

## **The Journalistic Gut Feeling**

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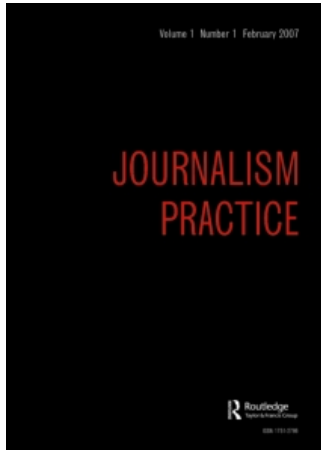
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# THE JOURNALISTIC GUT FEELING

## Journalistic doxa, news habitus and orthodox news values

**Ida Schultz**

*What goes on in editorial conferences and how do news journalists decide what is newsworthy? The journalistic "gut feeling" is an important part of the professional self-understanding of journalists and editors expressing how news judgements seem self-evident and self-explaining to the practitioners. This article presents an analysis of everyday news work drawing on the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu and using ethnographic material from observations of editorial practices in a Danish television newsroom as a case study. The analytical concepts "journalistic doxa", "news habitus" and "editorial capital" are put to empirical work on close-up observations of journalistic practices in editorial conferences and two types of news values are identified as part of the journalistic "gut feeling": the explicit orthodox/heterodox news values which are part of the sphere of journalistic judgement, and the implicit, silent doxic news values which are part of the sphere of journalistic doxa. An important task for future studies of journalistic practice is to investigate the seemingly self-evident orthodox news values as well as making visible the doxic news values imbedded in journalistic practice.*

**KEYWORDS** Bourdieu; ethnography; news values; newsroom; newsworthiness; sociology of news

### Journalistic Practice in a Field Perspective

Every day, news editors all over the world have access to endless numbers of events available in press releases, in telegrams, in newspapers, Internet services etc. All of these events could potentially become news stories but only a few end up in the newspaper, on the Web page or in the news broadcast. How do journalists make news judgements and why are some events considered newsworthy while others are not?

For me it has to do with a feeling. Can I picture the story? Can I see the headline? Then I'll believe in the story. (Danish editor, 2003)

The quote above illustrates how journalistic practice involves a seemingly self-evident and self-explaining sense of newsworthiness, the journalistic gut feeling. This article uses the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu to explore everyday constructions of newsworthiness in journalistic practice and argues that the field perspective contributes a promising analytical framework to re-invigorate the genre of news ethnography. The next section introduces the analytical framework of the article and the key concepts: field, journalistic doxa, news habitus, editorial capitals and the distinction between implicit doxic news values, on the one hand, and the explicit orthodox/heterodox news values, on the other hand. The third and fourth section are ethnographic case studies of news values in Danish journalistic practice based on in-depth interviews, observations and document

analyses gathered between 2003 and 2005.<sup>1</sup> The third section discusses the five dominant news values in the Danish journalistic field: timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict and sensation, and argues that newsworthiness cannot solely be explained by these five orthodox/heterodox news values. The fourth section is an investigation of the news judgements at an editorial conference, showing how the daily routine of press review and the ongoing positioning of news stories point towards a sixth dominant, doxic news value in the Danish journalistic field: exclusivity. The final discussion argues that an important task for media sociology is to investigate the seemingly self-evident orthodox/heterodox news values as well as making visible the doxic news values imbedded in journalistic practice. The remainder of this section will place the study within the tradition of news ethnography and media sociology.

In an international context, the tradition of newsroom studies where ethnographers have studied journalistic practices in news organisations and on newsbeats have provided media and communication research with important insights on the inner workings of media newsrooms (for a review of this literature, see Cottle, 2003; Schudson, 1989; Tuchman, 2002). Previous newsroom studies have given us important knowledge of the individual gate-keeping mechanisms (White, 1950), social control in editorial environments (Breed, 1955; Warner, 1971), the competitor–colleague relationship among journalists from different news organisations working the same beat (Tunstall, 1971), and the complex relations between news journalists and their sources (for instance Ericson et al., 1989; Gieber, 1961). Other studies have highlighted the organisational requirements and influence of news policy and budgets on news output (for instance Epstein, 2000 [1973]), the relativity of news production (Altheide, 1976), the constructs imbedded in routine procedures for news work (for instance Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1978), and the professional norms guiding journalistic news judgement (for instance Gans, 1979; Schlesinger, 1978). Evidently, news ethnography is a key method for studying the processes and norms guiding the producers and the production, but as most of the studies are Anglo-American and were conducted around the 1970s, we need more research on the everyday processes of news work in different cultural settings in order to understand the diverse, globalised journalistic cultures of the 21st century (Clausen, 2004; Hannerz, 2004). In the words of Simon Cottle (2000), we need a “second wave” of news ethnographies. Naturally, a re-invigoration of the newsroom genre means complementing the previous findings as well as trying to improve the analytical frameworks used in the past. Previous studies within the sociology of news production have either been approached as a question of “political-economy”, of “social organisation of news” or of “cultural practices” (Schudson, 1989). In an article addressing the methodological challenges of newsroom studies, Gaye Tuchman (2002) argues that the three approaches should rather be seen as different moments or aspects of news production, approachable from different angles using different methodologies. “News is both a permanent social structure and a means of social reflexivity and contestation; a product as well as a productive process” (Tuchman, 2002, p. 90). Simon Cottle (2003) addresses the same methodological issue when arguing that the reflexive sociology of Bourdieu might bridge the different approaches by investigating *news ecology* of fields instead of news production in particular organisations.<sup>2</sup> For Rodney Benson, the reflexive sociology of Bourdieu is a promising new paradigm for media and journalism studies aimed at analysing the meso-level of journalism using the concept of field (Benson and Neveu, 2005). An analytical strategy which “offers both a theoretical and empirical bridge

between the traditionally separated macro-‘societal’ level models of the newsmedia . . . and micro-‘organisational’ approaches” (Benson, 1998, p. 463). Where previous newsroom studies had an explanatory weakness in their focus on particular organisations and internal dynamics, field theory has its strength in taking into consideration the relations between the newsroom and the journalistic field and between the journalistic field and the field of power. In this way, field theory contributes to “explaining how external forces are translated into the semi-autonomous logic of the journalistic field” (Benson, 1998, p. 479). The next section uses empirical excerpts to illustrate the key concepts of reflexive sociology in order to illustrate the analytical framework.

### Using Bourdieu to Analyse Journalistic Practice and News Values

In the self-understanding of journalists, the news game begins over and over again with each new day. Journalistic practice is experienced as a daily challenge with very little routine work embedded and every day completely different from the day before. For most journalists, the news agenda is experienced as a blackboard wiped blank every morning: there are no typical days in news work and you just never know what the day is going to be like. An experienced Danish editor describes news work this way:

It’s just completely unpredictable. It changes from one minute to the next and it wears you down, but that’s also what’s so good about it. (Danish news editor, 2003)

For the ethnographer observing news work, however, this is not so. News work is highly routinised and follows recognisable patterns from day to day. Even though the news stories that are processed are about different events, and even though events and themes will change over time, the daily structuring of journalistic practice is very much the same from day to day.

#### *Journalistic Field, News Habitus and Editorial Capitals*

The core of Bourdieu’s analytical framework is the concept of field. Methodologically speaking, “the concept of field is a research tool, the main function of which is to enable the scientific construction of social objects” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30). In other words, fields are always empirical questions and the existence of a possible media or journalistic field cannot be answered without empirical investigations. However, a few assumptions can be made about the journalistic field as a research object. Firstly, that the journalistic field is part of the field of *cultural production* together with the arts and sciences, a field that is occupied with producing cultural, “symbolic goods” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 115). Furthermore, the journalistic field is part of the field of *power*, not least because the constant cultural production of social discourse not only implies production of categories for “vision” of the social world, but at the same time, categories also of “division” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 37), or more simply put: to give a name, is also to place within a hierarchical, symbolic space.

In contrast to the classic newsroom studies, Bourdieu does not focus on the particular organisation when looking at news values or journalistic practice. Rather, the analytical frame for re-investigating the traditional questions asked by newsroom studies is that of a professional field. This shift of analytical frame looks at journalism in light of cultural production and power, and means that theoretically we can assume that the newsroom is a hierarchical social space, a micro-cosmos reflecting a position in the

journalistic field as well as a position in the field of cultural production, the field of power and in the overall social space.

As for the editors and journalists who were the research object of the classical newsroom studies, the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu speaks of agents. In reflexive sociology, what is individual is always (and at the same time) social, or rather, that which might be experienced as subjective will always correspond to a relational position in a field, or to a somewhat objectified position. This is expressed in the concept of *habitus* which works as a “structuring structure” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 126).

The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes. (Bourdieu, 2003 [1979], p. 179)

We can all experience the feeling of being “free”, “independent” or “autonomous”, but as all social agents are products of a specific social, economic and cultural history, “freedom” is a relative and relational thing—for social practice in general as well as for journalistic practice. Journalists will be able to position themselves to a certain extent but always within the structures of the social space which surrounds him (Bourdieu, 2003 [1979]; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The quote above, speaking of journalism as “completely unpredictable” can be interpreted as an expression of the freedom an agent will experience. But if news journalism is so “unpredictable” how can journalists process the hundreds of potential news stories before deadline? One of the answers to these questions lies in the concept of habitus which we can understand as a practical mastering of the news game involving a strong, bodily sense of newsworthiness. Generally speaking of the habitus, Bourdieu uses the metaphor of having a feel for the game: “Having a feel for the game is having the game under the skin; it is to master in a practical way the future of the game; it is to have a sense of the history of the game” (1998, p. 81).

Habitus is a conceptual tool for analysing how social agents have different positions in the social space, and how these serve as different dispositions for social action. Using the concept of habitus in analysing news work, it might be appropriate to speak of a “professional habitus”, a mastering of a specific, professional game in a specific professional field.<sup>3</sup> We can assume that an editor will have a symbolic position in the social space of the newsroom which will be quite different from the position of a young intern, and that this can be understood as different dispositions in daily news work. For instance, an experienced editor saying “Now, that’s a good news story” during an editorial conference, will be quite a different argument to the young intern on his first day at work who claims: “Now, that’s a good news story” (see also Bourdieu, 1998 [1996], p. 26). The argument might be exactly the same, just as the news story in question would, but the position from where the argument is uttered is very different—the dispositions of the editor and of the intern are not the same. In fact, the dispositions are so different that even without first-hand knowledge of editorial conferences, the mere thought of a new, young intern defining the core conceptions of the news business seems unlikely.

Journalistic habitus thus implies understanding the journalistic game, and being able to master the rules of that same game. But the game can be played from different positions, and different dispositions point to different forms of mastering the game. In this way we can assume that there will be different positions in the field and that journalistic

autonomy will depend on this (Bourdieu, 2005; Marchetti, 2005). It is thus possible to imagine that there will be more specific forms of journalistic habitus within journalistic fields, such as “editorial habitus”, a “reporter habitus” or an “intern habitus”, but also forms of journalistic habitus differentiated according to journalistic genres such as a “foreign correspondent habitus”, an “investigative reporter habitus”, forms of habitus according to media “magazine habitus”, “newspaper habitus”, “television habitus”, etc.<sup>4</sup> Different forms of capital are the key to understanding the distribution of agents in the social space. Bourdieu point to economic capital as one of the two most dominant forms of capital, the other being cultural capital which will be different from field to field (Bourdieu, 1998). Journalistic capital can be understood as the specific, cultural capital of the journalistic field. Fredrik Hovden (2001) has investigated the educational capital of Norwegian journalism students but it is also possible to speak of other forms of what could be termed *editorial capitals* which serve as important capitals in regard to editorial prestige and symbolic capital in the newsroom (Schultz, 2005, 2006). These editorial capitals are, for instance, professional experience (years of work experience, kind of experience, etc.), “formal” organisational position (reporter or editor, general reporter or specialist reporter, etc.), news beat (political news or human-interest news, etc.), journalistic prizes, etc. (Schultz, 2005). The type and amount of editorial capital of the individual agent and the total distribution of capital in a field will constitute the habitus. Returning to the quote about news work being “completely unpredictable” we can acknowledge this as an expression of a journalistic self-image, an important part of this being experiencing “freedom”. However, an important assumption in Bourdieu’s sociology is the fact that social practice is never completely “free” but will always and at the same time be structured. What journalists experience as “freedom” and “unpredictability” in news work must be conceptualised as freedom within certain frames and structures according to the distribution of capital.

### *Journalistic Doxa and News Values*

Doxa describes the common experience that the world seems self-explaining and self-evident to us (Bourdieu, 2002 [1977], p. 164). Doxa is the taken-for-granted of social practice, the seemingly natural, which we rarely make explicit and which we rarely question (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 57). The general doxa of social practice can be described as “the universe of the tacit presuppositions that we accept as the natives of a certain society” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 37).

Journalistic doxa is a set of professional beliefs which tend to appear as evident, natural and self-explaining norms of journalistic practice. The journalistic doxa is a “specific doxa, a system of presuppositions inherent in membership in a field” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 37). Speaking of the journalistic doxa is naming a set of implicit, tacit presuppositions in the journalistic field, not least the practical schemes that editors and reporters take for granted (Bourdieu, 1998 [1996], p. 25). As many news ethnographies have shown, what constitutes a good news story is often very evident for journalists, while a new intern or a visiting ethnographer will need some time and experience before the good news story becomes evident or even recognisable. “With the concept of doxa, we can understand these practical schemes as principles of both ‘vision and division’” (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 37). “Doxa is a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 57).

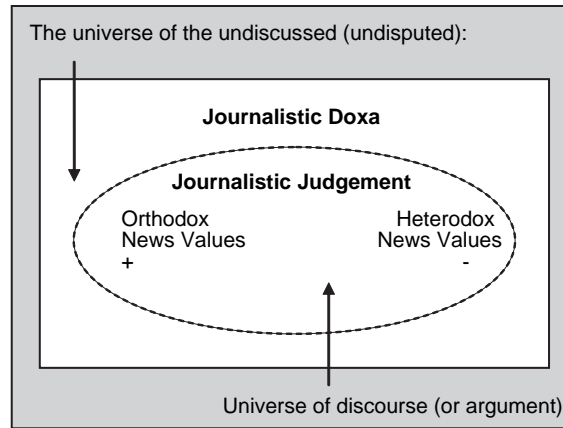
News ethnographers have previously paid attention to the practical schemes of news work (for instance Lester, 1980; Molotch and Lester, 1974; Tuchman, 1973). In a widely cited article Gaye Tuchman shows how everyday news work can be seen as a question of “routinizing the unexpected” (Tuchman, 1973). As part of the process of routinisation journalists make use of different news categories and typifications in order to reduce the contingency of news work. News stories, Tuchman shows, are recognised and processed according to different categories such as “hard news” and “soft news”. Whereas the analytical framework of Tuchman drawing on the sociology of knowledge and of organisation only makes room for seeing these practical schemes as part and parcel of the process of social construction, for Bourdieu it is also—or even first and foremost—a question of power. “Hard news” we can assume, is not a neutral category, but a practical scheme partly defined by its relation to the category of “soft news” and symbolising a certain position in the journalistic universe. Simply put, for Tuchman the different news classifications such as “hard” and “soft” news serve as principles of vision, whereas Bourdieu urges us also to take into account that typifications are always principles of division. In a field perspective “hard news” and “soft news” will not only be a question of organisational practices or journalistic routines, but categories which value different types of news stories and place them differently in journalistic hierarchies. This theoretical assumption is evident in ethnographic observations as well as in news products: first, looking at what become the top stories in television news or make the headlines in newspapers clearly reflects the dominance of the hard news genre. Second, there are notable differences in who does what which are evident from observations: hard news stories are most often made by men, as the traditional hard (prestigious and well-paying) genres like foreign news, political journalism, economy and business journalism will most often be male territory in the newsroom. Likewise, the traditional soft genres such as (the less prestigious, not so well-paid) genres of human interest, family and lifestyle are typical female territory. Another observation—which can also be seen in the following analytical section—is that it is the hard news stories which are given most time and consideration at editorial conferences. Quite contrary, the soft news stories are rarely discussed in detail and very often the soft stories are simply allocated. An editor will for instance say, “I assume you will do the interview with the nominated author . . .” or a reporter might say “I will do a story about the new furniture trend . . .” with no comments from colleagues or editors.

The model in Figure 1 is an illustration of how part of our practical understanding of the everyday world can be talked about and discussed as part of a discursive universe. When it comes to journalistic practice, this can be understood as a sphere of Journalistic Judgement where, for instance, news values (but also professional norms, routines, etc.) are explicit and arguable. At the same time, part of our practical understanding of the everyday world belongs to the universe of the undisputed and taken for granted. For studies of journalistic practice, this can be understood as the sphere of Journalistic Doxa where, for instance, news values are silent and undisputed.

In relation to news ethnography, the model can be used to make an analytical distinction between three forms of news values imbedded in journalistic practice and everyday news work:

- *Doxic news values*: unspoken, taken for granted, self-explaining, undisputed; for instance, the notion of “newsworthiness”.





**FIGURE 1**

Journalistic doxa. Model based on Bourdieu (2000 [1977], p. 168) and Schultz (1995)

- *Orthodox news values*: outspoken, recognised, agreed upon, dominant; for instance, “hard news”.
- *Heterodox news values*: outspoken, misrecognised, disagreed upon, dominated; for instance, “soft news”.

The broken line between the universe of the un-discussed (Journalistic Doxa) and the universe of discourse (Journalistic Judgement) illustrates that it is first and foremost an analytical distinction which should be investigated empirically: the implicitness of “newsworthiness” will, for instance, become an orthodox/heterodox news value if and when it is explicated and reflected upon. The critical sociology of Bourdieu stresses that one of the most important tasks for the social sciences is lay forward investigations of the social and of social practice which gives practitioners the opportunity to become more reflective about their practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). For journalism studies and media sociology, it is important to investigate the seemingly self-evident orthodox news values as well as making visible the doxic news values imbedded in journalistic practice.

### Orthodox News Values: The Five Danish News Criteria

The case of Danish news journalism illustrates the utility of concepts from Bourdieu to explore the general dynamics of journalistic practice relevant to most western democratic societies. Even though Denmark is part of the North European model of media systems and therefore quite different from the Anglo-American and Southern-European media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), analysing the editorial practices, news judgement and everyday construction of newsworthiness of Danish newsrooms sheds light on general features of everyday news work.

#### *Timeliness, Relevance, Identification, Conflict and Sensation*

In Danish news journalism five *news criteria* are highly institutionalised in the self-understanding of the journalistic field. The five news criteria are reproduced in different journalism readers, taught at journalism schools and discussed in the professional

magazines. Wake up any Danish journalist in the middle of the night, and they would repeat these criteria of newsworthiness at the drop of a hat. Other countries will most certainly have other institutionalised news criteria or news criteria that are formulated in different ways,<sup>5</sup> but for Denmark it is these five criteria that are the backbone of journalistic professional training: Timeliness, Relevance, Identification, Sensation and Conflict. In a journalism reader used in teaching, the criteria are described this way: "The news criteria define certain characteristics which traditionally, by experience, make a story a 'good' story. The criteria, which have been developed over the years in a dialectical relationship between media, sources, public and audience, express the editorial sense of what catches the interest of the audience and 'sells the story', and what makes a story more relevant than another" (Kramhøft, quoted in Schultz, 2005).

*Timeliness* is most often described as current affairs, as new information. The closer to the media deadline the story is, the more timely it is, which is why the criteria of timeliness will be different from print to electronic media. Printed media have fairly fixed deadlines and need time to get the newspaper printed and distributed to the public whereas electronic media have the possibility of broadcasting live. In this way, the television live report is one of the most timely types of news stories as they are being reported just after they happened, "I am standing in front of the Court House where the defendant has just received his sentence . . .", or reported just before or as they are happening, "I am standing in front of the Court House where we can expect a sentence any second now . . .".

*Relevance* is a news criterion which in journalism readers is described in terms of the expected importance to the public as a whole or to the specific audience of a given media. As an observer of journalistic practice, relevance is one of the most difficult criteria to understand. Whereas timeliness is closely connected to the temporality of news work and deadlines, relevance seems—at least in the outset—to be more qualitative in nature. Prompted to explain how they understand this news criterion most reporters speak of importance: a relevant story is a story that is either moderately important to a lot of people or very important to a smaller group of people. It also goes without saying that a story that is very important to a large group of people is a very relevant story. When the news criterion of *conflict* is used in the daily construction of newsworthiness, this means selecting stories and angles accentuating conflicts of interest between people, between causes, organisations, etc. Many news stories are being selected and sculptured in the shape of a conflict, for instance political news: "Government says A, opposition says B"; "Minister says A, critics within the party says B", etc. *Identification* is a news criterion described as a question of closeness between public/audience and events. The closer an event is—socially, geographically, culturally etc.—the more newsworthy the story is (see also Galtung and Ruge, 1965). The devastating environmental disasters of 2004 and 2005 can serve as an example—as evident in the difference in Danish and European newspapers' media coverage of the Tsunami, the New Orleans hurricane and the earthquakes in Kashmir. Naturally, there will be numerous explanations as to the different constructions of newsworthiness in the three cases, but certainly one of them has to do with identification. Scandinavia and Europe is culturally and socially closer to the western, industrialised city of New Orleans, than to the poor, rural districts on the border between Pakistan and India. Even though the Tsunami took place in Asian countries far away from Scandinavia, Danish and other European citizens were on holiday in Thailand and Indonesia, and this meant we could easily identify with the disaster, "It could have been

me on that holiday resort . . .”—something which is less likely in the case of the Kashmiri earthquakes.

*Sensation* is the fifth news criteria discussed and reproduced in Danish journalism readers. Sensation is the unusual, the spectacular, the extra-ordinary and the more sensational, the more newsworthy, and very used example of the criterion from the Anglo-American literature, is “man-bite-dog”. It is not unusual when a dog bites a man, but a man biting a dog quite clearly constitutes a sensation.

That the five news criteria are highly institutionalised in Danish news journalism is, as mentioned above, evidenced by the fact that they appear in almost the same form in different journalism readers. Also, they are often referred to in the professional trade magazines of the press. Most significant for the ethnographer though, is the institutionalisation that is observable in talk and in informal conversations. However approached, in whatever context and in print as well as electronic media, it seems that Danish news reporters and editors are totally in sync when it comes to the five news criteria which they know by heart. Even prompted for concrete examples, it is often the same descriptions and examples of stories that serve as shared memory in the field. Another significant observation is that at the same time news criteria are rarely mentioned in everyday news work. The news criteria may be on the tip of any news journalist’s tongue when a persistent ethnographer keeps addressing the question of newsworthiness, but in the everyday interactions of the newsroom and editorial conferences, this is not so. In fact, the news criteria are rarely mentioned. In the interview quote below, an editor answers the question about what he thinks the news criteria mean to everyday practice:

They are somehow part of your spinal cord, part of how you assess and form an opinion about news stories. But it’s not as if it’s a checklist you pull out, asking yourself, “Ok, how many criteria does this story apply to?” No. It’s more like something being there in the back of your head . . . It’s more something like a feeling, whether you think this is a news story or not. For me, it has something to do with feeling . . . can I picture the story, can I see the headline? . . . then I’ll believe in the story. (Danish editor, 2003)

The news criteria are experienced by the editor as something very physical, i.e. “part of your spinal cord”, “in the back of your head”, “something like a feeling” as if newsworthiness is an integral part of the editor himself. Another observation is that the news criteria are only rarely discussed or explicated in editorial conferences. Even so, asked what the news criteria mean to everyday news work, a reporter explains:

The news criteria are important when you need to discuss what stories you would like to do—the discussion you need to have with the editor at the editorial conference. Why are we even doing this story? That’s when the criteria become useful, I think. (Danish reporter, 2002)

When the reporter describes the news criteria as something which are important when negotiating stories with the editor, this seems to indicate that the news criteria can serve as a discursive resource or even as legitimisation strategies.

Summing up, this section has placed the five Danish news criteria in the sphere of journalistic judgement where news values are explicit and debatable. The next section will discuss news values in the sphere of journalistic doxa.

### Doxic News Values: Exclusivity and . . .

Press review is the practice of constantly being updated on the news flow, of reading news, hearing news, watching news, and following stories and themes, following by-lines of colleagues and competitors, following the performance of one's own media and of the competing media and media outlets (Bourdieu, 1998 [1996]). Bourdieu has described the practice of press review as a "game of mirrors reflecting one another", and criticised how the press review "renders journalistic products so similar" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 24). Patrick Champagne (1999 [1993]) describes the press review as an important tool.

The "press review" is a professional necessity: it suggests what subjects to treat because "the others" are talking about them, it may give them ideas for stories or at least allow them to situate themselves and to define a perspective that will distinguish them from their competitors. (Champagne, 1999 [1993], p. 47)

In relation to the everyday construction of newsworthiness we must understand the press review as a daily update of the positions in a symbolic news field: in order to decide what is newsworthy, it is necessary to understand relations in the field. The following empirical analysis is from a Danish television newsroom:

It is just after 8 a.m. at the newsroom of the Danish national public service broadcaster DR [Denmarks Radio].<sup>6</sup> The two editors are sitting by their desks with the morning newspapers in front of them. But their working day began hours earlier. Before coming to work the editors have read two, three or more newspapers at home, they have listened to one or two radio news programmes from DR, and probably also a news programme from one of the commercial radio broadcasters. In fact, you might even say that today's news flow began last night when the editors tuned into the late evening news programmes. The editors have probably also opened their home computers at some point during the evening to check out the stories of the Internet news sites, the national news agency Ritzau or of one of international news agencies such as Reuters or AP. Another important source of information is the list of events prepared by the researchers based on a general list of events from Ritzau. The last source of possible news stories that the editors review in the morning is the diary from yesterday. Here the editors note which stories might have been produced without being aired (for instance if an interview with a live guest in the studio took longer than planned), the stories "on the shelf". Most likely these stories are still timely the day after (or several days after) and can thus be part of the planning of the day. The stories "on the shelf" are not prestigious though, as most editors prefer to make their own stories, but for example during absences of key personnel at work, or on days when plans for stories fall apart to a degree where it might be too late to produce new stories in time for the broadcast, it is nice to have stories on the shelf.

Just after 9 a.m. the two editors go upstairs to the meeting room on the first floor. The oval meeting table is placed in a large, open office where the two researchers on duty have desks close by and where several workstations for reporters are placed in the other half of the space. The wall close to the meeting table is covered with magazine racks storing the large regional Danish newspapers and a wide range of journals and magazines. The biggest morning papers, tabloids and one or two niche newspapers in several copies are spread around the meeting table together with several copies of the list of events prepared by the researchers. On the wall at the narrow end of the meeting table, furthest away from the researchers' desks, hangs a large whiteboard. One of the editors

begins to list the potential news stories of the day while the reporters enters the room and places themselves by the table. Figure 2 shows what the whiteboard looked like today.

At a first glance, the stories on the whiteboard might appear to be written in a secret code. However, for the editors and journalists, these few words both signal what the news story is about and what kind of a story it is. Journalists will, for instance, immediately know that when it simply says "IRAQ" under the LATE NEWS, this is because the events in Iraq are a natural part of the agenda at this point in time. Reporters will also know, that DANISH ASTRONAUT is not a hard news story, but a soft, human-interest story because it is about people, because it is not about politics, economy, foreign affairs but about the possibility for Danish citizens to participate in the competition at the EEC space program. Also, the reporters are well aware that for some time now a DEFENCE-AGREEMENT has been on its way, even though there is great uncertainty about when it will come or what it will entail. When it says CHECK: ADVISORY BOARDS this indicates that the editors wants a check-up on a big news theme some months before, stories about the new government abolishing most governmental advisory boards while establishing news ones. The headlines written on the whiteboard are a clear mark of the unspoken practices surrounding everyday news journalism. In order to understand what the whiteboard says, you need to be updated on the news flow, the current and previous news stories as well as previous news themes.

These were the other stories on the whiteboard that day: CHURCHES CRITICISE MINISTER OF INTEGRATION [integrations minister] is a story about a handful of religious communities outside the Danish state church, criticising the minister of integration for his political plan to tighten up regulation concerning what is demanded of foreign priests. GOOD CONVICTS is the story about the MINISTER OF JUSTICE and her plan to release well-behaved "good convicts" from prison early on grounds of good behaviour in order to resolve the problem of crowded prisons. MANSOUR-CONVICTION is an event taking place today, the conviction in the case against the Danish–Moroccan Said Mansour, who has been under suspicion for being connected to the al-Qaida network. FYNEN: EXERCISE, MENTOR, ID CARDS are three stories proposed by DR's regional television station at the island of Fynen. EXERCISE is about a group of children who exercise as part of a research project on obesity. MENTOR tells the story of a new mentor project for immigrants and ID CARD is a story showing how minors cheat their way into discos using false identification. GAS STATIONS CLOSING tells how more and more small independent gas stations are closing in Denmark. PUBLIC SERVANT ASSAULTED [socialchef] happened yesterday, when the official of the social security department in the local government of the second largest

EARLY NEWS	LATE NEWS
CHURCHES CRITICIZE	BAAM-REPORTAGE
MINISTER OF INTEGRATION	SIT-COM SOLD TO USA
GOOD CONVICTS	FOCUS: OPENING OF SHOPPING CENTRE
MANSOUR-SENTENCE	IRAQ
DANISH ASTRONAUT?	CAR THEFTS
FYNEN: EXERCISE, MENTOR, ID CARDS	CHECK: ADVISORY BOARDS
GAS STATIONS CLOSING	
PUBLIC SERVANT ASSAULTED	
SAS-NEGOTIATIONS	
DEFENCE-AGREEMENT	

**FIGURE 2**

List of potential news stories on the whiteboard

city in Denmark, Aarhus, was assaulted. SAS-NEGOTIATIONS refers to the ongoing, biannual trade union negotiations in the Scandinavian Airline System where there have been threats of strikes but no result in the negotiation for a couple of days now. For the LATE NEWS, BAAM-REPORTAGE tells the reporters present at the editorial conference that one of the star correspondents has gone to BAAM to make a follow-up story on the devastating earthquake some months before. SIT-COM SOLD TO USA: the American TV station ABC has bought the rights to remaking the Danish director Lars Von Triers television series. FOCUS is a three-story format used to present a chosen news story in-depth usually consisting of a regular news story, a background story and a live studio interview. Today the FOCUS is the OPENING OF SHOPPING CENTRE in a recently developed part of greater Copenhagen. CAR THEFT is a story from one of the morning papers about an increase in car thefts.

### *Exclusivity—the Sixth News Criteria*

But how is the knowledge from the press review used in order to decide the newsworthiness of a story? The following sections dig deeper into the practices at the editorial conference showing how different positioning strategies are used.

By 9.10 a.m., all journalists have arrived and found chairs around the table. Many people are present today: all of the domestic reporters assigned to the EARLY NEWS and to the LATE NEWS today, but also editors from DR's other news programme are present, not only to discuss today's news stories but also to co-ordinate stories and resources between the news at noon, the two evening programmes and next day's morning news programme. Present are: the two editors for the EARLY NEWS and the LATE NEWS. The foreign news editor, the economic news editor, the planning editor, the morning/noon/afternoon editor including the host, two domestic reporters, two investigative reporters also from domestic news, a political news reporter (from the Parliament beat), an economy reporter and two interns. Also, the two researchers partake in the editorial meeting but from the side, as they are seated by their desks, and do not always have an active role in the editorial conference. One of the two editors (or both) will be directing the editorial conference which usually begins with the editor presenting the stories on the whiteboard with a few words, for instance ideas for angles or sources. The style and organisation of the meeting will vary from editor to editor, but when the meeting ends, all the stories on the whiteboard have been brainstormed and discussed, new story suggestions have been brainstormed, just as possible angles, pictures and sources have been discussed across the table. When the editorial conferences end, the first selection of news stories has been made, and the reporters will return to their desks with an assignment.

One of the editors begins the meeting by reading aloud the different stories on the whiteboard and presenting them with a few words: "We need to look at the DEFENCE-AGREEMENT, GOOD CONVICTS and CHURCHES CRITICISE MINISTER OF INTEGRATION. As you have all heard and read, this is an initiative from the Minister of Justice suggesting that well-behaved convicts should be let out sooner in order to make more room in the prisons. But how much is there in the initiative? [MANSOUR-CONVICTION] The sentence is today. We have been covering that story intensely and now it is time to tie the knot. [EXERCISE] We need a follow-up on the story about obesity from yesterday. [MENTOR] The mentor programme for female immigrants: a positive story. [ID CARDS] Minors cheating

their way into discos with false ID CARDS. [GAS STATIONS CLOSING] From yesterday. Gas stations closing in small towns. The news story is all done and ready for broadcast. Maybe we should leave it for the weekend? PUBLIC SERVANT in Aarhus assaulted. Increasing problem with civil servants and politicians being victims of violence. SAS-NEGOTIATIONS: the union walks out in protest. [DEFENCE-AGREEMENT] From Borsen [niche newspaper aimed at a business segment]. The Ministry of Defence has said that there is no story. Nothing new yet, just “drips”. When is the actual suggestion for an agreement here?” The editor then points to LATE NEWS at the whiteboard: [BAAM-REPORTAGE] Reportage from Mette Fugl [high-profile female correspondent]. [SIT-COM SOLD TO USA]. Kim Bildsøe’s reportage on ABC having bought 11 episodes of “Riget” to be instructed by Stephen King [Kim Bildsøe is a high-profile male correspondent in Washington, DC]. More and more car thefts happen because the thief has stolen the car key in advance. A reporter asks: isn’t that an old story? Another answers: new cars have starter-blocks, that is why there is an increase in thefts using stolen keys. [CAR THEFTS] A third reporter says: car thefts are generally decreasing, but at the same time increasing locally. There are big regional differences. The editor goes on: [OPENING OF SHOPPING CENTRE] The shopping centre in Fields opens on 9 March. The angle could be the story about the Danish supermarket chains feeling under pressure? Could we broaden the story? A Danish franchise chain has called the editor this morning to suggest that there is a war on service, not on prices, on its way. Apparently, this was also the message in their last press release, the editor says. A reporter mentions that a German franchise chain has chosen to open a store in another part of Denmark but not in Fields—could the angle on the news story be wars between chains? A competing shopping centre closer to the heart of Copenhagen is not afraid of the competition. Everybody will make money. Another reporter suggests a lifestyle angle on the story, that people use shopping centers for field trips. A third reporter suggests that the angle could be where all the new customers are supposed to come from? The editor breaks off the brainstorming on the Fields shopping centre and says: we know that the newspapers are going to write about it at the weekend, so we might just as well be ahead of the game.

### *Positioning the News*

By analysing the editorial conference through the perspective of Bourdieu, journalism studies are offered a promising analytical framework for re-invigorating and improving the tradition of newsroom studies. Where most of the classical newsroom studies used titles such as “making”, “creating”, “manufacturing” or “constructing” the news, the best title verb describing journalistic practice within the analytical framework of reflexive sociology would be *positioning* the news.

The first aspect is that of professional journalistic habitus, or news habitus, a bodily knowledge and feel for the daily news game which can be seen in the journalistic practices surrounding qualification and legitimisation of newsworthiness which almost takes place without words. The speed of news work is just as fast as the case study has attempted to illustrate. Journalistic practice is not the place for thorough detailed discussions of every little news story. Rather, news habitus implies a fast decision-making processes. There is no single recipe for “the good news story” or a single recipe for “newsworthiness” even though editors and reporters alike have a distinct gut feeling of what a good news story is and what newsworthiness is about.

Very little time is spent arguing for or against a specific story just as explicit discussions on which angle or source to choose is only the case for some stories.

The second aspect of journalistic practice, visible through the lenses of Bourdieu, is the differentiation of professional habitus, or in this case news habitus. This is visible in the fact that it is not without importance which reporter or editor comes up with which ideas. For instance, we saw how the IRAQ story and the BAAM story almost were not discussed at all which can be explained by differences in news habitus and editorial capitals: IRAQ and BAAM are stories allocated to and initiated by correspondents with high internal prestige.

Thirdly, reflexive sociology offers an analytical framework which distinguishes between explicit, orthodox values and silent, doxic values. The qualification of stories is very implicit, very embedded, very implied. One example from the case study is the fact that the editors did not explicitly evaluate all the stories or ideas during brainstorming by being blunt and saying: "That is not a good idea". For instance, the story about FEMALE STRESS suggested at the editorial conference was received with a silence from reporters as well as editors, sending a mute signal as an indication of low or no news value. In the Danish professional journalistic field the five orthodox news values are Timeliness, Relevance, Identification, Conflict and Sensation. These criteria can be understood as the institutionalised, practical schemes of Danish news reporters but very importantly, the criteria are relative when used to construct newsworthiness. For instance, the story about the MANSOUR-CONVICTION takes place later in the afternoon and is considered highly timely, whereas the story about GAS STATIONS CLOSING was made yesterday, but is still considered timely. CAR THEFT can be read in the morning papers and is chosen, whereas OPENING OF SHOPPING CENTRE is chosen exactly because it has not been in the newspapers. When having observed editorial practices for more than a single morning, these paradoxes of journalistic practice can be explained by the existence of a sixth criterion: exclusivity. The story about gas stations has not yet been aired or printed in other media and therefore the story is likely to be exclusive. In the same way, the story of Fields might be more timely if printed at the weekend of the opening, but by then the story will be all over the newspapers and in this case not exclusive. In both cases, the outspoken, orthodox/heterodox news values are not sufficient in order to explain the newsworthiness of the stories. In order to explain the newsworthiness of the two stories, we need to consider the silent, doxic value of exclusivity.

Finally, and very importantly, the analytical framework of Bourdieu conceptualises the journalistic field and the newsroom as hierarchical social spaces. This might be the most important theoretical lesson from Bourdieu, and the most substantive improvement in relation to classic newsroom studies, that a news story is never newsworthy in itself or newsworthy only in the eyes of the beholder—rather, the newsworthiness of a story is always a question of positioning. How is the story positioned in relation to other stories in circulation that day? How is the journalist proposing or writing the story positioned in relation to other journalists? How is the media positioned in relation to other media? and so on. A key indication of positioning being key to the construction of newsworthiness is the process of press review. As the case study showed, everyone present at the editorial conference knows the news stories which have been aired on radio, which are on the front pages of the leading newspapers and in the wires from national and international news agencies, but no one really talks about it: there's no need. Knowing the news picture and reading off the positions in the daily news game is all part of journalistic practice. In this



way, newsworthiness is constructed by reading the positions in the field: Which stories are on the agenda? Which media has which stories?

## Conclusion

This article has used the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology to investigate journalistic practices drawing inspiration from the analytical concept of the media field, journalistic doxa, news habitus and editorial capitals. Using the field approach the article draws a distinction between two types of news value in journalistic practice: doxic news values, for instance "newsworthiness", which are silent and belong to the universe of the undisputed, and orthodox/heterodox news values, which are explicit and debatable and belong to the sphere of journalistic judgement. It is argued that what journalists experience as their "journalistic gut feeling" entails both explicit news values—dominant (orthodox) and dominated (heterodox)—as well as silent, taken-for-granted (doxic) news values. Ethnographic analysis of journalistic practices in Danish newsrooms identifies five explicit news values: Timeliness, Relevance, Identification, Conflict and Sensation, but also a sixth doxic news value: Exclusivity. Following the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology, further research is important in order to identify other doxic news values, thus increasing the reflexivity of journalists and journalism—nationally as well as in a comparative perspective.

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## NOTES

1. The primary empirical material for this article is three months of observations of editorial practices at the two Danish national broadcasters DR 1 and TV 2, over 30 taped interviews with editors and reporters, and non-taped informal interviews with over 70 reporters (Schultz, 2005, 2006). The article is based on a Danish PhD dissertation combining reflexive sociology and newsroom ethnography in a methodological design including studies of everyday journalistic practice, a historical analysis of changing journalistic ideals using journalistic prize awards as empirical material, as well as an analysis of the recruitment to the Danish journalistic field (Schultz, 2005).
2. "The term 'news ecology' helps to signal a) the under-theorised, and ethnographically under-explored, dimension of news differentiation, and (b) how this is constituted in important respects by a system of internally defined relations of difference—differences that are consciously monitored and reproduced by practising journalists both as a means

- of managing personal career moves within and across the field, but also as a professional means of reproducing specific forms of news as required" (Cottle, 2003, p. 19).
3. Habitus is a dynamic, relational concept meant for empirical investigation just as the other analytical concepts in Bourdieu's theoretical toolkit. As such, the question of habitus is first and foremost an empirical question. This particular case study of news work has not investigated the social and statistical history and trajectory of the journalists and editors involved (for instance family background, school, higher education, professional training, etc.) and thus not the primary habitus of the agents. Rather, the theoretical discussions on the possible different habitus' of the newsroom might be understood as a "Habitus 2" (Bourdieu 2003 [1979], p. 171) or might even be termed a "professional" habitus.
  4. As a primary, secondary or even a third habitus is thinkable at the same time, habitus is not necessarily coherent or without complexity. The professional habitus, or secondary habitus, can theoretically be more or less in harmony with the primary habitus and the habitus might thus be more or less integrated, conflictual or destabilised (Bourdieu 2000 [1997], p. 159ff).
  5. As an example, Herbert J. Gans' outstanding ethnography, *Deciding What's News*, identifies eight clusters of *enduring values* which are Ethnocentrism, Altruistic Democracy, Responsible Capitalism, Small-town Pastoralism, Individualism and Moderatism, Social Order and National Leadership (Gans, 1979, p. 42ff). "Values which can be found in many different types of news stories over a long period of time; Often, they affect what events become news, for some are part and parcel of the definition of news. Enduring values are not timeless, and they may change somewhat over the years; moreover, they also help to shape opinions, and many times, opinions are only specifications of enduring values" (Gans, 1979, p. 41).
  6. Denmark has two public broadcasters showing national news, TV 2 and DR 1, both regulated within the frame of "Public Service Broadcasting" (similar to the structure in the other Scandinavian countries, the United Kingdom and Germany) which means an obligation to meet certain declared standards ("public utility", meaning for instance that broadcasting should be "balanced", etc.), political regulation (laws, declarations, etc.) and political "supervision" (for instance an obligation to deliver annual "public service reports" and political representation in the board of directors, etc.). DR is funded primarily by government support (tax revenues) and the income from a household fee whereas TV 2 is funded by advertising revenues, and to a lesser degree, by government support (tax revenues) to the regional affiliates of TV 2.

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