INTRODUCTION

FROM SOCIOLOGICAL ROOTS
TO CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Let us begin with two simple questions:

- What is news?

- Why does news turn out like it does?

That is where my earlier reader—*Social Meanings of News*—began. This book continues to address those questions and adds one more question:

- What does news tell us about the professional culture and the society that produces it?

These are deceptively simple questions with deceptively complex answers. For many people, these questions require a personal paradigm shift, a change of mind-set about the meaning of news and journalism.

Here is an example. In April 2007, a troubled student at Virginia Tech went on a shooting rampage, going from classroom to classroom and randomly firing his weapons at the students and professors inside. By the time he ended his own life, 32 people had been killed and many more were wounded. Among them were several professors who sacrificed themselves to save their students. In particular, one elderly professor who had survived the Holocaust held his classroom door closed while his students jumped out the classroom window to safety—ultimately, the gunman forced his way into the classroom and shot the professor.

Two points of view can be applied to this example: One could be called the *journalism critic,* the other the *cultural scholar.* From the perspective of the journalism critic, a discussion might focus on depth and details of the coverage, of ethics and sensitivity to the people interviewed and to the families who were affected. Ultimately, the discussion would

close in on an assessment of how well the media did in this situation and what flaws lay in the news they covered. There might be an ethical discussion, for example, judging whether the television networks should have broadcast video materials the gunman taped and sent to them. Or there could have been a debate about whether mental illness should have been incorporated into the story.

This book moves away from the journalistic answers and toward the perspective of the cultural scholar of journalism, considering the work of journalists in their news organizations and the texts that they produce. The cultural scholar sees journalists as people living and working within the culture of a newsroom, a media organization, and a society. And it views the texts that news organizations produce as an artifact of the culture that represents key values and meanings. This is quite different than the role of the journalism critic, because the cultural scholar steps aside from professional judgments to consider journalism as a human phenomenon like any other. The cultural scholar of journalism realizes that a particular study produces one of several possible answers shaped by the conceptual premise guiding that inquiry.

The cultural scholar of journalism might therefore study news stories about the Virginia Tech shootings and discuss how they correspond to long-standing cultural narratives of The Hero and how this narrative represents key values of the culture. The cultural scholar of journalism might consider how American collective memory of the Holocaust added meaning to the story by placing the event into a historical perspective. Or the scholar could argue for how both of these cultural elements serve as tools for the journalist, providing a way to facilitate writing news about a broad, multifaceted event in a way that can be accomplished more quickly while retaining the appearance of how a news story "is supposed to go."

A key goal of this book, then, is to help readers begin to ponder cultural meanings of news, considering a variety of answers to "What is news?"—which flow from several perspectives that cultural scholars of journalism have explored. The book is organized into six key conceptual parts. As a prelude, the Introduction sets up the exploration through three frameworks. The *first framework* considers the underlying vantage points that have guided research about journalism—some conversations about meanings of news that have emerged from ongoing research over time. By understanding these conversations, it becomes possible to sense the worldview that has shaped those research findings. The *second framework* considers meanings of the term *cultural,* which help locate the basis for the selected readings; the term has been used so often in so many ways that it has begun to lose its meaning. The *third framework* offers six dimensions for understanding why research about news has asked certain kinds of questions, and subsequently, why a specific study has arrived at a particular answer (these dimensions have broader application for mass communication research as well). Taken together, the three frameworks place the readings that follow into better perspective, helping show why one answer to "What is news?" comes out differently from some others.[1]

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[1]The intent here is not to call for considering news in a multidimensional grid built from a combination of the three frameworks: That would be an unwieldy and counterproductive exercise. In general, these three frameworks should be used distinctly to better understand the foundations that shaped the authors' questions and their resulting answers.

Vantage Points in the Study of News

Over the years, thinking and research about news and how it comes to be has passed through three central vantage points: the *journalistic* position, moving to an emphasis on *sociological organization,* and then on to a consideration of the *cultural* dimensions. These three vantage points are roughly chronological, yet all three continue to exist today among those who study the news and news media. Each vantage point has a different worldview about journalism, each asks different questions, and each shapes its answer in a different direction. Ultimately, each vantage point also represents a shift in thinking about what journalism means in a society, generating three discussions that are essentially incompatible.

From the *journalistic* vantage point, the core tenets focus on the ideals of objectivity and the "mission" of a journalist as standard-bearer of a Fourth Estate that protects a society from corruption in government and business. As such, questions about news tend to center around possible bias in reporting, on stories that are missed or misreported, and on other elements that might lead to less than a full and accurate truth. For example, a study in this vein might examine newspaper content involving people with Hispanic surnames to see if the news is favorable or unfavorable to that social group—the assumption underlying such a study might be that news about minority groups could be biased against them. Or a study of news selection in local television might consider which of a textbook range of news values—impact, timeliness, conflict, prominence, and proximity—is most closely related to news that has been broadcast. In general, these kinds of questions shaped inquiry into journalism and news from the founding of the discipline on through the 1960s. Answers about the nature of news from this vantage point could be considered normative (judged by a shared standard) or administrative (designed to improve the news media institution). The chief weakness of this journalistic position is that it centers on passing judgment about how journalism has dealt with issues, texts, and actions rather than on working toward understanding and explanation of news as a human phenomenon.

In all, the journalistic perspective on news can be considered an *ideology*—a taken-for-granted belief system that accepts a dominant form of practice as natural and right. Relying on this professional ideology to understand news actually *masks* understanding by making normative judgments about what is good and bad about journalism. A news article can be depicted as a good story or a bad story. Likewise, the article's writer can be called "a good journalist" if the story is seen by other journalists as "right" or as "not a good journalist" if a story does not conform to professional convention (but oddly, not as a "bad journalist"). As a professional ideology, the journalist's perspective may be applied to criticize the accuracy or slant of the news we encounter, but underlying this critique rests the unspoken belief that news can ideally represent the real world, presenting an accurate picture of what is really out there.

To get beyond this, professional critique first requires a shift to two different vantage points—that news is a socially and culturally created product like any other—and then to explore the social working arrangements and culturally agreed upon meanings that shape this product. From this perspective, news is constructed by workers who unavoidably put a bit of themselves, their organization, their profession, and their society into what they produce. These news workers interface with others in their organization as they do their jobs, learning norms for what they should be doing, receiving criticism and praise for what they have done. Within an organization, resources are limited in terms of staff and equipment; production demands related to deadlines, space, time, and competition further dictate how news turns

out. And as news is gathered and manufactured, its end result is shaped by unspoken expectations about which meanings are acceptable within the profession and within the society. All of this ends up being packaged within the tacitly accepted meanings of the culture of journalism and the culture of the society to which they belong.

Although an answer stemming from journalistic ideology might acknowledge these limitations on the news, it would still argue that eliminating those limitations is ideally possible and would allow an accurate presentation of reality to prevail. To go beyond *judging* news and move toward *understanding* it, we must step aside from professional ideology, avoiding the notion that news can be neutral.

The *sociological organization* vantage point surfaced most clearly in the late 1960s when sociologists began studying journalism from the perspective of the accomplishment of work—journalists make a product agreed to be "good" within a conventional time frame and allocation of resources (mainly staff and equipment). This perspective views journalists as similar to other workers who face expectations from their organizations and regularly develop strategies that allow them to accomplish their work in a predictable way. Because the backgrounds and theory of these researchers were based in sociology rather than in the discipline they were studying—journalism—they were not as intellectually bound by the professional ideology of journalism. To somebody thinking within the journalistic vantage point, this basic assumption becomes dissonant; journalists are supposed to have a higher societal mission than workers in factories or service industries.

Questions in this vein of study depict journalists in a struggle between the ideals of journalism and the tensions created within the journalism workplace, further tempered by the behavioral norms and ethics of the profession at large. Key to these arguments are the working arrangements and the constraints that they impose on a journalist's ability to fulfill their professional ideals. The ultimate argument is that this clash leads not to an approximation of reality but instead to a *constructed* reality that emerges from the imperatives of a journalist's everyday life. In a way, this argument was more about the shape and rhythms of journalistic work than it was about the meaning of the work—and its outcomes—to those involved in its construction. Along the way, it became clear that life and work in the news organization and the journalistic profession subsumed much of the differences that individuals could accomplish. For example, a study drawing on the sociological vantage point might look at the unspoken rules in the newsroom and how new reporters learn them. Or a study could explore the strategies that reporters use to gather information for news stories and what they do to ensure their stories will be done by deadline with the appropriate level of quality.

The *cultural* vantage point for studying news and its production shifted the emphasis away from the process, constraints, and structures of "making news" to an exploration of what doing journalism meant to those who worked in it. That is, the act of accomplishing journalistic work in itself carries meanings—when journalists do their work, the values and significance of that work both follows from that enactment and also leads toward work done in a way that yields those rewards. For example, when local television journalists produce stories and newscasts during rating periods (sweeps), their working as a competitive team in itself becomes part of the larger cultural activity. Just the act of engaging in this special kind of work carries important meanings for those within the culture. Likewise, when disaster strikes, journalists become part of a storytelling community, functioning as "bards" of the times to help society reflect on itself and join together for healing from the trauma that has been created. And when the integrity of the journalistic institution is threatened by an individual journalist or news organization that has violated

professional principles, the broader institution comes together to show how the aberration was isolated to one person or organization—the institution as a whole is thus not represented as flawed, and the blame is just placed on those who have deviated.

In each of these three examples, the emphasis is on the culture of journalism, blending the meanings of the product that journalists create with the meanings they see in the production work itself. But the term *cultural* still seems blurry and needs further attention.

TOWARD THREE MEANINGS OF *CULTURAL* FOR NEWS

As used in this book, three meanings of the term *cultural* are in regular use; all are relevant and will be included even though they focus on quite different concerns. The first meaning of cultural—and most central to this book—corresponds to an anthropological position that explores the meanings of lived cultures of news production. In other words, this version of the term considers what it means for journalists to engage in their work. This position also explores how news texts in their various forms reflect both the cultures of news production and the cultural values of the society where that news production takes place. To explain these ideas more fully, imagine that you are a reporter working in a newsroom of a television station. You interact with others in the newsroom as you work on your story assignments, and over the course of time, the news you produce begins to carry meanings beyond the news itself. Some stories predictably foretell the progress of society's events throughout the year, such as news of recurring holidays and the changing of the seasons. Other news stories tell society's great tales—joys, tragedies, successes, and traumas. Yet other news stories signify meanings about the profession of journalism itself—its professional values, its challenges, its successes and failures.

Over time, the act of creating news begins to shape the news itself not intentionally but simply by living out the meanings that emerge from everyday life in an organization that is part of a profession, an institution, and a society. It is a life bound with regular, familiar rituals with ongoing conflicts and with meanings that are readily recognized by those who participate in it. In all, news reflects the culture of its creation, both within and outside of a news organization.

A second meaning of cultural refers to how news is shaped by its global context. Most simply, journalism in countries as different as Korea, India, Germany, Kenya, Egypt, and the United States has some degree of commonality as a profession and a social institution. Yet all differ from each other because of how they have been impacted by historical, political, economic, religious, and other factors. Because much of the research on sociological and cultural dimensions of news is based in the West—and specifically in the United States—asking questions about the first meaning of cultural from another country's perspective both broadens inquiry and offers a comparative sense that enriches understanding. This meaning of cultural cannot simply be reduced to "international"—news made in another country—because it is the influence of a specific country's culture and its press system on news that becomes important.

A third meaning of cultural is less central to this book's mission, but it still needs to be addressed. Here, the term comes from the British cultural studies tradition that focuses on power and hegemony. This meaning of cultural argues that cultures develop subconscious understandings about who is considered powerful and who is subservient, and how meanings embedded in that culture—and conveyed by the media—serve to reinforce that social structure. By doing so, social power is wielded and maintained. This meaning

of cultural clearly contrasts with the first, where power is not a central purpose and the concern is more about understanding how human interactions carry meanings—although the meanings could, in turn, bring messages about a society's power structure.

Introductions to each part of the readings weave these three meanings of cultural into the discussion. Also key are six dimensions of a typology for understanding meanings of research. By doing so, the selections can be placed into their contexts, guiding the interpretation of what these readings contribute and illuminating how they differ.

A SYSTEMATIC, CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF NEWS

In retrospect, then, the purpose of this book is to further a growing and maturing trend in the study of news by developing key themes in the cultural dimensions. Even within this smaller realm, a systematic approach is helpful for sorting out equally appealing answers to "What is news?" and "Why does news turn out like it does?" Studies addressing these kinds of questions can be analyzed through six dimensions that help sort out why different studies arrive at different but valid answers. Table 1 presents a summary of the six dimensions. These are helpful to keep in mind while reading culturally oriented studies, as well as with studies based in other traditions. It is also important to mention that it would be too difficult to separate studies by matching them up on all six dimensions at once, so Table 1 should be considered as a guide for interpretation rather than as an organizing scheme for this book.

Considering news through its *topic of study* is probably the least productive route for understanding this book's key questions—answers in the topic dimension tend to mainly describe a phenomenon. At the same time, this is the part that many scholars—especially newer ones—respond to when asked what a study is about. Answers might come back like, "It's a case study of news about a student who went on a campus shooting spree" or "I want to learn about women journalists." The challenge here is to temporarily omit the topic itself and see what is left. That is, what does news about a specific campus shooting spree represent in the abstract about the interface between news and society? Or, what does it mean, more broadly, to study women journalists? Does this really represent how journalists with lower social power cover the news compared to those with greater authority and social power? Can such a study help inform research about Hispanic journalists or journalists just starting their careers? In sum, the topic dimension serves as a beginning of thinking about news but needs to be connected to something larger and more abstract that shows what the topic represents conceptually.

Focus of research tends to be selected as an offshoot of choosing a research topic: Some questions concern the production of news, some the reception of news by its audiences, and other questions concern the texts of news that move from producer to audience. We don't always outwardly consider the focus of research in these terms, but this decision—whether purposive or not—directly shapes both the direction of the research and the outcome of what is learned. An important point is that news content production can be studied by examining the outcome of that production: the news text. In culturally oriented studies especially, textual analysis of news is commonplace, even though assertions about production are the aim.

Turning back to Table 1, concerns about *level of analysis* become integrated into the bigger picture. The concept looks to specific social aggregations as the foundation of an

Table 1   A Typology for Understanding the Meanings of Research

This table offers a set of dimensions by which a reader can evaluate the meaning of research. Key here is understanding the positions, purposes, and assumptions that have gone into shaping a study. These may be either consciously or subconsciously chosen by the research but shape the process and outcome of research in either case.

Dimension	Sample Categories	Utility
1. Topic of study	Campus shootings, women journalists, presidential campaigns	Sets up the basic area of exploration. Working only at this dimension tends to create descriptive work. Try to ask what this topical exploration helps exemplify conceptually.
2. Focus of research	Producer, texts, audience	Identifies where the concerns might lie or where the data might be gathered.
3. Level of analysis	Individual, organizational, professional, institutional, cultural, etc.	Addresses the kind of social aggregation related to the focus of research. Data can be gathered from one level of observation to develop an understanding of a different level of analysis, such as individual survey questionnaires to study organizations.
4. Paradigm	Positivism, constructivism, postpositivism, critical, etc.	Relates to the kind of assumptions about truth, knowledge, reality, etc. that have shaped a researcher's exploration and the understandings that have been gleaned from it. Also guides potential theory to be applied.
5. Methodological choices	Qualitative, quantitative	The nature of the data collection scheme is somewhat linked to the four previous dimensions yet not necessarily so. For example, positivism would usually employ quantitative methodology, but qualitative research could also be conducted from a positivist perspective.
6. Purpose	Describe, predict, explain, understand	Helps assess the role of theory in the research and the perceived utility that the research attempted to bring to the work. Purely descriptive work tends not to incorporate theory into its design. Research aiming toward explanation or understanding uses theory more for interpretive vision. Predictive research uses theory to set up a framework for likely expectations.

explanation. For example, an individual-level answer would focus on the psychological dimensions that shape how a journalist accomplishes work, such as the way that schema influence the processing of information and telling stories. Higher levels all largely remove the individual from the equation while also exerting a stronger homogenizing force on lower levels of analysis. Introducing the notion of level of analysis is a key part—but just one part—of explaining how news comes to be.

Questions about level of analysis are interwoven with the topic of study and purpose of research. Considering the level of analysis also helps to look ahead toward paradigm questions, methods that are chosen, and even purpose of the research. Cultural approaches tend toward more macro social kinds of questions that texts can represent. Psychologically framed questions, in contrast, will by necessity focus on the individual journalist. Sociological studies will be based more on the news organization, along with the interactions among media workers and the ways that they strategically accomplish their jobs. There is no officially prescribed or agreed upon set of levels. Some scholars consider just three: individual, organizational, and societal. Some have included many more, so that within organizations, working subgroups might be considered in addition to the organization as a whole. In any case, what is key is how a particular social aggregation becomes a driving force in shaping outcomes.

- *Individual level* would consider cognitive processing of information, as well as questions about the degree of journalists' individual autonomy and agency.

- *Organizational level* looks at the way that individuals interact within an organization, how life within a news organization shapes the news that is produced, and the interplay between layers of reporters, editors, and managers.

- *Professional level* begins to examine larger homogenizing forces that present commonalties among, for example, broadcast journalists, or even more broadly, across journalists regardless of their medium.

- *Institutional level* suggests that forces from the media as a social institution carry common influences on the nature of news because of variations in kinds of ownership, press freedom, and financing arrangements. The media institution's mission is also important, such as the differences between furthering a nation's development, maintaining political authority, or informing the citizenry.

- *Cultural level* speaks to larger meanings that might span a nation or even a region. At the cultural level, these meanings are taken for granted and either unquestioned or positioned within an insider–outsider binary. Considering the cultural level helps understand why images in the news, for example, tend to be cast in similar ways— ways essentially matching systems of beliefs and meaning.

Looking at *paradigm* takes discussions of news in specific directions, again based on assumptions that might not be specifically acknowledged. Three basic directions are helpful to outline. First, positivism most closely corresponds to a social science perspective that a knowable reality exists—if a study can be designed well enough, it can come close to explaining a knowable truth. The positivist paradigm is a poor fit to a cultural approach to news, because culture can be considered intangible while positivist research focuses on

tangible objects of study. The positivist paradigm contrasts with constructivism, which argues that the world consists of multiple realities, each based on a construction that comes from the research design and the study context. In contrast to positivism, constructivism argues that there are several "truths" that can be learned and that more than one truth can provide meaningful insights—in these multiple answers, the researcher's questions and the methods used to explore them are acknowledged as leading toward one answer rather than another. A postpositivist position straddles these two polar opposites, designing research *toward* a truth yet acknowledging that the outcome of the research design represents a construction nonetheless.

A critical paradigm contrasts with these two positions by actually asking a different kind of question—one that deals with social power, class differences, and control by social elites. These kinds of concerns become the theoretical framework for designing critical research. In a sense, critical research assumes a truth about power arrangements and then adopts an interpretive, constructivist approach to support that assumption. By doing so, critical research carries attributes of both positivistic and constructionist paradigms.

Ultimately, paradigm has a connection to level of analysis. More micro levels of analysis (individual, organizational, professional) tend to fit best with positivistic perspectives. Constructivist and critical paradigms, in contrast, fit best with more macro levels (societal, cultural) because the questions falling from these perspectives better align with these levels. At the same time, these distinctions are not absolutes—any level can be explored as having knowable truths, and any level can also have results acknowledged to be a construction.

As with the other dimensions, *methodological choices* do not stand alone. In particular, methodological choices especially connect with the research paradigm a researcher adopts. For example, a scholar with a constructivist orientation would likely draw on qualitative methods (based on words and meanings) because that kind of analysis lends itself more toward open-ended findings that allow for multiple realities to be considered. A scholar more focused on a positivist paradigm would commonly draw on quantitative methods (employing computer analysis and statistical tests) for the perceived precision of numerical measurement of the phenomena under study—at the same time working to create more and more resonant measurement schemes that get closer to a singular, knowable truth. Although many researchers may explain a methodological choice based on preference for words or numbers, concern for paradigm tends to be lurking beneath the surface, even if not explicitly expressed.

Finally, the *purpose* of the research connects topic of study, focus of research, level of analysis, paradigm, and methodological choices. Strictly descriptive research may be nearly devoid of theory, with paradigm concerns also taking a backseat—data tend to either be qualitative or based on simple counts of some kind. On the other end of the spectrum, research directed toward building predictive models tends toward a positivistic paradigm (the ability to model outcomes within a single reality), quantitative methods (belief in the science of numbers), and a focus on the micro level (particularly on the individual). In between these two polarities are postpositivism, constructivism (or interpretive), and critical approaches. For each of these, explanation and understanding are the more likely research purposes, because both are compatible with paradigm beliefs (data guided by theory) and the nature of the data (tending toward the qualitative that allows interpretation).

APPLYING THE TYPOLOGY TO THIS BOOK

The six dimensions of the typology for understanding the meanings of research serve this book in two ways. First, the typology provides a systematic framework for understanding why readings seem different in their outcomes. One of the difficult aspects of reading a variety of articles on the same topic is understanding why they have drawn equally plausible conclusions. For a scholar looking for *the* answer, this can be frustrating. However, for somebody accepting the notion that research represents multiple answers constructed by the way a study has been designed, conducted, and analyzed, the framework can provide some clear guidance. When it becomes clear that key choices have been made in at least six dimensions, contrasts between studies can be understood more systematically. Competing answers no longer become contradictory but instead illuminating.

A second benefit of the typology is that it helps locate the emphasis of this book and the various parts within the broader terrain of the field. Here are some ways that the selected readings fit these six dimensions:

- *Topic of study:* This book centers on two key questions. First, what is news? Second, how do the cultures of the news organization, the journalism profession, and the society influence the way that news turns out?

- *Focus of research:* This dimension has two centers. One center is the news producer; the other is the news product in forms of print, broadcast, and online content.

- *Level of analysis:* The book considers midrange and higher levels of analysis, from the organization to the profession, the media institution, and—more broadly—to the society and culture.

- *Paradigm:* The key guiding paradigm is constructivism but with a few forays into the critical realm. This direction comes from the nature of culture itself—it is more intuitive than it is observable. To study culture is to acknowledge a construction of reality is at work.

- *Method:* Readings come from qualitative foundations, a decision that follows especially from the choice of paradigm and the focus of research.

- *Purpose:* The central purpose of these readings is toward explanation and understanding. Description alone would not be particularly helpful in exploring the role of culture in the nature of news. Prediction would require the paradigmatic assumption that culture can be known and measured precisely.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

The six parts of readings in *Cultural Meanings of News* each present a different thematic aspect of studying news from a cultural perspective. All selections are original studies that build a conceptual foundation and explore their topic through textual or ethnographic data. All readings have been chosen from journals in order to provide concise, complete packages of ideas. In keeping with the cultural paradigm's focus, all studies engage in qualitative analysis. An introduction begins each part, setting up the theme, highlighting key

concepts, and bringing out ideas that connect the selections. These introductions also show how the selections fit into the book's larger purpose.

At times, a selection may be reinterpreted to tease out an idea lurking within the study but not emphasized by the study's author—a study is often open to multiple interpretations. For example, sometimes an author provides a good example but uses a different conceptual label. For many of us, that is the norm, as we often take away something different from each new reading of the same text. Likewise, an important way to develop conceptual approaches is to fuse together ideas. Drawing from existing studies provides a strategic benefit for creating this kind of book, because readings can be chosen purposively to build a diverse, yet cohesive, group of ideas. Following from this train of thought, it is also important to mention that because of the common paradigmatic base across this book's selections, some readings could be equally well located in more than one part. As a reader of this book, keep an eye open for how ideas from one part can inform concepts central to another. Pay attention, too, for key elements that differentiate parts.

Part I, "A Framework for Thinking About the Meanings of News," offers three readings that address big-picture questions about news, setting up what distinguishes the cultural perspective from the journalistic one. The discussion of levels of analysis formalizes and further develops the basic ideas about news in global contexts, while the other two readings call for a fresh look at what it means to be a journalist.

Part II, "Cultural Practice of Journalism," moves ahead from the framework readings to place the work of journalists and the news they produce into settings that demonstrate how culture at several levels of analysis interacts with journalistic practice. These selections consider settings in new media, cross-national comparison, and crisis news work.

Part III, "Making Meaning in the Journalistic Interpretive Community," places news as a site of meaning making, where journalists work within a shared sense of both events and the work that they accomplish. Again, these readings consider scenarios at both macro and midrange levels of analysis, incorporating settings in multiple nations and both traditional and new media forms. Ultimately, news appears as a construction that results from the meanings that journalists share and maintain.

Part IV, "Repairing the Journalistic Paradigm," returns to the notion that journalists work within a professional paradigm that dictates norms for journalistic practice. The concept of paradigm repair is illustrated not only through failures in applying traditional methods for attaining objectivity but also by how the news institution polices the culture into which it is embedded.

Part V, "News Narratives as Cultural Text," picks up on the term often applied to news articles—*stories*—and asks if news could be treated literally as a story, that is, as a conventional tale that both rings true with the larger realm of a culture's stories about itself while also incorporating elements of the current instance of that story. This part develops the idea that news resonates with a culture by retelling a culture's stories the way they have traditionally been told, complete with all the ongoing mythical characters and cultural values.

Part VI, "News as Collective Memory," uses interpretive community as a point of departure but also can be considered a special case of news narrative that anchors the narrative in a tangible context of a historical moment. Collective memory helps journalists judge the magnitude of current occurrences in light of how things have unfolded in the past, which guides the news gathering process and provides a means for journalists to assess if their news stories have been presented "correctly." The concept of collective

memory also ties to a story's resonance with the journalistic paradigm that expects news to be based in the present rather than drawing from story templates from the past.

The Epilogue provides an opportunity to revisit the starting point of this book, considering the initial frameworks, analytic perspectives, and belief systems that shape both presuppositions and new insights about the cultural meanings of news. This part also looks beyond the readings to assess what questions they did not directly address, as well as their implications for larger questions that consider the intersections of culture and news.

I hope that as you work through this book, you will experience some moments of discomfort as your beliefs about news get twisted around and recast, along with some moments of pleasure as new insights about news begin to appear on the horizon. The discomfort can be seen as "growing pains," while the pleasure follows from the joy of discovery. Sometimes, though, joy of discovery hits a moment of dissonance when a perfectly satisfactory answer to "What is news?" or "Why does news turn out like it does?" or "What does news tell us about the professional culture and the society that produces it?" confronts another equally plausible answer. That is a time when the scholar of news and journalism can turn back to the frameworks of this chapter—particularly Table 1, which outlines a researcher's choice points—to understand why these answers are different. It is also a time when *the* answer begins to appear as *an* answer that is both satisfying and open-ended.