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THE REINVENTED JOURNALIST

The discursive construction of professional identity on Twitter

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Today, there is much academic discussion about how journalism and journalists are affected by rapid change and convergence in the work context. Considering the fundamental transformations of the media ecology brought about by digitization and the advent of social media, it has been assumed that journalists are more or less compelled to reinvent their professional role and identity. We know a good deal about how social media is adopted by journalists, mostly through survey and interview studies investigating self-perceptions of identity in terms of norms and values. There are also some case studies, predominantly in the form of (quantitative) content analyses, exploring the (innovative) uses of Twitter. However, we still have little knowledge about how the professional identity of journalists is discursively constructed – how, in specific detail, traditional norms and ideals are discursively reinforced or challenged – in the Twitter flow. With a discourse theoretical and methodological approach, this article aims to contribute to our understanding of the discursive construction of professional identity on Twitter by qualitatively analyzing tweets from the most widely followed journalist in Sweden. The analysis of the most active j-tweeter can yield important clues as to what journalism may be in the process of becoming. The article identifies discourses that (1) reinforce the watchdog identity, (2) challenge the watchdog identity, (3) reinforce the disseminator/explicator identity, and (4) reinforce transparency but challenge professional identity. It concludes that the reinvented journalistic identity includes discursive processes that both shape and are shaped by Twitter in a dialectical relationship.

KEYWORDS journalism; journalistic identity; j-tweeters; news; normalizing; professional ideals; social media; Twitter

Introduction

Today, there is much academic discussion about the changing role of journalism in general and of journalists in particular. Broadly, the discussion deals with how journalism and journalists are affected by rapid change and convergence in the journalistic work context (Deuze 2008; O’Sullivan and Heinonen 2008). The digitization of media and journalism has resulted in a partial dissolution of previously taken-for-granted boundaries and distinctions, blurring the line between professional journalists and other types of information brokers. Professional journalists today make up just one among many voices in public communication, and to remain competitive they must to an increasing degree make themselves flexible and multi-skilled (Deuze 2007). Thus, considering the fundamental

transformations of the media ecology, including the advent of social media, it is reasonable to assume that journalists are more or less compelled to reinvent their professional role and identity (Gulyas 2013).

Notwithstanding some sociological disagreements over whether journalism should be regarded a profession (Lewis 2012), the very notion of professionalism has been an important part of journalists' self-conception (Kunelius and Ruusunoksa 2008), and they have long strived to invoke it as a means to legitimize and justify their claim to playing an essential role in democratic society (Deuze 2005; Lewis 2012). It is arguably this notion of professionalism that provides the means for building journalist identity, by defining the "right" way of doing journalism and of thinking about this particular practice (Witschge and Nygren 2009). According to Deuze (2005), the professional identity of journalists is tied to a common understanding and sense of identification with the central ideals, values and norms of journalism, which include being objective, impartial, and scrutinizing those in power. These norms and ideals are collectively shared, reproduced through the professional socialization process (Wiik 2009), and function as ideology, i.e. a taken-for-granted interpretative framework which works as a frame for professional identification (Deuze 2005). Ideology is inherently rigid, but it has been argued that the proliferation of digital technology in today's journalism could lead to transformations in journalistic identity (Artwick 2013); in other words, it is important to recognize that "professional identities are not set in stone; they change" (Witschge and Nygren 2009, 49). This article acknowledges both the rigidity of the professional identity of journalists and its potential to be transformed.

This study focuses on the microblogging site Twitter, which has rapidly become an important news platform that "allow(s) for practices that deviate from established conventions" (Hermida 2013, 301) in that it offers journalism a completely new communicative logic with which to relate. The logic of Twitter involves attributes such as personalization, openness, connectivity, participation and interactivity which largely contradict the logic that characterized legacy media built on the idea of asymmetric one-way communication (Deuze 2008; Hermida 2012). Hence, Twitter constitutes an excellent case for capturing ongoing transformations of professional journalistic identity in a digitized setting. The body of research on journalism and social media in general and on Twitter in particular is rapidly growing and can broadly be divided into two categories of studies (Hermida 2013; Vis 2013).

The first category consists of studies that deal with how news organizations have adopted Twitter and other social media as platforms for dissemination of news and information as well as marketing tools (e.g. Ahmad 2010; Greer and Yan 2010; Hermida 2010; Messner, Linke and Eford 2012; Noguera Vivo 2013). Results from this category of studies indicate that social media have gone through a process of "normalization" (Hermida 2013, 300; cf. Singer 2005) in relation to journalistic practice in the sense that they are mainly used to distribute news organizations' own content (Gulyas 2013; Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012).

The second category of studies, to which the present study aspires to contribute, focuses on how journalists themselves have adopted social media, including how journalists relate to professional norms, ideals and identity (Canter 2014; Gulyas 2013; Hedman 2015; Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Hermida 2013; Holton and Lewis 2011; Lasorsa 2012; Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012; Wiik 2009; Witschge and Nygren 2009). Survey studies show that a large share of journalists testify to using social media on a regular basis, though the number of "around-the-clock" users might be quite small (Gulyas 2013; Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013). Overall, the results point to a rather ambiguous situation. On the one hand, there are strong indications that social media have not brought about any major identity shifts, but journalists have extended the scope of the traditional journalistic identity, in terms

of ideological values and norms, to include their social media practices, thus “normalizing” social media to fit with ordinary journalistic practice (Artwick 2013; Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012; Wiik 2009). On the other hand, there are signs of a partial breaking up of traditional professional identity, for instance, acceptance of the blurring of professional and private identity, an inclination to more freely express opinions, and a positive attitude towards personal branding (Canter 2014; Hedman 2015; Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013; Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012). This latter trend seems to be particularly visible among the most active journalists on Twitter, who deviate from other journalists in this respect (Hedman 2015).

The aim of this study is to contribute knowledge about the discursive construction of professional identity on Twitter. As noted by Hermida (2013), and as shown above, we know quite a lot about how social media is adopted by journalists, mostly through survey and interview studies investigating self-perceptions of identity in terms of norms and values. There are also some case studies, predominantly in the form of (quantitative) content analyses, that explore the (innovative) use of Twitter. However, we still have limited knowledge about how the professional identity of journalists is *discursively* constructed – how, in specific detail, traditional norms and ideals are discursively reinforced or challenged – in the Twitter flow. As suggested by Bogaerts (2011), the nature of journalistic norms and values is discursive; it is only through discursive processes that they achieve meaning, which is why discourse approaches are required when studying the reinvention of professional identity. The present study, with its qualitative discourse-theoretical approach, contributes to bridging this knowledge gap.

The study focuses on a small but quite distinct group of journalists: the “enthusiastic activists” as labeled by Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013), i.e., journalists who are constantly connected and twitter 24/7, or, in the words of Deuze (2012), who lead a “media life extreme.” In a recent survey study of Swedish journalists, Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) identified this group especially among younger, urban, tabloid journalists, who share most of the fundamental professional ideals of journalism but, unlike the majority of their colleagues, hold the view that the profession must undergo profound changes because of social media. In her study of Swedish journalists active on Twitter (j-tweeters), Hedman (2015, 280) notes that “it is among the j-tweeters that researchers can expect to find the largest impact from social media on the profession of journalism.” As a representative of the 24/7 group of “enthusiasts,” the Swedish journalist Niklas Svensson (@niklassvensson), political reporter at the national tabloid Expressen, was selected for the present study. Ranked as the most influential (in terms of number of followers) j-tweeter in Sweden,¹ and producing a multitude of daily updates, Svensson undeniably qualifies as a member of the 24/7 group.

It should be noted, however, that selecting the most widely followed journalists as study objects has been criticized by several scholars for being atypical, i.e. as forming bodies of empirical data that are not representative of the majority of journalists (Hermida 2013; Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012; cf. Artwick 2013). This is certainly a very strong argument if one aspires to obtain a representative picture of the current status of the journalistic field in its totality. However, when studying social change of whatever kind, this type of representativity is not always required or even desirable. Embryonic transformations, atypical of the larger population, give us important clues as to what is going on in a certain social practice and what direction a process might take (Olausson 2010; 2013). As pointed out by Hedman (2015), bearing in mind the ongoing generational shift in the newsroom, it is quite possible that the highly active j-tweeters, who are mainly found in the younger generation, will act as “*journalism’s avant-garde*” (p. 294, italics in original), pointing to what journalism might become and fashioning the reinvention of its professional identity. Thus, the non-representative but *critical* case (Esaïasson et al. 2012) of the present study will

enable the identification of transformative discursive mechanisms working towards a “journalism /.../ breaking with classic narrative structures and deviating from long-held and fiercely defended norms” (Hermida 2013, 306).

The article includes four sections including this introduction. The second section accounts for the discourse theoretical and methodological framework, and the material (197 tweets). In the third section the results are presented, and are thematically structured around the central findings as discourses that (1) reinforce the watchdog identity, (2) challenge the watchdog identity, (3) reinforce the disseminator/explicator identity, and (4) reinforce transparency but challenge professional identity. The final section discusses the results and it is suggested that the question of whether Twitter is being normalized to fit ordinary journalistic practice or the other way around does not have an *either-or* but rather a *both-and* answer.

Analytic Framework and Material

In order to investigate professional journalistic identity on Twitter, this study applies the discourse and identity theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) who basically argue that the world and our place in it only receive meaning through discourse, and that discourse by definition is contextually sensitive and thus flexible. Hegemonic meanings and identities are constructed through discursive contests where they are challenged by counter-hegemonic discourses. Hegemony is never totally fixed, and other contesting identity positions are always present and struggling to achieving the hegemonic position. Hence, it would be wrong to regard identity as either a fixed construction or something in constant transformation. Instead, it should be regarded as having two sides (Isin and Wood 1999): one that is fluid and flexible, sensitive to contextual influences (such as the specifics of the Twitter setting); and one that is stable and lasting due to ideological processes through which it becomes naturalized, taken-for-granted and seemingly self-evident (such as the professional ideals and values of journalism). One could talk about a form of “strategic essentialism” in the construction of identity, which is always temporal: “It is not forever /.../ every full stop is provisional /.../ not underpinned by any infinite guarantees, but just now, this is what I mean; *this* is who I am.” (Hall cited in Morley 2000, 253, italics in original). Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 112) use the term “nodal point” to describe this stabilization of identity position.

As suggested by Carpentier and Cammaerts (2007), hegemony plays an important role in defining “good” journalism and distinguishing it from other forms of journalism. From this perspective, the journalistic profession is viewed as a field of struggle, where hegemonic ideals, values and norms, which form traditional journalistic identity, are contested and challenged by counter-hegemonic discourses shaped by, for instance, the logic of Twitter. An important theoretical assumption of the present study is that there is an ongoing struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic journalistic identity positions; this struggle need not be regarded as a matter of life and death, however, but is a creative process which enables transformation (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) and makes possible the reinvention of professional journalistic identity.

Carpentier (2005, 202) identifies four hegemonic nodal points, i.e. ideologically charged journalistic ideals and norms that underpin traditional journalistic identity: (1) objectivity – a neutral and factual attitude that guarantees the status of journalists as “truth-speakers”; (2) autonomy and independence – a resistance to any form of pressure in order to guarantee freedom of expression; (3) responsibility, property and management – specific responsibilities in the professional production of specific media products; and, (4) the (semi-)

professional link to the media organization – a link that in various ways enables citizens to exercise control over the media as a watchdog or fourth estate.

Deuze (2005, 447) reports similar ideal-typical values or norms in an overview of literature explaining the occupational ideology of journalism: (1) public service – journalists serving as watchdogs and as collectors and disseminators of information; (2) objectivity – journalists being impartial, neutral, fair and thus credible; (3) autonomy – journalists being free and independent in performing their work; (4) immediacy – journalists' work being characterized by immediacy, actuality and timeliness; and, (5) ethics – journalists performing their work with a sense of ethics, validity, and legitimacy. The present study assumes that these hegemonic identity positions that define “real” journalism are constantly being challenged by counter-hegemonic discourses.

The study focuses on Sweden, a country often characterized as a “digital hot spot” (Hedman and Djerf-Pierre 2013, 374). The use of internet and digital media in Sweden is among the highest in the world and Swedish media houses have been eager to adopt digital and mobile technologies (Westlund 2012). Sweden thus constitutes a fruitful case for examining constructions of professional identity in a digitized setting.

Previous research has shown that the traditional hegemonic identity of journalists in Sweden revolves around the idea of public service (Wiik 2009), i.e. the notion of “doing it for the public” (Deuze 2005, 447). Wiik (2009) found that the dominant ideal among Swedish journalists was to perform their watchdog function, i.e. to scrutinize those in power, which was closely followed by the ideal of explaining complicated events to the public. These two ideals have even been shown to be growing stronger over time. On the basis of these testimonials by Swedish journalists about the nodal points of hegemonic professional identity (italicized below), and with inspiration from Carpentier (2005), the following analytic model was constructed and consistently applied to the empirical materials.

Analytic Model

The watchdog journalist: The essence of the idea of the watchdog journalist is serving democracy (journalism as the fourth estate), protecting the interests of the citizens by *scrutinizing those in power* and warning them about any kind of power abuse. In order to perform as watchdogs, journalists need to be *independent* and *detached* from those whom they scrutinize (Kovach, Rosenstiel and Mitchell 2004). In their role as watchdogs, journalists are also supposed to *give voice* to the public, i.e. act as representatives of citizens, pose their questions and convey their opinions. In short, journalists should “ask the same questions and look into the same matters citizens would do if they could” (Wiik 2009, 357).

The disseminating and explicating journalist: This public service ideal implies that journalism has an educational dimension, that it should not only gather and disseminate information with a sense of *immediacy*, a notion inherent to the very concept of news, but also *explain* and *comment* on it in order to help the public to make informed decisions in their role as citizens. As noted by Wiik (2009), this means that journalism is viewed as a strong democratic force with a transformative potential, which in turn requires its responsible use and *transparency*.

The transparent journalist: The ideal of transparency underlies both the watchdog and the disseminator/explicator identities, and aims to attribute a sense of credibility, accountability, and legitimacy to the journalistic practices, thereby boosting public trust (Newton, Hodges and Keith 2004). The citizens should be enabled to critically assess the quality of the news content through the *disclosure of journalistic processes and reporters'*

personal interests (Fisher 2015). In the digitized media landscape, transparency has been singled out as an increasingly important journalistic ideal (Karlsson 2011; McBride and Rosenstiel 2014; Phillips 2010), not least in the (micro)blogging context (Lasorsa 2012; Singer 2007).

A qualitative discourse analysis was performed in order to capture both the rigidity of the nodal points, i.e. the hegemonic journalistic identity positions presented in the model above, AND the contingency of identity by analyzing counter-hegemonic identity positions that challenge the occupational ideology of journalism (cf. Carpentier 2005). The material consists of 197 tweets and retweets published by Niklas Svensson during the time period 12–14 March 2014. The tweets were thematically categorized as discursively either reinforcing or challenging the hegemonic nodal points as identified in the analytic model above. In addition, pictures that accompanied the tweets were subjected to analysis with the aim of establishing how the visuals reinforce or possibly contradict the identity positions as discursively constructed in the tweets. The analytical focus on the nodal points of journalistic identity – the discursive cornerstones of the professional ideology of journalism – does not mean that other discourses that the material contained were completely disregarded; they were considered analytically relevant in those cases where they constituted integral parts of the identified journalistic identity positions.

It should be underscored that the aim of this analysis is not to determine which identity positions that appear most frequently in the materials but to display the shifting relations between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic identity positions in the discursive construction of professional journalistic identity (cf. Olausson 2010; 2014).

In addition to working as a more traditional political reporter at the newspaper Expressen, Niklas Svensson hosts the web-TV event Bar & Politics,ⁱⁱ which is recorded in Stockholm before a live audience and broadcast on Expressen.se. According to its Twitter account, @Barpol, the mission of Bar & Politics is “to put tough questions to leading politicians in live broadcasts.” The materials of this study encompass a broadcast of the Bar & Politics event, which took place a few months before the 2014 election in Sweden. This broadcast was extensively covered by Svensson on Twitter under the hashtag #Barpol, and included, among others, the then-leaders of the four political parties constituting the “Alliance for Sweden”: Fredrik Reinfeldt (then Prime Minister and leader of the center-right Moderate Party), Annie Lööf (then Minister for Enterprise and leader of the Center Party), Göran Hägglund (then Minister for Social Affairs and leader of the Christian Democrats), and Jan Björklund (then Minister for Education and Science and leader of the Liberal People’s Party). The Bar & Politics broadcast was included in the studied time period as a “critical discourse moment” (Carvalho 2007, 226), with an assumed potential to trigger a variety of journalistic identity positions. Thus, it was assumed that this live encounter between the journalist and highly influential politicians would constitute a good case for examining professional journalistic identity as discursively constructed on Twitter. The analysis is, however, not restricted to the Bar & Politics broadcast, but includes also the more general tweeting activities of Svensson (labeled “the j-tweeter” below).

As for the generalizability of the results, the study does not claim to contribute general knowledge about journalists’ tweeting activities in the empirical sense. If that was the case the quantity of investigated journalists and the number of tweets would have been important methodological aspects to address. Instead, the generality of the results should be viewed in theoretical terms as contributing to the understanding of the shifting identity discourses, also in their embryonic forms, that (re)construct the occupational ideology of journalism in a digitized media setting.

Results

This section presents the analysis of the discursive construction of professional journalistic identity on Twitter. It is thematically structured around the central findings, discourses that (1) reinforce the watchdog identity, (2) challenge the watchdog identity, (3) reinforce the disseminator/explicator identity, and (4) reinforce transparency but challenge professional identity.

Reinforcing the Watchdog Identity

The reinforcement of the hegemonic watchdog identity, being detached from and scrutinizing the people in power, is especially visible in the tweets about the web-TV event Bar & Politics. The j-tweeter covers this event not only during the actual broadcast but also in numerous tweets ahead of time, advertising it while addressing the public directly.

In 90 minutes we press the Alliance party leaders for answers on schools, low confidence in the military, and other topics. #val2014 (5:30 PM – 13 Mar 2014)

Schools, the military, life imprisonment, immigration policy, and the EU. We have a lot to cover in #Barpol tomorrow. You don't want to miss it. #val 2014 (4:33 PM – 12 Mar 2014)

When the j-tweeter posts about the upcoming event, it is in the service of the public that he discursively enacts his watchdog identity. He repeatedly encourages interaction with the individual follower – “you” out there – asking for questions to pose to the party leaders, thus shouldering the identity of giving voice to citizens' opinions and viewpoints.

What question do you want me to ask the Alliance party leaders on #Barpol tonight? #val2014 #val14 #svpol (10:14 AM – 13 Mar 2014)

In the picture below, the j-tweeter shares a photo from Instagram which copies an article from Expressen's website, in which the journalist's watchdog identity is underpinned by the caption “Alliance interrogated in ‘Bar & Politics’.” The j-tweeter himself takes front stage and constitutes the main voice as the quoted actor, again addressing the public as “you”: “Svensson: You don't want to miss it.” The four party leaders are symbolically lined up with their backs to the wall, chatting cheerfully with each other, while the j-tweeter stands alone, arms crossed, seemingly in charge of the situation. Thus, the picture conveys detachment and independence from the powerful people he is supposed to scrutinize and a reassuring loyalty to the public – he poses as a representative of “us,” the ordinary people.

Image 1

The Alliance party leaders visit #Barpol at Clarion Hotel Sign 7 PM tomorrow. Read more on EXPRESSEN.SE/BARPOL... [instagram.com/p/lcz2FkApu0/](https://www.instagram.com/p/lcz2FkApu0/) (12 Mar 2014)

The journalistic watchdog identity is further reinforced during the broadcast while the four party leaders are being interrogated. The j-tweeter delivers his tweets in real time while providing links to the web-TV broadcast.

Alliance with a new take on school matters in #Barpol: Suggests summer school in spring budget – as the Social Democrats. Expressen.se/barpol #val 2014 (7:05 PM - 13 Mar 2014)

In order to attract interest to upcoming issues he opens the tweets during the broadcast with the eye catcher “COMING UP ON #BARPOL” in capital letters, still linking to Expressen’s website where the event is broadcast.

COMING UP ON #BARPOL: Why are the Center party and Christian Democrats doing so badly in the polls? See the program live at expressen.se/barpol #val2014 (7:07 PM – 13 Mar 2014)

COMING UP ON #BARPOL: Which of your political opponents would you take to a desert island, Reinfeldt? expressen.se/barpol #val2014 (7:17 PM – 13 Mar 2014)

The journalistic public service identity also prevails when the politicians are asked questions originating from the public, giving voice to the “voter” in the tweet below.

COMING UP ON #BARPOL: Voter’s question to the Minister of Justice: Why aren’t more rapists convicted? Expressen.se/barpol #val2014 (7:40 PM – 13 Mar 2014)

After the Bar & Politics event, the discursive reproduction of the hegemonic watchdog identity continues. In the example below, the tweet about “Yesterday’s #Barpol” is accompanied by a screenshot of Expressen’s website showing two of the party leaders (Reinfeldt and Björklund), both with grave expressions on their faces underlining the

seriousness of the message conveyed by the headline “Accusations of copied politics: School conflict escalates – Fredrik Reinfeldt called ‘flip-flopper’.” Nothing in this tweet implies any other identity position of the j-tweeter than that of the detached and scrutinizing watchdog.

Image 2

Yesterday’s #Barpol with Reinfeldt, Björklund, @annieloof and @goranhagglund and others: expressen.se/tv/nyheter/barpol #val2014 (10:09 AM – 14 Mar 2014)

During the studied period, the watchdog identity is especially visible in the tweets about Bar & Politics, but it is not restricted to this event. The j-tweeter also discursively enacts this identity when promoting the regular content in Expressen (related to the broadcast by the hashtag #barpol) about the upcoming election.

In Expressen today. Four questions – eight party leaders. #val2014 #val14 #barpol #svpol [instagram.com/p/lhGfzQgpsS/](https://www.instagram.com/p/lhGfzQgpsS/) (14 Mar 2014)

The tweet above is a post shared from Instagram, where the j-tweeter, whose face appears in a thumbnail next to the text, takes on the role of giving voice to the public, allegedly “pressing the eight party leaders for answers” to the following questions:

- How will you improve the business climate?
- How will you improve health care?
- How will you create jobs?
- How will you improve the schools?

Summing up with the question “Who wins and who loses?” the j-tweeter strengthens the watchdog identity, ending the tweet as a representative of “us,” the public, by demanding, in bold, capital letters that they “GIVE US ANSWERS!”

The analysis above demonstrates how the j-tweeter discursively reinforces the hegemonic identity position of the watchdog with its elements of scrutiny, detachment, voice

giving, and so forth. In this way, one could claim that Twitter is being normalized to fit with traditional journalistic norms and ideals, even though the actual practices might not appear very “normal.” The fact that the j-tweeter, the Bar & Politics broadcast, and the journalistic practices themselves become the lead news in the construction of the watchdog identity might appear unfamiliar and perhaps even questionable from the perspective of professional ethics. Additionally, there are signs indicating that journalistic practices not only are shaping but also are being shaped by Twitter, e.g. the elements of public interaction interspersed in the construction of the watchdog identity.

Challenging the Watchdog Identity

The materials also display clear signs of counter-hegemonic identity positions that temporarily but forcefully challenge the watchdog identity and destabilize this nodal point. The detached relationship towards those in power more or less disappears, and the former symbolic distance and independence collapse into symbolic proximity and kinship. The construction of the j-tweeter as a representative of “us,” the public, disappears as well.

This dissolution of the traditional journalistic watchdog identity manifests itself not least in the numerous so called “selfies,” (or in today’s vocabulary perhaps “groupies”) that flood the j-tweeter’s Twitter flow during and after the Bar & Politics event. The following picture, where the j-tweeter (to the left) depicts himself together with, and on the same side as, the four party leaders – all happily smiling towards the cell-phone camera – suggests nothing but friendship and spending some happy and cozy time together.

Image 3

The tweeting interactions that accompany this picture and its many variants that run through the Twitter flow during the period studied, are saturated with humor (Holton and Lewis 2011). They refer, for instance, to the leader of the Liberal People’s Party, Jan Björklund, who was blinking at the moment the picture was shot, to the rather awkward position of the

Prime Minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt, who is half blocked by the j-tweeter, and to the j-tweeter himself, who seems very happy with the situation, laughing unreservedly.

Additionally, the j-tweeter copies Expressen's website, where the entire setting of the selfie is shown from another angle. This photo of the photo is accompanied by the humorous headline "Selfie Chaos: Won't you join us, Fredrik?" (referring to the blocked out position of the Prime Minister), and the teaser "See the party leaders' (and program leader's) worst picture ever."

Image 4

Thus, nothing in the j-tweeter's activities indicates that this turn towards symbolic alignment with the people in power is considered problematic for his professional identity. On the contrary, the identity shift is normalized by the j-tweeter in the Twitter context when he uses said selfie as his cover picture on Twitter while delivering the following tweet:

Have just changed my cover picture on Twitter after four years. It's a #selfie. (6:38 PM – 14 Mar 2014)

This counter-hegemonic identity position, which challenges vital elements of journalistic professional ideology – namely detachment and independence, on which the watchdog identity hinges – should be assessed against the backdrop of the survey by Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013) which shows that the 24/7 group of social media users consider the watchdog ideals to be just as important as other journalists do, non-users of social media included. The incongruence between the results of this survey and the current analysis suggests a certain discrepancy between journalists' values and their discursive practices, which should be further researched.

In sum, the analysis shows that strong counter-hegemonic identity positions are in play discursively, destabilizing the nodal point of the watchdog and challenging the occupational ideology of journalism. The cornerstone of this hegemonic identity – detachment from the people under scrutiny – is shaken to its foundations, which from the perspective of professional ethics could possibly be regarded as undermining public trust and legitimacy. Of course one should also acknowledge that this close relationship between journalists and

politicians is not unique to Twitter (or to the Bar & Politics event), but is seen also in legacy media such as radio and television, and could be viewed as a constituent of the wider hegemony of political ideas. The Twitter setting, however, fully allows the individual journalist to choose to either show off this relationship frontstage or play it down backstage. The j-tweeter under investigation clearly chooses the former option. Overall, it seems clear that journalistic practices here have been normalized to fit the Twitter logic, actualizing its potential for personalization, openness, humor and so forth.

Reinforcing the Disseminator/Explicator Identity

It has been argued that Twitter-based communication is event centered, much like traditional news (Hermida 2013). The hegemonic public service identity of journalists includes taking on the role of collector and disseminator of news to the public. The j-tweeter clearly strengthens this identity position during the period studied, for instance when retweeting and redistributing Expressen's news about various issues.

GROUP CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY. An Islamist group claims that they murdered journalist Nils Horner. (8:39 AM – 12 Mar 2014) (posted by @Expressen)

THREATENED BY AFA. Young Left threatened by AFA before demonstration. (10:01 PM – 14 Mar 2014) (posted by @Expressen)

The j-tweeter further reinforces the disseminator identity by retweeting messages from people with direct access to the scene of topical events around the world, such as the explosion in Harlem and the Crimea crisis, as in the examples below. The retweeted user-generated content also includes images: in the Harlem case, debris and smoke coming out from something that looks like a collapsed building; and in the Crimea case, moving tanks. In this way, the j-tweeter updates the public about the course of events in real time, both textually and visually, and reinforces the journalistic ideal of immediacy.

Huge explosion at east harlem. A building just completely exploded. (2:37 PM – 12 Mar 2014) (posted by @orangeadnan, English in original)

Moving tanks Omsk, Saratov, St.Pete, more photos like that popping up. Expect full-scale intervention beyond #Crimea. (1:39 PM – 14 Mar 2014) (posted by @sandwaldinjo, English in original)

In the quotations below, the introductory eye catcher "FLASH" (English in original) strengthens the impression of immediacy and the hegemonic journalistic identity of the rapid disseminator always prepared to serve the public. Meanwhile, the tweets are also promoting the web-TV event Bar & Politics. In doing this, the j-tweeter does not consider the very different natures and importance of the different happenings, but treats them equally under the FLASH-heading.

FLASH: LARGE EXPLOSION IN MANHATTAN. (3:02 PM – 12 Mar 2014)

FLASH: Alliance party leaders questioned in live broadcast by #Barpol 7 PM tomorrow evening. Facebook.com/events/2225055... #val2014 #val14 #svpol. (3:44 PM – 12 Mar 2014)

In addition to disseminating information about various events, i.e. news, to the public, an important part of the hegemonic public service identity consists of disseminating explanations and viewpoints. The j-tweeter discursively shoulders this identity when distributing viewpoints on a broad variety of topical issues, as illustrated in the quotations below. No apparent systematics or criteria guide the selection of sources, which range from journalists and nationally and internationally well-known politicians, to various legacy media outlets, including Expressen.

So-called referendum in #Crimea: direct violation of #Ukraine constitution & int'l law. Read my statement here ow.ly/uBadf (6:23 PM – 14 Mar 2014) (posted by AndersFoghR, English in original)

How Putin is deceiving western media expressen.se/ledare/patrik-... (11:31 PM – 14 Mar 2014)

During the study period, the j-tweeter mostly disseminates the viewpoints and explications of others, as shown above, without taking any active part in the explicating process himself. However, the j-tweeter takes to some extent on the explicator role himself in the tweet below, which is accompanied by a picture with background information about the conditions in Crimea.

Nice and plain graphics from AFP with Sunday's Crimea election approaching. (11:15 PM – 14 Mar 2014)

In the analysis above, the j-tweeter discursively enacts his disseminator/explicator identity as a representative of the newspaper Expressen, or at least there are no signs of anything else. However, the materials also supply evidence of an individualization of professional identity. This primarily occurs through repeated and automatically generated tweets informing his followers that “The Niklas Svensson Daily is out!” (English in original) linking to the content-curation platform *paper.li*, which collects and publishes compilations of various kinds of news from a variety of online sources based on users' preferences (7:16 AM – 12 Mar 2014; 7:17 AM – 13 Mar 2014; 7:17 AM – 14 Mar 2014). Here, the j-tweeter uses Twitter to promote and give access to his own news outlet, with which he is still establishing his disseminator identity, but now as an individual – marketing his own name – thus largely detaching himself from his organizational ties to Expressen.

These empirical indicators of the individualization of professional identity support the argument put forth by Deuze (2008) that a more singular view of professional identity than “organizational identity” (van Zoonen 1998) is needed when evaluating contemporary changes to journalism. As noted by Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013), the social media activities of individual journalists become important elements of a corporate brand, but it is also true that the individual journalist builds on a personal brand. Thus, the professional journalist is not necessarily situated within a given organizational context, but might oscillate back and forth between the identity of a professional representative and employee of a media organization and that of an individual professional (Bruns 2012; Deuze 2008).

To sum up, there is empirical evidence of discursive enactment of the hegemonic identity of being a disseminator and explicator of news and viewpoints, which also includes the individualization of professional identity. It would be reasonable to claim that Twitter is normalized to fit traditional journalistic practices, because the hegemonic disseminator identity is present, but also that the opposite is true, as the individualization of professional identity is shaped by the Twitter logic. In addition to this, the j-tweeter reinforces the

hegemonic ideal of transparency when providing links to other websites, etc., allowing the public to check his sources. The next section further elaborates on this nodal point in the ideology of journalism.

Reinforcing Transparency but Challenging Professionalism

The ideal of the transparent journalist, which underlies both the watchdog and the disseminator/explicator identities, is supposed to boost public trust and has been described as gaining momentum in the digital age (Karlsson 2011; Newton, Hodges and Keith 2004). In the studied materials, discursive reinforcement of this ideal is particularly discernible in the tweets about the Bar & Politics event, where the j-tweeter allows his followers a glimpse of the activities and interactions backstage.

The construction of transparency – that followers are allowed backstage and are given access to the journalistic activities – is evident in the example below, which is a picture shared from Instagram. Here, “Tonight’s script cards” are displayed against the background of a whiteboard with the signature “Bar & Politics: with Niklas Svensson” next to a picture of the j-tweeter himself with a serious pose, arms crossed and seemingly fully dedicated to his public service role.

Image 5

Tonight’s script cards #Barpol Instagram.com/p/lfVWHQgpkt/ (13 Mar 2014)

The tweet below “The evening’s broadcast being prepared by staffanengwall and mickekoff” and the accompanying picture, shared from Instagram, shows the editorial staff in full action before the broadcast, which also reinforces the impression of a credible and trustworthy work process:

Image 6

The evening's broadcast being prepared by staffanengwall and mickekoff. #barpol
[Instagram.com/p/lTZTk-gppr/](https://www.instagram.com/p/lTZTk-gppr/) (13 Mar 2014)

In this way, the backstage-tweeting could be interpreted as an example of traditional audience orientation – an invitation to the public to come closer to the news staff and be allowed direct insight into the news production process through journalists being “open...about how they conduct their work” (Lasorsa 2012, 403). It could also be understood as a transparency that is interwoven with the promotion and branding of the event as well as of the media organization and the j-tweeter himself (Greer and Ferguson 2011).

It has been argued that even information more related to journalists' private lives than their professional activities could play a part in constructing transparency (Lasorsa 2012; Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012). As shown by Hedman and Djerf-Pierre (2013; cf. Canter 2014; Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012; Vis 2013), frequent users of social media are much more inclined to accept blurring of the boundaries between journalists' professional and private lives in social media, and the j-tweeter studied here does not hesitate to inform his followers about his private life. As a case in point, he updates them about having felled a couple of trees in the garden of what presumably is his summer cottage, bringing to life the words of Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2012, 24) that j-tweeters “may write about whatever strikes their fancy – including the mundane details of their day-to-day activities.”

Material for my Sunday spread submitted. Now off to Norrtälje to meet up with a tree feller. Pictures of chainsaw coming. (2:22 PM – 14 Mar 2014)

The tweet starts by referring to editorial work the j-tweeter has just carried out, but in the next sentence this professional identity position is abandoned in favor of a private one where he mentions planning to meet someone who will help him fell the trees. Visuals shared from Instagram reinforce the private identity when illustrating the setting in which the trees are felled: one is a video showing the actual felling process accompanied by the tweet “There goes the oak” [Instagram.com/p/lh6AAJgpmO/](https://www.instagram.com/p/lh6AAJgpmO/), and a second, consisting of two separate photos from the scene. These photos show the garden, “Before. And After, [Instagram.com/p/lh62JUApnm/](https://www.instagram.com/p/lh62JUApnm/)” as put in the accompanying tweet.

Similarly, the j-tweeter shares photos from his Instagram account as in the example below, which together with the text “Could definitely be worse off. Fire in the fireplace,

South African in my glass – and Steffo on #letsdance” inform his followers about how he relaxes and spends his leisure time with a glass of wine in front of the television and the fireplace. Here, the j-tweeter brings transparency all the way into the realm of the private.

Image 7

Could definitely be worse off. Fire in the fireplace, South African in my glass – and Steffo on #letsdance Instagram.com/p/liOtGagpi1/ (14 Mar 2014)

This type of transparency is also evident in the more or less private comments and conversations with other people, which the j-tweeter lets his followers observe. Here, he does not hesitate to use words normally associated with the private sphere, such as “Dad” in the second quotation below.

Many thanks to @minifixar who got hold of a tree feller in Norrtälje for this afternoon. An oak and a rowan will be taken down. (2:04 PM – 14 Mar 2014)

@Niklassvensson How’d it go with the hot water heater? (14 Mar 2014) (posted by @JorgenModig)

@JorgenModig Problem solved. Dad fixed it by telephone. :) (14 Mar 2014)

The j-tweeter’s discursive behavior when moving into the private realm ties in to the discussion about celebrities on Twitter and how followers are viewed as fans rather than audiences (Marwick and boyd 2011). The j-tweeter’s position as the most-followed journalist in Sweden may at least partly explain his inclination to disclose personal information on Twitter; he discursively reconstructs his celebrity status using language and cultural references to create symbolic relationships with followers. This could also shed some light on why the local news journalists in the study by Canter (2014) did not get more personal on Twitter and rarely revealed any personal information: the celebrity ingredient was, in all probability, lacking.

In sum, the ideal of transparency is reinforced by the j-tweeter when he is open about what goes on behind the scenes. The discursive practices such as backstage-tweeting could

also be interpreted as means of organizational and personal branding, just as the revelation of information entirely distinct from the j-tweeter's occupational life could be viewed as linked with celebrity practices and as challenging the very essence of professional journalistic identity. In this way, one could claim on the one hand that Twitter is normalized to fit the hegemonic journalistic ideal of transparency, since the public indisputably is allowed backstage, but, on the other hand, that the opposite is also true because the types of transparency revealed by the analysis are to a great extent shaped by the logic of Twitter.

Concluding Remarks

The myriad findings suggest that just as journalists are shaping the application of Twitter, so is Twitter shaping the nature of journalism. Journalists seek to shape a new communicative space to fit within prescribed conventions while they are, themselves, shaped by its sociotechnical traits. (Hermida 2013, 301)

In line with the above quotation, the present analysis has demonstrated the dialectical nature of the discursive construction of journalistic identity on Twitter. The j-tweeter oscillates between traditional journalistic identity positions, such as that of the watchdog or the disseminator/explicator of news, and positions that temporarily but often forcefully challenge the professional ideology of journalism. Promotion of the news organization's content as well as personal branding in various formats permeate several identity positions, and the results indicate a creative process where something new or different has been added to occupational ideology (cf. Berglez 2011). As it seems, emerging journalistic discourses such as (self-)promotion are not replacing the occupational ideology of journalism and are not to be found in isolation; instead, they tend to intermingle with various journalistic identity positions.

The results resonate well with the argument put forth by Witschge and Nygren (2009; Wiik 2009) that we are witnessing two parallel trends in journalism: de-professionalization or destabilization on the one hand, and a resurgence of professional values on the other. The results also support the claim by Hedman (2015) that active j-tweeters do not completely normalize Twitter to the professional ideology; instead, they appear to engage discursively in a dialectical process of normalizing Twitter and being normalized by it, which allows new or transformed identity components to enter in creative ways. Thus, it seems as if the question of whether Twitter is being normalized to fit ordinary journalistic practice or the other way around does not have an *either-or* but rather a *both-and* answer.

Another issue on which this study has shed some light is the multimedia setting in which the active j-tweeters operate. These kinds of journalists may be twittering around the clock, seven days a week, but their extreme media life is in all probability not limited to microblogging. The analysis clearly illustrates the j-tweeter's simultaneous connections to various other platforms such as legacy media (in both paper and digital forms) as well as to web-TV and other social media such as Instagram. The multi-skilled journalists may use different media for different and complementary purposes, and future research should give analytical attention to journalists' off- and online activities overall in order to achieve an integral understanding of changes in the ideology of journalism.

To sum up, only time will tell whether the 24/7 group of j-tweeters constitute anything more than an extreme case, atypical of the majority of journalists (Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton 2012), or in fact foreshadow future developments within journalism (Hedman 2015). As Gulyas (2013) suggests, the journalism profession is fragmented and heterogeneous, and is influenced by a variety of factors; thus, not every journalist is likely to lead a media life

extreme in the future. Nonetheless, the reinvention of journalistic identity is an ongoing and largely unpredictable process, and this present study has hopefully contributed some relevant clues about its course.

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NOTES

ⁱ <http://www.twitterbarometern.se/>. Downloaded September 16, 2015.

ⁱⁱ In Swedish: "Bar & politik".