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Citizen Journalism

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Summary and Keywords

The emergence of citizen journalism has prompted the journalism field and scholars to readdress what constitutes journalism and who is a journalist. Citizen journalists have disrupted news-media ecosystems by challenging the veracity and representativeness of information flowing from mainstream news-media newsrooms. However, the controversy related to the desired level of citizen involvement in the news process is a historical debate that began before the citizen-journalism phenomenon. As early as the 1920s, journalist and political commentator Walter Lippman and American philosopher John Dewey debated the role of journalism in democracy, including the extent that the public should participate in the news-gathering and production processes.

This questioning of citizen involvement in news reemerged as an issue with the citizen journalism phenomenon around the late 1990s. People with no news-media organizational ties have taken advantage of the convenience and low cost of social computing technologies by publishing their own stories and content. These people are referred to as citizen journalists. Scholars have assessed the quality and credibility of citizen-journalism content, finding that citizen journalists have performed well on several standards of traditional news-content quality. Levels of quality differ dependent upon citizen journalists' goals and motivations, such as serving the public interest, increasing self-status, or expressing their creative selves.

As it is an emerging area of study, unarticulated theoretical boundaries of citizen journalism exist. Citizen-journalism publications emphasize community over conflict, advocacy over objectivity, and interpretation over fact-based reporting. In general, citizen journalists have historically acted when existing news-media journalists were not fully meeting their community's informational needs. Scholars, however, vary in how they label citizen journalists and how they conceptually and empirically define citizen journalism. For example, researchers have shifted their definitional focus on citizen journalists from one of active agents of democratic change to people who create a piece of news content. The mapping of the citizen-journalism literature revealed four types of citizen journalists based on their levels of editorial control and contribution type: (1) participatory, (2) para,

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(3) news-media watchdog, and (4) community. Taken together, these concepts describe the breadth of citizen-journalist types. For those of us interested in journalism studies, a more targeted approach in the field of citizen journalism can help us build community around scholarship, understand citizen journalists' contributions to society and practice, and create a more a stable foundation of knowledge concerning people who create and comment on news content.

Keywords: citizen journalism, alternative journalism, participatory journalism, hyperlocal journalism, community journalism, hyperlocal media, citizen media, user-generated content, para journalism, fact-checking, news-media watchdog, journalism studies

Scholarship Overview

Journalists assemble complex information so others can make informed decisions about their lives and community. Tension, however, has existed over citizens' participatory and editorial-control levels, because news construction and dissemination have been the primary duty of professionally trained and skilled journalists in recent history. Journalism involves the gathering, preparing, collecting, photographing, recording, writing, editing, reporting, or publishing of news or information that concerns local, national, or international events or other matters of public interest, for dissemination (Free Flow of Information Act of 2007, 2007). Several academics and professional organizations claim that high-quality journalists protect the public from consuming misinformation by adhering to journalistic ethical guidelines when producing their content, and there is concern that individual content creators may not abide by such high principles. People who produce and share content, but do not do so as a representative of a legacy news organization are often referred to as citizen journalists.

In the early studies on the topic of citizen journalism, scholars were mostly concerned with the degree to which citizen journalists produced journalistic content that adhered to journalistic norms and whether their content measured up against journalistic standards of news quality. Based on these findings, traditional journalists are more likely to cite a greater diversity and number of diverse sources and viewpoints, be transparent in communicating the backgrounds of their sources, and rely primarily on official sources for information for their stories. A traditional journalist is one who works for a commercial news organization that primarily focuses on the daily delivery of information concerning a large geographic (e.g., local, state, national, international) area in either a textual, audio, or visual format.

Citizen journalists are less likely to craft stories based on questioning another person in an interview setting. If citizen journalists do seek story input from another human source, that person will most likely be an unofficial source such as an acquaintance or friend. Interestingly, citizen journalists with previous professional journalism experience are more inclined to cite official sources (Carpenter, 2008, 2009, 2010A; D'heer & Paulussen, 2013; Reich, 2008; Paul, 2018). In fact, citizen journalists are more likely to cite and quote source material in content if they believe they are creating journalistic content (Gil

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de Zúñiga, Lewis, Willard, Valenzuela, Lee, & Baresch, 2011). The presence of official sources is generally lower in stories because citizen journalists often find that access to official sources is either difficult or impossible, partially because official sources do not see them as a legitimate information news provider, or citizen journalists do not interview them out of fear of retaliation from sources or other bodies in positions of power (Prado, 2017). However, citizen journalists support a diverse information system by covering a greater variety of topics than official platforms, and linking to content outside of their websites (Carpenter, 2010B).

Traditional journalists may perform better in the areas of thoroughness and accuracy, but perhaps not community representativeness. Some active citizen journalists take pride in deviating from traditional reporting styles. Many of these individuals believe that they contribute to society by documenting important historical moments and people and by inspiring dialogue and action around issues often ignored by traditional news-media organizations (Atton, 2003; Dennis & Rivers, 1974; Ekdale, Namkoong, Fung, & Perlmutter, 2010; Fröhlich, Quiring, & Engesser, 2012; Mortensen, Jones, & Keshelashvili, 2015; Nip, 2006). As previously suggested, the mass-appeal approach to news has led traditional journalists to become dependent on a few sources to decipher complicated issues, while not attending to more hyperlocal and diverse issues (Marzolf, 1991; Shim, 2006; Tuchman, 1978). In contrast, the reporting of citizen journalists tends to be reflective of their individual experiences and their targeted audience is usually other like-minded people. The field of citizen journalism may not represent an organized group, but rather a phenomenon whereby people express their individual concerns about matters of direct concern to them on and across online communication platforms.

The citizen-journalism approach to news, placed within the overall media ecosystem, may be necessary in order to informationally capture the overall diversity of mindsets, views, and cultures that exist in society. In 2000 in Korea, journalist-turned-activist Yeon-Ho Oh appeared to challenge Korea's existing elite media regime when he launched *OhmyNews*, an online publication that depended mostly on members of the general public, or citizen reporters, to report the news. Citizen reporters freely contribute news stories about their everyday lives, including opinions that otherwise may be neglected by the press, but content is still vetted prior to publication by traditional journalists (Kim & Hamilton, 2006; Nah & Chung, 2016).

Concerned citizens come together and put their lives in danger by taking on the role of reporter in order to raise awareness of tragedies such as human-rights abuses in India and the Palestinian crisis in the Occupied Territories. In fact, individuals often express outrage at mainstream news-media journalists for their role in supporting governmental corruption (Mäkinen & Kuira, 2008; Moyo, 2011). Citizen journalists penetrate information walls set up by their governments by using social-media platforms to organize mass demonstrations and distribute information documenting their realities, often doing so from geographic areas that are too dangerous or distant for news-organization journalists to access. Moyo (2011) found Zimbabwean bloggers took a stand against the political elite by covering stories on vote rigging, rape, abductions, torture,

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hunger, and murder. The bloggers were activists who were upset about the violence taking place in their communities. Protesters and organizations use social media to encourage people to protest, validate their cause, and invite others to learn about issues affecting their lives. Citizen journalists can be an effective check on traditional journalists, challenging them to stop acting as the mouthpieces of governments that seek to harm publics. Frankly, many people's voices would not be heard globally if citizen journalists had not joined the mediascape (Allan, Sonwalkar, & Carter, 2007).

However, the presence of a citizen voice in news-media publications is not only an issue in areas of conflict or authoritarian control. The decision of which sources to include in articles can have an impact on how an issue is presented and whose perspectives are valued. Citizen voice enhances the authenticity of journalism, but official sources most often drive narratives because of their perceived credibility and convenience. Traditional news-media reporters rarely cite average people for information unless they add an emotional component such as a hero or a victim in a story. Thus, this approach to reporting may inadvertently communicate to the public that everyday people are on the lower end of a social hierarchy, as they are treated as passive bystanders in the news. Citizen journalists, however, treat unofficial sources as experts (Atton, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2015). Citizen-journalism content can present different voices and perspectives to readers. Citizens widen narratives by bypassing news gatekeepers by the means of social-media platforms (Bruns, 2008). For example, global-movement activists placed citizen journalism in the forefront when they created their own content covering protests at the 1999 World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Seattle. Citizen journalists relied on indymedia (independent media) platform editors to curate stories from the anti-globalization movement, submitted by individuals. They covered issues such as human rights and the political and economic power of transnational corporations, but notably their stories challenged the confrontational and marginalizing framing of activists and protesters.

Indymedia centers were later established in Africa, Canada, the United Kingdom, Asia, Latin America, and so on, peaking around 2010 (Atton, 2015; Giraud, 2014; Platon & Deuze, 2003). Friedland and Kim (2009) stated that citizen journalism gained traction during the protests at the Seattle World Trade Organization conference. The network of citizen reporters that evolved around this event was later mostly displaced by Twitter networks, but at the time, it showcased the power of individuals using media to mobilize and inform publics around certain causes (Giraud, 2014; Platon & Deuze, 2003).

Nip (2006) and Goode (2009) have suggested that citizen journalism enables citizens to set the news agenda. In fact, research shows that consuming citizen-journalism content is related to people becoming more involved in offline and online politics (Kaufhold, Valenzuela, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2010). However, more research is needed to determine the circumstances under which they set the media or public agenda. Harcup (2005) found that alternative journalists felt that traditional news reporters often used their material without crediting them. St. Cyr, Carpenter, and Lacy (2010) found that citizen-journalism coverage influenced the number of stories traditional newspaper journalists covered

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likely because traditional journalists monitored their news stories. Lowrey and Mackay (2008) found that the perceived activeness of bloggers influenced newspaper journalists' perceptions of topic newsworthiness, and that bloggers' articles were shared during story-planning meetings. Future research could examine to what extent people who participate as citizen journalists influence what is news and what is perceived important.

News professionals, however, have been mostly critical of citizen journalists, viewing them as individuals who lack journalistic training, expertise, and organizational affiliation. Citizen journalists' style of reporting may counter journalistic reporting norms in some ways, either because they disagree with those rules or because they are simply unaware of them. Some perceive citizen journalists as creating and disseminating opinionated, self-centered, soft, or hyperlocal community content across social-media channels (Chung, Nah, & Yamamoto, 2018; Holt & Karlsson, 2015). Some of those assumptions have been supported by research showing that citizen journalists are more likely to deviate from objective reporting norms and they instead publish their own interpretations on matters of importance to them (Carpenter, 2008; Carpenter, Nah, & Chung, 2015; D'heer & Paulussen, 2013; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2011; Holt & Karlsson, 2015; Lindner, Connell, & Meyer, 2015). Their story ideas come both from personal experience and traditional news-media stories, but research has also found that they get them from official government sources and meetings as well (Carpenter, Nah, & Chung, 2015). These findings are not surprising, because the duty of small news outlets has historically been to be involved in and supportive of their community (Arant & Meyer, 1998; Rattray, 1966), and this is reflected in online citizen-journalism publications through their use of opinion and emphasis on local issues (Carpenter, 2009).

Another additional prevalent line of study has examined the credibility of citizen journalists. In communication research, it is known that a source can have a significant impact on how information is perceived, because individuals evaluate the message itself based on the credibility of the source (Eastin, 2001). Critics contend that citizen journalism can erode the credibility of the journalism profession because consumers are not able to delineate between what should and should not be considered reliable information, especially when confronted with unfamiliar subject matter. This subset of research requires a finer dissection, because findings are mixed regarding the perceived credibility of citizen journalists. Results reveal that students (Swasy, Tandoc, Bhandari, & Davis, 2015) and non-skeptics (Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang, 2014) do not find citizen journalists as credible as content authored by traditional journalists. Citizen journalists, however, are considered highly credible by bloggers and skeptics (Carr et al., 2014; Johnson & Kaye, 2004). Other research, however, showed that people attributed no or hardly more credibility to professional journalists over citizen journalists (Netzley & Hemmer, 2012; Siff, Hrach, & Alost, 2008).

Scholarship transitioned to a greater focus on citizen journalists at an individual level beginning around 2012; this redirection occurred once it became clear that they were playing an important role in the field of journalism. Scholars have sought to understand citizen journalists by studying their motivations to publish information and what they

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perceived their journalistic roles to be, because these concepts explain goals and self-identity. People who engage in citizen-journalism activities do so for a variety of reasons, including an interest in writing and in multimedia artistic storytelling; in critiquing the traditional news media's reporting practices; in sharing their expertise; in building community; in advocating on behalf of a particular cause; or in having their work read by a significant number of people (Fröhlich et al., 2012, Kus, Eberwein, Porlezza, & Splendore, 2017; Mortensen, Keshelashvili, & Weir, 2016). Thus, they, as many journalists, are driven by creative expression or social-responsibility motivations. Citizen journalists are often not motivated to make money, but are instead involved, self-interested, self-motivated, and educated individuals who want to engage and inform publics about particular issues (Chadha, 2016; Fröhlich et al., 2012; Johnson & St. John, 2017; Mortensen, Keshelashvili, & Weir, 2016; Paul, 2018). For example, a study on CNN's iReport experiment in which people sent news items to the news organization revealed that little content was produced by people affected by a cholera outbreak, but instead aid workers and medical volunteers created that content (Krajewski & Ekdale, 2017). Citizen journalists perceive their role as being to mobilize people, followed by challenging the status quo (Chung, Nah, & Carpenter, 2013). Findings are mixed as to whether most citizen journalists have worked previously as a professional journalist (Chadha, 2016; Fröhlich et al., 2012; Harcup, 2005; Lindner, Connell, & Meyer, 2015; Johnson & St. John, 2017), but some researchers have found that a small but notable proportion do possess a degree in journalism (Carpenter et al., 2015; Kus et al., 2017).

Most of these findings, however, are based on the results of small samples collected through research methods of surveys (average = 90 citizen journalists) or interviews (average = 26 citizen journalists). These particular approaches make it challenging to replicate, generalize, and theorize. Atton (2008) also noted this issue, stating that interviews were the dominant method used to study citizen journalists, and expressed interest in knowing more about the contexts and conditions in which interviews were conducted to advance this line of research. Smaller sample sizes present challenges in terms of the generalization of findings and the future development of measures. For the purposes of prediction and understanding the influence of their work and behaviors, scholars now need to identify boundaries (e.g., particular populations and contexts) in order to more precisely pinpoint to what extent existing research is applicable.

For example, additional research is required to understand what particular gaps citizen journalism content fills. Representativeness is "the extent to which an individual perceives there exist other important aspects than the media have portrayed about an individual or issue" (Austin & Dong, 1994). A common theme that reoccurs in the literature is that citizen journalism fills a perceived *gap* in news coverage left by shrinking news resources or biases (Metzgar, Kurpui, & Rowley, 2011). Research shows that citizen journalists do cover similar topics to traditional journalists, including business, politics, government, sports, education, crime, social issues, entertainment, and popular culture (Chadha, 2016; D'heer & Paulussen, 2013; Fico, Lacy, Wildman, Baldwin, Bergan, & Zube, 2013; Fröhlich et al., 2012, Holt & Karlsson, 2015; Karlsson & Holt, 2014; Paul, 2018). This use of the word *gap* suggests that the public has critical

information needs that citizen journalists are filling. Research is necessary to identify those information needs and how citizen journalists service those needs.

Definition of Citizen Journalists

The scholarly community still applies the labels *citizen journalist* and *citizen journalism* to this group of people even though the phenomenon of citizen journalism is not technically new. For example, citizens passed political pamphlets in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston in the 1740s (Bélair-Gagnon & Anderson, 2015). The new label for this particular category of journalism, however, does suggest that citizen journalism embodies a unique phenomenon in that its emergence was in conjunction with the advent of internet publishing technologies, especially blogging. Social-media platforms have facilitated people's ability to publicly share their knowledge, information, and opinions with anyone with internet access.

Many scholars have attempted to theoretically define citizen journalism. Despite these theoretical efforts, "there has not been a consensus on the definition of citizen journalism" (Kim & Lowrey, 2015, p. 311). As the field develops, we should see some agreement on the concept label and its definition. In the literature, these people have been referred to as participatory journalists, community journalists, citizen journalists, pro-ams, bloggers, nonprofit journalists, alternative journalists, hyperlocal journalists, user-generated participants, para journalists, and producers.

Based on the themes that emerged across theoretical definitions put forth by researchers, it appears that the scholarly community that studies citizen journalism interprets such journalists as people with no news organizational ties, who gather and/or publish news content, and who cover marginalized or hyperlocal communities. Earlier theoretical definitions, dating from approximately 2003 to 2011, were more idealist in nature stating that citizen journalists sought to engage other citizens or support democracy through their journalistic work. For example, some definitions stated that citizen journalists "provide independent, reliable, accurate, and wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires"; "strive to cover marginalized communities"; "benefit a community"; and "intend to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement" as shown in Table 1. As time has gone on, as Wall (2017) has noted, citizen journalism has become associated with amateur content creators who have produced at least one piece of news content, as revealed in Table 1. For example, definitions dating after 2011 state that a citizen journalist is "any person who does not get paid by a mainstream news organization to report"; that citizen journalism is "news produced by amateurs"; made "not by professionals but by those outside mainstream media organizations"; and created by any "participant that had ever produced a photo, video, or writing piece." In 1976, Johnstone et al. defined journalism as "the day-to-day representation of ongoing social process as filtered through the apparatus of the news industry (p. 6)." Researchers still define traditional journalists by their affiliation with an organization or employment. This review puts forward a modified definition of the citizen

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journalist, building on that of Wall (2015). Citizen journalists are people with no news-organizational affiliation who create news and information content (text, video, audio, interactive, etc.) intended for public dissemination. Theoretical definitions are important, because they should guide how one then studies and measures the construct.

Table 1. Summary of Citizen-Journalist Theoretical Definitions

Publication	Definition
Bowman & Willis (2003, p. 9)	(Citizen journalism): The act of a citizen, or group or citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide the independent, reliable, accurate, and wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires.
Nip (2006, p. 218)	(Citizen journalists): People who are responsible for gathering content, visioning, producing, and publishing the news product.
Friedland & Kim (2009, p. 297)	(Citizen journalists): Citizen journalists can be individuals making a single contribution (a fact correction, photo, etc.), bloggers, or professionals editing citizen content for “professional-amateur” (pro-am) sites which integrates the works of professional staff and citizen contributors.
Nah (2008, p. 64)	(Citizen journalists): Individuals [not considered professional journalists] who produce, disseminate, and exchange a wide variety of news and information, ranging from current topics to common interests to individual issues.
Rutigliano (2008, p. 45)	(Citizen journalism): (1) it is not produced by a traditional news organization, (2) it is produced by a group, and (3) it strives to cover marginalized communities through recruitment of members of these communities and coverage of these communities.
Goode (2009, p. 1288)	(Citizen journalism): A range of web-based practices whereby “ordinary” users engage in journalistic practices.
Carpenter (2010B, p. 1064)	(Citizen journalist): An individual who intends to publish information online meant to benefit a community.
Kaufhold, Valenzuela, & Gil	(Citizen journalism): Citizen journalism is defined by a number of attributes, which make it distinct, including unpaid work,

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de Zúñiga (2010, p. 517)	absence of professional training, and often unedited publication of content, and may feature plain language, distinct story selection and news judgment, especially hyperlocal issues, free accessibility, and interactivity.
Metzgar, Kurpuis, & Rowley (2011, p. 774)	(Citizen journalism): Hyperlocal media operations are geographically based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organizations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement.
Berger (2011, p. 710)	(Citizen journalism): Done by persons whose status is not that of hired hands in a media enterprise, but who are outsiders.
Robinson & DeShano (2011, p. 965)	(Citizen journalist): Any person who does not get paid by a mainstream news organization to report and write online as part of a blog, website, or forum imparting information about a geographic community.
Örnebring (2013, p. 36)	(Citizen journalism): News produced by amateurs.
Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang (2014, p. 454)	(Citizen journalism): Range of amateur information reporting and sharing activities.
Kim & Lowrey, 2015, p. 304)	(Citizen journalism): Citizen journalism activity was conceptualized as producing and using messages that were publicly relevant and political in nature.
Wall (2015, p. 798)	(Citizen journalism): News content (text, video, audio, interactive, etc.) produced by nonprofessionals.
Atton (2015, p. 1)	(Citizen journalism): Journalism produced not by professionals but by those outside mainstream media organizations.
Mortensen, Keshelashvili, & Weir (2016, p. 366)	(Citizen journalist): A participant that had ever produced a photo, video, or writing piece that has been <i>submitted</i> for inclusion by a mainstream or citizen journalism outlet, or that has intentionally or unintentionally been published by a mainstream or citizen journalism outlet.

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Nah & Chung (2016, p. 2304)	(Citizen journalist): Any citizen who had registered with <i>OhmyNews</i> and had submitted stories in the preceding year.
Paul (2018, p. 2)	(Citizen journalist): Someone who creates, moderates, or comments on news content on public websites.

The Future of Citizen Journalism Scholarship

Citizen Journalist Typology

The inconsistencies in citizen-journalism literature may be due to the varying levels of participation, ranging from a user-generated comment on a news article to people gathering original news content in order to mobilize publics and change society. It is not uncommon for the news media to be considered as one entity, and to be treated as such. However, *citizen journalist type* likely influences the degree to which citizen journalists are guided by journalistic norms and ideals, including their desire to support democratic dialogue and ideals. Thus, generalizations of citizen journalists may depend upon context, which is an important component of social science theory. The diversity of forms of citizen journalism media may lead people to believe that the phenomena does not entail stable characteristics, but it is critical to try to identify attributes in order to ensure that the knowledge community that studies this field has a foundation on which to support its future work and theory building. At this point in time, the phenomenon has been studied for long enough to enable the articulation of contexts and boundaries. Scholars expend much effort in articulating what journalism is, and have also examined how journalists combat people encroaching on their areas of expertise (Carpenter & Kanver, 2017; Lewis, 2012; Reich, 2012), but there would be greater advancement in the study of both traditional and citizen journalism if we could understand more precisely how they overlap and how they differ.

Based on what we know about citizen journalism, the literature thematically supports theoretically separating and comparing at least four different types of citizen journalists under the umbrella term *citizen journalist*, based on levels of editorial control and consistent participation. In 2006, Nip classified the concept of *audience involvement* into five types of journalism rather than journalists: (a) traditional journalism, (b) public journalism, (c) interactive journalism, (d) participatory journalism, and (e) citizen journalism. Those conceptual lenses, however, do not quite reflect the direction scholars decided to take in researching this phenomenon. Public journalism, the 1990s movement to publicly collect reader input and involve those readers in the news-generating process, could not be sustained due to a lack of support and resources (Voakes, 2004). Additionally, scholars have chosen to expand Nip's (2006) interpretation of citizen journalism according to which unpaid individuals report, produce, and publish content

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without the involvement of the traditional press, to also include a greater diversity of paid and unpaid content creators who work both with and without traditional journalists.

Based on the mapping of existing journalism scholarship, the higher-level construct is that of the citizen journalist and its dimensions include the *participatory*, *para*, *news-media watchdog*, and *community* types of journalists. There are likely other types of citizen journalists, but the goal was to theoretically select the fewest types that best represent the overall breadth of the construct based on the review of literature.

Participatory Citizen Journalists

In a participatory journalism context, audiences work in conjunction with traditional news-media journalists in the production of news content for a traditional news organization (Deuze, Bruns, & Neuberger, 2007). Participatory journalists are defined as people who contribute news, opinion, and information content to traditional news organizations. Participatory journalists were people who submit hyperlocal content to be published in designated sections of a website, but participatory journalism's news-production processes have evolved (Nip, 2006). Traditional journalists most often rely on such citizen, or participatory, journalists for their first-hand experience or for visual records of breaking-news events such as natural or human-made disasters that journalists are unable to access. For example, citizen journalists submitted more than 1,000 pictures, 20 pieces of video, 4,000 text messages and 20,000 emails within a few hours following the London bombings in 2005. These witnesses submitted information to news sites as events unfolded before their eyes, and news-organization representatives accepted this content because they did not have resources or access during the crisis due to security restrictions (Allan, 2007). Participatory news journalists submit mostly unpaid content that is later verified and assessed for its news value by a news-organization editor. This type of citizen journalist receives pleasure from contributing to democracy through the sharing of their opinions on personally relevant news stories, earning some money from capturing the event, or having their name mentioned in the news media (Aubert & Nicey, 2015; Nah & Chung, 2016, Palmer, 2012).

News-organization editors, however, rarely abide by this collaborative ideal in which newswork is a partnership between the news organization and citizen journalist. Even though news organizations are reexamining how news is constructed, content is still a reflection of past media routines and norms. Research has instead found that traditional journalists do not evaluate participatory journalists based on their journalistic skills, but rather on their proximity to a news event (Hellmueller & Li, 2015). Citizen journalists' intellectual and creative input is minimal within this category because traditional news-media organizational leaders refuse to relinquish editorial and gatekeeping control over news processes and their stories (Domingo, Quandt, Heinonen, Paulussen, Singer, & Vujnovic, 2008; Karlsson, 2011). In fact, traditional journalists often segregate citizen journalism content from their own content because of its perceived quality and emotional tone (Domingo, 2011).

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If a participatory citizen journalist contributes to a traditional online news product, they are hypothetically more likely to be loyal to the news organization because they feel valued (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Expression of opinion can lead to an increased appreciation and understanding of the news process and of public affairs, which may in return encourage more people to actively participate in their community and consume news (Bentivegna, 2002; Pavlik, 2001). However, research shows that the mere presence of a participatory community on a news-organization site does not mean that news organizations are making an effort to connect with news users or that they have relinquished their role as gatekeepers. Since the emergence of the web, many organizations have been looking for motivated individuals who want to share their visual content. Participatory journalists often contribute unpaid work because they believe that participation can lead to recognition or employment (Daubs, 2015; Palmer, 2012). The ideal that citizen and professional journalists will become collaborative partners in news will not likely occur in the near future, but the treatment of citizen journalists within these settings should be examined, and scholars should develop guidelines for ethical relationship practices in such settings. In public relations research, relational ethical practices often guide professionals' interactions with the public to ensure mutual benefits and a common understanding of issues (Carpenter, Takahashi, Lertpratchya, & Cunningham, 2016).

Para Citizen Journalists

Citizen journalists are also people who “commit random acts of journalism” (Lasica, 2003, p. 71). Para journalists are people who contribute news content, opinion, and information centered around an event in the making. They form temporary communities bound together by streams of information centered around a particular event. Papacharissi (2015) classified this type of environment as an affective news stream, defining it as “news collaboratively constructed out of subjective experience, opinion, and emotion, all sustained by and sustaining ambient news environments” (p. 34).

People gather together in these online spaces, or awareness systems, to characterize and discuss the impact of an event, which results in a conversational mix of reactions and relevant information about that event. Mediated community members monitor and participate in networks to make sense of the event and to become aware of emergency information. Motivations often include assessing the validity of traditional news-media reports, documenting events and individual struggles, and sharing one's versions of events with other citizens (Farinosi & Treré, 2014). The sharing of information and monitoring of news streams influences community, social cohesion, security, sense-making, and decision-making (Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2017).

Future research could examine more closely what stages must take place, and how these evolve, regarding how a news event or issue transforms into a social movement through the use of online platforms. Citizen journalism has been recognized as a powerful force for many global movements, such as the Arab Spring. These news events emerged because citizens sought action against injustices, and they chose to use their social

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technology skills to cover the issues themselves. From 2010 to 2011, Arab Spring protests in Egypt, then Libya, Syria, and Yemen, led to the resignation of Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali after 23 years in power. Ali used violence to try and stop demonstrators who were frustrated over unemployment, police brutality, food inflation, and corruption. In many countries, journalists are subject to reporting restrictions limiting the information shared with publics in authoritarian regimes. Citizens used decentralizing information communication tools to raise awareness and circumvent state controls (Lotan, Graeff, Ananny, Gaffney, Pearce, & boyd, 2011).

News-Media Watchdog Citizen Journalists

News-media watchdog citizen journalists are defined as journalists who verify and critique the performance of news media. Citizen journalists often hyperlink to and discuss traditional news-media content (Bosshart & Schoenhagen, 2013; Leccese, 2009). Nah and Chung (2016) found in their research that citizen journalists were necessary, given the massive amount of information and news available online, and offered more in-depth analysis concerning public issues and affairs. Complex issues often benefit from a third party to interpret the information (Sienkiewicz, 2014). Media reporting and media criticism in the news media grew in the 1990s in the United States as a way to hold the news media accountable (Fengler, 2003). Dissatisfaction with the news media's performance is often cited as a reason for people launching their own publications and sharing their own news content (Harcup, 2005). Most often citizen journalists provide analyses or critiques of news-media reports. Specialized journalists are needed to write critically about the news industry in order to uncover mistakes, point toward potentially harmful reporting, and encourage an adherence to ethics among journalists (Fengler, 2003). These citizen journalists often follow the development of a story and evaluate the accuracy of coverage. This evaluative role is not new. Historically, letter writers to the editor used to comment on and critique how well the news media represented an issue (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007). Fact-checking sites such as Snopes and Poltifact are among the most significant innovations in journalistic practice due to the spread of misinformation. These sites rely on crowd-sourced, aggregated content to assess the legitimacy of factual information and claims presented to the public often in news stories (Lowrey, 2017). And thus, verification, the dominant practice of journalists, is being carried out by average citizens as well.

Community Citizen Journalists

In independent news environments, citizen journalists maintain gatekeeping and editorial control over stories from the news-gathering stage to the final output stage. Thus, traditional journalists are not involved. These journalists cover hyperlocal communities or niche topics not covered by journalists (Johnson & St. John, 2017; Wall, 2015). They are community-oriented journalists who conduct original reporting intended to fill a perceived gap in coverage and/or to promote civic engagement (Metzgar et al., 2011). A community journalist is "an individual who intends to publish information that is meant to benefit and engage community" (Carpenter et al., 2015, p. 508). Kern and Nam (2009)

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argued that citizen journalists contribute to the betterment of the community by publishing local news stories and by supporting civic conversations among a smaller, more homogenized group of people, while ideally profiting from their work in order to remain sustainable. In order to devote time to consistently producing news products, revenue is necessary. In fact, the greatest constraints on alternative publications are economic in nature because resources play an important role in the thoroughness of reporting by the journalist and sustainability of the news outlet (McManus, 1994). One study showed that about half of the sample of citizen journalists made a small income from advertising and employed an average of 1.7 employees (Carpenter et al., 2015). In this category, community journalists conduct their own research and create news stories based on that information. The issues may vary, but there is an intent to serve the public (Metzgar et al., 2011; Paul, 2018). These citizen journalists want to motivate citizens to act on and solve civic-related issues in a timely manner and, sometimes, challenge the veracity of information communicated from people in positions of power (Chung & Nah, 2013; Fröhlich et al., 2012; Paul, 2018). As is the case with traditional journalists, community citizen journalists often believe in the principles of journalism in that they think news information should be verified, objective, and balanced; but they also believe in building relationships with their sources and sharing their opinions on current topics (Johnson & St. John, 2017; Paul, 2018).

Theoretical Frameworks

A review of the literature reveals that scholars do not often rely on formal theoretical frameworks to guide them in the selection of concepts or variables for their studies on citizen journalism. Clarity can be achieved through the use of theory. Theories help people make sense of the world by transforming it into statements (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004). Although what follows is likely not an exhaustive list, I found only a small number of studies utilizing formalized frameworks or conceptual lenses in the study of citizen journalism. Those frameworks included: (a) Shoemaker and Reese's Hierarchy of Influences (Carpenter, 2008, 2010B; Chadha, 2016; Nah, Yamamoto, Chung, & Zuercher, 2015); (b) Bourdieu's field theory (Hellmueller & Li, 2015; Li & Hellmueller, 2016; Lindner & Larson, 2017); (c) Habermas' theory of communicative action (Nah & Chung, 2016), (d) the MAIN model (Swasy, Tandoc, Bhandari, & Davis, 2015); (e) the theory of reasoned action (Nah, Namkoong, Record, & Van Stee, 2017); (f) social capital theory (Kim & Lowrey, 2015); (g) the population-ecology perspective (Lowrey & Kim, 2016), (h) gatekeeping (Lindner, 2017), and (i) the public-sphere perspective (Lindner, Connell, & Meyer, 2015; Nah & Chung, 2012).

Perhaps the current organized bodies of formal knowledge in journalism studies are not appropriate in citizen-journalism studies. For example, the sociology of occupations, a common approach used to study journalism, explains how workers united by shared values, rituals, and language behave and enact social control over behaviors in an organization or across a particular occupational field. Shoemaker and Reese's Hierarchy of Influences (2013) model explains how individual, routine, organizational, extramedia,

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and ideological-level influences account for variations in content. Traditional journalists who work for an organization will more likely conform to organizational norms and media routines, and thus behave in a more predictable manner because they abide the organization's goals and values, even if those values conflict with their own personal values (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Keith (2011) has argued, however, that theoretical models are less applicable in the digital-news-media landscape due to a rise in the individualization of labor. Thus, the mapping of patterns at an individual level may be more fruitful.

In recent years, enough research has been conducted on this topic to warrant some organization of the literature, including the identification of concepts and relationships among them to determine in what contexts they apply. I begin movement toward the direction of formalization by suggesting conceptual lenses that warrant exploration and testing based on a present review of citizen journalism literature. Potential predictor constructs could include citizen journalism type, education, professional journalism experience, publication topical focus, and editorial staff. And potential dependent constructs could include motivations, news quality, credibility, political participation and expression, journalistic role conceptions and enactments, sense of community, and so on.

Traditional and Citizen Journalism Boundaries

Citizen journalism should be considered one component of the overall news-media ecology. One major assumption of this line of research is that it assumes citizens are able to act as journalists, and we need to move toward articulating the boundaries of citizen journalism within this media sphere. In this article, it is argued that citizen journalism is an overarching umbrella construct in which various types of journalists reside. Traditional journalists most often have extensive practical experience and follow conventions set by the journalistic community, and they likely fear that the deskilling of their profession will result in a loss of control over work. However, citizen journalism is not a substitute for traditional journalism, but it does increase the amount of opinion and place a spotlight on alternative issues (Fico et al., 2013).

Dewey (1927) believed that the news media should encourage involvement in public affairs through social collaboration. In citizen-journalism research, scholars have invested their efforts into understanding to what extent citizen journalists are *journalists* or are creating *journalism*, rather than to what extent such participation reflects the behavior of someone who is acting as a good citizen. Good citizens are people who are involved with or concerned about particular issues, and they occasionally use publishing platforms to voice their views and mobilize the public around issues of interest to them. More research is necessary to understand the *citizen* component of citizen journalism including to what extent these motivations and behaviors actually reflect forms of community or political participation. A few scholars, such as Campbell (2017), have argued that citizen journalism is a form of active citizenship in which ordinary people express their views. Evidence to suggest that citizen journalism may be a form of civic expression is that

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citizen journalists often do not view themselves as journalists (Lenhart & Fox, 2006), but rather see themselves as citizens invested in particular issues. Harcup (2005) found that citizen journalists felt that publishing their own content was their contribution as a politically active citizen. The public's concern that the news media should represent the public in political and community matters has led people to bypass news-media institutions by publishing their own content in order to reach publics. Paying attention to news is considered a civic duty. People who consume news content online or offline for informational purposes are more likely to participate in their community (Kebbel, 1985; McLeod et al., 1996; Moy, Manosevitch, Stamm, & Dunsmore, 2005). The acts of writing and discussing the news constitute democratic behaviors. Some research also suggests that citizen journalism is related to higher levels of civic participation and positive attitudes toward nonprofit volunteering and donations (Kaufhold et al., 2010; Nah et al., 2017). The movement toward publics wanting to participate in news rather than consuming it will continue. Thus, constructs associated with good citizen behaviors should be considered in future research.

Citizen journalists show the journalism field how it can be different. Some people believe that the traditional journalistic approach toward treating the public as incapable spectators has encouraged the disconnection that exists between news journalists and the public (Merritt & McCombs, 2004). We perhaps need to reflect and categorize citizen journalists' contributions (e.g., as a witness, critic, sense-maker) in order to more concretely identify the ways in which citizen journalists contribute to the overall news ecology.

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