What Losing The Newspaper Means: Nostalgia And The U.S. Newspaper In Late Modernity

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Abstract
This dissertation examines how U.S. newspaper journalists respond in their newspapers to the ongoing secular decline of the U.S. newspaper industry. Focusing on the U.S. metropolitan daily newspaper, this dissertation theorizes newspaper journalists as a mnemonic community and examines self-reflexive, published responses to three material manifestations of industrial decline: job losses, the sales of newspaper buildings and headquarters and accompanying newsroom moves, and the closings of newspapers. Collective nostalgia is manifest in each of these case studies, and this dissertation argues that collective nostalgia provides newspaper journalists with a structure of feeling to turn to when the structure of feeling of newspaper journalism has been eroded by industrial decline. The use of collective nostalgia helps preserve the values of newspaper journalism for the future, even as it periodizes and thus consigns newspaper journalism itself to the past. Nostalgized values are not just preserved for journalists and for future reconfigurations of journalism, but also are seeded in other cultural products, from film to museum exhibitions to literary journals. Collective nostalgia thus helps spread newspaper journalism's structure of feeling into wider cultural memory at a time when newspaper journalism itself is less able to maintain that structure of feeling. Ultimately, this dissertation further elaborates the concept of collective nostalgia, through articulations of the specific dimensions manifest in the discourse studied in this dissertation, and through a discussion of how that collective nostalgic discourse circulates in and outside of the U.S. newspaper.

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WHAT LOSING THE NEWSPAPER MEANS: NOSTALGIA AND THE U.S.

NEWSPAPER IN LATE MODERNITY

Nicholas John Gilewicz

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Communication

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For Zoe Sinikka Gilewicz Kavanaugh, who will be very, very thrilled to hear that “Papa’s Big Project” is all done

and

For Karline Nadine Kavanaugh, with love always
ABSTRACT

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Nicholas Gilewicz

Barbie Zelizer, Ph.D.

This dissertation examines how U.S. newspaper journalists respond in their newspapers to the ongoing secular decline of the U.S. newspaper industry. Focusing on the U.S. metropolitan daily newspaper, this dissertation theorizes newspaper journalists as a mnemonic community and examines self-reflexive, published responses to three material manifestations of industrial decline: job losses, the sales of newspaper buildings and headquarters and accompanying newsroom moves, and the closings of newspapers. Collective nostalgia is manifest in each of these case studies, and this dissertation argues that collective nostalgia provides newspaper journalists with a structure of feeling to turn to when the structure of feeling of newspaper journalism has been eroded by industrial decline. The use of collective nostalgia helps preserve the values of newspaper journalism for the future, even as it periodizes and thus consigns newspaper journalism itself to the past. Nostalgized values are not just preserved for journalists and for future reconfigurations of journalism, but also are seeded in other cultural products, from film to museum exhibitions to literary journals. Collective nostalgia thus helps spread newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling into wider cultural memory at a time when newspaper journalism itself is less able to maintain that structure of feeling. Ultimately, this
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... III

CHAPTER 1: LOSING THE NEWSPAPER ................................................................. 1

Why Cultural Materialism? ................................................................................................. 6
Theoretical Foundations: Crisis, Collective Memory, and Nostalgia ................................ 20
Crisis, Crisis, and Crisis; or, Crisis as Context ............................................................... 22
Journalism as Mnemonic Community ........................................................................... 39
Nostalgia of, in, and for Journalism ............................................................................. 51

CHAPTER 2: NOSTALGIA AT ODDS: JOB LOSS, GRIEF, AND IRRESPONSIBLE CAPITALISM .............................................. 66

Responsible Capitalism and Executive Voices ............................................................... 71
Material Consequences .................................................................................................... 78
Irresponsible Capitalism and Journalistic Voices .......................................................... 85
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 97

CHAPTER 3: NOSTALGIA ON THE MOVE: REBUILDING “HOME” AND NEWSROOMS IN TRANSITION .................................................. 101

From Financialization to Nostalgia ............................................................................... 103
Nostalgia on the Move ..................................................................................................... 110
Rumors, Announcements, Sales .................................................................................. 114
Denouement and Disposal ............................................................................................. 126
A “Post-Industrial” Problem .......................................................................................... 132
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 138

CHAPTER 4: NOSTALGIA UNBOUND, OR, HOW TO MAINTAIN A MNEMONIC COMMUNITY WHEN THE COMMUNITY IS GONE .......... 144

Past Presences: Heroes, Awards, Front Pages .............................................................. 151
Heroes from the Past, for Today ..................................................................................... 151
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prize Memories</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Pages as Keepsakes</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Needs: Saying Goodbye, Death and the Family, Exculpation and Fear</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying Goodbye to Readers—and Each Other</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What's the point of helping write your own obituary?”</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Voices, Family Values</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exculpation and Fear</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Future without (Some) Journalists</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking the Memory object; Calls to Remembrance</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Hopes and Fears</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: FROM METAPHOR TO METANARRATIVE</strong></td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions of Collective Nostalgia</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Nostalgia is <em>Medial</em></td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Nostalgia is <em>Generic</em></td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Nostalgia is <em>Communal</em></td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Nostalgia is <em>Protective</em></td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgical Dynamics of Collective Nostalgia</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liturgical Orders, Journalism, and Faith</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Commentary and Metacommentary</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The <em>Denver Post</em>, Propagating “Rebellion,” and Faith</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda: Labor Power and Mnemonic Power</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX A: METHODS</strong></td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: LOSING THE NEWSPAPER

“Virgil and Genesis belong to our end-determined fictions; their stories are placed at what Dante calls the point where all times are present, il punto a cui tutti li tempi son presenti; or within the shadow of it. It gives each moment its fullness. And although for us the End has perhaps lost its naïve imminence, its shadow still lies on the crises of our fictions; we may speak of it as immanent.”

--Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p. 6

This dissertation is about the decline of the United States metropolitan daily newspaper industry as expressed by the newspaper journalists suffering through that decline. It is about the ends of communities, structures, identities, and authorities. As the literary critic Frank Kermode (1967/2000) might have it, this dissertation is about the End in an eschatological sense: it is about death, judgment, and destiny. The deaths are metaphorical, but the concerns about judgment and destiny are very, very real. It is about the impossible struggle to control the end. It is about what happens when a community that constitutes itself through self-reflexive discourse confronts the inevitable. It is about the discourse that emanates from this community at a time of ongoing existential crisis, and some existential ends. It is about control over the story, control over history, and control over memory—present and future.

This dissertation examines self-reflexive news texts produced by newspaper journalists as their communities approach their ends. It unpacks how these texts deploy collective nostalgia as a way to cope with and as an attempt to transcend these ends. It
argues that collective nostalgia, considered here as a special case of collective memory, undergirds American newspaper journalists’ constructions of themselves as a mnemonic and interpretive community. This community is one whose identity and cultural authority are derived from but also damaged by changes associated with modernity and progress. As Agacinski wrote in her monograph on modernity and nostalgia, “[w]hen progress reveals itself to be the ‘wheel with double gears’ that ‘makes something go by crushing something else,’ according to Victor Hugo, we cannot look away from those it neglects or the values it destroys” (2003, p. 9).

The decline and demise of U.S. metropolitan daily newspapers constitute not only the erosion and losses of beloved institutions—it is also the loss of ways of knowing and being. Newspaper journalists mourn the losses of both, and while the losses disproportionately affect those journalists themselves, they also affect audience. News for audiences, too, is both a way of knowing and a way of being. As Park noted long ago, “The function of news is to orient man and society in an actual world. In so far as it succeeds it tends to preserve the sanity of the individual and the permanence of society” (Park, 1940, p. 685).

News is a form of public and collective knowledge, and damage to news and to journalism may be considered damage to publics and collectives. News’s practitioners—journalists—assert this in their discussions about job loss, newsroom moves, and newspaper closings, which constitute the three case studies of this dissertation.

In the case studies analyzed here, collective nostalgia offers newspaper journalists—and audiences as well—an alternative way of being and knowing. Accompanying the decline and demise of newspapers, the turn to collective nostalgia
opens spaces in which the values of newspaper journalism can be preserved for the future. The use of collective nostalgia is a way to preserve newspaper journalism’s values inside journalism—and just as importantly, an attempt to preserve those values outside of journalism—when journalism is under threat.

As a community institution, journalism is unique in that it is not only a beloved institution, but one that actually shapes knowledge. This differs profoundly from the loss of other such beloved institutions. A library, for example, does not itself shape knowledge—it facilitates access to knowledge. A school does not itself shape knowledge—teaching and education do. The newspaper is also an industrial product, but one that carries discourse with it, which discourse is inseparable from the product itself. In this way, the loss of the newspaper differs from other instances of industrial loss—the closings of coal mines, steel mills, or automobile manufacturing plants, for but a few examples. This does not diminish the meaning of those losses. But journalists have an ability, unique among industrial workers, to publicize their plight(s) through the very work that they do. Coal miners cannot embed the public meaning of their work in the actions of mining; newspaper journalists can embed the meaning of their work in newspapers themselves.

As a structure of feeling, defined by its “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships” (Williams, 1977, p. 132), collective nostalgia offers emotional resonance that appeals to both journalists and audiences. Such resonance may not restore newspaper journalism as a way of being and as a way of knowing, but it may offer a way to preserve, for future use, what is valued about those ways of being and knowing. The news texts analyzed in
the following case studies reflect attempts to preserve the values of newspaper journalism, as articulated by contemporary newspaper journalists in the United States. The texts use historical material, but use that material in ways that veer towards the ahistorical—the values of contemporary newspaper journalism, in these stories, transcend time and space. Contemporary values are inscribed on past newspaper journalists; stories about past journalists authenticate contemporary journalistic values. Contemporary values are also inscribed on past news stories, selectively deployed to articulate these values as continuous when in fact they were fluid, inconstant, and inconsistent.

Nevertheless, these stories are historically important not because they are good history themselves (they are not), but because together as discourse they reflect and articulate the values of a current mnemonic community at a moment of decline and crisis. Thus, this dissertation examines these stories as journalistic discourse from a sociological perspective (Chalaby, 1998), and is comprised of three case studies of self-reflexive newspaper journalism: discourse about job loss, discourse about newspaper building sales and newsroom moves, and discourse about the closing of newspapers.

Such discourse, in Chalaby’s view, sees texts as both discursive units and “the material manifestation of a discourse” (emphasis in original) (1998, p. 59). Further, “[as] an entirety of texts, a discourse is not material, like its components, the texts. It is concrete, however, since it is an historical and social reality” (1998, p. 59). Chalaby argues that text and discourse are

symbolized contexts, that is, social structures put into symbols. There is no relationship between text and context, but only an entirety: text/context. Not only is the ‘context’ in the text, in the sense that the social conditions of existence of a text are fully reflected in the text, but the ‘text is context,’ because it is entirely made up of contexts. (emphasis in original) (1998, p. 62-63)
Such an approach allows for textual analysis that yields meaningful information about those who produced the texts and discourses, and about the conditions under which they were produced. The quality of that information is strengthened in the case studies of this dissertation, because the news stories in each case study, in their self-reflexivity, regard the authors, their colleagues, their professional ancestors, and the conditions of their work not as subtext, but as subjects of open concern. These are the contexts for the texts, and the texts express the contexts. Each case study of self-reflexive journalism about ends—job losses, newspaper building sales and newsroom moves; newspaper closings—covers the same period of time: 2005 to 2018. Advertising revenue (unadjusted for inflation) peaked for the newspaper industry in 2005 (Newspaper Association of America, 2014), which spurred various newspaper and chain sales and dissolutions as owners and shareholders sought to take profits from their investments; the so-called Great Recession followed shortly thereafter, increasing economic pressures on newspapers that were already seeing secular changes to their industry. The context is business optimism followed by a stark and ineluctable economic decline; this context is imbricated in the texts analyzed in this dissertation, which are informed by and express the conditions of their creation.

For Chalaby, journalism is itself a discourse; each of this dissertation’s case studies is a sub-discourse. Each sub-discourse operates simultaneously, and also in relation to the others. Each is about a changing aspect of the social structure of journalism put into symbols: who is doing the work (or losing the ability to do the work); where and how the work is done, and whether the work is sustainable. Together, they capture the
most significant aspects of the story of newspaper journalists in a time of stress: what happens to people, to places, and to the newspaper as both product and institution.

Changing structures of work are reflected in the culture of newspaper journalism expressed in these texts. Thus, following Schudson (2013) and Carey (2007), I examine newspaper stories as primary texts to explore news as a cultural form at a time of existential stress for the newspaper industry. The aim is to understand the nature of the mnemonic community of newspaper journalists in decline, to understand the ways in which the nostalgic turn in this self-reflexive discourse reflects changes to underlying economic conditions, and to further explicate the dimensions and dynamics of collective nostalgia.

To do so, this dissertation draws some of its analytical framework from the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams.

**Why Cultural Materialism?**

Values, as Williams noted, “are not a kind of gold standard, but living affirmations and conclusions” (1958/1989, p. 97). The texts studied here repeatedly assert the values of newspaper journalism—precipitated in these news stories as a gold standard, and structured in a way that attempts to preserve them for the future of journalism. Through those values, and through the style in which they are expressed, we can understand what an extant community in decline wants to affirm about itself.

To explore these values and the attempts to preserve them, this dissertation applies Williams’s (1973/2006) interpolation of Karl Marx’s base and superstructure into the realm of cultural production. This dissertation explicates how the economic stressors
facing newspaper journalism manifest in news stories about those same stressors written by those who suffer from them. It examines what kinds of stories are told about the stress upon and changes to the culture of newspaper journalism. Additionally, this dissertation uses Williams’ concept of the “structure of feeling” (1977) to explain how these stories privilege journalism as a discursive field (opposed to journalism as a business endeavor), and how these stories turn to the mnemonic and nostalgic when discussing what activities and values from the newspaper industry should be maintained by and in journalism more broadly. Through these prisms, this dissertation analyzes these news texts’ articulations of the decline of the U.S. newspaper industry and the effects of that decline on the culture of newspaper journalism, with a particular focus on how the values of newspaper journalists are threatened and/or maintained.

**Base and Superstructure in Newspaper Journalism**

Williams considered the base processual, and argued that the concept should be revalued away from fixed economic conditions “toward the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships, containing fundamental contradictions and variations and therefore always in a state of dynamic process” (1973/2006, p. 34). Culturally, he argued, the concept of the superstructure should be similarly revised, “towards a related range of cultural practices, and away from a reflected, reproduced or specifically dependent content” (1973, p. 34). Culture, in this view, still emanates from, relates to, and is affected by underlying economic conditions. The culture of newspaper journalists as superstructure should be similarly affected by changes to the economic base.
of newspaper journalism, and the self-reflexive newspaper stories studied in this dissertation indicate this to be so.

Williams’ model calls for scholars to attend to social intentions that may exist in the base, the superstructure, and interactions between them. Applied to the current state of the U.S. newspaper industry and culture, the superstructure is the wider culture of journalism, including its telos, its civic importance, and its self-conception. The base is composed of those social and economic processes, forces, and relationships that affect newspaper journalism, particularly as a business, but that also affect journalism as discursively practiced. Also significant: journalistic labor is itself a base economic force, and scholarship about journalism rarely addresses labor.

As Örnebring noted, “[j]ournalism studies have broadly been more concerned with work in the general sense rather than labour,” defining labor economically, as “exertion which generates surplus value and presupposes a contractual employer-employee relationship” (2010, p. 59). According to Örnebring, even those studies concerned with work practices tend to focus on the experiences of journalists and understanding them through the lenses of social control and professional ideology (Örnebring cites as examples Altschull, 1995; Bagdikian, 1974; Breed, 1955; Ehrlich, 1995; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Soloski, 1989; Tuchman, 1978). Research from the 2000s forward has largely neglected the question of labor as well, and this focus on practice and culture continues in both individually authored research and throughout major collected volumes exploring changes to journalism published over the past decade or so (e.g. Alexander, Breese, & Luengo, 2016; Anderson, 2013; Anderson, Bell, & Shirky, 2012; Boczkowski, 2010; Boczkowski & Anderson, 2017; Boczkowski &
This dissertation also insists upon a much more explicit acknowledgment that journalistic labor is an economic input. Considerations of the business and economics of journalism (at least in journalism studies) tend to relegate this recognition to the background. Economic considerations have largely related to the potential or observed effects on journalistic practice (e.g. Bourdieu, 2005; Ryfe, 2012; Singer, 2017)—again, focusing on work rather than labor. Economic considerations also arise in a stream of scholarship insisting first that journalism, particularly independent public interest journalism, is a public good (considered in this dissertation to be a piece of journalism’s superstructure) created out of the industry of journalism and second, that journalism as a public good deserves to be saved, by some kind of new subsidy, from market failure because of its wide social importance to democracy in the United States (e.g. Baker, 2002; Benson, 2011; Cooper, 2011; Hamilton, 2006; McChesney, 2012; McChesney &
Nichols, 2010; Pickard, 2011a; Pickard, 2014; Pickard, 2017). But what in the end is being subsidized?

Journalistic labor. Journalistic labor is a commodity, an economic input, which, to use Örnebring’s definition quoted above, “generates surplus value and presupposes a contractual employer-employee relationship.” Journalistic work and practices and cultures would be nothing without journalistic labor; more than simply surplus value arises from this labor—journalism’s mnemonic culture also arises as a culture of labor, documented in the articulation and replication of its work practices. These elements are a primary reason this dissertation turns in part to Williams’ discussion of base and superstructure. Journalism’s superstructure is contingent on the need for the labor of journalists; the textual expression of the superstructure—how journalists feel about their telos and threats to it—manifests newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling. So as Örnebring noted, and as I reiterate, the lack of attention to labor in journalism studies is odd. It is an especially odd omission for studies of the U.S. context, where journalistic labor is very much subject to market conditions, and where secular changes to the industry, vis-à-vis advertising, have stressed newspaper journalism in ways not seen before.

Pressures on journalistic labor at newspapers (the most fundamental of which is, as has oft been said, to “do more with less”—to increase each individual newspaper journalist’s productivity in the face of massive layoffs and buyouts) is a, perhaps the, prime mover in changes to the culture of newspaper journalism. Recognizing this helps explain how being a journalist both is and is not a special kind of job. Journalists are not just public heroes fighting for the little guy; journalists are not just hacks who need to
churn out increasing amounts of copy (or photos, or videos, or social media) per person to fill space with attention-grabbing material against which publishers can sell ads. Journalists are both, and considering journalism through Williams’ base-and-superstructure lens allows the cultural analyst to address this. To those who hold journalists in high regard (including journalists themselves), newspaper journalism indeed has been something special intertwined with U.S. democracy (and its past and future)—related cultural practices that help make up journalism’s superstructure. To those for whom “editorial” might be, foremost, just another line in a ledger, journalists are considered in terms of the base, in terms of their productive economic force, and lately newspaper journalists have been found wanting in that regard.

The base of newspaper journalism—its productive socioeconomic processes—is comprised of both the business and editorial sides of the industry. Editorial independence is primarily defined, at the level of the base, as freedom from the pressures and concerns of the business side—freedom to live in the superstructure. But both sides are inextricably linked. Put another way: the editorial side feeds the telos of newspaper journalism, where the business side funds that telos. As two interrelated elements of the base, they cannot help but affect each other and newspaper journalism’s superstructure. The cases studied here demonstrate that newspaper journalists can no longer escape business problems caused by secular changes to the industry. In stories about these problems, and about themselves, questions of labor are inserted (perhaps reinserted) into journalistic discourse, as newspaper journalists seek ways to come to terms with the threats to their community, culture, identity, and authority.
Yet, to borrow again from Kermode (1967/2000), the “naïve imminence” of the decline of newspaper journalism can be found in the repeated expressions of surprise that the economic conditions of the industry have affected the ability of journalists to do their jobs, and in denials that economic conditions should affect the ability of journalists to do their jobs. Present-day newspaper journalists in the United States mark their identity with a particular allegiance to nostalgia for the progressive endeavor, an allegiance that has stood the community’s identity well over time. As Zelizer wrote, professional journalists’ “version of modernity rested on an association with rationality, certainty, consent, reasoned thought, order, objectivity, progress and universal values, all of which journalism was expected to promote in order to create the conditions needed for an optimum public life” (2013, p. 463). The notion that newspaper journalism is a broad and ongoing social good that shares and promotes the values of modernity and progress has become essential to its practice, to its self-conception, and to its self-presentation. As Alexander noted, the question of journalistic independence from bias of whatever kind has been debated for decades, and yet, “[w]hat has gone relatively unnoticed in this debate, however, and what actually is crucial for any sociological understanding of the institution of journalism, is the factual self-presentation of journalists as independent, whatever the actual nature of their boundary connections” (emphasis in original) (Alexander, 2016, p. 1, fn1). One contribution made by this dissertation is a thorough assessment of recent self-presentations of newspaper journalists in newspaper journalism itself, as their independence from economic conditions has eroded.

Newspaper Journalism and Nostalgia as Structures of Feeling
Central to the definition of the journalistic field, the identity of journalists, and their job satisfaction (and to ongoing worries over the health of newspaper journalism) have been the notions of autonomy and independence in journalistic work (e.g. Bourdieu, 2005; Downie Jr. & Schudson, 2009/2011; Jones, 2009; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007; Reinardy, 2010; Reinardy, 2011; Reinardy, 2017; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996, Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007; Willnat & Weaver, 2014). As one scholar succinctly summarized, “[t]he most-satisfied journalists perceive a great deal of autonomy in their work and influence in the newsroom, and feel they are working for an organization doing a good job informing the public” (Beam, 2006, p. 182)

Some of these studies have found that structural changes in the business of newspapers lessened newspaper journalists’ autonomy—a major cause of work dissatisfaction. Technological advancements eased certain journalistic practices while stressing others, and leached both newspaper readers and advertisers. Newspaper journalism is thereby stressed both financially and practically—the result of the same march of progress which created it in the first place, and during which newspapers thrived for decades, and sometimes centuries. To paraphrase Kermode (1967/2000), the shadow of the end is cast by rising economic conditions that substantially determine the autonomy and culture of newspaper journalism. The end is immanent in the economic conditions of newspaper journalism itself, and we may speak of it as immanent in news texts about the end.

Autonomy is integral to journalism as a structure of feeling. Williams’ discussions of the concept are themselves processual and sometimes maddeningly vague, but two parts of his discussion are core to this dissertation.
First, structures of feeling regard the relationship between articulated values and how they are actually lived. On this point, Williams is worth quoting at length:

We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a ‘structure’: as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are also defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies. (Williams, 1977, p. 132)

Second, Williams writes that, methodologically, “a ‘structure of feeling’ is a cultural hypothesis, actually derived from attempts to understand such elements and their connections in a generation or period, and needing always to be returned, interactively, to such evidence” (Williams, 1977, p. 132-133).

Identifying these “affective elements” and their interrelationships, and returning them both interactively and iteratively through the case studies examined here, this dissertation argues its own cultural hypothesis: because the business side of the newspaper industry can no longer support journalism’s structure of feeling, nostalgia is deployed in these self-reflexive news texts as a way to tap in to a wider structure of feeling, for nostalgia is a common human experience. In doing so, these stories attempt to sidestep the base problems and processes that have eroded the conditions of their creation, and seek another pathway to reassert the contemporary values of newspaper journalism and argue for the reinstatement of those values in future journalism formations.
As a structure of feeling, journalism is a specific cultural formation that is historically contingent (e.g. Carey, 2007, p. 6; Schudson, 2013), and a modern/modernist institution (e.g. Hallin, 1992; Zelizer, 2004) linked to the emergence of a democratic market society (Schudson, 1978). In this context, journalists’ identification of autonomy and successful public service help outline the journalistic structure of feeling, and Gans’s (1979) classic identification of “enduring” news values—ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, moderatism, and order—also may be considered elements of this structure.

There is a great irony here: by repairing to these enduring values and to what Gans called journalism’s para-ideology, newspaper journalism has long supported the very economic processes that have, today, undermined the industry. This naturally problematizes the journalistic autonomy and independence that have been identified as accompanying the professionalization of the field in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the U.K. context, Chalaby has argued “that the profession of the journalist and the journalistic discourse are the products of the emergence, during the second half of the 19th Century, of a specialized and increasingly autonomous field of discursive production, the journalistic field” (emphasis in original) (1998, p. 1). Along with the emergence of the profession, Schudson has noted, “[t]he growing corporate coherence of journalists generated social cohesion and occupational pride, on the one hand, and internal social control, on the other. By the 1920s, this pattern produced a self-conscious professionalism and ethic of objectivity” (Schudson, 2003, p. 82; see also Schudson, 1978; Schudson, 2001). The autonomy and objectivity noted here stand in opposition to biases that can infringe upon journalistic practice, most notably from the economic and
political fields that Bourdieu (2005) has argued journalism defines itself in terms of and against. Journalists in the U.S. have no mandatory professional code by which they must abide to be journalists; rather, as communities, they “arise less through rigid indicators of training or education—as indicated by the frame of the profession—and more through the informal associations that build up around shared interpretations” (Zelizer, 1993, p. 223). Autonomy, then, may be a story journalists tell themselves about themselves in order to distinguish the professional community that emerged in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Indeed, some scholars have argued that journalistic autonomy may be more conceit than reality. Baldasty, for example, found that the commercialization of the newspaper over the 1800s resulted in some benefits to journalism, including objectivity and autonomy from government (1992, p. 8-9); he also found that by the end of that century, “editors defined news within a business context to ensure or increase revenues” (1992, p. 4)—an effect more basal than superstructural. About conditions a century later, Glasser and Gunther argued that “[p]aradoxically, the boundaries designed to secure autonomy in journalism work just as effectively to undermine autonomy for journalism” (emphasis in original) (2005, p. 390). Glasser and Gunther draw upon Murdock’s (1982) distinction between “operational” and “allocative” control to unpack levels of autonomy in journalism. Journalists, they write, have a great deal of operational control over their daily work; however, power at this level differs in kind, and pales in comparison to, the power associated with the allocative decisions that determine basic policies, long-term goals, and the general disposition of resources. Journalists usually find themselves excluded—or they exclude themselves through the walls they build and the lines they draw—from decisions about, say, the allocation of corporate funds, the deployment of personnel, strategies for growth or containment, and a host of
matters concerning corporate “synergies” and other economies-of-scale issues. (Glasser & Gunther, 2005, p. 390-391)

Glasser and Gunther also link concerns with individual autonomy to “the lack of a tradition of organized, collective action on behalf of the interests of the working journalist” (2005, p. 391), a rare acknowledgement of journalism-as-labor. As the case studies of this dissertation will demonstrate, the tension between operational and allocative control pervades much of the self-reflexive discourse published by newspaper journalists about the problems they and their newspapers face.

Hardt (1996, 1997, 2000) argued much the same as Baldasty, but suggested that the 1900s were a period of decline from “the utopian vision of journalism as an independent fourth estate” to “an aggressively commercial solution, the economic consequences of which have trivialized traditional, social and cultural co-determinants of journalism, including the role of journalists, the nature of newswork, and the pursuit of public interests” (2000, p. 209-210). McChesney and Nichols, too, have a lapsarian view, arguing that while professional journalism had both merit and problems, “[s]ince the late 1970s, commercial pressure has eroded much of the autonomy that professional journalism afforded journalism” (2010, p. 47).

Whether journalists have autonomy or not is a measure of degree. How their work is understood, however, is bifurcated, an epistemological divide with basal origins: contemporary newspaper journalists understand themselves in terms of autonomy and public service; industrially, they are understood as economic inputs. Unlike some other workers, who may define themselves by their contributions to the economy, journalists define themselves by their contributions to political and social life and believe they need
autonomy (from both political and economic pressures) in order to make those contributions.

The news texts studied in this dissertation present newspaper journalists, historically, as having had a great deal of autonomy. To a certain extent, at least regarding journalists’ self-presentation in these texts, whether this is true is irrelevant: they feel that it has been true, and they feel the decline in autonomy as an erosion of identity. How texts express these feelings matters, for as Williams wrote, “[t]he idea of a structure of feeling can be specifically related to the evidence of forms and conventions—semantic figures—which, in art and literature, are often among the very first indications that such a new structure is forming” (Williams, 1977, p. 133). This dissertation contends that we can find structures of feeling in the forms and conventions of journalism as well. Brennen noted that, “for Williams, realist texts offer representations and misrepresentations of actual lived experience” (Brennen, 1993, p. 104). Brennen, in that article, studied of representations of journalists in fiction, but what texts are more realist than news stories that purport to represent reality itself?

In the case studies that follow, in their analyses of “representations and misrepresentations of actual lived experience,” we see the dominant structure of feeling of newspaper journalism. From these case studies, we also see an additional structure of feeling emerge: nostalgia. These appeals to nostalgia project current values into the past and also articulate what current values should be remembered in the future. The prospective nostalgia that emerges is an attempt to maintain some kind of constancy in the face of loss.
In his discussion of nostalgia as a structure of feeling, Tannock builds on Davis’s (1979) view of nostalgia as “the search for continuity amid threats of discontinuity” (qtd. in Tannock, 1995, p. 456). Tannock argues that while nostalgia is a search for continuity, discontinuity “is also and always at the same time a discontinuity posited by the nostalgic subject” (Tannock, 1995, p. 456). Tannock writes that nostalgia offers periodicity, a way to temporally order experience. In nostalgic rhetoric,

one invariably finds three key ideas: first, that of a prelapsarian world (the Golden Age, the childhood Home, the Country); second, that of a ‘lapse’ (a cut, a Catastrophe, a separation or sundering, the Fall); and third, that of the present, postlapsarian world (a world felt in some way to be lacking, deficient, or oppressive). (Tannock, 1995, p. 456-457)

A reading of nostalgic rhetoric, according to Tannock, should examine how the prelapsarian world is constructed in the present, “but also on the continuity asserted, and the discontinuity posited, between a prelapsarian past and a postlapsarian present” (1995, p. 457). This model works well when the Fall is past and identifiable (or perhaps more aptly, constructable).

However, when a community is amidst a lapse, when a Catastrophe is ongoing, a slightly different nostalgic rhetoric emerges, and thus this dissertation further develops Tannock’s discussion of nostalgia as a structure of feeling. The news texts studied here reflect a community that is in a lapsarian time, amidst the rain before the Flood without an Ark, but seeking one. Discontinuity is posited as an ongoing, lived reality. The prelapsarian past is collapsed into the present. As Tannock also wrote, the lapse “may just as often be thought of as a horizontal separation, as the running into the ground of the past by the present” (1995, p. 457). The experience is one of a growing lack, a growing deficiency that eats away at the community of newspaper journalists.
Theoretical Foundations: Crisis, Collective Memory, and Nostalgia

The primary governing principle of this dissertation is that texts produced by journalists are interpretations, and studying them is a matter of interpreting their interpretations. Journalists themselves claim that their stories reflect reality, yet as Bird and Dardenne (1988) noted, news stories regard reality, but are not reality itself. The power of journalists’ stories, however, is very real. The stories studied here are predominantly self-reflections and self-presentations; understanding these, Alexander suggested, is “crucial for any sociological understanding of journalism” (Alexander, 2016, p. 1, fn 1).

Journalists’ stories about themselves are self-interpretations, and journalists are thus both news subjects and hermeneutical subjects, simultaneously and iteratively. Journalists, when they take themselves as their subjects, engage in what the philosopher Calvin Schrag (1986) called communicative praxis, in which their self-expression of their self-identity is, necessarily, socially and culturally enmeshed. In this way, they demonstrate what Schrag elsewhere called a “hermeneutics of nostalgia and a hermeneutics of affirmation” (1992). Rather than seeing these two hermeneutics only as competing, Schrag argues that they can be complementary, for nostalgia can be used not only for reminiscence but also productively to develop a future self.

Schrag’s social requirement for expressions of self-identity structurally echoes Maurice Halbwach’s (1952/1992) contention that framing memories socially gives them meaning. Both also resonate with what Gaye Tuchman (1978) called the “web of facticity” in news, in which a fact requires a frame of other ordered facts in order to be
meaningful. In all three cases, social and cultural context, and historical
contingency/specificity, are key, resonating with Williams’ notion that imbricated in all
writing are the historical conditions of its production. Schrag also calls for attending to
the specifics of situations in order to address the problem of multiple truths raised in
certain strands of postmodern theorizing:

one is always working with concrete situations of consensus or conflict. It is this
interpretation of a proper reading of a text that is at issue, this formulation of a
scientific discovery, this statement of a moral prescription, this installment of a
political ideal that needs to be assessed in conjunction with another political ideal.
(emphasis in original) (Schrag, 1992, p. 74)

Halbwachs argued that a memory without social context has no more truth or weight to it
than a dream, for it can have no functional relationship to social life. In Tuchman’s web,
context is necessary for meaning; news style normalizes the web of facticity, thus
purportedly avoiding distortion. Nonetheless, she writes that the language of news “is

Linking these conceptually—hermeneutics, nostalgia, collective memory, and the
nature of news stories and their relationship to the “real” or to “truth”—allows for a
deeper understanding of what happens when journalists write about themselves in times
of crisis. To understand their stories, both narrative and rhetorical analyses are required—
narrative analysis assesses what kinds of stories are told by newspaper journalists writing
about themselves, and rhetorical analysis assesses how these stories are told.

To do so, all three case studies engage with three bodies of literature that
sometimes overlap: academic discourse about the meaning of recent challenges to the
financial viability of journalism; the role of collective memory as a fount of cultural
authority and its particular deployment by journalists; and critiques and celebrations of
nostalgia, considered here as a specific case of collective memory that helps indicate a community’s structure of feeling. These bodies of literature provide the theoretical backdrop for the case studies explored in the dissertation; their interrelationships point to the need for sustained attention to the role nostalgia plays in the construction of news—a nostalgia that erupts most potently when journalists take themselves as the subject of their work.

**Crisis, Crisis, and Crisis; or, Crisis as Context**

In discussing nostalgia as a structure of feeling, Tannock notes that discontinuity “is also and always at the same time a discontinuity posited by the nostalgic subject” (Tannock, 1995, p. 456). Two of the three case studies of this dissertation find ongoing discontinuity posited by news stories about the stressors facing newspapers (the third, about the closings of newspapers, regards a distinct discontinuity at the local level, but each closing is an example of a sustained discontinuity at the industry-wide level). Discontinuity, and worries about the health of the newspaper industry, date back much further than 2005, the beginning of this dissertation’s periodization.

From the end of World War II through the late 1970s, the number of daily newspapers published in the United States hovered around 1,750. The number peaked at 1,786 in 1952 and did not see a substantial decline until the early 1980s. From 1979 to 2014 the number of newspapers published in the United States declined by 432, according to the Newspaper Association of America (2014), now known as the News Media Alliance. This ongoing decline marks a likely permanent change to the newspaper business; the financial problems facing newspapers are very real. As the newspaper
business grapples with an ongoing decline, so does the culture of newspaper journalism. This financial crisis facing newspapers, manifests as three related, layered, and often conflated crises in academic discussions about journalism culture and its wider social effects: a crisis for newspapers, a crisis for journalism, and a crisis for democracy.

Each discourse carries with it a set of assumptions about journalism and business practices, and about what kind of roles newspapers have, or should have, in a democracy. These discourses are not moot—as Brüggemann et al. (2015) and Pickard (2011a; 2011b) have noted, how we discuss, frame, and historicize crisis has professional and policy implications likely to affect the future of journalism institutions and practices. In this context, others have called for renewed commitment to journalism’s democratic role (e.g. Levy and Nielsen, 2010) because of the loss of accountability reporting about corruption (e.g. Starr, 2009) and the threat to the financial viability of independent journalism (e.g. Downie Jr. and Schudson, 2009/2011; Jones, 2009). Many see the decline of numbers of newspapers and newspaper journalists as threatening democracy and democratic engagement (Jones, 2009; McChesney and Nichols, 2010; McChesney and Pickard, 2011; Pickard, 2011b; Schulhofer-Wohl and Garrido, 2013; Shaker, 2014). Others have argued that a crisis frame insufficiently recognizes existing and ongoing adaptations and creativity in both the journalism profession and the newspaper industry (Alexander, 2015; Conboy and Eldridge, 2014; Franklin, 2012) and that invoking the word “crisis” itself, and all that it carries with it, interferes with both scholarly and professional attention to the variety of challenges facing the journalism field (Zelizer, 2015). The panoply of crisis discourses needs some elaboration to provide proper context for this dissertation.
First, the financial threats to journalism, and to newspaper journalism in particular, are indeed significant. Bourdieu (2005) articulated this as the economic field—the realm of business, of investors—threatening to deform the journalistic field, which is comprised of its internal practices (particularly the degree of autonomy claimed both by the journalistic field as a whole and by individual journalists) and which is in some ways defined by its external relations to other fields. While some findings have suggested that newspapers are not in imminent existential danger—some newspaper chains and companies are still quite profitable, for example (Edge, 2014; Purdy, Wong, & Harris, 2017)—they no longer earn the outsized profits that investors had come to expect. And even with industry revenue reduced by more than fifty percent between 2005 and 2011, newspaper companies did not undertake any significant leadership or board changes in response to their financial troubles, in contrast to other industries needing to adapt to changing business conditions (Soloski, 2015).

What has recently come to be called financialization—the absorption of industries from systems of production into systems of global finance—has been a decades-long process in the newspaper industry, and one of concern to media observers for just as long. A century ago, Villard (1918) bemoaned the consolidation of newspaper ownership, and later argued that the commercial nature of the newspaper industry restricted its freedom (Villard, 1944), a complaint echoed research on the commercialization of the newspaper (Baldasty, 1992). McChesney and Nichols (2010), with a nostalgia for a newspaper industry that never was, lionize a mythical past where newspapers did not have the profit motive, though that motive dates at least to their move away from the party system over the course of the 1800s.
While numerous newspaper owners owned multiple publications in the past, increased profits to be found after World War II motivated further consolidation of ownership. Davies (2006) outlines problems facing U.S. newspapers between 1945 and 1965, including industry attempts to better understand reader concerns and threats from Cold War self-censorship and from the rise of television. Despite growth in earnings and profits, newspaper circulation stopped keeping pace with population growth in 1945, an early indication of a major structural shift. Leo Bogart, under the aegis of the Newspaper Advertising Bureau, later introduced the “read yesterday” measure of newspaper readership (rather than circulation) as a measure to gauge the penetration of newspapers. The “read yesterday” rate of change from 1967 to 1987 showed a marked decline across age demographics, from -20% for 18-24 to -7% for 65+ (Bogart, 1989, p. 81, Table 3.1). The pollster George Gallup also noted this decline; Bogart quotes a 1976 letter from Gallup to the publisher of the Minneapolis Star and Minneapolis Tribune, in which Gallup noted his recent finding that the overall “read yesterday” metric declined from 68% in 1973 to 63% in 1976. Gallup wrote, “This is the first time since 1957 that an important change in newspaper readership has been found. The situation is serious enough in our opinion to warrant an aggressive and continuing program to combat the downward trend” (qtd. in Bogart, 1991, p. 61). Meyer (2009) saw these trends as representing the declining influence of newspapers, operationalized not through the metrics of raw circulation numbers, audience, or readership, but through market penetration—essentially, circulation divided by population.

Against this backdrop, the increasingly rapid technological transformation of the newspaper industry, such as the 1945 advent of using film to compose type instead of the
Linotype machine, improved the profit margins of newspapers even as their market penetration began to decline (Neiva, 1995/2007). A perhaps more significant structural shift, though, was a major change to tax policy. The Internal Revenue Service began examining the finances of family-owned businesses, including newspapers, in the 1960s, and “began appraising papers according to their market values (or what a potential buyer might pay), not according to their book values (or the sum total of their assets)” (Neiva, 1995/2007, p. 16). In turn, estate taxes often became unaffordable, and new generations of newspaper owners sold their properties, realizing their market value while generating money to pay taxes.

One result was increased consolidation of newspaper ownership in newspaper chains. Gannett expanded from 25 newspapers in the early 1960s to 79 newspapers by 1979. To gain capital to finance this expansion, Gannett became a public company, and traded shares for ownership of additional newspapers. Ten other newspaper companies went public between 1969 and 1973, including the New York Times Company, the Washington Post, and Times Mirror (Neiva, 1995/2007). Through interviews with former officers of Gannett, Knight Ridder, and McClatchy, Meyer concludes that answering to investors “was a major cultural shock to newspaper companies, which had traditionally been managed in a fairly informal way” (2009, p. 165). One such shock was the persistent attention to profits and profit margins; as Nichols writes, “Where a local family might have grudgingly accepted a weak quarter and a downturn in revenues, shareholders greet any softness on the bottom line with demands for draconian cuts” (2007, p. 180).

A story in the Columbia Journalism Review concluded much the same a decade earlier from interviews with news professionals and media analysts, among others: “more
so than at any other moment in journalism’s history—the news product that lands on newsstands, doorsteps, and television screens is indeed hurt by a heightened, unseemly lust at many companies for ever greater profits” (Hickey, 1998/2007, p. 110; see also Downie Jr. and Kaiser, 2002). In the 1990s, and into the 2000s, a litany of newspaper editors resigned to protest corporate insistence on cost-cutting and the damage they contended it caused to their news operations; papers that saw such resignations included the Chicago Tribune, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the San Jose Mercury News, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and the Los Angeles Times (Ryfe, 2012). This, according to Frank Blethen (of the family that independently owns the Seattle Times), is the result of “the now-dominant, Wall Street-based absentee ownership model of our news and journalism companies . . . their news-gathering operations have been eviscerated in pursuit of ridiculous, unsustainable profits” (Blethen & Blethen, 2011, p. 197).

This consolidation of ownership was contemporaneous with the beginning of the decline of newspaper readership, which began in the 1960s and which newspaper companies began worrying over in the 1970s (Shafer, 2006/2007). As subscriptions and readership peaked, leveled off, and began their slow decline, the number of households in the United States continued to grow. This resulted in declining market penetration for newspapers, one of the core metrics used by Meyer to operationalize the influence model—the notion that the space in newspapers is valuable to sell and trade precisely because the editorial independence and quality (and in turn, social and political influence) is not for sale. In turn, rather than investing in the newsroom—the one investment Meyer found that reliably correlated with increased influence—Meyer contends that investors turned to a harvesting strategy. Such a strategy extracts as much cash as possible from a
mature or declining business, with the expectation that the business will shortly end (or, perhaps, as Meyer (2009) puts it, be sold onwards to a “greater fool”). Harvesting, Jones writes, “is a business euphemism for stripping the carcass of every bit of flesh and then abandoning the pile of bones. It is a strategy designed for industries for which there is no prospect of salvation, and it is nasty” (2009, p. 162). In Almiron’s interpretation, this is the true challenge facing journalism: “[f]inance capital has become the real owner of the world’s top news-media firms” (2010, p. 154).

Worries over this ownership shift—from owners concerned about profit, but also about the industrial production and cultural authority of newspapers, to owners concerned primarily about profiting from newspapers as commodities—are also expressed by observers as a crisis for journalism more broadly. Almiron (2010) breaks down the threats from increased financialization as follows: news organizations suffer from greater instability and financial risk, from deviating from their own traditional core news activities, and from an increasing distance from social responsibility; news messages may increasingly defend economic and financial orthodoxies, may themselves become financialized, and may omit negative information about the finance industry, about financialization more broadly, and about the news organization and external forces that might affect it; journalists may engage in greater self-censorship, may suffer from greater pressure ownership to cover stories in certain ways, and may fail to develop sufficient critical eyes for financial matters (partly resulting in the threats to the news message). To sum up, these are concerns about professional journalism practice, actions and purposes.

While general agreement exists that newspapers (in the long view) are unlikely to survive as we have come to know them, general agreement also exists that the decline of
the newspaper is detrimental to the amount of journalism practiced, and detrimental to journalism’s independence from other forces or fields. Jones (2009) estimates that 85 percent of accountability news arises first from newspapers, a point Downie Jr. and Schudson (2009/2011) also make in their call to ensure the independent reporting ability of journalists. This decline erodes what Jones calls the “iron core” of news, the accountability journalism that includes “bearing witness,” “following-up,” “explanatory journalism,” and “investigative journalism” (Jones, 2009, pp. 4-5). The concern about the structural changes facing the business of newspaper journalism is thus also a concern about the present-day culture of newspaper journalism: as much as possible, reporting independently of political, state, or economic influences, to inform the wider public of matters of concerns to them. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) found in the early 2000s that journalists broadly agreed that independent reporting on matters of public concern was the purpose of journalistic practice.

The declining amount of independent journalism available to the public is further articulated as a crisis for democracy. While some have argued for decoupling journalism and journalism practices from considerations of democracy (e.g. Josephi, 2013; Zelizer, 2013), journalism scholarship often weds and conflates the two. Schudson (1978) has argued that the rise of journalism was a significant component of the emergence of a democratic market society in the United States. Carey (2007) long contended that journalism and democracy were inextricably intertwined, that they were co-emergent, co-dependent, and mutually constitutive. Even so, Carey recognized that news was historically contingent, and is worth quoting at length here:
news is a historic reality. It is a form of culture invented by a particular class at a particular point of history—in this case by the middle class largely in the eighteenth century. Like any invented cultural form, news both forms and reflects a particular “hunger for experience,” a desire to do away with the epic, heroic, and traditional in favor of the unique, original, novel, new—news. This “hunger” itself has a history grounded in the changing style and fortunes of the middle class and as such does not represent a universal taste or necessarily legitimate form of knowledge but an invention in historical time, that like most other human inventions, will dissolve when the class that sponsors it and its possibility of having significance for us evaporates. (Carey, 1975/2009, p. 17)

Here, Carey neglects that news and its public distribution long predated the advent of journalism (and democracy) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an omission he later (somewhat) corrects when distinguishing between the inventions of journalism and news, writing that journalism too, in the eighteenth century, was something both historically new and historically contingent (2007, p. 6). Carey’s conflation of news and journalism is common, as is the conflation of journalism and democracy.

Carey’s conflations may be strategic, and they are definitely normative, for he believed, in ways aligned with his grounding in the American pragmatist tradition, that journalism can help constitute democracy and democratic publics. Journalists themselves, in much the same way, widely understand their work as intricately wedded with democratic goals. Their work and their culture, as they currently exist, thus need to be seen at least partially through this lens. Shapiro, seeing a current need for a clear(er) definition of journalism that serves democracy, articulated a “functional definition of journalism” highly leveraged on the independence that concerned Jones (2009), Downie Jr. and Schudson (2009/2011), among others: “Journalism comprises the activities involved in an independent pursuit of accurate information about current or recent events and its original presentation for public edification” (Shapiro, 2014, p. 561). Blumler
suggests that the crisis of journalism has two facets: a crisis of viability (discussed above) that is “principally though not exclusively financial” and a “crisis of civic adequacy, impoverishing the contributions of journalism to citizenship and democracy” (2012, xv). He sees them as related, but notes that fixing one will not necessarily repair the other. Nonetheless, some scholars have found demonstrably negative effects on democratic engagement when cities with two newspapers lose one (Schulhofer-Wohl and Garrido, 2013; Shaker, 2014).

Concerns about a crisis for democracy emerge most pointedly in the solutions that have been proposed to the financial crisis facing newspaper journalism, and the reasons these solutions in particular have been proposed—largely to support autonomous journalists and the ongoing production of independent journalism. Such solutions tend to have two components: identifying what aspects of journalism are worth saving for the future, and suggesting ways to save those that are. As Fuller wrote, “the future does not depend on the persistence of ink on newsprint. What matters profoundly to our civic health, to the very way we live, is the fate of news itself, of public information about matters important to the commonweal” (2010, p. 6). While some observers have insisted that the market remains inseparable from quality journalism (Jones, 2009; Meyer, 2009), others have called a repair to market solutions “suicidal” (McChesney and Nichols, 2010, p. 83), and proposed policy interventions to direct journalism from a commercial system to a public service model (Pickard, 2011b). Indeed, many of the proposed solutions involve creating government policies that provide journalism with some form of subsidy.

Given the role that IRS decisions had in facilitating the consolidation of newspaper ownership in corporate chains, some interventions, appropriately enough,
have to do with taxation. McChesney and Nichols (2010) and Downie Jr. and Schudson (2009/2011) both advocate the IRS allowing news organizations “substantially devoted to public affairs” (Downie Jr. & Schudson, 2011, p. 81) to convert into nonprofit organizations, or to allow them to become Low-profit Limited Liability Corporations (L3Cs) who may receive donations to subsidize journalism as service to the public and to democracy in the United States.

Other interventions involve direct subsidies for and payments to journalism and journalists. Cowan and Westphal (2011) offer the Postal Act of 1792 and the subsidies it offered newspapers, along with other requirements that the U.S. government publish public notices in newspapers, as strong historical precedent for the role government can play in supporting the press. Frank Blethen suggests that the U.S. postal service return “to its original purpose of supporting ubiquitous newspaper access,” and end “its incestuous relationships with the direct-mail industry” (Blethen and Blethen, 2011, pp. 198-199). McChesney and Nichols (2010) suggest more specific support: decreasing the postage paid by all publications that have less than 25 percent advertising content, to support, without any other content-based selection criteria, a variety of print publications focused primarily on distributing their own content. Many of these texts propose direct support for journalists as well (e.g. Blethen and Blethen, 2011; McChesney and Nichols, 2010).

Ackerman (2011) and McChesney and Nichols (2010) both propose variants of citizen-controlled news vouchers to help fund journalism. In the former case, readers would vote for stories deserving of payment, and a new National Endowment for Journalism would administer payments strictly based on number of clicks. Ackerman’s proposal, though, has structural provisions that would bias his system in favor of legacy
media—particularly the availability of funds to both for-profit and nonprofit news organizations, and the requirement that such organizations procure libel insurance, a prohibitive cost for freelancers or brand-new independent organizations. McChesney and Nichols’s “Citizen News Voucher” would not support news organizations that receive advertising, and such organizations also would have to be nonprofit entities. While such vouchers may help support independent and community media, how to prevent funds from flowing, generally, to the most widely read news sites of that class remains unclear, especially considering that these vouchers would be administered once per year through tax returns. Some of these solutions, then, are not without their own structural issues.

The U.S. media system itself is also reconceived through repositioning public media. Powers (2011) writes that the U.S. government spends $671.3 million every year on foreign reporting, through organizations like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America, but their work is not available to U.S. citizens through traditional means of access. This amount exceeds what the U.S. government spends on domestic public broadcasting, according to McChesney and Nichols (2010). Powers proposes that ethnic media in particular could benefit from Voice of America’s already-existing, well-funded international reporting; VoA claims to be insulated from political pressures despite its government funding. Another study found some evidence that such insulation is possible: a comparison of French newspapers with comparable United States newspapers found that the French papers, publicly supported by France’s national government, are both more critical and more multiperspectival in nature than those in the U.S. (Benson, 2011). While not necessarily generalizable, this provides some evidence that direct government support of news media does not, always and necessarily, result in
tyrannical control over content. Again, such solutions are grounded in the notion that the culture of journalism that should be fostered is one that remains independent but in service of democracy and democratic engagement.

In turn, many of the recommendations above come with the caveat that, especially in the case of more direct subsidies, the U.S. government should not (and perhaps legally cannot) be put in the position of deciding what constitutes news or journalism. Cowan and Westphal (2011) argue that the First Amendment was written to accommodate government support for a free press, even while barring government from interfering with that press. Corporate interference is also to be avoided; the Blethens (2011) suggest that the U.S. government institute restrictions on newspaper ownership and enforce FCC regulations about ownership and public service, both of which may ensure increased independent ownership and intra-market competition. This independent ownership may also facilitate news in the public interest and a more diverse information infrastructure (Copps, 2011). The notion is that journalism should be free from outside forces—and should offer reporting independent of both government and corporate influence. That independence, Downie Jr. and Schudson (2009/2011) argue, is what is most worth saving from newspaper journalism. (A more apt position might be to argue that increased independence of newsrooms and individual journalists is worth fighting for. In their report, Downie Jr. and Schudson do not address the extent to which the ideas of independence and its corollary, objectivity, have been extensively problematized in journalism studies: journalists use objectivity to deflect criticism of their work (Tuchman, 1972); objectivity for its own sake introduces bias into news stories (Bennett, 2007); journalists’ work reflects the political expectations of the owners of their media (Breed,
1955); and the mechanisms of journalistic production themselves at once defuse the potential for political conflict in the newsroom and reinforce the political biases of a news organization (Siegelman, 1973)).

Such independence could allow for the accountability reporting that many of the observers discussed here have deemed of utmost significance to journalism’s role in facilitating democracy in the United States. Accountability reporting, as it appears in this discourse, is closely tied to journalists’ professional self-conceptions. Therefore, what is worth saving has very much to do with journalism practice and culture itself.

However, journalism culture has also been found to be counterproductive in its responses to crisis. Business interests, and business mistakes, are not the only source of the field’s failure to adjust to the digital era. Herndon’s (2012) institutional history of newspapers’ involvement in the online distribution of news traces the root of the difficulties to newspaper journalism’s persistent privileging of the print newspaper product. For example, Herndon argues that shovelware, a now-pejorative term for software-automated posting of newspaper content to the web on early newspaper websites, “illustrates how business processes applied to the web echoed the cultural artifacts of the printed products and often became an obstacle that prevented newspaper websites from absorbing and reflecting what was happening elsewhere in Internet-based media” (Herndon, 2012, p. 153). By staying focused on the print product, Herndon argues, both the business of journalism and journalists themselves attempted to maintain their authority over news and information:

This theme—control of news and information—was so ingrained in newspaper culture that it transcended the business model; it was a tenet of journalism doctrine manifested in the newspaper’s agenda-setting role. Most newspaper
editors and executives took their journalistic responsibility seriously as integral to the country’s democracy. . . . newspaper companies operated from the premise that it was their job to define the news, the degree of its importance, and when that information would be disseminated. The entire newspaper process was rooted in control. (Herndon, 2012, p. 214)

Ryfe refers to this as the “‘yes, but’ syndrome.” It describes how journalists agree that they should have innovated more, but felt that they had to hew to certain values, or keep doing certain things because they’ve always been done in a certain way. Reaching a similar conclusion to Herndon, Ryfe writes, “These ‘yes, buts . . .’ carry energy in the wrong direction. Instead of pushing toward the future, they lead journalists to fixate on the past. In so doing, they stop conversations about the future of news in their tracks” (2012, p. 196). Due to precarious labor conditions, news workers, even those who feel reasonable security about their jobs, are reluctant to embrace any substantive changes to newsroom practices and culture (Ekdale et al., 2015).

In looking backwards, most journalists truly believe that they serve their social mission of facilitating democracy for the American public. But that traditional framework, Ryfe argues, no longer holds, and “the centrality of this self-identity” causes great anxiety for journalists, for that identity is eroding (2012, p. 169-173). The public that consumes journalism is changing, and as Herndon observed, professional journalism has not met its needs. According to Anderson, “confusion about the meaning of ‘the public’ in the digital age blocked journalists from clearly considering alternatives to their existing organizational arrangements” (2013, p. 164). This is not to say that journalists did not want to serve a public; as with Ryfe, Anderson’s ethnographic conclusions resonate with Herndon’s historical analysis:
Rather than forgetting the public, the journalists I spoke to over the course of my research had a deep commitment to it; this commitment, however, was seen as eternal and timeless when in actuality it was provisional and historically contingent. My argument, in other words, is empirical rather than normative. Journalists’ particular conception of the public as an aggregate, unified entity was rendered problematic by the Internet. Because Philadelphia journalism had not yet visualized an alternative conception of what the local public looked like, it remained locked in place and unable to change. (Anderson, 2013, p. 165)

The public—both provisional and historically contingent—is nonetheless a “god-term” for journalists (Carey, 2007). How to serve the public dominates discourse; journalists have fixed that public, and in trying to serve it, fixate on the past. Even as they articulate their work in service of democracy, they strive to maintain control over information of public import. This control, or this autonomy, is central to journalists’ self-identity.

Journalism has been articulated as a modern/modernist institution (Hallin, 1992; Zelizer, 2004), seen as related to the emergence of a “democratic market society” (Schudson, 1978), and considered as mutually constitutive with democracy (Carey, 2007). But as Carey put it, contemporary journalists also think that journalism “was always practiced pretty much as they do it today” (2007, p. 3), motivating his consideration of what is historically contingent about journalism. Whether the decline of newspaper journalism is actually a crisis for democracy remains to be seen, and is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. What is within the scope, though, is that media observers and scholars—and journalists themselves—repeatedly and continuously articulate this to be so.

Such discursive production—how newspaper journalists produce understandings of crisis, and of themselves, by publishing stories about each—is one target of this dissertation. In this way, the dissertation answers certain calls for improved studies of the
crisis facing U.S. newspaper journalism. Among other items, Siles and Boczkowski call for more historical perspective, for examinations of the social and cultural implications, and, borrowing from Bourdieu, for an “epistemological break” requiring scholars to engage in “a careful examination of the language deployed to describe an object of study” (2012, p. 1389). Luengo writes that cultural codes need to be considered when evaluating journalistic crises, for “cultural meanings were not just in the background of these crises; cultural codes made understanding and interpretation possible” (2014, p. 584).

To these ends, this dissertation considers the expressions of crisis explored in each of its case studies to be the products of interpretive communities (Zelizer, 1993; see also Fish, 1980; Zelizer, 1992). As Zelizer has written, an interpretive community uses narratives and collective memories to keep itself together. Through narrative, the role of the individual, the organization/institution, and the structure of the profession become key factors in delineating the hows and whys of journalistic practice. Through shared narrative lore, reporters are able to espouse collective values and notions that help them maintain themselves as an authoritative interpretive community. This perspective addresses the ways in which journalists use credibility, power, or authority for themselves, with significant implications for audiences, organizations, and larger sociocultural questions of power. (1992, pp. 9-10)

That financial problems in the newspaper industry threaten the well-being of these interpretive communities of newspaper journalists is certain. What is also certain is that this is a crisis of culture for newspaper journalists, and a crisis of the faith in the tenets that hold that culture together—that is, a crisis of the vocation of journalism (on this point, see also Brüggermann, Humprecht, Nielsen, Karppinen, Cornia, & Esser, 2015; Nielsen, 2016), and of journalism as a structure of feeling. Each case study in this dissertation explores how these tenets are expressed, remembered, and strategically
deployed by newspaper journalists as not just an interpretive community, but also (and perhaps even primarily) a mnemonic community.

What is at stake here, for newspaper journalists, is the memory of a journalism that never was; how they mourn the loss of their hopes for what journalism could have been today, for them; and whether their own social consensus and para-ideology, to borrow from Gans (1979), can be maintained in the face of existential crises. To help understand the narratives journalists tell about themselves during these crises, this dissertation relies upon literature about collective memory and journalism, and the special, highly problematized, and contentious case of nostalgia.

**Journalism as Mnemonic Community**

This dissertation examines what happens when newspaper journalism’s own presents and pasts flood into the current journalistic agenda in times of crisis, and the functions of collective memory therein. It builds on a three-decade legacy of scholarship regarding collective memory in journalism that recognizes the role memory plays in constructing and constituting events (Lang and Lang, 1989; Edy 1999) and in developing journalists’ own collective identity (Zelizer, 1992). The case studies that comprise this research help reveal how newspaper journalists function as a mnemonic community.

The widespread use of collective memory in journalism arises in no small part because journalists can easily and strategically deploy collective memory techniques to use the past for present aims, to borrow Zelizer’s phrase (1995). Lang and Lang (1989) distinguish between formal historical knowledge of the past (produced by historians) and folklore of the past (produced in many ways by journalists):
the past to which most of us, including journalists, have all too ready recourse consists of images in the public domain. This folk knowledge, highly responsive to the daily flow of news, including occasional challenges by public figures plugging their own revisionist views, does not always accord with the latest and best historical evidence. (1989, p. 125)

Thus, the flow of news produced by journalists is more fluid and less scientific than the analyses of historians (though this view somewhat ignores the fact that historical work is highly interpretive and also subject to ongoing revision). In terms of practice, journalists often assess the significance and meanings of very recent events, while historians often assess the significance of events that are, for the most part, no longer on the journalistic agenda. Nonetheless, Lang and Lang conclude that events always depend on collective memory—often established by journalism—to survive into historical consciousness.

Memory studies originates with Maurice Halbwachs (1952/1992), who first explicated the idea that memories on their own have no functional meaning; framing them socially, in the context of other memories that are shared with others, gives memories value. From this grounding, other scholars have elaborated upon Halbwachs’s work, arguing that any truth of memory is really social truth that lies in mutual corroboration and resonance (e.g. Choi, 2008), and that social solidarity pushes aside other issues when memory is at play (e.g. Zelizer, 1995).

This dissertation adopts the position that, in building knowledge about the world and themselves, journalists use both commemorative and noncommemorative forms of collective memory in ways that reveal their own community as what has been called, varyingly, a community of memory (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994), a mnemonic community (Zerubavel, 1996), and a culture of memory (Schudson, 1997).
Mnemonic communities are “regulated by unmistakably social rules of remembrance” that tell us quite specifically what we should remember and what we can or must forget” (Zerubavel, 1996, p. 286; emphasis Zerubavel). Collective memory is a vehicle that conveys the cultural ideology of those who share it. Journalism’s ideology has been defined as

the collective knowledge journalists employ in their daily work. . . . Journalists feel that these values give legitimacy and credibility to what they do—they talk about them every time they articulate, defend or critique the decisions they and their peers make, or when they are faced with criticisms by their audience, news sources, advertisers, or management. (Deuze, 2008, p. 16)

Further, as Zelizer wrote, “the journalistic community activates its concern [about its professionalism] through its discourse about itself, and through the collective memories on which it is based” (1992, p. 9). Memory is built into journalism’s discussions about its own ideology, which helps explains how easily journalists can shift from daily news work to explicit memory work and back again, and from commemorative to noncommemorative work—especially when the memory journalists discuss is their own.

One way to understand the memories journalists share about themselves is through Irwin-Zarecka’s discussion of communities of memory (1994). She expressed concern that, “as we justifiably pay more attention to how the past is mediated, framed, represented, we may be assuming too much as to the relevance of both the past and mediation” (1994, p. 37). Irwin-Zarecka is somewhat skeptical about sweeping claims that many have made about collective memory, writing that its complexities “all point to the need for scaling down the inquiry” (1994, p. 64). Zelizer (1995) also expressed concern about the plethora of work considering memory, particularly about the overuse,
misuse, and conflation of mnemonic terms of analysis—a call for attending, in detail, to the specificities of both theoretical frameworks and research subjects.

Indeed, scholars may (and some surely do) assume too many things about the relevance of the past, memory, and mediations thereof. But an intriguing question remains: what does mediation say about mediation itself, when it becomes self-reflexive? In the case studies that follow, this question becomes: What do newspaper journalists have to say about newspaper journalism, when they remember it?

The research questions asked here are straightforward. What kinds of stories are told? How are they told? What techniques are used to tell them? What metajournalistic discourse occurs therein? Earlier analyses of four final editions of newspapers that closed concluded that journalists engaged in ritualized memory work mourning the losses of newspapers as crucibles of meaning-making about the world, the loss of the physical, material newspaper, and the dissipation of the immediate, local communities of journalists as loci of that meaning-making—ultimately concluding that journalists themselves are the subjects of this hybrid memory work and newswork (Gilewicz, 2015).

How journalists accomplish this is closely aligned with the “mythical structure” proposed by Irwin-Zarecka, who contends that structure is “needed when remembrance is to sustain a people” (1994, p. 58). According to Irwin-Zarecka, this structure is made manifest through four elements that also surfaced in the newspapers previously studied:

1. There is the “myth of the origin,” something that anthropologists have uncovered in virtually all human societies.
2. There are heroes, who provide the essential exemplars of core moral beliefs.
3. There is the highly selective memory of outside forces affecting the people’s fate.
Journalists, when looking back at their own newspapers’ histories and social roles, invoke all aspects of this “mythical structure.” Following from this model, it is clear that journalists’ goals include trying to sustain their own community through memory (Gilewicz, 2015).

The discourses about job loss, newsroom moves, and newspapers closing all indicate that this goal is pervasive in each community of newspaper journalists. That the discourses are shared across newspapers reinforces the idea that newspaper journalists share more than just responses to their local conditions. These responses are patterned, and the very similar ways in which they reflect Irwin-Zarecka’s “mythical structure” can be considered what Wertsch (2008) called a schematic narrative template, through which we can see how deep collective memory can be extremely conservative and resistant to change. In his study, Wertsch argues that amplifying historical study helps communities achieve a better, shared (and, he certainly implies, more correct) interpretation of the past, overcoming mnemonic divides that deep collective memory can generate.

In the case of journalists at troubled newspapers, this dissertation argues that deep collective memory creates not a divide, but a bridge between outposts of the wider journalistic community, thus reinforcing the values of newspaper journalists’ mnemonic community. Some expressions of newspaper journalism’s deep collective memory have been articulated in the discussion of crisis above—the insistence on ongoing interpretive authority, the nature of journalists as representatives of and for the public, the insistence on twinning journalism and democracy, the refusal to adapt to new conditions because of
belief in the ongoing value of the tenets of the profession manifest through traditional practices—all of which are deeply ingrained normative aspects of newspaper journalism and core to its structure of feeling. The changes to and perceived decline (and sometimes disappearance) of these journalists’ newspapers threaten deep collective memory and the ties that bind their communities.

To understand the functions of deep collective memory in these cases, Tenenboim-Weinblatt’s (2011) distinction between retrospective and prospective memory is very helpful. In her scheme, retrospective memory encompasses both the use of collective memories of the past to understand the present, and the attempts to craft collective memories of the present to be used in the future. Prospective memory is related to, although discrete from, this second notion. It is about establishing tasks for the future that are grounded in remembrance; it calls for remembering to take action in the future. The ways in which newspaper journalists may fulfill Irwin-Zarecka’s “mythical structure” are typically retrospective memory techniques. These are assembled to do specific work in the stories studied here: to reassert that in the face of job loss, the newspaper will still deliver the news readers need; to reassert the values journalists enacted in old newsrooms and carry them to new newsrooms; and to ask readers to remember to remember closed newspapers in the future, and in certain ways.

This is a manifestation of Gans’s notion of para-ideology (1979), which here can be considered a mnemonic exercise in service of a mnemonic community. As with memory, para-ideology shifts over time, to meet the needs of the journalism community. Journalists did not always hold up investigative reporting as a paragon of practice, nor public service, nor non-partisanship. How past journalistic ideologies are remembered or
misremembered by present-day journalists shows how, regarding themselves, journalists ultimately may not have much use for scientific truth or for history proper. Rather, like most other fields of practice and like cultures more broadly, journalism has great use for social truths arrived at through social consensus. And achieving social consensus, or positioning constructed forms of social consensus as fact or reality, is one of the great social, cultural, and historical roles played by the newspaper.

Recognizing that consensus does not always emerge, and that it is additionally or instead constructed, is crucial. In constructing social consensus, journalists use both commemorative and noncommemorative forms of memory. Both have important roles to play, and both offer frameworks for the case studies of his dissertation.

Commemorative memory work highlights how people feel about themselves at particular moments of heightened attention to self-conception and community identification, such as the anniversaries of the beginnings and ends of wars. Literature about commemorative memory helps explain how and why newspaper journalists package commemorative stories in this dissertation’s case studies, and helps explain the ways in which commemorative stories express newspaper journalism’s superstructure.

Noncommemorative memory, on the other hand, offers the chance to study memory’s functions not just in special circumstances, but also in day-to-day life. The events that trigger the news coverage studied here—layoffs and buyouts, newsroom moves, and newspaper closings—are cause for commemoration, but must first be understood as momentous everyday events. Workers are laid off, offices move, and companies close every day. Newspaper journalists may claim that they are a special case, but noncommemorative aspects of their work—especially the economic aspects of these
cases that reveal the extent to which financial concerns have determined commemorative memory work—inextricably link newspaper journalists to the base and demonstrate they have increasingly recognized that the march of business, in which many newspapers, for many decades, were in lockstep, has left them behind.

Schudson (1977) has argued that noncommemorative memory should be a primary concern in collective memory studies because it helps develop fuller and deeper historical and epistemological consciousness:

We should be trying to understand how people live in time, live inside a sequence of events, not simply how they honor, enhance, restore, commemorate, repress, or falsify the meanings of events. . . . [Collective memory] is also what residues the past leaves with us and in us, residues that construct and confine how we understand the world and how past and present govern our perceptions and actions. (Schudson, 1997, p. 5)

This position finds a later echo in Kitch (2008), who also contends that journalism constructs memory about everyday life, and that journalism is not simply a conduit for memory but indeed a cultural form of memory serving “as a memory network that also functions as a hub for other memory networks” (2008, p. 217). Zelizer has observed that journalistic forms and practices themselves “bring memory work directly into the foreground of journalism” (2008, p. 82). Edy (1999) has suggested that journalism is key to whether the past is remembered in any significant way at all. I build on these views and suggest that journalism is less a first draft of history than a first negotiation of memory and a first articulation of the social meaning of recent events. Journalism products should thus be considered, to borrow Pierre Nora’s term, lieux de mémoire (1997), and journalists, again, should be considered not only as an interpretive community, but also as a mnemonic community.
Meyers has offered a compelling articulation of how journalism work becomes memory work. First, he argues that journalists in their daily work report on events of which the public does not have immediate or eyewitness knowledge. Second, when journalism takes an interpretive turn, it socially and culturally contextualizes past events. Third, when journalism takes a reflexive turn, journalists tell “stories about their own work and the role they have played and still play in shaping social memories” (2007, p. 721). In this third step, the role of memory in journalism becomes much more explicit and easily seen, for reflexivity is necessarily mnemonic. Meyers recognizes that these steps are not distinct, but layered, and that news stories in aggregate synthesize commemorative and noncommemorative memory work into broader collective memory.

Even the first step—daily newswork that reports on typical news events—is also noncommemorative memory work. All news stories recount the past; but not all mentions of past events are commemorative. To consider daily newswork as noncommemorative memory work helps clarify how journalism always engages the past and that news regularly constructs memories about everyday life. This may be read as challenging journalism’s attention to currency, but quite the contrary—currency refers not to present events, but to the relative recency of past events. Notions of currency and its application as a news value and in news production involve negotiation with and over past events. Schudson (1995) laid out four general characteristics of collective memory: it is social; it is selective; it is driven by both deliberate and unconscious processes; it is provisional. All four principles also characterize the production of news: news is produced to be shared with an audience; news selection criteria are applied; the process of selection and
the internalized organizational expectations of journalists affect their work; and all news is provisional, because stories and their importance change from moment to moment.

Commemorative and noncommemorative memory work are often intertwined. Lang and Lang themselves evaluated how public commemoration was structured both for and by journalists. They suggest that for people whose contemporaneous experience of events was “mediated via the news media,” experience is “all hearsay after the facts” (emphasis in original) (Lang & Lang, 1989, p. 129) and memories these people retain are, strictly speaking, of the mediated event rather than the event itself. This points to the primacy of journalism in the construction of collective memory, which their data bear out; they argue journalists use the past in four ways: “to delimit an era, as a yardstick, for analogies, and for the shorthand explanations or lessons it can provide” (1989, p. 127).

Building on this, Edy (1999) has suggested three ways that journalists remember. Through commemoration, which Edy defines as any kind of remembering that has been sanctioned by a social authority, journalists can work backwards to organize their workflow and resources, but commemoration tends to reconstruct the past while failing to provide appropriate context. Through historical analogies, journalists create a frame that helps understand current circumstances through the lessons of the past, but journalists naturalize this frame, and do not admit the interpretive nature of such analogies. Through historical context, journalists attempt to explain how we got from the past to the present; using context, they do not suffer the foibles of commemoration and analogy, but they tend to create binaries that don’t necessarily reflect the immediate situation at hand. All three of these—commemoration, historical analogy, and historical context—are manifest to varying degrees in the case studies of this dissertation.
Writing, in which journalism’s origins lie, is both an inscribing and incorporating practice and both are involved in the production of collective memory (Connerton, 1989). That something is written suggests “a will to be remembered” (Connerton, 1989, p. 102). The act of writing (or typing, printing, recording, interviewing, and so forth) incorporates that will, regardless of the content of what is to be remembered. Journalism practice is one such incorporating practice. Consider the actual practice of assembling a news story. With the exception of directly-observed breaking or developing news, journalists rely upon sources, who rely upon their own memories of what they have seen or heard. Journalists then rely on their own memories of what sources told them; these memories are sometimes direct recall, but more often technologically mediated—notebooks, audio recorders, still and video cameras are all memory prostheses. That is, present information is preserved for future use, even if, in journalism, that future is only a few minutes, hours, days, or weeks away. This production process is mnemonic.

Building from Lang and Lang’s earlier observations (1989), contemporary research about journalism and collective memory finds that a great many of the events about which we say we have collective memories are, in fact, events that have been mediated for us by journalists. To borrow a term from philosophy and literary studies (e.g. Kant (1971/1998), Heidegger (1927/1996), Derrida (1967/1998), Ricoeur (1983/1984)), contemporary forms of collective memory are always-already mediated by journalism; because of journalists’ active role in the construction of collective memory, journalists have always-already absorbed and become dependent upon mnemonic narrative templates and styles. Having intertwined, journalism and memory each became part of the essence of the other, even in story framing, which, superficially, might be
considered non-mnemonic. Yet as Edy (1999) pointed out, journalists turn not only to commemoration but also to historical context and analogies to frame stories. Journalists, problematically, turn to past story frames even if such frames do not quite fit (Durham, 1998) and even if many frame theory scholars (e.g. Entman, 1993) do not recognize the full extent to which present news story frames depend on journalists remembering and recycling past ways of understanding events (e.g. Zelizer, 1998; Zelizer 2008).

The use of “always-already” here might feel incongruous if the concept is misread as insisting on the past as past per se. In fact, “always-already” is connected strongly to the notion, articulated in the section that follows, that journalists in times of crisis express nostalgia for that which could have been but is not. The condition of “always-already” is that what has (or has not) happened in or been true of the past is necessarily of the past, but also imbricated in the present. Additionally, present occurrences always-already will have happened in the future, and will be imbricated therein. The “always-already” condition makes the past distinct and identifiable, while recognizing its continuity through the present and into the future. As Lang and Lang noted,

\[
\text{past and future together frame the reporting of current events. Just what part of the past and what kind of future are brought into play depends on what editors and journalists believe legitimately belongs within the public domain, in journalistic conventions, and of course in personal ideologies. (1989, p. 126)}
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Journalism feeds memory, and memory also feeds what journalists believe to be appropriate courses of action.

What is arguably the inseparability and mutual contingency of memory and journalism often plays out as conflict and contradiction when journalists remember (especially those events with which they were involved). Schudson (1993), for example,
extensively documented contestation over the meanings and uses of Watergate, including journalists’ elevating the status of their profession. Zelizer (1992) explained how from shortly after the initial coverage, and continuing for decades, journalists visited and revisited their coverage of U.S. President John F. Kennedy’s assassination in ways that allowed them to discuss the social meaning of journalism and to promote their authority.

Conflicts and contradictions often, eventually, resolve into a binding memory for journalists, where even if the meaning of events is contested over time, a consensual meaning of journalism itself emerges a primary concern. This dissertation posits that collective memory of journalism, in journalism, should be considered vital to how news stories are built. Further it posits that when journalists turn their attention to themselves, and when news stories attend to journalism, we have a special opportunity to see how journalists grapple with their own roles in constructing such stories, with their authority to do so, and with their pathways to social consensus which, I argue, are deeply mnemonic in nature. It behooves us to remember that the social roles that journalists self-present are predicated and contingent upon journalists’ collective memories of themselves. These memories, in turn, are highly leveraged on nostalgia.

**Nostalgia of, in, and for Journalism**

Nostalgia provides a structure of feeling to which newspaper journalists can turn when newspaper journalism has begun to fail them. This dissertation theorizes nostalgia as a special case of collective memory, and proposes that journalists strategically turn towards nostalgia for reasons beyond typical professional practices and tenets. As with collective memory about journalism in journalism, nostalgia for journalism in journalism
serves to maintain and establish community values and authority. And as with collective memory, nostalgia for journalism in journalism is a tool to try to sustain those values and that authority into the future.

Nostalgia, in its contemporary use, is a metaphor. As a 17th century neologism, it named a longing for home that manifested as a physical and psychological pathology (Hofer, 1688/1934). When nostalgia began to be used to describe a longing for the past, its metaphorical nature began to emerge; nostalgia for a past time is nostalgia for something that, in its emotional fullness, stands in for home. A person nostalgic for a past time is a person who misses an emotional landscape that, softened and tinged by time, feels more like “home” than the present landscape. To be nostalgic is to seek such a home, in the finest sense of that word, that perhaps never was and likely never can be.

The nostalgic person thus aspires to an imagined home. At the moment of imagining, this home is thought of as permanent, for it is an idealized, objectified, and fixed sense of or feeling of home. Even while drawing upon both individual and collective memory, as well as historically specific events and people, the nostalgic person tries to fix a home or a past (or, as will be shown, other things entirely) as the apex of the idea of the comfort of home. Such a turn towards the past, combined with the idealization of something absent that was lost long ago, has caused nostalgia to be viewed as “the other side of the ideology of progress” and “obscuring the connections between past and present” (Lasch, 1991, p. 14).

In the view of Lasch and other critics (and even some proponents), nostalgia does not fit into modern views of the world. Like other memory systems, it is highly subjective and idiosyncratic and unreliable, perhaps most so, because of deliberate choices to elide
painful elements of the past. The idealized sense of the imagined home is the always-
already of nostalgia, its *sine qua non*. But nostalgia, again, like collective memory, brings
past, present, and future together to negotiate group identity and maintenance.

Discourse in these case studies is both nostalgic and metajournalistic. Thus, this
dissertation theorizes two phases of nostalgia that are iterative, yet occur simultaneously
when journalists turn their attention to themselves: nostalgia of the past for the present,
and nostalgia of the present (because it will become the past as soon as it is apprehended)
for the future (which will be experienced soon).

Such an “of/for” scheme traces from cultural anthropology through
communications and memory studies. Geertz (1973) articulated this as the “model of”
and “model for” aspects of rituals and ritual behavior. In Geertz, “models of” ritual
represent real patterns of behavior and information exchanges—they explain our group
conceptions of the world. “Models for” rituals are normative and dispositional: how we
should think about or feel about the world that we inhabit, or the world that is
circumscribed for us by ritual. That “models of/for” is a scheme or a model itself is worth
emphasizing, for both a “model of” and a “model for” can be present in the same ritual at
the same time. As Geertz himself noted, the distinction “seems largely arbitrary, a matter
of which aspect, the model of or model for, one wants for the moment to bring into
focus” (1973, p. 95). This dissertation argues that nostalgia is both models interrelated.

The models of/for scheme influenced communication studies through Carey
(1975/2009), who articulated this as a piece of his ritual view of communication.
Articulating the connections between symbolic reality and lived experience, Carey wrote,
This particular miracle we perform daily and hourly—the miracle of producing reality and then living within and under the fact of our own productions—rests upon a particular quality of symbols: their ability to be both representations ‘of’ and ‘for’ reality. (1975/2009, p. 23)

Zelizer brought this scheme into memory studies, interpolating it as memory of/for.

Others have echoed this scheme as well, particularly in its temporal aspects: for example, Boym (2001) discussed the distinction between a restorative nostalgia (in her view a damaging and stultifying version of nostalgia that conceptualized the past as a better state to which we should seek return) and a reflective nostalgia (that used the past as a substrate for critical reflection on how to move productively into the future); Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2011) articulated retrospective memory (essentially Zelizer’s (1995) notion of using the past for present ends) and prospective memory (articulating a present-day reminder to remember to do something in the future) in a related way.

As a memory system, nostalgia is necessarily symbolic. As a symbolic system, nostalgia, in its metaphorical nature, structures not only how we think about our past world, but also our present and future world. This is dramatically out of line with how journalists normally articulate their own work; nonetheless, this dissertation argues that nostalgia is a tool journalists turn to in times of crisis because it is a utilitarian and familiar aspect of shared human existence. A full assessment of the history of nostalgia is beyond the scope of this dissertation.¹ Instead, this section identifies elements of

¹ For initial articulations of the problems of nostalgia, see the neologism and initial association of nostalgia with physiological pathologies (Hofer, 1688/1934) and an explication of psychological entrapment by the past (Freud 1914/1958; 1917/1963). For an excellent in-depth intellectual history (and perhaps an overly optimistic view) of nostalgia, see Illbruck (2012). For theorizations of nostalgia in media and collective life, see Davis (1979) and the chapter “Theorizing nostalgia isn’t what it used to be” in Grainge (2012).
scholarship on nostalgia that shed light on how stories written by newspaper journalists use nostalgia as a tool to articulate, develop, and project collective memory.

The crisis facing newspaper journalists is a professional and community crisis that manifests as a crisis of memory and of identity. As an interpretive community, newspaper journalists have certain shared cultural codes that make interpretation possible in the first place (Luengo, 2015), and this is especially true when considering journalists as a mnemonic community. A shared sense of what things matter from the past (but which are no longer present), a collective nostalgia, manifests in attempts to maintain what Davis (1979) called identity continuity.

The case studies explored in this dissertation are about endings and what nostalgia can do when the ends are inevitable. Stories about the end are an attempt to control the end, even though they cannot prevent it. But these stories can affect how the end is understood contemporaneously, and the stories can attempt to establish nostalgic memories for audiences (including newspaper journalists themselves) that can be carried forward into the future. The case studies draw from and problematize the notions of “productive nostalgia” and “future nostalgia,” exploring how questions about identity continuity play out when journalists’ colleagues keep dropping away, when their longstanding professional homes are sold out from under them, and when their newspapers close.

The literature about nostalgia is quite contentious, especially when it examines nostalgia’s strategic uses and the potential benefits and threats of collective nostalgia. Where some scholars and observers have found it a highly conservative, retrograde, and damaging notion both socially and psychologically, others have argued that nostalgia is
future-oriented, and utopian in aspirational ways that open a present-day window allowing better self-assessment, self-regard, and community. This dissertation conceives the body of recent nostalgia literature as potentially complementary, rather than necessarily contradictory, in order to fully explore the nostalgia seen in each case study.

Nostalgia offers a sort of resolution to what Giddens has called the problem of “ontological security,” which “refers to the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action” (1990, p. 92). The use of nostalgia to seek such security is, to use Giddens’s phrase, one consequence of modernity, particularly in constructing traditions to respond to accelerated experiences of time and temporal displacement.

Tradition, it has been observed, “may be the most important encounter that non-historians have with what passes for history” (Shaw and Chase, 1989, p. 10). According to Hobshawn and Ranger (1983), history is always constructed in accordance with people’s ideas of time, and historic accounts offer legitimacy to those who wield them. What they termed the “invention of tradition” occurs when old forms are weakened either naturally or strategically. Such inventions are not about, ultimately, truth or tradition; rather, they construct relationships between the past and present to be used for present-day aims.

Nostalgia of, in, and for the newspaper are constructions that reveal what journalists think about their own invented traditions and also reveal, in part, how those traditions are constructed. Nostalgia, even if it affords only a false sense of ontological security, is sought after through repair, or perhaps retreat, to tradition as a place of refuge (see, for example, Baudrillard, 1981/1994; Jameson, 1991; Kammen, 1991; Lasch, 1991; Stewart, 1984/1993; Williams, 1973). Newspaper journalists’ invented traditions, which
relate to their community’s current and historical self-conception as a modern and modernizing agent of progress and democracy, have been used to socialize new journalists into the group. And as the community comes under threat, it turns to these same invented traditions, nostalgically, seeking to sustain itself through a troubled time.

The criticism that such security is false and that seeking it may be foolhardy, and even dangerous, can be summed, to an extent, by Boym’s term “restorative nostalgia” (2001). Boym suggested that endeavors focusing on tradition, or truth, or fidelity with the past are in fact about the values to which such projects and their creators aspire. Importantly, neither the projects nor their creators openly recognize (or admit) their nostalgic nature, for that recognition would undermine the restoration. The need to scrutinize nostalgic projects and agents for social intent also points to the need to explore how and whether nostalgia can be productive. If nostalgia is put to present use by powerful figures or institutions to, presumably, maintain their own power, nostalgia necessarily can have both productive uses and future orientations (but not necessarily positive ones). Kammen, for example, recognized such a productive role, finding that in the decades leading up to World War I, “the creative consequences of nostalgia helped [Americans] to legitimize new political orders, rationalize the adjustment and perpetuation of old social hierarchies, and construct acceptable new systems of thought and values” (Kammen, 1991, p. 295). Boym also articulated a hopeful version of nostalgia in the reflective side of the restorative/reflective binary she proposed. Reflective nostalgia is restorative nostalgia’s productively positive obverse, which Boym considers an opportunity for critical reflection on cultural memory—an opportunity to collectively work through troubled national pasts.
Schrag has viewed “productive nostalgia” as something that facilitates identity maintenance and development: “Productive nostalgia is a process of meaning-formation that gathers fragments of a remembered past, imaginatively reconstructs them, idealizes their contents, and projects the idealized portrait of the past as a directive for personal and communal actualization” (1992, p. 74). Without reference to Schrag, Blunt claims to coin the term “productive nostalgia,” and uses it in four ways: refocusing nostalgia on a desire for home; articulating longing for home as “embodied and enacted in practice rather than solely in narrative or imagination;” arguing that such desire and enactment are “oriented towards the present and the future as well as towards the past;” and reconsidering the spatial dimensions of home to include not only lost homes, but how senses of lost homes inform present and future homes, and the desires for them (2003, p. 717). Both are reminiscent of Boym’s “reflective nostalgia.”

Discussions of collective nostalgia often imbricate a productive, future-oriented nostalgia. Literature on collective nostalgia strongly connects it with collective memory. Beginning with Davis (1979), this literature has broadly focused on communal turns to nostalgia to address present problems: “the nostalgic evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties” (Davis, 1979, p. 34). Nostalgia has been theorized as a rhetorical response that provides a modernist sense of certainty and stability, a comforting notion in a time of confusion about cultural goals. When we don’t quite know where we are or where we’re going, we can return to a favorable past—or recall one if our immediate histories are painful—to regain our bearings. (Aden, 1999, p. 43)

In this way, a repair to nostalgia can aid in the pursuit of the “ontological security” of identity (Giddens, 1990, p. 92). Throughout the case studies of this dissertation, the
destabilization of the identities of newspaper journalists at both individual and group levels, and the erosion and destruction of their communities, are at stake. Of such situations, Davis writes, “collective nostalgia acts to restore, at least temporarily, a sense of sociohistoric continuity with respect to that which had verged on being rendered discontinuous” (1979, p. 103).

Collective nostalgia is often discussed as operating on a massive scale. In an oft-cited definition, Davis writes that collective nostalgia

refers to the condition in which the symbolic objects are of a highly public, widely shared, and familiar character, those symbolic resources from the past that under proper conditions can trigger wave upon wave of nostalgic feeling in millions of persons as the same time. (1979, p. 122-123)

The scope of what Davis termed the “nostalgia wave” of the 1970s concerned many observers because of its mass collectivity, especially when seen through the lenses of markets and capitalism. Across a variety of media—novels, television, films, advertising, even theme parks—scholars have argued that commercialization and capitalism have hollowed out the meaning of lived pasts and have separated people from what is presumed to be a more proper understanding of those pasts (e.g. Williams, 1973; Baudrillard, 1981/1994; Jameson, 1991). Davis noted that collective nostalgia could be seen from a Marxian perspective as false consciousness, that “in defiance of the logic of historical dialectics, [collective nostalgia] looks longingly backward to obsolete societal arrangements rather than forward to the better ones destined to emerge” (1979, p. 109).

Those concerned about potentially negative social effects of collective nostalgia have generally argued that those who experience it are personally stuck in the past, or that the past is marketed to consumers who use it to patch over the problems of the present,
distracting them from what is really going on around them. But as Wilson noted, “It would be easy therefore to dismiss nostalgia as false consciousness, as something provided by the dominant groups in society which individuals consume uncritically. . . . We need not view individuals as so passive” (2005, p. 30). Indeed, individuals are not so passive, nor is their use of nostalgia.

Uses of collective nostalgia make clear that its temporal dimensions are more complicated than just serving up a falsely idealized past to assuage pains of the present. These temporal dimensions are seen in the case studies comprising this dissertation, and in much other research into the functions of nostalgia at various social levels.

“Invented traditions,” one manifestation of nostalgia, have been argued to be the basis of the modern political state (Hobshawn & Ranger, 1983; Shaw & Chase, 1989); at the national level, “[c]ollective nostalgia can serve the purpose of forging a national identity, expressing patriotism” (Wilson, 2005, p. 31). At this level, collective nostalgia is in fact both backward- and forward-looking in its relationships to national, regional, and political identity, typically in the context of dissatisfaction with current situations in the nation (Boym, 2001), but also among groups within it, such as the cases of radical Basque nationalism (Muro, 2005) and the rise of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe (Mols & Jetten, 2014). Collective nostalgia and its uses are not necessarily bound by political ideology, and repairing to nostalgia is not simply turning to the past. While nostalgia can have a conservative nature, that nature does not preclude using it rhetorically to address present-day conditions and to prepare for or imagine the future.

Collective nostalgia also functions in groups smaller than the nation, as in newspaper journalists’ discourse in each of the following chapters. As Wilson wrote,
Nostalgia may be experienced collectively, in the sense that nostalgia occurs when we are with others who shared the event(s) being recalled. . . . Nostalgia is also experienced collectively in the sense that one’s nostalgia is often for the collective—the characteristics or activities of a group or institution in which the individual was a participant. (2005, p. 36)

This iterative relationship to the collective is present in groups of widely ranging size. Davis writes of generations, for which collective nostalgia “mediates the selection, distillation, refinement, and integration of those scenes, events, personalities, attitudes, and practices from the past that make an identifiable generation of what would otherwise remain a featureless demographic cohort” (emphasis in original) (1979, p. 111). Here, Davis connects the mediating or mediatizing functions of collective nostalgia to how generations are defined—that is, how they are periodized. This treatment of the generation finds a later echo in Nora’s (1997) discussion of generations and lieux de memoire. Lieux de memoire can be read as attempts to organize the disparate memories that surround us; in turn, in a recursive fashion, individuals and groups can then create or participate in memory by attaching their memory work to extant lieux de memoire. In this way, such a lieu can become both a source of collective memory and a realm in which people can do memory work. As with Davis, Nora notes that the production of a generation has more to do with mediation rather than events themselves. Implicit in both Davis and Nora is the notion, raised by Moddelmog (2001), that nostalgia periodizes phenomena and in doing so defines them by fixing them. Lived history is bracketed by “the symbolic stuff from which people’s living sense of history is made” (Davis, 1979, p. 111). The move from historical experience to historical sense is to distance oneself, opening the possibility for understanding the present and the past while foreclosing the possibility of an historical future.
Much smaller groups have been the focus of studies of collective nostalgia as well, often identifying positive aspects of that nostalgia. For example, stories from Volkswagen Beetle owners taken together exhibited shared nostalgia for a problematic automobile that nonetheless was associated with positive coming-of-age experiences (Wilson, 2005). Sports fans in particular have been the subject of a number of studies that found nostalgic cohesion among attendees at sports museums and halls of fame (e.g. Snyder, 1991), among those who travel together to participate in or view sporting events (e.g. Fairley, 2003), and among those who participate in sports fantasy camps, where adults can pay (often substantial sums) to play a sport in a famous stadium or alongside famous players of the past (e.g. Gammon, 2002).

These groups did not express much concern about connecting their collective nostalgias to the march of progress, despite having media or extensively mediatized objects as the substrate of their emotional reactions. Perhaps, as the size of groups diminishes, so their nostalgias become less collective and more private. Private nostalgia, according to Davis,

Refers to those symbolic images and allusions from the past that by virtue of their source in a person’s biography tend to be more idiosyncratic, individuated, and particularistic in their reference, e.g., the memory of a parent’s smile, the garden view from a certain window of a house once lived in, for Proust the little cakes from his childhood at Combray. (1979, p. 123)

These kinds of memories may be more closely held and more individually significant and idiosyncratic than, say, memories of fans celebrating on Broad Street when the Philadelphia Eagles won their first Super Bowl in 2018. Nevertheless, they remain collective for, as per Halbwachs (1952/1992), their meaning arises from understanding them socially rather than severed, dream-like, from other minds and experiences.
Collective nostalgia is, often, a tool of social cohesion that helps create a sense of permanence and fixity. It helps communities both large and small defend against threats to identity continuity. A group of psychologists engaged in ongoing study of nostalgia and collective nostalgia over approximately the past 15 years has defined nostalgia as a positive emotion that serves to maintain self-continuity, and in its sociality, nostalgia also imbricates the group. “Although the person (i.e., individual self) is typically the protagonist of the nostalgic account, an important group (i.e., collective self such as family, friends, co-workers) is almost always present” (Sedikides, Wildshut, Gaertner, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008, p. 232). In this context, their studies have suggested that nostalgia has “four key psychological functions” “Nostalgia serves as a repository of positive affect;” “Nostalgia maintains and increases self-positivity;” “Nostalgia fosters affiliation or stronger social bonds;” and “nostalgia carries existential meaning, serving as a reservoir of memories and experiences that is helpful for coping with existential threat” (Sedikides, Wildshut, Gaertner, Routledge, & Arndt, 2008, p. 231). For these reasons, and with additional experimental confirmation, this group has argued that as an emotion, nostalgia is a positive resource for the self (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, & Arndt, 2015). These psychologists also argue that nostalgia functions at the group level, with the experience of shared nostalgic events serving to strengthen ingroup bonds and increasing individual desires to support and protect the ingroup (Wildschut, Bruder, Robertson, van Tilburg, & Sedikides, 2014), desires that are sometimes partially driven by “outgroup-directed anger” (Cheung, Sedikides, Wildschut, Tausch, & Ayanian, 2017).

The discourses in each of this dissertation’s case studies exhibit many of these functions and dynamics. One of these facets, coping, differs from defending in that it
recognizes that the always-already cannot be resisted, and must instead be managed. Thus, in the face of job losses, newspaper journalists turn to repair work; in the face of newsroom moves, they assemble stories to consign the old buildings to the past and rhetorically navigate to new newsrooms; in the face of newspaper closings, they draft stories that share their sorrow with each other, but also with their readers. Newspaper journalists’ nostalgias sometimes exhibit out-group directed anger, usually over allocative financial decisions beyond their control—decisions that reduce journalists’ autonomy and in doing so make clear that journalists are not in full control over their autonomy.

Journalists as a whole, and newspaper journalists as a particular group, may indeed use idealized portraits of their profession to direct personal and communal actualization. However, the immediate communities discussed in the chapters that follow—of newspaper journalists who were laid off and cannot return to the industry because no jobs exist to reabsorb them; those who have moved from now-repurposed buildings and lost their spatial authority, or those at newspapers that have closed—no longer can actualize the same community in the same ways, despite appeals to nostalgia.

Mourning the layoffs at one’s own newspaper, or in others, in the newspaper is a fight against those layoffs having occurred, and also an acceptance those layoffs will have occurred. Similarly, remembering and idealizing newsrooms and newspaper buildings is a fight against the declines and losses that have occurred, and a recognition that, in the future, the loss of those newsrooms and buildings will have occurred. And commemorating the last issue of a newspaper in the last issue of a newspaper is both a fight against the newspaper having failed, and the recognition that in the future that newspaper will have failed. These changes are permanent, and some of these
communities have, as communities, no future whatsoever. In these cases, whether nostalgia is productive or not, whether it is reflective or restorative, or whether these categories are incomplete, may best be seen through how nostalgia for the newspaper plays out in news stories written by journalists themselves.
CHAPTER 2: NOSTALGIA AT ODDS: JOB LOSS, GRIEF, AND IRRESPONSIBLE CAPITALISM

Every year since 1978, the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) has surveyed U.S. newspaper (and eventually, digital) newsrooms in an effort to track and improve race and sex diversity in those newsrooms. While the survey has shown modest improvement in these regards, the survey also, perhaps inadvertently, starkly reveals the decline in the overall workforce of newspaper (and online-only) journalism. In 2005, the beginning of this dissertation’s periodization, an estimated 54,100 journalists worked at daily newspapers in the U.S., according to ANSE. At the beginning of 2015, the last year for which this data is available and prior to that year’s layoffs, ASNE counted approximately 32,900 employed journalists—a decline of 21,200, or 39.2 percent. The most precipitous decline came between 2007 and 2010, during which period a quarter of U.S. newspaper journalists lost their jobs. In 2016, ASNE stopped reporting data about total employment, because, according to an ASNE press release, “the structure of modern newsrooms makes it impractical and error-prone to try to estimate” (qtd. in Edmonds, 2016). This reflects the material changes that have resulted from job losses and increased use of digital technologies—but also that news editors, as a group, may not understand “the structure of modern newsrooms” in ways that lets them classify contemporary journalists in terms of their classical roles.

This chapter examines how, between 2005 and the present, newspaper journalists reflect on job losses due to layoffs and buyouts (and occasionally, related job changes) at their own newspapers. These articles sometimes regard the loss of journalists’ own jobs, sometimes regard the losses of their colleagues, and sometimes reflect on the wider state
of the newspaper industry. In the discourse studied in this chapter, two sets of voices emerge—newspaper executives and newspaper journalists—that contest what kinds of adaptations must be made and contest the value of the layoffs and buyouts in maintaining a healthy newspaper industry. Executive and journalistic discourses differ in two primary ways: whether the job losses are assessed to be in line with “responsible capitalism” (one of Gans’s “enduring news values” (1979/2004)), and in each discourse’s particular strategic uses of nostalgia.

Executive voices articulate a collective nostalgia that is continuous—layoffs are necessary to survival (and even success), and in the future, journalists (and audiences) will remember the good work done by the newspaper as an ongoing good. Journalistic voices articulate job losses as disruption—that damages not just the community, but also the ability of journalists to fulfill their vocation to create knowledge about the world. Following job losses, journalists note the erosion of their communities, and turn to collective nostalgia as a tool to argue for what should have been a maintenance of staffing levels. What should have been, however, is not, and journalists ultimately resign themselves to the job losses because their newspapers continue on, and they must continue on with their work. Recalling and restating their values also provides an opportunity to reassure readers that this way of knowing will continue.

This chapter focuses specifically on the layoffs of journalistic staff at newspapers, and coverage of the layoffs in those same newspapers. To assemble the body of stories analyzed here, incidents of layoffs were found first by reviewing *Columbia Journalism Review, American Journalism Review, Poynter*, the Newsonomics blog and column, *Quill*, and *Editor and Publisher* from 2005 to the present. Searches were conducted in
NewsBank Access World News, Newspapers.com, and the individual archives of newspapers to find self-coverage of these layoffs. In the self-coverage of job loss studied here, the voices of newspaper employees who were neither journalists nor executives are generally elided, even as industry job losses outside the newsroom have been greater in number and proportion than inside the newsroom (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Sales representatives, marketers, printers, and distributors have been harder hit than journalists, but they have not surfaced significantly in the discourse studied here. The layoffs and buyouts of these employees are sometimes noted, but the loss of their jobs is not assigned meaning in the same ways as the loss of journalists, and sometimes is not discussed at all. Voices of non-journalists and/or non-executives are not readily available in this discourse. This elision reinforces the idea that journalistic employees structure themselves as a separate community within the newspaper, and their primary concern is the continuity of their sub-community.

The news stories studied in this chapter report on losses of journalism jobs directly resulting from attempts to maintain profit margins in the mature newspaper industry. As Gans wrote quite some time ago,

in the last analysis, news organizations are overseen by corporate executives who are paid to show a profit. News judgment is resistant to change, and journalists will fight hard to preserve their autonomy; but if corporate economic well-being is threatened, executives may insist that their news organizations adapt. (Gans, 1979/2003, p. 246-247)

Layoffs and buyouts result from declining profit margins, the most direct threat to corporate well-being. With a total workforce decline of nearly 40 percent over a decade, newspapers necessarily must adapt. Newspaper journalists, both those laid off and those who remain, receive job losses and changes to working situations as direct challenges to
their ontological security (Giddens, 1990)—stability of profession and identity is undermined by consistent precarity and uncertainty. As one Los Angeles Times reporter told the Columbia Journalism Review in 2008, “It seems like it’s been one continuous layoff at this point” (Love, 2008). And since 2008, the situation has only worsened.

This chapter finds, first, that executive voices in this discourse—for example, publishers, corporate executives from newspaper chains, and sometimes, editors in chief—present job losses and sometimes-accompanying reorganizations as financially necessary for each newspaper, for newspaper chains, and for the industry as a whole. If newspapers cannot be maintained as ongoing business concerns, the argument goes, then newspaper will not be able to serve the public at all. Despite the appeal to mission, the argument is essentially financial in nature. While recognizing the cultural appeal to public service, this argument privileges concerns about newspaper journalism’s base over its superstructure (Williams, 1973/2006). Executive discourse manifests nostalgia primarily in articulations the historical and contemporaneous public mission of the newspaper as a necessary ongoing public good. Executives insist that the mission will be fulfilled despite the diminishing community of newspaper journalists—and, in fact, that the mission can only be fulfilled if jobs are cut to save the newspaper, which is one way nostalgia is used to come to terms with business decline. Executive voices thus privilege the good of the enterprise and institution-as-business over the good of journalists, both individually and in congregation.

For newspaper journalists, responsible capitalism comes up short. Journalistic discourse is something of a mirror image to executive discourse; journalists argue that the public mission would best be served by reducing or avoiding job loss. Newspaper
journalists question whether newspapers can still meaningfully serve the public in the wake of such repeated and massive job losses. Their discourse challenges the idea that widespread job reductions are responsible capitalism, because the losses challenge each newspaper’s ability to uphold another enduring news value: altruistic democracy. As Gans wrote, “the news implies that politics should follow a course based on the public interest and public service” (1979/2004, p. 43). Newspaper journalists position themselves as part of this polity, offering as a public service their ability to hold the political system to account by exposing political violations of the public interest. As economic problems challenge this ability, newspaper journalists suggest that these layoffs and buyouts are irresponsible capitalism. Journalistic voices exhibit a nostalgia emphasizing how their telos undergirds their job loss discourse. Newspaper journalists struggle to come to terms with repeated job reductions at their newspapers, and struggle to come to terms with the social meaning of those reductions for journalists individually, for journalists in groups, for journalists’ geographic communities, and for democracy and good governance. With each layoff and buyout, newspaper journalists are forced to reckon with the fact that their journalistic work is also economic labor—such reckoning is an experience (and acknowledgement) of diminishment. In the discourse of newspaper journalists, then, nostalgia is used as an outlet for concomitant grief; repair to nostalgia offers a reset of values, and thus nostalgia also functions obliquely as a form of paradigm repair (Berkowtiz, 2000). These stories position job loss more as an attack on newspaper journalism’s telos than as an attack on newspaper journalists’ labor. In expressing the newly discovered lacks accompanying each incident of job loss as related to telos, the
discourse also reasserts the importance and value of journalistic work. Journalistic voices privilege continuity of culture, community, and profession—and they seek preservation.

**Responsible Capitalism and Executive Voices**

That newspaper journalists have seen social responsibility at the core of their practices and businesses is not surprising. This integration of social responsibility into the business is not exclusive to the newspaper; examples date to the advent of modern capitalism (Harvard Business Review, 2012), an era that also saw the professionalization of newspaper journalism. Unique to journalism, though, is that journalists have been the beneficiaries of responsible capitalism, while at the same publicly defining responsible capitalism (and journalism, for that matter) as a public good and holding violators to account. Gans writes that a news perspective on economic issues resembles that taken toward the polity: an optimistic faith that in the good society, businessmen and women will compete with each other in order to create increased prosperity for all, but that they will refrain from unreasonable profits and gross exploitation of workers or customers. (1979/2004, p. 46)

Responsible capitalism was easy for newspaper companies to practice when newspapers were earning 30 percent returns, as they once did. It’s much harder to practice when that return ticks down year after year, with increasingly nervous shareholders and owners pressing the businesses to economically right themselves before they go under.

All of the newspaper articles studied in this chapter emanate from core secular changes to the industry—the combination of declining print circulation and declining advertising dollars spent on print—and the jobs cut in response to these declining economic conditions. Stories articulating layoffs and buyouts as part of responsible
capitalism typically take the form of news articles that emphasize executive voices while framing these job losses as materially necessary, or take the form of communications bylined to newspaper executives that do much the same. Executive voices engage in a variety of rhetorical strategies that ultimately exculpate both management and journalists.

First, executive voices reassert the mission of the newspaper, informing readers that the quality and values of the newspaper will be upheld, and these reassertions are common across both time and space. In 2008, the Cleveland Plain Dealer announced that 38 union newsroom positions would be cut by year’s end—a “tough decision” according to the Plain Dealer’s president and publisher, who said “the end result of what we’re trying to do is to keep the newspaper strong and able to serve the community for a long time” (qtd. in Hollander, 2008). In 2009, the Honolulu Star-Bulletin laid off 17 and announced a change to a tabloid format, emphasizing that they would not become akin to a supermarket tabloid. The president and publisher of the Star-Bulletin’s parent company told the paper, “[t]he content will be the same quality news, in the reporting style that [readers] currently enjoy” (qtd. in Engle, 2009). The editor of the Newark Star-Ledger told his paper in 2013 that the newspaper would not abandon its role: “We are right where we were yesterday. We have the same mission” (qtd. in Sherman & Heyboer, 2013). The denial of fact by the editor of the Star-Ledger is especially revealing. The newspaper’s journalists—presumably included in “we”—necessarily cannot be “right where we were yesterday,” for some are not there anymore at all. Followed by “we have the same mission,” this statement thus implies that the departed staff are not necessary to the continuity of mission.
Where executives exhibit nostalgia, it is nostalgia for the best things about the present, to which they appeal when asserting the continuity of the newspaper’s mission. Despite the layoffs of 10 newsroom employees at the Chicago Tribune in 2015, a Tribune spokesperson told the paper, “We continue to add and invest in staff in key areas such as investigative reporting, digital programming, local news, opinion leadership and commentary (qtd. in Channick, 2015, Section 2, p. 4). Following job cuts in 2016, the editor of the Columbus Dispatch discussed changes to the newsroom, reassignments and changing job responsibilities. He used his lead graph to remind readers of the present and future prospects of the Dispatch: “The mission of the newsroom is to find news, verify it, provide context and perspective, and deliver it accurately as quickly as we can” (Miller, 2016). After job reductions in 2018, the president of the Omaha World-Herald said that its mission was never more relevant, telling the newspaper, “Our newsroom is still equipped to provide high-quality journalism. Fact-based reporting is as important today as any point in our history. Our newsroom reports stories no competitor can match. That will continue” (Jordon & Davis, 2018).

Second, articles that position layoffs and buyouts as responsible capitalism give financial and technological context for the business conditions facing the newspaper (often intertwining the two), and use that context to explain why job losses and reorganizations are necessary. Again, the discourse is quite the same across time and space, and often positions individual newspapers as victimized by wider industrial conditions. The Cleveland Plain Dealer noted that newspapers weren’t alone in facing the Great Recession and a changing advertising business: “Traditional media like newspapers, television and radio have suffered revenue declines in recent years because...
of a weakening economy and marketers’ decisions to spend more on Internet advertising” (Hollander, 2008). The *Plain Dealer* also noted the industry-wide job reductions:

“Newspapers across the country, from San Diego to Akron to Newark, have been trying to cut costs through buyouts and layoffs. The nation’s biggest newspaper chain, Gannett, recently announced plans to cut 1,000 jobs at its papers” (Hollander, 2008). Following buyouts and layoffs in 2008, the *Baltimore Sun* noted that “Tribune Co., parent of Baltimore Sun Media Group, is struggling with large debt and rising production costs amid continuing declines in revenue as readers migrate to alternative media, including the Internet” (Cho, 2008). A year later, following a layoff of 61 of its 205 editorial staffers, the *Sun* offered industry-wide context as well: “Newspapers across the country are struggling through the recession, which has exacerbated sharp declines in circulation and advertising revenue, caused partly by online competition. Newspapers have laid off staff, eliminated sections, entered into bankruptcy or folded altogether” (Mirabella, 2009, p. A16). A business brief on 2012 layoffs at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* noted its chain ownership and the continued decline of the business: “The cuts continue the trend of downsizing at the newspaper, the largest in the Lee Enterprises chain, as the industry struggles to contend with declining print advertising revenue” (Staff reports, 2012). In this discourse, the causes are external, and little occupational or social context is provided, except that job losses are common, and frequent, across the industry.

Executives sometimes claim that their newspapers have been doing better than others, but still present the economic stressors as inescapable. In Honolulu, the president and publisher of the *Star-Bulletin*’s owner told the paper, “The Star-Bulletin and [sister publication] Mid-Week have been performing better than most over the past year, but
unfortunately the slowdown has reached us as well” (Engle, 2009). The slowdown also reached the Columbus Dispatch, whose publisher and CEO told the paper, “We avoided staff reductions as long as possible long after many other news organizations took such action” (qtd. in “Dispatch announces 45 layoffs,” 2009). Additionally,

While the newspaper readership remains strong and stable, [publisher and CEO John F.] Wolfe said the economy and market forces have pushed advertising revenue steadily downward. And advertising revenue provides the majority of funds needed to pay salaries and buy paper and ink. (“Dispatch announces 45 layoffs,” 2009).

Here, executives exculpate themselves, externalizing any business difficulties onto economic conditions, while reasserting commitment to readers. Journalists are casualties of efforts to sustain the newspaper as a business enterprise.

Changes in advertising and readership preferences and patterns are also presented as inescapable, and as a major cause of newsroom restructuring and layoffs. The Baltimore Sun reported that newsroom restructuring was due to increasing online readership, and by meting readers online, the paper might thrive. A spokesperson for the Baltimore Sun Media Group told the paper, “As everyone knows, more and more readers are moving online, and advertisers are following them. This is our plan for success, not just survival” (qtd. in Mirabella, 2009, p. A16). Similarly, when the Birmingham News reduced print publication frequency to three days per week and reallocated resources towards online publication, the newspaper reported “The move was driven by the migration of readers and advertisers from print to digital platforms” (Azok, 2012). In 2016, the editor of the Columbus Dispatch, on the heels of job reductions and reassignments at the newspaper, outlined changes aimed at meeting readers online:

“Obviously, we use the power of computers far more often than ever for both reporting
and delivering the news. And as electronic tablets smartphones and watches become more sophisticated, so do your expectations about how you receive your information” (Miller, 2016). The following year, after laying off eight people, the publisher of the Fresno Bee stated that layoffs were a necessary part of this process: “We must remake our newsroom to drive digital readership while at the same time reckoning with budget and expense realities that necessitate a smaller, more focused, nimbler newsroom” (qtd. in Fresno Bee Staff, 2017). Again, the now-unemployed journalists are not necessary to meet these goals (else they would have been retained), and thus are not required for the endeavor of the newspaper to continue.

Third, executives nonetheless often note the losses of “valued” colleagues, reasserting the value of newspaper journalists and journalism, even while acknowledging the losses and expressing regret at what they position as necessity. At the Birmingham News and Alabama Media Group in 2012, the group’s new vice president of content said, “We’re trying to balance the institutional knowledge and experience with the need for a new digital skill set” (Azok, 2012). Of those experienced journalists lost, the president of the Alabama Media Group told AL.com that “Their dedication and expertise to our newspapers and the communities they served cannot be overstated” (AL.com, 2012). Following a round of layoffs at the Tulsa World, its publisher said, “These are good people we lost from our organization, and we appreciate the work they’ve done” (“Tulsa World eliminates 28 positions,” 2017). Of Birmingham News employees, the newspaper’s publisher said, “I have never worked with a more talented team” (Azok, 2012). Talent, unfortunately, does not insulate a journalist against a layoff, as noted by the publisher of the Fresno Bee: “These cuts affect valued colleagues in a most painful
way but are in no means a reflection of their enormous skills and talents” (Fresno Bee staff, 2017). Even so, said he president and publisher of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the newspaper must go on: “We certainly feel for some very wonderful colleagues who are affected by this, but we need to reset the business and we need to move on” (qtd. in Smith, 2013).

This need to move on, to progress, to find, as the Baltimore Sun spokesperson had it, a “plan for success, not just survival,” makes nostalgia only a partially useful tool. The discourse discussed above privileges the business endeavor over the community of journalists; it weds job loss and responsible capitalism. Considered through the lenses of restorative and reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001), discourse reinforcing responsible capitalism might be expected to exhibit restorative nostalgia, repairing to past profits and past ways of making them. However, stable jobs for journalists at newspapers were a core part of that past and its profits. And as journalists both comprise (being the public faces of the newspaper) and see themselves at the core of the newspaper endeavor, stripping them out of a restorative nostalgia would ring false. A reflective nostalgia, from the business side, would imply working through a troubled past and finding ways to understand that past and to move forward from it. Nostalgia in executive discourse is similar to reflective nostalgia, but involves working through a troubled present. This nostalgia recognizes to borrow terms from Keightley and Pickering (2012), that repeated job losses create a lack—but longing for those employees lost, from a business perspective, is nonsensical. Employees are less individuals or a community than a cost that the business cannot afford. What longing exists is this discourse is for the mission of
the newspaper to continue, for what is presently good about the newspaper to be maintained, and for profits to be maintained or restored.

Following layoffs across Gannett properties in 2017, a writer for the Columbia Journalism Review summarized messages from executives and stories reinforcing responsible capitalism, which “seem to be important, if boilerplate, PR after newsroom cutbacks: *We’re still here, and we’re still working for you*” (emphasis in original) (Uberti, 2017). Executive discourse is characterized by seeking continuity of values and mission, but with nostalgia more for the present than the past. The problems of the past—sinking circulation numbers, shrinking advertising dollars—are to be left behind as newspapers carry their mission into the promises of a digital future.

In this discourse, newspaper journalists are ultimately revealed to be expendable—to be, in fundamental ways, a business cost. Newspaper journalists’ work, which they see in terms of higher ideals of service to their public and to democracy write large, is sometimes recognized in executive discourse, but is ultimately reduced to labor. Ironically, through their work assembling stories about themselves, newspaper journalists are forced to confront this business judgment. With their communities suffering severe material consequences as a result of this judgment, the voices of newspaper journalists turn towards nostalgia to manage their grief and to attempt to repair their communities.

**Material Consequences**

Despite assertions that job losses would help “reset the business” and “keep the newspaper strong,” their sheer scale has forced material changes in newsrooms and at newspapers, for the job reductions were aimed at maintaining profitability. While
newspaper profits have indeed declined, newspaper businesses remained quite profitable for a time (Edge, 2014), and some remain so although the structural decline in the print business has continued (Pompeo, 2016) and business fundamentals continue to deteriorate (Edmonds, 2017).

The ongoing (but shrinking) profitability that existed during these job cuts has been widely noted. When announcing layoffs in 2008, the president and publisher of the Cleveland Plain Dealer acknowledged that “The Plain Dealer is turning a small profit . . . but much less than expected” (Hollander, 2008). Gannett Blog famously posted the profit margins for individual Gannett newspapers shortly after the company announced a 10 percent workforce reduction; only one newspaper lost money, and the vast majority returned double-digit profits, reaching as high as 42.5 percent (Hopkins, 2008). Adweek, commenting on the details of layoffs at the Indianapolis Star in 2011, noted “The irony: The Star is still profitable, just not as much as before” (Kaufman, 2011).

Even as income and margins continued their decline, a 2016 Bloomberg article noted that media chains severed print newspaper businesses from their more profitable broadcast operations, and that industry consolidation in the name of profit-seeking has continued (Smith, 2016). In 2017, the accounting and advisory firm KPMG suggested that the future of the newspaper industry lies in further consolidation to restore growth and increase profitability (Purdy, Wong, & Harris, 2017). A KPMG chart compares the operating income of seven newspaper firms: A.H. Belo, The New York Times Company, Lee Enterprises, News Corp, Tribune Publishing, McClatchy, and Gannett. Of these, only Belo was unprofitable in the 12 months leading to September 30, 2016. Job reductions undoubtedly helped keep ledgers in the black. These job losses also underscored that
journalistic labor at newspapers can be measured not only in articles, in photographs, in videos, in social impact, but also as economic input, perhaps increasingly so.

In this era, the writer and producer David Simon (a former Baltimore Sun reporter now perhaps best known for his television programs Homicide, heavily based on his eponymous book, and The Wire) often has sharply criticized what he saw as failures of newspaper journalism and the newspaper industry, including in an early-2008 article in Columbia Journalism Review:

Simon is highly amused by an irony he perceives in the press’s reaction to corporations’ slashing of newsrooms: that newspaper editors are now making speeches about the same economic forces—the triumph of capital over labor—that the press has been ignoring in their own cities for years. “What they should have been covering is now biting them in the ass,” Simon said. “We’ll see it in season five: Guys, you’re a little late. It happened to you, and it happened to the entire working class.” (Lanahan, 2008)

Simon’s observations are worth unpacking, for they point to blind spots in newspaper journalists’ self-narratives. Newspaper journalists had perhaps been unaware (or had operated as if they were unaware, or had been in denial) that their labor is, to use capital’s reductive phrase, a “human resource” no different than that of any other worker. Simon’s point is that latter-day newspaper journalists arrived late to understanding their work as labor, compared to those whose bodily labor was replaced by robots, or to those who lost their jobs during the asset stripping executed by the corporate raiders of the 1980s—which asset stripping is echoed in the contemporary “financialization” of the newspaper industry and in the harvesting of newspaper real estate as discussed in the next chapter.

This late recognition of newswork as labor is understandable. Indeed, the newspaper industry’s stability outlasted the declines in other industries closely tied to the
industrial self-conception of the United States—such as steel production, automobile
manufacturing, and other forms of heavy industry. However, as observed in early 2006,

An industry that has weathered such upheavals as the advent of television, the
suburbanization of America, recessions and wars may be facing a fundamentally
different future this time. As Bruce Springsteen once sang, in a different context,
“Foreman says these jobs are goin’, boys, and they ain’t comin’ back.” (Farhi,
2006, p. 28)

Newspapers have been resilient entities, lasting through major socioeconomic changes,
but by 2006, the writing was on the wall. As the reader representative of the Hartford
Courant wrote, “The only savior I see is more revenue” (Hunter, 2005, p. C3).

This dissertation argues that contrary to Farhi, the context for how and why “these
jobs are goin’” is not all that different when properly understood. The story of increasing
financialization of industries and economic globalization, and concomitant industrial
debates in the U.S., is the story of advanced capitalism, whose practitioners see social
disruptions or social costs as collateral damage. That the “process of Creative Destruction
is the essential fact about capitalism” (Schumpeter, 1942/1994, p. 83) comes to mind, as
does the related idea that capitalism is evolutionary, and failing to adapt means death.

Scholars often have saddled newspaper journalists with responsibility for
newspaper journalism’s failure to adapt, and the culture of newspaper journalists has
been found to resist change (e.g. Andderson, 2013; Ekdale, Tully, Harmsen, & Singer,
2015; Herndon, 2012; Ryfe, 2012; Usher, 2010). Continuing work, from the American
Press Institute encouraging more innovation in newsrooms, has found much the same,
and argues for more aggressive approaches to transforming newsroom cultures (e.g.
Sonderman & Rosensteil, 2015). However, these discussions do not sufficiently consider
Murdock’s (1982) distinction between allocative and operational levels of control, the
extent to which allocative concerns, frankly, have crushed operational ones—and the extent to which allocative decisions have begun to determine many operational decisions.

Allocative concerns should be attended to, for their effect is widespread, including effects on the demographic composition of the newsroom. Layoffs, especially in newsrooms with so-called “last-hired first-fired” union seniority rules, have interfered with the diversity goals sought by ASNE (Delaney, 2017). In 2007, following complaints that layoffs at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia Daily News* disproportionately affected racial minorities, the newspapers’ owner formed a new diversity committee while blaming union “last-hired first-fired” rules for the effect (“Newspaper layoffs faulted,” 2007). At *The New York Times*, its public editor was struck by its “newsroom’s blinding whiteness” when she began working there (Spayd, 2016). Additionally, female newsroom employees have been found to bear the brunt of layoffs and have reported disproportionate dissatisfaction with their jobs and working conditions (Reinardy, 2017).

Widespread layoffs have also prompted accusations of age discrimination from older newspaper employees, including editors, reporters, columnists, business executives, and even freelancers. From 2005 to the present, staffers both in and outside of the newsroom have filed discrimination lawsuits against newspapers across the United States, including the *Cincinnati Enquirer* (twice) (Malaska, 2012), the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (Romenesko, 2009), the *Dallas Morning News* and A.H. Belo (Flournoy & Everbach, 2007), the *Indianapolis Star* (Wall, 2012), the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and Gannett (Hopkins, 2013), the *Los Angeles Times* (twice) (Maharidge, 2016; Mullin, 2016), the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* (Romensko, 2005), the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (Theim, 2013), *The New York Times* (Zhang, 2017), and the *Tampa Tribune* (Romenesko, 2007).
Certain groups of employees have shrunk through outsourcing and consolidation. In 2016, McClatchy reportedly outsourced between 120 and 150 IT positions to an India-based company. Some employees scheduled to be laid off had to train their replacements (Thibodeau, 2016a; Thibodeau, 2016b). A handful of major chains have consolidated copy and design desks away from individual newspapers, including BH Media Group, Gannett, GateHouse Media, McClatchy, and Tribune. Journalists have bemoaned the loss of copyeditors and the increased number of errors that can erode readers’ trust. In 2007, a few months after job reductions the public editor of the Orlando Sentinel noticed an increase in errors he attributed to fewer copyeditors, writing that “If readers regularly find mistakes, they have every reason to wonder about the accuracy of everything else in the publication” (Pynn, 2007). The Washington Post’s ombudsman, noting the newspaper’s loss of 32 of 75 copy editors—“the unsung heroes of newsrooms”—between 2005 and mid-2008, argued that increasing little mistakes eroded the newspaper’s credibility (Alexander, 2009). More recently, hundreds of journalists at The New York Times walked out to protest the elimination of the Times’s stand-alone copy desk in the summer of 2017. Over 100 copy editors were required to reapply for about 50 new positions following a reorganization that removed a layer of copyediting (Ember, 2017).

Both readers and employees have expressed concern that newspapers have underreported job reductions and their consequences. In 2005, the public editor of the Baltimore Sun wrote, “The Sun has provided coverage of the debate over the uncertain future of newspapers and other media. But The Sun’s reporting of its own staffing cuts through buyouts and other moves has been limited” (Moore, 2005, p. F2). One reader, quoted in the same column, wrote,
What concerns me is, it seems that whenever positions are eliminated at *The Sun* or there is corporate restructuring, the paper keeps a tight lid on the story. It strikes me as hypocritical for the media to do this in a democratic society. (qtd. in Moore, 2005, p. F2)

One of McClatchy’s laid-off IT workers “observed that McClatchy-owned newspapers did not appear to be reporting on the chain’s IT layoffs, although its newspapers routinely report on layoffs of similar sizes at other firms” (Thibodeau, 2016a). According to former media critic Jim Romenesko, a source inside Gannett told him that Gannett newspapers were not allowed to publish news of layoffs in May 2017; a staff writer at *Columbia Journalism Review* was only able to find two Gannett properties that reported on the layoffs, which reportedly hit 37 Gannett newspapers (Uberti, 2017).

Persistent job insecurity, among other issues, has led to journalists’ growing distrust of management (Moore, 2018). The threat of layoffs has been used to extract concessions from union newsrooms (Klein, 2007), though unionized newsrooms have increasingly engaged in public demonstrations, such as a march seeking better pay in Toledo (Clark, 2015) and a walkout protesting the reduction in copyediting at *The New York Times* (Ember, 2017). As a response to job precarity and what have been seen as capricious layoffs, non-union newspaper journalists have successfully organized in the Bay Area (Klein, 2008), Florida (Nesmith, 2016), and recently, at the *Los Angeles Times*, “a first for the 136-year-old news organization that for much of its history was known for its opposition to organized labor” (Koren, 2018).

While executive discourse asserted that layoffs were a commitment to responsible capitalism that would result in newspapers continuing to fulfill their missions, the actual experiences of newspaper journalists, as detailed above, are fraught with uncertainty and
precarity. This in turn drives their nostalgic discourse, and newspaper journalists articulate the repeated and widespread workforce reductions as irresponsible and as an abrogation of the trust that they (and the public) put in newspapers.

**Irresponsible Capitalism and Journalistic Voices**

In articulating job losses as irresponsible capitalism, journalists at these newspapers note specific problems accompanying job losses, and tie them to their ability—individually, as a group, and as an institution—to fulfill the mission of newspaper journalism. In doing so, they grieve for their colleagues and fear they will not be able to do their jobs as best they can. Newspaper journalists’ statements about job loss typically echo the concerns of scholarly observers, particularly about the risk of declining accountability reporting and independent journalism, and the worries over declining democratic engagement (e.g. Downie Jr. & Schudson, 2009/2011; Jones, 2009; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; McChesney & Pickard, 2011; Schulhofer-Wohl & Garrido, 2013; Shaker, 2014; Star, 2009). Newspaper journalists’ turn towards nostalgia offers context for careers and typically regards people who are missed, or who will be missed. Nostalgia exposes a new (or renewed) experience of lack that follows each job reduction and evinces a longing for recently departed colleagues and for a work situation—the retention of colleagues and respect for journalistic labor despite economic pressures—that could have been but is not.

In this discourse, newspaper journalists express a strong sense of betrayal—that layoffs and job losses have betrayed both the community of newspaper journalists and also their publics, resulting in not only a diminished journalistic community, but also a
diminished polity. A *Baltimore Sun* reporter and Newspaper Guild co-chair told her paper in 2008, “Whether people are leaving voluntarily or involuntarily, they are still leaving, and that means there will be 55 people fewer in the newsroom to do the good journalism that this community has come to expect” (Cho, 2008). Following an agreement about layoffs with the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the Northeast Ohio Newspaper Guild president (also a *Plain Dealer* reporter), told the paper that layoffs “will have a devastating impact on our ability to cover the community as it deserves to be covered” (Smith, 2012). That agreement in Cleveland was designed to preserve both the union and union positions; after two dozen employees took a severance package, 45 were laid off. Between buyouts and layoffs, the total was more than what the Guild had agreed to, and “the Guild accused Plain Dealer management of misleading the union by cutting more union employees than it said it would” (Smith, 2013).

In a fiery column presaging other concerns about political corruption rising in the wake of these job losses (e.g. Starr, 2009), the political columnist of the *Hartford Courant* suggested that a “surge in [political] misconduct occurred at the same time as Connecticut’s news media dramatically curtailed their coverage of politics and state government,” and that “Connecticut’s Fourth Estate no longer believes that informing and educating voters about their political leaders and government is its chief responsibility” (Jacklin, 2005). One week after Jacklin’s column the *Courant’s* reader representative noted that over the previous decade, the newspaper had lost one-third of its journalists, and that Jacklin’s assessment was on the mark:

> Readers know and some on the news staff will admit that the job cuts are getting close to the bone. State agencies and some towns aren’t watched as closely as they once were. There is no way that a news staff that has been reduced by more
than 120 people [down to 265] in 10 years can produce the same newspaper it once did. (Hunter, 2005, p. C3)

Even staffers proud of maintaining as wide coverage as they can, like those at the *Omaha World-Herald*, which retained a Washington correspondent even through layoffs in 2018, express similar concern. That Washington correspondent told a *World-Herald* columnist, “despite growth in online coverage, it’s a loss ‘when our elected leaders don’t have a local media representative pushing a recorder’ at them and ‘asking inconvenient questions and generally keeping an eye on what they’re doing here’” (Grace, 2018). The same columnist, calling for readers to subscribe in greater numbers, wrote that, “A healthy democracy depends on a free press. (See bots, Russia). All of us have a vested interest in living in a place where people are informed and care and are called to act” (Grace, 2018). Job losses are linked to the increasingly difficult work newspaper journalists are asked to do, or ask of themselves, to serve the democratic process. And the sharp sense of betrayal in this discourse suggests that newspaper journalists have viewed their jobs as worthy of special protection, and that their role in newspaper journalism’s superstructure should have insulated them from its economic base.

The turn towards nostalgia is a response to newspaper journalists’ sense of being betrayed in ways that erode the stability of their individual and group identities. Journalists feel betrayed by economic decisions, and feel that some of their agency—closely tied to their identities—is taken away. This sense of betrayal suggests that journalists recognize that their agency (or sense of autonomy, as it is often framed) is in most ways ultimately contingent on what the business side of the industry judges to be a healthy business. Nostalgia helps newspaper journalists repair to moments when that
contingency was either unarticulated or ignored—a major blind spot in their self-narratives—and when their mission was not under what they see as direct threats. While some pitfalls of nostalgia were discussed in the previous chapter, nostalgia also has productive social uses at both moments of crisis and throughout everyday life. Nostalgia can help maintain identity continuity (Davis, 1979) and can help people work through losses at the community level (Boym, 2001). As a group of psychologists studying group nostalgia has found, nostalgia

is part of the fabric of everyday life and serves at least four key psychological functions: It generates positive affect, elevates self-esteem, fosters social connectedness, and alleviates existential threat. By so doing, nostalgia can help one navigate successfully the vicissitudes of daily life. (Sedikides, Wildshut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008)

In their nostalgic discourse, newspaper journalists attempt to defend their community and its values as a way of defending both their mission and what they see as an ongoing social need for the newspaper. At the same time, this discourse expresses a wish for what could have been but is not, namely, that the body—the congregation of journalists—was whole, and a wish that it had been, and an assertion that it should be, inviolate.

But it’s not inviolate, and the violations—job losses and their effects—are often expressed in visceral terms. Recent layoffs at the *Omaha World Herald*, according to that newspaper’s executive editor, “hit the newsroom Tuesday like a gut punch” (Grace, 2018). This feeling was shared by a columnist from the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, who wrote that losing one’s job, and watching others lose their jobs, is a “punch in the gut” (Lohmann, 2017). In Newark and Richmond, job losses were “heartbreaking” (Lohmann, 2017; Sherman & Heyboer, 2013). Reflecting on her transfer from her column to other duties, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* television critic wrote, “Think of it as a media ER. All
emergencies are important, but they must be triaged by immediacy and threat to life” (Shister, 2007). In New York and Denver, two sports columnists writing eight years apart each called their departing colleagues the “beating heart” of their newspapers (Lupica, 2015; Paige, 2007). Their losses make their newspapers less animate, stripped of what one called “spirited souls” (Paige, 2007). These metaphors suggest that newspapers are alive because of the journalists who staff them; the idea that an injury to the newspaper is an injury to its journalists (and vice versa) is a symbolic metonymy that persists throughout the discourse studied in this dissertation, particularly in Chapter 4, about newspaper closings. In their discourse about job loss, newspaper journalists identify themselves, more than any other group of newspaper employees, with the newspaper, and define the newspaper as composed by them not only in the stories that they write, but also with their very bodies. This establishes newspaper journalists as a distinct and special group (one that they believe should be privileged) that is especially wounded by job loss.

This mode of writing effectively conveys the pain and grief journalists feel. Such pain and grief are also expressed openly and directly, as a longing for what is being lost at these very moments. Walking into the newsroom after layoffs, a Richmond Times-Dispatch columnist wrote, “a wave of quiet—and sadness—washed over me” (Lohmann, 2017). The loss is also one of “friends” (Lohmann, 2017; Lupica, 2015), and not just friends of journalists. Readers are imbricated too, and journalists ask them to share in the pain, mourning “old friends of yours” (Paige, 2007), and a “bunch of people I know and like and respect” (Lohmann, 2017) whose loss is “a great loss to the community” (Sherman & Heyboer, 2013). Nostalgia, here, is a response to journalists’ sense of betrayal, an analgesic for concomitant grief, and a way for newspaper journalists to
convey the particulars of that grief to readers, and to each other. Nostalgia for people and what they meant is a way to express the weight of the loss, both personally and socially.

This shared experience of nostalgia is also part of traversing the situation and repairing the community of newspaper journalists. As a Richmond Times-Dispatch columnist wrote, “I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to call it grief. But while we must wrestle with that, we can’t wallow in it. . . . for those who remain, there is news to report and stories to tell in the best way we possibly can” (Lohmann, 2017). Moving forward from the experience is inevitable, and newspaper journalists can do their departed colleagues justice by continuing to uphold the values of newspaper journalism. Nostalgia as an oblique form of paradigm repair allows newspaper journalists to assert their own continuity of mission and identity, despite their diminishing community.

Four stories analyzed in this chapter (Jacklin, 2005; Paige, 2007, Philp, 2007; Shister, 2007) were also discussed in an article that sharply criticizes both nostalgia and the journalists who write about their departures following layoffs and/or buyouts (Usher, 2010). This discourse, Usher contends, is characterized by a lack of self-reflexivity that journalists exhibit about the changes taking place around them” offered by “journalists who “are consumed by nostalgia” and Usher finds that their nostalgia is self-limiting because it fails to produce a vision of the future that catapults traditional journalists into the new media world and new media economics. Thus, they are limited by their own lack of self-reflexivity and their own sense of loss to see beyond their current situation. (2010, p. 923)

Usher assesses these journalists as “unable to give a considered reflection about the pressure of Wall Street on journalism confounded by changes wrought by a new media landscape,” and suggests a “silver lining”—that some of the journalists who have lost
their jobs were, essentially, dead weight “unable to help newspapers be entrepreneurial in their attempts to come through the crisis they face” (2010, p. 924). Usher’s desire for some kind of clean moving-on, in fact, resonates quite strongly with the discourse emphasizing responsible capitalism discussed earlier in this chapter, which discourse offers little rhetorical room for nostalgia. Spaulding (2016) argues that Usher’s stance here is dismissive and her perspective narrow, and offered a different reading of a different set of goodbye narratives, finding in them something akin to productive nostalgia. Of former Baltimore Sun staffers sharing their stories online, Spaulding writes, “nostalgia is one way by which these writers connected individual experiences to a collective sense-making effort” (2016, p. 221). This nostalgia does not “produce a vision of the future that catapults traditional journalists into the new media world” as Usher might prefer (2010, p. 923), and nostalgia is predominantly used to discuss and come to terms with contemporaneous conditions. Nonetheless, the future is still of concern to newspaper journalists, as the following analyses make clear.

The examples offered by Usher (2010) have been included and reassessed in this section (alongside other more recent examples) to correct selective readings of this type of discourse. Usher is correct that the few goodbye narratives she studied do not offer much in the way of economic solutions, and that newspaper journalists who wrote them indeed express dissatisfaction with industrial trends. Yet when it comes to job losses due to deindustrialization, industrial failure, and the closing of work sites, newspapers are as much an industry as any other, and job loss literature has suggested that grieving is very much a part of coming to terms with losing one’s job (e.g. Amundson & Borgen, 1982; Archer & Rhodes, 1993; Blau, 2008; Brewington, Nassar-McMillan, Flowers, & Furr, 1982).
2004; Finley & Lee, 1981; Hurst & Shepard, 1986; Lopez, 1983; Spera, Buhrfiend, & Pennebaker, 1994). Nostalgia can be a piece of grieving, and, much as Keightly and Pickering (2012) noted about nostalgia, grief too is composed of loss, lack, and longing. Such situations, in terms of both labor and emotion, are too messy to be navigated solely by articulating needs to slough off dead weight and to reskill the rest of the journalistic workforce. Newspaper journalists’ own discourse is more complicated than that.

Repair to nostalgia offers journalists the opportunity to articulate a sense of continuity in the wake of these job losses—a way to seek a kind of narrative agency over a lived experience that subjects their agency to economic exigencies. When newspaper journalists’ discourse turns more overtly nostalgic, usually when writing or speaking in the first person, they use nostalgia to explain their experience, to contextualize their careers, and to discuss why these job losses matter. Nostalgia personalizes and humanizes an inhumane experience of professional and personal discontinuity. Indeed, journalists exhibit a great deal of self-reflexivity that sees beyond the current situation, particularly in terms of the social and professional consequences that newspaper journalists claim executives neglect. It reminds readers—and fellow journalists—that while jobs were lost because of their economic costs, job losses are accompanied by social costs too. Expressions of nostalgia help reveal how one cost has been traded for the other.

One manifestation of nostalgic discourse is gratitude, expressed to readers, to colleagues, and for the experience of being a newspaper journalist. A Hartford Courant political columnist ended her last column by thanking readers: “Thanks for your support, words of encouragement, constructive criticism and, above all, your readership. I will miss you more than you know” (Jacklin, 2005). Tom Philp, a Pulitzer Prize-winning
member of the *Sacramento Bee*’s editorial board, ended his last column similarly: “I am not sure what more to say other than thank you. . . . Thank you for caring so much about Sacramento. Thank you for reading” (Philp, 2007). The *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s television columnist, reassigned to other duties, wrote that after a career commenting on the evolving medium of television, “The one constant has been the loyal readers of this column. I have never taken you for granted, and I never will. My mission—to serve you—has not changed” (emphasis in original) (Shister, 2007). Relationships with readers, while mediated through the newspaper, are nonetheless constructed here as real and fulfilling relationships that will be missed, at least by the journalists.

Expressions of gratitude also elevate the profession while invoking historical continuity. In Denver, a sports columnist who kept his job thanked departing colleagues (and a few legendary ones from further in the past), writing, “Thank you Peggy. Thank you Gary. Thank you Dusty and Dick. Thank you, Otto Floto. Thank you, fathers. Thank you all for being a big part of the everlasting dog-and-pony show in Denver” (Paige, 2007). Newspaper journalism—and journalists—here have an eternal role, and Paige offers gratitude to them and for the experience of being a journalist.

A photojournalist shared her similar experience at the *Birmingham News*. First a clerk, then a photo department secretary, she was later trained by the photo staff to be a news photographer. Laid off in 2012, she expressed gratitude to her colleagues and for her experience: “I’ve had a wonderful time, and I’ve met some of the most amazing, talented people. I’ve had a bird’s eye view of history, going through all the files and film” (qtd. in Azok, 2012). Her colleague, an environment and education reporter, reflected positively on his experience: “Trying to tell the story of Alabama and its people, our
perpetual struggles, our triumphs and our tragedies—it’s been a great honor” (qtd. in Azok, 2012). Newspaper work is positioned as historically continuous and honorable, and is honored in this discourse through gratitude and articulations of how much journalists invest in it themselves. In a plea for subscriptions following layoffs at the *Omaha World-Herald*, one columnist wrote, “Do I have a conflict of interest in this corporate self-promotion here? Absolutely. I love this job and am grateful” (Grace, 2018).

Nostalgia also manifests in stories linking formative experiences in or with journalism with present-day job losses and the experience of layoff survivors. Certain circles of lives and careers are completed. At the *Birmingham News*, a laid off editor, who’s served in a variety of editing roles during his 28 years, called his previous stint as sports editor his dream job. [. . .] “my dad taught me to read the newspaper by reading box scores,” Hester said. “That I got to do that, be sports editor here for nine years, is one of the things I’m most proud of.” (Azok, 2012)

*Sacramento Bee* columnist Tom Philp began his final editorial by recounting his first one ever, “the hardest of all,” in which he observed that cheerleaders at his high school were much more likely than others to become homecoming queen finalists. Of his first editorializing experience, Philp wrote,

I got either icy stares or nods of approval as I walked down the hallways of Helix High. And so it all began for me as a newspaper opiner. And now, about 5,000 stories and editorials later, it comes to an end. (2007)

At the *Omaha World-Herald*, one columnist who kept his job reasserted the values, purposes, and joys of newspaper journalism. Beginning with the moment he fell in love with journalism writing for his high school newspaper, he outlines many of his journalistic adventures, then imagines himself as both speaker and audience member in high school and college journalism classrooms, like I do maybe once a month. And I will tell them what I always have as I look out upon their faces and imagine
a tiny, 16-year-old redhead staring back at the newspaper columnist in the front of the room. [...] If you are curious, if you want to figure out how things work and write about it in a way that entertains, infuriates, inspires . . . then it’s the best job in the world. Then you will fall in love like I do, over and over, for the very first time. (Hansen, 2018)

Hansen hopes to inspire, still, even in the wake of the troubles facing his newspapers and the loss of colleagues he deemed “talented people and even better human beings” (Hansen, 2018). Here, nostalgia is uses to reassert the ongoing greatness of the profession, whose practitioners can renew their love again and again. The community is thus constructed as still affording this opportunity, even in its diminished state. The job of the newspaper journalist becomes an object of nostalgia.

Less sanguine, a Richmond Times-Dispatch columnist recalled his time working at the UPI wire service in his 20s, when “we experienced bounced paychecks, pay cuts and bankruptcy. And layoffs” (Lohmann, 2017). Remembering a phone call in which the caller had mistaken UPI for UPS “[d]uring one particularly fretful period when we were anxious about our futures,” Lohmann writes, “I smile at the memory, but that also doesn’t make me feel any better” following layoffs—which he survived—at his current newspaper. Nostalgia may be analgesic, but it’s not a cure.

The losses, after all, are real, and have emotional consequences for those laid off from newspapers and those who remain. People-sized holes and trauma, the pain of loss, and newly identified lacks are left behind and manifest as prospective nostalgia. One columnist wrote, “I will miss you [readers] more than you know” (Jacklin, 2005). A day of layoffs in Omaha was “a traumatic day for all involved and especially for those talented people and even better human beings ushered out the door” (Hansen, 2018). In Denver, a columnist suggested that job reductions would irreparably alter newspaper
journalism in the city; after the departure of a “a lot of ink-stained wretches” from the Denver Post, “Newspapering in Denver will never again be quite the same” (Paige, 2017). Newspapering itself may be constructed as eternal, but it can be damaged. Paige will miss a litany of people and offers a few names, adding to them “the other 30-plus veterans who have written and edited tens of thousands of stories and carried the lore and love of Colorado in their heads, not on computer screens. They leave white space” (Paige, 2017. The loss of these journalists is an erasure of stories, of lore, of love.

When these sorts of people are lost—“Friends of mine, some of the best I have ever had in the newspaper business and some of the best people with whom I have ever worked—and with whom I will ever work” (Lupica, 2015)—a newly discovered lack emerges. Lupica writes, “I will miss them mightily, because they were all part of the beating heart of this place, for a long time. You should miss them more” (2015). Addressing the reader with that kicker—“You should miss them more”—Lupica lashes out, implying that readers have not done enough to keep his colleagues at the New York Daily News, and that readers do not appreciate the work his colleagues did as much as he does. While much of the nostalgic discourse expresses sociality with readers, Lupica puts journalists and readers at odds, in a way that reinforces newspaper journalists as a discrete group whose collective nostalgia may not be fully understood by outsiders.

This concern regards prospective nostalgia: about how and whether laid-off newspaper journalists will be remembered by readers, even after being asked by those journalists to remember them and the value of their work. Optimism on this front is hard to find. As a laid-off Newark Star-Ledger photographer put it, “It’s a great loss to the community to lose people who report on people and tell their stories. . . . I don’t think
people will realize what they’re missing” (qtd. in Sherman & Heyboer, 2013). Newspaper journalists, however, surely realize what they’re missing, and use nostalgic discourse to manage the harm they feel has been done to them by irresponsible capitalism.

**Conclusion**

Crisis discourse has existed throughout the history of professional journalism, and crisis discourse is arguably one of newspaper journalism’s metanarratives. Much discussion of crises facing the newspaper industry has responded to specific moments of concern, or to ongoing trends (like increased chain ownership) that did not necessarily directly damage the ability of newspaper journalists to do their jobs. The massive reduction in the journalistic labor force seen since 2005, however, has damaged this ability, and in a consistent, ongoing way that exposed journalistic work as unable to isolate itself in its superstructure. Journalistic work is revealed to be labor as well, and subject to the erosion of newspaper journalism’s economic base.

The lack of nostalgia for the past in discourse appealing to responsible capitalism is notable. Newspaper executives openly admit financial exigency, framing job losses as necessary to maintain the mission of newspapers. In being almost entirely forward-looking, their nostalgia appeals to the future continuity of the best things about the present, namely, that the missions of the newspapers will be able to continue because of the job reductions. The intent of executive discourse differs from that of the wider journalistic staff. Executives privilege the business endeavor, and in the cases of newspapers owned by publicly held companies, executives have the legal obligation to maximize profit for shareholders. Profit is a primary determinant of discourse asserting
that job losses are responsible capitalism—reduced costs, reorganizations and restructurings that respond to new financial and technological realities, are understood as simply necessary to the future of the newspaper. Thus, executive discourse is not fully bound to the self-definition of the community of journalists. While the work of journalists is acknowledged as having been valuable to the mission and to the business, the repeated dismissal of so many journalists suggests, as argued earlier, that those journalists are framed as no longer necessary to the success of newspaper journalism.

The decisions to reduce the journalistic labor force are examples of allocative control overwhelming operational control (Murdock, 1982). The realm of allocative control—decisions about resources—has entered deeply into the realm of operational control, where newspaper journalists decide how to do their jobs. Journalists at unionized newspapers have had the opportunity to negotiate with management, but negotiations have typically regarded how to mitigate the damage of massive job losses, rather than to prevent them. Newspaper journalists are indeed resources. They increasingly recognize the more basal elements of their work, a dehumanizing experience to be sure, especially as their journalistic work reports on the reduction of that same work to economic input.

The inescapable lived experience of this revelation has caused one scholar, who has extensively studied the effects of job loss in newsrooms and on journalists’ morale, to “call it an organizational depression that’s occurring. There has been so much job loss in these newsrooms. Journalists don’t necessarily just lose jobs, they lose careers and some real self-identity” (qtd. in Lee, 2016). What newspaper journalists experience in this context, and what most comes through in the stories they write about themselves, is grief. These journalists grieve the loss of their jobs, their careers, and their self-identity. They
also grieve their growing loss of autonomy from economic concerns, and the threats, real or perceived, to their ability to fulfill their self-defined social roles.

The voices of newspaper journalists deny that job losses are responsible capitalism, instead framing the losses as deeply damaging, viewing job loss as disrupting the mission of the newspaper in the name of what have sometimes been outsized profits. Newspaper journalists charge themselves with upholding the mission, for they identify metonymically with the newspaper. Their turn towards nostalgia thus reasserts the ongoing value of newspaper journalism, the importance of newspaper journalists to that value, and the continuity of their community even in the wake of job losses. Nostalgic discourse coming from journalists rehumanizes the experience of job loss and those who suffer through it. In this discourse, nostalgia primarily addresses the immediate concerns of journalists who have suffered from these losses, deployed in an effort to stitch the community back together after being rent by decisions beyond its control.

In the attempts to preserve its value, the occupation of the newspaper journalist becomes an object of nostalgia. In some ways, the work is the same as it ever was—to report news of public interest to an interested public. The parameters of the occupation, however, have meaningfully changed, and newspaper journalists have struggled to adapt (Anderson, 2013; Ekdale, Tully, Harmsen, & Singer, 2015; Herndon, 2012; Ryfe, 2012; Usher, 2010). While nostalgic discourse offers a way to repair the community of newspaper journalists, it cannot fully maintain the community either practically or emotionally. As productive nostalgia, it can be only partial. As the community is in a state of constant diminishing, nostalgia cannot fully offer “a directive for personal and
communal actualization” (Schrag, 1992, p. 74). At best, nostalgia helps repair what’s left over, offering a narrative template to help manage the story of job losses.

This discourse reminds us that the decline of the newspaper industry has not only material consequences and wider social and democratic consequences, but also human ones. With the acts of writing the names of their colleagues, and of writing out their own experiences of newspaper journalism, these journalists express what Connerton called “a will to be remembered” (1989, p. 102). Sharing their stories and their memories are ways to keep newspaper journalism’s discursive and mnemonic community intact. In the cases of layoffs and buyouts, the community at each newspaper, and in aggregate, is diminished—but it remains. Nostalgia is a way for newspaper journalists to understand their experiences, to link their stories to each other, and to engage in what discursive repair work they can following job losses. It is one way that the community binds itself again, to be maintained in place, to await what comes next.
CHAPTER 3: NOSTALGIA ON THE MOVE: REBUILDING “HOME” AND NEWSROOMS IN TRANSITION

Many U.S. newspaper buildings in the twentieth century were constructed as explicit projections of the cultural authority of newspapers, and as explicit demonstrations of their wealth and power. While the cultural authority of the newspaper largely derives from the journalism practiced therein, the decision to build a new building—or much more frequently in recent years, to sell a longstanding home—is made in the business realm, not the editorial realm.

When old buildings are sold and/or repurposed, and when newsrooms move, journalists are displaced from the primary physical fount of their power and from the primary space in which they generate news (and from which they imagine worlds for readers). When these moves occur, news stories in those same publications often document that experience. Following building sales and newsroom moves, journalists recognize that the loss of their building’s spatial authority may reflect a decline in their cultural authority. Journalists’ turn to collective nostalgia for journalism as practiced in the old newsroom is a way to reassert their values, make them discrete and recognizable, and preserve them for transport to their new buildings and newsrooms. The use of collective nostalgia assists with injecting those values into a new place, and offers a path for ontological continuity.

This chapter examines these news stories, analyzing the public-facing discourse that newspaper journalists produced about changes to the places and spaces of newspaper journalism, from 2005 to the present. At individual newspapers and in aggregate, the news articles comprising this case study tell a consistent story of how the mnemonic
community of newspaper journalists proactively turns to nostalgia as a tool to help its members carry their shared values and their sense of cohesion from one place to another, and into the future. Nostalgia—about past achievements, antics, and the sense of home that all emerge from journalistic labor—is a response to dislocation from what were often longstanding, sometimes multi-generational professional homes. Nostalgia for the home-about-to-be-left is used to articulate the cultural meanings of the spaces and places of newsrooms and newspaper buildings, and is productive as a safeguard for community values. Nostalgia, in these stories, is a tool that reifies the character of newspaper journalists and the mission of newspaper journalism, preparing both for a move into a new space and into the future.

Whether nostalgia has a lasting operational effect here is unclear. Nostalgic discourse fades after moves to new buildings are complete, suggesting that this discourse is purpose-driven and is used to manage a time-bound change. In allocative terms, nostalgia has no effect on building sales or moves. Nostalgia in these cases is bound by material conditions and, in responding to those conditions, is in some ways determined by them. Nostalgia cannot change where journalists work; it can only inform how they work, if they repair to the values of their past work to inform their ongoing work, and if they repair to the senses of place from their past spaces to inform their new spaces. And so, the nostalgia articulated in these stories is prescriptive and future-directed: Nostalgia—a values-based discourse—compensates for the physical instability caused by an allocative, basal decision. Nostalgia provides a narrative template at the institutional level (especially if we consider journalists to be the dominant producers of the meaning of journalism as an institution) for how to deal with change. Because nostalgia reifies
values and is itself, in the stories comprising this case study, temporally bound, it here offers a temporary template, and thus helps us understand how journalistic authority is both deployed and limited during a time of substantive transition.

This examination of nostalgia also helps reveal the extent to which journalistic authority—a marker of journalism’s independence and core to journalism’s superstructure and structure of feeling—relies substantially on beneficial material conditions. Building sales and newsroom moves do not necessarily mark declining material conditions; in fact, three of the newsroom moves studied here were to new purpose-built buildings. But even stories covering the more optimistic moves noted secular changes to the newspaper industry. And the vast majority of these moves involved financial exigencies that caused the losses of sometimes-longstanding professional homes, which losses were at the same time losses of powerful spatial symbols of journalistic authority.

**From Financialization to Nostalgia**

Regardless of whether newsrooms move to new purpose-built and newspaper-focused buildings, as in three of the instances studied here, or to other existing buildings, as in the other 34 cases, nostalgia is used to invoke the ongoing values and significance of newspaper journalism and to articulate a continuity of the community of newspaper journalists and their mission through these changes. In general, newspaper building sales and concomitant newsroom moves have been explained by media companies and understood, both by wider industry observers and in some of these newspapers themselves, as financially exigent and part of the “financialization” of the newspaper
industry (Meyer, 2009; Almiron, 2010). Over the past decade, the ongoing decline of the U.S. newspaper has run headlong into the ongoing revitalization of urban cores and an accompanying increase in real estate values.

This has created a situation ripe for the harvesting of newspaper real estate. For another example, when The New York Times Co. offered the Boston Globe for sale in 2013, a Boston-area real estate expert told the Boston Herald that the land under the Globe’s building was more valuable than the newspaper: “From a strictly business standpoint, the real value here isn’t selling newspapers or even the boston.com website. . . . I’d say the real value is more in the real estate” (Cassidy, 2013). That just the land—not the newspaper, not its website, not even its building, but just the land—may exceed the value of the newspaper company seems absurd, but is nonetheless the state of the 21st-century newspaper. This is one indicator that newspapers and the companies that own them are being broken down into parts, for many are businesses operations in decline, and thus finance capital starts to seek an exit.

Over half of metropolitan daily newspapers have sold their buildings, and industry observers have repeatedly discussed this trend. At the end of 2008 the Associated Press wrote about how the trend, already begun, had been disrupted by the Great Recession’s pressure on real estate prices and on the bottom lines of newspapers themselves (Vanacore, 2008). As lending and real estate markets recovered—while the financial troubles of newspapers remained challenging and sometimes worsened—the website of the Poynter Institute also identified the ongoing sell-off of newspaper-held real estate as a trend, pegging its story to the Seattle Times’ announcement that it would begin selling its Seattle properties (Beaujon, 2012). Some sales addressed immediate needs, such as
McClatchy’s $50 million pension obligation. McClatchy transferred the land and buildings of the Charlotte Observer and holdings in six smaller markets to its pension fund and then leased the space back (Romenesko, 2011). The pension plan’s financial advisors later marketed and sold the Charlotte Observer site, and the newspaper moved to a new downtown Charlotte location.

Other building sales, along with corporate reorganizations, were more clearly designed to turn real estate assets fungible and to manage debt, often new debt. The Tribune Company was split into two—Tribune Media and Tribune Publishing (now called “tronc”)—in 2014 (Haughney, 2014). Structured to spin off the newspapers (and seemingly to saddle them with the company’s debt, a plan also followed by Gannett and Scripps (Carr, 2014)), Tribune Media retained the real estate assets, while the newspapers of Tribune Publishing paid rent until buildings started to be sold (Gosselin, 2016). Digital First Media, the successor to MediaNews, put its remaining newspaper real estate holdings—those of 51 newspapers—on the market in 2014 (Beaujon, 2014).

Some have reported an interpreted such moves as harvesting assets, a late stage of financialization, with the building sales and newsroom moves also symbolizing the decline of the newspaper as a local civic institution (Clark, 2014; Pristin, 2013; Reinan, 2012). Other observers see a more mixed future; a lengthy Columbia Journalism Review article titled “Why the sale of old newspaper buildings isn’t all bad” (Uberti, 2015) featured numerous reporters from around the country discussing the hopes and problems of a fresh start in a new space. Even so, the CJR reporter noted, “The structures remind us of a time when those in our profession felt in control of their own destiny” (Uberti, 2015). The sale of buildings and required newsroom moves take away one part of that destiny.
As a response, the stories that newspapers publish about their own moves can be considered reassertions of some elements of control, with journalists in particular taking responsibility for both informing new spaces with longstanding professional values and integrating them into an evolving newspaper. As one Detroit News reporter wrote, invoking a very old journalistic cliché, “The new place feels like . . . well, we don’t know yet. All we know is that we’ll be comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable, just like always” (Rubin, 2014).

But considered through the lens of Williams’ notions of base and superstructure, the processes of the base are necessarily altered with a newsroom move, and these stories consider how the labor of journalists and their work practices are likely altered in a move to a new space. Stories about moves are sometimes tinged with optimism. Nevertheless, newspaper journalists lose the longstanding sense of place that informs these newsrooms. While not all 83 newspapers studied in this dissertation have seen newsroom disruption, most have. To date, 45 have sold their buildings, and 37 have moved to new sites. This chapter examines 371 articles about sales and moves published in these newspapers. These articles use nostalgic discourse to articulate the importance and continuity of the values of newspaper journalism. The articles also reflect the relevance of these values in informing the new newsrooms and buildings with the same sense of place as the old.

Seeking continuity through the move, journalists abstract the sense of place, a manifestation of newspaper journalism’s superstructure into something portable, while mourning the loss of the spatial and cultural authority of the departed buildings. Nostalgia is a tool for continuity, and its use reasserts the values of newspaper journalism and
argues for the need to reinstate them in a new professional home. Nostalgia is a vessel to preserve newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling through these transitions.

Analyzing what nostalgia is of and what it is deployed for provides valuable insights into the reality of newspaper journalists who have given meaning to their newsroom-as-place. When the Atlanta Journal-Constitution moved in 2010, one reporter wrote, “For employees leaving 72 Marietta St., the move marks a time to reflect on the past as well as focus on the future” (McIntosh, 2010). These reflections are consistent across the newspaper stories studied here, including the few newspapers that moved to purpose-built buildings and the greater number that harvested the real estate for income and/or recapitalization.

Even old buildings that have been repurposed are sometimes later understood as reflecting a structure of feeling that was set up in earlier physical environments. The New York Daily News’s former printing plant in Brooklyn, for one example, is now an apartment building called “The Newswalk.” The Boston Herald’s old site is now the “Ink Block,” a mixed-use development of apartments, condominiums, and stores. And such reuse is not limited to especially hot and expensive real estate markets like Brooklyn and Boston. In 2013, the Quad-City Times’s predecessor newspaper, the Davenport Democrat, had its name affixed to a building in Davenport, Iowa, called the “Democrat Lofts.” Columnist Bill Wundram, who worked at the Quad-City Times and its predecessor newspapers for over 65 years until his 2018 retirement, reported a column about the opening of that building.

Touring the property, Wundram found, where the city room and his old desk used to be, “a small carpeted apartment to be named ‘The Wundram Suite,’ renting for $599 a
month” (Wundram, 2014). Despite finding “no trace of the essence of newspaper ink and the sweet smell of big rolls of newsprint,” Wundram nonetheless wrote, “[i]n all this facelifting, I could feel the place as a newspaper. Nostalgic craziness, I guess” (Wundram, 2014). Notably, the building had not been home to a newspaper since 1951, according to Wundram—and yet the building’s most recent use harkens back to an old one, eliding 63 years of other uses.

A high-end boutique hotel in Maine called The Press Hotel appeals directly to nostalgia for a newspaper, the Portland Press-Herald, that used to occupy the building. Newspaper-themed, The Press Hotel notes on its website that its lobby has tables “emblazoned with Press Herald headlines spanning 150 years,” and that its coffee shop, The Inkwell, was once the newspaper’s city room and “echoes the energy and intellect of its former occupants. You can tap into that energy and turn Inkwell into your satellite office” (Inkwell, n.d.).

Understanding newspaper buildings to be infused with the culture of those who worked there exemplifies the notion of social production of space (Lefebvre, 1974/1991). Definitions of place and space in literature on the social production of space are inconsistent yet productively messy. Drawing from this literature, this chapter treats “place” as a specific location, but one that is a manifestation of space, in space. The concepts of place and space have an iterative relationship. Senses of place can mark the purposes and meanings of space and mark spatial boundaries; what space is, what it becomes, and the processes that affect it can reinforce, redefine, or remove a sense of place as well. In this view, the raw stuff of Lefebvre’s “absolute space” is imbricated into “place,” as is Harvey’s geographically specific “absolute space” (1973/2009, 2005,
2006). This chapter treats “place” and “space” as iterative: the social production of space results in a specific place of particular character, or “sense of place” as per Tuan (1977,

That place, in turn, affects the space round it:

Place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning. (Tuan, 1977, p. 387)

Such a perspective, manifest in the newspaper stories studied here, suggests two related stakes for newspaper journalism and newspaper journalists.

First, the sale of the building is the sale of a place serving as spatial representation of authority. As per Tuan, “If sculpture is personal feeling made visible, then a building is an entire functional realm made visible, tangible, and sensible: it is the embodiment of the life of a culture” (1977, p. 417). A symbol of journalism’s authority, projected into the urban fabric, is removed—not because buildings are necessarily destroyed (many of them are repurposed), but because journalists’ departures hollow out the symbol.

Second, the move to a new newsroom necessarily disrupts both the base and superstructure of newspaper journalism. Work practices will be altered; at the same time, the newsroom is a metaphorical home of the journalists and the place from which the meaning of their work emanates. The life of the culture of newspaper journalism is uprooted with a move; the discourse studied in this chapter shows how newspaper journalists use nostalgia to articulate a continuity of mission and community such that roots of the culture may grow into their new buildings and newsrooms.

Newsroom moves also take journalists into what Tuan calls historical space. Of the movement of people, Tuan writes, “For the individual emigrants the journey takes
them not only to a place that can be marked on the map, or to a point later in time that can be shown on the calendar, but a place that symbolizes their future” (1977, p. 402). And the future, in the end, is the direction in which the news stories studied in this chapter turn. As one *Washington Post* reporter wrote of that newspaper’s 2015 move, “It’s a journey of just three blocks—but it feels as though we’re on an epic voyage into the unknown” (Achenbach, 2015).

**Nostalgia on the Move**

Historically, it has been argued, newspaper buildings were created as demonstrations of wealth and authority, and were created to project that authority into the surrounding physical space—and also into social space (see Cressman, 2009; Wallace, 2005; Wallace, 2012). The newsroom is a space within the place of the building. Over time, journalists informed that space with care, as per Tuan (1977): care for the news, care for the newspaper, care for journalism, care for each other. As Zaman writes, “The newsroom is not merely the brick and mortar building; it is what the news workers make of it through their actions” (2013, p. 832). In this way, the space of the newsroom—in which the ideals of journalism are negotiated and become, at the end of each day, real news on real paper—also gains Tuan’s “sense of place” on its own.

A specific ontological uncertainty—whether traditional news values and practices can sustain and inform a new home—persists throughout the discourse about newsroom moves. The earliest move studied here—the *Salt Lake Tribune*’s 2005 move from its building of 68 years to an office building integrated into a shopping mall—foreshadowed many of the moves to come. The newspaper stepped away from a spatially authoritative
building, which happened in nearly every case. The stories in the Salt Lake Tribune emphasized that the staff, primarily the journalistic staff, are charged with carrying the values of the past into the new space and into the future, and do so nostalgically.

One Tribune columnist wrote, from her old “majestic building,” that “Writing my last column from this spot, I am bleeding pure nostalgia,” focusing on the smell of ink, “one last memory to pack up” (Mullen, 2005). She noted this would be not only the last column in the old building, but also the last column written in the same geographic place as the Tribune’s printing presses, which were shortly to move as well. Here, nostalgia is expressed for the printing presses from which the news staff is decoupling; it is a memory to be packed up and moved. This decoupling is a natural move for an industry changing focus from the fixed manufactured good of the newspaper to an electronic service. Additionally, the printing presses here stand in for the dematerializing newspaper and the loss of solidity or fixity that the printed newspaper, as a finished manufactured product of labor, offers those who labored to create it. Remembering the presses helps remember what the labor was for, and what it will be or should be for in the future.

The Tribune's reader advocate explained the need for the move in terms of changing work practices, noting that in the old building, the staff was spread out and departments and desks communicated poorly. Despite sadness for some staffers, she reassured readers: “Moving with the staff is the same sense of commitment to honesty, accuracy, fairness, variety, completeness and relevance you have come to expect from the Tribune. We will remember to unpack all of them, too” (Coyne, 2005). The mission is dislocated, but its commitments come along with the staff; so, when the staff moves from the old space, the old space loses its meaning. As one Tribune reporter wrote,
The Salt Lake Tribune newsroom on Main Street became a shell of itself over the weekend after the staff of Utah's largest-circulation newspaper packed up 68 years worth of work and memories and moved down the road to its new home. (Bergreen, 2005)

The staff and their memories—discrete, packable, reified—carry forward the commitments the reader advocate articulated. As a subhead to Bergreen's story read, “What matters is what the paper does, not where; New building is just a shell; soul lies in staff” (2005). Unpacking the work and memories—that is, informing the new newsroom with news work and community memory—will fulfill the promise of the reader advocate's headline: “Tribune family is what makes new house a home” (Coyne, 2005).

The staff, especially the journalistic staff, literally animates the newspaper in the subhead quoted above; as a metaphorical family, they bring their connections and relationships and shared values to the space, fulfilling the cliché of family making a house a home.

The stakes, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, are twofold. If a building is “the embodiment of the life of a culture” (Tuan, 1977, p. 417), that life becomes disembodied with the loss of the building that both symbolizes it and brings it into physical being. Losing the buildings (and/or the newsrooms), to paraphrase Tuan, dislocates the life of the culture of newspaper journalism, which then needs to find a new home. In addition, the spatial projection of newspaper journalism is often (though not always) removed along with moves from more longstanding or historic headquarters. In one sense, this is a community crisis, for these communities of journalists can (and perhaps should) be considered forcibly displaced through no fault of their own. Stories about the newsroom moves are in part a response to this twofold crisis: loss of home, and loss of one form of authority. As a response, these stories reassert authority, articulate a continuity of
mission, and use nostalgia to articulate the newspaper’s ongoing commitments, as the Salt Lake Tribune’s reader advocate put it, to “the honesty, accuracy, fairness, variety, completeness and relevance you have come to expect” (Coyne, 2005).

The stories about the sales and moves are proxies—presented as very tangible and often-personalized—for the wider changes facing the industry, of which real estate harvesting is but one. The overall story arc manifests a nostalgia closely aligned with Boym’s “reflective nostalgia” (2001). In Boym’s scheme, reflective nostalgia is the productive obverse of what she calls “restorative nostalgia,” which has an edge of danger and denial: that looking to restore or return to a past imagined as better either elides or fails to come to terms with actual present conditions. Reflective nostalgia, in contrast, bears hope for the future; such hope is found in these stories.

These stories are typically published in three phases. First, newspapers publish rumors about potential real estate deals, stories announcing those agreements, and stories about the completions of sales. Stories from this first phase typically focuses on the business transactions and provides industrial context for building sales. Second, newspaper stories about the move itself recount the histories of newspapers, newsrooms, and newspaper journalists, and report on the lived experiences of journalists who are about to transition into a new building, or who have just made the transition. In the second phase, nostalgia is manifest as journalists share their experience in these stories to navigate the journey to a new home. Third, newspapers stories cover the disposal of the old building; in this third phase, stories discussion whether and how the old building has been redeveloped, and occasionally discuss the building’s ongoing historicity. The
general trend in this coverage is that in the early phase nostalgia is minimal, then waxes through the middle phase and wanes in the third.

Rumors, Announcements, Sales

Initially, stories report on building transitions as newsworthy events themselves, with only occasional memorial, mnemonic, or nostalgic tone. Many of the financial transactions are relatively large. The sales involve a change of ownership of well-known buildings and sometimes-significant amounts of land, and a change of use that will eventually affect the dynamics of the surrounding (and usually central city) neighborhood. These are newsworthy elements of any major downtown real estate transaction, and they remain newsworthy here. For example, when the Tampa Bay Times building went on the market in 2015, the first four graphs of the story dealt with mechanics of the sale and facts about the building—that the building was on the market; its size and condition; and that the parent company of the Times would use the money to pay off a loan it had previously secured to refinance existing debt (Smith, 2015). These stories primarily treat the sales as any other major downtown real estate transaction, and generally present the transactions as present-oriented and contemporaneous news.

At the same time, these stories use industry-wide context to separate journalism from business concerns, and to articulate hope and opportunities in the face of declining material conditions. The first story in the San Jose Mercury News on that newspaper’s move reported on the announcement that its building would be sold. In the article, the CEO of Digital First Media, the owner of the Mercury News, “said the sale of the 36-acre campus is part of the company’s plan to reduce ‘legacy infrastructure’ costs across its
newspaper holdings” (Carey, 2013). The Tampa Bay Times is not part of a chain, though it grouped itself with other newspapers across the industry whose real estate was sold. A Times reporter wrote, “Like many newspapers, the Times has reduced its staff in recent years as the industry as a whole has faced financial difficulties from a challenging advertising market” (Smith, 2015), noting the 2014 sale of the Washington Post building, the 2011 sale of the Miami Herald building, the then-imminent sale of the Charlotte Observer’s properties, and other newspapers exploring different possibilities for their real estate. A St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter also noted the trend: “The planned sale mirrors similar moves by other media organizations. Major metropolitan newspapers, such as the Star Tribune of Minneapolis and the Philadelphia Inquirer, have relinquished large headquarters buildings that were built for an earlier age” (“St. Louis Post-Dispatch downtown headquarters for sale,” 2015).

These stories, while focusing on the newsworthy elements of the sale announcements, also lay the groundwork for stories to come, and fill a significant role in building the base of the industry-wide narrative scheme. They position the building sales as unexceptional for the industry, perhaps even required to ensure financially healthy publications for newspaper companies and their owners. In this way, they echo how executives positioned layoffs as responsible capitalism, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, in the corpus studied in this chapter, newspaper journalists acquiesce to building sales as necessary and there is a confluence of journalistic and executive voices. In terms of newswork, these stories position the buildings as outmoded for the current needs of individual newspapers and the newspaper industry as they pivot away from the print newspaper and towards a digital future grounded, predominantly, in urban cores.
The *Colorado Springs Gazette*, for example, leased new office space in a “sleek, gray modern building. The new offices will include a video studio and other equipment aimed at the growing online audience, but no printing presses” (Philipps, 2013). Here, the story notes the adjustment to industrial change. While journalists are decoupled from the printing presses, other accouterments of their industry—production equipment enabling them to better reach their online audience—are enhanced and better integrated into their new space (where they will still be able to produce *and* distribute the news online, even though the *Gazette* had outsourced its printing to the *Denver Post* earlier that year). The publisher of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* expressed the need for more up-to-date offices when that newspaper announced its headquarters was for sale:

> “We are a 21st-century media company operating in a mid-20th-century building,” Ray Farris, president and publisher of the Post-Dispatch, said in a statement. “As we expand our digital platform, we need a modern facility that is suitable for us now and in the future.” (“St. Louis Post-Dispatch downtown headquarters for sale,” 2015)

Such articles identify technological needs and advancements as one cause of newsroom moves. They also marry these needs and advancements to, most often, a desire to remain in the city core (though a few papers, including the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Miami Herald*, and the *Los Angeles Times* left central locations for more peripheral ones).

The article announcing the *Colorado Springs Gazette*’s move noted that the new office was merely one block away from where the newspaper was first printed, quoting its own publisher about the move:

> “We're moving back to the dead center of the community, right where Gen. (William Jackson) Palmer laid out the first street,” said Gazette Publisher Dan
Steever. “It is a reiteration that we are part of the fabric of the region and will be for a long time.” (Philipps, 2013)

Here, the *Gazette* is presented as integrated into and integral to Colorado Springs. While the work of newspaper production, the format of news, and the distribution of news may all be changing, the assertion here and at other newspapers is that core institutional values and commitments remain the same.

The *Charlotte Observer*’s publisher told her newspaper that she sought both a more modern newsroom and geographic continuity with uptown Charlotte, the city’s center. She told a reporter that “she would like to keep the Observer's 400 employees in or near uptown, and wants to build a new high-tech newsroom better suited to the digital era,” and that the current location was “the environment of yesteryear” (Frazier, 2014). In New Orleans in 2012, NOLA Media Group, owner of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* and NOLA.com, announced that it would move from its more industrial building (which included its printing plant) into two high floors of a central business district office building. According to the publisher of the group, quoted in an article on NOLA.com, “Moving to this office space reinforces our commitment to the city by placing us in a highly visible location,” and “It also showcases our evolution into a multimedia company, dedicated to both print and digital publishing” (“NOLA Media Group leases top floors,” 2012). The publisher of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said much the same to his newspaper. A reporter noted that the publisher “said the Post-Dispatch would like to stay in the downtown area,” and quoted the publisher reasserting the ongoing significance of his newspaper: “‘nothing will change for our readers,’ he said. ‘We will always be the
leading newsgathering organization [in St. Louis], regardless of our physical address’” (“St. Louis Post-Dispatch downtown headquarters for sale,” 2015).

These examples share certain commonalities that exemplify articles from this first phase. The head of the organization, typically the publisher, is quoted on the move. Speaking on behalf of the organization, the publisher usually adopts the first-person plural “we” to refer to the organization and to represent it as a collective of people. As the Charlotte Observer report implies when it notes its publisher’s desire “to keep the Observer’s 400 employees in or near uptown,” the issue regards not simply the disposal of a place and a move to a new one, but rather the needs and the presences of the people in that place. While the spatial authority of the old buildings themselves may be lost, keeping newspaper staff in that same geographic space can be considered a preservation of part of that spatial authority.

Stories from this first phase periodize the old newsroom as old (and sometimes outmoded in terms of working conditions), and also cue up elements of stories from the second phase: emphases on the ongoing social value of the newspaper, the integration of the newspaper into its community, and continuity of news values into the future—all of which are ultimately stories of the people who comprise the newspaper, the work that they do, and the mission to which they are committed.

**Moving Days and High Nostalgia**

News articles surrounding the actual move exhibit a sharply increased level of nostalgia. The original definition of nostalgia, a pathological longing for home—is worth
One-third of the articles reviewed for this case study refer to newspaper buildings, both old and new, as “home.”

On one hand, this is simply a colloquial or idiomatic use of “home.” One could say that *The New York Times*’ home was its old building on West 43rd Street in Manhattan, or Times Square, or New York City, just as one could say that the New York Yankees’ home was Yankee Stadium, or the Bronx, or New York City.

On the other hand, the “home” metaphor is especially potent. Perhaps the most incisive observations about metaphors have regarded their conceptual nature—that metaphors explicitly involve and shape and appeal to the human thought process itself (e.g. Beer and De Landtscheer, 2004; Black, 1962; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Richards, 1936). Further, because of the power metaphors have in constructing understandings of human experience, they also have a potentially persuasive dimension that must be reckoned with (e.g. Charteris-Black 2004; Lakoff, 2002).

By invoking the “home” metaphor, these stories appeal to the senses of comfort and fullness that a home can offer—security, stability, reliability, and intimacy, among others—which helps to explain the significance of the newsroom to journalists and the reasons that moving their professional home can be quite so jarring. Losing a home is much weightier than losing an office. At the same time, the “home” metaphor is also applied to the new newsrooms in a way that proposes carrying the values of the past home forward. As that *Salt Lake Tribune* headline put it, “Tribune family is what makes new house a home” (Coyne, 2005). Nostalgia is used in these news articles to help explain how the “family” can make the transition to a new home. In doing so, the articles present that “positively toned evocation of a lived past” (Davis, 1979, p. 18) even as
some journalists, writing in the first-person voice, resist or struggle with the very presence of nostalgia despite it being vital, in these stories, to what Davis called such a community's identity continuity.

Articles appearing in these newspapers and in online or multimedia packages about the newsroom moves offered nostalgic takes on the moves. A headline from the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* succinctly summarized the role nostalgia plays here: “Hope, nostalgia packed in move to fancy new digs” (Tevlin, 2015). Hope and nostalgia are closely linked in these articles: nostalgia will help maintain hope for the community's future through the move. Nostalgia for the values and practices and successes of journalism in the old space has the potential to seed the new space with the same. Both hope and nostalgia are also fixable and portable, if they can be “packed” for the move.

Many of these articles detail deficiencies of the spaces from which newsrooms are moving, even while those spaces are otherwise remembered fondly. A columnist at the *San Jose Mercury News* bemoaned working conditions “in the bowels of the old building, in a room without windows, I felt like a rat housed in a maze for a psychology experiment” (Herhold, 2015a). An article in the *Houston Chronicle* found its old building similarly warren-like, “[a]n accretion of five buildings made into one, it featured a maze of corridors, cul-de-sacs and steps that seemed to spring on strollers at the most unexpected times,” quoting a past editor remembering that “I often didn't know which building I was in” (Turner, 2016).

A staff writer at the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*—in the same article headlined “Hope, nostalgia packed in move to fancy new digs”—referred affectionately to his “last couple of weeks at the old dump,” even while noting ongoing problems of the building:
“Drinking fountains have ‘out of order’ signs on them. The carpet looks like it hasn't been replaced in about 25 years because, well, it hasn’t” (Tevlin, 2015). Another Star-Tribune reporter noted that

Over the years, renovations have removed most traces of [the building’s] 1947 glory. Here and there, a metal banister with Buck Rogers flair; letters on a pebbled door; remnants of machinery in the basement where reporters’ words were fed to great clattering banks of presses, glass blocks on a side entrance. (Lileks, 2015)

Newspaper journalists’ mnemonics of labor are in many ways tied to this manufacturing history of the newspaper, to what a writer in The New York Times called “the old factory,” to the more openly industrial nature of producing a finished product.

The decline of these industrial elements, and the material conditions of offices especially, arguably substitute concern about one set of material conditions for another. For example, the conditions of the old building of the Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News were found wanting: the “dilapidated 18th floor of the Tower” offered “a million-dollar view,” even though “the place doesn't look as if you'd get $20 for the interior” (Lubrano, 2012). The Miami Herald’s building had become a “decaying relic” (Beasley, 2013). A columnist at the Los Angeles Daily News observed that his building “was old and it was ugly. The elevator was always breaking down, and there wasn't a window in the city room. But it was home for the last 21 years” (McCarthy, 2008). Discussing decaying buildings and what must be done about them may stand in for discussions of the wider problems of the decaying newspaper industry; people can flee a decrepit building that no longer suits them, but they cannot flee secular change.

Despite the flaws in these buildings, they were nevertheless articulated as and felt as homes, and remembered fondly as such. A Houston Chronicle article called the
chronicle building “a kind of paradise,” observing the sadness of “[f]ormer employees, perhaps dabbing at a too-moist eye, [who] came by for one last look. ‘Yes, yes, there is a sense of loss,’ lamented one” (Turner, 2016). The Chronicle also published an online package gathering the various articles the newspaper published about the move, to which it added a video montage of still images. Making liberal use of the so-called “Ken Burns effect,” in which slow pans and zooms are used to add motion, the montage shows historic images of past editorial staff at work, old printing presses, external building shots, and downtown Houston, all set to an innocuous jazz soundtrack. The video ends with text that reads, “After calling it home for 106 years, we say farewell to 801 Texas,” the street address of the building, before closing with the “-30-” end mark (“Farewell to our downtown home,” n.d.). While problems may have existed, the memories are toned like this to preserve what is important to the community and to persevere through the “sense of loss” felt when departing an old building.

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette also published a multimedia package. In it, staffers remembered their old building, largely in terms of how people interacted with the space and with each other in the space. One staffer recalled bringing an engineer friend to the building, who “was amazed to see that the thick, metal steps were actually worn down in the center [. . .] the engineer's question made me realize how long this building has stood and indeed, how many journalists have climbed its steps” (“34 Boulevard of the Allies,” n.d.). This anecdote weds the people to the space, illustrating how journalists affected the physical form and emotional sense of place. Most often, memories of buildings and newsrooms do not so much describe the physical space; primarily, the memories are of the lived experience of Tuan’s sense of place. As one Minneapolis Star-
Tribune reporter put it, quoted in an article about that newspaper’s move, “It's like selling the family home [...] But the family's still together and we now know we're going to a place that is sleeker, brighter and more comfortable” (Painter, 2015).

A report on the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette’s move finds the remaining resonance of its old building in the people who worked there and what they did:

Once vibrant, energetic and cacophonous, the second floor of 34 Boulevard of the Allies, Downtown, is now abandoned, silent but for faint echoes of the past—clicking keyboards and ringing telephones, muttered curses and loud cheers, boisterous laughter and some tears. (Fuoco, 2015)

This resonance does not come from the space itself; rather, the resonance comes from nostalgia for what it was like to have been there. As the Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News prepared to move, “scattering the grumpy ghosts of newspeople past,” a reporter noted that every story

was produced in a building that has housed a corps of messy, clever rascals, scolds, and raconteurs, brimming with both slobbering idealism and stone-hard cynicism—people who’ve seen themselves as the thin, ragged line between the scoundrels and the rest of you; who’ve seen themselves, deservedly or not, as stewards of Jeffersonian democracy, along with your right to hear the latest on Lindsay Lohan, that poor, misguided soul. (Lubrano, 2012)

The newsroom move, in Lubrano's piece and in others, is a moment at which to reflect upon the character and mission of journalists—what it was like to do this work, why it matters, and why it should be remembered and preserved.

This articulation itself can be moved to the new newsroom. Remembering these values and commitments can inform the new space, socially and professionally. As a San Jose Mercury News reporter wrote of that newspaper’s old building, “For generations of reporters, this was much more than a building and a workplace” (Pizarro, 2014). The building had been informed by lived experiences that often overlap the personal and
professional, such as putting the paper to bed on election night and celebrating in the parking lot, or meeting a spouse or partner in the newsroom. The process of informing a new newsroom with a sense of home is, here, articulated as a mnemonic one:

It’ll be exciting to have the newspaper based back downtown in the nation’s 10th largest city, instead of kissing the edge of the city limits near a freeway. It’s a location filled with promise but lacking in memories. It won't take us long to start making new ones. (Pizarro, 2014)

In order to make new memories, old memories are used. A Minneapolis Star-Tribune reporter wrote, “Some of my colleagues are a bit nostalgic. They’ve been walking around taking pictures of the place where so many have spent their careers and a good part of their lives” (Tevlin, 2015). Such mnemonic preservation is important; such pictures can provide touchstones to remind these journalists of what was best and most important of their time in the old newsroom. Telling readers that newspaper journalists are engaged in this kind of memory work is one way to reassure them that the newspaper will function as before. It may be one way for newspaper journalists to reassure themselves as well.

Nonetheless, while the buildings themselves might be, as one reporter wrote of the Miami Herald’s, “brimming with nostalgia” (Beasley, 2013), the stories suggest some hesitation to invoke the word itself. A Los Angeles Daily News columnist wrote, “I took a last walk through the old city room Saturday after it had been stripped down for the move. Sad. I thought I'd never feel nostalgia for the old place, but I did” (McCarthy, 2008). A Rocky Mountain News columnist asserted that he was “not a nostalgia guy” (Littwin, 2006). In the Washington Post, a reporter wrote, as its own graph, “Nostalgia isn’t part of our business plan” (Achenbach, 2015).

Nostalgia is instead a response to business plans that resulted in dislocation, and
nostalgia is part of what helps the sense of home from the old building come to the new. The reasons that the old building mattered are similar to the reasons that the new building will matter: because of how journalists and their work give the space its meaning. In an editorial, the Boston Herald noted “at least a good deal of nostalgia for that shabby old building. After all, careers were made there, reputations built by some who would move on to make us proud in countless ways at countless other assignments” (“One last look back,” 2013). Nostalgia is not actually about or for the building, but about the wealth of human experience that came alongside and out of the labors of journalists:

The old building holds a place in the personal histories of many who worked there. Amid the pressure of assignments and deadlines, there were couples who met, fell in love, married, had babies (and, by the way, welcome to the world Jackson Wedge). Lifelong friendships were forged there and endure unaffected by the bricks that will come tumbling down today. (“One last look back,” 2013)

The personal histories in the workplace extend beyond the work itself, as they often do, and those histories transcend the workplace as well. Still, the editorial concludes by noting that “the essence” of the Herald is the people who “continue to be devoted to an institution that remains an integral part of this community and to a profession they feel privileged to be a part of” (“One last look back,” 2013). Or as Gene Roberts, the legendary Philadelphia Inquirer editor told the Inquirer on the occasion of its move, “The physical newsroom is not important. The quality of journalism is. Good journalism,’ he said, ‘can be done in a tenement’” (Lubrano, 2012).

Nostalgia, at the moment of newsroom moves, is collective in nature. Newspaper journalists share specific, individualized stories about their lives and experiences not simply to be heard, but also because these stories resonate with colleagues who have had very similar experiences. That resonance indicates a communal, collective experience,
publicly shared with each other and with readers. In this discourse, the experiences are presented as continuous. Lived memories of commitments to the mission and of the pleasures of executing them facilitate the transitions to new buildings; articulating those lived memories periodizes the buildings but asserts continuity of communities, who can take these memories to their new professional homes.

**Denouement and Disposal**

After the moves are complete, the level of nostalgia in stories about the sales and moves dramatically recedes. The recession of nostalgia underscores its specific use in discourse about building sales and newsroom moves, namely the preservation of communities and their values. This is the reason, for example, a story in the *Salt Lake Tribune* noted the old newsroom “became a shell of itself” after the staff moved out, and the reason that a subhead to the same story noted, “New building is just a shell; soul lies in staff.” Continuity of space is impossible, but the continuity of the sense of place is possible because the activity of people creates that sense of place.

The future of old buildings frequently becomes the topic of straight news stories: that an insurer moved into the old *Birmingham News* building, for example, or that the old *St. Paul Pioneer-Press* building is to be renovated as apartments. Such straightforward information is typically the takeaway from stories that cover the old buildings or sites after the newspaper has moved. The work of newspaper journalism is informing the new space; the old space, largely, is done with.

This recession of nostalgia also indicates its periodization. Nostalgia is primarily bound to the move itself, and is bound to concern over whether and how the values of
newspaper journalists will be maintained in the face of new work structures and strictures (and sometimes freedoms), and in the face of what are avoidable declining material conditions. However, in post-move discourse, nostalgia occasionally arises, particularly when the historicity of an old building or site becomes a topic of public debate. These are rare but noteworthy.

Miami saw a lengthy debate over the historical significance of the *Miami Herald* building and site during about 16 months leading up to the move. One *Miami Herald* staffer denied that nostalgia played a role in her advocating for the historic preservation of the building: “It isn't a judgment that comes from a sentiment of nostalgia for the past, but from documented history and architectural facts” (Santiago, 2012). However, Santiago goes on to explain, nostalgically, the work of journalism:

> I am not without bias. On the front lines for the last 32 years, I’ve been part of the reporting and writing of stories that become the first draft of history, the extraordinary and the tragic, and the ordinary daily events that make up a community’s fabric. And as many other Miamians, I’ve witnessed the newspaper’s influence on South Florida, mostly for good, sometimes for worse, but that’s history, imperfect and educational. (Santiago, 2012)

Here, Santiago understands the *Herald’s* building as infused with news stories and with history itself. This understanding, as seen in the previous section, is quite common in move-related discourse, but for the community of journalists, the utility of that understanding may not be useful once the move is complete.

In fact, the *Herald* editorial board itself disagreed with Santiago, and argued that the building itself is not architecturally significant—despite its value to those who worked there. Writing that that Miami’s historic preservation board made the right decision in voting not to designate the building as an historic landmark, the editorial
board noted that the building “evokes natural feelings of sentiment and nostalgia. This has been our home away from home” (“Making way for the new,” 2012). The editorial proceeds to note many things that define a newspaper besides its building, including tradition, awards, dedication, and identification with geographic community:

. . . a newspaper is more than bricks, mortar and marble. The tradition of hard-hitting journalism that has earned The Herald 21 Pulitzer Prizes and countless more awards over the years will continue, as will the dedication of the men and women who work here. The newspaper’s identification with and commitment to the wellbeing and progress of Greater Miami won’t change. (“Making way for the new,” 2012)

The journalism practiced there was worthy of both historical and present-day recognition, but the building itself isn’t. The move itself has already periodized the community—both of journalists and of Greater Miami—and nostalgia was used to fix and to carry forward values such as “the tradition of hard-hitting journalism,” “dedication,” and “commitment to the wellbeing and progress” of the city the Herald calls home. Further historicizing the site where newspaper journalism occurred does little, then, to maintain the values of newspaper journalism.

A similar decision was reached in San Jose, where its historical commission recommended that the Mercury News building be landmarked, but its city council chose not to do so. A Mercury News metro columnist echoed the discussion in Miami, noting that merely having been the headquarters for a newspaper company does not make a building inherently historic: “A newspaper is a tangible product, not something tied to a given location” (Herhold, 2015a). Newspaper journalism as a practice, and relatedly, as a structure of feeling that can inform a new space with its values, is not bound to a particular place or space either. To use Tuan's term, the “sense of place” comes not from
the building itself. Rather, the sense of place comes from the people and what they do—
their journalistic labor, and the cultural structures that emanate from it, are the source of
that sense of place.

In Columbus, Ohio, the *Columbus Dispatch* was sold by its family-controlled
company, Dispatch Printing Co., to GateHouse Media in 2015. GateHouse moved the
Dispatch offices around the corner, within sight of the old building across the grounds of
the Ohio Statehouse, while Dispatch Printing Co. retained ownership of the Dispatch’s
longstanding home. Historicity arose months after the staff’s early 2016 move, but was
primarily related to financialization rather than nostalgia. Dispatch Printing Co. asked
Columbus’s Historic Resources Commission to grant historic designation for the
Dispatch’s former headquarters. When the commission voted to add the building to
Columbus's Register of Historic Properties, one Dispatch article quoted the city's historic
preservation officer, who said the building was added “because its history is ‘part and
parcel of the history of the city of Columbus’” (King & Ferenchik, 2016). This
designation allowed Dispatch Printing Co. to seek and to be awarded $2.2 million in tax
credits from the state, to help subsidize the renovation of the Dispatch’s old building. The
CEO of the Dispatch Printing Co. subsidiary that controlled the building spoke with the
Dispatch, and “called the tax-credit program ‘absolutely critical’ to preserving such a
building” (Ferenchik & Rose, 2017). The third article that covered the future of the old
Dispatch building reported on the plans for the major renovation, including new windows
and new mechanical equipment (Rose, M.M., 2017). None of these three articles
covering the future of the old Dispatch building exhibited any nostalgia for it, suggesting
that even when the building is historicized by an act of city government, nostalgia
remains bound by the move of journalists from one home to another.

While journalists don’t much appeal to nostalgia after newsroom moves are complete, real estate developers invoke nostalgia and newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling when redeveloping old newspaper properties; these appeals echo newspapers’ industrial pasts even while reducing their memory to décor and architectural themes. To revisit a point made earlier in this chapter, apartment buildings in Brooklyn, New York and Davenport, Iowa both appeal in their names to their previous uses as a printing plant and newspaper headquarters, respectively; a hotel in Portland, Maine is named The Press Hotel, and is themed after the newspaper that used to occupy the building.

The *Boston Herald*’s old building was to be redeveloped as the “Ink Block,” a mixed-use development of 475 apartments, a grocery store, and shops. In appealing to how the newspaper continues to inform that area’s sense of place, a reporter wrote,

> The old Herald building [ . . . ] was a place where journalism thrived in the days when rewrite men tapped out stories on Royal typewriters. Wire machines rang with breaking news and photographers captured the news of the day in images shot with Speed Graphic press cameras and developed in cavernous dark rooms. (Dwinell, 2013)

This appeal to the past at once distances the *Boston Herald*’s new “multimedia success in its cutting-edge newsroom” from old technologies, while also emphasizing ideas about what journalism is and how it is practiced might inform journalism’s historical spaces, “where journalism thrived”—even if those spaces are put to new use. Such invocation of newspaper journalism is less about the daily practices and lived values—for those have been packed and moved to new newsrooms—and more reflects the longer arc of newspaper journalism in wider cultural memory.

Other redevelopments around the United States have appealed and continue to
appeal to the past presences of newspapers in their buildings or on their sites. Coverage
of these redevelopments indicates the extent to which nostalgia for the newspaper extends
beyond journalists and into the wider culture. In San Francisco, the block that the San
Francisco Chronicle sits on is being redeveloped rather than sold, with the Chronicle
maintaining a presence. The old San Francisco Examiner building is there as well, and in
2012 had become home to a newspaper-themed bar called Local Edition (though it has
since moved to another location). The bar “had décor that is an homage to the city’s
newspaper history with displays of vintage newspapers, printing presses, Dictaphones
and Linotype machines” (Dineen, 2016). In Sacramento, a mixed-use project called the
Press Building considered aesthetic representations of the Sacramento Bee’s past,
including “a design with rolling walls designed to evoke the look of newsprint moving
through a printing press, and another with hexagonal honeycomb accents to play on the
newspaper's name” (Shallit, 2015). In these cases, nostalgia for the newspaper is
dislocated from newspaper journalists and transmuted into style. That nostalgia for the
newspaper has become an identifiable style or an architectural motif strongly suggests
that while the newspaper itself may be on the way to cultural obsolescence, nostalgia for
the newspaper resonates with newspaper journalism's structure of feeling, emphasizing its
wider cultural power even as it again periodizes newspaper journalism and, perhaps, its
values (if those values can be reduced to and/or expressed as bar and hotel themes). As
news becomes increasingly ephemeral, even as news stories about moves to new spaces
emphasize how newspaper journalists retain the power to inform their homes with senses
of place, such redevelopments, in their nods to the past, suggest that the faint echoes of
the newspaper's manufacturing past continue to resonate.
A “Post-Industrial” Problem

In some ways, the analyses of this chapter are at odds with recent reconsiderations of journalism and news as “post-industrial.” In these reconsiderations, the increased distance of the newsroom from the printing press seems to be the primary marker of a “post-industrial journalism,” defined as “journalism no longer organized around the norms of proximity to the machinery of production” (see Anderson, Bell, and Shirky, 2012, p. 12; Searls, 2001). Indeed, newspaper journalism has increasingly decoupled from the printing press as its historical apparatus of production, and earlier in this chapter, nostalgia for the printing press, and for what one New York Times staffer called the “old factory” (Dunlap, 2007), periodizes the newspaper as a manufactured, material product. The sensory and tactile elements of newspaper production—both newsroom collegiality and the experience of producing and reading a fixed, manufactured good—characterize much of the nostalgia expressed by newspaper journalists reflecting on their old newsrooms and buildings. But having newsrooms located on top of factories is not the only way in which journalism is industrial.

The terms “post-industrial journalism” and “post-industrial news” also have been used to describe news practices that have come to deviate from, expand upon, or otherwise alter professional journalistic practices (Anderson, Bell, and Shirky, 2012; Kammer, 2015; Searls, 2001; Usher, 2014; Usher, 2015). Recent journalism studies scholarship offers a few additional studies that deal explicitly with these issues, specifically exploring what we can learn about historical changes to the newsroom over time based on the orientation and uses of objects within (Keith, 2015; Le Cam, 2015) and
what journalists think of new and/or contemporary newsroom conditions (Usher, 2014; Usher, 2015; Zaman, 2013). These studies all primarily address operational control—the control over day-to-day activities of reporting and editing—rather than allocative control over resources writ large, which includes newsroom locations and building ownership (Glasser & Gunther, 2005; Murdock, 1982).

In some ways, this attention to space in journalism is a logical extension of the plethora of scholarly literature that examined the “converged” newsrooms of the 2000s (both in the U.S. and around the world) and how and whether they had altered journalistic practices (e.g. Colson & Heinderyckx, 2008; Dailey, Demo & Spillman, 2005; Paterson & Domingo, 2008; Quinn, 2005; Robinson, 2011; Silcock & Keith, 2006; Singer, 2004; Verweij, 2009). As Robinson wrote, “When journalists take up new technologies, they manipulate their news-work spaces” (2011, p. 1125), and, as she acknowledges, this observation is not new (e.g. Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001; Boczkowski, 2010; Bromley, 1997; Carey, 1989/1992; Deuze, 2007; Deuze & Marjoribanks, 2009; Hardt & Brennan, 1995; Hardt & Brennen, 1999; Meyrowitz, 1985; Nerone & Barnhurst, 2003). These studies, too, primarily regard journalists’ operational control over their labor—how they perform it, and the tools with which they work.

While “post-industrial journalism” may be a convenient term under which to group changes in journalism, this chapter finds both the term and the concept of post-industrial journalism erroneous. The industry of journalism has not gone away, but merely has changed and continues to change, as these same observers and scholars often make clear. The term “post-industrial,”” as it has been used, incorrectly suggests that the nature of news production is somehow no longer industrial. In fact, journalism remains
organized around new norms of proximity to different machinery of production, as detailed in Usher's (2014, 2015) discussion of changes to newsroom organization, and in many of the above studies about “converged” newsrooms.

Furthermore, where legacy newspaper buildings were constructed around the desire or need to have printing presses on site, those presses often were out of sight in the basement, or in adjacent buildings. Some presses later moved to suburban printing facilities, further distancing them from the newsroom. Now, with the ongoing shift to online publishing, the industrial apparatus of distribution moves to data centers, while the industrial apparatus of production continues to move closer to newspaper journalists: first to networked desktop computers, then to laptops, then to mobile phones and tablets, with the expectation that news will be broken—that is to say, news will be both produced and, potentially, distributed—from wherever a journalist might happen to be. And this news is produced as much for networked and mobile audiences as for the newspaper. No need to call in the story; it can now be moved electronically through remote access to content management systems, and breaking news can be reported on the website, or via Twitter or Snapchat or Facebook Live or any one (or all) of increasing numbers of mobile apps.

All of the above are indeed changes, and while they may be post-newspaper and part of a move to a post-print or post-manufacturing news environment, they are not post-industrial. Calling journalism “post-industrial” elides the fact that journalistic labor remains organized around machinery of production, and remains industrial in that journalistic labor produces something that is sold (or against which advertising is sold). Newspaper publishers as entities, to be sure, are moving away from the manufacturing practices and conditions that formerly characterized their industry. And it is important to
reiterate here that news, the newspaper, and journalism are often conflated, and to properly understand them we must properly conceptualize how this occurs. Journalism, as considered in this dissertation, is a set of related labor, professional, and cultural practices that in the end produce news. Newspapers are a manufactured product through which news is distributed; newspapers, historically, are purchased for the news (and other content) they contain.

One reason for the conflations of news and journalism, and sometimes both with the newspaper, is that news is also considered a service (for example, by the United States Department of Labor). The news product is information selected to be of public value and worth, sometimes contextual, sometimes actionable, and thus has a service dimension as well. Newspaper journalists produce a product that is tangible and fixed, and consumable—but at the same time provides a service to readers. (The emergence of the knowledge economy being considered a separate economic sector helps accommodate these multiple dimensions—and perhaps here journalists are reckoning with their shift from an allegiance to the newspaper-as-manufactured-product to the news-as-end-product, which is reflected in their changing workplaces. Nevertheless, those workplaces still organize labor around the means of production.)

Journalists are nuanced in addressing newspapers that found new homes. Discussion of the past is sometimes mournful, and the end of the great days of the newspaper, such as they were, are reckoned with. But these stories often recognize that the newspaper as a means of information conveyance and exchange is increasingly outmoded, that newspaper facilities are similarly outmoded, and that the old ways of doing business as a reporter are no longer what evolving newspapers need. Old buildings
are discussed not only in terms of their authority, but also in terms of their efficacy, and stories also recognize that these buildings, and the organization of the newsroom within, are often outmoded as well. Nostalgia helps preserve a memory of what newspaper journalism is for, even as it periodizes the old newsrooms, buildings, and sometimes the material newspaper itself, consigning them to an (approaching) end.

Wallace contends that “[a]lthough the contemporary media scene is rife with complaint, regret, and nostalgia over what has been lost, tracing the industry through its built form reveals more continuity than change” (2012, p. 8). In Usher’s research (2014, 2015), some journalists worried over their departure from city cores, and indeed, some major papers, including the *Atlanta Journal- Constitution* and the *Miami Herald*, left their downtowns. The significantly larger sample of moves studied in this chapter, however, indicates that others, such as the *San Jose Mercury-News*, returned to the city from the suburbs or, like the *Philadelphia Daily News* and *Philadelphia Inquirer*, moved to office space better integrated into the city core—and discourse about the moves seeks continuity through change.

Many moves were well-received by staff. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* architecture critic wrote that despite moving only one mile away to a different city neighborhood, it felt “as if we’ve left the sleepy suburbs for the hyped-up density of the big city, and that can only do all of us—the company and the city—some good” (Saffron, 2012). A *San Jose Mercury-News* reporter praised the potential benefits to newsgathering from its renewed downtown presence—serendipitous meetings and connections, proximity to news and sources—in an article titled “Newspaper’s home is downtown” (Herhold, 2014). Still others, including for but a few examples *The New York Times*, the *Columbus*
Dispatch, the Indianapolis Star, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, and the Washington Post moved to new offices near their old buildings. Stories published in these newspapers frequently recognize continuities of work, and reflect on but are not trapped by the past.

In these news stories, the past is used to assess where the newspaper has been, what it is today, and what it could become in the future. These stories articulate newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling and in doing so fix values such that a turn to nostalgia may carry those values forward into the future, and into the new newsroom. This may be something of a trap, however; in fixing those values, it declares them to be the historical apex of newspaper journalism and suggests that they should be immutable, despite the recognized and active need for them to be at least somewhat flexible to help a community successfully move to and inhabit a new home.

The sales of newspaper buildings and the moves of newsrooms reflect changes to the industry now recognized as secular: less advertising, smaller staffs, converged work, and a shift to web and mobile publishing platforms. Workloads and workflows have certainly changed at newspapers. The disposal of properties that served to produce newspapers and the move to newsrooms that facilitate the production of news in multiple forms may indeed serve newspaper companies better in the long run. The biggest industrial change, though, is that the physical newspaper itself is no longer the only, and may eventually not even be the primary, industrial product of newspaper companies. News is. And the increased distance from traditional physical manufacturing of the newspaper highlights the fact that if news is an industrial product, then journalists are (or more aptly, remain, at least partially) industrial labor.
Conclusion

The news stories studied in this chapter offer both trepidation and hope, but also reflect efforts to come to terms with inevitable changes to newspaper journalists’ labor conditions. This collective narrative offers a sense of control over one end—the move away from a familiar newsroom and building—and a sense of control over a new beginning. The self-reflexivity of this narrative allows journalists to tell their own stories; appealing to the “home” metaphor and by turning towards nostalgia, these stories are attempts to preserve newspaper journalism's structure of feeling so it may be reinserted into a new newsroom and/or building, informing the new space with that structure of feeling and developing or redeveloping what Tuan called the “sense of place.”

Together, the reports on building sales, newsroom moves, and redevelopment of old headquarters tell the story of a community in transition. This story relays the community’s history through the history of its spatial presences, and uses nostalgia for that history as a vehicle to carry forward past community values and thus to imagine a potentially positive future for the institution. On one hand, this can be understood as in line with newworkers’ history “of grudging accommodation to unpleasant circumstances” (Solomon, 1995, p. 112). On another, the positive turn is akin to reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001). These stories’ integrations of the past are imaginative acts (Keightley & Pickering, 2012) of productive nostalgia (Schrag, 1992), in which memory of the group's past is used in a re-creative way. The stories come to terms with the past while directing attention to the possibilities of the future—and they maintain, adjust, and rearticulate the group identity of newspaper journalists along the way.
Through this narrative we can also see the limits of control and the intent of the
discourse. To return to Williams’ discussion of base and superstructure, building sales are
basal matters—they regard the economic processes of the newspaper industry, and are
presented, as seen above, as financially exigent to newspaper owners and perhaps even
beneficial to newspapers themselves. The sales are allocative decisions, beyond the
control of journalists. Nearly all of the discourse analyzed in this chapter is about
operational control, about how newspaper journalists organize their day-to-day labor, and
how journalists remember their work. Through this discourse, in continuing to organize
and conceptualize their work for themselves (and by doing so publicly, for the wider
audience of readers), they can maintain some control over the meaning of their work.

Newsroom moves highlight inescapable changes to the industry and practices of
newspaper journalism, and these stories documented some of those recent changes.
Again, the newspaper is not becoming post-industrial or being deindustrialized, but
moving into a different industrial future. These newsroom moves force a specific
conceptual reckoning: while newspaper journalism remains industrial in nature, it is also
moving away from the newspaper as a physical, manufactured good. The moves
accelerate this recognition, and part of understanding the moves as an “epic voyage into
the unknown,” as the Washington Post had it, is related to this reconceptualization. The
idea of a newspaper as a 19th- or 20th-century industrial product—that is, as a
manufactured product—is indeed being lost, as needs and desires for print products fade,
and as news organizations have new practical needs.

These stories reflect an acceptance of inescapable industrial changes. In doing so,
they accommodate what Wallace articulated as “nostalgia over what has been lost”
(2012, p. 8)—that is to say, the past ideas of what a newspaper was, and the intimate and intricate identification of newspaper journalists with that idea. These stories are also forward-looking, expressing some degree of optimism for the future even as they mourn what is lost with newsroom moves and building sales. In doing this, they in part generate “reflective nostalgia” (Boym, 2001)—that future-directed nostalgia reminiscent of, to borrow from Freud, moving from melancholia to mourning. The stories are about moving on, not just physically as journalists must, but psychologically, as they should.

In these stories, and in its prospective use, nostalgia is both binding and bound.

Nostalgia is binding in functional terms. Even while some of these stories struggle to come to terms with the use of nostalgia—particularly when the word itself is deployed—it is used creatively, to tell a story that may help recompose communities on the move by reminding community members of their mission, their achievements, their value, and the opportunities that the future may hold. In doing so, it also fixes the missions and the values in order to carry them forward.

Nostalgia also is temporally bound by this same purposeful and prospective use. It is a means towards an end: informing the new newsrooms with the values and sensibilities of the old. Nostalgia, in these stories, is about maintenance, because nostalgia is not about the buildings, but about the people who inhabit them and the work they do therein. The building is something to be remembered, but people do the remembering. Shortly after the moves, however, remembering is no longer done publically in the newspaper—personal memories and nostalgic sentiments are no longer on display for readers. This may suggest that nostalgia, in these cases, is also spatially
bound. The sentiments—the “positively toned evocation[s] of the lived past” (Davis, 1979, p. 18)—have a usefulness particular to the new newsrooms.

The use of nostalgia fixes newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling that it may be preserved and revisited in the future. Counterintuitively, this also periodizes the structure of feeling, which, necessarily, will evolve in a new space, as will the identity of journalists. Massey, in her discussion of relational space, argues “that identities/entities, the relations ‘between’ them, and the spatiality which is a part of them, are all co-constitutive” (2005, p. 10). Structures of feeling, community values, senses of place—all of these cannot be truly fixed, for they exist in relation to people, spaces, and systems. In the stories studied in this chapter, an attempt is made to fix them such that continuity of work is maintained from one home to another. Once the new home is established, the process of reinforcing the sense of place begins. This is accomplished through the human activity within, and by the intersections of that activity with the space in which it occurs. Nostalgia at once preserves values and resists reconfiguration, even as newspaper journalists come to terms with the fact that such reconfigurations are inescapable and perhaps even industrially necessary.

These newspaper spaces and places and their meanings are then necessarily fluid, and leaky as well. As Massey wrote,

If space is the sphere of multiplicity, the product of social relations, and those relations are real material practices, and always ongoing, then space can never be closed, there will always be loose ends, always relations with the beyond, always potential elements of chance. (Massey, 2005, p. 95)

These loose ends of course exist when it comes to newsroom moves. For a spatial example, the *Columbus Dispatch*, whose old building was approved for historic
preservation tax credits to help finance its renovation, moved to a new office within sight of the old building. The Dispatch's new owners also own the newspaper's historic sign, which sits atop the old building, on space leased from the Dispatch's old owners. Dispatch staff, every day, can see a sign marking a building as theirs, although it no longer belongs to them. This spatial slippage has existed since early 2016, and will exist until the future of the sign is determined; it also underscores that, in allocative terms, the building never really belonged to the staff at all.

The structure of feeling of newspaper journalism is resilient, though, and widely recognized, which, I argue, is the reason that developers invoke it when rehabilitating old buildings (like the Press Hotel of Portland, Maine), redeveloping sites on which those buildings once stood (like the Ink Block in Boston, which, beyond its name, has little to do with the newspaper), or stylizing a bar on an existing newspaper-owned site (like the Local Edition bar in San Francisco, which was previously located on the San Francisco Chronicle property and whose website remains stylized like the front page of a newspaper (“Local Edition Bar – San Francisco,” n.d.). That it can be used as style, though, suggests that the civic potency of newspaper journalism's structure of feeling is under threat. While nostalgia has helped preserve it in the face of newsroom moves, nostalgia also helps bring an end to the understanding of the old buildings as important—their significance recedes because the journalists and journalism have left those spaces.

It also helps us understand that nostalgic appeals to the past of the newspaper in the future uses of the buildings resemble simulacra. In the move from places of great spatial authority, and yielding them to other uses, newspapers perhaps bequeath what we might call their public style, or public stylings—or at least future users/developers of
newspaper buildings/sites appeal to those things, invoking them as a salable or marketable aspect of the buildings. In the end, this is perhaps unsurprising. As newspapers cede real estate and as journalists use nostalgia in a limited way to manage that change, the changes to labor also recognize that the physical newspaper itself is decreasingly the end product of the work of newspaper journalists. And when newspapers close, as examined in the next chapter, stories published therein become unbound, projected outward in the hopes that newspapers that have met their end will be remembered in certain ways, forever.
CHAPTER 4: NOSTALGIA UNBOUND, OR, HOW TO MAINTAIN A MNEMONIC COMMUNITY WHEN THE COMMUNITY IS GONE

Following newspaper closings, journalists at closed newspapers are faced with a stark loss of authority, an eradication of how they orient themselves in the world, and an eradication of their abilities to construct knowledge about the world for audiences. In the stories analyzed in this chapter, the turn to collective nostalgia more openly recognizes the audience’s role in maintaining the values of newspaper journalism, for journalists at those closed newspapers no longer have the ability to repeatedly reassert their values, as in the cases of job loss and building sales and newsroom moves. Collective nostalgia becomes perhaps most significant in this case, as it is oriented not to a specific and diminished future, as in the case of job losses and newsroom moves; instead, it is oriented to an uncertain future. Whether newspaper journalism’s values actually will be preserved is unknown—and such journalism as a way of knowing, as a source or ontological steadiness, is directly challenged. The use of collective nostalgia holds out the possibility of preserving at least the reasons that newspaper journalism mattered, even though it cannot preserve newspaper journalism itself.

When a metropolitan daily newspaper closes, its cultural authority necessarily comes to an end, for it will never again report or comment on events. The closing of a newspaper, much like the newsroom layoffs and newsroom moves discussed in the previous two chapters, is an economic decision. Closings are culminations of base processes—in these cases, generally reduced to profitability or lack thereof—and while, as per Raymond Williams, the base does not always fully determine the superstructure, in these cases it largely does. The superstructure of each individual community of
newspaper journalists is predicated on the existence of the newspaper in the first place. With the closing of a newspaper comes the necessary end of the local communities of journalists and their culture, and the end of a particular kind of ontological security for both those journalists and their audiences.

This poses a particular problem for newspaper journalists as a mnemonic community. So long as the newspaper exists, newspaper journalists can articulate and negotiate and renegotiate the meaning of their work when they take themselves as the subjects of their stories, as the discourse studied to this point in this dissertation makes clear. But the demise of their newspapers forecloses the opportunity for the same kind of future self-reflexivity. As Meyers has observed, journalists in their self-reflexivity tell “stories about their own work and the role they have played and still play in shaping social memories” (2007, p. 721). The last moment that newspaper journalists retain the authority to tell these stories is in the final editions of their newspapers; for this reason, this chapter argues, those final editions are crafted as memory objects. The discourse within these editions—as well as the material final newspapers themselves—is aimed at the future memory of the newspaper, newspaper journalists, and their social meanings. The discourse in the final editions is constructed of nostalgic memories of the newspaper, even as the physical final editions themselves are constructed as future memory objects.

Physical objects, both within journalism and beyond, link identity to community, to cultural and historical contexts, and to memory (e.g. Arendt, 1958; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 1989; Kitch, 2000; Kitch, 2009; Radley, 1990; Stewart, 1984/1993). Journalistic memory objects—both material artifacts and discursive texts that “extend the cultural authority of journalism”—have been found to engage in rhetorical strategies that
“conflate their own past with the American past” including “reusing past content as historical evidence” about present conditions, explicitly marking memory objects as such, “personalizing the past,” and “envisioning the future” (Kitch, 2002, p. 47). These strategies are often present in stories in the final editions of newspapers, making clear that memory is the target of these stories and editions.

This chapter focuses on what is remembered in the final editions, what the final editions ask readers to remember, and how “rules of remembrance” (Zerubavel, 1996, p. 286) that govern such discourse are grounded in and reflect newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling. The collective nostalgia articulated in this discourse is of journalists, and directed at colleagues—but is as importantly directed at readers. It is nostalgia of newspaper journalism, for journalists and readers both.

The memories offered in these stories often reflect a “mythical structure” that is “needed when remembrance is to sustain a people” (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994, p. 58). According to Irwin-Zarecka, such structure is made manifest by four elements: articulating a “myth of the origin”; telling stories of heroes as moral exemplars; explaining the effects of outside forces in a highly selective manner, and offering “the narrative of shared suffering, greatly strengthening the sense of moral obligation to the communal past” (1994, p. 58). Final edition stories about newspapers’ histories and social roles involved all aspects of this “mythical structure.” Seen through the lens of this model, these stories are one attempt to sustain the community of newspaper journalists through memory, and the memories shared are predominantly nostalgic in nature.

The “mythical structure” manifest in this discourse resembles Wertsch’s schematic narrative template (2008). In Wertsch’s view, such a template allows us to see
how deep collective memory resists change, and how it can be highly conservative. Discourse in the final editions of newspapers, though, is forced to recognize its own end; those who construct it—newspaper journalists—use these stories as attempts to preserve their values and their structure of feeling for the future. Nonetheless, the demise of these newspapers threatens this deep memory, their structure of feeling, and the foundations of their mnemonic communities. Because the newspapers studied in this chapter have no future, no social role remains for them to play, except insofar as they can establish memory of and nostalgia for their work in the minds of readers. These stories, and their assembly into memory objects, aim to fix a nostalgic memory of each newspaper as a vessel of newspaper journalism’s history, character, and spirit, in which the value of newspaper journalism may endure.

The newspaper final edition, as a class of memory object, differs in a fundamental way from the anniversary editions of magazines studied by Kitch (2002), and from other mnemonic manifestations of journalism that bring together “the past, present, and future in some meaningful way for members of the group” (Zelizer, 1995, p. 227). In particular, manifestations in which the collective identity of journalists is tied to their cultural authority to interpret events for a wider public (e.g. Edy, 1999; Kitch, 2009; Lang & Lang, 1989; Meyers, 2007; Schudson, 1992; Zelizer, 1002) presume an indefinite future existence of present-day journalistic products and practices. In the last-ever editions of newspapers that presumption is gone; cessation of publication has foreclosed that possibility. Like stories about layoffs and newsroom moves, stories in closing newspapers about closing newspapers still address past, present, and future—often all at the same time—but the future temporality differs.
Applying Tenenboim-Weinblatt’s (2011) articulation of prospective memory helps clarify this difference. Prospective memory, in her scheme, calls for remembering to take action in the future. As seen in the previous two chapters, collective memory and collective nostalgia are used to reconsolidate communities of newspaper journalists in the wakes of layoffs and newsroom moves. The future actions to be taken involve continuity: continuing to do one’s work well, and continuing to fulfill the mission of the newspaper. But the newspapers studied in this chapter have no future; their final editions necessarily envision a future in which neither the newspaper nor its journalists play a part. This is not to say that journalists themselves don’t survive (although illness and death metaphors and obituary forms pervade discourse in the final editions). Rather, they may not survive as newspaper journalists (because the occupation is shrinking), and the cultural authority of their newspapers necessarily ends with the end of publication. Newspapers are material artifacts; these artifacts are vessels for the discursive texts produced by newspaper journalists. As the artifact disappears, so disappears the ability of newspaper journalists to maintain their own cultural and interpretive authority.

Yet as a memory object the newspaper transforms from a disposable object into one that is to be saved and revisited in the future. The final discourse produced by journalists about their newspapers—which articulates the ongoing social value of newspaper journalism even as their publications and jobs both come to an end—is thus also preserved. As discursive texts, these final editions prepare for a future in which the newspaper and the journalists who staff it will have lost authority over how they will be remembered. The production of the newspaper as memory object is an attempt to project that lost authority past its natural end, ferrying a message into the future of how the
newspaper and its journalists should be remembered. The action to be taken, in prospective memory terms, is to remember to remember the newspaper in the future.

As a communicative text, the final publication of a newspaper offers something unique: it is at once the event being commemorated (the publication and distribution of the last-ever edition of a newspaper) and the commemoration of the event (the discourse about the social meaning of the newspaper). Materiality and discourse collapse into the same thing: the print newspaper itself. A temporal collapse occurs as well: neither the material newspaper nor the discourse it typically ferries will exist in the future—the future, then, must be imbricated into the present-day discourse, in ways that exceed merely envisioning the future. This is one manifestation of what Chalaby called “symbolized contexts” (1998). Final editions as memory objects offer that entirety of text and context together: “Not only is the ‘context’ in the text, in the sense that the social conditions of existence of a text are fully reflected in the text, but the ‘text is context,’ because it is entirely made up of contexts” (1998, p. 62-63).

One significant social condition revealed here is that the discourse published in these final editions is not only for contemporaneous readers, then; it is also discourse of and for the future, and that discourse is packaged as part of a memory object (Gilewicz, 2015). As Zelizer (1995) observed about the uses of collective memory, journalists deploy the past for present-day ends. In the case of these last-ever editions, the present-day ends primarily regard the future: how each newspaper and newspaper journalism's structure of feeling are to be remembered following a third collapse that each newspaper also addresses, namely, the collapse of the individual newspapers and the collapsing newspaper industry.
This chapter examines the uses and functions of the past, present, and future temporalities vis-à-vis memory and nostalgia in 14 English-language metropolitan daily newspapers that ceased publishing a print edition between 2005 and 2017. Two of these newspapers closed suddenly, and their final editions do not contain self-reflexive content—that is, no stories about the closings were published. One was changed into a weekly hyperlocal section as a part of a consolidation of regional newspapers. The other 11 newspapers published extensive material about their own closings. In aggregate, 482 of the 909 total items published by these 11 newspapers were about the closings, and in most newspapers, were by far the dominant news of the day. Much as when discourse turned highly nostalgic in the days surrounding the move of a newspaper newsroom to a new home, discourse studied in this chapter similarly brings together past, present, and future into the same stories, pulling future concerns—about how newspaper journalism should be remembered—into present-day discourse. Base processes—financial concerns

2 The newspapers discussed here chapter and the dates they ended daily print publication are: Albuquerque Tribune, February 23, 2008; Baltimore Examiner, February 19, 2009; Birmingham Post-Herald, September 23, 2005; Cincinnati and Kentucky Posts, December 31, 2007; Honolulu Advertiser, June 6, 2010; Honolulu Star-Bulletin, June 6, 2010; The New York Sun, September 30, 2008; Oakland Tribune, April 4, 2016; Philadelphia Bulletin, June 1, 2009; Rocky Mountain News, February 27, 2009; Seattle Post-Intelligencer, March 17, 2009; Tucson Citizen, May 16, 2009; Tampa Tribune, closed May 3, 2016; Washington Examiner, June 14, 2013. The Philadelphia Bulletin and Tampa Tribune both closed suddenly; their final editions did not include self-reflexive content. The Oakland Tribune was merged into the East Bay Times along with other Bay Area newspapers, and did not publish self-reflexive content on its last day of daily publication; it now appears as weekly section in the East Bay Times. The Los Angeles and the Long Beach Registers, editions/expansions of the Orange County Register that failed five months after their 2014 creation, were not included in this analysis.

3 “Items” for the purposes of this chapter includes all editorial copy, stand-alone photographs, illustrations, and other stand-alone graphics.
in particular—have periodized each newspaper. In turn, these newspapers deploy a prospective nostalgia that periodizes the values of contemporary newspaper journalism, attempting to preserve them for the future, and aiming to create a memory that, somehow, impossibly, might maintain newspaper journalists’ mnemonic community.

**Past Presences: Heroes, Awards, Front Pages**

These articles, which recall the work of both current and past journalists, marshal the past in order to craft a present understanding of each newspaper's historical and social significance. Hagiographic and mythologizing stories of past journalists' achievements, stories that revisit past prize-winning news coverage and how the newspapers effected change in their geographic communities, and stories that remediate front pages that covered historical stories of local, national, or global significance all remind readers of the newspaper’s outsized role in interpreting events and in delivering readers a version of the wider world. These treatments of the past call upon nostalgia for those moments when the newspaper and its journalists were, perhaps, at their finest. These stories offer memories of past successes that transcend both time and material conditions, and assert the value of more recent work by comparing it favorably to the best work of the past.

**Heroes from the Past, for Today**

These stories present the natures of both the newspaper and its journalists as heroic, serving not only their readers but also wider community interest as chroniclers, storytellers, and/or historians of that community. While stories sometimes recognize the diminished present state of the newspapers, the stories nonetheless articulate the present-
day work of newspaper journalism as aligned with and in the tradition of past journalistic heroes and accomplishments. This reasserts the value of contemporary work in the face of certain, imminent demise.

In *The New York Sun*, an article published in its obituary section by its obituary writer drew both from the past of the most recent iteration (founded in 2002) and from the past of its eponymous predecessor:

Whereas the original New York Sun uncovered the mob's involvement with shipping that became the basis for ‘On the Waterfront,’ the new Sun helped crack corruption at the United Nations and disclosed student complaints of bias against Israel at Columbia University. (Miller, 2008, p. 13)

It also compares the novelty of the original *Sun* and its founder, Benjamin Day, with the creation of the latter-day *Sun* by Seth Lipsky. Here, the *Sun* harkens back to a markedly more famous publication related only by name, invoking the earlier *Sun*'s historical significance in order to articulate its own.

The *Sun*, despite its relatively small circulation, its short tenure (fewer than seven years of publishing) and the explicitly political nature of its founding (to be a New York daily newspaper with a stridently conservative and pro-Israel political voice), nonetheless remembered the same sorts of things as much more long-running newspapers that had failed: stories that effected change, the people who wrote them, and both the incidental and ongoing influence of each.

The *Sun* was a well of reporting talent from which other publications drew. The “obituary” article mentions Ben Smith, who passed through the New York *Observer* to *Politico* to become editor-in-chief of *BuzzFeed*; Seth Mnookin, who moved onto *Newsweek*, and later *Vanity Fair* and MIT; and Rachel Donadio, who left to join the *New
York Times Book Review, became the European Culture Correspondent for The New York Times, and most recently has worked as a Paris-based culture and politics writer for The Atlantic. The article also celebrates Sun successes, such as getting the paper produced during the 2003 blackout in the Northeast U.S. and Sun reports that played a role in the conviction of a Brooklyn Democratic Party power broker.

Further, articles in each newspaper engage in deliberate hagiography and mythmaking about each newspaper’s role in the world and the work accomplished by its journalists. At the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, editorial cartoonist David Horsey remembered (and imagined) some such journalists and their triumphs:

When I think of the history of this newspaper, I think of the long succession of artists, editors, reporters and photographers who have made the P-I their own for a time, then handed it off to a new generation

I think of the men who set up a press in a frontier town on the shore of Elliott Bay back in 1863 and started it all.

I think of those who managed to get out an edition of the paper amid the ashes and smoke of the Great Seattle Fire in 1889.

I think of P-I reporter Beriah Brown Jr., who chartered a tugboat to intercept the gold-laden ship arriving from the Klondike in 1897, then rushed back to file a story and scoop the competition.

I think of what the P-I newsroom was like in 1920 and 1930 and 1940 and imagine it as a scene right out of a Spencer Tracy/Katharine Hepburn movie. (Horsey, 2009, p. A18)

For Horsey, and for many other journalists reflecting on the closings of their newspapers, the history of the newspaper is told through the story of the people who staffed it, and staffed it well. This litany articulates what journalists think, and what readers should remember, about the newspaper at the moment of and following its demise.

Equally important to note is that except for knowledge of his immediate predecessors, what Horsey thinks of when he thinks of the newspaper's history is not his own lived experience. Instead, he remembers the founding of the newspaper, remembers
the journalists who covered events foundational to the city of Seattle, and then imagines his newsroom-as-film-trope. He has learned the newspaper’s history; he remembers what he has been told or what he has read of that history: memory once removed, an invocation of the culture of journalistic labor at the Post-Intelligencer. Further, he remembers the wider geographic history—the fire, the Klondike gold rush—through the newspaper’s role in reporting each. To borrow phrasing from Davis (1979), Horsey does not offer a positively toned evocation of his own lived past, but invokes other memories, not his own, to offer a positively toned evocation of the newspaper's lived past. Two forms of memory are at work: social memory of shared lived experience and recollections of institutional memory/history.

The Rocky Mountain News published an expansive multi-page, mostly chronological history of past editors, columnists, reporters, and photographers. This history republished old stories (with context), laid claim to interpretive authority, and reinforced the image of the swaggering and effectual journalist. One editor who “helped save [the paper] from certain death” (“Jack Foster,” 2009, p. S16) told readers in a 1942 item why the paper entered the tabloid format, and in another recycled item, discussed grieving the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy. Damon Runyon, before he went on to write for the New York American and write the short stories on which the musical Guys and Dolls was based, wrote for the Rocky Mountain News. The final edition ran two old Runyon columns: one on state fairs, and one on pumpkin pies. In another reprint, John Coit (“John Coit,” 2009, p. S21), who “charged into town in the early ‘80s, a flawed man trailing bad marriages and bad habits” called readers to submit their
Christmas memories in one of his last columns before his death at 38; those memories were re-remembered in this section.

One of the Tucson Citizen's former sports editors recalled past staffers of his acquaintance, “people of character, most of whom were characters” and “legends,” such as an “Okie” colleague who “did everything. Reported, edited, wrote a column, covered politics, read copy, wrote headlines. And he was superb,” (Simpson, 2009a, p. 2B). Another colleague, lauded for “the most beautiful movie reviews you've ever read” (Simpson, 2009a, p. 2B) was also rumored to have been a friend of Dorothy Parker, associating the reviewer and thus the newspaper with an especially renowned literary wit. Similarly, at the Albuquerque Tribune, a staff writer followed a colleague's advice about how to treat the newspaper's demise: “write about how The Tribune tells—has told—stories. Can't argue with that approach” (Reed Jr., 2008, p. A2).

These articles often discuss specific journalists in these ways, and identify journalists with their work. When this occurs, the people and their work are presented as inextricable, as in the case of one past Albuquerque Tribune feature writer: “You can't write about Tribune feature stories without bringing up Hank Stuever” (Reed Jr., 2008, p. A2). As a way to assert the value of Stuever’s work (and to instruct readers who may not know of him), the article immediately notes that Stuever now works at the Washington Post, and as of this writing is that newspaper’s television critic. It also notes that he was a 1993 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing for his work at the Tribune.

Despite the Baltimore Examiner’s youth—it existed for merely five years—its gossip columnist positioned her work as a part of a personal family legacy and the
legacies of Baltimore newspapering and social columns, emphasizing family and professional continuity:

As many of you know, my mother Sylvia Boone-Badger was Baltimore’s first Liz Smith when it came to society news and gossip, first with the Baltimore News American, then with both the Baltimore Evening Sun and Baltimore Sun. . . . The brass at The Examiner gave me this wonderful opportunity to continue my mom's legacy, and it's been a terrific ride. (Boone-Simanski, 2008, p. 2)

Defining past (and some present) staffers as newspapers’ “characters” and “legends,” and associating both past and contemporary journalists with other better-known personages (like Liz Smith) and news organizations (like the Baltimore Sun) all help assert the value of these particular newspapers and newspaper journalists—they remain of the same type and quality—even as the newspapers close.

Such hagiography closely ties to each paper’s claim to authority over its own history and memory. In a Post-Intelligencer piece titled “Agony, rapture, bribes and felons: Best stories were the people behind them,” the “people behind them” were the journalists. For example:

Love letter, 1981. Reporter Jack Smith was sent to the Kingdome to write a color story on Kingdome prep football title games. One cheerleader somehow reminded Jack of the first woman he’d ever had a crush on, so he produced a missive, rampant with agony and rapture, about unrequited love—and we ran it! (Rudman, 2009, p. A10)

Another Post-Intelligencer article, headlined “A cast of characters, with storied histories,” succinctly summarized these newspapers’ mythmaking aspect of memory work. “They swore and typed and quit and typed and rescinded and typed and risked their lives, jobs and relationships for the pleasure, pressure and paycheck earned from a daily newspaper” (Lewis, 2009, p. A8). A history of the Post-Intelligencer's investigative
reporting began with the following question and answer: “Who feared us? People in positions of power who abused that power” (McCumber, 2009, p. A14).

The newspaper, then, is both the true power and, despite the potentially offensive characteristics of the tribe of journalists, the true enforcer of community values. Ultimately, these stories, pulled from newspaper journalism’s mnemonic well, all reassert how newspaper journalism’s culture of labor matters beyond the economic value of that labor—at a time when financial considerations have killed these newspapers.

**Prize Memories**

Prizes recognize journalistic success and efficacy, and revisiting such awards remediates work judged to be among each newspaper’s finest. Stories and items are discussed and sometimes repackaged and republished as a part of the final editions—another component of the memory object, drawing from the further past. Nostalgia about these successes is deployed for the future, to be one more element of the final edition as nostalgic memory object.

In addition to identifying reporter Hank Stuever as integral to the history of feature writing at the *Albuquerque Tribune* because of his Pulitzer nomination, the newspaper found its pinnacle in a Pulitzer win: “Obviously, The Trib’s high point was Eileen Welsome’s Pulitzer Prize-winning 1993 series about Americans our government used as lab rats for plutonium experiments in the 1940s” (Reed Jr., 2008, p. A2). Welsome’s series became a PEN-award winning book, and was the subject of a 2,500-word front-page feature article on the penultimate day of the *Tribune*, which included a photo of the newsroom celebration on the day the prize was announced (Krueger, 2008).
The use of “obviously” presumes that journalists and readers will both agree upon the newspaper’s high point, and draws readers into the nostalgic narrative.

The latter-day *Rocky Mountain News* had become well-respected for its photojournalism, and in the 2000s won a streak of awards, mostly for photography. It received two Pulitzer Prizes for breaking news photography, for its coverage of the 1999 mass shooting at Columbine High School and its coverage of an especially disastrous wildfire season in 2002. In 2006, it won two Pulitzers—one in feature writing and one in feature photography—for a 24-page special report on a Marine major whose job it is to notify the families of servicemen who died in combat. And in 2000, a story of a 14-year-old undocumented migrant worker who died in a van crash on a smuggling route in Colorado, and the return of his body to his home in rural Guatemala, won a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for international photojournalism.

In its final edition, the *Rocky Mountain News* published a double-truck package about each of these awards. Each package featured a brief column explaining the award on the left, accompanied by a *Rocky* front page that featured the stories (except in the case of the migrant worker story, for which it published a special section and recycled that section's front page). Each package also republished between one and four photographs for which the newspaper received its prizes; the story on the Marine major included a brief excerpt from the reporting as well as two images. Eight pages of the *Rocky*’s 52-page special commemorative section were dedicated to revisiting these awards. Exhibiting both nostalgia of and nostalgia for, each package gives readers a chance to engage a relatively recent story that the *Rocky* had brought them and to fondly
remember the newspaper's achievements, even if the underlying stories, like the Columbine massacre, may be disturbing.

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, the only other of these papers to receive a Pulitzer Prize, also recycled past content from its editorial cartoonist David Horsey, who twice won the prize. It included a cartoon from a portfolio on the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal, for which he won the Pulitzer in 1999, and a cartoon from a more wide-ranging portfolio for which he won the prize in 2003. Even with prizes in hand, newspaper journalists also focused on the efficacy of the newspaper as an institution that helped its readers tell their stories, and advocated for just causes.

A *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* columnist wrote that, primarily, “Journalists help [the community] by parachuting into lives and bearing witness to shared hopes and fears, by giving voice and value to the lives and words of others” (Jamieson Jr., 2009, p. A11). Jim Sheeler, who won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing with the *Rocky Mountain News*, wrote, “Walls of journalism prizes hang in the newsroom, but they’re not the real rewards.” The real rewards came from effective storytelling, from telling those stories that “could make people stop” and take notice of things like a war widow sleeping next to the casket of her dead husband the night before his burial—one of the stories and images from Sheeler's Pulitzer-winning package (Sheeler, 2009, p. S28).

The newspapers that did not win similar prizes nonetheless expressed shared values about serving their communities. The final editorial of the *Birmingham Post-Herald* asserted that the newspaper had always advocated for better government and against corruption. The editorial offered examples of an editor who argued against then-legal usurious interest rates until the state legislature dealt with the matter; of the same
editor whose right to write an Election Day editorial had to be settled by the U.S. Supreme Court; and of the newspaper, since the 1960s, being “a consistent advocate for civil rights, for bringing into the mainstream of community life any and all people who were on the outside looking in” (“Farewell, dear readers,” 2005).

And at the Cincinnati Post, one article gave a succinct and holistic account of the social role of the newspaper, articulating its values as continuous:

> In its 126-year-history, The Post exposed corruption, helped change city government, fought for social change and chronicled the daily lives of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky through wars and peace, through floods and tornadoes, through hard times and boom times. (Kreimer, 2007a, p. 1A)

These examples from four different newspapers have one thing very much in common: an emphasis on the newspaper as interpreter and advocate, ways in which the newspaper stands between the world and its readers, and between the readers and powers greater than them. That is to say, they emphasize what the newspaper is for, and how it should be remembered.

**Front Pages as Keepsakes**

The past front pages deployed in these final editions emphasize the newspaper’s role as mediator and interpreter, especially over events recognized as of historical significance. Newspapers and their front pages bear keepsake value, linking memory and historical authority as one Seattle Post-Intelligencer story makes clear: “And when our lives changed overnight—when President Kennedy was slain, or the Twin Towers fell, or President Obama was elected—it was the next day's newspaper that people thought of
saving” (Smith, 2009). The newspaper not only gives readers the news, major news can transform the newspaper into a memory object.

The *Cincinnati Post* and *Kentucky Post*, sister papers that shared content and served communities on both sides of the Ohio River, also shared a special section titled “Our Front Pages: Looking back through The Post.” The title puns on the idea of looking through the past, with the Post/past pun itself an assertion of interpretive authority. “Looking back through The Post” refers both to rifling the archives to find the “collection of some of our most notable front pages” (“Our Front Pages,” 2007, p. 1E), and to the way in which the *Post* serves as a mediator and interpreter of the past. In the past, the *Post* selected the most influential events of each day to present to readers; at the moment of its demise, the *Post* selected which of those influential events were the most influential, or, perhaps, the most worthy of remembering. This special section published 18 front pages covering global and national events like the end of World War I, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy; and local events like a devastating flood and the Cincinnati Reds’ 1990 World Series victory.

Of particular note were two past front pages about the newspaper itself. One, titled “Beginnings,” features “The Evening Post” as predecessor title; the front page is from 1883, the year that E.W. Scripps bought it, and the contextualizing paragraph notes that in 1890 “he settled on The Cincinnati Post for the masthead” (“Beginnings,” 2007, p. 2E). The other, titled “P.M. Powerhouse,” features a 1958 front page about the merger of the *Post* and the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, at a time when Scripps Howard owned both those papers and the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. About half of this front page, from July 21, 1958, is dedicated to explaining the merger from both newspapers’ perspectives, with the first
headline, spanning the full width of the page, reading “Post, Times-Star Prints First Combined Paper” (“P.M. Powerhouse,” 2007, p. 3E). While not in all caps, like the headline immediately below about a summit with the USSR, it is of nearly the same visual and rhetorical weight.

Including major changes to the newspaper as among events of world and local historical significance is an elevation suggesting that such changes may even trump other kinds of news—which, given that the newspaper is the entity that interprets or constructs news events for readers, makes sense. Major changes to the newspaper are equivalent to major changes to the world, if the newspaper is understood as having predominant interpretive authority over reality not directly experienced by readers. “Beginnings” and “P.M. Powerhouse” are also the first two pages presented in the Cincinnati Post’s special section of front pages. Such placement provides readers with historical context for the newspaper and for the front pages that follow. Importantly, because of the spatial rhetoric of the newspaper—more important or significant stories come first—the placement also underscores the idea that news about the newspaper itself, especially in times of major change, should be presented as the most significant news of the day.

Newspapers with both short and long histories recycled past front pages in similar ways, providing a short visual assessment of the history of their interpretive role in their communities, however brief. The New York Sun, a newspaper that lasted only seven years, republished 13 past front pages on the first page of its final edition, covering topics ranging from the 2003 blackout to the downfall of then New York governor Eliot Spitzer, from a New York Giants Super Bowl Victory to the deaths of Pope John Paul II and former U.S. president Ronald Reagan. The Baltimore Examiner, which lasted for fewer
than three years, published a double-truck featuring 14 front pages. These included a report on the use of small streets and alleys as sites for murders in Baltimore; a successful run into the NFL playoffs by the Baltimore Ravens; a dispute by some in Baltimore and Philadelphia over the disposition of Edgar Allan Poe’s body; a local connection to terror attacks in Mumbai; and the first election of Barack Obama as U.S. president. The *Washington Examiner* assembled “21 memorable local Washington Examiner covers” (Spiering, 2013), emphasizing its focus on local reporting.

Newspapers with much longer histories used front pages as well, often integrated into a timeline that overs an overview of that history. In Seattle, the *Post-Intelligencer* packaged a number of past front pages into a timeline organized by decade. Not every decade was awarded a front page; many were illustrated by news photography. But the reproduced front pages included one from 1876, as an example of the paper’s ‘early ancestor,’ along with coverage of the Great Seattle Fire; the 1917 U.S. declaration of war against Germany; the 1926 election of Seattle's first female mayor; the 1940 collapse of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge; the 1944 invasion of Normandy; JFK’s assassination; and their ‘extra’ edition published following the terrorism of September 11, 2001. Folding these covers into a timeline that mixed events of global, national, and local historical significance with developments at the *Post-Intelligencer* suggests that the newspaper itself is the access point to remember such past events.

On a similarly structured timeline, the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* included front pages such as “its most famous extra” covering the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese air force, a photo of a 12-year-old newsboy the prominently features the *Star-Bulletin’s “famous statehood editions,”* and a photo of a new owner in 1961 holding a 163
copy of the newspaper celebrating his purchase with a two-line banner headline (“Key events in Star-Bulletin history,” 2010, pp. 14-17). At the Tucson Citizen, the timeline mostly featured ownership changes and photos of past publishers, editors, and executives, but included past front pages of particular local significance: a 1912 front page, purportedly the first publication to announce statehood for Arizona; the 1934 arrest of the John Dillinger gang in Tucson; and the 1970 arrest of a teenager suspected of setting fire to a hotel and killing 29 people. Much like the Post-Intelligencer, these two papers integrated news about the paper with other significant events. The newspaper is not just the access point to these events, but news about the newspaper is elevated to a near rhetorical equivalency, suggesting that the newspaper thus should be remembered as having had similar significance.

These newspapers’ roles in interpreting events is presented as continuous and unchanging. They are positioned as conduits of great events—most readers did not witness those events, and therefore cannot remember the events themselves. What readers can remember is that a newspaper told them about these events, and that is precisely what the deployment of past front pages asks readers to do. Furthermore, in all cases, news or history about each newspaper—be it the front cover of the first edition or the Rocky’s change to a tabloid format—is mixed with great events in a way that lends them rhetorical equivalency. To remember great events, then, is to remember the newspaper, and to remember the newspaper is to remember its facility in interpreting the world, nostalgically, even as that facility is about to end.
Present Needs: Saying Goodbye, Death and the Family, Exculpation and Fear

When stories draw from the present, they articulate the closing of the newspaper as a moment dedicated to remembrance and reflection; they use the present to say goodbye to readers and to share the immediate, lived experience of losing one’s job, one’s colleagues, one’s employer, and even one’s profession; and they assess the state of journalism, both locally and nationally. These stories tell of a community facing an imminent crisis, and how that community attempts to navigate it. Group photos of staffs are taken and published. Stories personify the newspaper, allow it to die, and use obituary-like modes to articulate remembrances and to assert the close affinity journalists have with the newspaper. These stories metonymically identify journalists with the newspaper; they also articulate the community of journalists as a family, an additional dimension of the close bond between journalists and between journalists and their newspapers. Ultimately, these stories ultimately suggest that journalists and what they value are what readers should remember most of all. Nostalgia for these journalists and their work is one way that community memory can be carried forward, and community values can, potentially, be remembered in the future.

Saying Goodbye to Readers—and Each Other

These final editions are marked throughout as dedicated to memory, and sharing memories is one way that goodbyes are said. At the Cincinnati Post, an editorial leader on the front page promised “a collection of reminiscences” (“It's all about People,” 2007, p. 1A). That collection featured headlines such as “Recollections of Post alumni,” “Memories of Post alumni,” “Remembrance of Post past,” and “Post staff reflections.”
One *Post* contributor wrote, “A consensus emerges among more than a few Post alumni—even in the last 30 years as it functioned under a Joint Operating Agreement with the Cincinnati Enquirer, The Post was a joyride filled with effervescent memories” (Moores, 2007, p. 1D). These memories may be of the past (though some are of current staffers and very recent experiences), but they are present-day expressions of lived and living memories that are shared to navigate the demise of the newspaper.

At the *Honolulu Advertiser*, an intro graph to a collection of staff reminisces read, “The air was thick with memories as the last days at The Honolulu Advertiser disappeared one by one” (“Advertiser’s staff says farewell,” 2010, p. A29). The thickness of air offers a tactile metaphor that helps make those memories felt and real. The last article by a *Tucson Citizen* sportswriter was headlined “One sportswriter’s locker full of memories” (Rivera, 2009, p. 3C). Memories here, like nostalgia for old newsrooms and buildings, are discrete and fixed enough to be packed into a metaphorical locker.

Throughout all three broadsheet sections of the *Tucson Citizen*, a column also ran that was titled, varyingly, “Citizen staffers memories” or “Citizen staffers remember,” offering many brief memories of times and people at that newspaper. Reader letters, too, are marked as chances to remember, as at the *Cincinnati Post*, where those letters were given the headline “Readers give thanks, share memories,” and, over multiple pages of letters, jump headlines read, “Readers: Remember Post,” “Readers: Reminisce,” and “Readers: Fond memories.” A jump headline such as “Reader Memories” would serve the same purpose, and would be more precise, as at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, which carved out sidebars on its institutional timeline for "Reader Memories." Readers, too, are imbricated into the nostalgic project, as they fondly remember the newspaper and say
goodbye to it. So, while the *Cincinnati Post*’s jump headlines are necessarily short, two can be read as imperatives, commands to readers to remember and reminisce, and the third can be read as defining readers as “fond memories”—for those journalists who are leaving them.

As detailed at length in the previous section, what was remembered, both by readers and by journalists, were stories of journalistic achievement, the mythic traits of newspaper journalists themselves, and their role in interpreting the world for readers. Such memories are brought forward in time as present-day journalists associate themselves with such accomplishments and myths. Even at the *Baltimore Examiner*, a paper that lasted fewer than four years, such recent experience was worthy of reflection and mythologizing. A business reporter invoked a mythological run, writing that the experience of working at the *Examiner* was

> a marathon for all of us . . . But I, along with others, crossed the finish line of our time with *The Examiner*. And like exhausted marathon runners, we’re finally catching our breath, looking back at what we accomplished. (Cannarsa, 2009, p. 15).

The experience and memory are both collective, and the reflection is on achievements; the work experience is embodied, like physical labor, and evokes the exhaustion that follows both stress and triumph—albeit at the newspaper’s ultimate moment.

Also at the *Baltimore Examiner*, the individual traits of the current tribe of journalists were noted as lasting memories by its sports editor: “Kelly Carson’s storytelling,” a critic’s “ability to Pan & Praise, but never hurt,” the “wisdom” of a columnist, another staffer’s “tireless work ethic,” another’s “ability to make me care about people I never wish to meet,” another's “prose,” another’s “scientific approach,”
another's “growth as a journalist,” the “vision” of the founding editor, and another staffer’s “mentoring and pursuit to ensure the past is never forgotten” (Gallo, 2009, p. 29). This is a litany of positive characteristics for journalists to have, along with some personal ones that humanize the newsroom, and others that are clearly inside baseball: “maternal instincts,” “paternal instincts,” “vernacular,” “fashion sense,” an “ability to mix violence with professionalism”—here, the journalist is writing to his colleagues as much as, and perhaps more so, than to his reading public.

Journalists—and particularly journalists together—are to be remembered most of all, as the frequent use of group photos suggests. Commonly, group photos are taken to record one's presence—in congregation with others—at events of some personal or group significance. In these final editions, group photos are common, showing newspaper journalists who are to be remembered, together, even while the event being marked is the end of that congregation. The photos, too, provide a visual to accompany valedictions.

The back page of the Tucson Citizen’s A section, for example, features a photo of the final staff, with a strong black stroke around the image. Next to it is the list of staff members, with their start dates, suggesting the day they were born into the Citizen family (“The Tucson Citizen staff,” 2009, p. 12A). The features staff of the Citizen also offered their own photo, a double-truck photo illustration inside the calendar section crafted as a parody of Leonardo da Vinci’s The Last Supper (“Thank you & goodbye from the Features staff,” 2009, pp. 8-9). The choice of The Last Supper should not go unnoticed, for it depicts the coming together of believers at the moment of imminent death of the focus of their belief.
At the Honolulu Advertiser, a group photograph illustrated an article assembling goodbye notes from staffers. The image was taken of most of the staff in front of the newspaper’s iconic building; as per the caption, “Those who couldn't be there on the building’s front steps have been added along the bottom” (“Advertiser's staff says farewell,” 2010, p. A29). The staff is complete, and can be remembered together.

On the last page of its commemorative section, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer published a group photo of its staff, with a caption reminding readers, “No matter who owned the Seattle Post-Intelligencer over the decades, members of the staff have been an active and integral part of the community. We'll miss you” (“P-I staff,” 2009, p. A20). Below the photo are printed, alphabetically by last name, the names of all then-current staffers, with a small dot between them—a format notably reminiscent of the Memorial Wall at the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial. The back page of the Rocky Mountain News’s commemorative section did not offer a whole staff photo, but like the Post-Intelligencer, offered a list of names and titles under the headline “The staff: As of the Final Edition.”

The front page of the first of two special sections the Cincinnati Post published about its demise was, above the fold, taken up almost entirely by a group photo of the staff; inside, a graphic numbers and names all the staff members present in the picture (Moores, 2007, p. 1D). And on the front page of its final edition, the Birmingham Post-Herald published a group photo of its staff, spanning the width of the page above the fold, under the headline “Goodbye, Birmingham, and thank you.”

The Honolulu Advertiser included a photo of its sports reporting staff on the first page of a seven-page repository of sports-section memory titled “Farewell to our readers” (“Farewell to readers,” 2010, pp. C5-C11). “Advertiser sports staff says aloha” ran as a
running headline on the next six pages. Inside, readers are promised “Our favorite stories, memories” and indeed the section is full of reminisces of reporters and columnists accompanied by photos of them, of the sports events they covered, and past front pages about a Honolulu Little League world championship team and an undefeated season for the University of Hawai‘i's football team. This seven-page section encapsulates much of how newspaper journalists say goodbye to readers and to each other: sharing (mostly) positive memories and marking the last-ever editions as “final” or “farewell” editions—a recognition that this is, indeed, the end.

The Tucson Citizen crafted its flag into something resembling a marble tombstone, with the name of the newspaper appearing as if engraved into the marble. It further marked the end of the newspaper on the front page of each section with “The final edition” in a light red font; inside each section the same words appeared on every page (except full-page ads) in white, on top of a thick black background, as a running head. The Honolulu Advertiser printed “The Final Edition” on its front page, and on pages where the newspaper reported on its end, it published a running head featuring the newspaper's first flag (as the Commercial Advertiser, from 1856, with the year under the flag) to the left of an historic photo of the Advertiser's iconic building. To the right ran the flag as it existed at the end, with the year of demise, 2010, printed immediately below. In Denver, the Rocky Mountain News's 52-page special section ran “The final edition” as a running head at the top of each page, and in Cincinnati (and Kentucky), the Post ran at the top of many of its pages, beginning with 1A, “Farewell Edition: Saying goodbye to Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky after 126 years.”
Stories in the final editions discuss how the community of journalists might come together and come to terms with their multiple losses. A business section headline in the *Baltimore Examiner* read, “A wake for our dream of Baltimore.” The “dream of Baltimore” here apparently is the *Examiner* itself, for on its final day, its journalistic staff “gather[s] in print one last time for an ink-stained wake” (Gainor, 2009, p. 15). If the history of the newspaper is the story of those journalists who staffed it, as examined in the above section on the past, then it is no surprise that end of that story takes on elements of the obituary, often explicitly.

“What's the point of helping write your own obituary?”

Stories from the final edition turn to aspects of the obituary form and to metaphors of life and death; these stories also make clear that some journalists find the experience unsettling. The repair to obituary is clear—most of all in the *New York Sun*, which assigned an “obituary” for the newspaper to none other than its own obituary writer. Elsewhere, stories invoke the word “obituary” when discussing how the end of the newspaper is being covered.

Nevertheless, discomfort with the obituary form is repeatedly expressed, and stands in for discomfort with the imminent demise of the newspaper. A *Honolulu Advertiser* columnist wrote, “Newspaper writers have the honored task of writing story obituaries for people in our community. None of us ever thought there would be a need to write an obituary for the newspaper” (Cataluna, 2010, p. A27). In the *Rocky Mountain News*, a reporter wrote,

Despite the hundreds of life stories I’ve told—after all of the tear-smeared drives
returning from funerals—this remains one of the most difficult.

When I arrived at the Rocky, I was known primarily as an obituary writer. I wanted to tell the stories that might be lost. I wanted to tell them for the last time.

We’re not trained to write obituaries in the first person. (Sheeler, 2009, p. S28)

A Post-Intelligencer reporter expressed similar sentiments:

Writing obituaries is a rite of passage for journalists—a first beat for cub reporters, and often the last for those who've been around long enough to have covered, or been friends or enemies with, those whose passings they note.

Eventually, a gut-punch of an obit comes along. Now it’s our turn. (Smith, 2009, p. A3)

The Birmingham Post-Herald’s sports editor wrote about rallying to prepare the final sports section: “I guess we could've stayed home. I mean, what's the point of helping write your own obituary?” (Adamson, 2005).

Adamson goes on to write, “The point is we have pride.” The newspaper gets the “story obituary” treatment because newspaper journalists articulate the newspaper as a crucial, living part of the community whose end is exceptionally newsworthy and whose demise should be actively mourned. To do so, they use similes and metaphors to bring the newspaper to life and to lay it to rest. Ontological metaphors are particularly pervasive in this discourse, and may be especially useful for these stories; according to Lakoff and Johnson, such metaphors “are necessary for even attempting to deal rationally with our experiences” (1980, p. 26). Giving the newspaper being and agency is one way these stories highlight the newspapers' vitality, while also coming to terms with its loss.

Metaphors of life and death were common, and helped personify newspapers. The inception of the Baltimore Examiner was akin to the birth of a child, for example:

Publisher Michael Phelps, Editor Frank Keegan, Editorial Page Editor Marta Hummel and this writer spent much of the night [before the first paper was
published] riding around to the distribution points and the printing plant as the baby was delivered. (Leffler, 2009, p. 18)

A full page personified the *Tucson Citizen*, literally giving it first-person voice in an article titled “My Life Story,” illustrated by the cover of its first-ever edition: “The day I drew my first breath, Oct. 15, 1870, was a lovely day—cooler than the days before it.” Then, the *Citizen* turns to what Davis (1979) called that “positively toned evocation of the lived past,” with the newspaper itself as character:

I saved my best stuff for my chief competitor in the political shouting match, the *Arizonan*. My favorite was this small item, dropped in the midst of a column of news briefs: ‘For a whole paper full of willful and premeditated lies, see this day's *Arizonan*.’

The *Arizonan* is gone. And, after today, so am I. (“My Life Story,” 2009, p. 10C)

One *Rocky Mountain News* reporter gave the birth, life, and death of that newspaper something of a mythic tone:

It came into being on a dark night two years before the Civil War’s first gunshots, survived a flood that washed away its press and countless threats to its very existence, then enjoyed, in the twilight of its life, recognition as one of the best newspapers in the country. But today marks the final milestone in the storied history of the *Rocky Mountain News*, Colorado’s first newspaper and oldest continually operated business. (Vaughan, 2009, p. S3)

Life necessarily entails death; these stories frequently note such. An article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* quoted the novelist (and former staffer) Tom Robbins to draw a stark distinction between the visceral newspaper and the cold technology of the Internet:

“There's something about the way ink bleeds into the paper. . . . There’s more soul there,” [Robbins] said. “Ink is the blood of language. Paper is the language's flesh.”

The flesh is dying now, here in Seattle and in many places. . . . A story well-told will lose some of its flesh and blood, diminished by false urgency and backlit pixels. (Thiel, 2009, p. A16)
Here, the newspaper was both denotatively and connotatively vital, but at the end, “the flesh is dying.” A Rocky Mountain News columnist wrote, “newspapers don't simply close. They die. . . . The Rocky lived. It breathed” (Littwin, 2009, p. S46). A former Tucson Citizen sports columnist wrote in that newspaper, “it saddens me more than I can tell you that the Tucson Citizen is about to draw its last breath” (Simpson, 2009b, p. 3C). The Citizen’s acting editor wrote, “At press time, our ultimate deadline, this was our last gasp—our final edition” (Boice, 2009, p. 1A). Here, “our final edition” is “our last gasp.” The newspaper is a living, breathing entity, and “our ultimate deadline” is death. In the same article, the Citizen editor echoed the Rocky Mountain News columnist:

“Newspapers don't just close, they die. And death is personal” (Boice, 2009, p. 1A).

Family Voices, Family Values

The experience of these “deaths” is personalized in multiple ways, and is most commonly expressed as familial, often in the first-person voice. The publisher of the Baltimore Examiner wrote, “to my colleagues and friends at The Baltimore Examiner:

Thank you for all that you have done. This was not a job for any of you. We were like a family working together tirelessly serving our readers and advertisers” (Beatty, 2009, p. 18). One Tucson Citizen staffer found her newspaper to resemble a “real family” who was “sarcastic, funny, smart, lovable, cynical” (Stanton, 2009, p. 1B). That same editor/columnist co-wrote an especially prickly Citizen column that opened,

For those of you looking to this space for perspective on the Citizen’s demise, for those looking for What It All Means—you are looking in the wrong place. Excuse us, but we're a little too close to the situation right now.
Do you ask someone how it feels when a relative dies after a long bout with cancer? (Kimble & Stanton, 2009, p. 1B)

In the *Cincinnati and Kentucky Post*, a reporter quoted a former president of the Ohio State Senate: “I suspect the full impact of The Post leaving us won't be felt until we're into 2008. Then, like a lost member of the family, people will begin to realize how cherished it really was” (Kreimer, 2007a, p. 14A).

In another story, the same reporter noted, “The slogan for The Post used to be, ‘The newspaper that spends the evening with the family’” (Kreimer, 2007b, p. 1A). In that article, headlined “Post was part of the family,” readers were reporters’ “second families,” often taking primacy over their own:

Longtime reporters say they were not writing for the paper or the paycheck, they were writing for the readers. That’s why they came in early and stayed late and misses suppers with their own families so they could do right by their second families—their readers.

And that’s why The Post’s closing after 126 years is hitting some readers like a death in the family. (Kreimer, 2007b, p. 1A)

More often, though, journalists found their second families in their colleagues and their newspapers. In an article about the last day at the *Honolulu Advertiser*, a longtime editorial assistant who disliked her first days at the paper but came to love her job, said, “I’m going to miss our big, dysfunctional news family” (Nakaso, 2010, p. A30). The Advertiser's deputy director of photography “worked for 41 years for The Advertiser, where the people became his extended family. . . . ‘it will be a family we all will miss’” (Nakaso, 2010, p. A30). The Rocky Mountain News’s Washington correspondent “flew to Denver because he had a haunting feeling and a reporter’s instinct that the end was near. He arrived just before Thursday’s announcement. ‘This is my family,’ Sprengelmeyer said. ‘I’m going down with my family’” (McCrimmon, 2009, p. 6). And the Rocky’s
media critic—an outside columnist, not a full-time staffer—addressed the paper directly:

“You were part of my family even before I was born, from the early 1950s when my father was your notoriously tough copy editor” (Kopel, 2009, p. 65), positioning his work as a part of a personal family legacy, much as the Baltimore Examiner’s gossip columnist did, as discussed early in the previous section.

Family references and metaphors serve multiple purposes here. First, by identifying themselves as a part of a family in these stories, newspaper journalists articulate a bond that is greater than that of friends or colleagues, a bond thought to be irreducible, to a group that will welcome you and to which you could always return. Second, by framing the end of the newspaper as a death within the family, or of an entire family, journalists can articulate the depth of their sorrow. The death and family metaphors are ways journalists can make sense of their loss, and to convey the scope of that loss to each other and to readers.

The metaphorical family is not all that is lost here—the metaphorical voices of and for their communities are lost as well. The president of the Cincinnati chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists told a Post reporter, “The Post offered another view, another voice. When it comes to news, you cannot have too many views” (Kreimer, 2007a, p. 14A). The final editorial of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer noted, “The daily newspaper opinion pages that for more than a century made the P-I ‘The Voice of the Northwest’ are no more after this edition” (P-I Editorial Board, 2009, p. A19). At the Birmingham Post-Herald, a past staffer wrote, “The funeral is always sad. The death of a newspaper much sadder. A vital community voice has been silenced. Instead of two opinions, now only one. What a loss” (Lumpkin, 2005). Remarkably, here the death of a
newspaper is “much sadder” than a funeral for a person. This makes sense, though, considering that journalists are metonymically identified with their communities and with their newspapers.

At the *Tucson Citizen*, columnists wrote, “Healthy journalism equates with a vibrant city. A dead paper is analogous to the city's libraries closing—a chilling prospect” (Kimble & Stanton, 2009, p. 1B). Others recalled the *Citizen*’s motto: “In the end there is one great consolation. Our slogan has always been ‘The Citizen is Tucson.’ We meant it, and we earned the right to say it every day” (Buckley, 2009, p. 3). A past *Citizen* editor emphasized the identification, writing, “Our motto was ‘The Citizen IS Tucson,’ and one of our promotions remarked ‘If you care about Tucson, you have to read the Citizen’” (Hatfield, 2009, p. 3B). If the newspaper is the city, the end of the newspaper is then the end of the city as well. And in a way, it is, for the newspaper’s construction of the city will disappear.

Where the newspaper may be the community, newspaper journalists themselves are the newspaper. A *Baltimore Examiner* business columnist wrote,

> A good newspaper isn’t pulp and ink. It’s people. Damn fine people you might never meet. Young reporters trying to make a difference in a dying or at-best changing industry. Veteran reporters who have survived layoffs, downsizings and closings to bring you the news you need each day. It’s ad salespeople who try their darnedest to help your business thrive and deliverymen and women who break their backs carrying tons of information to your home in all kinds of weather. (Gainor, 2009, p. 15)

Notably, and somewhat exceptionally, Gainor included business-side employees here. However, while ad salespeople and deliverymen and women occasionally get to say goodbye to readers in these final editions, with a quote in a story or a small item in staff remembrances, nearly all discourse about the end of newspapers in these final editions is
written by journalists, and that which is not is edited by journalists. Journalists’ voices are dominant; if a good newspaper is people, those people are the journalists.

Also at the Examiner, an opinion writer wrote, “I wish we weren’t leaving, but we are. What’s important is that we remember The Examiner. And maybe, with The Examiner’s precedent, a newspaper like us will come back one day” (Robinson, 2009, p. 20). The desire is for a newspaper that could have been but is not, and the construction “a newspaper like us” is revealing. This staffer did not write a more natural phrase, such as “a newspaper like The Examiner,” but “a newspaper like us.” The newspaper is people, the people are journalists; the journalists are the newspaper. Similarly, a Cincinnati Post columnist wrote, “The newspaper is nothing more than a collection of professionals doing their best to get at the core truth of the forces touching the city they serve” (2007, p. 1B). This “collection of professionals” engage in journalistic practice, and in this view it is clear that the newspaper is composed of, at least primarily, journalists.

At the Rocky Mountain News, the odd and oddly compelling statement “We're not trained to write obituaries in the first person” (Sheeler, 2009, p. 28) is similarly revealing. On the face of it, the statement straddles the obvious and the illogical. Of course journalists are not trained to write obituaries in the first person, for the quite obvious reason that, if dead, they would not be able to memorialize themselves. However, thanks to symbolic metonymy, they can suffer further: “Despite the hundreds of life stories I've told—after all of the tear-smeared drives returning from funerals—this remains one of the most difficult” (Sheeler, 2009, p. 28). If this life story is told in the first person, then indeed the life story of the Rocky Mountain News is the life story of the journalists who staff it, and the end of that story is the end of the journalists’ story as well.
Exculpation and Loss

Even if the journalists metonymically identify with the newspaper, the ends of the newspapers are not blamed on the journalists, but on the economic conditions facing the newspaper business. A distinction is continually drawn between the basal concerns of the business and finances, and the superstructural concerns of journalists and journalism, despite that the latter cannot exist without the former. The immediate causes of the closings of newspapers are typically presented as external to both journalists and those who own the newspapers.

An article in the Tucson Citizen about a possible buyer quoted Gannett’s vice president of news informing staff about the closing: “This is not about the journalism,’ Marymont said. ‘Do not in any way take this as a reflection on your journalism. You have done outstanding journalism for decades’” (Horton & Brosseau, 2009, p. 2A). In Denver, the CEO of E.W. Scripps Co., the company that owned the Rocky Mountain News, said

It’s certainly nothing you (employees at the Rocky) did. While you were out doing your job, the business model and the economy changed. . . . This was a hard decision about an unprofitable business in Denver. This is one of America's great newspapers. You’re the example. The thought of this paper going under is one of the great tragedies. (Kelley, 2009, p. 11)

The Baltimore Examiner sports editor reflected on his “best 591 days in journalism,” writing, “Sure, we're out of business, but it wasn't because of what we wrote. We beat perception, just not the economy” (Gallo, 2009, p. 29). Journalism as it was practiced at these newspapers had its value asserted repeatedly; nonetheless, these newspapers were closing, and journalists took these closings as opportunities to reflect on and opine on the state of journalism in their region, and across the United States.
The loss of diverse voices was one problem journalists identified. The president of Cincinnati’s Society of Professional Journalists told a Cincinnati Post reporter, “A second newspaper offers a democracy of opinion, a potential of a different editorial opinion. We're losing a source with a century and a quarter of experience. Everybody in the community should bow their heads at its passing” (Kreimer, 2007a, p. 14A).

A decline in local reporting was also mourned; in Baltimore, a staffer wrote, “I wish we weren’t leaving, but we are. What’s important is that we remember The Examiner” because “[w]ith The Examiner leaving, Baltimore is losing local reporting that was truly valuable to the community” (Robinson, 2009, p. 20). A past editor and publisher of the Tucson Citizen worried over much the same:

. . . other forums are not yet able to support democracy—that is, self-government—the way newspapers have.

What Tucson TV newsroom, radio station or blogger will consistently watchdog local institutions? Even at its lowest level of staffing, the Citizen had Tucson’s second largest number of reporters poking into the goings-on of public entities, more than the combined reporting staffs at local TV and radio stations, weekly publications and news blogs. (Chihak, 2009, p. 3B)

And the loss of journalists also makes it harder to hold power to account:

A few unemployed journalists may not amount to a hill of beans. Ninety percent of what we do is—not, fluff, exactly, but superfluous. . . . But still we lose something with every demise. Newspapers have the staff, if not always the will, to ferret out embarrassing information local governments don't want published. To pursue documents revealing whether Lute Olson got special treatment. And to hold big businesses—like Citizen owner Gannett Co. Inc.—at least somewhat accountable for previous statements. (Carlock, 2009, p. 10A)

Even with the occasional surge of bitterness—more than one journalist blamed the “guys in suits” for their troubles (e.g. Adamson, 2005; Littwin, 2009)—newspaper staffers offered a fair amount of explication of and context for the troubles facing their individual papers and their industry.
A *Baltimore Examiner* columnist seemed to recognize how in newspaper closings, base overtakes superstructure:

These are gloomy days for American newspapers . . . on a routine day in America, 105 million people read a daily newspaper. So somebody’s still paying attention. An awful lot of people realize the importance of newspapers in their lives, and the lives of their communities. But an awful lot don't. (Olesker, 2009, p. 6)

The associate editor of the *Cincinnati Post* bemoaned the financial squeeze of declining advertising and “merciless” demands for quarterly profits, seeing a concomitant fall in quality that threatens the newspaper system: “I’m an ancient, but I value the newspaper beat system, along with enterprise and investigative reporting and commentary that's based on adequate research. These are increasingly becoming luxuries that cost-conscious editors are being forced to shed” (White, 2007, p. 8A). Again, in these final moments, because they are final moments, reckoning with basal concerns is inevitable.

The *Tucson Citizen* editor noted that her newspaper was the third major metro daily to close in 2009 (following the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and the *Rocky Mountain News*), and that the newspaper industry lost 12,000 jobs in 2008. She wrote, “About 65 talented *Citizen* staffers are being shot into an economy that is losing rather than creating jobs. The newspaper industry is so distressed that few of us will be reporters, newspaper designers, editors or news photographers again” (Boice, 2009, p. 1A).

The state of journalism, for journalists at these closing newspapers, is one of deep crisis. Across these closed newspapers, journalists found ways to express their grief and share their memories, marking the present as a time to reflect, articulating the potency of their grief through metaphor, and to metonymically identify themselves with their newspaper. But as the newspaper dies, so these staffers die as journalists, not to return to
the field. The lived experience, in the end, “is a tragic loss of talent and enthusiasm” (Boice, 2009, p. 1A)—a superstructure that no longer has a base.

A Future without (Some) Journalists

The future is the ultimate target of self-reflexive discourse in these final editions. The newspaper is described, in a sustained way, as a memory object or a mnemonic deposit; the final editions themselves are marked and explained as objects to be saved; and stories issue explicit calls to remembrance. These stories also imagine a future without these newspapers, and often without the journalists who populate them, and in doing so point back to the ways in which newspaper journalists want to be remembered.

Marking the Memory object; Calls to Remembrance

Writing about the newspaper in a general sense, Tucson Citizen columnists wrote, “a newspaper isn't just any company. It’s a repository of the city’s collective memory and of our aspirations and hopes” (Kimble & Stanton, 2009, p. 1B)—as is the physical newspaper itself. The Rocky Mountain News unified memory, interpretive authority, nostalgia, and a strong future orientation in describing the newspaper, and items saved from it, as memory objects:

The Rocky’s offspring will live on in the stories—nearly 150 years’ worth—clipped and pasted in scrapbooks, hanging on refrigerators, yellowing in museums, lingering in countless minds. Their power is one that, for a few minutes or a few hours, takes the readers to places they’ve never been, places they need to go. (Sheeler, 2009, p. 28)

A Post-Intelligencer story ended with a connection between memory and the historical authority of newspapers: “And when our lives changed overnight—when President
Kennedy was slain, or the Twin Towers fell, or President Obama was elected—it was the next day’s newspaper that people thought of saving” (Smith, 2009, p. A7). Along with the use of front pages from the past, that the physical newspaper is a vessel of memory lays the groundwork for articulating the final editions themselves as memory objects.

The editor of the Cincinnati and Kentucky Posts wrote about his final encounters with readers, who, in “an outpouring of condolences and commiseration,” used the paper as a touchstone for their own memories of events and of the newspaper:

Some readers have brought us yellowing editions of The Post that have become family heirlooms. Others have carried in faded photographs of our reporters at work or our delivery trucks or our old building at Post Square which was razed to build the first convention center. (Philipps, 2007, p. 8A)

That editor was quoted in another Cincinnati Post story:

“It’s a sad day, but we're going out with our heads high,” said Post Editor Mike Philipps. “This paper made a difference in the community.” The benefits will be around long after this memorial issue is packed away and forgotten” (Kreimer, 2007a, p. 1A)

Here, the nature of the final newspaper as memory object is clear—the memorial issue may be “packed away and forgotten,” but it still saved, and when revisited or rediscovered, will remain what editors at the Tucson Citizen called that “repository of the city's collective memory.”

As that story referred to the Post's final edition as a “memorial issue,” so other newspapers were marked as things to be saved. The Honolulu Star-Bulletin, which published the least amount of self-reflexive discourse, nonetheless marked its final edition as a “keepsake edition,” running the phrase at the very top of the front page, above any other headline, copy, or design element. A note from the publisher of the Rocky Mountain News read, in part,
Given the circumstances, I hope you understand why today’s edition of the *Rocky* is organized differently. . . . we decided to simplify its structure and restrict the scope of our news report so we could focus on producing a ‘final edition’ you’d remember. (Temple, 2009, p. 2)

Here, the publisher of the *Rocky* is explicit: on the final day of its existence, the concerns of the mnemonic community trump the concerns of the everyday, displacing some of the regular news agenda. Others were equally explicit about the need for commemoration. The *Albuquerque Tribune* “conclude[d] [its] life” with a “commemorative final edition” (“Good night, Albuquerque,” 2008, p. A1), and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* published as its first section a 20-page “commemorative section.” A *Cincinnati* and *Kentucky Post* editorial writer and associate editor wrote of assembling reader letters about the demise of those newspapers: “I tried to fit as many as I could into what I knew would be a souvenir edition” (White, 2007, p. 8A). This writer and editor tried to imbricate as many readers as possible directly into the nostalgic project.

Newspapers—at least at the end of their existences—are here understood as memory objects to be kept and to which readers can, and should, return. In a farewell message titled “Goodbye, Colorado,” the *Rocky Mountain News* issued this double call to remembrance: “We hope Coloradans will remember this newspaper fondly from generation to generation, a reminder of Denver’s history—the ambitions, foibles and virtues of its settlers and those who followed” (“Goodbye, Colorado,” 2009, p. S1). Coloradans are to remember the newspaper, and in the future, *this* newspaper, the final edition, will be the key to remembering Denver’s history and its own. The final editions, both materially and discursively, will carry memories—of the staff, of the newspaper’s past, of the events and feelings surrounding the closing of each newspaper, and of
newspaper journalism's structure of feeling—into the future.

The *Baltimore Examiner* imagines a perhaps overly optimistic future memory of itself: “The effect of *The Baltimore Examiner* and its contributions will never be gone, however” (Leffler, 2009, p. 18). The editor of the *Cincinnati* and *Kentucky Posts* wrote about the temptation to navel-gaze: “it has been tempting for us who work at The Post to get wrapped up in ourselves and in our memories and in our concerns for our own futures” (Philipps, 2008, p. 8A). He continued, writing, “in the end it is not about us. It is about the community we have tried to serve,” and thanking readers for letting *Post* staffers do their jobs, “on behalf of the reporters and photographers and editors” they know and on behalf of their predecessors, of the carriers who delivered the paper “no matter what the weather,” on behalf of the printers and office workers. (Philipps, 2007, p. 8A). Then, the *Post* editor loops back around to expressing gratitude to readers for simply reading, and for letting journalists do the work of journalism, saying thank you

. . . for putting up with us as we poked our noses in your personal business; thank you for your indulgence as we preached and prodded when we were impatient; thank you for permitting us to harass your favorite—and perhaps not so favorite—politicians and local leaders.

Most of all, thank you for letting us into your homes every day to celebrate your success and record the moments which marked your lives in your community. (Philipps, 2007, p. 8A)

These may not be memories that the *Post* editor has wrapped himself in; the work of journalism, though, whether abrasive or welcomed, is what he wants to be remembered by. But this work is precisely what is lost, and what is mourned.
Future Hopes and Fears

When imagining the future without their newspapers, and perhaps without newspapers at all, these stories project outward the losses articulated in the present—the prospective results of the loss of newspapers and the journalists who staff them. According to these stories, everybody loses, and everybody will feel the pain. At the Tucson Citizen, “we’ve had it all. And you had it, too. But not now. With the loss of the Tucson Citizen, everybody in Tucson loses. And that's a fact. Goodbye” (Kimble & Stanton, 2009, p. 1B). About the Cincinnati Post, a former Ohio State Senator said, “Cincinnati was lucky to have two papers. When The Post leaves, it will be a loss in the whole history of Cincinnati” (Kreimer, 2007a, p. 14A). In Baltimore, “the demise of The Examiner doesn't just hurt us. Believe it or not it hurts you. . . . once again, Baltimore is saddled with only one voice” (Giro, 2009, p. 29). A Citizen sports columnist wrote, even if you think that only once a month we nailed a story, a scoop, a column, a feature—and I think our batting average was much higher than that—well, that’s one story, scoop, column, feature you won't be getting anymore. That's not good for anybody (Gimino, 2009, p. 2C)

That important stories will go untold is a great fear expressed when the future is imagined. The prospective lack of those stories is the cause behind the expected future hurt. The assistant managing editor of the Baltimore Examiner wrote that her biggest regret about The Examiner’s demise is the many stories for which we won't get to write the endings. The prostitute deaths that point to a serial killer; the death of Robert Clay (how can someone who was killed R.I.P., and why should he?); and the upcoming City Hall corruption trials are but a few of the intriguing tales that will go un-Examined. (Holmes, 2009, p. 20)

Here, Holmes, an assistant managing editor, offers as her biggest regret being unable to “write the endings” to interesting stories of now—that is, losing the ability to interpret
those events for readers in the future. While those stories may go “un-Examined,” they surely did not go unexamined. So the loss of the particular, specific job, and a specific way of doing things at her paper, is her personal regret—what she will miss, not necessarily what will be missed by readers or by the community. A Rocky Mountain News reporter expressed similar sentiment: “She mourned the stories she and others wouldn't write, including one about oil and gas development in western Colorado. . . . ‘There are so many stories Denver will never read,’ Frank said. ‘That’s what makes me so sad’” (McCrimmon, p. 6). The Baltimore Examiner’s sports editor wrote that he was as sad for losing his job “as I am for our readers, who no longer will read about what's going on in their backyard. . . . we dedicated our space to our local college teams, whose stories and accomplishments will now largely go unheard” (Gallo, 2009, p. 29).

The wider fear for the future is expressed as fear for a democracy to which newspaper journalists couple themselves even as their newspapers fold. The headline of an article by a past Tucson Citizen editor and publisher succinctly sums up those fears: “Public will be worse off if no one steps up” (Chihak, 2009, p. 3B). He wrote, “The Citizen has been part of the framework supporting democracy. Its demise threatens democratic balance, because other media entities don't have the resources to pick up the slack, at least not yet” (Chihak, 2009, p. 3B). A former editor of the Honolulu Advertiser expressed similar fears, writing, “Fewer reporters will serve as public watchdogs, holding politicians accountable, covering faulty school fire alarms, shoddy nursing homes and government scandals. Civic life will be poorer. Democracy will suffer” (Keir, 2010, p. B4). A Cincinnati Post business page article quoted numerous publishing professionals and journalism professors, and detailed the problems facing Cincinnati's media
landscape: domination by Gannett, shrinking numbers of reporters, and a decline in journalism that helps people make informed decisions. Two professors quoted referred to journalism's “historic responsibility” as a “cornerstone of democracy,” and warned that a decline in covering news about governments “could have ‘profound implications on the health of a democracy’” (Paeth, 2007, p. 11A).

Similarly, the media critic of the Rocky Mountain News feared for the impact that the declining newspaper industry would have on the United States, writing, “It’s possible to have a republic without newspapers. But we’ve never done it in America, and there’s no guarantee that we would succeed at doing it” (Kopel, 2009, p. 65). Above his column ran an editorial cartoon depicting a saddened Statue of Liberty, with a sign hanging from her torch that read, “Will the last newspaper to fold please turn off the light?” As a Baltimore Examiner columnist wrote, “Dies the daily newspaper, dies the flow of serious information to grownups . . . it’s the hometown newspapers that supply actual news—and, boy, we’ll miss them if they ever disappear completely” (Olesker, 2009, p. 6).

This, too, is how journalists want to be remembered: as invaluable to their communities, perhaps even as constituting them, and certainly as integral to United States democracy and as the authoritative interpreters and constructors of the world. They want their structure of feeling to last, even if it outlasts them.

**Conclusion**

The newspapers’ communities can be thought of like an hourglass, with the sands of meaning shifting from journalists to readers and back. The newspaper operates at the waist of the hourglass, and that is the center of meaning-making for these communities.
By constructing memory texts, journalists project their vision of their newspapers through the hourglass to their readers. But there is no opportunity for backflow once a newspaper closes. A final edition is the final opportunity for present-day meaning-making. The day after, and the day after that, and today, and in the future, all that remains and will remain is the final edition. Any negotiation of meaning with journalists about journalistic text is over. What remains is a final text that, with the eradication of the community of journalists who constructed it, becomes uneditable, uncorrectable—fully fixed. This particular fixity allows for a kind of permanent prospective memory work.

The final editions ask readers to carry forward the collective memories the newspapers attempt to establish. Readers are asked to inscribe the proposed social meaning and function of the newspaper-as-institution onto the final newspaper-as-text, and into their own memories. In fact, the presumed ritual role of the reader in the news community is crucial to understanding the function of memory work in these final editions. Newspapers are ritually offered to readers on their doorsteps, in their mailboxes, at newsstands. Readers respond to these offerings not as a community of scribes, but as a community of inscribers. Readers adopt the truth of what newspapers offer them, question that truth, or reject it. Readers’ assent to journalists’ interpretations can be found in the rituals of news consumption: by reading the newspaper over coffee in the morning, on the train to work, or, in the past, taking in an evening paper after supper. Even if readers negotiate separate or disparate meanings for each individual news story, participation in the overall endeavor, expressed by participation in rituals of consumption, suggests that readers accept the wider social meaning and functions of newspapers and the interpretive work of journalists.
The production of meaning for a newspaper depends on both journalists and readers participating in the same vessel of meaning-making—a *fixed* vessel. It may change every day, and it may have replicants, but we know that—according to the journalists who compose it—the vessel is the newspaper.

But these observations, while intriguing, are not especially new, nor is the critical move of integrating ritual into the analysis of journalism (see Ehrlich, 1995). Rather, the analysis in this chapter reinforces the ritual view of communication (Carey, 1989/2009) while showing how newspaper journalists quite clearly understand how they help define reality—they deploy that attribute in attempts to establish a future nostalgic memory for readers. Quite some time ago, Elliott offered that press ritual may be ‘a structured performance in which not all participants are equal’ (Elliott, 1981, p. 145). Under normal circumstances, this is true in the relationship between readers and journalists (and newspapers); even if readers agree to receive the host of the newspaper, journalists are the priests who bless it. However, as newspapers disappear, throughout the process of dematerializing, and at the moment of final dematerialization, we see quite a remarkable shift in power.

If the newspaper, in Carey’s view (1989/2009), has served to order reality and life, its demise disorders the same, and multiple dematerializations occur. The communities of journalists at each newspaper fly apart; the communities of readers are severed from the communities of journalists; and each newspaper loses its physical existence. The final edition, with regards to dematerialization, is again doubly reflexive, for it is both the product of and the presentation of the process of *dematerializing*. To borrow Zelizer’s notion of the subjunctive voice in journalism (2010), these final editions
are in fact both “as-is” and “as-if” texts. The “as-is” aspect inheres in material finality: these are final editions, and there will be no more. The “as-if” aspect is expressed because that finality is contingent, and produced through dematerializing: the journalists work until they don’t, and that final deadline is not final until it has passed. But at the end, these newspapers are not about to die; they have died.

The symbolic content of these newspapers, the “as-if” aspect, is the product of performing dematerialization—performing being about to die. Regardless of whether the power lies with institutions, or as suggested earlier, lies in mutual assent that the newspaper constitutes the world, moving forward in time from the publication of these final editions, power shifts to the audience. The audience is no longer complicit only in meaning-making, for in these final editions, they are asked to commit to acts of future memory. While the immediate community of newspaper readers is gone, each of those readers still exists; they are not the ones about to die. And so they are asked to remember to remember the newspapers, suggesting that even as final, fixed texts, these texts are in fact contingent. Thus, the fight against contingency may explain the persistent and pervasive expressions of worry for the future, the attempt to cement the meaning of the past in present minds, and the attempts to projection present values into the future minds of readers. Fixity was the concern of the past; memory is the concern of the future. Ironically, by trying to fix a nostalgic memory of the newspaper, discourse from the final editions both consigns newspaper journalism's structure of feeling to the past, and consigns the power of each of these newspapers to the past as well.

Yet, this irony is consonant with the facts of the base: The newspaper as material product has been winding a long, slow road to unviability. Studying the memories that
stories in failed newspapers construct about those newspapers and newspaper journalists ultimately has be a way to explain how the mnemonic community of newspaper journalists articulates and remembers the social meaning of its profession, of how those journalists want to remind us to remember that meaning in the future, and of how the journalists themselves want to be remembered.

An article about the Honolulu Advertiser’s last day was headlined, “End unfolds with sadness, nostalgia” (Nakaso, 2010, p. A27), linking the two. A columnist at the same paper offered a lead graph that collapsed time not just in her newspaper, but in her locale: “In Hawai’i, we are forever glimpsing the past and the future” (O’Connell, 2010, p. D7). Another Advertiser columnist offered as her lede an appreciation for the bidirectional word “aloha,” writing, “I like that ‘aloha’ means both hello and goodbye” (Chan, 2010, p. D9). Like “aloha,” nostalgia points in different temporal directions.

Metajournalistic nostalgia, in final editions, defends against the horrors of the present: the terminal diseases, the assassinations, the deaths in the family, the death of the family, the loss of the job-that-is-not-a-job-but-fun. Because newspaper journalists cleave to the newspaper as a marker of their identity, the loss of their newspaper is, in some ways, expressed as (and thus experienced as) a loss of self. The annihilation of self is difficult to grasp; easier, then, to muster one last charge at the inevitable.

The defense is two-fold. First, by repairing to imagined better days of the past, journalists can seek shelter from their imminent demise. They take stock of their histories and themselves, and say, essentially: we deserved better. In using those imagined better days to explain the present and how we got here, journalists savage the financialization of the newspaper industry that led to the demise of many of the newspapers studied here.
Second, by working to establish prospective memory that is nostalgic in nature, journalists can also plan for a future in which they may no longer staff their newspapers, but in which they will be remembered nonetheless. In this way, some pain of the present loss can be assuaged, the future can still be imagined, and the journalists hope their readers of the final editions—and other savers of the final editions—will indeed light upon the memory of the newspaper with that "positively toned evocation of a lived past" (Davis, 1979).
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: FROM METAPHOR TO METANARRATIVE

This dissertation has explored three contexts—job losses, building sales and newsroom moves, and the closings of newspapers—in which collective nostalgia is used by newspaper journalists to reassert the value of newspaper journalism. As these case studies illustrate, newspaper journalists turn to a public collective nostalgia to tell stories of who they are and why they should still matter in the face of declining economic conditions. They ultimately exhibit resignation to these conditions, and use collective nostalgia to recompose their immediate communities in the face of job losses, to transport their values to a new workplace, and to transmit their values to a wider audience when newspapers close—recognizing that they are losing control over how they will be remembered, for they can no longer negotiate memory in any ongoing way. Each case study shows a different pathway by which a mnemonic community nonetheless tries to preserve its values through discourse, attempting to maintain some control over memory even when the community is eradicated.

Encouraging a collective nostalgia for what has been—and what newspaper journalists articulate as what should now be in lieu of what we have—does not itself preserve the values journalists hold dear. Chief among these values is providing audiences with truthful, verifiable, actionable information that supports audience members’ abilities to productively engage with civic life. The U.S. metropolitan daily newspaper, historically, has offered its readers knowledge about the world with which those same readers have agreed or to which those readers have assented. As Park (1940)
had it, despite its ephemeral nature, news orients its audience to the world around them; as Carey (1975/2009) had it, news allows audiences to participate in the drama of events. When that drama is the decline and demise of newspapers, newspaper journalists both imbricate and implicate readers.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the meanings of layoffs and buyouts are contended. Executive voices attempt to reassure audiences that the newspaper will continue its valuable mission despite what has proved to be a continuous and continuing decline in the number of journalists doing the work of newspaper journalism. Journalistic voices insist that their ability to do this work is damaged, but in the end, they reassert their ability to continue their valuable work despite what they articulate as damage to their community. Such work and the knowledge it generates continue; journalistic discourse recognizes that the work may be diminished, but reasserts its social necessity—and that newspaper journalists will continue to provide audiences with an appropriate orientation to the world at large.

When newspaper journalists move locations—when historical homes are sold, and when extant newsrooms are displaced, the threat to journalistic work is not necessarily overt. Such moves, though, spur reflection by newspaper journalists about what their work is for, and how it can be maintained in the wake of physical displacement.

And when newspapers close, the loss of a way of knowing is expressed in visceral terms, with journalists expressing the pain of their own more immediate losses in terms of the losses that may be faced by readers in a longer period. A tension, rare and revealing, emerges in this case. While newspaper journalists may see themselves chief among the meaning-makers of their communities, when their newspapers are lost, they
lose the legacy of their newspapers’ authority. They also lose the legacy of each specific way of knowing about each community—every newspaper is bespoke, or more aptly, is presented by newspaper journalists as having been bespoke—and that loss is specific to each community even while reflecting industrial trends.

Nostalgia is mediatized by newspaper journalists when they turn their attention to themselves and their colleagues, revealing journalists’ memories of themselves, their field, and their ideologies. Reifying and objectifying these items prepares the values of newspaper journalists for transfer. This is one way that journalists continue to lay claim to interpretive authority over both the past and present (Zelizer, 1993), and nostalgia has elsewhere been theorized as one possible connection between these durational and local claims (Spaulding, 2016).

Two volumes that try to synthesize the many dimensions of nostalgia are Grainge (2002) and Keightley and Pickering (2012). Grainge articulates a theoretical continuum spanning nostalgia-as-mood (citing Davis (1979) and noting that nostalgia-as-mood is what “Williams might call a ‘structure of feeling’ (2002, p. 21)) and nostalgia-as-mode (citing Jameson, 1991). As a mood, nostalgia is a social emotion, something collectively felt and returned to at moments of upheaval. As a mode, nostalgia is a condition of cultural practice that both reflects and generations a condition of being that is, somehow, decoupled from historical truth or reality. The positions are rather different, but both offer insight and can be coupled. Davis rejects the possibility that media could “control the times (i.e., events, happenings, and moods) that generate our nostalgia” (1979, p. 135); Jameson sees this as a foregone conclusion. According to Grainge, the mood perspective considers nostalgia to be about loss and the meaning thereof, and the mode perspective
considers nostalgia as a form of historical amnesia in which nostalgia may be divorced from loss itself. This distinction, Grainge contends, helps explain how “[c]ritics frequently address nostalgia as a feeling and a style, as a cultural orientation and a representational effect” (2002, p. 35), because critics often draw upon elements of both.

In the case studies of this dissertation, nostalgia for the newspaper emerges as, perhaps, mood, and nostalgia in the newspaper as mode. They are necessarily intertwined, for the content (nostalgia in the newspaper) expresses nostalgia for the newspaper. The expression of nostalgia is itself nostalgic, and expressed in the very product about which the news stories wax nostalgic. As studied here, nostalgia, as Chalaby (1998) might have it, is text/context at once, and in that text/context nostalgia as a structure of feeling is manifest.

In trying to reframe nostalgia as an imaginative act, Keightley and Pickering (2012) argue that nostalgia is characterized by three functionally related but conceptually distinct components: loss, lack, and longing. In their view, these components, whose intensity may vary from case to case, taken together always offer the potential for generative acts of imagination. Their contention is that memory and imagination have been falsely divided into, respectively, true recollection and fabrication. Instead, they argue that memory—which, to recall Schudson (1995) is, in its collective form, social, selective, provisional, and driven by both intentional and unconscious processes—is not a truthful recollection of objective truth but instead an imaginatively creative or, to emphasize its potentially positive social ends, and imaginatively re-creative process. Elsewhere, Keightley and Pickering (2006) have argued that nearly all of the
aforementioned dimensions and uses of nostalgia should be considered, in their interaction, engagement, and conflict, as mutually constituting nostalgia.

If nostalgia elides or conceals the horrors of capitalism and late capitalism and helps to eviscerate the meaning of the past while separating people from it (e.g. Baudrillard, 1981/1994; Jameson, 1991; Williams, 1973), then understanding how it does so—that is, unpacking in detail its narrative and stylistic traits—remains vital to understanding first, how it might work in public consciousness and second, how and why authors turn to nostalgia, in order to address and critique what can be understood as a false consciousness. As Stewart wrote,

> [a]lthough narrative offers transcendence, it lacks authenticity, for its experience is other. The printed word suffers doubly from this lack, for not only has it lost the authenticity of lived experience—it has lost the authenticity of authorial voice as well. . . . By the narrative process of nostalgic reconstruction the present is denied and the past take on an authenticity of being, an authenticity which, ironically, it can only achieve through narrative. (1984/1993, p. 23)

But nostalgia in the newspaper pushes back against Stewart’s claim that nostalgic narrative lacks authenticity. Newspaper stories are bylined, and at contemporary newspapers bylines index authorship onto actually existing present-day reporters (although bylines also elide the editorial and copyediting work that also produces these stories). Additionally, nostalgic stories about newspapers are written for present-day newspapers, which necessarily puts them in the present and places them on the news agenda of the day they are published. Such stories insist that articulating a “positively toned evocation of a lived past” (Davis, 1979, p. 18) is necessary to understand the poor condition of the newspaper in the present.
On the other hand, if nostalgia serves to maintain identity continuity (Davis, 1979), facilitates a less Whiggish and more complete historical consciousness about progress (Lears, 1998), operates as a tool to work through loss at a community level (Boym, 2001), or unites loss, lack, and longing in a future-oriented imaginative response to the changing experiences of modern time (Keightley & Pickering, 2012), unpacking nostalgia’s narrative and stylistic traits remains vital to understanding these functions too. In all cases, stories are crucial: nostalgia’s stories, and the stories of how nostalgia came to be. In analyzing the former, as they appear in newspaper journalism at times of newspaper crises, this dissertation helps explain the latter: how and why pointedly nostalgic stories arise in the mnemonic community of newspaper journalists, and the functions of nostalgia in that community.

Nostalgia is not just longing for something; it is also a discursive space in which longing occurs. It may be simultaneously comprised of a combination of loss, lack, and longing; it may be retrograde and it may be future-oriented. Again, we see the need to study it in its historical specificity. When newspaper stories use nostalgia in self-reflexive discourse, the point isn’t just to reminisce; these stories are about newspaper journalists and what they currently value. In terms of narrative and style, nostalgia opens formal elements to journalists—they can personalize their stories, drawing upon the trove of material memories, such as the feel of paper, the smell of ink, the sound of printing presses, the clatter of typewriters, all of which preceded (and for journalists, marked conditions superior to) the increasingly silent newsrooms and silencing of newspapers’ voices.
Nostalgia characterizes the efforts of newspaper journalists to maintain authority when their jobs, newspapers, and industry as a whole are under existential threat. The stories they author use nostalgia in a future-oriented way, but one that is retrograde: by appealing to prospective memory—by asking readers to, in the future, remember to remember newspapers in a certain way—these stories suggest to readers that thinking about the newspaper in the future is to think nostalgically.

The tension here is that while newspaper journalists may be future-oriented in their uses of nostalgia, and while they may well be working through their own worries about the profession in a reflective way (at least sometimes), when journalists are laid off and cannot return to the profession, when stately buildings and their authority are abandoned in urban space, and when newspapers have failed, real loss occurs. In each instance of each of these cases, nostalgia offers a chance to negotiate or renegotiate what matters about journalism now. But repair to nostalgia may be a discursive trap. Dissatisfaction with the present can also manifest as a longing for what could have been but is not, and perhaps as longing for a future that should have been but will not be.

The industrial context for self-reflexive uses of nostalgia by newspaper journalists is dissatisfaction with capitalism as an agent of progress. To borrow Illbruck’s pun (2012), the unenlightened disease of nostalgia may be caused by unresolved problems of the advance of capitalism (including financialization, as discussed earlier in this proposal), latter-day consequences of the Enlightenment and modern notions of progress, and technological progress. Newspaper journalists have been rudely slapped out of their superstructure and reminded again and again that they are part of an economic base; nostalgia offers a pathway out of the problems of the base, at least temporarily.
But newspaper journalists, in their uses of nostalgia, are locked in many ways to valorizing past successes that reinforce their interpretive community’s para-ideology, itself largely predicated on intimate integration with modernity and progress, in terms of both capital and knowledge. They are nostalgic for the very things that, ultimately, have disrupted their communities. This opens a seam in normal journalistic practice, in which we can see how closely memory practices and journalism practices are intertwined.

Newspaper journalists sometimes express this quite openly in the discourses comprising the case studies that follow, when in the course of normal business they would deny this strongly. In this way, journalists reveal their involvement in and many details about their politics of nostalgia, their para-ideology, and their particular variety of deep collective memory, evincing their mnemonic community in times of personal, professional, institutional, and mnemonic crises. They also reveal the extent to which memory of their community and of their work is contingent on their audience.

One contribution this dissertation offers is documentation and analysis of the ongoing discursive process ending the progressive metanarrative of newspaper journalism. Another is a more refined and granular discussion of the dimensions and dynamics—and perhaps most importantly, the limitations—of collective nostalgia.

Each of the three case studies in this dissertation bear elements, sometimes implicit, often explicit, of commemoration. As Casey wrote,

Commemoration can be considered the laying to account of perishings, the consolidating and continuing of endings. It is the creating of memorialization in the media of ritual, text, and psyche; it enables us to honor the past by carrying it intact into new and lasting forms of alliance and participation. (Casey, 2009, p. 257)
The collective nostalgias at play in the story of the declining U.S. newspaper are characterized by attempts to honor the past and craft it into a new and lasting form, one that might transcend the end of the newspaper itself.

A major power shift, both within and outside of journalism, is underway as the cultural authority of newspaper journalism erodes. When the community of newspaper journalists falls apart, journalists’ power to establish the meaning of their work diminishes. Newspaper journalists’ nostalgia necessarily becomes increasingly individualized, most especially when newspaper journalists lose access to their newspapers because of layoffs, or because of closings, lose the newspapers in which they would typically express their shared grief (though they reconvene in other forms to reminisce online (Spaulding, 2016), through social media (Kramer, 2015), and even through a photo project turned newsroom commemoration published in the form of a newspaper (Steacy et al., 2015)).

Power over social and cultural meaning shifts to readers, to journalists at other entities, and other cultural producers as the diminished or extinguished community of newspaper journalists tries to pass on the “moral obligation to the communal past” to others. Through the discourse studied in this dissertation, and as we see nonjournalistic culture producers adopt newspaper journalism as an object of nostalgia in recent years, we can better understand the dimensions and dynamics of collective nostalgia as mediated through the U.S. newspaper.

In 2018, aspects of these discourses began to exhibit slightly different characteristics in at least one case. Online on Friday, April 6, 2018, and in print on Sunday, April 8, the Denver Post published a package of stories in its op-ed section,
“Perspectives,” that rhetorically pushed back against the latest round of repeated layoffs at the newspaper. On the front page of the print section, the lead article by the Denver Post editorial board bore the headline “News matters” spanning the entire page, followed by a sub-head reading “Colo. should demand the newspaper it deserves” (Denver Post editorial board, 2018). Organized by then-editorial page editor Chuck Plunkett, the editorial package used spring 2018 layoffs as a peg to discuss the meaning of newspaper journalism and the potential loss of the Denver Post. The ten stories comprising this editorial package turn in part to collective nostalgia to discuss that meaning. This editorial package differs somewhat from those stories discussed in the previous case studies. The Denver Post package extends beyond a prospective nostalgia that implicates and/or imbricates readers in calls to memory; it also calls for immediate action to support the Denver Post in particular and local journalism more generally. But even in its calls to action, the collective nostalgia exhibited is consistent with its manifestations in the three cases studies of this dissertation.

As a coda, this chapter first uses examples from its three case studies and the Denver Post editorial package as a springboard to explicate and refine the dimensions of collective nostalgia, further developing collective nostalgia’s definition. By dimensions of collective nostalgia, I mean aspects of collective nostalgia’s mediality, narratives, and social intent. From the three previous case studies and the discussion of the Denver Post that follows in this chapter, we see collective nostalgia’s utility to the mnemonic community of newspaper journalists. The dimensions of collective nostalgia are identified here not only because of their use to newspaper journalists—as a structure of feeling, collective nostalgia is content-agnostic, and thus of use to other mnemonic
communities as well. Developing these dimensions may help identify how collective nostalgia serves other mnemonic communities, especially communities under threat.

It then examines the *dynamics of collective nostalgia* manifest in responses from non-journalistic culture producers to the wider problems facing journalism, and in responses from journalism to the *Denver Post* package. By *dynamics of collective nostalgia*, I mean the ways by which collective nostalgia as not only a structure of feeling but also as a schematic narrative template, to borrow from Wertsch (2008), is perpetuated. In Chapter 4, for example, this is seen clearly in closing newspapers that call upon readers to remember to remember the newspaper in certain ways. In the discussion of non-journalistic culture producers later in this chapter, we see how the concerns of newspaper journalists, manifest in and as collective nostalgia, have been seeded successfully beyond their own pages. And in the discussion of responses from journalists to the *Denver Post* package, we see some of the limitations, both discursive and material, of collective nostalgia.

Lastly, this chapter discusses how the *Denver Post* package relates directly to a current active union campaign and the reconfiguration of the newspaper industry. The use of collective nostalgia cannot fully resist economic stressors, but expressing community values and *telos* spurs discussion of material conditions while also informing wider cultural memory with the collective memory of one particular mnemonic community.

**Dimensions of Collective Nostalgia**

As a metanarrative, collective nostalgia is a response to and an outgrowth of the metanarrative of journalism crisis. Journalism crisis discourse dates back at least a
century, is integrated into the advent of journalism professionalization, and continues across that century to today. This discourse persistently sees change as a challenge to positive aspects of journalism’s present. It often identifies past manifestations of journalism as superior to the present, or repairs to successes of the past, identifying those successes as ways to improve the present or future.

The turn to collective nostalgia can be read as a logical continuation, and perhaps to date the apotheosis, of crisis discourse. When present conditions are not only changing newspaper journalism communities, but sometimes ending them, finding ways to improve the present may be fruitless. Discourse in these newspapers thus turns to preservation and conservation not only when newspapers close, but in all cases of threat and damage, even in sometimes-specific calls to action like those seen in the April 2018 Denver Post editorial package and responses to it. Collective nostalgia is, in part, a coping mechanism. Considering nostalgia as a structure of feeling, as per Tannock, it perhaps matters little whether those studied articulate their nostalgia as collective or as resisting change and its accompanying pains. According to Tannock,

nostalgia becomes a widespread, general structure of feeling only with the massive dislocations of peoples in the modern period. It is the distinctly modern sense of a radical separation of past from present, of people from place, and of person from people that nostalgia functions to mediate, as it spins out its endless tales of return. (Tannock, 1995, p. 463, en 4).

Nonetheless, collective nostalgia’s historically specific uses reveal some of its defining dimensions. The discourses studied in this dissertation, as well as the most recent exemplars from the Denver Post, certainly reflect the senses of radical separation identified by Tannock. In its strategic uses, collective nostalgia’s dimensions are found here to be medial, generic, communal, protective, and projective.
Collective Nostalgia is Medial

It is a method of transmission, as well as a conceptual space in which discussion of the meaning(s) of the past can take place. As Tannock noted, nostalgia helps mediate a modern sundering of “past from present, of people from place, and of person from people” (1995, p. 463, en 4). Collective nostalgia, at least upon its invocation, is a way to reconnect those people, things, and times; this use of collective nostalgia also conveys the collective nostalgia of its author(s). Articulating its various roles, the Denver Post editorial board summarizes how it cultivates the public good by being a public sphere itself:

A flagship local paper like The Post plays a critically important role in its city and state: It provides a public record of the good and the bad, serves as a watchdog against public and private corruption, offers a free marketplace of ideas and stands as a lighthouse reflective of and protective of—a community’s values and goals. (The Denver Post editorial board, 2018)

The concern is that these roles are under attack, and that their loss will create a profound community lack. Those loss and lack aspects of nostalgia are here used to define a current need. A former Denver Post staffer, writing in this same section, argues that these medial roles are necessary, and that even simply making such an argument might save the Post:

[I]f we don’t speak up now, then we will be destined to witness the demise of our city’s largest and most essential news-gathering operations—and what would happen to democracy then? Who would then hold the powerful, Alden Global Capital included, accountable in the absence of a major metropolitan daily newspaper? (Baca, 2018).

Here, Baca also invokes prospective loss and lack, two experiences or elements associated with nostalgia. In asserting that we will long for these things because of their importance, he also inserts a normative element to such collective nostalgia, implying
that readers should feel these same concerns and ask these same questions. This normativity is a current running throughout the discourse studied in this dissertation.

**Collective Nostalgia is Generic**

It offers, to use Wertsch’s term (2008), schematic narrative templates for understanding past events in ways that foster community unity. While Wertsch was concerned about deep collective memory’s conservative streak, the ways in which it resists change through schematic narrative templates also can preserve the values of those writing the narratives for future use. Newspaper journalists, in these narratives, turn to something akin to Irwin-Zarecka’s mythical structure of communities of memory: articulating professional origin myths and professional hagiography; invoking selective memories of the forces that have damaged the newspaper; and expressing “the narrative of shared suffering, greatly strengthening the sense of moral obligation to the communal past” (1994, p. 58).

The Rocky Mountain News republishing past work from journalists articulated as exemplars, including one editor who “helped save [the paper] from certain death” (“Jack Foster,” 2009, p. S16), has these generic characteristics. So does a past Tucson Citizen sports editor’s recollection of his colleagues as “people of character, most of whom were characters” and “legends” (Simpson, 2009a, p. 2B). So does the recollection of a Denver Post columnist, who, recounting her “first paying job as a reporter,” wrote,

The grungy newsroom was overcrowded and packed with characters. There was a young courts reporter who protested her removal from a courtroom during graphic testimony in a rape case and was carried out by guards, and a cop-shop reporter who was hired during World War II when there was a shortage of men,
and, 30 years later, she was still scooping the competition on the 6 p.m.-to-2 a.m. shift.
These were my role models. (Carman, 2018)

Tonally, this template tends to align with one of the primary ways in which nostalgia has been characterized: a “positively toned evocation of a lived past” (Davis, 1979, p. 18).

Selective memory of the forces affecting the newspaper are part of this story too. As at other newspapers, in April 2018 columnists at the Denver Post blamed secular changes to the industry and readership, and blamed irresponsible owners. One Denver Post columnist, the president of “a libertarian-conservative think tank in Denver,” wrote,

People in the industry will rightly point to the larger financial issues: how the internet took away all their classified advertising revenue, a younger generation with no attention span who won’t read anything printed on dead-tree paper, and the odd ownership structure happy to cannibalize a once-proud flagship paper and sell off the carcass. (Caldara, 2018)

A past editor of the Denver Post wrote much the same, blaming not only Denver Post ownership, but owners across the industry:

What has happened to the newspaper industry cannot simply be explained by the rise of the internet. A lack of imagination and entrepreneurial thinking is also to blame. Bereft of ideas, most owners have embraced cost cutting to maintain profit margin over trying to grow the business. (Moore, 2018)

By externalizing blame, the “lack of imagination and entrepreneurial thinking” that journalists and editors have also exhibited (e.g. Herndon, 2012; Ryfe, 2012) is elided, positioning both journalists and newspaper journalism yet again as the victims of irresponsible capitalism. The job losses are commands that come from elsewhere, with the staff reduction described as “marching orders” and “heartbreaking instructions” (Denver Post editorial board, 2018).
Shared suffering ranges from journalists articulating decrepit buildings in affectionate terms to the expression of more emergent existential fears. A *Houston Chronicle* journalist called its old building “a kind of paradise” (Turner, 2016); a columnist at the *Los Angeles Daily News* wrote that his building “was old and ugly. The elevator was always breaking down, and there wasn’t a window in the city room. But it was home for the last 21 years” (McCarthy, 2008). Even when stories detail adaptations to changing conditions, shared suffering can manifest. At the *Denver Post* in April 2018, its editorial board articulated this as a “sad history” of being savaged by financialization that victimized everybody from reporters to local executives. Equating job losses in its newsrooms with a mass shooting, the editorial board wrote,

> Since Alden [Global Capital, the current owners of the *Denver Post*] took control, the decline of local news has been as obvious as it’s been precipitous. The editor who oversaw coverage of the Aurora theater shooting, Gregory L. Moore, decamped in 2016, unable to endure the new fund’s directives any longer.

> This year began with The Post recovering from more bloodshed as it packed up to leave its namesake city, its journalists clinging to the hope that a newly launched initiative to charge for online content would improve its fortunes. Before journalists were even in their new headquarters, our publisher and former editorial board member, Mac Tully, resigned. (Denver Post editorial board, 2018)

The “bloodshed” continued, and continues, “despite constant adaptation and innovation within our organization that grew our online reach exponentially” (Denver Post editorial board, 2018).

> These commonalities illustrate the generic traits of nostalgia. That these traits are shared across the newspapers studied in this dissertation shows how collective nostalgia can provide a genre to which a wider discursive community can turn in times of crisis—a framework for telling stories about what should be remembered, and how.
Collective Nostalgia is Communal

Concerns about potentially deleterious effects of nostalgia often have regarded an entire culture or society, collective nostalgia can relate to, manifest in, and serve significantly smaller social groups. In the discourse studied here, expressions of shared suffering—sometimes, but by no means always, positively toned—most often mark the boundary of the group of newspaper journalists, identifying them as those most injured by changing material conditions, and for whom nostalgia thus has the highest stakes.

Discourse often personifies the newspaper through visceral metaphors—often of illness, life, and death—and journalists articulate these experiences as collective, and defining, for their in-group.

Job losses in Richmond were a “punch in the gut” (Lohmann, 2017); in Omaha, job losses were “like a gut punch” (Grace, 2018); in Seattle, the Post-Intelligencer’s end was a “gut-punch of an obit” (Smith, 2009). A gut-punch may not be nostalgically toned, but conceptualizing newspaper buildings as homes certainly is (e.g. Achenbach, 2015; Asimov, 2007; Bergreen, 2005; Chandler, 2006; Coyne, 2005; Dunlap, 2007; “Farewell to our downtown home,” n.d.; Herhold, 2014; Littwin, 2006; “Making way for the new,” 2012; Painter, 2015). When newspapers face existential threats or ends, death metaphors manifest. In Seattle, one staffer wrote not only of the Post-Intelligencer, but of newspapers more broadly, “The flesh is dying now, here in Seattle and in many places” (Thiel, 2009, p. A16). A Rocky Mountain News columnist noted that “newspapers don’t simply close. They die. . . . The Rocky lived. It breathed” (Littwin, 2009, p. S46).

The metaphor of breath being snatched away appears in the April 2018 editorials of the Denver Post as well. The Denver Post’s owner is described as “a New York hedge
fund that was choking out a respected Colorado institution” (Baca, 2018)—a metaphor that equates financiers with murderers and also sets up oppositions between finance and the newspaper, and between New York (representing Wall Street) and Colorado (representing Main Street). A conservative columnist at the Denver Post, defending the newspaper, noted that “many conservatives can’t hide their delight, their Facebook posts and tweets show their glee at The Post being placed on a ventilator” (Caldara, 2018), and a past Denver Post theater and TV critic called the Denver Post’s decline “a calculated strangulation by vulture capitalists” (Ostrow, 2018).

In Tucson, the Citizen, at the end, was “about to draw its last breath” (Simpson, 2009b, p. 3C), and its “last gasp” was “our final edition” (Boice, 2009, p. 1A). The first-person plural here is, largely, newspaper journalists. A Cincinnati Post columnist wrote that “[t]he newspaper is nothing more than a collection of professionals doing their best to get at the core truth of the forces touching the city they serve” (Clooney, 2008, p. 1B), a reasonable definition, if a bit over-positively-toned. Still, “[a] good newspaper, wrote a Baltimore Examiner business columnist, “isn’t pulp and ink. It’s people” (Gainor, 2009, p. 15). While readers are ultimately invited in, journalists primarily constitute the mnemonic community, and the newspaper.

**Collective Nostalgia is Protective**

Collective nostalgia is a tool to resist the irresistible always-already of events that might damage the community of newspaper journalists, periodizing what is understood to always-already have been good about that community. In job loss discourse, newspaper journalists bemoan the loss of “friends” (Lohmann, 2017; Lupica, 2015), whose loss
readers are invited to share—mourning “old friends of yours” (Paige, 2007)—and whose loss is understood as “a great loss to the community” (Sherman & Heyboer, 2013).

These journalists are understood as always-already having served the community well, and their loss, or the loss of their positions, spurs repair work. A Philadelphia columnist transferred off her beat wrote, “My mission—to serve you—has not changed” (Shister, 2007). A Richmond Times-Dispatch columnist found cause for grief, but wrote “we can’t wallow in it. . . . for those who remain, there is news to report and stories to tell in the best way we possibly can” (Lohmann, 2017). Confronting job losses in 2018, one Denver Post staffer who took a buyout expressed faith in her colleagues and in the newspaper: “I know some of my colleagues will make judicious choices to take the time, to bring readers the narrative that shows a more complete picture of what’s happening in the communities we cover” (Fields, 2018). A past editor of the Denver Post expressed much the same, but acknowledged limitations that come with such deep cuts: “The journalists who remain will try their best, as they always have. But there is just so much they can do with the dwindling resources they have” (Moore, 2018).

This sense of protecting what is good and carrying it forward also runs throughout the discourse about newsroom moves. Where old buildings were found, nostalgically, to be home, the stories also suggest that collective nostalgia will help newspaper journalists inform new newsrooms with that sense of home. Continuity of space is impossible due to the harvesting of newspaper real estate; collective nostalgia helps protect values against economic incursions by providing a pathway through which the old sense of place, crafted by newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling, can move to the new newsrooms. As one headline noted, “Hope, nostalgia packed in move to fancy new digs” (Tevlin,
Past experience is made discrete enough to be boxed up for moving day. Even in the face of clear loss of spatial authority (and some of the accompanying cultural authority), the hope is that the positive experiences of the past will inform the future, and that the future will conform to what this community found best about its values.

When confronting the existential end of a newspaper closing, protectiveness turns mostly mnemonic: final editions of newspapers become memory objects, becoming vessels for values and history. As the front page of the final edition of the Rocky Mountain News read, “We hope Coloradans will remember this newspaper fondly from generation to generation, a reminder of Denver’s history—the ambitions, foibles, and virtues of its settlers and those who followed” (‘Goodbye, Colorado,’” 2009, p. S1). The chance of material salvation is gone, so the only remaining realm is mnemonic. Ironically, periodizing what’s worthwhile about newspaper journalism also consigns it to the past. The April 2018 editorials in the Denver Post differ from much of the other discourse studied in this dissertation, resisting periodization and issuing calls to action. Rather than only bemoaning the current state of the newspaper, these editorials also defend it in arguing what it should be, and could be, in the future.

When the Denver Post spoke out against its owners in April 2018, following the announcement of job cuts that one former staffer called an “extinction-level media event” (Ostrow, 2018), it tried to intercede in “a trend we all had better hope reverses course sooner than later” (Nicolais, 2018). Denver Post contributors argued that “local journalism is dangling by a slender thread and we’re all the worse for it” (Carman, 2018) because of the actions of the newspaper’s owners, “the money-over-everything
behemoths that attempted genocide on their very own newspaper group” (Baca, 2018). In response, the newspaper’s editorial board wrote,

We call for action. Consider this editorial and this Sunday’s Perspective offerings a plea to Alden—owner of Digital First Media, one of the largest newspaper chains in the country—to rethink its business strategy across all its newspaper holdings. Consider this also a signal to our community and civic leaders that they ought to demand better. Denver deserves a newspaper owner who supports its newsroom. If Alden isn’t willing to do good journalism here, it should sell The Post to owners who will. (Denver Post editorial board, 2018)

The collective nostalgia for the past work of the newspaper—for its “faithful attention to public meetings and government committee hearings, background on business achievements and disputes, profiles of colorful characters and investigative work—you know, the stuff of civic life” (Ostrow, 2018), for journalists who “tend to be especially passionate about their roles as watchdogs who work on the public’s behalf, to hold powerful people and institutions accountable” (Roberts, 2018), for “a properly resourced news organization [that] can cross swords with other powerful interests and come out on top” (Moore, 2018)—deploy the mnemonic for material ends, namely improving the financial state of and working conditions at the newspaper. Potential solutions are even offered, echoing some of those discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, which “could include a private-public partnership for funding it, finding a buyer, creating a foundation, establishing some kind of trust, or convincing the current owners to invest in the product, with, possibly, some incentives and guarantees” (Moore, 2018).

In both its defensive nature, and as a protective tool, collective nostalgia from newspaper journalists also necessarily reaches beyond their professional community. Articles about their situation are not solely for journalists; they are also for readers.
Collective Nostalgia Can be Projective

Calls to memory and calls to action both extend beyond the immediate communities of newspaper journalists. Journalists mourn the lost jobs of their colleagues, and also ask readers to buy into the continuing worth of the newspaper. Journalists prepare for newsroom moves by writing stories that document the good work that was done in one place and assure readers that the good work will continue, unabated, in a new place. And journalists confront existential ends and threats by asking readers to remember them, and occasionally, to take action on their behalf.

Thus, when the end of one community is threatened, collective nostalgia can be a tool to convey the its values related communities. Newspaper journalists do this by publishing stories about themselves for their readership; they also sometimes engage their readership directly, telling readers that what is worth remembering and how to remember should align with journalists’ own views. A sports columnist at the New York Daily News, writing about missing his colleagues, tells readers that “You should miss them more” (Lupica, 2015). A former editor of the Denver Post, expressing much the same about his former newspaper in the wake of layoffs, wrote “I will miss it if it is gone. We all will” (Moore, 2018)—using “we” to expand the mnemonic community of journalists—past, present, and future—to include readers as well.

Stories about building sales and newsroom moves ask readers to see them as, in the end, financially and journalistically useful, and culturally useful for the wider geographic community. Executives, typically newspaper publishers, praise newer buildings, better technological equipment, and often locations better integrated with city or regional cores in places ranging from San Jose to Colorado Springs to New Orleans to
Charlotte to St. Louis. About the hunt for a new home, the publisher of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reassured, “‘nothing will change for our readers’ [. . .] ‘We will always be the leading newsgathering organization [in St. Louis], regardless of our physical address’” (qtd. in “St. Louis Post-Dispatch downtown headquarters for sale,” 2015). Journalists’ nostalgia for older buildings is largely periodized to the time prior to the move, and articulates the values exercised in the old space such that they may be remembered in, and thus inform, the new. Stories after the move that regard the disposal of buildings and their historicity tend to step away from nostalgia. Nostalgia was useful for the move, to maintain the community of journalists and its relationship to readers, but after the move, nostalgia wanes, having been necessary primarily for navigating the move itself.

When newspapers close, the crafting of final editions as memory objects invites readers even more explicitly into newspaper journalists’ mnemonic community. At the same time, because certain mnemonic communities of newspaper journalists are ending, the real ask is that readers invite newspaper journalism into theirs. After a newspaper closes, that newspaper no longer has active authority over its public memory; ongoing future articulations of that memory live, instead, in the minds and in the texts of others.

In the *Denver Post*’s April 2018 calls to action, editorials adopt an often-slippery use of the first-person plural. While “we” sometimes refers to journalists of the *Denver Post*, a more expansive “we” is also used to expand the group to encompass readers and members of the wider geographic community. The *Denver Post*’s libertarian columnist argued that the newspaper should be supported because without a healthy newspaper, many governmental bodies in both Denver and Colorado won’t have thorough scrutiny: “From my point of view battling ever-expanding government, we have a better chance
slowing it down with a vibrant, even if liberal, paper in town” (Caldara, 2018). The “we” here is not journalists, but the wider readership who might share his concerns.

Editorials in the Denver Post also position the newspaper as inextricably linked to community progress, using that positioning to move towards a more expansive “we”:

The Post has been an integral part of progress in Colorado. It supported building Denver International Airport, the 16th Street Mall, the Colorado Convention Center and Mile High Stadium. It helped the community heal after fires, floods and unspeakable gun violence. It explained how we were changing politically and demographically, and it exposed corruption and malfeasance. It has provided a window and a mirror to help us become a better community. (Moore, 2018)

Here, “we” and “us” are the “better community” due to the Post’s involvement. The newspaper has documented community history, advocated for community good, and helped the community see itself more expansively (through the “window”) and understand and reflect upon itself (through the “mirror”). To help Denver city to continue understanding and manifesting itself, the newspaper is articulated as necessary:

A growing population has access to great new restaurants, a thriving arts scene, light rail, a truly international airport, a booming tech sector—this should be a moment to celebrate. If we are to once again “Imagine a great city,” we’ll need a great newspaper. (Ostrow, 2018)

The dissonance between the progress of Denver and the decline of the Denver Post is palpable. Denver has progressed despite the decline of its newspapers, yet, if “we”—the wider community of Denver and as the Post would have it the entire Rocky Mountains—are to continue on this path, “we’ll need a great newspaper.” To “imagine a great city,” Ostrow invokes the 1982 campaign slogan of Federico Peña, who as mayor of Denver developed many of the plans for infrastructure that the Denver Post supported—a new airport, light rail, a new convention center, and more. Tying the work of the newspaper to a person regarded as substantially responsible for the better aspects of Denver’s present-
day condition, Ostrow suggests that “we,” inclusive of readers, should associate the newspaper with these achievements and demand more of the newspaper, and more of its owners, as the city continues to improve and progress into the future.

Both the losses of individual journalists and the losses of newspaper journalism jobs are positioned as damaging to community development. As journalists left “without replacements, they left more than empty desks. They left a hole in our ability to understand and reflect on our world as a collective citizenry. That’s a trend we all had better hope reverses course sooner than later” (Nicolais, 2018). The “we” of journalists certainly lose some of their ability to report thoroughly, due to their shrinking numbers; here, though, the shrinking numbers of journalists damage our ability to do so “as a collective citizenry.” Journalists are aligned with, even blended with, the wider public.

Defending the utility of letters to the editor, Denver Post editorial page editor Chuck Plunkett, who assembled this editorial package, argues that letters and readers are inextricable from the newspaper, and from its journalists. Plunkett implored his readers, “Let us now celebrate our letter-writers! Their contributions are incalculable, big chunks of our DNA. Their blood and sweat and tears mix every bit as deeply in our ink as that of our paid professionals” (Plunkett, 2018a). Plunkett’s visceral metaphors unite readers and journalists—their blood and sweat and tears intermingle, their genetics intermingle, and thus that “collective citizenry” is readers and journalists, and the wider community of which both are a part. The boundaries of the journalistic tribe open up to others; journalists are the keepers of memory for the wider tribe, and the declining number of journalists threatens both mediality and memory:
Fewer journalists in the community means fewer storytellers, fewer people to meet that human need to continue the story, to communicate. Journalists have what “Intimate Journalism” author Walt Harrington called “the job of remembering for the tribe.” I hope the tribe recognizes how important this job is before it’s too late. (Fields, 2018)

Journalists, in this view, provide what the Assmanns have called “communicative memory,” actively used and circulated as it documents and continues to document community activities and values, connecting and reconnecting communities and community members to each other. Journalists are not positioned as their own separate tribe, when collective nostalgia turns projective. Instead, journalists are positioned as integral to and integrated with the wider tribe and its culture, in its local, regional, and sometimes national senses. As such, newspaper journalists reach out mnemonically to that wider tribe when confronting existential ends, as in the final editions of closed newspapers, and reach out materially when the end seems in sight, as it did for the Denver Post in the spring of 2018. The wider tribe ultimately has power over how and whether newspaper journalism continues as ongoing business and discursive endeavors, and has power over what will be remembered about newspaper journalism.

Liturgical Dynamics of Collective Nostalgia

As per Zerubavel, newspaper journalists as a mnemonic community are “regulated by unmistakably social rules of remembrance that tell us quite specifically what we should remember and what we can or must forget” (emphasis in original) (1996, p. 286). Collective nostalgia articulates memories of and for a community; it also articulates a scheme for memory and behavior. As seen in the dimensions discussed above, it offers lessons in both how to remember and what to remember about a
community. Together, these dimensions function liturgically, and when that liturgy is public, other communities, directly related or not, can choose to participate. The discourses studied in this dissertation bear normative instructions, for both newspaper journalists and wider audiences, that can be considered liturgical orders as discussed in Rappaport’s model of ritual (1999).

Collective nostalgia, as manifest in discourses about the declining U.S. newspaper, reflects two related responses: one attempts to preserve the newspaper and its place in “communicative memory,” and one recognizes the likelihood that the end of the newspaper as we know it is nigh, and seeks its proper place in wider “cultural memory.”

First, discourse around job losses and building moves—and the calls to action issued by the *Denver Post* in April 2018—reflect a desire from newspaper journalists to remain in the realm of active communicative memory and to resist what can be seen as a fading into a deeper cultural memory even as they appeal to that same cultural memory. In its daily work, journalism spans both forms through circadian work rituals that draw upon frames from both recent and distant pasts. Newspaper journalists have their own communicative memory that functions to share the values and traditions of pasts and presents; when pressured, they do so in ways that structure those pasts as mythical history, rife with origin myths and hagiography. These narratives are schematic, and journalists argue, mostly, that they alone are responsible for interpreting the meaning of events for readers—including the demise of newspaper journalism.

To borrow from Assmann, newspaper journalists want to remain actively circulated memory that is canon, and fight against becoming passively stored memory that is archived (A. Assmann, 2008, p. 98). As Assmann notes,
The term ‘canon’ belongs to the history of religions; it is used there to refer to a text or a body of texts that is decreed to be sacred and must not be changed nor exchanged for any other text. The canonized text is a stable reference that is used over centuries and millennia in continuous acts of reverence, interpretation, and liturgical practice. (A. Assmann, 2008, p. 100)

This is the permanence that newspaper journalists as a mnemonic community once felt, and the permanence which, through collective nostalgia and liturgical orders, they seek. But in resigning themselves to declining material conditions, and particularly in the cases of newspaper closings, newspaper journalists periodize their values and in some ways consign them to the past. In this way, newspaper journalism as an object of nostalgia may be becoming archive. Interpolating Foucault, Assmann writes, “The archive is the basis of what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become past” (A. Assmann, 2008, p. 102), with the archive a form acknowledging the always-already diminished (or extinguished) state of the newspaper. Seeking fixity can be dangerous, then, for one way to find fixity is to find an end.

Along with nostalgia, or perhaps more aptly, accompanying it, ritual and religiosity offer additional refuges from progress, that “‘wheel with double gears’ that ‘makes something go by crushing something else,’” according to Victor Hugo (qtd. in Agacinski, 2003, p. 9). In contemplating the demise of newspapers through the discourses of newspaper journalists, the roles that liturgical orders play in the model of ritual articulated by Rappaport (1999) are helpful. Rappaport distinguished between liturgical orders in calendrical and non-calendrical cycles. Of the former, he wrote,

Calendrical liturgical orders, leading their congregations around the year’s circle, may not only distinguish seasons one from another and then join them into years, but may also organize their mundane activities. [ . . . ] These activities are more likely to be concerned with distribution and with the maintenance and
reproduction of society and cosmos than with food production (Rappaport, 1999, p. 193).

Journalists at the newspapers studied in this dissertation articulate their role as one of social upkeep; much of their collective nostalgia is highly leveraged upon that very role. And depressingly, layoffs and buyouts at newspapers have become almost calendrical, if not in a temporally-specific sense, then in a regularized, recurrent, and ineluctable sense. In the wake of job losses, newspaper journalists criticize the conditions that led to the job losses, but also engage in repair work that reasserts their value and their authority, encouraging readers to still join them in their construction of the world.

The regularized production of news, in Carey’s ritual view that leans upon Geertz’s, is a “miracle we perform daily and hourly—the miracle of producing reality and then living within and under the fact of our own productions—that rests upon a particular quality of symbols: their ability to be both representations ‘of’ and ‘for’ reality” (1975/2009, p. 23). Providing liturgical orders, newspapers offer both of these, even as circadian orders in their daily publication. Newspapers serve as liturgical orders for readers, guiding them through the world and through time, and are the textual expressions of the liturgical orders of journalists, namely those orders which govern the regular production of newspaper journalism.

Non-calendrical liturgical cycles also have liturgical orders, in Rappaport’s analysis. According to Rappaport, a non-calendrical liturgical cycle “does not simply reflect [environmental and demographic] processes, nor does it merely provide an arbitrary periodicity in terms of which humans may organize their management. It itself imposes recurrence upon those processes” (1999, p. 189) (emphasis in original). In the
case of newspaper building sales and newsroom moves, which are irregular and non-calendrical, the recurrence, stepping back from the local level to the industrial level, occurs in the rhetoric of collective nostalgia that is consistent across the newspapers that have sold their buildings and/or moved their staffs to new locations.

A similar recurrence is found in the self-commemoration of their final issues, a non-calendrical death ritual in which newspapers seek afterlife in the memories of their readers through projections of collective nostalgia. To borrow from Carey, these newspapers, at their demise, strive to be symbols of the reality that they claim to report (the present meaning of the end of the newspaper) and to be symbols for the reality which they clearly attempt to construct (the future social memory of the meaning of the newspaper). This self-commemoration is, to use Rappaport’s terms, “auto-communicative as well as allo-communicative. [. . .] Auto-communication is, I will argue, of utmost importance even in public rituals. In fact, the transmitters of ritual’s messages are always among their most important receivers” (1999, p. 51) (emphasis in original). Auto-communication is privileged in much of the discourse this dissertation has analyzed—newspaper journalists are simultaneously creators, subjects, and audiences. But Rappaport’s discussion, like the discussions of collective nostalgia and collective memory reviewed above, presumes community continuity—it does not imagine a community that is aware of and navigating its own destruction.

This is not to say allo-communication has been less important in the case studies here. When a community confronts a prospective demise and/or seeks material assistance (as in the April 2018 editorial package at the Denver Post), how messages are received and propagated by others is vital. When a community confronts its actual demise, as
when newspapers close and leave behind final editions as memory objects, those objects
do have mnemonic power, but mnemonic authority lies in the wider community of
readers who ultimately determine whether and how the newspaper will be remembered.

The cultural memory of newspaper journalists is at stake. According to Assmann,
“Cultural memory is a kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away
in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and
situation-transcendent” (J. Assmann, 2008, p. 110-111). If nostalgia is a “positively toned
evocation of the lived past,” as per Davis (1979), what happens when the past is no
longer lived, when the cultural memory of journalists is no longer embodied in journalists
(because they are no longer journalists), and becomes disembodied? Is it a floating
signifier? Does newspaper journalism as an object of nostalgia, as a cultural memory,
become merely a simulacrum? In practice, we are part of the way there—saying we read
“the newspaper” often means that we read the online or mobile or app version of
newspaper articles, on a website, in a newspaper’s own app, or on Google News or Apple
News. These are not the newspaper, for the word “newspaper” still has a tangible, tactile,
fixed referent. Rather than what some journalists have viewed as the coldness and
impermanence of pixels on a screen, the physical newspaper offers something better—
security through fixity. A story is done; the newspaper is put to bed; this day in the world
is complete. We can go back to the same stories, again and again, with a great deal of
trust that the stories will not change. This is not necessarily so with digital media.

Such concerns regard not just trust, but the social construction of truth about the
world that, for centuries at this point, newspapers have offered readers and that readers
have willingly received, and in which both journalists and readers have placed their faith.
And so the fixity of the physical newspaper connects to the structure of feeling of newspaper journalists. That fixity allows for a tangible textual expression of newspaper journalists’ embodied cultural memory. The concern about losing that fixity is a concern about ongoing disembodiment of their cultural memory. If newspaper journalism is a part of cultural memory, but is disembodied from the journalists and the objects they produced, how may it continue? According to Assmann, at the social level, “the role of external symbols becomes even more important [than on the individual level],” and “[i]n order to be able to be reembodied in the sequence of generations, cultural memory, unlike communicative memory, exists also in disembodied form and requires institutions of preservation and reembodiment” (J. Assmann, 2008, p. 111).

The framework of Rappaportian liturgical orders is thus useful for it provides a way to investigate, in at least a cursory manner, whether additional layers of metadiscourse about journalism—authored by other journalists and by cultural producers outside of journalism—reflect a successful insertion of newspaper journalists’ concerns, both material and mnemonic, into wider cultural discourse and wider cultural memory.

**Liturical Orders, Journalism, and Faith**

This section discusses two additional valences of metadiscourse about journalism that relate to, and in part arise from, the self-reflexive collective nostalgic discourse that newspaper journalists publish about themselves following job losses, newsroom moves, and newspaper closings.

First, seeing whether the structure of feeling of newspaper journalists is maintained can be explored through Assmann’s “institutions of preservation and
reembodiment” (J. Assmann, 2008, p. 111), examples of what Williams called a group’s “documentary culture”:

> Once the carriers of such a structure [of feeling] die, the nearest we can get to this vital element is in the documentary culture [. . .]. The significance of documentary culture is that, more clearly than anything else, it expresses that life to us in direct terms, when the living witnesses are silent. [. . .]

> When it is no longer being lived, but in a narrower way survives in its records, the culture of a period can be very carefully studied, until we feel that we have reasonably clear ideas of its cultural work, its social character, its general patterns of activity and value, and in part of its structure of feeling. Yet the survival is governed, not by the period itself, but by new periods, which gradually compose a tradition. (Williams, 1961/1965, p. 65-66)

Any reasonable understanding of the contemporary condition of U.S. metropolitan daily newspapers recognizes that they remain in the midst of a painful transitional phase. And during the “Great Recession” of 2007-2009 in the United States, and in its wake, non-journalistic cultural producers reckoned with the decline of the U.S. newspaper and adopted newspaper journalism’s metanarrative as an object of nostalgia. Journalists also covered these cultural phenomena; at a time when newspaper journalism itself is less able to do so, both the phenomena and journalism about them provide additional touchstones for newspaper journalism’s values.

Second, following its latest round of layoffs and buyouts, the Denver Post’s April 2018 calls to action demonstrate strongly liturgical elements: what its journalists believe to be right and true, and what should be done about phenomena that damage those beliefs. Responses from other journalists to the Denver Post editorial package indicate collective nostalgia’s liturgical dynamics. These other journalists repeat and propagate much of what the Denver Post editorial package had to say about the newspaper’s
material conditions; this reinforces newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling in framing that editorial package as heroic resistance against the ongoing assault of financialization.

**Cultural Commentary and Metacommentary**

This dissertation has focused primarily on newspaper journalism’s metajournalism and the ways in which it reflects, articulates, and develops its structure of feeling. Other cultural production—including examples from satirists, film and television makers, artists, and literary writers—reflects how the structure of feeling of newspaper journalism is in the United States has moved and can move beyond journalism. This section focuses on how the idea of the newspaper is mediatized more widely and the role collective nostalgia plays in that mediatization. The examples and analyses offered in this section are useful in that they relate and respond to a particular period of decline in the newspaper industry. Both the pervasiveness of newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling and the ways in which cultural production has responded to recent pressures on the industry suggest that newspaper journalism’s liturgical orders, in their circadian, calendrical, and non-calendrical manifestations, have been and continue to be quite effective in informing a wider documentary culture. The so-called Great Recession in the United States, spanning 2007 to 2009, tremendously damaged the newspaper industry. Eight of the newspapers discussed in Chapter 4 closed during that period, though the recession may have simply accelerated closings that, given the secular changes to the newspaper business, may have been inevitable. The final editions of newspapers that have gone out of business can be considered part of newspaper journalism’s documentary culture, created for future use at a time when the newspaper journalists who staffed those
papers can no longer develop, maintain, or even address their structure of feeling. These documents, though, are also imbricated in auto-communication, so looking further afield is helpful to see if newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling is manifest elsewhere in culture. And surely it is.

On screen, the 2015 film Spotlight retold the 2002 story of the Boston Globe investigative unit whose work in the end brought the Boston Catholic Church to justice over child sexual abuse. The title is derived from the eponymous investigative team at the Globe, one of the oldest such teams in the United States. A particularly telling moment of boundary maintenance in the film occurs when Mark Ruffalo, playing reporter Michael Rezendes, tells an attorney for sexual abuse victims that he didn’t see the attorney’s interview in the Boston Phoenix, an alternative-weekly newspaper, because “nobody reads the Phoenix anymore. They’re broke, they don’t have any power.” The 2017 film The Post lauds the story of the Washington Post’s 1971 publication of the Pentagon Papers. In a referential nod, The Post ends on the exact same shot of the Watergate Hotel that opens the 1976 film All the President’s Men (based on the eponymous book, whose title itself references the 1946 novel All the King’s Men, in which a political reporter narrates the rise and death of a character based on the populist Louisiana governor of the 1930s, Huey Long). Both The Post and Spotlight pop up as emblematic of nostalgia in the Denver Post’s April 2018 editorial package, in which a past staffer wrote, “romance is part of the package [of doing newspaper journalism]. Who didn’t share goose bumps when the Washington Post’s presses rolled in ‘The Post’ or the Boston Globe’s in ‘Spotlight’?” (Ostrow, 2018).
The recirculation of such discourse also appears in the satirical newspaper The Onion. Founded in Madison, Wisconsin in 1988 and distributed for free, it expanded its print edition during the 1990s to numerous other cities, and in 2000 its editorial staff moved to New York City. As the 2000s progressed, The Onion withdrew from those markets, and by the end of 2013 shuttered its print operations in its final three cities—Chicago, Milwaukee, and Providence—thus ending its print existence.

In Madison, where The Onion had been published for 25 years, the main page one story of the final edition bore the satirical title “Print dead at 1,803” (“Print dead at 1,803,” 2013). The back page of the final issue is given over to a note of gratitude. The opening paragraph reads, in part, “For all of your love and support over the years, without which we would undoubtedly not be the publication we are today, The Onion would just like to graciously and respectfully say: Thank you, Madison!” (“Thank you, Madison!,” 2013). Close mirroring of print newspaper story types and styles was a hallmark of The Onion’s parodic print edition, and such is the case here. The expression of gratitude to readers closely echoes similar expressions by laid-off journalists as discussed in Chapter 2, and in straight newspapers that went out of business, as discussed in Chapter 4. It diverges, however, in its parodic articulation of why print journalism matters, which, as good parody can do, lays open much of the anger that is subsumed into newspaper journalists’ nostalgic discourse:

If print dies, so then shall the world.
For The Onion and you, our loyal readership, will not rest until the spineless oligarchs and bean-counting quislings who have brought about this grave injustice feel our undying wrath.
Rise, devoted readers of The Onion, and topple the corrupt powers that have betrayed you.
Loot. Fight. Burn. Spare nothing from your savage fury. Feel encouraged to visit *The Onion*’s former office at 122 State Street, where you will find an extensive cache of Molotov cocktails, ready to be lit. Scorch the very sky and purify the city with flame. Show no mercy. (“Thank you, Madison!,” 2013)

A confounder here is that *The Onion* ended its print production for much of the same reasons as the newspapers it parodied: secular changes to print advertising. Perhaps it should come as little surprise that a product so closely aligned to the newspaper industry, both conceptually and economically, would exhibit a sympathetic nostalgia—and one that its writers, unconstrained by the exigencies of actual newspaper journalism, could express in terms of open rage (which is mitigated by their publication’s parodic stance).

The worlds of visual art and literature also offered responses to the pointed economic problems facing the U.S. newspaper in the wake of the Great Recession. The 2010 exhibition *The Last Newspaper* at New York’s New Museum of Contemporary Art, the 2009 styling of the thirty-third issue of the literary journal *McSweeney’s* as the *San Francisco Panorama* newspaper prototype, and news coverage of each, evince newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling as cultural memory.

Manhattan’s New Museum of Contemporary Art, which exhibited *The Last Newspaper*, is not quite a museum, but not quite an alternative art space either. It shows almost exclusively living artists in rotating exhibitions, from solo shows for rising artworld talents and older influential artists, to topical group shows in which artists interrogate particular ideas, such as *Art and Ideology* and *Difference: On Representation and Sexuality*, both presented in 1984 (“History,” n.d.). *The Last Newspaper*, which ran from October 6, 2010 to January 9, 2011, was one such topical show, one of *New York* magazine’s most anticipated shows of that season (“Art,” 2010). The exhibition included
work from the 1960s to the then-present, from a wide variety of artists and in a wide variety of forms. For example, the show reinstalled Hans Haacke’s *News*, a piece that in its original 1969 incarnation printed wire service reports, reworked in 2008 to print out news from thirty different RSS feeds. A critic from the *Wall Street Journal* called *News* “especially disconcerting” (Jones, 2010); the *Washington Post* critic wrote that it “evokes the out-of-control assembly line in ‘Modern Times,’ with information as the commodity now being churned out” (Gopnik, 2010). Dash Snow, an artist who had recently died from a drug overdose, used his own semen to adhere glitter onto twenty editions of the *New York Post* and *Daily News* from 2006, with covers featuring Saddam Hussein.

The show opened to mixed reviews. One reviewer, the editor of the *New York Observer* (not normally an art critic by background or practice), wrote that while he left relieved that the curators hadn’t found enough material to nail down their premise, the exhibit suffers from a randomness that reminded me of a bad small-town daily, a mixing of spaghetti dinners and Eagle Scout announcements I do my best to avoid. (Pope, 2010)

The palpable and multi-layered arrogance of that review was unique, but others “didn’t find [the show’s] observations particularly timely or fresh” (Bacha, 2010). A critic at *ArtsJournal*’s “Artopia” called the exhibition “play-it-by-the-numbers,” a “grad-school assignment,” “dull,” and “ahistorical” (Perreault, 2010). Other reviewers were more generous. One found the exhibition “without a doubt the most impressive thing I have seen at the Museum since it opened its doors on the Bowery” (Duffy, 2010); another, that the show “gives a terrific and deeply felt examination of what we’re losing” with the demise of the daily newspaper (Biederman, 2010).
The reviewers from the major daily newspapers that covered the show—*The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*—found much about the show compelling as well. According to the *Wall Street Journal* critic, “newsprint’s possible disappearance is just one of many themes” (Jones, 2010), and the *Times* found that the exhibition “is far less about trashing the printed word than about recycling and repurposing it as, or at least in, art” (Cotter, 2010). The *Washington Post* critic took solace in this, writing, “artists seem to be finding the daily press as compelling as they did more than a century ago, when painting pictures of newspaper readers, or using the dailies as art supplies, was a sure sign of your avant-garde cred” (Gopnik, 2010). All three agreed, as did a number of other reviewers, that the artworks “go beyond using news media as a formal element” (Jones, 2010).

According to reviews of the exhibition, the show found its most success interrogating the relationships between news media, mediation, mediatization, and truth. A critic for the website *Artcards* was “impressed by the exhibition’s conceptual narrative which explores the dual functionality of news media as both a source of content and a vehicle for its delivery” (Duffy, 2010). According to CNN.com, “A major theme of the show is deconstructing the news. Exhibits show artists using anarchic gestures to express their dissatisfaction with newspaper’s presentation [sic] of events from Vietnam to Iraq” (Allsop, 2010). In a withering assessment of the value of news, one critic wrote, “In deconstructing the newspaper the New Museum allows the flaws of news in general, overflowing with special interests and monopolized thought, to writhe like a slug under salt” (Maliszewski, 2010). A *Capital New York* writer found that much artwork served as media criticism itself, “responding, reacting to, and reframing outrageous headlines and
text or highlighting instances of imbalanced reporting” (Tang, 2010). The aforementioned

Dash Snow piece was often cited as one such provocation, as in the *Washington Post*:

> Newspapers seem to represent one side of a binary that has art as its other half; it feels as though art can assert its own identity just by setting itself as the opposite of news. That binary seems to be in play in works by a bad-boy artist named Dash Snow (recently deceased, age 27) in which he used semen to glue glitter onto tabloid front pages featuring Saddam Hussein. It’s Dash the Fabulous up against the dreary world—with the newspaper standing in for the later. (Gopnik, 2010)

But the questions asked by that dreary world, critics found, were not dissimilar to those asked by the sprightlier art world. The *Times* review drew parallels between the existential ephemerality and the aspirations to greater truths, both of which can characterize both art and newspapers. According to the *Times* critic,

> The idea behind the exhibition — print journalism as a visual and existential phenomenon — is timely, and specific enough to be addressed and illustrated through art. Is the phenomenon intrinsically ephemeral or monumental? Is it truth telling or illusion spinning? One asks the same questions of art. One also asks: Who has the power to write the news, or make art, and by extension to create something called history? What are the similarities between newspapers and museums? To what degree are both responsible for providing social information as well as entertainment? (Cotter, 2010)

Even Gopnik’s *Washington Post* review recognized that the news and art worlds are not necessarily divorced. Gopnik wrote,

> A newspaper gives an ink-on-paper portrait of the world that isn’t infinitely far from the pictures artists have always drawn of it. Which brings us to why this show should perhaps scare anyone in love with newspapers: Even when they seem to be dealing with the day to day, artists have a tendency toward retrospection and nostalgia. (Gopnik, 2010)

The fear expressed in Gopnik’s review is that the newspaper as news in print form will actually come to an end, that the exhibition offers “[n]ot an engagement with the live but a fascination with the almost gone,” that the works presented “may not signal the continued power and relevance of the real thing. They may be watching at its deathbed.
After all, you sometimes learn more from an autopsy than from a living body” (Gopnik, 2012). In the New York Review of Books, another critic concluded much the same—that the show reflected how the newspaper itself was no longer the unparalleled source of current information:

While the show conveys an appreciation for the newspaper as object, as texture, as semiotic marker, most of the works on display are so far from engaging with the idea of the newspaper as vital carrier of immediate information that the exhibit might as well date from a time long after the final passing of the medium. The show’s primary message seems to be that since the flavor of the newspaper—so piquant, so gritty, so salt-of-the-earth—is on the verge of disappearance, it may be the last time that an aesthete can experience the bouquet of printer’s ink: ash, black pepper, cordite, with a hint of brimstone. (Sante, 2010)

In this view, the newspaper is reduced primarily to its physicality, and as its physical existence is threatened, the reader’s, or the aesthete’s, as Sante has it, experience of the newspaper is threatened as well. But the conclusion to Sante’s review—the quotation immediately above—underscores the other ways that people interact with the newspaper besides information currency: “as object, as texture, as semiotic marker.” These too, as The Last Newspaper exhibition suggested, are forms of public engagement. The newspaper is at once more than and simply words and images printed in ink on paper.

Even so, the Times critic, writing before The Last Newspaper’s exhibition catalog was complete, emphasized its prospective significance. Organized by the curatorial group Latitudes, it appeared in weekly installments with titles like The Last Post and The Last Gazette; at the end of the exhibition, these ten weekly newspapers, with content both drawn from and about the exhibition, were published as that catalog. In the Times, Cotter wrote that it

would, of course, be the ideal place for the curators and participating artists to go on the record, at un-Twitterish length and polemical breadth, about the viability of
analog journalism—and analog art—in the digital age. Such a document would help ground an exhibition that can too easily float around themes rather than land on them. (Cotter, 2010)

The problems that Cotter pointed out can be endemic to themed group shows like The Last Newspaper; it is not surprising that the catalog offers few definitive statements or in-depth polemics about the viability of analog journalism and analog art. The catalog—modeled as a series of newspapers, with the multiplicity of voices that one would expect of a newspaper—instead reflects the same diverse array of perspectives as the show itself.

Together, The Last Newspaper catalog serves as something of a journalism studies primer. The principals of Latitudes, Max Andrews and Mariana Cánepa Luna, served as the editors, writing in the introduction, “The distinction between the news, the newspaper, and newsprint—and moreover between the newspaper and journalism in the age of the internet—have always been key points of articulation” (Andrews & Cánepa, 2011). They also echoed Cotter’s assessment of the exhibition, in that they find in the artworld echoes of the challenges facing the newspaper business:

As newspapers are questioning the kind of business they are in that is, no longer (just) the print business. The Last Post . . . hopes to extend the contemporary museum’s reflection on a similar provocation. How is a museum, such as the New Museum, no longer (just) in the artwork display business? Is it a producer, a publisher, or a distributor? Is it a knowledge enterprise or an opinion enterprise? About what? Should a museum or a newspaper be a community, a platform or a network, for example? Given that most people would now accept that the world is too big and too complex for an individual to master, then what position should an organizational form take? The newspaper has been struggling for centuries with this fundamental issue which the exhibition format seems to have tackled comparatively only recently. (Andrews & Cánepa, 2011)

The catalog provides a range of content echoing the newspaper form that it takes. It reprints newspaper front pages from a century prior, illustrating past news designs and agendas. It published photographs that straddle art and news photography, including a
possibly fictionalized photojournalistic sequence about attempts to find the entrance to the Bettmann Archive, a collection of historic photographs controlled by Corbis that is preserved in a facility built into a former limestone mine in western Pennsylvania. Artists—both those who contributed to the show and others—were interviewed about their media consumption habits; none of them were daily newspaper readers. The catalog also published a regular column called “The Next Newspaper,” which profiled “the organizations, projects, initiatives and individuals redefining ink-and-paper news.” These columns covered many of the organizations and people with whom media observers were likely familiar, including ProPublica, Clay Shirky, The American Independent News Network (formerly the Center for Independent Media), the now struggling Patch, and the San Francisco Panorama.

The catalog, ultimately, fails to meaningfully fulfill what Cotter hoped—that it would make the case for analog newspapers and analog art. What it does accomplish, though, is similar to what one would expect of a weekly newspaper serving a small, idiosyncratic community—interviews with community members about topics of interest, reprints of old items of interest, documentation of community events, a weekly comic strip by a community member. All of these are present in the weekly editions that comprise The Last Newspaper catalog; rather than putting to bed the idea of the newspaper, it instead replicates it for its own small community. In this way, “last” can be read both as “final” and as “most recent”—as the Wall Street Journal reviewer wrote, “The word ‘last’ in the exhibition’s title thus doesn’t necessarily suggest an endpoint, but reproduction, repetition, and daily labor” (Jones, 2010).
The *San Francisco Panorama*, published on December 7, 2009, styled itself a first newspaper, a prototype for what the contemporary newspaper could, and should, be. A 320-page publication, it featured a 112-page broadsheet with 15” by 22” dimensions, including a 16-page comics section and news, arts, sports, and food sections. Most of the newspaper was published in full color. It was accompanied by a 112-page magazine, a 96-page books section, and pull-out posters. Constituting the thirty-third issue of the literary journal *McSweeney’s*, contributors included novelists Michael Chabon, Steven King, and William T. Vollman; cartoonists Chris Ware, Art Spiegelman, and Daniel Clowes; and contributions and reports from a number of others, including a collaboration with the nonprofit news organization the San Francisco Public Press, who provided the page one report on cost and time overruns related to the construction of the new Bay Bridge (“Excerpts from the San Francisco Panorama,” n.d.). The paper is beautiful; the literary journal *McSweeney’s* is renowned for highly creative design work, including one issue that came as a collection of individual stories in a box, another that came in a cigar box, and book-length issues of striking design and archival quality production. Similarly, the *Panorama* offers full-color double-trucks—layouts spread across two full, adjacent broadsheet pages—on topics from the sun’s relationship with Earth to how to make ramen like the renowned chef David Chang of New York City’s Momofuku restaurant.

The actual news section is small, and not timely in the way one would expect of a daily newspaper; however, the *Panorama* includes that investigative report into the Bay Bridge, a story on that year’s elections in Afghanistan, and a feature by novelist Andrew Scott Greer about his experience traveling to and participating in the audience of a NASCAR rally, accompanied by his husband. On the day of its release, the *Panorama*
was sold for $5 on the streets of San Francisco; it was available through bookstores and through the McSweeney’s online store for $16; it sold for as much as $50 through McSweeney’s website before it sold out; in 2018, McSweeney’s made 10 additional copies available for sale at the cost of $250. Little of the *Panorama* directly addresses the future of the newspaper form, except in an included “information pamphlet”:

We’re hoping to remind readers of all the things a printed newspaper can do. The articles are long, the design expansive. We think newspapers are essential, and should always be part of the delivery of news and information. . . . The *Panorama* is just a reminder that readers will be more likely to pay for a physical paper if they’re given something very different than what they can get on the internet. And until someone gets people to really pay for content online, the paper newspaper is still the most viable business model for getting journalists paid to do the reporting essential to a democracy. (“Information Pamphlet,” 2009)

As with *The Last Newspaper*, the ideas expressed here are fairly straightforward: the newspaper has a social role in democracy; it plays that role differently, and, implicitly, plays it more completely and thoroughly than the internet does or can; and even with the collapse of the business model supporting the industry, newspapers still can and should play that role. Press discourse surrounding the publication of the *Panorama* used both its attractive design and claims about viability and essentiality as jumping off points to discuss both at greater length.

This press reception was decidedly mixed. First, the *Panorama*’s aesthetic appeal and potent lineup of renowned contributing writers, reporters, and reviewers were almost uniformly praised. A reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote, “Panorama is a celebration of print . . . intended to get people to think about the centuries-old medium in new ways” (Guthrie, 2009). Frank Mina of the Society of News Designers called it “the boldest celebration and embrace of the printed broadsheet format in recent memory”
A writer at Slate wrote, “it is the most gorgeous newsprint object I have ever seen. It’s utterly seductive” (Heller, 2009). A book columnist for Australia’s Sydney Morning Herald wrote, “it is a gloriously well-written, designed and produced version of the throwaway object we daily journalists pump out” (Wyndham, 2010); a writer for the Los Angeles Times agreed on the literary quality, calling it “contemporary literary journalism at its finest” (Ulin, 2009). And in a headline, Time magazine announced that the San Francisco Panorama “proves print isn’t dead” (Suddath, 2009).

The heads of the project, McSweeney’s founder Dave Eggers and Oscar Villalon, a former book review editor at the San Francisco Chronicle who served as the publisher of the Panorama, discussed their goals in a number of interviews. In a Q&A with The Observer, the Sunday sister paper to the U.K. newspaper The Guardian, Eggers said,

There’s a downbeat atmosphere about the future of the form so we thought we could demonstrate some things newspapers do uniquely well. . . . We’re resurrecting practices from 100 years ago—like printing full-page comics. We want to give young people ways to engage with it, feel ownership of it. (Hoby, 2009)

In USA Today, Eggers said that one of his goals was to remind readers of the medium-specific attractions of the newspaper: “A lot of what we’re doing, oddly enough, is resurrecting things that papers used to do 100 years ago—like really using the broadsheet as a huge canvas that artists and designers and photographers can go crazy with” (Minzesheimer, 2009). Similarly, Villalon, speaking with a reporter for the online publication Flavorwire, said that the goal was “to point out how wonderful a medium print remains for newspapers, and to remind folks of all the pleasures print can offer that the Internet can’t” (Warner, 2009).
Eggers and Villalon also positioned the *Panorama* as not just a revival, but also an experiment, and a display of techniques that newspapers could use. Quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, Eggers said, “We don’t pretend to have the solutions. We’re just asking a few questions. We admit how little we know, but we’re trying to luxuriate in print and maybe remind people of everything it can do” (Ulin, 2009). To the website *Baynewser*, Villalon said, “There’s plenty of inspiration within newspapers. We’re kind of hoping the *Panorama* becomes a touchstone for folks, reminding them, ‘Those ideas you had? They are good ideas, and this is how they might look like’” (Grant, 2009). Villalon told the book editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*, “We’re not competing with anyone. This is a prototype, to show what newspapers can do.” That book editor found the *Panorama* to be “a resounding rebuke to the noisy meme that print journalism is dying.” But, she added, “maybe it’s just spit in the wind” (Bancroft, 2009).

The “spit in the wind” perspective relates to something discomfiting that underlies the laudatory discourse and experimental spirit. That *McSweeney’s* needed to remind readers about the value of newsprint, and to prototype a new kind of newspaper “to show what newspapers can do,” implies that contemporaneous newspapers need a dramatic overhaul in terms of both content and design. This, in fact, stands as a strong criticism of the contemporary newspaper—a call for newspapers to fundamentally change what they do and how they do it. And a quote from Eggers in *The Observer* suggests as much: “We’re inviting [newspaper editors] to borrow any ideas they want, to steal anything they can. Anything that helps any paper stay afloat” (Hoby, 2009).

And on this point—the viability of such a newspaper—the press reception becomes decidedly more questioning. That newspapers can be produced to be “utterly
seductive,” as a Slate writer had it, with articles allowed to run as long as needed, was found somewhat dubious by a reporter in the Los Angeles Times, who wrote, “it’s easy to make such an argument when you’re not dealing with the issues facing the commercial press” (Ulin, 2009). As the book editor of the St. Petersburg Times noted,

That five-month time line [for production] tells you that Panorama isn’t meant to be a model for a daily or weekly paper. So does the roster of contributing writers and artists: Stephen King, Michael Chabon, Roddy Doyle, George Saunders, Nicholson Baker, Chip Kidd, Art Spiegelman, Daniel Clowes, Jessica Abel and more than 100 others, including many professional journalists and journalism students. (Bancroft, 2009)

A reporter from Business Insider wrote,

[W]e’re not sure what to take away from the project. Does anyone think print as a medium can’t be moving, beautiful, and engaging? It’s not the medium that’s failing, it’s the business. Advertisers are moving their dollars elsewhere. Would advertisers like to be in a paper like this? Maybe, but it’s not like it could be done on a daily basis. The Panorama is [a] really cool one off project, but it doesn’t tell us anything about the future, or even the past of the news business. (Yarow, 2009)

The blog The Wire, of the website of The Atlantic, pulled together a pair of critiques from two other high-profile publications. According to The Economist, “The fact that this is a one-off, $16 newspaper means it doesn’t offer real tips for financial sustainability,” and via Gawker, “this six-month long niche literary project has absolutely nothing to do with newspapers or with the continued viability of print, which is dying as a mass medium, naturally, due to its obvious limitations” (Fisher, 2009). A writer for Reason magazine found a quite different meaning from the Panorama’s publication than did its creators:

they probably didn’t intend the most obvious social lesson that Panorama suggests: that this sort of high-minded, carefully curated collection of material, planned for many months and starring big-name writers dedicated to the McSweeney’s cause, would be an impossible business proposition as a daily. (Doherty, 2010)
The website *The Awl* examined editorial and production cost estimates publicly offered by McSweeney’s and a rumored pay rate of twelve cents per word for written contributions. Editor Choire Sicha argued that McSweeney’s claim to viability was “magical,” largely because the small staff could not possibly earn a living wage, including Eggers, who, for his labors, Sicha estimated would have earned $800 per month (Sicha, 2009). *Time* also noted this:

>[T]here’s plenty to criticize about the project too: the *Panorama* took nine months and more than 150 people to produce. Only seven of them were full-time staff members. Reporters didn’t have word limits. The Bay Bridge [story] was funded by outside sources. . . . Most of the paper went to press weeks before it came out, making it a poor source for breaking news. (Suddath, 2009)

As Suddath put it, referring to the demand for the *Panorama*, readers “wanted something well written, insightful and fun. Something that could handle in-depth investigations, thousand-word essays and an article on how to make moonshine. They wanted a magazine” (2009). Slate’s Nathan Heller agreed:

>It is a magazine form grafted onto a broadsheet. McSweeney’s real ambitions seem to run less toward newspapers and more toward the golden age of glossy. Like many golden ages, this one never quite existed in real life. . . . there’s something naggingly backward about the path of its idealism. If the innovations of the ‘60s and ‘70s showed anything, it was that journalism thrives by reimagining itself to fit new media and new constraints. (Heller, 2009)

Both the practical business of publishing a newspaper like the *Panorama*, and the extent to which it actually exemplified the medium itself, then, were both contested.

So it is worth noting that the word “homage” appears repeatedly in this discourse. Homage offers honor to something that has come before, and discourse about the *Panorama* suggests that this idea—paying homage to a medium that should be remembered for its sometimes-attractive nature and its sometimes-excellent journalism—
is what is actually at play. Nonetheless, the homage is repeatedly tied to the future of the medium as well, but in perhaps a different form than the creators of the *Panorama* claim they intended.

At *Time*, Suddath wrote, “the *Panorama* was an homage to the increasingly threatened—some would say obsolete—institution of print journalism” (2009). A writer at *True/Slant* called the *Panorama* “an homage to an endangered species and a manifesto of sorts on the possibilities of the form” (Dundas, 2009). *The Wire* reported that, “The project’s publisher says he wants to create an homage to newspapers and hopes to provide the ailing industry with ideas on how to reinvent themselves for print survival in the 21st century” (Fisher, 2009). And the Artsbeat blog of *The New York Times* noted, “the editors say it is, in large part, homage to an institution that they feel, contrary to conventional wisdom, still has a lot of life in it” (Weber, 2009). The discourse thus positioned the future of newspapers not as a matter of revival, but of survival.

One likely path of survival resonates with the analyses of final editions in Chapter 4—preserving newspapers as physical objects to serve as touchstones of cultural memory. A blogger at the National Public Radio affiliate radio station KQED in San Francisco suggested that the *San Francisco Panorama* plays upon the newspaper’s role in active contribution to one’s memory of history. . . . While I don’t imagine anyone will want to cut it up, Panorama still feels like a very big bow to that habit, like a gilded, gold-plated super-paper destined for a prime permanent spot on dusty bookshelves around the world—an artifact, evidence, something to last. (Simmons, 2009).

Eggers, recounting his childhood love of the *Chicago Tribune* and the sections he saved, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “it is our belief that if you make something beautiful,
people will want to hold on to it” (Guthrie, 2009). Newspapers have for quite some time played just this role—the saving of the newspaper object—in cultural memory.

A writer for Nieman Journalism Lab suggested precisely this future for the newspaper, through the lens of the *Panorama*:

> What we all once viewed as a temporary container with a 24-hour expiration date is now being reborn in souvenir form. It makes sense. We seem hardwired to connect memories and physical products. Just look back to November 2008, when the U.S. presidential election gave newspapers a one-day reprieve from the economic apocalypse. Or consider the long history of front-page reprints. Newspapers and collectibles are already entwined. But with Panorama, perhaps we’re seeing the broadsheet format, with its hundreds of pages and multiple inserts and various content forms, re-imagined as a sort of long-form, luxurious physical good. It’s not just a frame-worthy memento. It’s the leather-bound first edition of the newspaper business. (Slocum, 2009)

So, perhaps the medium of the newspaper, then, is losing the periodic element of its temporality, and is ossifying into its best imagined-turned-reified form: collectible, luxurious, to be set on a shelf and saved to remember stories, and to remember what the newspaper was for.

*The Last Newspaper* exhibit and catalog, and the *San Francisco Panorama*, at once mediatized and reified questions about the future of the newspaper, commenting upon the historical role of newspapers to do so. *The Last Newspaper* raised persistent questions about truth and authority of the newspaper even while its catalog offered an authoritative document of the exhibition in tabloid newspaper format. A co-curator of the exhibit, Benjamin Godsill, told *DNAinfo*, “The artwork included in the exhibition is always an assault on the newspaper, but also an homage” (Glickel, 2010). And the editor of the *New York Observer* wrote, “So this is what print journalism has come to—a museum curio that just might crumble without extraordinary care” (Pope, 2010). This
extraordinary care is also what the *Panorama* purported to offer, and to value. The
*Panorama* presented an idealized newspaper form, offered as a prototype, but one whose
form and content both recalled journalism and newspaper as they used to be.
Nonetheless, news discourse surrounding the *Panorama*’s publication argued that its
execution as an actual newspaper was impossible.

In these forms—the exhibit and the prototype—the newspaper itself is
mediatized, allowing for commentary both implicit and explicit. In the exhibit,
newspapers and their accouterments are physically taken in by the artworld, altered into
art, installed in a gallery, and that process is then documented and re-presented through a
catalog that takes the newspaper as its own medium. In the prototype, the newspaper
form is taken in by a literary journal, tweaked and transmuted to its own purposes, which
are often articulated as celebration and homage. The mixed reception both received, and
the lack in the *Panorama* of extended commentary on the future of newspapers,
suggested, or perhaps reinforced, the idea that newspapers are very much things of the
past. In this way, newspapers themselves—used in the art found in *The Last Newspaper,*
and produced in an idealized form as the *San Francisco Panorama*—have much in
common with the notion of memory objects (e.g. Kitch, 2003; van Dijck, 2007).
According to van Dijck, in a comment strongly resonant with Williams’ discussion of the
value of documentary culture (1961/1965), “Mediated memory objects provide clues to
their social and cultural *function,* thus divulging how people use technologies to produce
their own material and representational deposits; these deposits, in turn, betray
sociocultural practices” (2007, p. 40). *The Last Newspaper* and the *San Francisco
Panorama* ultimately may be considered such deposits; by mediatizing the physical
newspaper and the social conceptions thereof, these two products also propose that the newspaper—in both material and conceptual terms—may, in its decline, become such a deposit itself. While concern about and focus upon mnemonic deposits has occurred when newspapers have closed, when the *Denver Post* editorial section contested the value of ongoing layoffs, its editor and his writers militated against this kind of ossification, trying to fight off the prospect of becoming merely a deposit and the prospect of relegating their work from actively circulated canon to archive, a move received by newspaper journalists as a yielding of their cultural authority.

The *Denver Post*, Propagating “Rebellion,” and Faith

In the *Denver Post*’s April 2018 editorial package, the beliefs of newspaper journalists are repeatedly articulated. The *Denver Post* editorial board wrote, “We believe without question that if community leaders and our readers care about our mission, and what our newsroom ought to be instead of this shadow of what it once was, it’s time for their voices to be heard” (2018). The editorial board at once asserted its unquestioned beliefs that wider community must be heard, that the wider community agrees with the sentiments of the editorial board, and that the voice of the newspaper is the expression of those voices. Another columnist, a former staffer, wrote that “there is a future there [for the *Denver Post*], and I wholeheartedly believe that” (Baca, 2018).

An unquestioned faith in the endeavor pervades the editorial package, and extends outwards from journalists to other stakeholders and the wider community as well. A past *Denver Post* editor wrote in this section that “I can’t imagine our community without The Post. I don’t want to see power go unchecked or the soundtrack of our community
snuffed out” (Moore, 2018). For another past staffer, the new job loss “forces us to imagine a Denver without a substantive daily newspaper. And that’s something I’m just not willing to do” (Baca, 2018). The business side of newspapering is imbricated into belief by a nostalgia for altruistic democracy and responsible capitalism: “All this was possible because newspaper owners and advertisers believed in the value of professional journalists observing and sharing the human experience, holding public officials and institutions accountable, and building strong, well-informed communities” (Carman, 2018). Readers too are wedded to newspaper journalists’ weltanschauung: “Even merely occasional readers believe their local newspaper should be everywhere when they need it and everything to everybody” (Carman, 2018). Chuck Plunkett, the Denver Post’s editorial page editor who assembled this package, wrote that he contemplated getting rid of reader letters, “But doing so felt like sinning” (Plunkett, 2018a). The relationship with readers is quasi-religious: “Reading through [reader letters] day after day is like doing a devotional. Here are the real voices and ideas of Coloradans” (Plunkett, 2018a).

The dimensions of collective nostalgia present in the Denver Post’s editorial package, when taken together, contribute to and are the basis for articulated liturgy—what matters now (or what should matter now), and what should be done about the condition of the newspaper. The editorial board’s “call for action” resonates with Plunkett’s religious tone: “Consider this editorial and this Sunday’s Perspective offerings a plea to Alden—owner of Digital First Media, one of the largest newspaper chains in the country—to rethink its business strategy across all its newspaper holdings” (Denver Post editorial board, 2018). The “offerings” are a “plea” to its owners, but as with a god, remote owners don’t have to answer to supplicants.
Nevertheless, calls for what “should” and “ought” to happen run through this section, as stories also appeal to others in the community to support the Denver Post, its mission, and local journalism. The package, for the editorial board, is “a signal to our community and civic leaders that they ought to demand better,” and “If Alden isn’t willing to do good journalism here, it should sell The Post to owners who will” (Denver Post editorial board, 2018). A past editor of the Denver Post wrote that “Government, business, media, community and civic leadership should brainstorm solutions and come up with a strategy to preserve The Post” because “everybody needs it—whether they know it or not” (Moore, 2018). Such paternalistic attitude, observed elsewhere about related discourse (Carlson, 2012), may be inevitable when an entity claims to speak for a wider community about what’s best for that community. Imagining the unimaginable, one past Denver Post staffer wrote, “What can be done before the traditions and mechanisms of heavy-lifting local journalism are completely lost? An increasingly vibrant city deserves a daily dose of thoughtful, nonpartisan, well-researched and carefully edited reportage, opinion and features” (Ostrow, 2018). The newspaper, as tribal memory, is positioned not just as the best articulator of that memory, but as the entity most able to assess what the community needs. There is a self-serving element here, necessarily—this discourse is striving to fight off the job losses that materially infringe on newspaper journalists’ abilities to do their jobs. What is needed, for the community, is also articulated liturgically:

We need professional trained journalists to sit through those long, often tedious government meetings that determine policy and how tax revenue is spent. We need them to pore over government documents and databases, which they often must fight to obtain, sometimes for fees amounting to hundreds or thousands of dollars. We need them to develop sources who will help them explain to the
public what’s really going on in their state, city, county and school district. (Roberts, 2018)

Again, this “we” is the wider community, not just the community of newspaper journalists. And that community should see things as the journalists do: “A news organization like ours ought to be seen, especially by our owner, as a necessary public institution vital to the very maintenance of our grand democratic experiment” (Denver Post editorial board, 2018). As that article’s print headline stated, “Colo[rado] should demand the newspaper it deserves.”

As seen in the discussion of collective nostalgia’s dimensions, the Denver Post’s discourse in April 2018 uses a nostalgia similar to that of other newspapers facing job losses, newsroom moves, and closings. The intent differs, though; rather than developing a discourse that is primarily mnemonic, it also calls for action and for others to pick up its calls to action. According to Williams,

In the analysis of contemporary culture, the existing state of the selective tradition is of vital importance, for it is often true that some change in this tradition—establishing new lines with the past, breaking or re-drawing lines—is a radical kind of contemporary change” (emphasis in original) (Williams, 1961/1965, p. 69)

Other journalists certainly picked up the Denver Post’s messages about itself. 56 stories about the Denver Post’s early 2018 layoffs and editorial package were reviewed for this section, and indeed they mark the package as exceptional and evince the liturgical dynamics of this discourse.

A reporter at The New York Times wrote that the Denver Post “took the extraordinary step this weekend of publicly blasting its New York-based hedge-fund
owner and making the case for its own survival” (Ember, 2018a), reflecting how the

*Denver Post* positioned its owner as an opponent. According to NPR, the newspaper

wrote a new page of its history when it fought back in its Sunday edition, with an editorial and a package of opinion pieces around one central idea: Its owners are bleeding the *Post*, and Coloradans are going to miss it if it dies. (Wamsley, 2018)

The *Daily Beast* called the op-ed package an “eye-popping . . . denunciation” (Grove, 2018). Ken Doctor, the Newsonomics columnist at NiemanLab, wondered, “Maybe it took the bare-knuckled capitalism-without-conscience behavior of Alden Global Capital’s Heath Freeman to push journalists to this point” (Doctor, 2018a), accusing Freeman, who oversees Digital First Media, of irresponsible capitalism. Freeman was also called “The Gordon Gekko of newspapers” by *The Daily Beast* (Grove, 2018) and *Bloomberg* (Nocera, 2018), invoking the corporate-raiding character from the film *Wall Street* who has come to symbolize unrestrained greed.

The *Denver Post*’s package has been understood as not merely out of the ordinary in its attacks on its owners and calls for support, but exceptional, and both media critics and the wider press articulated it in terms of “revolt” and “rebellion.” At *Poynter*, Rick Edmonds wrote, “‘Unprecedented’ is always a dangerous claim—but I cannot think of a parallel case to the Denver Post editorial and eight accompanying articles denouncing its hedge fund owner, Alden Global Capital, for profiteering and making crippling newsroom cuts” (2018). Media critic Dan Kennedy called the editorials “an unprecedented rebellion” (2018). The *Washington Post* called the lead editorial “an extraordinary rebellion.” A headline in *The New York Times* read, “Denver Post rebels against its hedge-fund ownership,” and the following article began with this standalone lead graf: “The Denver Post is in open revolt against its owner” (Ember, 2018a). An
article in the Columbia Journalism Review referred to “the Denver Post’s rebellion” (Vernon, 2018a), as did one story in The Nation (Reynolds, 2018). Another Nation story lead with the observation that “The Denver Post’s editors revolted against ‘vulture-capitalist’ ownership” (Nichols, 2018). The New York Times wrote of “a revolt at The Post that grew out of years of dissatisfaction with the paper’s owner” ( Ember, 2018b). CNN contextualized this as one of other “newsroom revolts” like the increasing unionization of newsrooms in recent years (Disis, 2018). At Poynter, Rick Edmonds called the op-ed package a “rebellion” and an “insurrection” (Edmonds, 2018); Esquire wrote of the “newsroom rebellion” and the “insurgency” (St. John, 2018). A Denver Post reporter, writing in The Atlantic, wrote of the editorials and related public protests, that “My colleagues and I have risked our jobs to rebel against Digital First’s bleeding of its papers at Alden’s behest” (Wenzel, 2018). In The Nation, John Nichols advocated for increased resistance:

> Saving this one newspaper won’t necessarily create a model for preserving journalism in other cities. But it could. What we know is this: It is necessary to defend newsrooms, to rise up on behalf of old and new media sufficiently staffed to cover cities, states, nations, and the world. Denver is as good a place as any for a pivot toward a more militant struggle—a struggle that recognizes, finally, and unequivocally, that we must sustain journalism in order to sustain democracy. (Nichols, 2018)

Yet resistance, to borrow from Star Trek’s Borg, may be futile. Media critic Jack Shafer wrote in Politico, “Journalists and citizens have protested and rebelled against the Alden cutbacks to no effect” (Shafer, 2018). Dan Kennedy wondered whether the Denver Post package and its aftermath “was the start of something big—or a futile gesture, quickly forgotten and not to be repeated as Digital First’s newspapers continue their long, not-so-slow slide to oblivion” (2018). At NiemanLab, Ken Doctor asked, “After this big splash,
how much will this sense of truth-telling rebellion grow?” (2018a). The rebellion, such as it is, is about trying to hold fast to the idea of what a newspaper should be, and what the Denver Post should have been, in the face of overwhelming odds.

Doctor also noted that despite layoffs not just at the Denver Post, but throughout the industry, historically “journalists have been remarkably accepting of their buyouts and layoffs,” and finds “an acquiescence to what’s been seen as the inevitable toll of digital disruption. Sadness, rather than spirited action, has marked the trade” (Doctor, 2018a). But with this “rebellion,” and coverage of it, newspaper journalists attempt to change the story of their capitulation to material conditions to a story of resistance.

Journalists at the Denver Post assert that their story hasn’t been properly told, journalists elsewhere reiterate that claim, and suggest that changing the story may help change the conditions. The Denver Post editorial board wrote, “We get it that things change. We get it that our feelings are raw and no doubt color our judgment. But we’ve been quiet too long” (2018). A reporter and vice chair of the Los Angeles Times told CNN that the Denver Post “performed this act of civil disobedience,” and added, referring to newspaper journalists in general, “We have not been telling the story of our industry, which is that it’s being plundered” (Disis, 2018). The editor of the Chico Enterprise-Record, a small newspaper owned by Digital First Media, wrote, “I’ve long felt this story wasn’t worth sharing. Nobody is going to feel sorry for us. Readers just want the news, not excuses for why we didn’t cover this or that” (Little, 2018).

The editorial page editor of the Boulder Daily Camera, another Digital First property, self-published a rejected editorial, arguing in part
One of the more insidious aspects of this process is that these communities are generally left in the dark about what is happening because the newspaper is the community storyteller. When it fails to tell this important story about itself, it breaks trust with its readers. We have remained quiet about this for too long. (Kreiger, 2018a)

One group of newspapers that spoke up was another set of Digital First properties, the Southern California News Group, which includes the Los Angeles Daily News, the Orange County Register, the Riverside Press-Enterprise, and eight other daily newspapers (Khouri, 2018). Those papers published a ten-story editorial package, noting that “we don’t like being the story” (Editorial Board, 2018). The Denver Post proposed a variety of potential solutions, many of which echo those discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, including “a private-public partnership for funding it, finding a buyer, creating a foundation, establishing some kind of trust, or convincing the current owners to invest in the product, with, possibly, some incentives and guarantees” (Moore, 2018). The Southern California News Group picked these up, asking for continued reader support while articulating a continuity of work and reputation that could extend into new ways of doing business: “There are several economic models going forward that will ensure our historic legacy stays strong in the future. Nonprofit ownership along the lines of NPR. A philanthropic enterprise with private owners” (Editorial Board, 2018), “[o]r it could be a new business strategy that invests in the product and accepts lower margins to finance new initiatives” (Pine, 2018). The executive editor of the San Jose Mercury-News and the East Bay Times, both Digital First Media properties as well, wrote about having informal conversations about changes in ownership or business model following 2018 job cuts, when “people in our community offered introductions to potential investors in the
event our owners decide to sell. Others suggested that we seek nonprofit support for some of our reporting as other news organizations have done” (Chase, 2018).

Journalists also engaged in public protests, with Denver Newspaper Guild members writing a public letter to readers about their issues (Dean, 2018b), taking to the Denver streets with signs reading “Quality journalism over corporate greed” (Wenzel, 2018), and joining their colleagues from other DFM newspapers in St. Paul, California, and New York state for a protest at the Manhattan offices of Alden Global Capital, DFM’s owner (Dean, 2018c; Smith, 2018a). Public officials also spoke up on behalf of the Denver Post, suggesting that its editorials were successful, in that their own message was reproduced by not only other journalists, but politicians as well. The mayor of Denver, Michael Hancock, aligned himself and the people of Denver with the Post:

Denver is so proud of our flagship newspaper for speaking out. [ . . . ] The Denver Post said it best — they are necessary to this “grand democratic experiment,” especially at a time when the press and facts are under constant attack by the White House. For a New York hedge fund to treat our paper like any old business and not a critical member of our community is offensive. We urge the owners to rethink their business strategy or get out of the news business. Denver stands with our paper and stands ready to be part of the solution that supports local journalism and saves the 125-year-old Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire. (qtd in Ember, 2018a)

Hancock reiterates the Denver Post’s own rhetoric: the paper is necessary to democracy, the continuing cuts set New York City against Colorado, a newspaper is a special kind of business, and if DFM and Alden Global Capital can’t see that then they should leave the industry. The governor of Colorado, John Hickenlooper, also a former Denver mayor, told Rolling Stone in an interview,

I think it’s got to be sold. . . . They don’t feel they can get their fair value from it if they just keep squeezing it, laying more people off, to the point where people won’t buy it anymore. Obviously, they haven’t gotten to that point yet, but they’re
going to get to it. They’re getting down to a real skeleton staff. I wish they would sell it, to be honest. (qtd. in Stuart, 2018)

Hickenlooper’s statement reflects the Denver Post’s position that it should be sold to socially-responsible owners, and like Hancock’s, agrees that its current owners have damaged the newspaper.

Alden Global Capital and Digital First Media, as entities, did not engage this discourse in any meaningful way. Not including the Denver Post editorial package, 56 stories about DFM, Alden Global Capital, and the layoffs at the Denver Post were reviewed for this chapter. Many requested comment from DFM and/or Alden Global Capital; only one story included a comment from DFM, and none had comments from Alden. According to the Washington Post’s media columnist, who was seeking comments on the Denver Post layoffs three weeks before its now-famous editorial package, “When I asked to be connected to managing director Heath Freeman’s office, the receptionist hung up on me” (Sullivan, 2018).

One result of the no-comment stance from ownership is that the discourse in and about the Denver Post exhibits no opportunity for the mnemonic confluence often found in the three previous chapters, where business and journalistic interests eventually align and move forward together. Instead, comments like one from a bought-out Denver Post journalist calling Alden Global Capital “black-souled owners” (Hutchins, 2018b); another from a columnist in the Post calling Heath Freeman (who oversees DFM for Alden) “heartless management” and “a vulture capitalist whose Nixonian legacy will involve the attempted murder of local American journalism” (Baca, 2018); another from a Denver Post columnist writing of “owners who care nothing for journalism but seek only more
profits” (Ostrow, 2018); another from Bloomberg, calling Alden “a destroyer of newspapers” that repeatedly institutes “savage” layoffs (Nocera, 2018); and repeated statements that Alden is comprised of “vulture capitalists” and that the company “gorges itself and leaves its papers to die” (Reynolds, 2018)—go unanswered in this corpus. This indicates a strong discursive separation of ownership from journalists, reflecting the criticisms leveled by journalists that ownership cares exclusively about profits, not about newspaper journalism. Given that the stories, essentially, are entirely one-sided, it may be unsurprising that Denver Post journalists’ concerns seem to have easily propagated.

While Alden and DFM did not respond in this discourse, they did respond both discursively and materially, though not publicly. The publisher of the Boulder Daily Camera, another DFM newspaper, reportedly censored syndicating an editorial (Kreiger, 2018b) by a sometimes contributor that sharply criticized Alden Global Capital and DFM and called the Denver Post editorial page editor “a journalistic superhero” (Littwin, 2018). The editorial page editor of the Boulder Daily Camera, Dave Kreiger, wrote an editorial protesting DFM’s role in the decline of his newspaper; it was rejected, he self-published it (Kreiger, 2018a), and he was fired (Kreiger, 2018b). Chuck Plunkett, the “journalistic superhero” of the Denver Post, resigned under pressure (Ryckman, 2018), followed shortly by two senior editors and Denver Post chairman William Dean Singleton (the past Post owner who sat on the editorial board) (Dean, 2018a). Plunkett wrote an editorial condemning Kreiger’s firing and DFM, which was rejected by DFM after being informed “that content DFM might view as controversial required review by DFM’s [Chief Operating Officer Guy] Gilmore as well as two other Denver Post executives” (Hutchins, 2018c). Gilmore denied this to Columbia Journalism Review (the
only public comment from DFM or Alden that I have been able to locate), though the editor of a small New York State newspaper, the Kingston Daily-Freeman, reportedly emailed his staff that any mention of DFM or Alden Global capital “required ‘prior approval.’” He also wrote, “This directive comes from above”—a reference, [the editor] tells CJR, to his own paper’s publisher” (Hutchins, 2018c). Newsonomics columnist Ken Doctor reported that such a directive “now applies across all of Digital First Media’s 63 dailies and its weeklies as well” (2018c). Singleton told him, “[Alden and DFM] put us in a position where everything had to be cleared in New York,” and both Singleton and other sources told Doctor that DFM had discussed “eliminating all editorial pages except syndicated columns” (Doctor, 2018c). Chuck Plunkett, the resigned Denver Post editorial page editor, again invoked religious terminology to defend his actions and the newspaper when he called DFM’s approach to cost-cutting “an act of apostasy to our profession (Dean, 2018a), and told Columbia Journalism Review that prior review of content by the corporate owners is an “atrocious apostasy.”

And we come full circle: the discursive and material responses of Alden and DFM are, as in the earlier chapter on job loss, positioned as an act of betrayal, now at the level of apostasy. These owners, unlike previous ones, have abandoned the tenets of the faith of newspaper journalism and are traitors to both its practice and its cultural memory. Owners abandoning the faith—how journalists understand the actions of Alden and DFM—manifests the risks of financialization identified by Almiron (2010): newspapers are unstable and have trouble continuing their socially responsible core news activities; news messages at newspapers, reportedly, are being censored by a distant ownership; and
while it’s unclear whether newspaper journalists engage in self-censorship, they are certainly pressured to cover Alden and DFM only in (literally) approved ways.

Invoking collective nostalgia to defend what journalists at the Denver Post think should be the condition of their newspaper, and, indeed, to protect their own dignity as workers, in fact exacerbated their problems. In the end, discourse may be no defense against capital. The nostalgia is much the same as at the other newspapers discussed in this dissertation’s case studies; so, unfortunately, are the end results.

Plunkett, the architect of the Denver Post editorial package, admitted as much when he wrote about the situation for Rolling Stone one month later:

But what may have looked like a David-and-Goliath victory quickly turned into a shameful crushing of dissent at the Post, its sister publication in Boulder and among its counterparts in local newspapers owned by the same hedge fund. [. . . ] While we managed to change the public conversation and rightly refocus the national understanding of the plight of traditional newspaper journalism, we also made the vultures even more menacing. (Plunkett, 2018c)

One month may not be enough time for material support to rally around newspapers, or even just one of them; it has, however, proven to be enough time for a discursive “rebellion” to be put down. In this failure, we can see the limits of narrative in the above attempts to change a story, the limits of collective nostalgia as a tool to do so, and perhaps most poignantly, the newest (or perhaps more aptly, newly recognized or newly accepted) limits of the power of the U.S. newspaper. Carey’s “miracle of producing reality and then living within and under the fact of our own productions” (1975/2009, p. 23) may, for the newspaper, finally be breaking down.
Coda: Labor Power and Mnemonic Power

This dissertation began by arguing the importance of recognizing journalism labor as such—and as this chapter has shown, that recognition is vital to understand what is happening to the contemporary U.S. newspaper. As a Bloomberg headline put it, “The hard truth at newspapers across America: Hedge funds are in charge” (Smith, 2018b). And they see journalists as labor, not as heroes. Another Bloomberg article, published between the Denver Post layoffs and its editorial package, suggested that DFM’s “papers are intended not so much to inform the public or hold officialdom to account, but to supply cash for Freeman to use elsewhere” (Nocera, 2018). Indeed, reducing labor costs and raising prices has rewarded Alden Global Capital, owner of DFM. When Alden put DFM up for sale in the past, DFM as an entity reportedly earned profits of $125 million per year, with individual margins being as high as the low 30s (Doctor, 2015). The recognition of journalistic labor bearing the brunt of profit-taking isn’t new, nor is the greater extent to which DFM has cut its labor force than other chains. And the danger of hedge funds to newspaper journalism has been documented in extensive articles in The Nation (Reynolds, 2017) and The American Prospect (Kuttner & Zenger, 2018).

What is actually different about the Denver Post’s April 2018 editorials and responses to it is that they suggest a growing labor solidarity among journalists. In their view, the conditions of labor for newspaper journalists have become deplorable, to the extent that the foundations of the profession are threatened. The Denver Post published its editorials under the front-page banner headline “News matters.” Unsaid except in one Columbia Journalism Review article (Hutchins, 2018a) is that “#newsmatters” is also a hashtag and the title of a “national, coordinated campaign to win fair contracts with wage
increases for the nearly 1,000 Guild-represented employees of Digital First Media. . . .

united by a central theme: News Matters” (About, n.d.). Julie Reynolds, the author of two articles about DFM for The Nation, also covers DFM as a beat for the NewsGuild-CWA. This is not a secret, per se; she spoke with the Columbia Journalism Review about it, and her Nation byline notes that she covers it for the NewsGuild. Online, as of September 2018, the Denver Post package still bears the NewsGuild campaign logo to illustrate the sidebar to all of the related stories in its April 2018 editorial package. In this case, discourse invoking collective nostalgia has a connection to an active union campaign.

When considering collective nostalgia and labor, newspaper journalism as an object of nostalgia turns inside out. The labor campaign uses nostalgia for what the newspaper should be but is not, invoking a prospective nostalgia of what the newspaper could be. In doing so it invokes the pasts of the U.S. newspapers, and the better days of newspaper journalism not just in terms of salaries and benefits, but in terms of cultural respect and influence. All of these have been eroding over the time period studied in this dissertation. As Williams wrote,

> The more actively all cultural work can be related, either to the whole organization within which it was expressed, or to the contemporary organization within which it is used, the more clearly shall we see its true values. Thus ‘documentary’ analysis will lead out to ‘social’ analysis, whether in a lived culture, a past period, or in the selective tradition which is itself a social organization. (Williams, 1961/1965, p. 70)

In a sense, newspaper journalism leaves behind its own documentary culture when newspaper stories turn self-reflexive. Such stories leave deposits—in the case of the printed newspaper, physically fixed deposits—that regard the conditions and the culture of that moment of newspapering, its “selective tradition” and its values.

260
Understanding these deposits and their contents as liturgical orders, in the Rappaportian sense, rings true. The outer layer of journalists (i.e. those not at the Denver Post) can be considered in both auto-communicative and allo-communicative terms. As a wider tribe of their own, journalists see an attack on one journalist as an attack on all—seen, for example, in the way that many members of national news media continuously assert their role in identifying the truth for audiences in the wake of the Trump presidency’s disinformation campaigns. The reasons for the outcry from Denver Post journalists resonate with other journalists, who try to do the same kind of work under the same kind of challenging conditions. Thus, seeing the Denver Post’s editorial package as an “uprising” or “rebellion” is easy—especially when the distant hedge fund owners refused comment in every article for which it was sought. These other journalists are, nonetheless, outsiders to the Denver Post, and in many cases to newspaper journalism (though many have worked for newspapers). Stories in Denverite, Bloomberg, Politico, and Columbia Journalism Review all appeared mostly online. Communications to other journalists are also allo-communicative; were the Denver Post to go out of business, the discourse from these other journalists would likely turn away from discussing both what the challenges to the Denver Post (and other local newspapers) mean and how to address those challenges, to merely discussing what the demise of the Denver Post would mean, similar to the second-order paradigm repair observed in journalists by Carlson (2012) following the 2009 closings of the Rocky Mountain News and Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

With the present and recent past presented as an ongoing lapse (and in the cases of closed newspapers, the present as a lapse itself), a postlapsarian future is imagined. In that imagined future, newspaper readers are ultimately asked to remember newspaper
journalism in certain ways, not least because the local futures of each newspaper and newspaper journalists as both groups and individuals is deeply uncertain—they lack “ontological security” (Giddens, 1990) for market conditions threaten their existence. To borrow Raymond Williams’ analogy, the community is being dissolved back into the solution of the structure of feeling by losing the precipitated form of the newspaper.

The future precipitate—the re-formation(s) or reconfiguration(s) of journalism—is also unclear. Addressing this uncertainty, the stories in this dissertation examined operate in two ways that echo Geertz’s (1973) discussion of ritualized “models of,” which reflect the world as group posits it to be, and ritualized “models for,” which offer guides for how to engage the world.

First, these stories document what is being lost—they record the lapse at the base level. They record the experience of a growing lack, a growing deficiency. Stories about job loss confront, necessarily, that journalistic labor power is indeed a commodity, and the lapse is expressed here largely as a base process in news reports about the economic stresses on the newspaper. Stories about newspaper building sales and newsroom moves document the harvesting of real estate assets and how changes to the newsroom affect journalistic work. Stories about the closings of newspapers are about the ultimate loss, and at the same time comprise the material final product being sold. This documentation comprises stories of the community.

Second, at the same time, these stories document what is being lost not only for the sake of documentation, but also to reify the values of newspaper journalism, to give them life when their existence is under threat from these basal stressors. These are stories for the community, which reflect the community’s social intentions. Stories about job
loss regularly feature publishers and editors openly reasserting their commitment to maintaining the quality of newspaper journalism, despite the need to “do more with less;” voices of newspaper journalists in this discourse reflect nostalgia for better-staffed days, and for those staff who’ve lost their jobs. Stories about newsroom moves discuss the relationship of the values of newspaper journalists to their old newsrooms and buildings, and use nostalgia as a vessel to carry those values into their new buildings and to imagine how the values will inform the new space and future work. And when newspapers close, nostalgia turns the final editions of newspapers into memory objects that may be saved as touchstones to remember the values of contemporary journalism in the future.

In these ways, nostalgia helps cope with the problems of base processes that threaten the health of newspaper journalism. As a structure of feeling, nostalgia offers a place to which newspaper journalists can retreat when newspaper journalism’s structure of feeling and its telos are threatened by the ever-creeping problems of the base. While elements of nostalgia are certainly seen in premodern stories and myths about restoration, Tannock noted,

nostalgia becomes a widespread, general structure of feeling only with the massive dislocations of peoples in the modern period. It is the distinctly modern sense of a radical separation of past from present, of people from place, and of person from people that nostalgia functions to mediate, as it spins out its endless tales of return. (Tannock, 1995, p. 463, en 4)

Nostalgia offers a discourse that newspaper journalists use to mediate the ongoing dispersal of their communities. These case studies, however, do not find tales of return, but tales of community transformation that seek to mitigate that sense of radical separation even while they ultimately recognize transformations, and ends, as inevitable.
In doing so, two aspects of nostalgia emerge. The first is more local in nature, articulating the value of news journalism, with each newspaper’s staff wanting its particular journalism to be valued, and wanting its journalistic values to be upheld. These concerns are evident in each case. Nostalgia is least manifest in the discourse about job loss, because while individual colleagues are lost, the immediate community of journalists remains intact, and the use of nostalgia assists in repair work. In discourse about building sales and newsroom moves, the community leaves an old home with extant spatial authority; nostalgia for what was best from that old home—for the best news values as identified by contemporary journalists—can help inform the new home with an appropriate sense of place, serving a present and near-future need. In discourse about newspaper closings, the values of each individual newspaper and its contributions to its immediate community are under existential threat, for the newspaper is coming to an end; transforming the last issues of these newspapers into memory objects, through the discourse those same newspapers contain, creates a material vessel that preserves, if not the values themselves, at least articulations of them.

The second is more catholic, about what happens more broadly when values are to be preserved—that is, an articulation of journalistic values for their use in future configurations of journalism. Across these final editions of newspapers, the values of newspaper journalism writ large are consistent. The three case studies, considered together, reveal a story that provides a coda to the modern newspaper, a story that was seen early on by Nerone and Barnhurst (2003), for example, as having entered inevitable decline as it moved from the professional to the corporate type. Accompanying this
decline are the values of newspaper journalism, not themselves in decline, but transformed into objects of nostalgia in an attempt to preserve them.

In an analysis of two Progressive-Era novels by Theodore Dreiser, one literary critic echoed Tannock’s recognition that nostalgia provides periodicity, and argued that nostalgia for recent presumed-idyllic pasts were part of the motivation for business reform of that era, for, as practiced, business was assumed to have destroyed those pasts. In addition, it is argued that nostalgia can be considered “a narrative mode that, in effect, ‘kills’ the past in order to preserve its legacy” (Moddelmog, 2001, p. 190), by taking “an active part in the destruction [of that idyllic past] by defining beginning and ends, by consigning periods, concepts, and ideologies to extinction, and in the process releasing their narrative power” (Moddelmog, 2001, p. 191). Regarding business reform, Moddelmog goes on to argue,

while progressive discourse raised the banners of nature and property in justifying the need for business regulation, it did so in a way that relegated those liberal essences to the scrap heap of history; only by turning them into objects of nostalgia could progressives invoke their authority to legitimate a legal incursion into the formerly private relations of the marketplace. (2001, p. 193)

While nostalgia itself is dynamic, and in the news texts analyzed in this dissertation, frequently active, full of social intention, and future-oriented, Moddelmog points to the ways in which the objects of nostalgia are, themselves, fixed. Reifying the values of newspaper journalism may give them a longer life, but it fixes those values in an attempt to invoke their lasting authority.

Fixing these values through nostalgia creates two opportunities. First, it periodizes the U.S. newspaper as a thing of the past, helps to create a collective memory of the newspaper that should be valued, and extends the collective nostalgia of newspaper
journalism beyond the immediate mnemonic community of journalists to audiences as well. Second, in more clearly identifying which specific values of newspaper journalism should be preserved—particularly autonomy, independence, public service—nostalgia helps prepare the field of journalism for reconfiguration at a time of pointed crisis.

Perhaps, nostalgia can indeed be considered “a narrative mode that, in effect, ‘kills’ the past in order to preserve its legacy” (Moddelmog, 2001, p. 190). The discourse of “rebellion” for the Denver Post in 2018 is not the kind of radical break envisioned by Williams (1961/1965). Underneath the radical rhetoric lies a story of narratives and journalists and newspapers overtaken by events. Acknowledging defeat is mnemonic as well: to be defeated is to have gone down fighting; who would prefer to be remembered capitulating rather than going down fighting? Newspaper journalism’s culture and labor inflect as the industry declines. And the fight, again, is for the legacy and values of newspaper journalism, an attempt to both articulate and preserve its cultural memory.

Accompanying layoffs, newsroom moves, and newspaper closings are other material changes to the U.S. newspaper unstudied here, but which may pose challenges to future studies that find, as this dissertation does, shared discourse across unique newspapers. In the reconfiguring consolidation of the newspaper industry, much of what actually differentiates these newspapers is disappearing. DFM has centralized clusters of newspapers, akin to regional chains, as does Advance Publications. Many chains have centralized design, copyediting, and content management systems. All websites of Advance Publications properties look alike, as do those of Gannett’s USA Today Network, as do those of DFM; newspapers too are converging. In a way, these changes continue to consign the metropolitan daily newspaper—and other local dailies and
weeklies—to the past as well. Nostalgia does much the same. In the new centralized chain models, what makes individual newspapers unique cannot be preserved. The use of nostalgia recognizes this by consigning such uniqueness to the past. When newspaper journalists write of loss, lack, and longing, they invoke their unique experience, but as a manifestation of a collective nostalgia for what they wish their newspaper, and the newspaper as an idea, could be today.

As U.S. newspapers are broken down into their financial components and money is extracted, the boundaries of individual communities of newspaper journalists begin to disappear as well. The New Orleans Times-Picayune was absorbed into the NOLA Media Group; the Cleveland Plain Dealer was absorbed into the Northeast Ohio Media Group, later renamed Advance Ohio. The distinctiveness of each newspaper is crumbling, as each is treated like the others, and journalists are treated as disposable. Alden Global Capital’s Heath Freeman, as early as 2015, was reportedly asking this question of DFM employees: “What do all these people do?” (qtd. in Doctor, 2015).

This affords the recognition that journalists are labor input, which helps explain increased unionization efforts, and increases in strategic union actions, like at the Boston Herald, which finalized a union contract five days before DFM closed its purchase of the newspaper in March 2018 (Chesto, 2018). It was not exactly a victory. They kept the same pay levels while expecting pension reductions as a result of the Herald’s bankruptcy; DFM pledged to keep 175 of about 240 jobs, an initial workforce reduction of 27%. Its new publisher, a DFM executive, oversees three newspapers including the Herald. As the advisory firm KPMG noted in 2017, further consolidation may be a way to increase the profits of still-profitable entities (Purdy, Wong, & Harris, 2017).
Ideas of what the U.S. newspaper does, and represents, have become so culturally integrated that the tendrils of journalistic authority and responsibility are articulated—by newspaper journalists and others as well—as intimately interwoven with the basis of society. Like ivy growing onto and into masonry over time, this narrative sees the newspaper as grown into and now inseparable from social structures, and that as its tendrils wither and fall away, the necessity of its support will be revealed in the presumed-to-be-ensuing social collapse. Ironically, investment firms see and can extract cash value in reducing social value; as Ken Doctor titled one column, “Alden Global Capital is making so much money wrecking local journalism it might not want to stop anytime soon” (Doctor, 2018b).

The richness of lived newspaper journalism culture is threatened in the contemporary scenario just as much as jobs, historic buildings, and newspapers themselves. This dissertation shows that that culture’s structure of feeling is very much contingent upon its material conditions. Collective nostalgia for that richness cannot preserve the culture, nor can it stave off the relentless demands of capital. It can, however, help the community of newspaper journalists commemorate their end, insert their collective memory into the wider cultural memory, in the hopes that in the end, their values of integrity and public service may somehow continue, and that in defense of those values, we remember that they went down fighting.

-30-
APPENDIX A: METHODS

Researching newspaper journalism as a failing vocation, profession, culture, and field presents a particular set of problems when studying it through the lenses of self-reflexive documentary culture and discourse. Journalists generate a lot of material about themselves when they turn their attention inward, and because the decline is ongoing, the data is something of a moving target.

This project’s genesis lays in an historical study I conducted about the 1982 failure of the original Philadelphia Bulletin, and how journalists both at that newspaper and elsewhere in the news industry covered the meaning of its closing. In that study, I was first exposed to—though my thoughts on them were only nascent—many of the discursive phenomena analyzed in this dissertation. Everything from executive discourse asserting that the journalists performed as best they could, to the deployment of front pages to remind readers that the newspaper is (or was) their chief conduit of knowledge about the world, to a presentist historicity about journalistic heroes, was found therein. That spurred further research, including a paper cited above published in 2015 about how journalists privilege the newspaper and, metonymically, themselves as the conduit of meaning about the world, when their newspapers close (Gilewicz, 2015).

Portions of that analysis inform and appear in Chapter 4, a case study that expanded and deepened research about newspaper closings. This dissertation expanded its scope to include two additional case studies of self-reflexive and metajournalistic discourse: job loss (through both layoffs and buyouts, and occasionally job changes due to reorganization), and newspaper building sales and moves. This allowed for a more
multi-dimensional approach, examining the losses of people, places, and objects of journalism, focusing on the metropolitan daily newspaper.

My previous research had focused on history and collective memory, though I began to recognize nostalgic elements in the discourse of newspaper journalists. In crafting this dissertation, I took the following steps:

*Periodization:* This dissertation examined instances of job losses, newspaper building sales and newsroom moves, and newspaper closings, from January 1, 2005 through the summer of 2018. The former date was chosen because 2005 was the apex of newspaper advertising income (in unadjusted dollars) (Newspaper Association of America, 2014), spurring high corporate valuations that resulted in major corporate shuffling, including for but two examples the dissolution of Knight Ridder (accomplished by selling of individual newspapers as well as small groups of newspapers) and the sale of Dow Jones to NewsCorp. This time period spans a dramatic swing from investment and corporate optimism to explicit financial harvesting (though journalists were generally skeptical of ownership throughout). This time period also spans a variety of corporate reconfigurations that reshaped some journalistic practices, such as centralization of copy editing and design, and newspaper groups that share a single publisher for multiple titles.

*Defining the metropolitan daily newspaper.* No strict definition of the metro daily exists across journalism studies. A commonsensical definition would be “a newspaper publishing six or seven days per week that serves a major metropolitan geographical area,” such as a city and its suburbs, for example. A more specific definition was needed to guide data collection. For the purposes of this dissertation, a metropolitan daily newspaper is defined as one that publishes daily (or six days per week), and serves one of
the 50 most populous U.S. cities and/or metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (2018). Considering both definitions allows for the inclusion of cities and regions of diverse types and organizations, such as Albuquerque, whose urban population constitutes nearly two-thirds of its MSA, and Honolulu, whose urban population constitutes only one-third of its MSA. National newspapers, such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* were excluded; *The New York Times*, which in many ways functions as a national newspaper, remains based in and extensively covers New York City and was thus included.

*Data procurement and analyses.* The corpus (I use this term colloquially, not in the critical discourse analysis sense) for each case study was thus drawn from the following cities and their newspapers:

- Albuquerque, NM  
  - *Albuquerque Journal*  
  - *Albuquerque Tribune*
- Atlanta, GA  
  - *Atlanta Journal Constitution*
- Austin, TX  
  - *Austin American-Statesman*
- Baltimore, MD  
  - *Baltimore Examiner*  
  - *Baltimore Sun*
- Birmingham, AL  
  - *Birmingham News*  
  - *Birmingham Post-Herald*
- Boston, MA  
  - *Boston Globe*  
  - *Boston Herald*
- Buffalo, NY  
  - *Buffalo News*
- Charlotte, NC  
  - *Charlotte Observer*
- Chicago, IL  
  - *Chicago Sun-Times*
- Chicago Tribune
- Cincinnati, OH
  - Cincinnati Enquirer
  - Cincinnati and Kentucky Posts
- Cleveland, OH
  - Cleveland Plain Dealer
- Colorado Springs, CO
  - Colorado Springs Gazette
- Columbus, OH
  - Columbus Dispatch
- Dallas, TX
  - Dallas Morning News
- Denver, CO
  - Denver Post
  - Rocky Mountain News
- Detroit, MI
  - Detroit Free Press
  - Detroit News
- El Paso, TX
  - El Paso Times
- Fort Worth, TX
  - Fort Worth Star-Telegram
- Fresno, CA
  - Fresno Bee
- Hartford, CT
  - Hartford Courant
- Honolulu, HI
  - Honolulu Advertiser
  - Honolulu Star-Bulletin
  - Honolulu Star-Advertiser (created by a merger of the other two)
- Houston, TX
  - Houston Chronicle
- Indianapolis, IN
  - Indianapolis Star
- Jacksonville, FL
  - Florida Times-Union
- Kansas City, MO
  - Kansas City Star
- Las Vegas, NV
  - Las Vegas Review-Journal
  - Las Vegas Sun
- Los Angeles, CA
  - Los Angeles Daily News
  - Los Angeles Times
- Louisville, KY
  - Louisville Courier-Journal
- Memphis, TN
  - Memphis Commercial Appeal
- Mesa, AZ
  - East Valley Tribune
- Miami, FL
  - Miami Herald
- Milwaukee, WI
  - Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
- Minneapolis, MN
  - Minneapolis Star-Tribune
- Nashville, TN
  - Nashville Tennessean
- New Orleans, LA
  - New Orleans Times Picayune
- New York, NY
  - New York Daily News
  - New York Post
  - New York Sun
  - New York Times
  - Newsday
- Newark, NJ
  - Newark Star-Ledger
- Oakland, CA
  - Oakland Tribune
  - East Bay Times (the Tribune was folded into the East Bay Times in 2016)
- Oklahoma City, OK
  - The Oklahoman
- Omaha, NE
  - Omaha World-Herald
- Orlando, FL
  - Orlando Sentinel
- Philadelphia, PA
  - Philadelphia Bulletin
  - Philadelphia Daily News
  - Philadelphia Inquirer
- Phoenix, AZ
  - Arizona Republic
- Pittsburgh, PA
  - Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
  - Pittsburgh Tribune-Review
- Portland, OR
  - Oregonian
In total, 85 newspapers were drawn from 61 cities and metropolitan statistical areas, and provided the basis for this dissertation’s case studies. The first case study developed was that about closed newspapers, covered in Chapter 4.

Having selected the cities, the list of closed newspapers for Chapter 4 was compiled by reviewing the Library of Congress’s catalog, “U.S. Newspaper Directory,
1690-Present,” for each city, selecting city and state for location, and the date range of 2000 to the present. The criteria for selection was that a newspaper ceased daily publication, even if some had afterlives, such as the website seattlepi.com, or the weekly "Oakland Tribune" section published in the "East Bay Times." Results prior to January 1, 2005 were discarded. This list spans the geographic breadth of the United States with the exception of the upper Midwest. The list includes broadsheets such as the "Seattle Post-Intelligencer" and tabloids such as the "Rocky Mountain News." It includes afternoon papers such as the "Honolulu Advertiser" and morning papers such as the "Honolulu Star-Bulletin." It includes papers dating to the mid-1800s such as the "Albuquerque Tribune" and papers established in the 2000s such as the "Baltimore Examiner." It includes "The New York Sun" and the "Philadelphia Bulletin," two titles that revived legendary newspaper titles and deployed them to explicitly political ends. Together, they represent a wide range of U.S. metropolitan daily newspaper types and locations.

This case study applied a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2006) to develop research questions. 909 items from these 11 newspapers were first coded for whether they were about the closing of each newspaper itself. “Items” for the purposes of this case study included all editorial copy, stand-alone photographs, illustrations, and other stand-alone graphics. Of these 909 items, a total of 482, or 52.9% were about the closings. The percentage of self-reflexive articles in each newspaper varied from a minimum of 7.7% in the "Honolulu Star-Bulletin" to 91.7% in the "Tucson Citizen." In each newspaper, the newspaper’s own closing thus dominated the news of the day for the final day of publication. This was even true at the "Honolulu Star-Bulletin,"
which dedicated half its front page—its flag, a banner headline, and four editorial leaders—to its merger with the *Honolulu Advertiser*.

Once self-reflexive items were identified, those items then were coded for temporality. Common-sense definitions of past, present, and future were adopted relative to the publication of the last-ever editions of these newspapers. Because items could regard only the past, only the present, only the future, or some combination thereof, coding resulted in six final categories: past-only; present-only; future-only; past and present; present and future; past, present, and future. 73.1% of total items had at least two temporal orientations, and 48.6% of total items regarded past, present, and future together. This was consistent with the multiple temporalities one would expect in collective mnemonic and collective nostalgic discourse.

From this coding process, the following questions were generated about each temporality:

*Past*: What exactly is remembered from the past? What stories are told? What past items are recycled and how are they deployed?

*Present*: How is the past articulated in the present context? How are memories of the past framed? How are they discussed in the context of the immediate end of the newspaper? How is the present articulated—how do journalists express the lived experience of the loss of their jobs and newspapers, what do they present as the cause of that loss, and what do they think newspapers should be?

*Future*: What do journalists imagine the future to be? How do they articulate a future for their cities and regions, for politics, for culture, and for journalism without their newspaper?
A close reading of the 482 news items for Chapter 4 was then conducted using these questions as a guide; the analysis of the chapter was assembled from evidence that illustrated emergent themes, particularly regarding how newspaper journalists want to be remembered.

Additionally, as memory and nostalgia—both individual and collective—were clearly prevalent in this discourse, other questions emerged that were explored throughout this dissertation: for what purposes are collective memory and collective nostalgia deployed in each context? How does a close reading of this discourse help us better understand how collective nostalgia functions in journalism? What characterizes collective nostalgia when deployed to support a stressed mnemonic community? And how does collective nostalgia help circulate, perpetuate, and/or reinstate a stressed community’s values?

These questions, and the questions about past, present, and future, were slightly adapted for Chapter 2 (on job losses) and Chapter 3 (on building sales and newsroom moves). Questions about the future regarded maintenance, for job losses and building sales and newsroom moves diminish and/or change the community, but do not eradicate it. Journalists sometimes imagine a future without their newspaper in the wake of these losses and changes, though questions about (and journalistic discourse about) the future are focused more on how journalists imagine a future for themselves and their work that has absorbed these losses and changes.

Where the data for Chapter 4 were drawn entirely from closed editions of newspapers, data for Chapters 2 and 3 had to be assembled from multiple sources and found by multiple pathways.
To assemble the body of stories for Chapter 2, incidents of layoffs were found first by reviewing *Columbia Journalism Review, American Journalism Review, Poynter,* the Newsonomics blog and column, *Quill,* and *Editor and Publisher* from 2005 to the present. Searches were conducted in NewsBank Access World News, Newspapers.com, Lexis-Nexis Academic (now Nexis Uni) and the individual archives of newspapers to find self-coverage of these layoffs, using combinations of the search terms “newspaper,” “newsroom,” “journalist,” “editorial,” “layoff,” and “buyout.” Expectedly, the general search results, after filtering for the selected cities and newspapers above, yielded many results—2,494 articles. Many stories were irrelevant, about layoffs in other industries, for example, or were not self-reflexive—that is, articles that reported on layoffs at *other* newspapers, but not at the newspaper in which the article appeared. After eliminating irrelevant results, combining them with targeted searches (which were based on known instances of layoffs), and eliminating duplicate articles, 422 articles in total were analyzed for Chapter 2. It is important to note that this pool of articles may not be complete. While multiple databases and individual newspaper archives were consulted, layoffs and buyouts have occurred with such frequency at so many daily newspapers that it is likely that search terms did not catch every article about layoffs in the newspapers studied here. The body of articles, nevertheless, is representative, spanning nearly all cities and newspapers considered metro dailies in this study. As in Chapter 4, a close reading of these texts was conducted, using similar questions as a guide.

To assemble the body of stories for Chapter 3, about building sales and newsroom moves, the same trade sources consulted for Chapter 2 were consulted here as well:

*Columbia Journalism Review, American Journalism Review, Poynter,* the Newsonomics
blog and column, *Quill*, and *Editor and Publisher* from 2005 to the present. Searches were also conducted in Lexis-Nexis Academic, NewsBank Access World News, individual newspaper websites and archives, and Google News using a combination of search terms including “newspaper,” “new building,” “old building,” “old newsroom,” “new newsroom,” “building move,” “newsroom move” and “new office.” Again, such general search terms yielded a large amount of results—6,410—many of which were irrelevant. Many of these stories addressed other buildings and other industries, or were about building sales and newsroom moves at other newspapers. After eliminating irrelevant and duplicate results, 364 articles remained for analysis. As of spring 2018, of the 85 newspapers included in this study, 14 closed, and only 28 had neither sold their building nor moved (nor closed), though some of those 28 have been marketing their buildings for sale, or exploring the possibility. Of the 43 remaining newspapers, nine had sold their buildings but not yet moved as of spring 2018 (one of these, the *Tampa Bay Times*, sold its building but signed a 15-year leaseback agreement; two others, the *Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*, moved in summer 2018, after the analysis for Chapter 3 was complete). In the end, 36 metro dailies had moved to new buildings or newsrooms and were included in this analysis. As in Chapters 2 and 4, a close reading of these texts was conducted, using similar questions as a guide.

For both Chapters 2 and 3, the most recent layoffs and recent building moves in the newspaper industry, such as the summer 2018 moves of the *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, were not included in the analyses, as the chapters were already deep into revisions. A cursory look at such coverage finds it to be consistent with the analyses in this dissertation. For example, an article on the history of the *Los Angeles Times*,
published to mark the occasion of its move, praises the era of Times Mirror ownership as “Camelot” (Curwen, 2018). No other metro daily newspapers have closed beyond those discussed in Chapter 4. All articles and news items discussed in this dissertation are included in the bibliography.
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294


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