

Assessing the Role of Proximity, Authenticity, and Professionalism in Struggles Over Journalistic Authority in Fan Communities

Clara Juarez Miro, Phoebe Maares & Jonathan Hendrickx

To cite this article: Clara Juarez Miro, Phoebe Maares & Jonathan Hendrickx (15 Oct 2025): Assessing the Role of Proximity, Authenticity, and Professionalism in Struggles Over Journalistic Authority in Fan Communities, *Journalism Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/1461670X.2025.2567891](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2025.2567891)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2025.2567891>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 15 Oct 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 463



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Assessing the Role of Proximity, Authenticity, and Professionalism in Struggles Over Journalistic Authority in Fan Communities

Clara Juarez Miro ^a, Phoebe Maares ^b and Jonathan Hendrickx ^c

^aDepartment of Political Science, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain; ^bDepartment of Communication, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria; ^cDepartment of Communication, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

ABSTRACT

Global declines in news consumption underscore the tension between journalists' ideals of detachment and audience demands for engagement. In hybrid digital environments, non-traditional journalistic actors can assert authority in specific communities by deviating from traditional values. As these actors challenge traditional business models, their emergence has destabilized the journalistic field. Yet, scholarly understanding of how community membership shapes claims of journalistic authority is limited. To address this gap, we examine how diverse journalistic actors in two niche communities base their claims on (1) proximity to sources; (2) authenticity; and (3) professionalism. Drawing on interviews from two fandom community events, the Eurovision Song Contest and re:publica, this study disentangles how diverse actors can claim authority while meeting community needs, which is crucial to journalism's prevalence amid the ongoing economic transformation in the journalistic landscape.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 March 2025
Accepted 23 September 2025

KEYWORDS

Journalism; epistemic authority; boundaries; community; fan studies; interviews

Questions about journalistic authority arise as digital technologies amplify and spawn new, non-traditional actors, blurring journalism's boundaries (Maares and Hanusch 2023). As the barriers and costs to create and share content decrease, these actors can sustain themselves by providing specialized audiences with in-depth knowledge. This challenges traditional notions of journalistic authority, typically based on serving a general audience with a certain distance from the object of reporting (Carlson 2017). The emergence of these journalistic actors, coupled with growing audience fragmentation in the digital environment (Napoli 2011), has given rise to diverse audience communities, brought together by affect, shared interests and practices, and collective meaning-making about varied subjects like popular culture and politics (Hills 2015; Lowrey, Brozana, and Mackay 2008).

As the boundaries defining who is considered a journalist and what constitutes journalism increasingly blur, these communities are characterized by a participatory culture that

CONTACT Phoebe Maares  phoebe.maares@univie.ac.at

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

integrates the roles of media content creators and audiences (Bruns 2008; Jenkins 2006; Meyers 2012). However, research primarily examines these new actors in relation to a journalistic “core,” and less through their embeddedness in a specific audience community, which equips them with specific knowledge. As such, we have a limited understanding of how diverse (non-)traditional journalistic actors, who are also part of audience communities, effectively establish epistemic authority. Exploring these relationships can shed light on how diverse journalistic actors legitimize their truth claims in ways that address the diverse needs of their communities.

This study examines these questions through an analysis of 27 interviews with diverse journalistic and journalism-like actors attending the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), an annual pan-European music event, and re:publica, an annual festival about technology, politics, and culture. The research design draws on a theoretical framework based on three dimensions of journalistic authority, namely proximity with event protagonists and sources, authenticity as perceived by the audience community, and professionalism regarding the journalistic field (Juarez Miro et al. 2025). Findings reveal that journalistic actors claim epistemic authority by leveraging each dimension based on the kind of work they produce and the relationships they can establish with other actors within the communities they cover. Thus, our study contributes to a nuanced understanding of journalistic authority as a multi-dimensional construct, showing how diverse actors establish authority through boundary-making practices specific to their unique positions.

Hybrid Journalistic Actors Embedded in Audience Communities

Journalists’ social relevance relies on their ability to effectively assert and be granted the authority to observe, document, and ultimately define reality (Carlson 2015, 2017; Zelizer 1992). The notion that such legitimacy cannot be unilaterally imposed and needs to be conferred to journalists by their audiences is a particularly important consideration given the current context of globally declining news trust, interest, and use (Newman et al. 2024). These trends are related to audience expectations that journalists be more engaged with their audience communities, have a deeper understanding of them, and represent them fairly (Ross Arguedas et al. 2023). When these expectations go unmet, journalists may be perceived as inauthentic, irrelevant, and undeserving of trust (Carlson, Robinson, and Lewis 2021; Maares, Banjac, and Hanusch 2021; Ross Arguedas et al. 2023).

Research documents journalism’s power to build relevant affective communities (Anderson 2006). While traditional media can foster a sense of community among geographically close members (Hume 2012), digital technologies extend this affordance to dispersed audience communities (Vos and Hanusch 2024) who share thematic interests and meaning-making practices (Lowrey, Brozana, and Mackay 2008; Meyers 2012). At the same time, audiences in the digital environment have become increasingly fragmented into niche, interest-based communities, able to exercise unprecedented control over the media content they consume, produce, and distribute (Napoli 2011). Fan communities exemplify this, as members form intense connections with cultural objects, constructing collective interpretations and identities driven by emotional attachments (Baym 2000; Jenkins 1992; Sandvoss 2004). These communities produce, use, and re-use cultural products while satisfying the social needs of their members (Jenkins 1992).

Given the highly mediated nature of these communities, interconnected media-producing and media-consuming actors emerge (Bruns 2008; Jenkins 2006; Meyers 2012). While digital technologies support their activities, their roles extend beyond digital spaces. They engage in hybrid practices that combine journalistic and journalism-like traditional and disruptive norms, professional and amateur identities, as well as older and newer media logics (Chadwick 2017; Hallin, Mellado, and Mancini 2023). In these mediated and hybrid environments, journalistic actors navigate tensions of dependency and competition for authority among diverse community members, including other journalists and non-journalistic media producers (Hills 2015; McEnnis 2020; Meyers 2012). While these media producers are often studied through the lens of content producers or influencers, their practices and output have effects on the journalistic field (Maares and Hanusch 2023). Thus, and following research on peripheral journalistic actors (Eldridge 2018; Schapals 2024), we approach them as journalistic when they engage in factual reporting on and analysis of events (Löhmman 2025).

A valuable concept for understanding challenges to traditional journalistic authority within affective audience communities is embeddedness, the extent to which journalists are immersed in the communities they cover (Vos and Hanusch 2024). Journalistic actors who belong to these communities can achieve a privileged position over perceived outsiders. We differentiate journalistic actors in fan communities by their community knowledge, which shapes their epistemic authority (Juarez Miro et al. 2025). We identify three forms of knowledge: institutionalized—legitimized through formal education; objectified—deep expertise on a topic; and embodied—knowledge derived from everyday practice and lived experience (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). While the diversity and hybridity of actors within fan communities suggest these categories exist on a spectrum, we distinguish three kinds of journalistic actors with varying degrees of knowledge of these communities. First, mass media journalistic actors typically work for mainstream (online) newspapers, magazines, broadcasters and public service media, are outsiders to fan communities, and derive their journalistic authority from institutionalized traditional journalistic epistemic practices and values (see Carlson and Lewis 2015). Second, niche media journalistic actors produce and distribute narrow-interest journalistic content that relies on institutionalized knowledge but also draws on their objectified, specialized expertise (Cook and Sirkkunen 2013) and typically work for niche (online) magazines, podcasts and similar outlets, focused on specific topics. Third, fan media journalistic actors actively position themselves as members of the fan community, allowing them to uphold certain traditional journalistic values while leveraging their objectified and embodied community knowledge (Hills 2015). They typically write for fandom outlets such as amateur podcasts, blogs, their own media, and in social media pages.

These actors with varying degrees of knowledge on fandom communities compete over journalistic authority, i.e., what is appropriate journalism (Carlson 2017), when reporting on them. Journalism research draws on the concept of boundary work (Gieryn 1983) to examine how different journalistic actors navigate these tensions and define who can claim and be granted epistemic authority (Carlson 2015, 2017). Boundary work can occur within the journalistic field to negotiate authority among journalists of different occupational status or working in different beats or formats (Ferrucci and Vos 2017; Wiik 2015), as well as between journalists and various non-journalists, like actors engaging in acts of journalism or audiences (Carlson 2015; Örnebring et al. 2018).

Boundary work includes boundary drawing, a social and discursive process where new actors attempt to enter the field with antagonistic, cooperative, or neutral intentions (Eldridge 2019; Maares and Hanusch 2023). In response, established actors may incorporate or reject these newcomers to protect their professional autonomy (Carlson 2015). Our study extends this scholarship to fan communities, tracing how diverse journalistic actors establish discursive boundaries to claim or dispute authority.

Dimensions of Journalistic Authority

Our theoretical framework combines insights from boundary work and fan studies to argue that different types of journalistic actors in a fan community can claim and contest journalistic authority based on three dimensions: proximity, authenticity, and professionalism. The selection and development of these dimensions build on prior conceptual work that organized relevant aspects present in existing literature into these categories (Juarez Miro et al. 2025).

The first dimension, proximity, describes the relationship of diverse journalistic actors regarding news sources and protagonists and relates to their ability to claim having witnessed relevant events (Pantti 2019; Zelizer 1990). As such, proximity encompasses physical access to events and latent and manifest resources granting this access. Journalistic actors' renown, expertise, and/or resources (e.g., press credentials) shape their level of proximity. For example, mass media traditionally have high means of getting access to information due to their status and resources (Lough 2019), which can provide news sources and protagonists with increased visibility and reach. Here, proximity shapes actors' epistemic authority through the power to decide which information makes it into the news (Carlson 2017). At the same time, as they are not considered part of a specific community and their expert knowledge might be minimal, mass media reporters could encounter difficulties in getting close to central community members (McEnnis 2016). In that case, highly influential community media can have more access due to their insider status and highly specialized deep knowledge about the community and the main actors in it (Vos and Hanusch 2024).

Second, authenticity describes the relationship between mass, niche, and fan journalistic actors and their audiences. Authenticity is a highly relevant concept in digital media production spaces as it captures the credibility of non-institutionalized knowledge producers, like influencers (Marwick 2013). The concept speaks to a congruence between the behavior of mass, niche, and fan journalistic actors and their audiences' expectations (Maares, Banjac, and Hanusch 2021). Journalistic actors across the spectrum can engage in authenticity labor, a calculated performance of genuineness, community building, being true to their ideals, and consistent in reporting (Duffy and Hund 2015; Maares, Banjac, and Hanusch 2021). Members of fan communities might be more inclined to accept statements from "real" community members whom they perceive as experts and genuine (Banjac and Hanusch 2022) rather than articles in mass media. Likewise, while niche journalistic actors might have more specific expertise, their interest in pursuing a business might be perceived as less authentic than fan journalistic actors who report on the object of fandom "out of passion" (De Kosnik 2009). While mass and niche journalistic actors can adopt amateur practices to be viewed as genuine, such practices could also backfire (Bossio 2017).

Third, professionalism describes the relations between journalistic actors and the extent to which they are viewed as a legitimate part of the journalistic field by those with defining power (Carlson 2017; Eldridge 2018). This dimension explores how actors might adhere to established journalistic norms, routines, and skills (e.g., Deuze 2005; Waisbord 2013). The dimension also involves examining how actors might challenge these approaches and/or introduce new ones (Carlson 2015). This is particularly important since established practices are not guarantees of fair representation for specific communities (Ross Arguedas et al. 2023). As community members, fan journalistic actors might be able to claim journalistic authority by better serving and representing their communities while challenging traditional journalistic professionalism markers like a detached reporting style (Hills 2015).

This theoretical framework, informed by boundary work and fan studies, allows us to examine diverse journalistic actors' claims of epistemic authority based on their (1) proximity to news sources and protagonists of reporting; (2) authenticity in the relationship to their audience community; and (3) professionalism in relation to the journalistic community. With this goal, we ask:

RQ1: Which markers of proximity, authenticity, and professionalism are used by diverse journalistic actors to claim their own or dispute others' journalistic authority?

RQ2: How do diverse journalistic actors possessing diverse kinds of knowledge about the communities they cover perceive their epistemic authority when reporting on them?

Method

To address these research questions, we draw on 27 interviews with journalistic actors in two fan communities. The first, the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), launched in 1956, is one of the world's largest televised (pop)music competitions (ebu.ch 2024). The second, re:publica, is an annual festival about digital politics, culture, and democracy, first held in 2007 (About re:publica n.d.). Both communities offer insights into how diverse journalistic actors draw boundaries and establish authority. Their regular in-person gatherings allowed us to interview diverse journalistic actors at ESC in Malmö, Sweden (May 7-11, 2024) and re:publica in Berlin, Germany (May 27-29, 2024).

Comparative Case Study

Following a most-different comparative case study approach (Gerring 2006), the two communities help illuminate both differences and similarities in how journalistic actors discursively draw boundaries to assert their epistemic authority. Eurovision has long been recognized as a fan community, due to its highly mediatized nature, the existence of a deeply affectively engaged viewer base involved in activist practices and socialization around the contest (alongside more casual viewers) as well as the official designation of amateur reporters as fan media (Baker 2017; Wolther 2022). While initial studies on fan communities concentrated on entertainment, scholarship has since expanded to include political engagement (Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington 2007). This broader approach to fandom allows us to consider re:publica a fan community as well, as it fits the definition of an affectively engaged group that shares meaning and identity,

mobilizes around collective expectations, produces and circulates cultural content, and serves as an alternative space for socialization (Jenkins 1992). Therefore, to include varied communities to which this framework can be applied (from “softer” to “harder” issues), we selected two cases that span a spectrum from entertainment to political fandom. This approach allowed for an examination of the applicability of our framework in diverse community settings, encompassing diverse communities, journalistic actors, and the relationships among them.

Data Collection

To ensure comparability of data collected at two different events, the research team met several times during the conceptualization, fieldwork, and analysis phases. They collaboratively developed the interview guide, remained in contact during and after fieldwork to share observations, and met again after transcript coding and initial analysis to discuss findings and reach consensus.

To achieve a diverse sample at both events, we contacted potential interviewees in advance, securing two to four journalistic actors from mass, niche, and fan media during the events. These were supplemented with on-site interviews, except for four (two for each event) conducted digitally afterward. Most respondents were recruited on-site, identified through their work and online presence. Other recruiting strategies included snowball sampling and, occasionally, chance encounters during the events, in line with a typical ethnographic approach (Hammersley 2006). Before starting and recording the interview, all participants were informed about their rights and provided signed informed consent. The study received IRB approval (ID: 20240418_020).

A multi-step strategy allowed us to identify and classify actors based on their outlet type, the scope of their work, their position in relation to the dimensions of journalistic authority outlined in our framework, and their knowledge of the two communities. This process involved (1) an initial assessment based on their work and social media presence, which provided early insights and informed recruitment decisions; (2) refinement or confirmation of this assessment through direct observations conducted during the events (e.g., evident connections to key players in the community or live-reporting); (3) further validation through the interview data we collected and analyzed (e.g., self-identification as journalists); and (4) a final review of each participant’s published work and coverage following the interviews. Together, these steps informed the classification of journalistic actors as shown in [Table 1](#).

In total, we interviewed 27 journalistic actors, including institutionalized, freelance, and hybrid reporters working for both mass and niche media as well as fan and social media journalistic actors. Of these, 12 interviews were conducted at ESC and 15 at re:publica (see [Table 1](#)). Interviews averaged 23 min, ranging from 10:03–36:22, totaling over 11 h. 16 respondents identified as men, 10 as women, and one as non-binary. The average age was 40, ranging from 19 to 64. Most respondents had some journalism training (18), held a journalism-related job title (16), and/or self-identified as journalistic (15). To preserve anonymity, we share a few examples of outlets that our respondents worked for at the time of writing. These include professional mass media such as mainstream newspapers (e.g., *Aftonbladet*, *De Morgen*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*), public broadcasters (e.g., ARD, WDR), fan outlets such as ESC Insight and Aussievision, as well as blogs and social media sites.

Table 1. Sociodemographic background of interviewees.

ID	Age	Gender	Journalistic training	Job Title	Outlet Type	Journalistic Authority Dimensions	Knowledge about Community
ESC1	56	male	No	Podcaster	Fandom outlet (podcast) - collective-led	Low proximity, high authenticity, low professionalism	Objectified, embodied
ESC2	54	female	Yes	Freelance journalist	Public service broadcaster	High proximity, medium authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized, embodied
ESC3	35	male	Yes	Scientist	Fandom outlet - collective-led	High proximity, high authenticity, medium professionalism	Objectified, embodied
ESC4	43	male	Yes	Journalist	Mainstream mass media (newspaper)	High proximity, high authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized, objectified
ESC5	28	male	No	Visual artist/graphic designer/photographer	Social media pages - individual-led	Low proximity, medium authenticity, low professionalism	Embodied
ESC6	32	female	Yes	Working journalist	Mainstream mass media - news website, magazine	Low proximity, medium authenticity, high professionalism	Objectified
ESC7	39	male	No	Actor	Social media pages - individual-led	Medium proximity, high authenticity, low professionalism	Embodied
ESC8	36	male	Yes	Administrative personnel	Fandom outlet (crowdfunded medium) - individual-led	High proximity, high authenticity, medium professionalism	Embodied, objectified
ESC9	37	male	Yes	Freelance journalist	Fandom outlet - collective led / mainstream mass media (news website)	Medium proximity, medium authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized, embodied
ESC10	19	non-binary	Yes	Student	Niche media - newsroom-led	Low proximity, medium authenticity, medium professionalism	Embodied
ESC11	26	male	Yes	Journalist/Podcaster	Fandom outlet (podcast) - collective-led / mainstream mass media (newspaper)	Medium proximity, high authenticity, medium professionalism	Embodied, objectified
ESC12	34	male	No	Communication professional	Fandom outlet - collective-led	Low proximity, medium authenticity, medium professionalism	Embodied, objectified
RP1	26	male	Yes	Freelance journalist/public broadcaster/media consultant	Public service broadcaster	High proximity, medium authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized, objectified

(Continued)



Table 1. Continued.

ID	Age	Gender	Journalistic training	Job Title	Outlet Type	Journalistic Authority Dimensions	Knowledge about Community
RP2	64	female	No	Historian/editor-in-chief of niche online-only medium	Niche online magazine - newsroom-led	Low proximity, medium authenticity, high professionalism	Objectified
RP4	45	female	Yes	Journalist	Public service broadcaster	High proximity, medium authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized
RP5	54	male	Yes	Blogger/digital consultant	Fandom outlet (blog) - individual-led	High proximity, high authenticity, medium professionalism	Objectified, embodied
RP6	52	male	No	Journalistic Writer	Social media pages/	High proximity, high authenticity, medium professionalism	Objectified, embodied
RP7	49	male	Yes	Editor-in-Chief at a local public broadcaster	Public service broadcaster	Medium proximity, low authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized
RP8	32	female	Yes	Journalist at a broadsheet newspaper	Mainstream mass newspaper	Low proximity, low authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized
RP9	46	female	Yes	Freelance Journalist	Niche media / Fandom outlet (podcast) - individual-led	Low proximity, high authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized
RP10	46	female	Yes	Self-employed digital consultant	Fandom outlet (blog) - individual-led	High proximity, high authenticity, high professionalism	Objectified, embodied
RP11	32	female	No	Editor-in-Chief at a niche magazine	Niche magazine- newsroom-led	Low proximity, high authenticity, high professionalism	Objectified
RP12	30	female	Yes	Freelance Journalist	Social media pages - individual-led / Mainstream mass media	Low proximity, high authenticity, medium professionalism	Embodied, institutionalized
RP13	28	female	No	Activist	Social media pages - individual-led	Low proximity, low authenticity, medium professionalism	Embodied
RP14	41	male	Yes	Employee-like freelancer at two public broadcasters	Public service broadcaster	High proximity, low authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized, objectified
RP15	40	male	No	Blogger/journalist/curatorial director of republica	N/A (event protagonist)	N/A (event protagonist)	Institutionalized, objectified, embodied
RP16	41	male	Yes	Journalist	Public service broadcaster	High proximity, low authenticity, high professionalism	Institutionalized, embodied

The interview guide included initial ice-breakers related to the event (e.g., What's your history with this event?). Then, questions specifically inquired about the theoretical frameworks' three relevant dimensions. First, proximity was explored through questions about access to key people and resources (e.g., How would you describe your level of access? What resources do you have?). Second, authenticity was addressed via questions on audience perceptions and community expectations (e.g., How do you think your audience imagines you?). Third, professionalism was examined through questions about journalistic identity and values (e.g., Do you consider yourself a journalist? Why (not)?). Finally, the interview included an explicit question about participants' perceived authority (What gives you the authority/legitimacy to talk/write about this?).

The 27 interviews were transcribed by a professional human-transcription service in the languages in which they were conducted (English, German, and Dutch) and translated into English using translation software and checked by native speakers, ensuring that all researchers could analyze randomly distributed interviews.

Data Analysis

We employed a thematic analysis in MAXQDA (Braun and Clarke 2006). The analysis was partially deductive, structured by our conceptualization of the three relevant dimensions (proximity, authenticity, and professionalism) to identify discursive boundary-making relating to each one. Additionally, the analysis adopted a partially inductive approach by maintaining an "other" category for open coding of relevant data. Broader themes we found for each category relate to access and resources (proximity), perceived membership, and relationships with audiences, fans, and other journalistic actors (authenticity), and journalistic practices, values, and norms (professionalism).

Findings

Markers of Proximity, Authenticity, and Professionalism to Claim Epistemic Authority

Regarding our first research question, diverse journalistic actors generally secured their epistemic authority vis-à-vis other actors in the fandom community and the journalistic field by drawing on several markers within the broader concepts of proximity, authenticity, and professionalism.

Proximity

Proximity was relevant for journalistic actors, allowing them to meet their audiences' needs by providing specific information, addressing niche interests, and evoking emotions. Fan journalists particularly emphasized that their connection to the events and communities was essential for asserting authority, as it enabled them to convey that same proximity to their audiences: "I'm just here to bring the contest to other people. For the people who can't be here" (ESC7). To draw boundaries to other journalistic actors and ground their epistemic authority in proximity to key sources, protagonists (e.g., artists, panelists), and gatekeepers (press representatives, organizers), journalistic actors used two key markers: access and resources.

In terms of access, journalistic actors across the board emphasized the importance of “being [t]here,” (ESC2; ESC7; ESC8; RP11; RP12), “in the room” (ESC3), “on the ground” (ESC3; ESC12), “attending” (RP1), and “taking part” (RP2). Their presence at the events allowed them to connect with both audiences at home and those seeking information and guidance on-site. Attending in person—visiting on-site parties, conducting interviews, and engaging in informal discussions with sources—helped them build closer relationships with the community and its key players. Moreover, being present made the experience more enjoyable, as highlighted by those journalistic actors most affectively engaged with the event, namely fan journalists: “It’s great because, after every talk, you have the chance mostly if they don’t have other talks to do, you can at least briefly talk or connect” (RP9). In general, journalistic actors also referred to digital media’s relevance in reducing the need for physical presence while maintaining community connections, blurring the distinction between access and resources. As explained by one fan journalist: “the hybrid model of Eurovision right now with online media is something that would potentially work for me” (ESC3).

Mainstream mass media journalistic actors explained that their outlet’s status and renown enhanced their access to artists, representatives, and EBU organizers at ESC and, to a lesser extent, speakers and organizers at re:publica. Niche and fan journalistic actors thought that protagonists and gatekeepers prioritized outlets with larger audiences, although they felt that, unlike mass generalist outlets, their commitment allowed them to cultivate deeper relationships with key figures. For instance, ESC fan journalists felt their privileges had steadily diminished in favor of mainstream mass media, seeing restrictions by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), like closed rehearsals, as obstructive and dismissive: “Throughout the years, the EBU has made it harder for an independent journalist to cover the event.” (ESC4). Moreover, a fan podcaster at ESC believed he was denied an interview because the “head of the press is not that interested in getting back to a small podcast” (ESC1). Similarly, a niche tech journalist wondered if legacy media had easier access since “nobody knows us, people that I interviewed can’t expect a huge reach” (RP11). Still, they explained that mass media sought synergies with them, offering access to the events’ key players in exchange for specialized knowledge. A fan journalist explained: “They value what we do, that we have this passion because very often the journalists that are working for bigger media don’t know Eurovision much, they just do their work” (ESC8). Journalistic actors generally highlighted professional networks when accessing sources, particularly at re:publica, where many key figures were professional journalists themselves.

In both cases, journalistic actors across our typology highlighted that available resources influenced their ability to work. However, financial constraints posed a challenge, particularly for those uncompensated (i.e., fan journalists at ESC and those without press accreditation at re:publica). This resource limitation intersected with the notion of working for free, driven by passion (De Kosnik 2009). Accreditations were crucial resources for proximity to the venue, restricted areas like the press lounge, and central figures at both events.

Consequently, fan journalists at ESC devoted considerable effort to securing accreditations. However, not everyone succeeded, with fan media feeling more likely to face rejection than larger, established outlets: “They rejected it. I felt like I was not enough to be there, and I felt it was unfair” (ESC8). Traditional mass and niche journalists, eligible for

a different tier of accreditation than fan media, enjoyed greater privileges: “For me, it’s easy. I get an accreditation that gives us - we have to be honest - more access than the fan media that gets accredited” (ESC11). This disparity motivated those working for multiple outlets to apply for higher-tier accreditation, making it harder for fan media to reach key figures. Despite these challenges, outlets with fewer resources took pride in producing more “personal” and intimate work (ESC6).

At re:publica, speakers and press attendees received free entry, but press members were expected to produce coverage. Therefore, many journalistic actors, despite identifying as journalists, chose not to apply for accreditation, preferring to enjoy the event rather than work. Unlike ESC, re:publica accreditations had less impact due to its more horizontal culture, which made it easier for attendees to connect with organizers and founders. Some journalistic actors actively reporting on re:publica and financially able opted to purchase their tickets to support the event. As put by a long-time attending fan blogger: “Normally I buy my ticket because I can afford it, and I want to support re:publica” (RP5). The conversation around press accreditations carried a negative tone, implying that applicants were “free-riding.” To navigate these dynamics, niche and fan journalistic actors employed various strategies, like submitting papers to become speakers or volunteering. One fan journalist who also worked as a freelancer for mainstream mass media shared her experience: “I joined as a volunteer, so I helped to get everything ready around here because the ticket was too expensive for me as a freelance worker” (RP12).

In summary, journalistic actors engaged in discursive boundary-making by highlighting how they differentiated themselves from others through their proximity to key figures at the events. Here, we primarily observe a contestation of the boundary between fan journalists on the one hand who struggle to gain access, and traditional mass media and niche journalists on the other, who can rely on their journalistic reputation and resources to increase their proximity. Higher proximity provided actors with certain advantages, such as more access and easier work. These comparisons also entailed distinctions based on available resources (i.e., financial capacity, audience reach, and outlet reputation), which were perceived to provide more established mass and niche journalistic actors with higher proximity than fan journalists.

Authenticity

Regarding authenticity, journalistic actors across the board were viewed as members of their respective communities, albeit to varying degrees. At ESC, most, including mass media journalists, considered themselves part of the fandom. At re:publica, primarily fan bloggers who had attended the event since its founding in 2007 identified as members, while several mass media journalists saw themselves more as interested participants. When claiming epistemic authority through authenticity vis-à-vis other actors, journalistic actors generally referenced their relationship with audiences, other community members, and other journalistic actors.

Regarding their audience, not all journalistic actors catered exclusively to a niche or fan audience community. Some niche and fan journalists who reported through niche platforms, fan media, podcasts, or micro-blogging also worked for national newspapers or public broadcasters addressing a broader audience. An ESC mainstream mass media journalist and fan podcaster explained, “With the podcast, that’s very clear. Those are super fans (...) At [national newspaper]? Initially, I think, the average Fleming” (ESC11). With

these “super fans,” respondents developed direct and close relationships akin to influencer authenticity labor (Maares, Banjac, and Hanusch 2021). Niche media actors, especially in subscription-based platforms, were well-connected with their audience, turning readers into engaged members. Fan journalists covering ESC, in particular, tailored their content to their audiences’ and crowd-funders’ interests, adjusting language and style accordingly. By commodifying their relationship, however, respondents felt “guilty” (ESC8) when unable to fulfill expectations. Others emphasized authenticity by staying “true” to themselves (Maares, Banjac, and Hanusch 2021), producing content they found relevant, hoping audiences would like it. As one ESC fan reporter explained, “If there’s something I want to talk about, then I’ll talk about it. (...) I want to be me.” (ESC7). Similarly, a fan blogger and long-time re:publica member argued, “I just write for me. I only do it because writing relaxes me and because I want to. I don’t care who reads it, who likes it, and who doesn’t like it” (RP5).

Regarding their relationship with other members of the community, journalistic actors at both events noted that they were recognized for their work and expertise within the community. At ESC, nearly all journalistic actors were deeply involved in the fandom; they self-identified as “fans” even when working for mainstream mass media outlets (ESC4; ESC3; ESC7; ESC9; ESC12). Several respondents working for both mass, niche or fan outlets linked their work to their love for ESC. As one put it, they were “fortunate enough to just write about it” (ESC9). At re:publica, journalistic actors across the board, but most prominently fan journalists, described membership in a tight-knit community, referring to it as their “emotional home” (RP9), a “class reunion”(RP9, RP10, RP13, RP14), a “homecoming”(RP10) or like seeing “family” (RP4, RP10). Respondents explained the festival makes their “digital connections [...] real” (RP10), while newer participants were more reserved about their membership, suggesting an aspirational appeal primarily created online.

As their audience did not always entirely overlap with the fandom community, fan journalists also differentiated themselves from other fans through their position as reporters, balancing authenticity as both community members and objective chroniclers of truth. They emphasized the obligation to be critical as a key to providing authentic information, even if it “feels bad” as a fan (ESC12). While this critical stance might alienate them from the larger community, they regardless viewed it as important. One respondent, who identified more as a journalist than a fan reporter, acknowledged this made him a “little bit more of an outsider. I’m sure that there are people who don’t like what I do and don’t follow me, and they choose other Eurovision-related media.” (ESC8).

When it comes to their perception of other journalistic actors’ authenticity, niche and fan journalistic actors questioned mainstream mass media journalists’ expertise and knowledge of the event. While most engaged with content produced by other community members, they found mass media’s reporting to be “pretty on the surface” (RP1), prioritizing celebrities or elite actors over details. At ESC, both fan and mass media actors who identified as fans said that generalist journalists sometimes “don’t really have a connection with [ESC]” (ESC11). In defending their epistemic authority, fan journalists emphasized their authentic relationships with audiences as well as their deep knowledge about the fandom, and criticized that mass media reporters’ opinion was perceived as more legitimate by the public and protagonists of their reporting: “[Their] opinion is

more valid than the people who have loved Eurovision, watched Eurovision all their lives, and now are reporting on it" (ESC7).

In conclusion, fan and, to a lesser extent, niche journalists used authenticity as a boundary marker to distinguish themselves from mass media journalists and claim epistemic authority as authentic chroniclers of the events. As such, we can observe boundary drawing within the field (between niche and mass media) as well as at its periphery (between fan and mass media). Fan and niche journalistic actors emphasized their deep embodied knowledge about the community they are part of and report on to legitimize their claims of epistemic authority. At the same time, fan journalists distinguished themselves from other fans who do not report on the fandom, linking markers of authenticity with those of professionalism. By highlighting their intention to stay "true to themselves" (Maares, Banjac, and Hanusch 2021), they, however, emphasized that they have higher editorial freedom than professional niche and mass media journalists, which renders their work more authentic and truthful.

Professionalism

While proximity and authenticity markers were discussed in depth, cues of professionalism were mentioned as a taken-for-granted basis of journalistic actors' reporting. Across the spectrum from mass to fan media, actors highlighted journalistic values as important guiding principles when they reflected on how they covered ESC and re:publica. This indicates their relatively high adherence to standards of professional journalism, like researching and fact-checking information. Furthermore, mass and niche journalists considered organizational standards shaping their work, while fan journalists emphasized their relatively high editorial freedom. At both the ESC and re:publica, journalistic actors across our typology asserted their journalistic authority by emphasizing markers of professionalism, including their self-identification as journalists, training, commitment to values and ethical stances, and adherence to traditional journalistic practices and routines.

Mass, niche and fan media actors who self-identified as journalists supported this by describing their work as "journalistic" or conducted from a "journalistic point of view" (ESC4; ESC11; RP4; RP7; RP12; RP16). They also distinguished themselves through salaried employment at recognized outlets, emphasizing that they were "paid for it" (ESC7; ESC8; RP7; RP12). Actors who did not identify as journalists (e.g., fan bloggers) cited this same criterion, arguing they were not journalists because they did "not make money doing journalism" (RP5). Additionally, self-identified journalists across our typology highlighted their training, which facilitated entry into news organizations and equipped them with essential research and writing skills while familiarizing them with traditional journalism principles. For instance, they related journalistic authority to making knowledge accessible to audiences (Carlson 2017). As put by a niche media journalist who also was a fan podcaster at re:publica: "I'm trying to break down complex information into small pieces so that everyone can follow. I provide information that not many people have access to for different audiences, so that makes me a journalist" (RP9).

Journalistic actors who identified as journalists expressed the relevance of maintaining journalistic values and ethical stances. Truthfulness and transparency were particularly important (ESC2; RP1; RP4; RP6). As one mass media journalist explained, "the biggest value is truth" (ESC2), while another mass media journalist stated, "we are committed to the truth, and we try to tell the facts" (RP4). Objectivity and neutrality were also

highlighted by mass, niche and fan journalists alike (ESC4; ESC11; RP1; RP9), although they viewed them as tools for fair reporting and offering multiple perspectives: “it’s not objectivity or neutrality because every journalist is a human as well, [...] but in our coverage, we try to get to know the main pros and cons of every story to cover the arguments” (RP1). Still, fan journalistic actors prioritized affect and personal engagement as core values guiding their reporting. Those working across different media types, like a national newspaper and a fan media podcast, adapted their reporting style: “At the fan media, I will dare to share my own opinion much more than I will at [large national newspaper]. There it will be really objective” (ESC11).

However, journalistic actors across the spectrum described resisting common social media standards, like adopting an explicitly opinionated tone. One niche media journalist and fan podcaster aimed to add context when sharing opinions online to prevent discussions from escalating (RP9). At ESC, fan reporters acknowledged having opinions on Israel’s participation in the 2024 edition but withheld them for professionalism (ESC1, ESC3, ESC10, ESC11, ESC12), with one of them only agreeing to an interview on the condition that Israeli participation not be discussed (ESC7).

Journalistic actors generally noted their role within a broad content production landscape, where traditional gatekeepers coexist with a diverse constellation of hybrid content creators at both re:publica and ESC. However, not all identified as journalists or adhered to traditional journalistic values. Those who did not, perceived themselves enjoying more editorial freedom (ESC5, ESC7, RP5, RP7, RP13). A former journalist-turned-blogger and digital consultant explained that editorial freedom also meant less pressure to produce:

I don’t have to write. I can write anytime I want to. I can write about what I want to. I can put into the articles the amount of research I want to. I know there are always some people saying, “You write this, but you should have asked X, Y, and Z.” I said, “No, that’s the work of a journalist and I’m not a journalist.” (RP5)

Regarding practices and routines, journalistic actors broadly used journalistic language, reflecting both traditional and digital cultures. They referred explicitly to “covering” or “reporting on” events or stories (ESC6; RP1; RP4; RP10; RP11; RP13) and writing “news articles” (ESC4; RP9) for specific outlets, “whether it’s for fan media or for an official medium” (ESC11). Other journalistic practices and routines included “do[ing] research” (ESC2; RP8; RP10; RP11), “talk[ing] to people,” “check[ing] for sources” (ESC6; RP1; RP8), and taking “interviews and statements” (ESC1). Some mass media journalists mentioned being or working with “an editor” or “editorial office” (ESC4; RP8; RP16), or being in “the press room” or “the newsroom” (ESC12; RP1). Using specialized jargon, journalistic actors across the board discussed “having a formal assignment” (RP4), “having the scoop” (ESC11), “covering the other side,” “taking that kind of angle” (ESC10), or “pitch[ing] topics” (RP12). On the digital side, actors from mass to fan media explained that they also created “backstage videos, vlogs, and live streams” (ESC8) or “live chat[ted] with the readers” (ESC4). This language, rooted in professional practices and routines, served as boundary work, differentiating insiders from outsiders (Waisbord 2013). However, some niche and fan media reporters questioned their ability to adhere to certain journalistic norms and routines, like fact-checking, due to limited resources: “I would say the journalistic values are the same but just not the possibilities, like I would love to fact-check everything” (RP11).

In brief, journalistic actors generally grounded their claims to authority on professionalism by leveraging their self-identification as journalists to distinguish themselves from others, emphasizing their adherence to journalistic values and practices, drawing boundaries between journalism and non-journalism. Our findings show that this can work both ways, with some fan reporters deliberately setting themselves apart from professional mass and niche journalists or considering themselves their peers. Consequently, not all fan journalistic actors claim membership, albeit they might have effects on the journalistic field (Maares and Hanusch 2023).

Perceived Recognition of Epistemic Authority

Beyond discursively positioning themselves vis-à-vis others along these three dimensions, journalistic actors broadly reflected on their epistemic authority (RQ2). They believed their ability to produce knowledge about these events and the surrounding communities was recognized by their audiences for several reasons relating to their embeddedness in the respective communities (Vos and Hanusch 2024). These included their intense involvement in the events, professional standing, specialized knowledge, long history with the events, and relationship to key players organizing the events. At the same time, some journalistic actors, in particular mass media journalists, also drew on their professional standing to ground their claims to epistemic authority (Carlson 2017).

Journalistic actors with embodied knowledge of the communities argued that their audiences recognized their active, personal involvement in the events' central activities. For instance, in the re:publica case, this involved attending the panels, reflecting on them, and establishing connections between the discussions and public affairs in the reporting. Their deep appreciation and genuine interest in these events, coupled with a personal commitment to conveying this passion through their journalistic work, were seen by these actors as key factors in establishing their authority.

Regarding their specialized knowledge, journalistic actors with objectified and embodied knowledge, mostly niche and fan journalists at both events, perceived that their authority was acknowledged due to their in-depth understanding of niche topics intimately related to the events. This recognition often came from other media outlets that sought them out as expert sources on the communities, as well as from their firsthand experiences gained by attending and covering them.

Journalistic actors across the board also noted their long history with the event as a basis for recognition of their epistemic authority. Their experiences often extended back before their careers as journalists, particularly in the case of ESC: "This was my 19th year covering Melodifestivalen" (ESC4). Relatedly, journalistic actors generally highlighted how attending the events over many years, and getting to know fellow journalistic actors, along with engaging in online discussions, enabled them to develop an intimate understanding of the event and its key players in the organizing teams. Moreover, this familiarity granted them access to privileged information before it became public, especially in the context of re:publica.

Additionally, journalistic actors with institutionalized journalistic knowledge, mostly mass media journalists at both events, reflected on how their professional standing was recognized. This recognition stemmed from various factors, including "taking the journalistic craft to heart" (RP16), their self-identification as journalists, their affiliation

with a reputable media outlet, and their possession of press accreditations. However, those actors with objectified and embodied knowledge also used professionalism markers to ground their epistemic authority. As one fan journalist explained, “I have accreditation. That is my authority, just like everyone else here. [...] If they’ve applied they’ve earned the right to be here” (ESC7).

In brief, mass, niche, and fan journalists anchored their sense of epistemic authority in the specific types of knowledge they possessed. Mass journalists emphasized institutional credentials and newsroom prestige, while niche and fan journalists highlighted embodied participation and objectified expertise. Across the board, they perceived that audiences recognized these distinct assets (i.e., professional standing, specialized insight, and long-term community membership) as legitimate foundations for relying on their reporting.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined how diverse journalistic actors involved in two different communities, the ESC and re:publica, asserted their journalistic authority based on three dimensions of epistemic authority: proximity to main sources and protagonists; authenticity, recognized by the community members; and professionalism, in reference to the journalistic field. We examined how diverse actors across a spectrum from mass media to niche and fan media discursively drew boundaries along these dimensions of journalistic authority that distinguished them from other actors producing knowledge about these specific events. Our findings indicate that the dimensions allowed journalistic actors to effectively claim authority while navigating the tensions stemming from their practical needs to access the events to be chronicled (Carlson 2015, 2017; Zelizer 1992), audiences’ demands for more engaged and authentic reporting (Carlson, Robinson, and Lewis 2021; Ross Arguedas et al. 2023), and traditional journalistic values like detached objectivity (Carlson 2017).

Despite disparities in their available resources, all journalistic actors involved could apply for accreditations, which allowed them to establish their epistemic authority based on their access to the events, including restricted areas reserved for the press. Event organizers often resort to such a strategy, shifting the playing field for all actors in terms of access and resources (McEnnis 2016; Rocamora 2017), although traditional mass media journalists with more status or renown still had more privileges. Here, journalistic professionalism and reputation affected the extent to which some actors, primarily those with embodied knowledge, could toggle their degree of embeddedness (Vos and Hanusch 2024). Even though they are embedded within a community based on their authentic membership and embodied knowledge, reduced access complicates their ability to witness an event on-site.

Even so, journalistic actors with less access and resources used digital technologies to conduct real-time monitoring and reporting through practices such as live (micro-)blogging, a documented strategy by fan reporters (e.g., Hills 2015; Sandvoss 2013) which allowed them to assert their epistemic authority by competing, and even circumventing, gatekeeping from other journalists and event organizers. This finding can be contextualized within the broader discussion of how mediated witnessing capabilities—defined as the ability of ordinary citizens to observe, record, and share events in real time using

everyday portable devices like smartphones—have become a widespread affordance of digital technologies, challenging traditional notions of journalistic gatekeeping (Bruns 2003; Hills 2015).

Importantly, our analysis revealed that the dimensions were interrelated. For instance, some who were disadvantaged when claiming their authority based on proximity were better positioned to do so through their authenticity claims. In that sense, while enhanced access positioned established journalists to build relationships with important sources (Ahva and Pantti 2014), less established journalistic actors argued that they were closer to the community, being able to capture the community's real sentiment. Similarly, while outlets with a broader reach utilized their influence to gain access to important sources, they also partnered with journalistic actors who had deep specialized knowledge. This collaboration allowed both parties to assert their epistemic authority based on expertise and authentic connection to the community. Future research should further investigate the affective dimension of such collaborations and to what extent they can be viewed as strategic demarcation practices of traditional journalists to maintain their role as detached observers while outsourcing more passionate reporting to fans (Wahl-Jorgensen 2015), a dynamic echoing the relationship between conflict reporters and local fixers (Kotišová 2023).

Additionally, journalistic actors attending these events without an assignment were not compensated for their work. This enabled them to ground their authority claims on their community membership and genuine interest rather than financial motivation, a particularly important marker of authenticity among fans and aspirational workers (Abidin 2017; De Kosnik 2009; Duffy and Hund 2015; Reade 2021). Furthermore, identifying themselves as journalists allowed actors to claim epistemic authority based on their adherence to professional journalistic norms, routines, and skills regardless of their affiliation to mass, niche, or fan media. Fan and niche journalistic actors more explicitly demonstrated the normalization of these standards in live blogging and social media reporting (Matheson and Wahl-Jorgensen 2020). This reflects a broader trend of convergence between journalistic norms and digital culture (e.g., Hellmueller, Vos, and Poepsel 2013). Moreover, although fan journalistic actors could set themselves apart by embracing more affective and subjective reporting styles (e.g., Atton 2009; Hills 2002), they relied on professionalism to distinguish themselves positively from other fans and claim membership in the journalistic field, a common practice in fan communities (Hills 2002; 2015; McCudden 2011).

We acknowledge that the two communities analyzed, while diverse in terms of “softer” and “harder” topics, may not be representative of other communities with differing cultures (i.e., fans had significant influence at ESC and re:publica's organizational structure was particularly horizontal). Similarly, diverse journalistic actors and relationships with organizers and protagonists could lead to varying discursive strategies of boundary-making. Additionally, although our analysis included a diverse range of actors who produced their own but also consumed others' journalistic work, future research should focus more explicitly on the reception of these authority claims to understand whether and how they are recognized, by whom, and whether this changes based on the dimension they are rooted in.

These limitations notwithstanding, this study contributes a more nuanced conceptualization of journalistic authority as a multi-dimensional construct. Our findings suggest

that journalistic authority is shaped by how different actors manage their relationships with sources, audience communities, and the broader journalistic field. By examining boundary work along the dimensions of proximity, authenticity, and professionalism, this study enabled a broader examination of varied journalistic actors across diverse communities and types of work. Therefore, future research following this approach holds the potential to enhance our understanding of how these actors establish authority through boundary-making practices that set them apart from other hybrid actors involved in covering their community.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the Kaiserschild Foundation, which made this study possible. Further, the authors want to thank the four anonymous reviewers for their comments.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was funded in whole or in part by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [10.55776/P34692; 10.55776/P35317]. The Kaiserschild Foundation is a nonprofit in Austria, that supported this study with travel costs through a Kaiserschild Advance fund.

Ethical Approval and Informed Consent Statements

Data collection followed ethical guidelines for standard research as approved by the IRB of the Department of Communication, University of Vienna (ID: 20240418_020), and all participants gave informed consent.

ORCID

Clara Juarez Miro  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6626-6317>

Phoebe Maares  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9518-7132>

Jonathan Hendrickx  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2802-2802>

References

- Abidin, C. 2017. "#Familygoals: Family Influencers, Calibrated Amateurism, and Justifying Young Digital Labor." *Social Media+ Society* 3 (2): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117707191>.
- About re:publica. n.d. https://re-publica.com/de/ueber_uns.
- Ahva, L., and M. Pantti. 2014. "Proximity as a Journalistic Keyword in the Digital era: A Study on the "Closeness" of Amateur News Images." *Digital Journalism* 2 (3): 322–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.895505>.
- Anderson, B. 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 3rd ed. London: Verso.
- Atton, C. 2009. "Writing about Listening: Alternative Discourses in Rock Journalism." *Popular Music* 28 (1): 53–67. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114300800158X>.

- Baker, C. 2017. "The 'gay Olympics'? The Eurovision Song Contest and the Politics of LGBT/European Belonging." *European Journal of International Relations* 23 (1): 97–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066116633278>.
- Banjac, S., and F. Hanusch. 2022. "A Question of Perspective: Exploring Audiences' Views of Journalistic Boundaries." *New Media & Society* 24 (3): 705–723. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820963795>
- Baym, N. K. 2000. *Tune in, log on: Soaps, Fandom, and Online Community*. London: Sage.
- Bossio, D. 2017. *Journalism and Social Media: Practitioners, Organisations and Institutions*. Melbourne: Palgrave.
- Bourdieu, P., and J. C. Passeron. 1990. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Vol. 4. London: Sage.
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>.
- Bruns, A. 2003. "Gatewatching, Not Gatekeeping: Collaborative Online News." *Media International Australia* 107 (1): 31–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X0310700106>.
- Bruns, A. 2008. *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Producers*. Lausanne: Peter Lang.
- Carlson, M. 2015. "Introduction: The Many Boundaries of Journalism." In *Boundaries of Journalism*, edited by M. Carlson, and S. C. Lewis, 1–18. London: Routledge.
- Carlson, M. 2017. *Journalistic Authority: Legitimizing News in the Digital era*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Carlson, M., and S. C. Lewis. 2015. *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*. London: Routledge.
- Carlson, M., S. Robinson, and S. C. Lewis. 2021. *News after Trump: Journalism's Crisis of Relevance in a Changed Media Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chadwick, A. 2017. *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cook, C., and E. Sirkkunen. 2013. "What's in a Niche? Exploring the Business Model of Online Journalism." *Journal of Media Business Studies* 10 (4): 63–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2013.11073576>.
- De Kosnik, A. 2009. "Should fan Fiction Be Free?" *Cinema Journal* 48 (4): 118–124. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.0.0144>.
- Deuze, M. 2005. "What Is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered." *Journalism* 6 (4): 442–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884905056815>.
- Duffy, B. E., and E. Hund. 2015. "Having It All" on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-branding among Fashion Bloggers." *Social Media + Society* 1 (2): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604337>.
- ebu.ch. 2024. Eurovision Song Contest 2024 breaks new records as hundreds of millions watch, listen and engage on TV and digital platforms. <https://www.ebu.ch/news/2024/05/eurovision-song-contest-2024-breaks-new-records-as-hundreds-of-millions-watch-and-listen-on-tv-and-digital-platforms>.
- Eldridge, S. A. II. 2018. *Online Journalism from the Periphery*. London: Routledge.
- Eldridge, S. A. II. 2019. "Where Do We Draw the Line? Interlopers, (ant)Agonists, and an Unbounded Journalistic Field." *Media and Communication* 7 (4): 8–18. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v7i4.2295>.
- Ferrucci, P., and T. Vos. 2017. "Who's in, Who's Out? Constructing the Identity of Digital Journalists." *Digital Journalism* 5 (7): 868–883. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1208054>
- Gerring, J. 2006. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gieryn, T. F. 1983. "Boundary-work and the Demarcation of Science from non-science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists." *American Sociological Review* 48 (6): 781–795. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095325>.
- Gray, J., C. Sandvoss, and C. L. Harrington. 2007. *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York: NYU Press.
- Hallin, D. C., C. Mellado, and P. Mancini. 2023. "The Concept of Hybridity in Journalism Studies." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 28 (1): 219–237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211039704>

- Hammersley, M. 2006. "Ethnography: Problems and Prospects." *Ethnography and Education* 1 (1): 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820500512697>.
- Hellmueller, L., T. P. Vos, and M. A. Poepsel. 2013. "Shifting Journalistic Capital? Transparency and Objectivity in the Twenty-First Century." *Journalism Studies* 14 (3): 287–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2012.697686>.
- Hills, M. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Hills, M. 2015. "Location, Location, Location: Citizen-fan Journalists' "set Reporting" and Info-war in the Digital age." In *Popular Media Cultures: Fans, Audiences and Paratexts*, edited by L. Geraghty, 164–185. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hume, J. 2012. "Community Journalism and Community History." In *Foundations of Community Journalism*, edited by B. Reader, and J. A. Hatcher, 65–82. London: Sage.
- Jenkins, H. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where old and new Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Juarez Miro, C., P. Maares, J. Hendrickx, and F. Hanusch. 2025. "Understanding the Role of Community Membership in Journalistic Authority Claims: A Framework Informed by Boundary Work and fan Studies." *Communication Theory* qtaf010. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtaf010>.
- Kotišová, J. 2023. "The 'Emotional Gap'? Foreign Reporters, Local Fixers and the Outsourcing of Empathy." In *Media and the War in Ukraine*, edited by M. Pantti, and M. Mortensen, 154–174. Lausanne: Peter Lang.
- Löhmman, K. 2025. "Activists for Diversity or Diverse Journalists? How Austrian Peripheral Journalistic Actors' Role Orientations Serve as Boundary Markers." *Journalism Studies* 26 (11): 1323–1341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2025.2505945>.
- Lough, K. 2019. "A Gate in the Wall of Sound: Embodiment and Traditional Gatekeeping in Music Photography." *Journalism Practice* 13 (2): 247–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2018.1423629>.
- Lowrey, W., A. Brozana, and J. B. Mackay. 2008. "Toward a Measure of Community Journalism." *Mass Communication and Society* 11 (3): 275–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205430701668105>.
- Maares, P., S. Banjac, and F. Hanusch. 2021. "The Labour of Visual Authenticity on Social Media: Exploring Producers' and Audiences' Perceptions on Instagram." *Poetics* 84:101502. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2020.101502>
- Maares, P., and F. Hanusch. 2023. "Understanding Peripheral Journalism from the Boundary: A Conceptual Framework." *Digital Journalism* 11 (7): 1270–1291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2134045>
- Marwick, A. E. 2013. *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media age*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Matheson, D., and K. Wahl-Jorgensen. 2020. "The Epistemology of Live Blogging." *New Media & Society* 22 (2): 300–316. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819856926>.
- McCudden, M. L. 2011. "Degrees of Fandom: Authenticity and Hierarchy in the age of Media Convergence." Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas.
- McEnnis, S. 2016. "Following the Action: How Live Bloggers Are Reimagining the Professional Ideology of Sports Journalism." *Journalism Practice* 10 (8): 967–982. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2015.1068130>.
- McEnnis, S. 2020. "Playing on the Same Pitch: Attitudes of Sports Journalists towards fan Bloggers." In *Changing Sports Journalism Practice in the age of Digital Media*, edited by R. Boyle, 168–204. London: Routledge.
- Meyers, E. A. 2012. "Blogs Give Regular People the Chance to Talk Back': Rethinking 'Professional' Media Hierarchies in new Media." *New Media & Society* 14 (6): 1022–1038. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146144481243905>.
- Napoli, P. M. 2011. *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Newman, N., R. Fletcher, C. T. Robertson, A. Ross Arguedas, and R. K. Nielsen. 2024. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>.

- Örnebring, H., M. Karlsson, K. Fast, and J. Lindell. 2018. "The Space of Journalistic Work: A Theoretical Model." *Communication Theory* 28 (4): 403–423. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qty006>
- Pantti, M. 2019. "Journalism and Witnessing." In *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, edited by K. Wahl-Jorgensen, and T. Hanitzsch, 151–164. London: Routledge.
- Reade, J. 2021. "Keeping It raw on the 'Gram: Authenticity, Relatability and Digital Intimacy in Fitness Cultures on Instagram." *New Media & Society* 23 (3): 535–553. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819891699>.
- Rocamora, A. 2017. "Mediatization and Digital Media in the Field of Fashion." *Fashion Theory* 21 (5): 505–522. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2016.1173349>.
- Ross Arguedas, A., S. Banerjee, C. Mont'Alverne, B. Toff, R. Fletcher, and R. K. Nielsen. 2023. News for the Powerful and Privileged: How Misrepresentation of Disadvantaged Communities Undermine Their Trust in News. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Sandvoss, C. 2004. *A Game of two Halves: Football Fandom, Television and Globalisation*. London: Routledge.
- Sandvoss, C. 2013. "Toward an Understanding of Political Enthusiasm as Media Fandom: Blogging, fan Productivity and Affect in American Politics." *Participations* 10 (1): 252–296.
- Schapals, A. K. 2024. "Peripheral Actors and Journalistic Boundaries." In *The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism Studies*, edited by S. A. Eldridge II, D. Cheruiyot, S. Banjac, and J. Swart, 267–275. London: Routledge.
- Vos, T. P., and F. Hanusch. 2024. "Conceptualizing Embeddedness as a key Dimension for Analyzing Journalistic Cultures." *Communication Theory* 34 (1): 39–48. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtad018>.
- Wahl-Jorgensen, K. 2015. "Resisting Epistemologies of User-Generated Content?: Cooptation, Segregation and the Boundaries of Journalism." In *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*, edited by S. C. Lewis and M. Carlson, 169–185. London: Routledge.
- Waisbord, S. R. 2013. *Reinventing Professionalism: Journalism and News in Global Perspective*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Wiik, J. 2015. "Internal Boundaries. The Stratification of the Journalistic Collective." In *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*, edited by M. Carlson, and S. C. Lewis, 118–113. London: Routledge.
- Wolther, I. 2022. "From Trouble to Bubble? The Ambiguous Relationship between Professional Journalists and fan Media in the Eurovision Song Contest." In *The Eurovision Song Contest as a Cultural Phenomenon*, edited by A. Dubin, D. Vuletic, and A. Obregón, 201–218. London: Routledge.
- Zelizer, B. 1990. "Where Is the Author in American TV News? On the Construction and Presentation of Proximity, Authorship, and Journalistic Authority." *Semiotica* 80 (1–2): 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1990.80.1-2.37>.
- Zelizer, B. 1992. *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.