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Reintroducing the Journalist's Body and Emotions in Metajournalistic Discourse: The Case of *What I Didn't Say*

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes *What I Didn't Say*, a literary magazine column that asks journalists to share personal stories from their reporting assignments. In answering this prompt, journalists produce a unique type of metajournalistic discourse that includes their bodies and emotions. Taking insight from three developing strands in journalism studies – metajournalistic discourses, journalists' bodies, and emotions in journalism – the analysis illuminates how journalists' bodies and emotions are connected to journalistic practices. The findings reveal that emotions led journalists toward a more holistic understanding of what they were reporting. This emotional engagement was linked to the use of their bodies across three levels: as a sensor, transducer, and depository. Finally, the findings demonstrate that narrow conceptions of journalism that exclude the journalist's body and emotions miss crucial aspects of how the body is instrumental in journalistic practice.

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Introduction

During a trip to Killeen, Texas, while on assignment to report on the mysterious deaths of soldiers at the Fort Hood army base, journalist May Jeong was pulled over in the middle of the night by a police officer who approached her car with his gun pointed to her head. She received two traffic tickets, and the incident was not included in her final reporting. Instead, she writes about the experience and the "round shape" of her fear in an article for digital literary magazine *Off Assignment* (OA). In her article, Jeong, a seasoned war reporter, describes her surprise when she weeps listening to sources recount the horrible deaths of their loved ones. She also confesses what drove her to Fort Hood in the first place, spurred by personal experiences with loss and grief, writing: "I know well how such losses can come to haunt a life, generations if you let it. I was curious about the type of ghosts the events at Fort Hood had conjured" (Jeong 2023).

Jeong's article is part of a dedicated column on OA's website titled *What I Didn't Say* (WIDS). The column, which simply asks, "*What did journalists leave out of their final assignments?*" is a space where journalists tell personal stories about their reporting experiences. As OA is a literary magazine, the journalists that contribute to WIDS write about their

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reporting experiences in ways not typically afforded to them in traditional journalistic formats. By stepping out of this boundary, they produce a unique type of metajournalistic discourse that offers insight into how they articulate, navigate, and negotiate their bodies – namely, their bodily experiences, sensations, and emotions – vis-à-vis their work.

Metajournalistic discourses are "public expressions evaluating news texts, the practices that produce them, or the conditions of their reception" (Carlson 2016, 5). These discourses are produced by journalists and non-journalists alike and are part of a continual process of constructing what journalism is and ought to be (Perreault, Tandoc, and Caberlon 2023). Metajournalistic discourses have been particularly insightful in understanding how journalistic norms and boundaries are changing or staying the same amidst contemporary crises and challenges (Carlson and Usher 2015; Engelke 2023; Ferrucci 2021; Perreault, Perreault, and Maares 2021). WIDS is a particular case in that it is a type of metajournalistic discourse that includes journalists' own experiences from behind the scenes of their reporting assignments, which grants visibility into how their bodies and emotions operate in journalistic practices.

Emotions are defined here as "biologically preconditioned but to a large extent culturally determined, defined and shaped practices of feeling and thinking" (Kotišová 2019, 2). As this definition suggests, I refer to a "sociological conceptualization of emotion" as laid out by Peters (2011, 299) to allow for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between emotions and journalism. A sociological approach is particularly useful in conceptualizing how emotions are socially relational and impacted by social structures, which is well-documented within what has been dubbed the "emotional turn" in journalism studies (Beckett and Deuze 2016; Kotišová 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen 2013; Wahl-Jorgensen 2020; see also Hochschild 1979). Within the emotional turn is an opportunity to grant visibility to the often-forgotten journalist's body, which, like emotions, is "often juxtaposed against reason, rationality, and objectivity – core journalistic values" (Francoeur 2021, 2013). Scholars within the emotional turn argue that such a binary obscures the inherent embeddedness of emotions and rationality, which in turn obscures both the role of emotions in journalism and the underlying social, cultural, and political factors that shape them (Pajnik 2023; Wahl-Jorgensen 2019; Waschková Císařová 2021). Similarly, Francoeur (2021) argues that not only are emotions and affect part of the body, but so is reason. A more productive way to conceptualize the journalist's body, then, is not to place it in contrast to reason (or, for that matter, objectivity), but to understand how the body's internal processes of affect and emotion are shaped and guided by the journalistic contexts and environments they exist within – which can be illuminated through discourse.

Through a discourse analysis of 32 articles in the WIDS column, the paper sets out from the following research question: What do journalists' emotions in WIDS, as a form of metajournalistic discourse, reveal about the journalist's body during journalistic processes? In answering this question, I bring together three developing strands of research in journalism studies: metajournalistic discourses, journalists' bodies, and emotions in journalism. The following section presents an overview on metajournalistic discourses, followed by an overview on journalists' bodies and emotions. The approach and methods are then presented before the findings. The findings are structured in accordance with Francoeur's theoretical framework of the journalist's body as a sensor, transducer, and depository. The article concludes with a discussion on what the WIDS articles can contribute to existing

scholarly debates and suggestions for further research that prioritizes the journalist's body as central to news work.

Metajournalistic Discourses

Simply put, metajournalistic discourses are discourses from journalists and non-journalists alike that discuss what journalism is, how it works, how audiences interact with it, and what its social role should be (Carlson 2016). These discourses stem primarily from journalism's social status as a legitimate purveyor of truth and information about the world (Starr, 1982 as cited by Carlson 2016). This social status is not fixed; it is discursively constructed and relies heavily on social acceptance to maintain its legitimacy (Carlson 2016, 3). In charting a theoretical conception of metajournalistic discourses, Carlson (2016) lays out a three-part foundation: (1) journalism is produced in highly contingent conditions, (2) metajournalistic discourses are produced by various actors in various sites, for various audiences, and on different topics, and (3) the outcomes of metajournalistic discourses include control over journalism's definition, negotiation and enforcement of its boundaries, and legitimization of its social status (5).

First, starting with journalism's contingency, the study of metajournalistic discourse understands journalism as temporally and spatially contextual and as a set of social relations, underlying that journalism is created by and for people. Second, metajournalistic discourses are produced by both journalists and non-journalists, from within and beyond journalistic contexts, and on different topics that arise from specific journalistic instances or about journalism as a whole (Carlson 2016, 7). Crucial here is that metajournalistic discourses are constructed for public consumption and are "ritualized performances in which beliefs about journalism get played out" (Carlson 2016, 9–10). Finally, these components of metajournalistic discourses are linked to three outcomes: defining journalism, negotiating and enforcing its boundaries, and legitimizing its social role.

In line with these components, much of the literature on metajournalistic discourses analyzes how various discourses adhere to these outcomes, and thus what they reveal about the landscape of contemporary journalism (De Maeyer and Holton 2016; Moran and Shaikh 2022; Perreault and Vos 2020). Carlson (2016) emphasizes that the link between the three components of metajournalistic discourse (actors, sites/audiences, and topics) with the three outcomes (definition, boundary work, and legitimization) is a way to understand how *meanings* of journalism connect to journalistic *practice* (2). In other words, how we interpret journalism – its purpose and social role, for example – is linked directly to how journalism gets done, and we can better understand this process by looking at how such interpretations are constructed and contested.

Within metajournalistic discourse research, an emphasis on technology and new forms of journalism has advanced more quickly than the equally important pursuit of journalists' identities, emotions, and personal experiences. While Perreault, Tandoc, and Caberlon (2023) remark on an increasing tendency in journalism studies to consider journalists' emotions and personal identities with as much consideration and centrality as it does professional journalistic practices, rigorous inquiry into the presence of journalists' bodies and emotions in metajournalistic discourses has yet to be fully undertaken. To do so requires prioritizing the body and emotions as central to news production. As argued by Peters (2011), "just as "objectivity" has been unpacked by academics who wish to

understand how the rules of truth are formed and enacted within professional journalism, reconfiguring "emotion" allows a more complete picture of the relationship between news production and presentation to emerge" (307).

Journalists' Bodies and Emotions

The journalist's body often faces a double obscurity: first, from dominant journalistic norms and values in liberal democratic contexts and second, from theoretical perspectives in journalism studies. As noted by Deuze and Glitsos (2024), previous seminal texts in journalism studies render journalists' emotions and bodies not as their own, but rather as part of "the realm of "the citizenry's embodied knowledge" (1852). This is not to say that the disembodied, "view from nowhere" approach to the journalist's body is a consensus within journalism studies, rather, it underscores how prominent theoretical frameworks have not fully factored in the role of the body, especially when it comes to how the body connects to journalism practice.

Having journalists physically present at sites of developing news stories is acknowledged as part of positioning journalists as eyewitnesses to significant events, which in turn establishes journalistic authority (Zelizer 2007). However, as observed by Zelizer (2007), when journalists "make claims of eyewitnessing", it is unclear whether they are referring to "the technology of newsgathering, the person, or the report that they produce" (425). The journalist's body is thus buried within notions of journalistic norms and values that can be difficult to distinguish from one another, and that consider the involvement of the body insofar that it contributes to establishing these values. Similarly, Richards and Rees (2011) observed that journalists' emotions are buried within rarely defined notions of objectivity that require them to simultaneously be "tuned in" with their intuitions yet "detached" from their reporting (861). The journalist's body and emotions are clearly relevant to producing the news, but the extent of their contributions are often understated.

While the connection between journalists' bodies and emotions within journalistic practices has yet to be fully explored, Francoeur's (2021) theoretical framework offers tangible insight into how "bodies participate in and contribute to the journalistic endeavor, both practically and epistemologically" (202). By turning to tools from sensory ethnography and sentient geography, she posits that the use of the body as an instrument in journalistic practice can be conceived across three categories: as a sensor, as a transducer, and as a depository.

As a sensor, the journalist's body gathers information through both internal bodily signals and external signals from their environment. The sensor body can also be related to the popular saying of a journalist's "hunch", an innate feeling that leads a journalist to follow a certain trail (Schultz 2007). Francoeur refers to the journalist's sensor body as picking up on "signals" (which correlates with the term "sensor"), which they then apply various tools to interpret and shape into their final news story. This interpretive process is labeled as the "transducer body" (see Helmreich, 2007 as cited by Francoeur 2021) and includes all forms of deciphering signals, including various methods of gathering information (e.g., interviews with sources) and deciding how to present them (219). Finally, the experiences that journalists undergo in crafting their work – including the signals they pick up on and the processes of transducing them – do not leave the

body when a story is finished. Rather, the body becomes a "depository" that journalists can draw upon and refer to – like a personal archive – in future reporting.

This theoretical framework, while an indispensable starting point, is not without its limitations. Francoeur notes in particular that "journalism's longstanding mistrust of the body" presents a challenge in both studying and "finding a place for the body in contemporary journalism" (221). A first step in addressing this challenge lies in "discovering how this theoretical framework applies to working journalists on the job", which can partly be achieved by analyzing metajournalistic discourses produced by journalists about aspects of their work that are typically obscured in journalistic output – such as the WIDS column. WIDS provides a space where the journalist is centered, thus rendering their emotions and bodies visible. As a result, the use of the body as a sensor, transducer, and depository can be observed within discourses of journalistic practices and norms, which is explored in depth in the analysis.

Approach and Methods

Off Assignment (OA) is the brainchild of writer and editor Colleen Kinder, who, in her own words, observed that "when I asked fellow writers whether they ever came home from a reporting trip with better stories than those they'd gone seeking, the answer wasn't just 'yes'; it was 'always'" (Kinder 2022, 3). The magazine includes five columns total, including *What I Didn't Say*. While the other columns of OA do not directly relate to journalism as WIDS does, they contain similar themes regarding the profundity of the human experience, particularly through the intersection of place, time, and memory. The name *Off Assignment* is a playful inversion of the journalistic term "on assignment", which refers to journalists carrying out a specific reporting task and which often includes traveling to a specific destination, thus aligning well with the magazine's appetite for nonfiction travel writing. The magazine publishes new articles semi-frequently and is a digital-only publication. Since the column's launch in 2017, some years have been more active than others.

After collecting all of the column's articles, which at the time was 42 total, I applied a general inductive approach (Thomas 2006) through a close reading of each article to sensitize myself to the articles and to identify preliminary connections between the research question and the data. During this process, it became clear that the column had experimented with different formats, the most common (21 articles) were written by journalists themselves in a personal narrative format, and the second most common (11 articles) were the result of journalist-on-journalist interviews that were presented in a question-and-answer format. 10 articles were omitted from the final dataset because their content deviated from the focus of the column, for example, one of these articles was a chapter from a nonfiction book (presumably this was a result of the column experimenting with different types of content). This resulted in 32 articles in the final corpus.[1]

The articles were analyzed via discourse analysis, which included both deductive and inductive coding. In the first round of coding, articles were analyzed across three preselected themes that corresponded to the three strands of literature: (1) journalists' emotions, (2) journalists' bodies (including ethnicity, positionality, gender, descriptions of the body), and (3) metajournalistic discourse (how the articles adhered to or challenged the three established outcomes as per Carlson 2016). The results of these deductive

categories then led to an inductive coding process in the second round to understand how the three themes were interlinked, which allowed for more comprehensive insight into the connection between bodies and emotions within WIDS as a metajournalistic discourse beyond the established outcomes. The connections in the findings between emotions and the body also led to a final round of deductive coding in accordance with Francoeur's three categories (sensor, transducer, and depository).

In identifying how journalists articulated their emotions in the articles, I referred to Katriel's (2015) three analytical categories of emotion discourse as a sensitizing framework. This includes a distinction between discourses on emotion (whereby emotions are explicitly identified), emotional discourses (whereby emotions are both verbally and nonverbally expressed), and emotion-evocative discourse (how discourse works to evoke certain emotions from the audience), with the acknowledgement that these categories can and often overlap.

The Journalist's Body and Emotions in WIDS

While emotions were present on some level across all the analyzed articles, the articles within the personal narrative format offered more insight into bodies and emotions than the question-and-answer format, given that they were written by the journalist with a first-person point of view. The analysis brings forth the most illustrative instances of journalists' bodies and emotions in relation to journalistic practices.

In recounting their stories, journalists first honed in on a specific time and place, emphasizing that journalism is not merely about boundaries and norms but also about being physically present in a place and interacting with other people. After establishing this focus, journalists then began to reintroduce their bodies into stories they had reported on. This included physical descriptions of where they were, but also deeper context into the connection between their self and the assignment. One journalist reporting on EuroPride in Riga, Latvia begins by not only establishing her assignment for VICE Magazine, but also her personal connection as a queer woman who had previously spent time in Riga visiting her grandparents and discretely exploring the city's gay bars (Kitto 2019). That the journalist was able to connect her personal experiences with her reporting assignment within the article for WIDS demonstrates the use of metajournalistic discourse by journalists to untangle the complex emotional experiences they can encounter in their reporting, which suggests a potential outcome beyond definition, boundary setting and legitimization.

At the same time, WIDS clearly delineates its peripheral place in the overall journalism ecosystem, thus serving as a process of boundary setting. The column's designation as a literary magazine position it as separate or distant from the core of traditional, hard news journalism. While certain journalistic norms and boundaries were explored earnestly in the column, journalists did not necessarily seek to redefine or push these boundaries outright, rather, they reflected upon them and used WIDS as a means of processing their layered emotions toward them. However, it can be argued that the very existence of WIDS is a challenge to dominant journalistic norms surrounding journalists' emotional expressions and the removal of their bodies in their work. The acknowledgment of the column as a space for journalists to tell the stories they are not typically asked to share in traditional journalism indicates both an awareness of the rigidity of such norms and a potential to challenge them by rendering such stories more visible.

This visibility also grants insight into how emotions and the body are connected to each other and to journalism practice. In the WIDS column, the presence of emotions revealed that journalists use their bodies in every aspect of the journalistic process, as laid out by Francoeur's (2021) framework. Within the WIDS column, journalists were able to reflect on their emotions in what Katriel (2015, 60) refers to as a "double-layered emotional landscape": they referred to emotions both in the past (at the time of the experience) and in the present (at the "time of narration"). Sometimes, this was done by explicitly naming these emotions, thus resulting in discourse on emotion, per Katriel's (2015) categorization. Other times this was accomplished through descriptions of bodily responses to an emotional situation, thus resulting in emotional discourse. Writing about the body also produced emotion-evocative discourse, which was most frequently elicited in descriptions of the depository body. In the following subsections, the various articulations of emotions in WIDS are explored in tandem with journalists' use of the body as a sensor, transducer, or depository.

Sensor Body

The use of the body as a sensor in journalistic work pertains to the ways that the body acts as a "primary information gathering device" through the interpretation of both internal and external signals (Francoeur 2021, 210). Within the WIDS column, the sensor body often came to the fore when journalists explained their internal reasoning (or "signal") in pursuing an assignment in the first place, which overwhelmingly stemmed from a desire to understand something that puzzled them. Sometimes, this came from the journalist's confusion toward a situation they could not understand, as seen in the following quote regarding residents that remained in Fukushima, Japan, after the 2011 nuclear disaster: "In the interviews [of residents] I read, I learned that for all their grief, there was a contingent of the displaced who were making no demands (…) It seemed they simply waited to return to an area devastated by nuclear meltdown, and I wanted to understand why" (Lin 2024). Another journalist identifies a sense of wonder as a sensory signal as she explained, "What drives a lot of my story ideas is just wondering how somebody felt in a particular high-profile moment" (Taft, 2020). In identifying these signals, journalists referred to curiosity, wonder, and puzzlement as emotional parts of the initial process in using their body as a sensor.

In other instances, journalists were drawn to a topic as a way of understanding their own relationship to it, often at the crossroads of their identity and their position as a journalist. For journalists with marginalized identities, such as queer journalists and journalists of color, the body as a sensor led them to their career in the first place, as a means of representing their communities and amplifying their stories. "Stories about the destruction of my homelands led me toward my path as a journalist," writes an Indigenous journalist in a story detailing his experiences reporting on the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, "The protest at Standing Rock was a chance [for natives] to retake their narratives and voices. I had never seen it happen before and I wouldn't have missed it for the world" (Goodluck 2018). Here, the sensor body can be seen picking up the protest at Standing Rock as an external signal, and the desire to witness this part of history as an internal signal. The journalist continues with how this personal desire melded with his journalistic position: "Looking back on my trip to Standing Rock, I knew I went for selfish reasons, not

just because I felt a journalistic urge to report the truth" (Goodluck 2018). That the journalist identifies this as "selfish" is an interpretation that reveals the intricacy of emotions that arise from a journalist's personal feelings toward a subject of reporting and the binding conditions of their profession.

The body as a sensor included physical or emotional responses to journalists' environments, which was articulated through both discourse on emotions and emotional discourse, per Katriel's (2015) categorization. In the article from the journalist who reported on soldiers' deaths at Fort Hood, she wrote: "It hurt my ear to hear an army wife talk about her five-year-old daughter finding her father shot dead in the bedroom of their Fort Hood housing" (Jeong 2023). Here, the description of bodies also results in emotion-evocative discourse, as the journalist and reader alike think about the shock and tragedy of a child discovering their dead parent.

The emotions that journalists picked up from both internal and external signals also enabled them to grasp their surroundings more profoundly. One journalist described her reactions to her source's messy home, which then lead her to a deeper understanding of the interiority of the man she profiled:

> "My disgust at the state of this man's home alchemized. It hit me that we were sitting in something more like a museum or memorial, one steeped in grief. My peek into his world was a privilege, not just something to do for laughs […] It wouldn't be right to reveal what he could not yet see in himself … or maybe he did, but even so, it would not fit the angle of the publication. I wondered if Hunter S. Thompson or Susan Orlean ever choked back tears in the midst of experiential reporting." (Kenney 2019)

When charting the emotions she felt throughout her time in her source's home, the journalist described the signals she picked up on – a messy home, newspaper clippings about the man's father, the weight of grief following the loss of parents – all of which cumulate in her obtaining a deeper understanding of the situation. At the same time, she explicitly mentions how such a realization would "not fit the angle of the publication", thus revealing another aspect of the journalist body: the transducer body.

Transducer Body

The transducer body, per Francoeur, is "the totality of activities involved in the capturing and analysis of … internal and external bodily signals experienced while covering a story; and the processes involved in shaping them into a finished report" (2021, 217). Within the WIDS column, the transducer body was visible across a broad range of descriptions about journalistic practices and processes, demonstrating the variety of approaches that journalists take when reporting on different kinds of subjects. In their articles, journalists demonstrated a dexterity in these approaches that required being in tune with both their environment and their own bodily interpretations. One journalist, for example, describes how he adjusted his approach on two different press visits at the notorious American detention camp, Guantánamo Bay, writing: "Back on my first visit, I'd done my best to charm the public affairs staff, reasoning that you catch more flies with honey, and if they like you they might reveal more" (Conover 2016). Upon interpreting the rigid and closed disposition of the press team on his second visit, he notes both a difference in his approach and even a relief in this change: "Charm, I concluded, was unlikely to make much of a difference and this felt freeing" (Conover 2016).

Descriptions of the transducer body further revealed the tensions that can arise between the level of the individual journalist and the level of editors and news organizations. This tension is explored extensively in an article from a journalist revisiting her experience reporting on Jehovah's Witnesses and the Chinese diaspora in Kenya, which required her to build a relationship with a woman who was initially reluctant to speak to a journalist, citing negative portrayals in mainstream media. The journalist recounts how she leveraged her own Chinese American identity and the similar experiences of her parents finding faith as immigrants in the United States – essentially, the affordances of her body in relation to ethnicity and religion – to assure the source that this exchange would be different. Yet, as she recounts in the article, her story receives changes from her editor, resulting in a "skepticism" that the journalist did not feel in her experience:

> In service of the medium [longform journalism], we removed the implicit observer – my gaze, my doubts, and in doing so, lifted the subjects into a very different kind of archive than the one I had imagined. My readers saw Witnesses in Kenya, they didn't see through what lens I saw them; and holding a paper magazine with the heft of objectivity, they had no reason to consider that at all. (Zhu 2023)

In this quote, the journalist describes the removal of her body – in particular, her transducer body, which had experienced and interpreted the situation of the Witnesses in Kenya differently than in the final published story. This illuminates the contradictions that can arise between a journalist's physical presence in witnessing and experiencing their source material, versus an editor who is physically removed from the situation and operating in accordance with the direction and logic of a certain publication. WIDS reveals that the transducer body, therefore, can be riddled with complex emotions as journalists grapple with translating their knowledge and experiences into a holistic representation for audiences that may be both physically and emotionally distant from the situation they are reporting on.

These challenges gave rise to certain moral emotions in the WIDS column, which, in several cases, coincided with the early periods of journalists' careers when they were less experienced. Moral emotions, as defined by Haidt (2003), are "emotions that are linked to the interests or welfare either of society as a whole or … of persons other than the judge or agent" (853). In the previous example, the journalist recounts the feelings that arise after her story on Jehovah's Witnesses is published. She receives an email from her source, expressing her disappointment not only in how Witnesses were portrayed, but in how the journalist seemed to betray her own integrity for dubious reasons. In receiving the feedback, the journalist recounts a bodily description of her response, creating both emotional and emotion-evoking discourse: "I felt bile in my throat and my chest seized […] Journalists need thick skins, but this barb went right in and never came out" (Zhu 2023). The description shows that contradictions in the transducer body can give rise to moral emotions, such as guilt or regret, and can even elicit physical discomfort.

As metajournalistic discourse, emotions within the WIDS column likewise revealed how journalists felt about the use of their bodies as transducers. One journalist recounted her relationship with a source, an elderly German woman who transformed hateful graffiti into positive messages, and the contradictions that arose from her place as a journalist

– ultimately, as a temporary witness and messenger of the woman's story, which eventually was picked up by other major news outlets:

> "As I read these [other news] stories, especially the ones that mentioned her near-arrest and fine, I felt a strange sense of propriety. I was there, I thought. None of these stories are sharing the tense details of the first time the German government turned against her, because none of those other reporters were there. I remembered our shared glee over the hidden spray cans, her clasping my hands on the bus. But, then, the truth of it: I had no propriety over Irmela's story, and our shared struggle was an illusion." (Cataneo 2018, emphasis my own)

The journalist's firsthand experiences with the source, which were necessary in getting the news story, were, as required by the norms of journalism, not a part of the final story. The journalist continues by expanding on this seemingly paradoxical relationship: "This, I think, is the great delusion that journalists and writers must allow ourselves: we must believe that we can try on the lives of others, that we can recreate their struggles and triumphs on the page, when *by necessity of our profession*, we are always transitory" (Cataneo 2018, emphasis my own). The reflection of the frozen state of being transitory as a requirement of the profession is an exceptionally explicit acknowledgment of Francoeur's conceptualization of the transducer body. Feelings of "illusion" and "delusion", as described by the journalist, reveal the complicated emotions that arise from the struggle of reconciling genuine experiences with the process of creating distance as necessitated by their work.

Depository Body

The complex emotions that arise in the journalist's transducer body as they navigate being both a part of and separate from their stories leads to the final category of Francoeur's theoretical framework: the journalist's body as a depository. Ultimately, the articles from WIDS chronicle the various ways in which journalists were changed by their reporting experiences. This is evidence of the depository body – the experiences that pass through the journalist's body in picking up a story and following it through stay with them even after the story concludes. Journalists who specialize in a certain beat can also be seen as journalists with a certain depository, or accumulation of experiences, that grant them expertise on a subject.

As noted by Colleen Kinder in creating WIDS and *Off Assignment*, journalists' stories – the essence of the depository body – are rarely discussed as part of the journalistic process. Instead, they are often translated into years of experience or portfolios – professional markers for professional means. The internal impact of the depository body, and how journalists feel about them, are alluded to in the conclusions of the articles in WIDS, as demonstrated in the following quote: "I feel fortunate to meet so many fascinating people in my line of work – rock stars, rappers, sex workers, lawmakers, graffiti artists, activists and real life world-changing culture creators. My life has been enriched by each of them, but few people know the ones who will stick with me forever" (Kenney 2019). This demonstrates that the depository body has continuing effects on the journalist, but these effects remain largely internal and, as a result, invisible within the journalistic process.

The depository body also revealed how journalists felt toward certain contradictions and challenges within the broader framework of journalistic norms and practices. Several journalists described an awareness of being "extractive" in their work and

reflected upon the unidirectional benefit they received from their sources without necessarily being able to give anything back. This can be seen in the following quote from the journalist who recounted the feeling of receiving an email from her source after the publication of her piece, writing: "For the first time, I saw the mechanics of my craft laid bare through the eyes of the individual from whom I'd extracted my raw material" (Zhu 2023). The tensions between the journalist's body and the structures of journalism – in this case, the hierarchy of the editorial process – further emphasize that journalists are people that are impacted by the way their work is packaged and presented.

Similarly, the journalist reporting on Fort Hood remarks on how several stories she had heard from sources – all of which had been necessary in helping her understand the tragic events surrounding the military base – had been cut by an editor: "I spoke to the widow of a staff sergeant who died during a land navigation exercise, a loss made worse by a bureaucratically deranged system that denied her right to his corpse. I nodded along as I listened, feeling her pains acutely. Her story was cut in edits, as were the stories of scores of others" (Jeong 2023). Despite these stories not making it into the final publication, they still linger with the journalist and have an impact. The lingering impact of sources can be seen in another journalist's description of his experiences reporting on baseball in the Dominican Republic, who states, "We had seen some of the worst desperation the country had to offer, but also the friendliness and kindness that marks so many encounters in the Dominican" (Arangure 2018). These experiences, which are stored in the depository body, are building blocks toward a more comprehensive understanding of the places, people, and broader social contexts that journalists are reporting on during a given assignment.

In the WIDS column, emotions that were associated with the depository body tended to be less explicit and were rather more emotion-evocative; that is, they prompted emotional responses from the reader (Katriel 2015). Throughout the coding process, I often found myself moved to the point of tears by the articles' concluding paragraphs. This is where the journalist's depository body was most visible, as it was typically when the journalists reflected on how their experiences had changed them. This is seen in the following conclusion from the journalist reporting on the rebellious German woman: "I thought of Irmela when swastikas appeared in my home city in the stunned days after the 2016 [US] election. I've thought of her often in the past two years […] of her conviction that the words and symbols we surround ourselves with matter, and that it is possible to change them, marker-stroke by marker-stroke" (Cataneo 2018). Similarly, the journalist who reported on Fukushima concludes with how the experience changed her perspective on human connection to place, even years after her reporting trip:

> "Over the years, I saw that, for the displaced, it was possible that Fukushima seemed as sentient as a person, its spirit as alive as it ever was, since it was never bound by our sense of time but kindled by devotion. I try to remember that freedom in the mind comes with the radical acceptance of multiple truths. The Japanese government had presented logistical futures for the displaced, yet they hadn't considered enough how to help its people contend with the memories of the past. Both desires – to relinquish or hang on to the past – are equally human." (Lin 2024)

These conclusions, in addition to being emotion-evoking and well-written, reflected on journalism not solely as a profession but also as an experiential journey. Journalists

chose to tell stories from their reporting that had some impact on them – large or small – as a person. Furthermore, these instances of the depository body reveal that emotions draw journalists closer to the "truth", or at least, to a deeper understanding of the subjects and environments of their reporting. The stories within WIDS serve as a testament to the experiences that mark a journalist's depository body, and as a reminder that even the most detached, "facts-only" hard news stories are linked to bodies and complex experiences.

Discussion

In answering the prompt of WIDS, journalists were able to reveal the essential role of the body and emotions within their work, thus demonstrating the potential of metajournalistic discourse in bringing to the surface aspects of journalistic practices that would otherwise remain hidden. This offers researchers an additional avenue of insight into journalists' emotions within the "back end" of journalism production (Kotišová 2019). Further research on emotions in metajournalistic discourses can expand on these findings to understand how journalists negotiate acceptable versus "unacceptable" emotional expressions and how this relates to varying degrees of visibility of the journalist's body in journalistic output.

The analysis of the journalist's body as a sensor, transducer, and depository examined the connection between emotions and bodily senses, and how this lends itself to journalists in comprehending perplexing situations and in making authentic connections with their sources. The process of reintroducing journalists' bodies and emotions through this type of metajournalistic discourse reveals just how much traditional journalism and its core tenets, such as objectivity, require the constant suppression of emotion. While emotional detachment can be beneficial for journalists in stressful and intense reporting situations, or as part of routine reporting, constant suppression contradicts the necessity of emotions in leading journalists toward deeper understandings of their news stories, as demonstrated in WIDS. This corresponds to findings from Richards and Rees (2011), who note that "the idea that [journalism] is an emotion-free process" is contradictory to the "belief that a good journalist will "instinctively" know whether a story is newsworthy or not" (861).

Furthermore, rendering the journalist's body invisible upholds the rigid management and norms of emotional expression and cements the journalist in a state of being transitory, as a messenger that – despite witnessing and experiencing a story with their entire body as a necessary part of understanding it – is not part of it. The findings from WIDS illuminate these contradictions but also raise questions about how the body can be better included in journalistic formats. For example, one journalist recounts her decision to intentionally include her emotions and body in her reporting on rising Sinophobia in Kenya during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which receives significant positive feedback after publication. This can be linked to emerging forms of journalism that allow the journalist not only more visibility, but also a more active role in the delivery of their reporting. Another example of body-inclusive reporting has been observed in "journalistic theater", which uses the journalist's body as a medium to convey journalistically rigorous news stories while at the same time offering audiences a more meaningful interaction with the information they are receiving (Postema 2024).

Finally, the findings challenge rigid conceptions of journalism that exclude the journalist's body. The stories within the WIDS column demonstrate how such conceptions miss fundamental aspects of journalistic practices, such as following leads, connecting with sources, and building on knowledge from previous reporting, all of which require journalists to be both emotionally and bodily attuned to the processes of newsgathering. These requirements also raise important considerations about the necessity of the journalist's body in the coming era of AI technology.

As journalists face increasingly uncertain times, both with journalism as a profession and with audience relationships, continuing to prioritize the body in journalism studies can help to improve audience understanding and even appreciation of the work that goes into journalistic production at the level of individual journalists. Further research into how, and when, the journalist's body is allowed to appear in the news offers a path toward critical reflections into the broader cultures that journalism operates within. In the words of Francoeur (2021), "bodies do not operate alone: they are a reflection of the culture in which they live" (206). Ultimately, the journalist's body is an integral part of what journalism is. Neglecting to consider the body has come at the expense of invaluable insight into what it means to be a journalist seeking not only accurate information, but also holistic understanding.

Note

1. See Appendix 1 for a full list indicating which articles were kept and which were omitted.

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