CLOSING THE DISTANCE IN 140 CHARACTERS: TWITTER AS A

PROFESSIONAL TOOL FOR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

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Abstract

As new technology is introduced, it is always a question of how the field of journalism will react. This occurred throughout history with the invention of the printing press, telegram, telephone, radio, and television. The latest in these developments is that of social media. Through the development of social networks and social media sites, scholars are noting an increased flow of information and a change in the way information is disseminated. It is also a discussion point how users of social media networks, including journalists, use these networks to interact with each other and spread information.

Furthermore, as budget cuts tighten the staffs at newsrooms and the spread of information becomes more globalized, the role of the foreign correspondent is changing. Instead of being the sole source of information in a certain country for an American audience, foreign correspondents are now a voice in a sea of many.

This study examines how foreign correspondents use one of the most prominent social networks, Twitter, to disseminate information to and interact with audiences. Through a content analysis of over 1,000 tweets, several variables were examined to determine whether traditional gatekeeping activities were fulfilled through Twitter activity, and how foreign correspondents use their accounts to interact with followers. In order to do this, tweets were sampled from 20 correspondents across four national American news outlets: CNN, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and NBC.

Results showed that the majority of Twitter use among foreign correspondents was spent repeating information from other users' accounts or channeling messages to users. A low percent of messages across all outlets was spent interacting with users.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since its launch in 2006, social media network Twitter has registered more

than 271 million monthly active users, according to the platform's website in 2014.

Twitter is an international mass communications network, with 77 percent of accounts

being outside the U.S. and the platform supporting more than 33 languages. With

many users, Twitter is changing the way information is spread, with users being able

to share knowledge, experiences and links via 140 character microblogs. The

participative nature of the platform allows users to take an active role in the

production of content (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013, p.64).

Although Twitter allows all of its users to create and disseminate content,

professional journalists have joined in on the conversation. Weaver (2014) surveyed

1,080 journalists assessing the identity of the American journalist in the digital age.

Results showed that 53.8 percent of journalists surveyed "regularly" use microblogs

such as Twitter (Weaver, 2014). When asked regarding social media's impact on

professional work, 80.3 percent of participants responded it could be used to promote

oneself and one's content (p. 21). Also, 69.2 percent said that social media makes

them more engaged with their audiences (p. 21). But journalists may not be leading

this conversation – Hansen (2013) writes since social media allows citizens to become

content producers, the traditional role of journalists in information flow is being

examined. One of the functions Hansen notes as being challenged is that of the

gatekeeper. He describes that news organizations have always filtered the information

that reaches an audience and this professional role for journalists has long been one of

the pillars of social control in democratic societies (Hansen, 2013). However,

interactivity has allowed members of the audience to become gatekeepers, causing

journalists to redefine their role in information flow.

Mass communication researchers have explored step-by-step how new

innovations have affected journalists – first in terms of the creation of the Internet as a

new form of communication, and now more specifically on how social media sites

affect information flow. However, research including Weaver (2014), Hinton and

Hjorth (2013), and Hansen (2013) typically does not focus on specific social media

sites. Recent research such as Weaver (2014), have focused on U.S. practices on social

media, but not examining the global vocation within the journalism profession: foreign

correspondents.

This study will focus specifically on how foreign correspondents use Twitter to

interact with and spread information to audiences. Foreign correspondents are tasked

with the job of going overseas and reporting news, along with context, to their

audiences. This study is based on the assumption that foreign correspondents may

have unique opportunities with the new flow of information on social media networks

such as Twitter. Cozma and Chen (2013) note new media technologies have "the

potential to bring innovative and improved ways of attracting audiences home and

abroad and informing them about the world" (p. 34). The research questions for this

thesis are as follows: How much do foreign correspondents interact with their

followers on Twitter? Do foreign correspondents conduct traditional gatekeeping activities through microblogs?

A content analysis of the tweets sent out by individual foreign correspondent Twitter accounts associated with national news outlets allows examination of how foreign correspondents are utilizing Twitter to convey information to and interact with their audiences. By comparing the different functions of different messages, it can be determined where foreign correspondents place their focus when spending time on Twitter. Data from individual foreign correspondents from four major national news outlets were collected and combined to allow comparison of the outlets as populations. The data were then analyzed through a chi-square to determine significant relations. Cozma and Chen (2013) found that 27 percent of tweets coded from foreign correspondents' Twitter feeds were spreading information and 19 percent were about other current events. Analysis of interactivity and three gatekeeping functions in the messages of 20 different foreign correspondents across four national news outlets provides a comprehensive look of how foreign correspondents utilize Twitter.

In order to understand how foreign correspondents use social media in the workplace, it is important to understand professional routines and how these journalists view their role in providing information to the public. Friend and Singer (2007) address the changing role of gatekeeper for journalists, asserting that journalists are now sense-makers in a stream of endless information (p. 45). Journalists now have to turn their attention to analyzing and contextualizing, as well as reporting, something that is "not new, but newly pressing" (p. 45). This research

provides a look at the social media practices foreign correspondents engage in to

inform and interact with their audiences, despite a significant physical distance.

CHAPTER TWO

TWITTER & SOCIAL MEDIA AS NEW MEDIA

With 500 million tweets being sent every day, a lot of information is sent over Twitter. The network is present all over the world, and is accessible on both desktop and mobile. About 80 percent of Twitter's users are on mobile, according to the organization's website (2015). Although the company's presence is large, Twitter has not even been around for a decade.

Early days

Twitter launched in 2006, but is described as "breaking through" at the 2007 South By Southwest festival in Austin, Texas (Twitter.com, 2015). A content analysis by Arceneaux and Weiss (2010) discussed the first three years of Twitter and how people responded. The study concluded that although there were many jokes made by bloggers and comedians in the network's early years, the response from journalists was primarily positive (p. 1274). However, there were also negative critiques of Twitter that popped up in the media during the 2006 to 2009 period. The positive press indicated Twitter allowed people to connect more closely with a group of friends, and the network presented a different "rhythm" of information that some people enjoyed (p. 1269). Brevity of messages and the speed of information released also were brought up as positive points when discussing Twitter (p. 1268). However, some people thought that the speed and brevity of the microblogging platform lent to information overload and the lack of revenue options made the network unappealing

(p. 1271). Despite these critiques, the researchers remained optimistic in their conclusion, stating, "skepticism won't slow (the network's) diffusion and adoption" (p. 1274) and the complaints about the network would eventually die out as people began to adopt it.

Arceneaux and Weiss' study was published in 2010. That was also the year that Twitter launched its promoted launch feature. The feature allows businesses to pay money for their tweets to show up in users' feeds. This way, the advertising is integrated directly into the user's stream of information. Examples include Starbucks, Virgin America and Target (Twitter.com, 2010). There are also Promoted Trends and Promoted Accounts that exist on the site, both also launched in 2010. These features were an attempt at monetization, according to a statement written by the CEO and co-founder of the site, Biz Stone (Twitter.com, 2010). The business has expanded in numerous ways over the years. The outlet surpassed 100 million monthly active users worldwide in September 2010, and 500 million tweets per day was reached in August of 2013. The company also created another service, Vine, which consists of six-second videos that loop. Anybody can submit a video, and users can follow other users as well as revine and favorite videos. Updates also include numerous design updates, as well as Twitter lists being developed in 2009. Twitter lists allow users to add other users to a list and have views where they can only see users from that list.

Who uses Twitter?

Biz Stone in an interview stated that he did not view Twitter first and foremost as a social network, but instead emphasized the network as "social media" stating that

"(Twitter is a place where you can) zoom in and out on trends and emergent topics; when you think of the whole ecosystem as an organism, that is when it begins to get really interesting" (O'Connor, 2008, p. 2).

Twitter's users are sourced from all over the world, with 77 percent of accounts being outside the United States. There are four known countries where Twitter is banned: Turkey, Iran, China and North Korea (Dugan, 2014).

Studies on who uses Twitter, and for what, are extensive. Research has occurred in the fields of marketing, mass communication and political science. Wu and colleagues (2011, p. 205) found that the same 20,000 "elite" users on Twitter generate 50 percent of the URLs that people click upon on the site. The researchers also found these elite users are often celebrities, not information producers. Almost half the information spread throughout the site is passed through a middle step of communication — a level of "opinion leaders" (p. 714). Often who follows each other on Twitter depends on the field, with politicians following politicians, media following media, etc. (p. 714).

Twitter gained visibility through breaking news events, as recognized on Twitter's milestones page. The network has two ways of connecting users to each other, according to a 2012 study by Bruns and Burgess. The study described how users could be connected in the long-term through follower-following networks, or users choosing to connect with each other through following, as well as short-term connections around events, which are created through looking at a hashtag or a trending topic (p. 803). Breaking news typically falls under the latter category, where

users are clustered around a topic to find out what is going on. The speed and brevity

of Twitter, noted as perceived positives in Arceneaux and Weiss's study (2010),

makes Twitter first and foremost a tool for first-hand reporting of events as they occur

(Bruns & Burgess, 2012, p. 801). The example of this cited on Twitter's page and in

Brun's and Burgess' study is the crash landing of a plane on the Hudson River in New

York in 2009. Twitter broke the news, and people were able to share in real-time what

they were observing on the ground. Another notable example of Twitter being

associated with the reporting of news is during the Arab Spring. Live accounts from

different parts of the Middle East allowed users to connect with each other and

common topics (Dirioz, 2013). The earliest instance of this occurring, Dirioz states, is

after the Iranian presidential elections in 2009, and then users really discussing topics

during the Arab Spring in 2010 (p. 71). There were, in 2013, 3.7 million active users

of Twitter in the Middle East. Dirioz noticed that use of social media upped during the

same period that the ideals of the Arab Spring spread to different countries (p. 72) and

that people cited Twitter as a place for freedom of expression.

News outlets have adopted Twitter into their practices over the years, as noted

in the interview with Biz Stone. Even in 2008, only two years into Twitter's launch,

Stone notes that journalists at major news outlets are using the outlet for feedback,

sourcing and breaking news (O'Connor, 2008). An example of news outlets using

social media can be drawn from Knight's 2012 study of how social networks were

used to cover the backlash after the Iranian elections in 2009. Although findings

showed that reporting largely stayed along "keeping with traditional journalistic

practices" (p. 68) there was a noted presence of social media both used for sourcing and as the topic of studies. Photos and information about citizens involved were sourced through social media. Although early in Twitter's timeline, Twitter was the most talked-about social network within the minority of stories that came out of that conflict that dealt with social media.

Use of social media has continued to develop, and many notable news outlets have Twitter accounts today, such as *The New York Times,* CNN and other outlets, as well as individual reporters having their own, separate accounts.

Social media and mainstream journalism

Social media are often noted as a challenger to mainstream journalism, for numerous reasons. One of these reasons is that the interactivity, the immediacy, and the multitasking provide social media a leg-up on traditional media (Dimitrov, 2014, p. 7). Social media, especially Twitter, allow people to send out a large number of messages very quickly. Social media also come from a number of producers, all of who have different perspectives and different experiences, which allows the masses to gather information quickly (Lazaroiu, 2014, p. 80). Specifically, the masses are better at collecting information from on the ground, providing photos and news about events quickly through the sheer number of individuals putting messages out there.

However, many studies remain optimistic. Luke Goode asserts that news consumers, ideally, now search for news to be a conversation (2010, p. 14). This is due to the new opportunities provided to consumers to be producers of information, as well as source their information from different places. Goode also asserts another need

for news consumers is to have their information bundled into "packaged digests" (p. 10) that allow the reader to see what is important in a sea of information. Dimitrov states that there is still a role for journalists to provide news, explaining: "in the traditional media, journalists were educating through contributing to content. In the new media, they also educate the contributors of content" (2014, p. 7).

Furthermore, some studies view social media as an opportunity. Deuze, in a 2008 study, stated that some reporters view the new aspects of social media and the Internet as "empowering and liberating" (p. 21). Lazaroiu makes the point that although the public is better at gathering information, reporters still have a role in "crosscheck and analysis" (p. 80). There are applications of social media in enhancing collaboration in journalism as well. Gearing notes the development of journalistic organizations such as the International Center for Journalists and the Center for the Investigative Reporting that connect journalists worldwide comes in part from social media advancement (2014, p. 62). This allows for collaboration and data sharing between journalists all over the world. Ignoring these opportunities would be a problem, because "failing to conceptualize journalism as part of the network society can lead to an unnecessary narrowing of focus" (p. 66).

In summary, in order to understand how technology can "extend and amplify previous ways of doing things," and what new opportunities social media can bring to journalism, Deuze sums up in that technology must be "examined through implementation" (p. 10). Through looking at how different outlets utilize technology, it can be seen how the role of newsrooms is changing in response to new media being

introduced and new consumer needs, such as those described by Lazaroiu (2014),

Goode (2010) and other studies.

CHAPTER THREE

NETWORKED GATEKEEPING

Gatekeeping Perspective

Kovach and Rostenstiel (2001) defined gatekeeping as a principle of journalism, defining the act as filtering and providing verification on information for a general audience. The act of gatekeeping filters news items, only allowing some to make it to an audience through a selection process, as seen in David Manning White's model of gatekeeping (McQuail & Windahl, 1981). This idea illustrates a one-way flow of information between the source of news items, the selector of news items (gatekeepers) and the receiver of news items (the audience). However, this process is shown as a two-way flow in other models, such as Westley and MacLean's (1957). In this model, mass media is directly put in the gatekeeper position, and receivers of information can give feedback to both the information senders and to the media channel (gatekeepers) (Westley & MacLean, 1957).

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) explore the impact of this process, asserting that gatekeeping cuts down major amounts of information into a manageable number of messages for the public. By this logic, gatekeepers have a notable impact on the consumer's "social reality", or their view on important issues and events. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) also define terminology within the gatekeeping process, terming information as the content obtained by news producers from sources and news items

as the information that is selected and processed through the gatekeeping process (p. 24).

Foreign correspondents as gatekeepers?

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) describe foreign correspondents as "agents" for their home countries, citing Westley and MacLean (1957, p. 34). Foreign correspondents go to a country and find what is relevant to the interests to their audience, a journalist stating in a study by Cohen (1963) that they "print what we know the public will want to read" (p. 125).

McNelly's model of foreign correspondence (1959) puts many individuals as players in the foreign correspondence process, including news service editors, editors at publications, and copy editors. Studies have been conducted primarily on what topics have been selected for coverage by America-based media outlets. Shoemaker, Chang and colleagues (1989) conducted a study based on variables such as geographical distance, relevance to the United States and press freedom (p. 396). Results showed that geographical distance had very little to do with coverage of an event, but U.S. involvement in the event would be an important factor in selection of news (p. 410). This would coincide with the qualitative results of the study by Cohen (1963), where journalists view their role as foreign correspondents as selecting the events that are most relevant to the audience they're reporting for.

A foreign correspondent's role can also fit in with other gatekeeping functions besides selecting news (Archetti, 2013). Archetti claims in her study that foreign correspondents and editors are now seeking the "alternative angle", with journalists in

a sense "translating" news to their audiences in a way that will allow for a reader to understand how the foreign news affects them (p. 431). Archetti quotes Alexander Smotrov, a correspondent for the Russian news agency RIA, as stating that foreign correspondents "have to add significant additional value to our stories […] special angles, maybe some opinion, multimedia and good background details" (p. 432). However, technology has made it more difficult for foreign correspondents spend as much time "embedding" themselves in the culture, with immediacy becoming a much higher priority in newsgathering (Eisendrath, 1976, p. 14). Eisendrath comments that after the developments of even now-outdated technology like the telefax, foreign correspondents were expected to cover larger areas more quickly (p. 15). With budget cuts, he continues, translators were being cut which adds even more to the journalistic routine. This, he asserts, cuts down the amount of time journalists have to reflect and form relevant commentary on news. Social media is now an additional technology being studied that has affected how journalists conduct their reporting (Xu & Feng, 2014).

Journalists and professional routines

This study will explore the role of gatekeeping within journalistic routines, specifically those of foreign correspondents. In order to fulfill roles for the public, such as that of gatekeeping, journalists adopt a commonly accepted set of standards that change over time (Borden & Bowers, 2008). In order to maintain these journalistic norms, professional journalists incorporate specific practices into everyday reporting (Gilligan, 2006). Gilligan does not define gatekeeping as a journalistic norm,

instead describing it as an "action and an effect of news production" (p. 17). For example, by looking to uphold standards such as understanding, where journalists seek to provide audiences with clarity on an issue or event, or brevity in reporting, journalists pick and choose information in order to best achieve these norms (Gilligan, 2006, p. 16). Gatekeeping is not necessarily a journalistic norm that guides everyday news production, but instead an activity that is filled through the routines that aim to uphold these ethical standards.

A subset of professional routines that is rarely analyzed is social media guidelines. News outlets often have rules for how their foreign correspondents should use social media, and what content they can post on social networking sites. This can include how they interact with readers, or how they present themselves online. However, there are few studies on social media guidelines, and some are not publically accessible.

The disappearing foreign correspondent?

As early as the turn of the century, researchers noticed a shift in foreign correspondence as a field. For one, it was getting much smaller. As newspaper budgets tightened, the number of foreign correspondents was reduced (Livingston & Asmolov, 2010, p. 747). Globalization of business and politics has led to a globalization of news, which has led to a system of news, which "overrides geography" (Reese et. al, 2007, p. 256). More news from other countries is applicable to the United States, which theoretically should increase the need for foreign correspondents. Technology has also increased the amount of information coming from other countries. Through

major milestones like the popularization of the web browser in the early 1990's, the creation of blogging sites, and the invention of social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, there are many more voices that are entering the information arena. Many non-official sources now can not only can comment and contribute to news, but also create it (Weaver & Willnat, 2013, p. 506).

The invention of the Internet also presented both challenges and benefits to foreign correspondence. In a 2001 survey, foreign correspondents said they had incorporated the Internet into their professional routines in terms of finding background information, checking out competitors' work, and finding sources (Wu & Hamilton, 2004, p. 526). However, it also presented pressures like the need to file more often and update stories more frequently. Wu and Hamilton also noted the rise of "foreign foreign" correspondents. According to their survey, only 31 percent of foreign correspondents are Americans, and there are no significant differences in priorities between American and non-American foreign correspondents (p. 528). However, Americans abroad do write for an American audience, which increases their connection with the readers.

Hamilton and Jenner (2004) also noted the developments of new types of foreign correspondent. Although they said the foreign correspondent is an "endangered species" they noted that although the traditional role of the foreign correspondent is dying out, the career is also evolving (p. 303). Hamilton and Jenner note foreign correspondents as giving bragging rights to larger newspapers, but also discussed the addition of the "parachute" foreign correspondent (p. 306) which can

save costs for a newspaper but still fulfill the traditional view that "Americans are best equipped to be the public's eyes and ears abroad". The parachute journalist, however, lacks the insight and experience of being stationed in that country for a long period of time.

Transformation of gatekeeping and professional routines

Singer (2005) noted some of the staples of the professional role of journalists as "gatekeeper" were being challenged by microblogging. She notes that by expressing personal opinion in these blogs, sharing a gatekeeping role through quoting others and using external links. However, Singer ultimately concludes that, although forfeiting the title of a "nonpartisan" gatekeeper, journalists who microblogged provided more transparency and accountability through sharing the opinions and the reading that shaped the journalists' work (Singer, 2005). Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton (2011) built on this inclusion by examining whether Singer's claims were true through content analysis. Through this study of journalists' tweets, researchers found that most tweets were categorized as opinionated or personal. Lasorsa and colleagues found that even though "elite" journalists – those attached to a division of a major professional news outlet – were less willing to deviate from professional norms of objectivity (p. 476), many of the tweets coded as opinions could be considered forms of professional judgment (p. 31). The conclusion ultimately confirmed Singer (2005)'s findings in that journalists were using Twitter to fulfill professional norms and standards, although they may adapt these to fit the evolution of Twitter as a medium (Lasorsa et. Al, 2011).

Journalists not only use social media for the information dissemination part of their professional routine, but also for sourcing. Moon and Hadley (2014) found that during the course of a content analysis for seven major news sources, 57.1 percent of sources were from Twitter (p. 298). It was also noted within the study how Twitter fit into the differing newsgathering routines in different mediums, with TV using Twitter more frequently due to smaller news cycles whereas print reporters had time to chase down sources based on leads from Twitter (Moon & Hadley, 2014).

Interactivity

Looking back at Westley and McLean's (1957) model of gatekeeping, feedback is a way for audiences to interact with the gatekeepers and information producers. Social media is a new way to do this, with audiences being able to locate and interact with professionals in mass media.

However, many studies focus on the fact that – while there are interactive features on Twitter – there are different barriers to journalists interacting with their audiences. A study by Hermida, Fletcher, Korell and Logan (2012) found that social media users are now more likely to seek information from their own networks, which can include peers and journalists. However, users tend to gravitate towards the opinions of their personal networks rather than professionals (Hermida et. al., 2012). This indicates a challenge to traditional gatekeeping theory, with social recommendation weakening the professional media's influence.

Networked gatekeeping addresses the dynamics between the audience and the gatekeepers that sometimes go ignored in traditional gatekeeping theory. A study by

Xu and Feng (2014) found that the power of spreading messages and creating information has to do with how much of a following each person has. While the audience is "engaged" and "expressive", journalists are found to have a greater number of followers than the average user, and therefore more reach. If journalists retweet citizens, it can spread a message more effectively (Xu & Feng, 2014). The fact that this kind of influence is still wielded by journalists on social networks like Twitter indicates that there could still be a "gatekeeping" role, but it would depend on the interactions between journalists and other social media users.

Cozma and Chen (2013) focused their study on foreign correspondence, exploring what made foreign correspondents popular on Twitter. Ultimately, researchers found that discussion was the main purpose of foreign correspondents on the site, with 27 percent of tweets being in response to events where the journalist is stationed and 19 percent in other corners of the world (Cozma & Chen, 2013). These findings seem to contradict earlier studies, such as Lasorsa and colleagues (2011). This may be due to a difference in vocation in the authors of the tweets selected, with Lasorsa being more focused on domestic journalists. However, although Cozma and Chen (2013) found foreign correspondents commonly used Twitter to discuss current events, research also found that this discussion might not have anything to do with two-way flow of information. Researchers found that foreign correspondents who linked to external sites were less popular compared to colleagues and interactivity made no difference in a correspondent's number of followers (Cozma & Chen, 2013).

Foreign correspondents who used hashtags and tweeted more frequently had more followers.

For the purpose of this study, the focus will remove the factor of popularity and focus on whether or not discussion between followers and foreign correspondents is a two-way discussion. This will build on Cozma & Chen (2011) and Lasorsa and colleagues' studies to provide more perspective as to how journalists use Twitter and how they view that use fitting into their professional roles as gatekeepers.

Networked gatekeeping

Barzilai-Nahon (2008) builds a theoretical framework for networked gatekeeping through defining the bases of the action of gatekeeping and gatekeeping mechanisms. Gatekeeping bases include acts such as selection, which is described as making a choice or choosing from alternatives, and disregard – paying no attention to information (p. 1497). Gatekeeping mechanisms – "tool(s), technology or methodology used to carry out the process of gatekeeping" (p. 1496) – include processes like adding a cost to join a gatekeeper's network or the editing process (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). Through translating both these aspects of gatekeeping to social media, a theoretical framework can provide understanding of how foreign correspondents use these actions to fulfill their professional role as gatekeeper and uphold professional norms.

Operating as a networked gatekeeper

This study will focus on activities within networked gatekeeping described by Barzilai-Nahon (2008): selection, channeling and repetition. These are slightly more

specific than those used in other content analysis studies, but fit into common categories used such as discussion, opining and personal sharing. These functions, for the theoretical framework of this study, have been translated into Twitter functions, such as retweeting, sharing links and reporting via microblog.

Selection

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) define one of the key roles of a journalist as a verifier of information. Traditionally, when a journalist writes an article, the facts included are — to the reporter's knowledge — correct. Hermida (2011) establishes that truth and verification are linked to the professionalism of the field of journalism (p. 659). However, technology has presented challenges to that ideal through acceleration of the news cycle (p. 661). When information is constantly being disseminated on sites like Twitter, and journalists are expected to be on a 24/7 news cycle, updating online content to reflect the latest news, the journalistic process of verification becomes much more difficult. Journalists become tasked with sifting through "raw, unprocessed journalism" (Hermida, 2011, p. 665) from professionals and the public.

Barzilai-Nahon (2008) defines selection, or picking out pieces of information to share with followers, as a gatekeeping activity. In this study, this will be translated into a foreign correspondent tweeting out a link that leads away from the journalist's own work. Selection, however, will not imply verification. Hermida (2011) concluded the journalist's role on sites such as Twitter is not so much to only tweet carefully verified messages, but to curate messages and update them based on discussion and

new information (p. 662). Selection indicates a journalist feels a link is worth looking at, and the user is passing the information along as important for followers to read. According to Cozma and Chen (2011) this is a commonly used function for foreign correspondents, and researchers defined these links as an activity promoting discussion within followers. Cozma and Chen (2011) however defined this activity as including both external and internal links. Tweeting one's own work is a form of self-promotion, and is separated in studies such as Xu and Feng (2014) from other activities. Journalists have an interest in tweeting their own work, whereas tweeting external links removes any personal benefit from followers clicking on the link.

Channeling

Defined by Barzilai-Nahon (2008) as "conveying or directing information info or through a channel" (p. 1497) channeling will be used to encompass traditional gatekeeping conducted through Twitter. Journalists were defined as gatekeepers in the past because they moderated what information got to the users through the creation of media messages (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Foreign correspondents can provide coverage of what is happening at an event by live-tweeting speeches and taking photos at events that an American audience cannot attend overseas, as well as tweeting regarding news occurring in that country.

Repetition

Shoemaker (1991) defines gatekeeping function as cutting down the large amount of information each day into a small number that is possible for a given person to consume (as cited in Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). By retweeting, gatekeepers are

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gathering information from users that they trust and potentially follow themselves for information, and spreading it to their followers. While it is not message production, it is spreading information to an audience. Journalists can retweet other journalists, companies or even members of the public. The retweet function is specific to Twitter, and therefore is an indicator of the functions of the medium that journalists can use in order to fulfill gatekeeping activities.

Variables examined with the study will also touch on interactivity in order to gage how much time foreign correspondents spend interacting with their audiences on Twitter. This can be examined through looking at the number of times that foreign correspondents directly interact with users that are not "elite", but also through other indicators.

Follow-to-following

A statistic that allows further insight on interactivity on Twitter is the follow-to-following ratio. This is calculated by dividing number of followers by the number of following. Although there is little to no academic research on the metric, social business websites have numerous posts about what the golden ratio for this is, but for the purpose of this study, a Twitter ratio close to 1 is ideal. Tffratio, a website created to calculate Twitter follow ratios based on an API, asserts that this ratio shows "you're listening and being listened to" (tffratio.com, 2014). This indicates a willingness to interact. A Twitter ratio below 1 indicates the user has more people they're following than are following them. This showcases a stance of "seeking knowledge", according to tffratio, because the user is receiving information from more users than the number

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of people they're disseminating information. However, this low of a statistic indicates people are not seeking information or updates from the user; a ratio of above 1 indicates people want to listen to the user more than the user needs to receive information. Larger ratios occur for people like celebrities, who have a lot of people who want to listen to them, but not necessarily a lot of people from who they want to receive information. For example, recording artist Katy Perry, who has one of the largest following numbers on Twitter with 68.4 million followers, only follows 165.

Calculating average ratios for each outlet allows examination of differences in the follow-following relationship for foreign correspondents working for those organizations. For example, if NBC had a much higher average follow-to-following ratio than CNN, it would imply differences in the way foreign correspondents follow other accounts on Twitter, as well as popularity of the foreign correspondents among users on the site.

Frequency

Foreign correspondents tweet at different rates. Over the course of gathering data, there was a distinct difference in timespan that it took for a user to send out 20 tweets. For some, timestamps went back a week or two, but for others, 20 tweets spanned a year. Cozma and Chen (2013) found that foreign correspondents that tweeted more frequently had more followers. This study includes frequency as an observation as to how foreign correspondents use Twitter. Whether a foreign correspondent tweets daily or tweets three times a year makes a difference in whether or not they're actually using the medium, as opposed to simply owning their handle. If

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a journalist is using Twitter frequently for work-related purposes, they have incorporated it as a tool.

This study hypothesizes:

H1. Due to the highly interactive nature of Twitter, a high percentage of foreign correspondents' tweets are spent on interacting with followers.

H2. The four outlets' foreign correspondents will use repetition more often than any other gatekeeping activity on Twitter.

H3. Foreign correspondents will spend more time channeling messages with followers on Twitter than conducting traditional gatekeeping activities.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a content analysis of 1,054 tweets from 20 foreign

correspondents. For the purpose of this research, a foreign correspondent is defined as

a news and current affairs reporter for a U.S.-based news outlet reporting from another

country. Twitter is a social networking site where a user profile is a microblog, or a

series of short, frequent messages. A tweet is defined as one of these messages.

Correspondents included

Four print and broadcast news outlets were selected for this study. The outlets

chosen were national and employ foreign correspondents. The two print media

included were *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. The two broadcast

networks chosen were CNN and NBC. Outlets were chosen on the basis of having

enough foreign correspondents to fit the sample size.

CNN

CNN, or the Cable News Network, provides 24-hour news coverage. The

network is part of the Turner broadcasting system, which is part of Time Warner

Cable. There are 17 shows which are part of CNN TV, and 11 that are part of CNN

International, according to the network's website. CNN.com topped cable news sites

in traffic in September of 2014, heading up the list with 993 million page views

(comScore Media Matrix, 2014). Foreign correspondents were identified on CNN's

website and Twitter handles were included in each correspondent's biography.

NBC is the news division of the National Broadcasting Company. Nbcnews.com is part of NBC News digital, which represents 11 news sources, including Newsvine, tv.msnbc.com and TODAY.com. NBCnews.com received 227 million page views in September of 2014 (comScore Media Matrix, 2014). Currently NBC is listed as having 14 foreign bureaus. Foreign correspondents were selected for NBC through a Twitter list listing employees of NBC.com, as well as finding bylines on international stories and searching for them on Twitter.

Print outlets

The Washington Post

The Washington Post has a total daily print circulation of 484,385 and Sunday circulation of 696,589. Washingtonpost.com has an average of 18.8 million unique visitors per month. There are currently 13 foreign bureaus associated with *The Washington Post*. These are listed completely on the organization's website, along with all foreign correspondents and their Twitter handles.

The Wall Street Journal

The Wall Street Journal is the largest newspaper in the United States, with an average weekday circulation of 2.1 million. WSJ.com reaches a global audience of 39 million digital readers per month, according to the organization's media website. Dowjones.com lists *The Wall Street Journal* has 35 foreign bureaus. There is a Twitter list created for all *The Wall Street Journal* employees. Foreign correspondents included were all selected from this list.

FOX, who led cable news outlets in views, according to the Nielsen ratings for 2013, lists their foreign correspondents on the network's website. However, according to the site, the network only has seven foreign correspondents, all of which are male. CBS does not list its foreign correspondents on its website and not enough foreign correspondents could be found through cross-referencing bylines and Twitter accounts. ABC was removed as an option after not enough of the foreign correspondents met the verification criteria and had accessible data. *The New York Times* was a viable outlet, however it was removed to create equal representation of print and broadcast outlets. It was the print outlet with the least amount of data available.

The names of foreign correspondents were found through looking at Twitter.com and outlet websites. Foreign correspondents selected had a Twitter account. The process for selecting foreign correspondents was based on the definition of foreign correspondent included in this study, as well as their presence on Twitter. Five foreign correspondents were selected – this number was chosen because it was large enough to obtain a significant amount of content, but all of the outlets had enough foreign correspondents that fit the above criteria for five foreign correspondents to be selected.

Foreign correspondents who were selected were verified on Twitter. Verification, signified by a blue checkmark on the user's profile, shows the website recognizes that account is owned by the user it is representing. If more than five

correspondents fit the definition of a foreign correspondent and were verified, the foreign correspondents were ranked by number of tweets. The foreign correspondents with the most tweets for each outlet were then selected. However, Twitter only allows for so many tweets to be displayed on each Twitter profile. The tweets past this amount are archived and inaccessible to the public. This was the case for some of the foreign correspondents. If tweets from the month of March were inaccessible, the correspondent was not used.

Foreign correspondents included are:

CNN:

Max Foster joined CNN in 2005, and is a correspondent based in London. Much of what he covers has to do with the royals, including his work regarding Prince William to Kate Middleton in 2011.

Will Ripley is based in Tokyo, and covers issues related to Japan and the surrounding area. He reported on the Sony hacking investigation of 2014 as well as interviewing three American detainees in North Korea.

Kristie Lu Stout, based in Hong Kong, hosts *News Stream*. The focus of her coverage is linking the United States and China, explaining how Chinese news affects CNN's American audience.

Ivan Watson is based in Hong Kong, previously based in Instanbul. However, he moves location frequently, reporting from locations such as Tahir Square and Haiti.

Hala Gorani is the host of "The World Right Now, with Hala Gorani" for CNN. Based in London, she anchors the newscast but will also travel to go to locations such as Syria and the Middle East.

The Washington Post:

Liz Sly is the bureau chief in Beirut, and is covering the Middle East. She writes mainly news pieces, not only briefing news coming from different Middle Eastern countries, but also news from the U.S. that relates to the Middle East.

Simon Denyer is the *The Washington Post's* bureau chief for China. He writes about a variety of Chinese news, including pieces covering political, technological, and environmental news.

Nick Miroff is based out of Latin America, writing news briefs about all parts of the continent. He often loops back issues in South America directly to U.S. policy, for example, how the embargo on Cuba affects Midwestern farmers.

Tim Craig is the bureau chief for Pakistan, based in Islamabad. His reporting does not often extend outside the Pakistan region, instead focusing on comprehensively covering news and features inside the country.

Anna Fifield is the bureau chief based in Tokyo. Her work, as described in her Twitter bio, is focused on Japan and the Koreas, where she travels to report. She also reports on other neighboring countries, such as Singapore.

The Wall Street Journal:

David George-Cosh is based in Toronto. He writes about financial markets with interest in macroeconomic data. This means he delves into topics such as currency and the real estate market in Canada.

Niki Blasina is based out of the London office, and focuses on video journalism. She travels to cover different events, such as the Ukraine crisis and the Ryder Cup.

Carlos Tejada is the news editor for Chinese coverage. He is based in Beijing and not only writes articles, but also edits stories for print and online for daily news coverage.

Taos Turner covers South America's Southern Cone and is based in Buenos Aires. He writes comprehensively across business, culture, economics, politics and energy. He specifically covers Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Newley Purnell is based in Singapore, and writes about technology in Asia. This includes coverage of new social media, interviewing professionals in the field and writing about how governments interact with technology.

NBC:

Richard Engel is based in the Middle East and is the Chief Foreign Correspondent for NBC. He has lived in the Middle East since 1996, and provides commentary on Middle Eastern affairs as well as reporting on events.

Katy Tur is a foreign correspondent based in London. She covers a variety of stories that seem to have no fixed geographical area. Bylines include everything from MH370 coverage to "quirky" UK workout trends.

Ayman Mohyeldin is a foreign correspondent for NBC News. While his Twitter bio designates him as being based "anywhere and everywhere", he focuses on the Middle East, his most recent bylines describing air strikes on Gaza.

Bill Neely is based in London, and is the Chief Global Correspondent for NBC News. He also does not seem to focus on a specific geographical area, recent bylines coming from places like Venezuela and Malaysia.

Keir Simmons is based in London. Many of his pieces seem to be more focused around his personal experiences or commentary on world news. He reports on topics ranging from pop culture to breaking news.

Tweets selected

After determining the foreign correspondents for each outlet, tweets were collected from three months of 2014. September was chosen due to a high level of activity for foreign correspondents to tweet about when governments return from summer recess. March is a month that does not have many holidays, but does not include major elections or events. The third month included, December, is a period where many U.S. holidays take place, potentially decreasing the foreign correspondent's use of Twitter for professional purposes.

First, the number of tweets made for each month was recorded for each correspondent, and the number of total tweets within the sampling frame was determined. Two independent coders were then recruited to code 10 percent as a representative sample. The tweets were stratified by outlet, so that researchers could compare results between outlets. Therefore, an equal representative sample of 248

tweets was selected for each outlet. This researcher then gathered the tweets based on

a skip interval determined for each outlet and sent them to the coders.

Table 1: Coded tweets

Outlet	All tweets	Skip interval	Sampled
The Washington Post	1,958	10	266
The Wall Street Journal	2,666	7	266
CNN	3,434	13	261
NBC	1,823	7	261

NOTES:

- *Numbers represent collapsed data for agreement in percentages*
- *The coders did not agree on any tweet coded with multiple variables. Therefore, v5 is not included in this table.*

Systematic random sampling was used to determine the population sample. The definition of systematic random sampling used is selecting every 'xth' unit, as determined by a skip interval (Neuendorf, 2002). The skip interval is determined by dividing the population by the sample size.

Variables: *Operating as a gatekeeper*

Three gatekeeping activities described by Barzilai-Nahon (2008) can be directly translated into Twitter functions: Selection, channeling and repetition. *Selection*, defined within this study as a foreign correspondent choosing information to share with readers, will be equated to tweeting a link to information not produced by the reporter. This can include links to work by a reporter from the same news source as the foreign correspondent or by an external source. The selection of a link to include in a message to followers implies the correspondent thinks that the information is important and relevant to their audience. *Channeling*, the act of creating

information and sending it to users, will include traditional reporting activities taking place on Twitter, such as tweeting news coverage and links to the correspondent's own work. *Repetition*, which is defined in this study as a foreign correspondent repeating a message to an audience, is similar to the selection category, except it is translated directly to a function specific to Twitter. The act of retweeting allows a reporter to repeat an exact message from another source without providing commentary. By retweeting another person's message, the foreign correspondent disseminates to followers the message and links in it. This is separated from selection by the fact that using the retweet function does not allow for the journalist to provide commentary, with the journalist simply repeating the message. With selection, there are a limited number of characters for the user to contextualize or describe the link. Retweeting also requires less effort than tweeting a link because no content needs to be created and all the reporter needs to do is click the retweet button.

After the sample was collected, the two independent coders, both male third-year undergraduate students in the Honors Tutorial College, were given the messages to code into the different variables. The code sheet defined different characteristics of these messages that would link them for a specific variable. For example, if a tweet was repeated using the retweet function on Twitter, that was coded as variable one. This researcher trained the coders to recognize these characteristics through having the coders process sample tweets. The coders were able to ask any questions of the researcher for the example tweets. A copy of the code book the coders received is attached as Appendix A.

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The coders recorded their findings in two respective Microsoft Exel spreadsheets, with the results grouped by outlet. Each outlet was given a unique identifier. The tweets selected were given an ID number. For example, the first tweet for Outlet A, NBC, was recorded as A1.

After data was recorded, simple intercoder reliability was calculated (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 154). Neuendorf states that there is no agreed-upon level of intercoder reliability. This study uses Ellis (1994, p. 91) and Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000) as a baseline, proposing a 70 percent minimum for intercoder reliability. After simple intercoder reliability was calculated, Scott's *pi* was determined using online software. This measure corrects for the role of chance agreement and uses a joint distribution across two coders.

Other statistics were also calculated using SPSS. The frequency and mean for each variable for each outlet's population were calculated. A chi-square was then used in order to test the relationship between outlets and the frequency of a type of activity.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

This study examined some gatekeeping variables and other constructs to determine social media use for foreign correspondents from four media outlets: repetition, channeling, interaction and selection. Three of these variables are associated with the functions of networked gatekeeping, namely repetition, channeling and selection. Out of 2,666 tweets made from 20 foreign correspondents at four different outlets, a population size of 10 percent was selected. The researcher selected 1,054 tweets and gave them to independent coders to be analyzed.

Intercoder reliability was then calculated to ensure the reliability of results. Using a simple intercoder reliability statistic, 78.8 percent intercoder reliability was determined. A Scott's *pi* calculation yielded .718 (Scott, 1995). Percentages of actions taken on Twitter were then calculated in excel in order to determine what activity foreign correspondents from each outlet participated in most. The results are recorded in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentages of activities by outlet

|	Gatekeeping Activities				
Outlet	Repetition	Interaction	Selection	Channeling	No Activity
A - NBC	20	15	0	63	2
B - WSJ	46	8	8	8	21
C - WP	36	8	22	30	4
D - CNN	44	8	9	36	7
Total	**37**	**10**	**10**	**36**	**7**

NOTES:

- *Numbers represent collapsed data for agreement in percentages*
- *The coders did not agree on any tweet coded with multiple variables. Therefore, v5 is not included in this table.*
- *Outlet names are abbreviated.*

The two most-used activities across all outlets are repetition, or using the retweet function on Twitter (n=831, 37%) and channeling, or reporting via the microblog function (n=831, 36%). The lowest percentages across all populations were interaction (n=831, 10%) and selection (n=831, 10%). According to the data, foreign correspondents also rarely sent out messages that did not fill a gatekeeping role or an interactive role, with tweets that fit into none of the activities only making up 7% (n=831) of the total population.

The results for the entire sample were reflected in individual populations. Three out of the four outlets had repetition as their most-conducted activity.

Figure 1: Percentages of tweet activities in individual populations
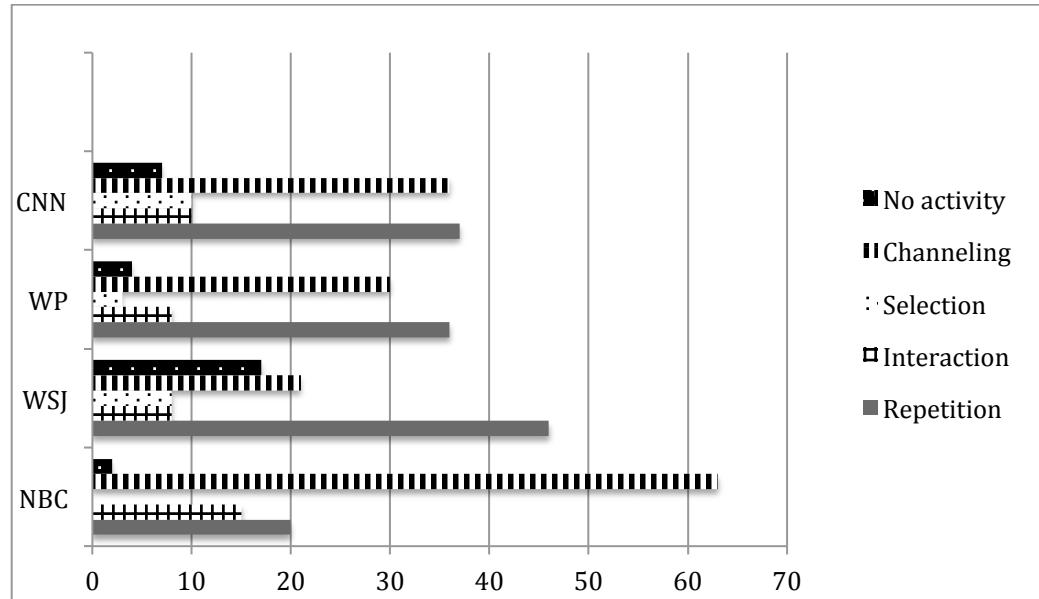
NOTES:
- *Numbers represent collapsed data for agreement in percentages*
- *The coders did not agree on any tweet coded with multiple variables. Therefore, v5 is not included in this chart.*
- *Outlet names are abbreviated.*

The difference between repetition and selection variables (v1 and v4) and the other variables coded (v2, v3) is large across all populations. The two most-used variables, repetition and selection, are almost even in percentage of use in both *The Washington Post's* and CNN's samples. The difference between the percentage of use of the top two variables is greater in the *The Wall Street Journal* and NBC, NBC being the greater difference. In that sample, channeling makes up 63% (*n*= 177) of Twitter activity with repetition only making up 20% (*n*=177). Although repetition is the second most-used activity in that population, in the other three, it is the top variable.

Table 3: Two-Sample T-test of Outlets*Gatekeeping Variables Crosstabs

	Gatekeeping Activities				
Outlet	Repetition	Interaction	Selection	Channeling	No Activity
A - NBC	35	27	0	112	3
B - WSJ	94	17	16	42	35
C - WP	82	17	48	66	9
D - CNN	99	19	21	82	7
Total	**310**	**80**	**85**	**302**	**54**

NOTES:

- *Numbers represent collapsed data for agreement in percentages*
- *The coders did not agree on any tweet coded with multiple variables. Therefore, v5 is not included in this table.*
- *Outlet names are abbreviated.*

H1 examined the extent to which a high percentage of foreign correspondents' twitter use is spent interacting with followers due to the highly interactive nature of Twitter. All four outlets' foreign correspondents' tweets showed a statistically significant and positive association between interaction and selection $r = .63$, $n = 163$, $p < .01$. However, interaction and selection were among gained some of the lowest scores, averaging 82 ($X^2=176.254$, $df=12$, p<.001). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

H2 that examined the extent to which all four outlets' foreign correspondents' tweets would use repetition more often than any other gatekeeping activity on Twitter was statistically supported. A chi square test of all six categorical variables showed a statistically significant and positive Pearsons correlations 310 ($X^2=176.254$, $df=12$,

p<.001). As Table 3 shows, Hypothesis 3 also was supported, claiming that foreign correspondents would spend more time channeling messages with followers on Twitter than fulfilling traditional gatekeeping activities ($r = .66$, $n = 301$, $p < .01$).

Findings in the universal data

The following variables, frequency of tweets and follower-to-following ratio, are designed to examine two different aspects of foreign correspondents' Twitter use. Results for both of these calculations, which were done for all populations, are recorded in Table 4.

Table 4: User and Interactive Correlations (Followers & Following)

	Frequency	Follow-to-following
A - NBC	138	122.46
B - WSJ	178	7.97
C - WP	131	11.35
D - CNN	230	147.53
Total	**170**	**72.33**

NOTES:
- *Follow-to-following ratios are calculated by dividing an account's followers by their number of following. The number shown is the average follower-to-following ratios.*
- *Frequencies are averaged from the three months sampled.*

The most notable observation from the follower-to-following list is the differences between outlets. The closest to a 1:1 follower-to-following ratio is *The Wall Street Journal* (7.97). The outlet with the highest follower-to-following ratio is CNN with 147.53. None of the foreign correspondents at any of the outlets has a follower-to-following ratio that indicates that they have a lower follower count than they do following count.

Frequency numbers are generally in hundreds for the average number of tweets per month. The only exception to this is the highest number, CNN. The lowest numbers are not separated by a large amount of tweets with *The Washington Post* at 131 average tweets per month and NBC at 138.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

This thesis examined how foreign correspondents used microblogs published on the popular networking site, Twitter. Data were drawn from four different news outlets—two print, two broadcast—and 20 different foreign correspondents, reporting on a variety of geographical areas. These tweets were coded into four different variables: repetition, selection, channeling and interaction. Each variable was linked to a different way a foreign correspondent could use Twitter, either interacting with audiences or conducting traditional gatekeeping activities. The gatekeeping activities are associated with the selection, channeling and repetition variables. Interactivity is associated with the same variable name, which allows a look at how often foreign correspondents interacted with users that were not "elite", in other terms, not being in a position with a news outlet or a political based.

The study hypothesized that:

H1. Due to the highly interactive nature of Twitter, a high percentage of foreign correspondent Twitter use is spent interacting with followers.

H2. Foreign correspondents will use repetition more often than any other gatekeeping activity on Twitter.

H3. Foreign correspondents will spend more time channeling messages with followers on Twitter than fulfilling traditional gatekeeping activities.

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In summary, one of the hypotheses proposed was found null. Hypothesis 1 was not supported, indicating that a high percentage of foreign correspondent use of Twitter is not spent interacting with their readers. The statistical support of the second and third hypothesis shows that although repetition was the most-used activity within foreign correspondent Twitter activity, the primary use of Twitter among foreign correspondents was dedicated to sending messages and reporting for followers, not fulfilling other traditional gatekeeping activities, such as selection.

Results show that while there are the channels in place for Twitter to be a place of interactivity for foreign correspondents, it is still not typical for these foreign correspondents to primarily use the outlet for that reason. With foreign correspondents still spending more time channeling messages to followers—a one-way form of communication—than interacting, some traditional forms of correspondence still transfer over to the social media network. This, according to studies like Singer (2005), could indicate that the reporter is providing more transparency and more information about the events they are covering. It could also show that the foreign correspondents are still dedicated to being the "eyes and ears" of the public, a traditional role for foreign reporters (Hamilton & Singer, 2004). It can be traced back to the 1960's that foreign correspondents perceive their primary role as information gatherers (Cohen, 1963) and foreign correspondents could still be fulfilling that role. The results of this study indicate that foreign correspondents are still spending most of their messages on Twitter acting as information gathers, indicating there is still a value on foreign correspondents acting in this way on new media.

The gatekeeping activity of repetition is one that has a couple different dimensions. The repetition act on Twitter is easy to commit. By pressing a button, the information in another user's feed is transferred, in a way, to one's own. Therefore, it would be easy for foreign correspondents to utilize it. By retweeting a reputable source, the correspondent is getting the information to their readers without having to create a message to contain it. Xu and Feng (2014) suggest that retweeting somebody could be considered a form of interactivity, especially if it is of a user that is not "elite". As will be discussed later in this chapter, this study does not differentiate between foreign correspondents retweeting "elite" users and "non-elite" users. Therefore, it is impossible to quantify repetition as a form of interactivity within the methodology of this study.

Follower-to-following ratios, while originally selected as an indicator of interactivity, did not line up with the interaction results. The lowest follower-to-following ratio was *The Wall Street Journal* with 7.97, but the highest level of interactivity was NBC, with 15 percent of its messages being dedicated to interaction. However, this connection was not examined statistically. Due to the low amount of academic research on follower-to-following ratios, this would be a point of expansion for future study.

This study can also be applied to examine the question on whether or not the foreign correspondent role is disappearing, at least from the perspective of new media as a challenger. Social media provides a way for people to become their own news producers, and their eyes are turning away from professional sources to their own

networks. Because so many people are putting out messages from events overseas that users in the United States can browse easily from their homes, it seems that the foreign correspondent is almost becoming obsolete — but that is not true. According to these results, foreign correspondents do not prioritize interacting with their followers, instead channeling messages to them or repeating messages for them. This doesn't mean, necessarily, that the foreign correspondent is ignoring the need for interaction in new media. It could mean, instead, that the foreign correspondent is trying to satisfy his or her audience's need for information. After examining the needs of consumers for their news, Goode (2010, p. 14), concludes that "without conversation, citizens lack the wherewithal to test, refine and enrich their interpretations of and responses to the news they read, hear and watch". Despite this, he ultimately asserts that continuous feedback is not possible, but that encouraging more members into conversation could enhance the relationship between traditional journalists and their readers (p. 19). A balance between reporting and curating information and interaction with readers ultimately needs to be struck, but there's no professional standard that has yet been set by news outlets on how much time a foreign correspondent should spend interacting with their readers.

Looking at the social media guidelines for each outlet, social media rules give foreign correspondents boundaries they should adhere to in order to maintain professionalism and good standing with their outlets. Of the four outlets analyzed, two have made their social media guidelines public: *The Washington Post* and NBC. A major point made in both outlets' guidelines is that journalists can be held accountable

for the information they link to or retweet. NBC News has the policy that the journalist should avoid spreading any information that "NBC News is not prepared to report on air or online" (NBCnews.com, 2015). In one section of their policies *The Washington Post* note that by "following" someone on a social network we "trust them to filter content on the basis of some expertise," (washingtonpost.com, 2014). The guidelines place this in the context of readers having some expectation of the validity and transparency of the information that journalists associated with that outlet share. The guidelines also note the importance of sourcing, and not reporting information that is not sourced. Although repetition may be a fairly easy action to take, as previously described, through these social media guidelines, there is a lot of weight given to it.

Both sets of guidelines contain little to no mention of interacting with readers, besides the traditional dissemination of information role. The NBC News guidelines bear no mention, and *The Washington Post's* only contain mention of how to maintain calm and not fight with readers, even going so far as to advise reporters to "count to 10" before responding to an inflammatory tweet (washingtonpost.com, 2015). Therefore, there is an indication that the outlets expect foreign correspondents to stay professional, but no indication as to whether the outlets encourage or discourage interaction with readers, and at what level.

The research questions for this study were designed to assess how foreign correspondents were going to use Twitter as a professional tool in terms of gatekeeping theory and interactivity. The data analyzed in part answers these

questions. There is still a high level of gatekeeping activity taking place on Twitter, with foreign correspondents most often repeating information they want their audiences to hear, which is a traditional gatekeeping activity.

The high level of the repetition activity shows that foreign correspondents are not only producing information, but also gathering it from different users. However, selection, or providing a link to another person's work, even within the correspondent's outlet, is very low. By selecting a link and adding their own commentary to it, selection would be a primary example of gatekeeping on Twitter. There is a large gap between selection and repetition, however. It is important to note that foreign correspondents more frequently repeat a message instead of adding to it. One of the traditional actions of a foreign correspondent, and journalists in general, is providing context to a message (Friend & Singer, 2011, p. 45). If a foreign correspondent were providing election results in an article, for instance, he or she simply would not repeat the press release, instead relating the results back to the audience, perhaps adding historical context and providing background on the candidates. This would translate into a selection versus repetition function on Twitter. If a foreign correspondent simply retweeted a message from an official, there would be no context, besides the fact that it came from a user that anybody interested could look at the information. If a correspondent tweeted the link to a webpage with the results, along with a short message about how it related to an American audience, which would provide more context about the information the foreign correspondent is sharing.

However, there are benefits to retweeting over selection. For example, with selection, character space can be very limited, preventing the opportunity to tag the source of the information. This way the audience gets a direct link to where the correspondent gathered his or her information. Retweeting "non-elite" user messages without altering them also allows followers to see how a user was feeling and how they shared the information, for example, a message surrounding their opinions on a crashed airline flight or the latest political scandal. Sharing these perspectives could be important in providing context and providing comprehensive bundles of information to an audience. The retweeting function also fits in well with immediacy, an essential factor to consider in social media (Dimitrov, 2014, p. 7). Clicking button to retweet information saves time for the correspondent, which, especially in breaking news situations, could allow them to keep up with the flow of information and get their followers the most up-to-date information quickly.

Interactivity is one of the least utilized activities by foreign correspondents across all outlets in this study. The criteria for interactivity are that the correspondent was communicating with a "non-elite" user, so someone not associated with a political organization or a media outlet. The fact this is so low across all outlets, ranging from 8 to 15 percent, is interesting due to the move toward networked gatekeeping. Because there are so many voices, feedback is a way for journalists to interact with audiences and receive different perspectives (Westley & McLean, 1957). With social media, this has become much easier, with directly replying to users requiring an "@ reply". This is still not a main priority for foreign correspondents, as found in the results of this

study, with activities like selection and channeling taking precedence. So, when considering this lack of interactivity, it is important to note a journalist only has so much time on Twitter. Even two years into Twitter's launch, journalists were using Twitter as a way to interact with audiences and gather sources (O'Connor, 2008). Interactivity is taking place, and foreign correspondents do take some time to reply to non-elite users. Meanwhile, when balancing the activities a foreign correspondent can take on Twitter, a user might think channeling and repetition—two of the higher-used activities on the site—could be more of a priority due to the fact they gather and share information. This could be explored further by analyzing foreign correspondent's @ replies across a larger amount of outlets, and seeing if, like the data collected in this study, they all hover in the same percentage of time being spent on interacting with users. This could indicate further which outlets spend more time communicating with their audiences via Twitter.

Another place to look for interactivity is the follow-to-following ratios. All of the average follow-to-following ratios are above 1, which is not surprising. Foreign correspondents are deemed a source of information, which would lead to a higher follower count. Consequently, the gap between the lowest follow-to-following ratio to the highest is wide. The *Wall Street Journal* has the lowest ratio, which shows that, on average, foreign correspondents have a smaller difference in the number of people they follow as opposed to those that are following them. This could show willingness for conversation, but *The Wall Street Journal*'s interactivity activity sits lower than NBC's, who has the second-highest follow-to-following ratio. The measure does not

seem to be a concern for most outlets, and nothing addresses who or how many people to follow in the two social media guidelines.

There are limitations to how far this study reaches. The repetition section is not comprehensive in how it reflects interactivity and gatekeeping. As Cozma and Chen (2014) indicated, retweets can be an indicator of interactivity as well as a gatekeeping activity. However, this study did not differentiate between retweets of different types of users. This would split variable 1 into two different variables—one that hypothesizes interactivity, the other that hypothesizes how often foreign correspondents use repetition as a gatekeeping activity.

Another limitation is that this study does not indicate the foreign correspondents' intent. Foreign correspondents may not take gatekeeping into consideration when they tweet, or consider themselves still gatekeepers. The journalism profession is centered on a set of core goals such as objectivity and truthfulness. Despite this professional standards vary from outlet to outlet, and ethics and priorities vary from person to person. One foreign correspondent may intentionally spend a lot of time selecting what to retweet, but another might not think about what they're implying when they retweet a message. Some foreign correspondents also have "RT do not equal endorsements" in their bios. Every foreign correspondent is different, and therefore a researcher cannot tell what the intent behind every activity is. For example, this study associates three different acts with traditional gatekeeping activities, but a foreign correspondent could think that the gatekeeper role is obsolete and view his or herself as a completely different part of the flow of

information. In order to truly understand professional routines and how foreign correspondents incorporate different social media networks, namely Twitter, into their professional routines, qualitative study is required. This would allow more concrete qualitative evidence on what activities foreign correspondents prioritize, how they think their role is changing in journalism, and whether they believe the gatekeeper role exists. It would also provide perspective on what foreign correspondents think their audiences want, and how they cater to that. The study does not touch on the use of Twitter in addition to reporting, nor does it talk about using Twitter for sourcing or opining. The variables also do not assess favorites, which is a way that foreign correspondents can in a way "bookmark" tweets for their personal use. Adding in the variable of "favoriting" can add to the comprehensiveness of the study. However, in order to assess how foreign correspondents use Twitter in professional settings, it would be important to get qualitative information on how they use it and how they view their responsibilities on the outlet.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The examination of foreign correspondents' tweets allows us to take a look at how gatekeeping has transformed due to the introduction of social media. Foreign correspondents focus mainly on repeating relevant information and channeling information to its users. This study shows that interactivity is one of the least conducted activities in foreign correspondents' tweets. Although various studies have noted that people are now more involved in different stages of the newsmaking process, foreign correspondents are not spending their time on Twitter interacting with their readers. As noted previously, there is only so much time that a foreign correspondent puts into social media; microblogging only is part of the many tasks journalists and foreign correspondents have to accomplish.

While users of new media engage in interaction—as noted by the move towards a model of networked gatekeeping—there are other responsibilities that foreign correspondents have to fulfill. Since foreign correspondents spend most of their time channeling information to readers, should not be of concern, but rather shows that foreign correspondents still feel a responsibility for getting information to their readers over everything else. The role of a foreign correspondent, in terms of this study's results, is still primarily the same: providing information to readers. However, Twitter provides additional avenues to do this through closely connecting with other sources of information. Although studies may indicate that users are looking for

interaction, they are also looking for foreign correspondents to sort information for them (Goode, 2010, p.14). Foreign correspondents seem to place more of a priority on information rather than interaction, which should not be condemned if it is what readers still need. Through the data analyzed and references to social media guidelines, it is clear this is not yet a priority for foreign correspondents at the four outlets analyzed. Further study could build upon Xu and Feng's (2014) work and reexamine whether interactivity—as defined through this study—as an influence on a correspondent's number of followers. This could indicate whether or not foreign correspondents should begin to focus their time on Twitter on interacting with readers instead of channeling messages or repeating other users.

Interaction may also be an activity that becomes more utilized as foreign correspondents gain professional direction in how to use different features of Twitter. For example, professional guidelines for news outlets do not seem to have much dedicated to audience engagement. Interacting with readers can be tricky, and foreign correspondents may need guidelines as to how to remain professional while tweeting. By setting guidelines on how often and how to interact with readers, news outlets would show a commitment to conversation and feedback. Keeping extremely detailed rules would be difficult.

New features are added to Twitter every year, such as direct messaging, paid tweets, and more recently the ability to add text to a retweet which is displayed in a box in its entirety below. For example, being able to add comments to a picture of a tweet being now an option with the retweet function completely changes the way the

retweet function works. Now, it is much easier to add commentary as well as repeating the original message, something that can be very helpful to foreign correspondents that are retweeting sources of information or people on site at a breaking news event.

Such updates provide new opportunities, but also make it difficult to standardize professional guidelines when it comes to the use of social media. A set of guidelines regarding interaction on Twitter could become outdated every few months, depending on new features being released. Dedicated web staffs and social media teams can pay attention to these updates and give direction as how to advance interaction with users and optimization in message delivery. This becomes harder when the correspondent is separated from the newsroom, but having at least one person dedicated to social media use and training at a foreign bureau could keep foreign correspondents in the loop, if the outlet can afford it.

The results of this study showcase that foreign correspondents can utilize things like Twitter not only to report, but also to gather information into digestible bundles that allow them to provide valuable context and insight to their followers. As foreign correspondents continue to be cut in newsrooms, analyzing how the traditional roles of foreign correspondents transfer to new media can lend insight as to how the professional routines of foreign correspondents could transfer and be helpful in the new newsroom. By looking at the messages that journalists send using new social networks, researchers can examine how newsrooms are implementing new technology, and how they are exploring the possibilities it brings, according to Deuze (2008). Further study could survey the followers of foreign correspondents to see how

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much of their news they take from these foreign correspondents' activities on Twitter. By looking at how the recipients of these messages respond to them, and their needs when it comes to consuming news on social media, researchers could gain a more comprehensive understanding of how foreign correspondents and news companies could cater their coverage to a new type of consumer.

This study shows room for expansion in journalistic use of social media, which would allow for major news outlets to strengthen their connection with their readers. Creating this line of feedback could make these traditional sources of media more relevant. Dimitrov (2014, p. 9) asserts social media will not be the "death knell" for traditional journalism, just as past challengers to the field—radio and television—did not lead to its death. While both deeply changed journalism, it simply evolved to utilize technology. Based on the findings, it seems there is plenty of room for foreign correspondence and journalism in general, to grow and develop in the social media environment as the information communication technologies continue to evolve.

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APPENDIX A

CODE BOOK

Procedure

The following steps should be taken when using the following code sheet. Tweets, or messages sent from a Twitter.com user account, have been transcribed. Each tweet was given a unique identification number: the outlet's code, which is a letter, followed by the tweet's number. These messages are to be read and analyzed for each variable (v) below. The results will be recorded in excel using the tweet's ID.

Outlet codes are as follows:

NBC – A

The Wall Street Journal – B

The Washington Post – C

CNN - D

v1. Repetition

If the tweet was directly retweeted using the retweet function on Twitter feeds. This was indicated on the site with a retweet symbol, which then was transcribed using [retweet] prior to the message.

Note: If the Tweet fits into v1, it should not be coded into any other category.

v2. Interaction

       If the tweet includes @mentions, or the process of tagging another user through typing the username preceded by an @ symbol, of users not associated with a news outlet.

v3. Outside links

       The tweet includes a link not related to the journalist's own work.

v4. Reporting

       The tweet contains information about an event or links to the journalist's own work.

v5 = The tweet fits into multiple categories regarding variables v2 through v5 (specify)

v6= None of the above