow in the performances of those roles. (Biddle, 2013, p. 8)

Roles, when defined by context, are known as contextual roles. These include periodic roles, such as handshake greetings when meeting someone new but not if they are close and familiar. Roles, like narratives, are influenced by coherence, or the distribution of a role's components. Coherent roles consist of behaviors that can be performed easily, either in sequence or simultaneously, while less coherent roles evidence behavioral disjuncture, inconsistent behavior, or roughness of flow (Biddle, 2013). Role generation occurs through expectations as determined by experience, and derived concepts include role conflict, role-taking, role-playing, and consensus.

Role Conflict and Consensus

Role conflict occurs when others lack consensual expectations for each other's behavior (Biddle, 1986). When people face competing interests and pressures, they suffer stress from the conflicting roles. Role conflict arises from multiple incompatible expectations for personal behavior. Consensus, on the other hand, denotes harmony between the

expectations held by social actors. Interaction proceeds more smoothly in a social system that evidences consensus (Biddle, 1986). Photojournalists, like subjects, often adopt one or more roles, which are often expressed as a metaphor, such as the fly on the wall or the watchdog (Prosser, 1998). The first implies a desire to neither be intrusive nor highly visible, while the latter foregrounds journalists' responsibility to provide accountability and transparency. Subjects, too, adopt roles that influence their behavior. The "soccer mom," the "workaholic," and the "helicopter parent" are examples of roles that some might adopt. This study is interested in the little-researched tension that exists when photojournalists' subjects adopt contradictory or incompatible roles (such as the tension between familial expectations and sexuality) or have these thrust upon them. How does such tension affect their behavior and the narrative they tell while being documented? Examining the use and evolution of narratives will shed light on how cohesively people live their lives and if photojournalists choose to portray them in all their complexities and contradictions or more simplistically or reductively.

Research Questions
This study concerns itself primarily with two questions: (1) How do journalists' understanding of narratives change as they and their subjects go from knowing nothing about one another to knowing quite a bit over the course of several weeks or months during long-form journalism projects; and (2) How do the narratives that are relayed verbally differ from those that are relayed nonverbally, e.g., through behavior or setting that is illustrated visually through the images the photojournalist makes?

Thus, considering how intrinsic narratives are to human sense-making and considering how different roles can create tension and the potential for these contradictions to be exposed by visual journalists during long-form documentary projects, the study explores the following two research questions:

> **RQ1:** How does a photojournalist's understandings of his/her subjects' narratives evolve during long-term (one month or longer) documentary projects?
> **RQ2:** How do the narratives told verbally by the photojournalist's subject compare to the narratives expressed visually through the images?

Methods
Since narrative evolution can be subtle and because human memory can be selective, a longitudinal approach to answering the study's research questions is essential. Kvale (1996) suggests a "minimum of three rounds of open or in-depth life story interviews." This study's design exceeded this recommendation and made use of seven in-depth interviews instead.

Sample Population and Justification
Studying narrative evolution and fidelity through the lens of photojournalism is an ideal focus for several reasons. First, photojournalists interact with their subjects much more closely and intimately than do other types of journalists (Jardine, 2014). Reporters are not limited by proximity and can, for example, phone their subjects, follow up with them through e-mail, or video chat with them if they need clarification or to ask further questions. Photojournalists, in contrast, have to be where their subjects are while the "action" is happening. They spend more time in proximity to their subjects and, especially during long-

form projects, are exposed to more intimate parts of their subjects' lives (Jardine, 2014). This intimacy often means it is harder for subjects to keep their roles and identities separate. Role conflict and discontinuity is more likely to be visible in such circumstances and allows the researcher to study how narratives change over time and differ by modality.

Research Setting and Participant Recruitment

After obtaining IRB approval in late 2016, Jack[1], a Black male photojournalist working on a 30-plus-day picture story in a midwestern U.S. city, was recruited for this study. He consented to weekly interviews, to providing copies of his final images to the researcher, and to putting the researcher in contact with his subjects at the conclusion of the project so they could be invited to participate as well. Jack's initial plan for the picture story was to "show the similarities and differences about what a polyamorous relationship means" through his primary subject, Janice, and, eventually, two of her partners, secondary and tertiary subjects Candy and Alexander. Jack had regular contact with Janice from the first and second interviews onward. He did not meet Candy or Alexander face-to-face until the third interview.

Data Collection

This study made use of in-depth interviews that were developed deductively from past research and theory as well as inductively through a series of several pilot interviews conducted prior to the study's data collection phase. After the interview questions were revised and clarified through this process, in-depth, in-person, recorded interviews with Jack took place weekly from November 4, 2016, through December 11, 2016, to track how the understanding of his subjects' narratives evolved over time. After six weeks of documenting his subjects, Jack showed the researcher the images for the first time and was interviewed one final time using a photo elicitation technique (Harper, 2002). Following this, Jack's primary subject was interviewed three times and his secondary subject was interviewed once to explore the second research question about how the spoken narratives compared with the visual ones. Interviews were transcribed directly after they were conducted so that the scene was fresh and nonverbal cues and gestures could be represented in the transcript. In all, the interviews yielded 106 pages of transcripts for analysis.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used because of its attention on "what" is said, rather than "how," "to whom," or "for what purpose" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54). Audiences are usually quite broad and diverse in journalistic community news contexts (where Jack trained and works), so the focus on what rather than who is appropriate since journalists who do not work for niche publications often do not know who their audiences might be. The transcripts were first analyzed using as a guide some of the recurring narrative elements Labov (1972) identified. These elements, including abstract (origin), orientation (setting), complicating action (tension), and resolution (outcome), helped map how the photojournalist's understanding of his subjects' narratives evolved over time. Next, the transcripts were reanalyzed with role theory in mind to survey each participants' roles and highlight any consensus or conflict that arose from these roles. An Excel spreadsheet and ATLAS.ti software were used to systematically manage these processes. Following Moen's (2006)

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[1] Participants' names have been changed.

best practices for ensuring narrative validity in narrative research, this study used multiple data types and sources (first- and second-person accounts and verbal and visual narratives that were constructed in person and, in some cases, online), employed member checking strategies, and immersed the researcher into prolonged exposure and engagement with the research participants and their settings.

Justification for Using a Single Case. In standard qualitative approaches, saturation of meta-themes can be reached in as few as six cases, while more extensive saturation can be reached in as few as a dozen cases (Guest, Bunce, & Johnston, 2006). Narrative is a distinct enough approach, however, to warrant rigorous examination of a single case on the following grounds: First, in contrast to standard research practices that examine a tiny slice of an interaction, an event, or a phenomenon, this study's topic of interest is vastly more broad—the contents and styling of an entire life as represented through narrative. Such representations often fill entire books in the cases of biography and autobiography, so attempting to understand and represent a single case and the lives of the journalists' three subjects in the space constraints of a journal article is a challenge indeed. Second, exploring "atypical, extreme, or paradigmatic cases is often necessary to extend theory about a general problem" as these cases "can uncover social practices that are taken for granted" (Riessman, 2008, p. 194). Rather than obtain fragmentary information from many individuals about the typical minutes-long exchange between journalists and subjects, studying the atypical, extreme, and paradigmatic long-form approach, in this case, is necessary to extend theoretical understanding of how journalistic understanding evolves over time. Third, though only three people were interviewed in a single case (not including the pilot interviews undertaken for this study with other long-form visual journalists that helped shape and refine interview questions), 11 individual interviews were conducted (seven with the photojournalist, three with the journalist's primary subject, and one with the journalist's secondary subject). This provided more than enough data for rich analysis and thoughtful presentation of findings.

Findings
RQ1: How does a photojournalist's understandings of his/her subjects' narratives evolve during long-term (one month or longer) documentary projects?

As the primary subject, Jack's understanding of Janice's narrative will be examined first. Following this, Candy's narrative, which is unique because Jack corresponded with her via text message for several weeks before the first face-to-face meeting, will be examined. Jack provided inadequate information for Alexander's narrative to be analyzed with sufficient depth.

The Evolution of Janice's Narrative
At the time of the first interview, Jack, the photojournalist, had met with his primary subject, Janice, "six or seven times." He was not aware of any role conflict in her life and provided 33 descriptors about her during the first interview.

Eight of these descriptors were demographic characteristics. They included the following features: "Polyamorous, American, Midwestern, brunette, White, female, in her early 20s (she was 20 at the time of the first contact and turned 21 during the course of the

interviews), and a "small-towner." Four of the descriptors were role- related. The photojournalist was aware of and identified the following four roles: student (studying psychology), romantic partner (currently in relationships with four people), employee (worked at a call center), and daughter to parents ("but I never really explored that too much," Jack said). The remaining 20 descriptors concerned her personality and behavior. These included: kind-hearted, open/"an open book," not afraid to speak her mind, not afraid to be herself, figuring out who she is, organized in her life, relatively structured, cooperative, invested in others, extroverted, bubbly, willing to get to know others, genuine in front of others, nurturing, maternal, straight forward/blunt, caring, exudes genuine warmth, excited about life, and multilayered.

"Honesty" was added in the third interview. "Sassy, inclusive, loving, and den mother-y" were added in the fourth interview. At this point, Jack revealed that Janice had started referring to him by pet names, including "hon," "sweetie," and "sweetheart." He found it surprising but not off-putting. He said:

> As a journalist, you get kind of uncomfortable when your subject uses pet names toward you, cause it's like, I want you to treat me like the professional I am, but at the same time, you're like, you're probably going to only have a handful of visual subjects who are ever going to do that for you, so I think you have to roll with it.

At the fourth interview, Jack also mentioned that Janice had added him on Facebook and that he did not know how to respond:

> This is where the whole "blurring the lines" thing really comes into play, because, out of nowhere, Janice added me on Facebook. To me, that's a huge ethical question that I don't know who to ask about that. It's no different than if someone else added me on Facebook, but, at the same time, it is different because that's your subject. It's like if you're a psychiatrist, is it OK if my patients interact with me in a nonprofessional setting? What effect does that have on the work we do and is that OK? (Jack, unpublished interview No. 4[2])

By the fifth interview, Jack revealed that role conflict in Janice's life had become apparent, and he was interested in exploring it further. Janice is open about her sexuality and polyamory at her work and where she volunteers, Jack said, but he disclosed that she has a strained relationship with her mother because of how her mother views Janice's sexuality.

> Janice has mentioned how she's not close with her mom too much because her mom doesn't get it (polyamory) and doesn't approve of it. She doesn't want to go home very often because she doesn't want to give her mom the satisfaction that she is right. At the same time, she does want to because she does want to have the satisfaction that, by being there, by being present, her family, indirectly, accepts this lifestyle. (Jack, unpublished interview No. 5)

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[2] Interview numbers correspond to the week the participant was interviewed—e.g., Interview No. 4 refers to the interview conducted during the fourth week of the study.

Jack thought he would have opportunity to explore this role conflict a day after the fifth interview, when Janice was scheduled to attend a parade with her friends and family. During the sixth interview, Jack revealed that Janice did not end up seeing her mom at the parade, and his only opportunity to observe their interaction came after when Janice stopped by her mother's house to drop off some medication.

> I knew that she isn't very close to her mom, but everything was very calm. In my head, I was wondering about that the entire time. I didn't see any of that conflict or disagreement. On the car ride back, all the three of them [Janice and two of her friends who accompanied her] were talking about was "That's just not like how her (Janice's) mom normally acts." (Jack, unpublished interview No. 6)

Jack said he attributed this atypical behavior both to his presence and to the presence of Janice's two friends. "Who wants to have their kid show up with their friends but then also this strange guy with a camera trying to take pictures of me interacting with my kid?" Jack said. "I, personally, I wouldn't want to be in that situation."

Jack relayed during the sixth interview one final facet of how his understanding of Janice's narrative had evolved. Unbeknownst to him, Janice had, some three weeks prior, broken up with one of her partners from a polycule in Colorado. Jack said he was surprised when he found out and said he would not have known had he not overhead a friend bring it up during a birthday party for Janice's roommate. "I didn't say anything about it, but it was like, 'Wow. That happened and I would have never known.' I could not tell." Thus, Jack went from trying to show the similarities and differences of a polyamorous relationship to exploring what it means to be polyamorous and have only a single partner. "It's not as sexy as what I had before, but it's something," he said.

The Evolution of Candy's Narrative

The first interview concerned Janice exclusively, and Candy was not mentioned until the second interview. By this time, Jack had acquired permission from Janice to photograph her but was still trying to secure permission from two of Janice's romantic partners—Candy and Alexander—to be photographed too. Jack acquired from Janice Candy's phone number and began texting her in the hopes of gaining access. "I can't start shooting anything yet until I get the OK from her partners who live here, and that's been like pulling teeth," Jack said. "Yesterday, I got a text and she was like, 'Yeah, we don't really know if we want to do this.'" Candy disclosed that she did not like to be photographed and, when pressed, admitted to Jack that she has "really bad body image issues." Jack said he revealed some of his own personal mental health issues to her in an attempt to be vulnerable and gain her trust. "Hopefully by letting out some of my own skeletons that shows I do genuinely care," he said. Since he had never seen Candy face-to-face before, Jack was much less descriptive than he had been about Janice. Compared to the 33 descriptors he provided about Janice, Jack used only five descriptors for Candy. These included a single demographic characteristic (body dysmorphic disorder) and four characteristics related to personality or behavior (hesitant, uncomfortable being photographed, "has really bad body image issues," and "very kind").

By interview three, he had met Janice, Candy, and Alexander together at a local coffee shop and, after spending face-to-face time with Candy, described her this time as "very quiet," "very reserved," "very calculated," and "lively but reserved." By the fourth interview, though, this perception shifted dramatically. His perceived her now as "cocky," "sassy," and much less inhibited:

> Now that I've interacted with Candy over the course of multiple hours, Candy's not nearly as reserved as I initially thought. Like what I said about Candy being kind of cocky and really sassy. That is very true. That is very much who Candy is and, sometimes, Candy might say something that might hurt your feelings and, in your head, you're like, "Dude, what the fuck?" But, at the same time, that's who she is.

Figure 1 *Janice, right, watches as floats go by with her roommate and friend during a midwestern parade on December 3, 2016. Many of Janice's closest friends are polyamorous and Janice considers them family when she doesn't feel accepted by her biological family.*

In both cases, Jack acquired a more nuanced and complex picture of his subjects the longer he spent with them. His understandings were not just deepened and made more complex but, in some cases, were also radically reassessed and altered to accommodate for the new information he learned as he spent more time with them.

> **RQ2:** How do the narratives told verbally by the photojournalist's subject compare to the narratives expressed visually through the images?

Jack decided to visually represent Janice's narrative in seven images. Within these seven images, he shows Janice's roles as romantic partner in a polycule, daughter, friend, and upcoming graduate. The graduate and romantic partner elements were reflected in both

Janice's self-assessment of her narrative and in Jack's visual rendering of it. Janice's status as a mother to a cat and an employee—both elements she mentioned when asked to describe her own narrative—were not reflected in the visual narrative. Also divergent from her verbal narrative was Jack's inclusion of (1) an image of Janice watching a parade with friends and (2) an image of Janice at her mother's house, which— though benign on the surface—revealed some of the underlying tension the two experienced.

Figure 2 *Janice plays with her family's dogs as her mother tries to speak with her on December 3, 2016.*

> This picture[3] really represents our relationship. In this picture, I'm down on the floor loving my dogs. They're loving me back, and my mom is standing there not really looking mean or angry but kind of like she might be ready to scold me. That's so indicative of my relationship with my mother and how, when I go home, I receive the unconditional love of my dogs because they don't know how to love any differently, and that's great. Whereas, my mom, she creates this tension when we're together, and she is ready to scold on almost any subject, any time. I remember talking to Jack about this picture and all that this picture says and represents in my life. I remember having this thought in the back of my head: "Do I want my mom to be in a picture that Jack takes about my life?" Kind of questioning that, 'cause my mom doesn't like my life at all.

Janice thought that most of the images converged with her spoken narrative and that, with these images, Jack had captured her essence. She noted, however, that the images could only converge with the narrative that she had expressed, and some photos were not entirely accurate because she had not fully expressed that part of her narrative yet.

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[3] Please see figure two.

There might be a lie or two in these pictures. There are some things in life that aren't big enough issues yet. Small enough that we can live with so you don't talk about it until the "yet" goes away and it is that bigger issue. Some of these pictures talk to that. My relationship with my roommate is much different now. It was starting to be strained here (in December 2016) and now (a month later) it is very strained. This picture[4], you can't tell that, so it's a little bit of a lie because it was a small issue and something I hadn't said yet.

Thus, while most of the images converged with the verbal narrative as Janice expressed it, two aspects of her narrative were not reflected visually, and another two aspects—including one showing role tension—were added.

Discussion

Time has a poignant impact on how, if, and under what circumstances verbal and visual narratives are produced. Recalling the earlier example of Manny Crisostomo, journalists writing about his case have noted how intense deadline pressure can sometimes impact behavior and ethical standards. "With the instant 24-hour format of the drug story, the journalists were also under tremendous pressure to come up with a crack addict during a fleeting amount of time" (Carvajal, 1990). Such pressure resulted in actions that Crisostomo's colleague later admitted "violated our standards" and "tainted" the resulting coverage. Time can also influence the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and fairness of the content itself, as evidenced by this study's case.

In both Janice's and Candy's cases, their narratives shifted dramatically as journalist and subject became more comfortable and vulnerable with each other over time. Though both narratives evidenced a shift, it was not the same type of shift for both. The evolution in Janice's narrative came from (1) the tension that was revealed toward the end of the project when Jack learned his subject's mother was disapproving of her daughter's sexuality, and (2) from overhearing three weeks after the fact that Janice had broken up with one of her partners. Thus, in this case, the narrative was not changed so much as it was extended and rendered more complex through the role conflict that became apparent after the fifth interview and through the news of the breakup after the sixth interview. In contrast, Candy's narrative was not extended or made more complex but was shifted compositionally due to an inaccurate or shallow understanding that become more nuanced as Jack spent more time with her. At first, he regarded her as shy, calculated, and reserved, but by the fourth interview, he had spent sufficient time with her that he now regarded her as uninhibited, "sassy," and "cocky."

Role Consensus and Conflict

Janice evidenced role coherence with her behaviors at home, at her partners' homes, at work, and at the nonprofit organization where she volunteers. The role of daughter was less coherent for her, as evidenced through her mother's seemingly inauthentic behavior when she traveled to the state's capital city after the fifth interview to spend time with her family. Her mother's actions after the parade typify the behavior inconsistency Biddle (2013)

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[4] Please see figure one.

suggests is characteristic of less coherent roles. Janice said both she and her mother experienced this role inconsistency:

> To fulfill the role of being my mother's daughter, I have to let go of the roles of being a caregiver and being a lover because I can't do that in her household the way that I like to do it. Her space is not a safe space. It's not for me, and it's not for many people. It's very hard for me to be in that place without wanting to create it into something that is accepting. That's the main role and space that doesn't feel right to me.

Janice's role as a polyamorous person was also challenged after the breakup that occurred halfway through the project. "I guess our conflict here is you have a person who is poly, but she's no longer poly," Jack said. "How do you maintain your identity as a poly person when you only have one partner?" Because Janice did not reveal this to Jack and because Jack did not find out about this until three weeks after the breakup occurred, it suggests that her role as a polyamorous person is more stable than her role as a daughter.

Jack too experienced role consensus initially but then experienced some role conflict after the fourth interview when his subject added him on Facebook and started referring to him by pet names. These actions, he felt, conflicted with his role as a professional journalist, on one hand, and as a developing friend, on the other. Jack referred to himself as both human and vulture during the interviews and said he struggled to balance an appropriate level of closeness.

> One of the problems with having a lot of access is that you don't photograph from the perspective of not having too much access. Because you're so close, it's almost like you're too close. It's like you have to take a step back and shoot from the perspective of being the fly on the wall, again. That was something I didn't think about that. I was trying so hard to work toward being closer and closer and closer that I never thought, "Let me take a few steps back and shoot from that perspective."

By the sixth interview, Jack had accepted Janice's Facebook friend request—so as not to cause a "rift" between the two of them—but had hidden her posts from his newsfeed and edited his privacy settings so she could not see any of his recent posts, including some updates on the project and still images from his outtakes.

Implications for Professional Practice

Interestingly, both Janice and Candy had vulnerable private issues that they eventually shared with Jack but at radically different stages in the process. Janice waited until Jack and she had interacted more than a dozen times before revealing the tension that brewed between her and her mother, while Candy divulged her body image issues during her first conversation with Jack. A potential explanation for this comes from the mode of communication. Jack and Janice interacted face-to-face from the beginning and never had a text-only relationship, while Jack and Candy texted back and forth about two weeks before they met in person.

It's easier for people to be vulnerable or disclose if it's a number you don't know or you don't have any prior interaction with the person you're interacting with. It's a lot easier. For me, it's a lot easier to just say it via text to someone I don't know, because there's a very good chance I might not ever interact with that person in person. When it's a person you know or when you're communicating in person, you have to be a little more cognizant about how you deliver something, how you talk about a personal issue, because, now these faces have seen each other, these faces recognize each other, if I saw you anywhere else, that's the first thing that's going to come to mind: "They know that secret about me that not even my family knows about me." It does get a little dicey. (Jack, unpublished interview No. 4)

Thus, when discussing sensitive issues or experiences, it might be best for journalists to broach those conversations initially through mediated communication channels so that intrinsic factors, such as demographic characteristics, are less likely to influence how or even if subjects will interact with journalists. This lessens the likelihood of unconscious bias and also benefits the journalist in that people are less inhibited communicating in virtual spaces than they are when communicating face-to-face (Ensher, Heun, & Blanchard, 2003; Hamilton & Scandura, 2003).

Situating this study back in the context of its production and recalling that (1) more than half of U.S. citizens are concerned about the news media's accuracy, contextual depth, and fairness (Riffkin, 2015) and (2) that a photographer's institutional settings and occupational communities affect the media he or she produces (Rosenblum, 1973), it is clear that the current practice of little to no interaction between visual journalists and their subjects (Thomson, 2016) is inadequate for satisfying audiences or for portraying them with adequate depth and nuance. Therefore, at least two components should be examined as they relate to journalistic encounters: exposure and accountability. As this study suggests, multiple days, if not weeks, are required to obtain a representative understanding of someone's personality, and an awareness of conflicting roles can take more than a month. Not all journalism, such as breaking news or daily reportage, requires or makes such depth practical, but journalists should invest the time for stories that are complex or deserve nuance, such as profiles, cover stories, and in-depth analyses.

Accountability goes hand in hand with exposure. If journalists do not interact with their subjects or only interact with them briefly, their subjects are likely to never see them again, and the journalist has little accountability to represent them with care and trust since the interaction is finite and not ongoing. If, however, the journalist spends an extended period of time with their subject so that they eventually become comfortable sharing vulnerable aspects of their lives and, in the case of Janice, develop pet names for the journalist or wish to sustain contact after the story finishes, the journalist's accountability is heightened because they will likely see the subject again, whether physically or in the digital world, and have to face the consequences for how they treat the subject and his or her narrative. In Jack's own words:

Daily work is great. It's fun, and you can find ways to make great pictures, but it's almost like this temporary high. You're there, you shoot, you have fun, you make connections you need to, and you do it for just that one chunk of time. But after

that, it's done. It's over. You don't go back to that again. When you work on a story, the more you go back, you build a close relationship with who you're photographing. In a way, your subject becomes a part of who you are or you become a part of who they are.

If this had been a day-turn assignment, all we would have known was the rather straightforward story of Janice, a polyamorous woman with several partners and no apparent role conflict, and Candy, a woman who was shy, reserved, and calculated. Instead, with the perspective afforded by more than six weeks of immersive journalism, we instead can better understand the more nuanced and complex Janice as a polyamorous woman living in a monogamous relationship who experiences tension with her mother and the not-so-shy Candy who is bristling with sass and confidence.

Future studies that focus on the intersection of visual or verbal narratives and journalism could also explore those narratives that are presented online through, for example, social media, and how the narratives compare to visual or verbal ones presented elsewhere. Such an analysis would likely yield relevant and interesting insights because self-disclosure is not incremental in social media relationships like it is in face-to-face relationships and, once users are connected, they have instant access to a vast trove of personal, biographical, and time-line-based information. Another stream of research could focus more fully on the role conflicts that emerge over extended durations between journalists and their subjects, their antecedents, outcomes, and the factors that mediate these.

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